香港科技大学(广州)
THE HONG KONG
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY (GUANGZHOU)

Guidelines on Thesis Supervision

A. Appointment of the Thesis Supervisor

1. Assignment. Each research postgraduate (RPg) student will be assigned two thesis supervisors from different disciplines, who will oversee the student's research from the time the student embarks on his/her research.

2. Prime supervisor

2.1 The prime thesis supervisor must be a full-time member of the HKUST(GZ) academic faculty.

2.2 For Research Professor and Fractional Faculty:

- Subject to the approval of the Thrust Head and Dean of the RPg student concerned, all Research Professors may serve as the prime supervisors.
- Fractional Faculty in general is not allowed to serve as the prime supervisor of an RPg student unless special approval is granted by the Thrust Head and Dean of the student concerned.
- To ensure continuity of supervision, at least one co-supervisor, who should be a full-time regular academic faculty member of the University, must be appointed for joint supervision of the students. The Research Professor or the Fractional Faculty, and the co-supervisor should agree on the postgraduate studentship arrangement for the student. In the event that the employment contract of a Research Professor or a Fractional Faculty ends prior to the student's graduation, the co-supervisor is responsible for providing the necessary guidance and support to the student, including postgraduate studentship, until a new prime supervisor is identified.

2.3 Arising from the cross-campus appointments between HKUST and HKUST(GZ), a faculty member with zero percent joint appointment with the non-home campus is not allowed to serve as the prime supervisor of RPg students at the non-home campus.

3. Co-supervisor

3.1 For (i) an HKUST(GZ) academic member carrying a title of, e.g., Visiting, Adjunct or Fractional faculty, Research Associate Professor, Research Assistant Professor, or Visiting Scholar, (ii) a non-HKUST/ non-HKUST(GZ) academic, or (iii) a non-academic professional, he/she may help supervise the research work of an RPg student, but only as a co-supervisor.

3.2 Arising from the cross-campus appointments between HKUST and HKUST(GZ), a faculty member with zero percent joint appointment or affiliate appointment at the non- home campus can serve as the co- supervisor of RPg students at the non-home campus.

3.3 Appointment of a non-HKUST/ non-HKUST(GZ) academic as a co-supervisor requires approval from the Thrust Head. Appointment of a non-academic professional as a co-supervisor requires approval from the HKUST Fok Ying Tung Graduate School (FYTGS).

4. Sabbatical leave/No-pay leave

4.1 When a prime supervisor is on sabbatical leave or no-pay leave, he/she will be allowed to continue supervising his/her existing students, but a prime supervisor on no-pay leave will not be allowed to admit any new students.

4.2 The prime supervisor should identify a co-supervisor to take care of the academic matters, physical and mental well-being, safety and any emergency issues of the students when he/she is on-leave.

5. **Vacancy.** In the case of a thesis supervisor leaving the University, another member on the Program Planning cum Thesis Supervision Committee should be appointed as a temporary thesis supervisor until a replacement thesis supervisor has been identified.

6. Change

6.1 If, after sincere effort, a good working relationship fails to develop and the student and/or the thesis supervisor believe that, for this reason, satisfactory study progress cannot be made, either party may approach the PG Coordinator for advice. The PG Coordinator should, in consultation with the Thrust Head/ Dean of the relevant Hub, consider the matter carefully.

6.2 Where a change of prime supervisor is required, the Thrust Head should appoint a temporary supervisor for the student up to one year until a replacement has been identified. If a new prime supervisor cannot be identified after one year, the case will be handled by the Thrust and the Hub.

B. Program Planning cum Thesis Supervision Committee

Each student will have a Program Planning cum Thesis Supervision Committee (PPTSC) to determine the curriculum requirements and supervise the thesis research.

1. This Committee consists of at least three members which include both of the thesis supervisors and the committee chair. The committee chair and the student must come from different Hubs. To derive the maximum synergy, the committee may also include faculty member(s) from HKUST and/or external members, in addition to faculty members at HKUST(GZ).

2. For all students, the PPTSC should be formed within the first year of study as soon as practicable.

3. The formation of a PPTSC is initiated jointly by the thesis supervisors. The student may be consulted in the process. The proposed membership should be endorsed by the Dean of the respective Hub before seeking approval from the Dean of HKUST Fok Ying Tung Graduate School. Upon approval, the Dean of the respective Hub will appoint the committee members.

4. For both MPhil and PhD PPTSCs, at least one committee member must normally have had experience, at the University or elsewhere, as the designated supervisor of the thesis research

work of at least two RPg students who have successfully completed their degrees.

5. For PhD PPTSCs, at least one member of the committee must normally have had experience, at the University or elsewhere, in the supervision of at least one PhD student who has successfully completed the degree.

6. Members on a PPTSC usually have research expertise relevant to the student's area of research.

7. PPTSC or a sub-committee should meet regularly with the student to ensure that the student's academic and research progress is satisfactory. Where applicable, the sub-committee consists of at least both of the thesis supervisors and a sub-committee chair. The student, the thesis supervisors and the PPTSC (or its sub-committee) are required to complete an annual progress report which serves to document the study progress of the student.

8. When a thesis supervisor goes on sabbatical leave, he/she will usually continue to supervise his/her students through various means. In the case of a thesis supervisor leaving the University, another member on the PPTSC should be appointed as a temporary thesis supervisor until a replacement thesis supervisor has been identified.

C. Joint Supervision with Non-academic Institutions

The joint supervision of RPg students by academic institutions and the corporate sector is a universal trend with multiple, wide-ranging benefits that HKUST(GZ) seeks to foster. The principles, limitations and framework for joint supervision of RPg students by the corporate sector and the University are provided in the guideline.

D. Supervisor-Student Relationships

1. Responsibilities of Thesis Supervisors

To ensure high quality in both the student's research and his/her learning experience, thesis supervisors should provide advice, guidance and support at every stage. Supervisors are expected to:

1.1 Assign student tasks that are relevant to their thesis and academic development;

1.2 Share responsibilities on student management between prime and co-supervisors;

1.3 Provide guidance about the nature of research, the standard expected, the planning of the research program, the review of literature, the selection of coursework, and appropriate training in research techniques;

1.4 Establish, at the beginning of the student's research, a framework for supervision, including arrangements for regular meetings. The stages of progress the student is expected to have completed at various points should also be agreed on;

1.5 Meet with the student regularly following the agreed schedules and with a clear agenda, and be accessible to the student at other appropriate times when he/she may need advice;

1.6 Ensure that the student's research:

- Falls within his/her own area of expertise;
- Can be completed with the resources available;
- Can be completed within the prescribed period of study; and
- Is suitable for the degree program the student aims to undertake.

1.7 If applicable, discuss any potential physical hazards involved in the research work and how these can best be dealt with, ensuring that safety procedures are followed;

1.8 Provide advice on the publication of research work, ensuring that attribution is discussed before publication;

1.9 Deal promptly with any research problems the student may encounter;

1.10 Adhere to the schedule for submission of the annual progress report;

1.11 Advise the student promptly of unsatisfactory progress with regard to any aspect of his/her study, and put this advice in writing if such unsatisfactory progress is considered likely to interfere with satisfactory completion of the research by the agreed deadline;

1.12 Guide the student in the preparation of the thesis and the thesis examination;

1.13 Identify prospective examiners for the student's Thesis Examination Committee;

1.14 Treat the student professionally, ensuring proper credit for his/her work;

1.15 Be on the lookout for signs of behavioral changes, stress and depression, including absence from classes, laboratory sessions or appointments with no prior notification, reclusion, or erratic behavior in the student being supervised. The Thrust/Base Head and PG Coordinator should be notified if any of the above behavior has been observed or reported. If necessary, the student should be referred to the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) for professional advice; and

1.16 Ensure that replacement supervision is available to the student during any significant period of absence.

2. Responsibilities of Students

RPg students are expected to:

2.1 Discuss with the thesis supervisors and PPTSC the type and scope of guidance he/she needs, and agree on regular meeting times;

2.2 Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the thesis supervisors, however elementary they may seem, before they become serious;

2.3 Attend supervisory meetings well prepared and with a clear agenda for the meeting;

2.4 Be accessible to the thesis supervisors and/or PPTSC or during the course of study;

2.5 Make satisfactory academic and research progress following the advice of the thesis supervisors and PPTSC;

2.6 Discuss with and obtain the approval of the thesis supervisors regarding any changes in the direction of his/her research focus and its implications;

2.7 Provide a brief self-evaluation summary report to be attached to the annual progress report

for submission through the thesis supervisors as part of the annual review process;

2.8 Ensure that the thesis is completed and submitted within the period stipulated by the University for assessment;

2.9 Abide by the rules and regulations governing postgraduate studies of the University; and

2.10 Ensure that all work done by others used in the thesis is properly acknowledged.

3. Relationship between Thesis Supervisors and Students

3.1 Mutual respect and open communication are the foundation of a good relationship between the thesis supervisors and the student. Both parties must strive to express respect and communicate clearly and honestly with each other.

3.2 To avoid unnecessary disruption, the student and the thesis supervisors should inform the other party as soon as they are aware of a possible change in their status, e.g. a student plans to withdraw from the program of study, or a thesis supervisor may take sabbatical leave.

3.3 If, after sincere effort, a good working relationship has failed to develop and the student and/or the thesis supervisors believe that, for this reason, satisfactory study progress cannot be made, either party may approach the PG Coordinator for advice. The PG Coordinator should, in consultation with the Thrust Head/Dean of the relevant Hub, consider the matter carefully.

3.4 Where a change of prime supervisor is required, the Thrust Head should appoint a temporary supervisor for the student up to one year until a replacement has been identified. If a new prime supervisor cannot be identified after one year, the case will be handled by the Thrust and the Hub.

HKUST Fok Ying Tung Graduate School - *Guangzhou Office*

May 2025