

Postgraduate Research Methodology Course,  
14 August 2018, UMS

# **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

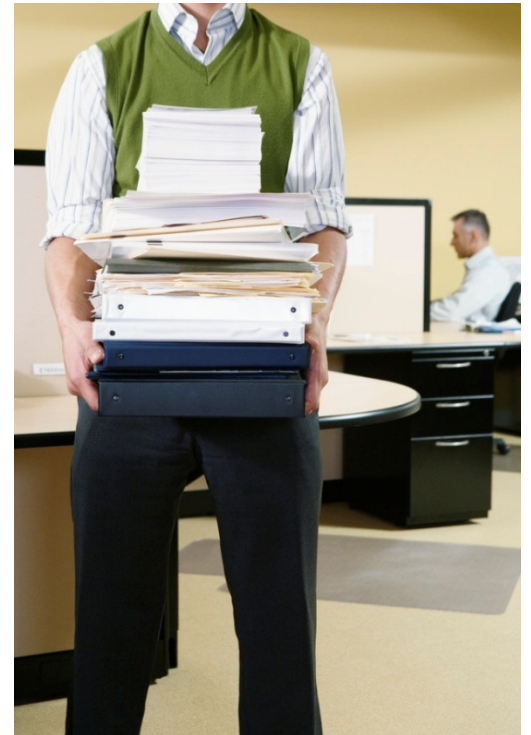
- 1. Preparation of proposal – first 6 months, reading, development of literature review**
- 2. Presentation of proposal to Faculty – around 6 months**



# 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<sup>st</sup> draft, 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, 3<sup>rd</sup> draft**





## Process (cont.)

### **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:

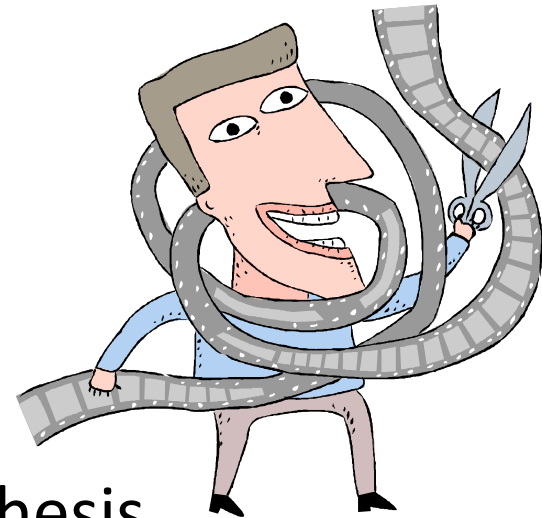
- Outside scholarships
- UMS scholarship (must apply in 1<sup>st</sup> sem) – rare
- PPI funds BUT you must **GOT** (graduate on time)
- Research grants of supervisor (if available)



# 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**

## 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)



# 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)

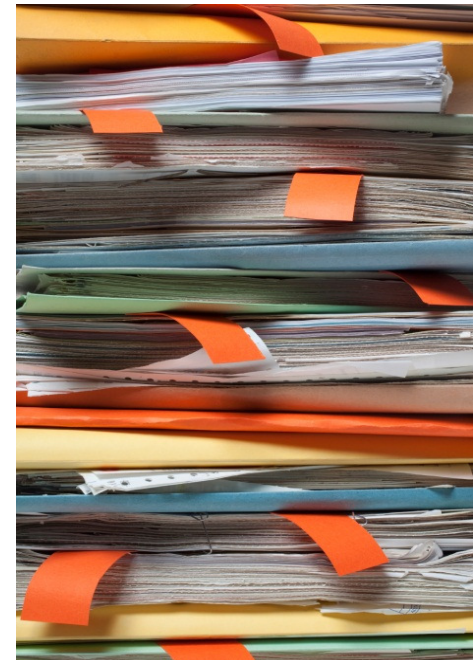


# Wise Students



## 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**



Dr. Ian Baxter & his former teacher,  
Datin Dr. Kathryn Rivai,  
UMS Convocation 2017

## At the End of the Road (cont.)



# 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**

