**Short Course Proposal Form**

This form is for members of staff proposing new short courses for external learners. It is recommended that staff consult their Head of School before submitting a short course proposal. More information on short courses can be found on the Innovation Support Unit Connect Site. This form can also be completed online.

**STAGE ONE – PROJECT DETAILS**

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| 1. Proposer Details | | | | |
| 1.1 | Name of academic lead | | Chao-Yo Cheng | |
| 1.2 | Contact Email Address | | [c.cheng@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:c.cheng@bbk.ac.uk) | |
| 1.3 | School / Department / Institute | | Social Sciences | |
| 1.4 | Faculty | | Humanities and Social Sciences | |
| 1. Course Details | | | | |
| 2.1 | Proposed Course Title | | Using AI for Social Research | |
| 2.2 | **Proposed Course Type**  Choose all that apply. | | | |
| *2.2.a* | *Bespoke Training* | | |  |
| *2.2.b* | *Non-Credit Bearing Open Short Course* | | | V |
| *2.2.c* | *Credit Bearing Open Short Course* | | |  |
| *2.2.d* | *Existing module designed for Birkbeck Students, to be opened up to external learners* | | |  |
| *2.2.e* | *Other* | | |  |
| 2.3 | **Course Rationale**  Please provide a summary of how this short course fits in with your school’s strategy. Please include strategic, financial and/ or recruitment reasons. | | | |
|  | This intensive four-session virtual short course is designed to equip professional social researchers across diverse career stages -- both within and outside academia -- with the knowledge and skills necessary to leverage cutting-edge artificial intelligence technologies in their research practice.  The course directly supports the School's strategic objective to enhance research skills training while advancing the College's growth priorities centred on "Digital, data, artificial intelligence." Furthermore, it strengthens our initiative to expand industry and business partnerships through practical, professionally oriented training. The short course also aims to promote interdisciplinary collaboration within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences on the teaching and research of artificial intelligence.  This program will position Birkbeck as a leading institution in social research methods training in the country. By establishing this reputation for innovation in methodological education, we anticipate increased enrolment in our existing social research and data analytical modules and/or courses, thereby expanding our impact in the field of quantitative social research and social data science. | | | |
| 2.4 | **Course Description**  Please provide a description of the proposed short course. Include an overview of the key features of the course, highlighting any distinguishing points that will persuade learners to enrol. Include additional information that may help for marketing the programme. | | | |
|  | This four-session intensive course, organized over one or two weekends, introduces both qualitative and quantitative social researchers to the applications of Generative AI and/or Large Language Models (LLMs) in their research practice for the purpose of re- or upskilling in the age of artificial intelligence.  Participants will develop critical competencies in utilizing AI tools across the research lifecycle, from literature review and research design to data analysis. The course is designed for researchers with or without coding experience, requiring only a willingness to engage with technical content.  Through a combination of theoretical frameworks and hands-on exercises using contemporary LLM platforms such as Google Gemini, OpenAI’s ChatGPT and Anthropic Claude, participants will explore how AI can enhance research productivity while addressing critical considerations of bias, environmental impact, and intellectual property rights. The curriculum emphasizes practical applications within social and political science contexts, with special attention to text analysis methodologies.  Throughout the course, participants will engage with real-world research scenarios drawn from recent political and social research, practicing the implementation of GenAI tools to expedite data collection, assist with statistical programming tasks, and enhance analytical capabilities while maintaining research integrity.  By the conclusion of this short course, researchers will possess actionable skills for responsibly incorporating AI into their established research practices, equipped with practical techniques to maximize research productivity while upholding research rigor and transparency. | | | |
| 2.5 | Mode of Delivery  (e.g. Face to face, online, HyFlex/blended) | | Online (or HyFlex) | |
| 2.6 | Proposed Delivery Length (Hours) | | 10 hours, 2.5 hours for each session | |
| 2.7 | Is the proposed course linked to an existing programme? If yes, please provide details. | | Postgraduate Social Research Programmes (MRes, MSc, Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma) | |
| 2.8 | **Indicative Course Content**  Please provide an overview of the indicative content for the proposed course. | | | |
|  | **Session 1: Introduction to LLMs**   * GenAI and LLMs: Basics and key concepts * When social sciences meet AI: Opportunities and challenges * Exercise: Using AI as a brainstorming tool   **Session 2: LLMs for Qualitative Social Research**   * Review: Principles of qualitative interviews * Exercise: Conducting interviews and response coding with AI   **Session 3: LLMs for Quantitative Social Research**   * Review: Principles of survey research * Exercise: AI-assisted Survey and experimental research design   **Session 4: LLMs and Social Data Science**   * Review: Text-as-data and agent-based modeling * Exercise: NLP/Text-as-data analysis with AI * Exercise: Simulation techniques to study human society and behaviors   **Session 5: Wrapping up and looking ahead**   * Critical reflections: Ethics, transparency and open access * Workshop for student proposals | | | |
| 2.9 | **Professional Partnerships**  Does the proposed programme involve a collaborative external partner or provider? Please outline the responsibilities of the partner or provider in developing and delivering the course. | | | |
|  | None at this moment, but potentially we can work with external providers such as the Social Research Association or the National Centre for Research Methods. The academic lead has also been elected as the new Lead for the Social Statistics Study Group for the British Association of Sociology. | | | |
| 2.10 | **Learning Objectives**  What are the objectives of the course? What are the KPIs? What are you hoping to achieve? How do you plan on measuring the impact of this course? | | | |
|  | Upon completion of this short course, participants will possess a basic understanding of artificial intelligence applications in social research, alongside a solid grasp of the associated risks and ethical considerations that must be carefully evaluated in research design and implementation. Each participant will be expected to develop a research proposal demonstrating their ability to integrate course content into their individual research agendas.  This culminating exercise serves a dual purpose: It provides tangible evidence of learning outcomes while simultaneously fostering a scholarly community that may ultimately contribute to Birkbeck's postgraduate student recruitment. Through this approach, we anticipate cultivating lasting professional relationships that extend beyond the short course duration and potentially translate into enrolment in our degree programs. | | | |
| 2.11 | **Market Information**  Please provide evidence of market demand for the proposed course. This can include learner demand, competitors, search volumes, audience size and employer feedback. | | | |
|  | Leading artificial intelligence and social sciences research institutions globally have begun systematically updating their curricula while providing flexible training opportunities in response to the emergence of "social data science" and "AI for science" as distinct disciplinary areas.  Within the United Kingdom, notable examples include the London School of Economics, which has introduced a specialized short course titled "Applied Language Models for Social Science Research," delivered by Dr. Zach Dickson (<https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/training/show.php?article=14072>). University College Dublin has also created a new master’s level (level 7) module “AI and Large Language Models” (https://hub.ucd.ie/usis/!W\_HU\_MENU.P\_PUBLISH?p\_tag=MODULE&MODULE=POL42560).  Comparable initiatives have been established at Imperial College London and King's College London. In the United States, prominent training opportunities include the "Summer Institute in Computational Social Science" (SICSS, see https://sicss.io/), which has become a flagship program in this emerging field.  Building upon this institutional context, the academic lead has successfully piloted several sessions from the proposed syllabus as components of this year's Masterclass in Social Research. Participants, comprising both master's and doctoral students, have demonstrated considerable enthusiasm for expanded learning opportunities regarding artificial intelligence applications in research, while simultaneously expressing strong interest in addressing the critical ethical and methodological concerns inherent in these technologies. | | | |
| 2.12 | **Target Audience**  Please define your target audience. Include geography, demographic profile, personas, motivations and barriers (if applicable) | | | |
|  | The short intensive course is open to postgraduate-level social researchers employed across diverse institutional contexts, including universities, private sector firms, government departments, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and political parties.  No technical background (e.g., coding and quantitative/statistics) is required for participation; however, prior experience in social research methodology would be advantageous for maximizing learning outcomes. | | | |
| 2.13 | **Costing**  The ISU will do a full economic costing of the proposal. Please provide any basic information you think needs to be included to assist this process (e.g. external speakers needed, catering, material needs, Birkbeck staff involvement) | | | |
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| 2.14 | **Additional Information**  Please include additional relevant information | | | |
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| 1. Signature | | | | |
| 3.1 | Signed: | Chao-Yo Cheng | | |
| 3.2 | Date: | 11 June 2025 | | |

Send complete form to the Innovation Support Unit: [innovation-support@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:innovation-support@bbk.ac.uk)