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

• As a postgraduate student, you 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 your 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
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 of thesis for marking)

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 must submit their **online progress reports** each semester.

• Candidates must: (a) **present** at a conference, & (b) **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)
• Research grants of supervisor (if available)
Common Problems faced by Postgraduate Students (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
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
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
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
10. **Viva Voce** - Supervisors are normally excluded from viva voce in most universities that have this practice.
   - 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 examiner.

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)
Types of foolish students (cont.)

4. The Plagiarizer
- Obvious signs (Turn-It-In for English)

Violations of the Copyright Act face legal action
Types of foolish students (cont.)

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
  – Other problems
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