The Role of a Postgraduate Student & Relationship with the Supervisor

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Outline of Talk

• The nature of postgraduate research
• Choosing a supervisor
• Process of doing a postgraduate degree
• Common problems faced by students
• Common problems faced by supervisors
• Role of the supervisor
• Sources of problems
• Foolish and wise students
• At the end of the road - the best outcome
What is Postgraduate Supervision?
The Nature of Postgraduate Research

• Students must be able to think clearly, work independently, write clearly/academically
• Must read widely to know what other research has been done in your field
• New research – not regurgitating old work, nor other’s work (plagiarism is an offence)
• Must present at conferences and publish, in addition to producing a thesis
Choosing a Supervisor

• Choose someone who is expert in your field
• Check their background and publications
• How many postgraduate students have they successfully graduated?
Process for Student

**PHASE 1: Beginning**

1. **Preparation of proposal** – first 6 months, reading, development of literature review

2. **Presentation of proposal to Faculty** – around 6 months
Process (cont.)

**PHASE 2: Research**

3. **Data collection** - Fieldwork, lab work etc.

4. **Interim progress presentation** – to Faculty

5. **Completion of research**
Process (cont.)

**PHASE 3: Writing the Thesis**

6. Collation of Findings

7. Writing thesis - 1\textsuperscript{st} draft, 2\textsuperscript{nd} draft, 3\textsuperscript{rd} draft
**PHASE 4: Leading to Submission & Viva Voce**

8. **Pre-viva presentation** – to faculty postgraduate committee (at least 3 months before submission)

9. **Corrections** before submission & “Turn-It-In”

10. **Submission for Examination** - 4 plastic covered copies (depends on status of candidate)

11. **Viva Voce**
Process (cont.)

**PHASE 5: After the Viva**

12. **Corrections to the Thesis** (if any)
13. **Checking content** with Supervisor &/or Internal Examiner
14. **Checking format** with Postgraduate Research Centre
15. **Binding & Final submission**
16. **Convocation**
Process (cont.)

• Throughout this whole process, candidates should submit their **online progress reports** each semester.

• Candidates must **publish** a minimum of:
  – **PhD candidates:**
    • 2 refereed journal articles
    • 1 proceedings paper
  – **Masters candidates:**
    • 1 refereed journal article
    • 1 proceedings paper
Common Problems faced by Postgraduate Students

• Many postgrads are part-timers
  – Working full time
  – Family commitments
  – Live far away from UMS
  – Therefore lack time

• Lack access to resources
  – Funds
  – Secondary source materials
Common Problems faced by Postgraduate Students (cont.)

Potential sources of funding:

• Outside scholarships
• UMS scholarship (must apply in 1st sem) – rare
• PPI funds BUT you must GOT (graduate on time)
• Sometimes, research grants of supervisor
Common Problems faced by Postgraduate Supervisors

• Time limitations and other work commitments
• Immature or unprepared candidates
• Personality issues
• Communication problems
• Lack of commitment and contribution of some candidates including scholarship holders
Common Problems (cont.)

• Academic problems
  – Differences in the discipline
  – Where to start
  – Fieldwork issues
  – Analysis problems
  – Problems with writing up the thesis

  – Lack of commitment and contribution of some supervisors
Role of the Supervisor

- Research guide
- Building the future

**NOT:**
- “Family counselor”
- “Spiritual advisor”
- “Parent”
- “Therapist”
Role of Supervisor (cont.)

1. **Have regular meetings with student** – at least once a month, later per fortnight or week
2. **Check** – proposal, acquisition of data, chapter drafts, thesis drafts, suggest reading
3. **Remind** students to submit online semester progress reports on time
4. **Fill-in** progress reports online
5. **Arrange presentations** – proposal & interim presentations with faculty postgraduate committee
Role of Supervisor (cont.)

6. **Arrange Pre-Viva** with faculty postgraduate committee

7. Inform Faculty Postgrad Committee and *Pusat Pengajian Pascasiswazah* - *at least 3 months* before submission of thesis (fill form)

8. **Suggest examiners to Pasca** – fill in form with examiner s’ CVs

9. **Prepare student** for Viva Voce
Role of Supervisor (cont.)

10. **Viva Voce** - Supervisors are normally excluded from viva voce in most universities that have this
• Supervisors may attend viva voce only with the permission of the student
• During viva, supervisors must remain silent unless questioned by the chair of the panel

11. **Post-examination thesis corrections** are normally done with the internal examiner **OR** with supervisor and internal

12. **Check & Sign** correction list
Sources of Conflict

• Dissimilar academic backgrounds
• Candidate’s lack of understanding of key academic and processual issues involved
• Disagreements over academic issues
• Wrong attitudes
Types of foolish students

1. “Get an Easy Degree at UMS” student
Types of foolish students (cont.)

2. The Lazy Loafer
   • Unproductive
   • Relies on Wikipedia and Kamus Dewan
Types of foolish students (cont.)

3. The Excuse Maker (related to Lazy Loafer)
4. The Plagiарizer
- Obvious signs (Turn-It-In for English)

Violations of the Copyright Act face legal action
5. The Big Talker
Tries to impress supervisor with his/her knowledge, but lacks substance
• May be insecure
• May be hiding lack of work
• May have psychological problems
Types of foolish students (cont.)

6. The Unreasonable Complainer (excuse for inaction)
Wise Students

SET

GOALS
Wise Students (cont.)

• Try to keep ahead of deadlines
• Keep back-up copies of all data and writing
• Don’t procrastinate
• When writing up drafts – try to write at least one sentence per day, then one paragraph, then one page
• Soon you will have one chapter
• Do keep appointments with your supervisor (bug them)
When the going gets tough

- **Enlist God’s Help** and keep on praying for:
  - Your research
  - Your write-ups
  - Your viva
  - Your corrections
At the End of the Road

• Supervisors are important, BUT success or failure is mostly up to YOU
At the End of the Road (cont.)

REACH FOR THE STARS
At the End of the Road – the best outcome

• You **will** go on to greater heights
• You will have made lifelong friends
• Your career will eventually develop
• Your recognition as a scholar will also begin to grow
Thank You