

Developing Guidelines to Ensure Higher Transition of Postgraduate Students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chuka University, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of the steps that were taken in preparing guidelines for postgraduate students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) at Chuka University in Kenya. While the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPGS) at Chuka University is tasked with monitoring postgraduate students' progression at Chuka University, it was thought prudent to prepare guidelines for students in the FHSS to ensure a comprehensive in-house guidance and monitoring in order to improve graduation rates in the faculty. This idea was born from the International Deans' Course (IDC) Africa 2017/2018, which took place in Osnabrück and Berlin in Germany, Kampala in Uganda and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, where we had a lot of teaching and guidance on Leadership, Strategic Faculty Management, Financial Management, Quality Management and the Role of Deans, among other topics. Further, the trainers guided us in preparing a Project Action Plan (PAP) and I chose to work on a topic that would help improve postgraduate studies in the FHSS, where I was the dean. The rationale for preparing guidelines for postgraduate studies emanated from the fact that in my Faculty a good number of students are registered but only few graduate within the stipulated period. This paper therefore discusses the processes taken in preparing the guidelines. The paper demonstrates how staff members and students were involved, makes a brief outline of the content of the final copy of the postgraduate guidelines and the extent to which they were found useful by staff and students at the time of writing this paper.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Chuka University is located on the slopes of Mt. Kenya in the Eastern region of Kenya, in Tharaka Nithi County. The university started as Eastern campus of Egerton University in 2004. In the year 2007, the institution graduated to Chuka University College, and on 8th January 2013, the college was chartered, thus making it a fully pledged University, Chuka University (CU).

Like many other universities in the world, Chuka University endeavours to provide quality education, training, research, extension, environmental sustainability and entrepreneurship, leading to social cohesion, human integrity, and economic development. The Chuka University vision is to be a premier university for the provision of quality education, training and research for sustainable national and global development (CU Statutes, 2014: 4). Additionally, Chuka University's mission is to provide access, generate, preserve and share knowledge for quality, effective and ethical leadership in higher education, training, research and outreach through nurturing an intellectual culture that integrates theory with practice, innovation and entrepreneurship (*ibid*). This mission and vision are in line with the topics that were taught in the IDC 2017/2018 workshops, and therefore the training was very crucial for me as a dean because I got insights on how to boost performance, not just in the FHSS, but also in the university at large.

Chuka University has five established faculties, namely: the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Studies (FAES), the Faculty of Business Studies (FBST), the Faculty of Education and Resources Development (FERD), the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology (FSET), and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), where I am currently the dean. CU's academic governance lies with the Vice-Chancellor (VC), and below the VC is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic, Research and Student Affairs (DVC- ARSA) [assisted by the registrar]. Under the DVC (ARSA) are five Deans of the five Faculties, who supervise the Chair of Departments (CODs), while the CODs supervise lecturers as shown in the simplified figure below.

Postgraduate studies, often done at Masters and Doctorate level in most universities in the world serve the purpose of ensuring that continuous research is carried out in institutions of higher learning. This continuous research, innovations and subsequent dissemination of results is key in all faculties at the university, because it is through such research and innovations that the faculty and the university become visible or known to other universities and researchers in the world. In Kenya specifically, the completion of a research thesis and publication of the same on the university website in soft copy, or its storage as a hard copy in the library, ensures that researchers in other universities in Kenya and all over the world have access to this information. For such information to be disseminated, there has to be a successful transition of postgraduate students from course work to research work and to the eventual graduation. Often, during research proposal defences in many universities in Kenya, supervisors and examiners encourage students to visit other university libraries to access other researches carried out in specific areas of interest. One of the issues that I realized needed to be addressed urgently when I became the dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Chuka University in August 2015, was improving the rate of graduation for postgraduate students in the faculty because many students stalled after completing coursework. Therefore, when I qualified for the IDC course 2017/2018 and the Project Action Plan (PAP) idea was introduced to the participants, I thought it was a great idea to pursue the thread of postgraduate

students' progression as my PAP. I therefore settled on guidelines with an aim of improving the transition of postgraduate students in the FHSS from their first year of study where they undertake coursework, to their second year (for Masters) and third year (for PhD) when they write their projects/ theses. This paper outlines the processes taken in making those Guidelines, the outcome of the process and the impact the prepared Guidelines had on both students and faculty members.

2 Statement of the Problem

The FHSS at Chuka University is made up of two departments: the Department of Social Sciences (DSS) and the Department of Humanities (DHUM). Within these departments there are twelve sub-sections namely: Communication and Media, Linguistics, Literature, Kiswahili, Geography, History, Religious Studies, Philosophy, Criminology and Security Studies, Community Development, Economics, Sociology, Information Science and Psychology. Majority of these disciplines have students registered at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It is important to note that while many undergraduate programmes at Chuka University are done by students on full-time basis, few postgraduate courses are fulltime as most students prefer the part-time mode. Each year, the FHSS registers postgraduate students in almost all the disciplines, but few complete their studies to graduation. For instance, the students at Masters Level are expected to identify their research topics after the first year of course work and then spend the first part of second year fine-tuning their research proposals and subsequently write the project/thesis in the last part of their second year. However, few students make it to graduation within the stipulated time (two years). My PAP was geared towards identifying the causes of such delays from both the lecturers and students and developing guidelines specifically for FHSS in an attempt to reduce some of the impediments of the research process.

Objectives

The objectives of the project were to prepare postgraduate guidelines that would help increase the number of graduate students qualifying with their degrees in the FHSS each year, track supervision of postgraduate students in the FHSS and to help enhance supervisors' capacity to guide postgraduate students in the FHSS. These objectives were proposed against the understanding that there are some specific potential risks that I had no control of, like, lack of cooperation from lecturers and students, inadequate supervisors in some disciplines and unresolvable possible reasons for failure to complete studies, for example, school fees and other personal issues.

3 Justification of the Project

Every dean in any faculty in the university rejoices in helping students to become better academically and graduate with their degrees promptly. In the FHSS at Chuka University there was a noted delay in completing studies by postgraduate students as shown by the example in the Table 1, which samples students at Masters Level.

Table 1: Rate of Graduation of Masters Students in the FHSS

Registered Masters Students vs. Those who Graduated				
Year	Total Registered Students	Expected Year of Graduation	Total number of Students who Actually Graduated	Balance
2013	71	2015	8	63
2014	104	2016	6	98
2015	48	2017	11	37
2016	58	2018	16	42

The samples above were got from the online system of the FHSS and from the Board of Postgraduate Studies at Chuka University. In picking this data, attention was paid to year of students’ registration and counterchecked to ascertain the number of students that graduated immediately after the expected year of graduation. Data was sought starting from the year 2013 when Chuka University was chartered. The data for those to graduate in 2018 is not indicated in the table above because the 2018 graduation was still pending by the time this paper was written. From Table 1, we notice that a very small percentage of students (11.3% in 2015; 5.8% in 2016; 22.9% in 2017) graduated as required. It should also be noted that the percentages of those graduating are not necessarily for those students that finish within the stipulated time because some are from previous years, with many taking even more than six years to finish their Masters studies. Such a trend was alarming and it called for an intervention to help sustain students who finish their studies timely. It was hoped that guidelines produced by this project would help improve not just the current situation in the FHSS, but also sustain better trends in future.

4 Processes and Steps Taken

The first step that this project took was to ask for permission from the Vice-Chancellor to proceed with the PAP idea, which was granted. The second step was to try and find out the causes of delay in completion by postgraduate students from both the students’ perspective and academic staff members’ perspective. To accomplish this, the dean formed a committee of five members picked among the academic staff members to assist in the PAP tasks. The committee held a series of meetings to

come up with the gaps to be filled by the guidelines. Simple questionnaires were designed and distributed to students and staff to respond to questions relating to post-graduate studies in the faculty so that the committee members would consider issues and suggestions raised. It should be noted that these questionnaires were administered in a random manner but at least a good number was administered to capture enough details. This was done because the project was not really trying to find the problem, but only to get backup information, since the problem had already been identified. The third step was that the committee benchmarked with a few other universities in order to develop guidelines that would be beneficial to students in the FHSS at Chuka. This benchmarking was done with Kenyatta University, Centre of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi, University of Pretoria, and the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

After the lecturers and students responded to the questions, a meeting was held with the committee to discuss the responses. Subsequently, the dean prepared draft guidelines paying attention to the issues raised by the respondents, which she tabled in second committee meeting. A third committee meeting was held to finalize the draft guidelines. The guidelines (see appendix I) were tabled in the FHSS board meeting for discussion and improvement, and subsequently submitted to the management for approval. At the faculty level, students were invited for a sensitization workshop and issued with copies of the guidelines which marked the beginning of implementation.

5 Brief Literature Review

Many universities all over the world have one time or another reported poor progression of postgraduate students in their institutions. For instance, in a study on causes of attrition in private universities in Nairobi county, Kenya, Njoroge, Wang'eri, & Gichure (2016), argue that "student attrition presents a major concern for many institutions of higher learning as it either causes delays in degree completion or total dropping out from degree programs that students had enrolled in" (225). The three scholars quote Herman (2011) and show that a study conducted in a South African university established a 50% attrition rate among postgraduate students. Njoroge, et al., further posit that a South African study was done among graduate program leaders who were of the opinion that attrition happened due to students' personal reasons, students' lack of ability, skills or motivation to do a graduate program, students' lack of financial support, poor supervision and an inflexible policy of the universities (225). Bunting and Sheppard (2012) also argue that completion rates of doctoral studies in most South African universities remained below 20 percent until the year 2004 when it began to improve after a few intervention were made. Away from South Africa, Terence (2011) demonstrates that the average doctoral completion rates in Egypt were at 55% in humanities and 49% in social sciences (Quoted in Rong'uno, 2016). It can be argued that failure to complete studies by postgraduate

students is a widespread problem in Africa because similar issues were identified in FHSS. These findings from Africa corroborate the results of a study carried out by Creighton (2007) with students in American universities where she argues that students “often leave for personal reasons, job demands, dissatisfaction with the academic environment, and incongruence with campus values” (1). Creighton adds that low graduation rates often cost universities scarce resources, weaken the ability to meet educational objectives and reflect the university’s inability to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of students. Such costs are not unique to America and therefore there is need for intervention in institutions of higher learning to reduce the hitches that cause students’ drop out from postgraduate programmes. Such drop outs make universities to lose revenue due to students not completing their degrees or taking more time to finish the degrees, therefore making planning for universities difficult and completion time uncertain.

Mwebi and Simatwa (2013) carried out a study among students in private universities in Kenya and found that 1.7% of students who had been admitted in private universities cycle for 2007/2008 academic year dropped out translating to 3.2% education wastage with a completion rate of 96.8%. While students in Kenya register in private universities by choice because they are able to meet the cost, the drop out shows that there could be other problems related to failure to complete studies other than finances. According to Rong’uno (2016), the process of acquiring a postgraduate degree, especially doctoral degree is a daunting task to many students because effective learning and timely completion of thesis development and writing process is dependent largely on accessibility to relevant reading materials. This can only be possible in universities where libraries are equipped properly and have advanced ICT services. Rong’uno however notes that development of ICT in most Kenyan institutions of higher learning is still far underway, which often affects not just timely completion of thesis writing process but it may also compromise the quality of education. Some of these issues were also identified by students and staff in the FHSS at Chuka University.

An audit carried out in Kenya by the Commission for University Education (CUE) revealed that that 50% of those who enrolled for Masters programmes between the year 2012 and 2016 failed to complete their studies, and less than 20% completed their PhD studies (CUE Report 2016). In this audit, 70 universities were sampled across the country and it showed that some postgraduate candidates took 9 to 14 years to graduate with PhDs. The CUE recommended the need for adequate number of qualified teaching staff to allow close supervision and consultation between the supervisor and the supervisee. This recommendation came along with the directives that all university lecturers attain a doctorate degree. While these directives from CUE are far from being adhered to, it is hoped that they will help improve the situation of postgraduate studies in Kenya and retain more students in the universities in future.

6 Findings

The discussion here is based on responses from both students and lecturers. As indicated earlier, questionnaires were given in a random manner but at least one lecturer was sampled from each discipline, mainly targeting lecturers who taught and supervised postgraduate students. A total of 18 lecturers responded to the questions. For students, there were 55 respondents, 15 of whom were PhD candidates and 40 Masters' students. This was just a mere representative number to gather opinion from the learners to give direction when preparing the guidelines.

7 Responses

7.1 Responses from Lecturers

7.1.1 Coursework

A majority of the lecturers (72.2%) indicated that they were able to cover their coursework in class timely, while 27.8% (5) indicated they were not able to finish teaching coursework within the allocated time. Those lecturers who were able to cover coursework timely argued that the time allocated for coursework was enough, while others availed themselves in class during their own free time to make sure the content was covered. Those who were not able to cover coursework timely said that students who study on part-time basis had very few contact hours which made it difficult to finish covering the course content, thus forcing the lecturer to compress the course material. This shortage of time was also indicated as the main cause of inability of postgraduate students to grasp the research process during coursework, regardless of how smart they were. Additionally, some students were said to be of less ability and thus they were not able to comprehend the course content clearly. As Samuel Siringi reports in the Kenyan *Daily Nation* on Friday 11th March (2011) the number of applicants for doctoral programmes in many universities in Kenya has continued to rise over time. Siringi attributed such increases to the fact that other than the urge to pursue knowledge, there is a high desire for educational advancement for purposes of promotion at the work place, which has motivated the desire for higher academic qualifications among elite. This being the case, therefore, many candidates register for postgraduate studies only to stall at some point because all they want is the paper certificate to get promotion. The academic rigor in postgraduate studies therefore frustrates such candidates.

7.1.2 Transition from Coursework to Thesis

It was noted that lecturers were comfortable with the period within which the unit on research methods was taught to postgraduate students. However, it was indicated that there were students who faced challenges during the transition from coursework to thesis writing because many lacked computers to carry out their work, caus-

ing delays. A few students were said to delay in making a decision on what to carry out their research on and thus they could not get their research problem. Others were not able to focus on their studies because they were working and therefore not able to multitask. Such issues result to overdependence syndrome with students expecting the lecturer to help them do much of their work, thus leading to frustration and withdrawal from studies.

To try and reduce the above mentioned hitches and improve transition from coursework to thesis writing, many lecturers proposed that the BPGS at CU, in conjunction with the faculties and the Senate should effect deadlines and impose financial penalties for students who delay. It was further proposed that students should be encouraged to attend conferences and seminars to interact with other scholars in order to boost their research skills. In addition, there was an indication that competent and committed lecturers should be assigned to tutor postgraduate students because some disciplines lacked capacity. This aspect of understaffing is common in most universities in Kenya and it has resulted to employing part-time lecturers, a practice labelled “moonlighting” which reduces commitment on the part of lecturers. According to Kimmel and Conway (2000), moonlighting is a reflection of the worker’s choice to pursue entrepreneurial activities while maintaining the financial stability offered by the primary job. This means that many lecturers work outside their universities or get additional units to teach in their universities for extra payment, thus reducing commitment to teaching and research as these lecturers juggle to meet the needs of all the units. This results to underperformance.

7.1.3 Thesis Writing and Supervision

It was noted that the causes of failure of students to graduate timely included late submission of proposals, inability to be consistent and resilient, preoccupation with other activities outside class because many postgraduate students are working, failure to meet deadlines and financial issues. On the lecturers’ part, it was noted that many lecturers do not take time to read students’ work because of either laxity or being overwhelmed with a lot of work resulting from understaffing. Additionally, the management was also said to cause delays on students due to the fact that, first, there was no clear policy to guide supervision, second, unwillingness to engage specialized supervisors from other universities where the university lacks capacity, thus overloading lecturers, and third, poor remuneration for examiners and supervisors which demotivates them from exerting themselves. It was therefore suggested that lecturers be given reasonable workload and more lecturers be employed to enhance capacity of supervision. Many respondents also indicated that lecturers should create time for students and have a calendar of events with regard to supervision. Further, it was suggested that seminars be conducted in the FHSS to enhance students’ research capabilities. The respondents also indicated that the University Management should ensure that postgraduate students study on fulltime basis, and also incorporate workshops to train and/or update lecturers’ knowledge on supervision.

7.2 Responses from Postgraduate Students

7.2.1 Coursework Experience

When asked to show how the nature of interaction with lecturers helped them with coursework, many students indicated that lecturers gave them substantial reading assignments and that they took notes during the lectures. In addition, a number of respondents agreed that coursework helped them in their research process. However, there was a suggestion that research proposal development, methods of data collection and analysis should be enhanced. Discussions in class, the unit on research methodology, and seminar papers were mentioned as having helped a number of students to conceptualize their study. This means that on average, the units offered during coursework were taught well. This means there was a need to try and address issues outside classwork that cause impediments to student progression.

7.2.2 Transition from Coursework to Proposal Writing

Slightly more than half of the respondents (28) indicated that they did not have challenges in conceptualizing research problem, while 27 students experienced a few difficulties, which made them take longer to start the research process. It was noted that fulltime students and those who got supervisors early were able to finish in time, while part-time students stalled because they took longer to make corrections and return their drafts to the supervisors. These responses show that the part time mode of study was not ideal for postgraduate students since it caused them to stall as they concentrated on other issues outside research work. Being a full time students ensures that one takes time of work and concentrates on the research work, thus bringing timely completion. Possibly, this problem will be rectified in Kenya in future because as Augustine Oduor reports (*Standard Digital* 5th May 2018), there is a proposal by CUE that part-time studies, famously known as school-based programmes would be scrapped from the education system, although it has not been actualized. The system was christened school based for having emanated from scheduling classes at the university for high school teachers to further their studies during the school holidays.

The respondents further identified various problems that they encountered, like rude supervisors, delayed responses from supervisors, delayed defences, inaccessibility of reading materials and personal issues, to mention only a few. To improve on problematic areas, the respondents suggested that there was need to improve human resources, do capacity building, appoint dedicated supervisors, set serious deadlines for students, hold more seminars and workshops for students, demand progress report from students and discontinue or charge those who delay.

7.2.3 Thesis Writing

The respondents indicated that they preferred more interaction with the supervisor during thesis writing and that discovering new knowledge was exciting. However, there was an indication that students who disagreed with supervisors ended up be-

ing delayed. In addition, some students indicated that serious intervention was needed in methods of data analysis and how to interact with literature review, which caused them problems. Shortage of resources like research materials in the library also made students to get stuck while writing.

7.2.4 Supervision

While there was an indication of timely allocation of competent supervisors and involvement of students in the process of selecting supervisors, the respondents identified, delayed response from supervisors, disagreement between two supervisors, and fewer interactions with supervisors as causes of delays in the research process. These problems agree with a research carried out by Rong'uno (2016) on doctoral studies in universities in Kenya, mentioned earlier. Remedies for the above mentioned problems were identified as schedule official contact hours with supervisors to ensure efficient interactions, supervisors to assist students with research materials where possible, setting deadlines and outsourcing supervisors in areas where they are few.

8 Conclusion

From the summary of findings above, it is evident that both lecturers and students identified issues that caused delays in progression of postgraduate students. Generally, the findings indicate that at least both students and lecturers had problems in covering coursework; that there was inadequate time for research work due to the fact that most postgraduate students attended classes on part-times basis, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their research fully. It is also evident that shortage of human resources (qualified lecturers) made supervision of postgraduate students in the FHSS difficult. The admission criteria was also criticized by some respondents because it was linked to the issue of weak students who had long working experience, which qualified them to get admitted to postgraduate studies. This often makes it difficult for such students to catch up since they had been out of academics for longer periods. The clamour for more degrees in the Kenyan education system also caused an inflow of students into many institutions of higher learning, Chuka included, some of whom could not cope with postgraduate studies, while others just wanted to get the degree regardless of the procedure. Such assumptions frustrate many students when they realize that research work needs much more concentration than just getting the degree and thus they withdraw from studies.

The responses to the questions further demonstrate that many of the problems identified and solutions proposed by students corroborate the perspective taken by lecturers. Many of these responses were considered in preparation of the postgraduate guidelines for FHSS (appendix I), which was the general objective of the PAP. The guidelines contain six sections as follows:

1. Acronyms
2. Introduction

3. Obligations of Students Undertaking postgraduate Studies in the FHSS at CU
4. Best Practices to Improve Supervision in the FHSS/ Monitoring and Evaluation
5. Obligations of Chuka University Management to Make the Guidelines Successful
6. Bibliography

There are two main committees that were established through the guidelines. First, there is the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Postgraduate Committee (FHSS-PC), which is responsible for monitoring the progress of postgraduate students in the faculty. Secondly, there is the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Seminars and Publications Committee (FHSS-SPC) tasked with organizing academic seminars in the Faculty and sourcing possible avenues where students and staff can apply for funding, attend conferences and publish their research work. Aspects that could not be handled at the faculty level like employing qualified supervisors in every discipline and developing a written policy on outsourcing of supervisors was tasked with the University Management under section 5 of the guidelines.

9 Recommendations

Following the results of the responses, and the PAP objectives, a number of recommendations were made with the aim to improve transition of postgraduate students in the FHSS.

- i. Postgraduate studies to be done via fulltime mode to allow more time for study.
- ii. Students to be encouraged to take leave from work to concentrate on their studies on full time mode.
- iii. Revise the admission criteria for postgraduate studies so that those who have freshly finished are given the first priority instead of tagging admission on work experience.
- iv. University to effect set deadlines and financial penalties for overstaying at the university.
- v. Employ enough qualified and competent staff members in all disciplines.
- vi. Improvements in learning environments and purchase of resources like more computers and library books.

10 Milestones from the PAP

After finalizing the guidelines for postgraduate students in the FHSS, a sensitization meeting was held with all postgraduate students in the Faculty and subsequently more students were able to pick up their research. In addition, a number of students were able to voice complains through the channels that were put in place through the guidelines and unreliable supervisors were changed as per section 4 (viii) and (ix) of the guidelines (see appendix I). Four seminars were also organized in the Faculty

by the FHSS-SPC between July and September 2018, where twelve (12) postgraduate students presented chapters from their work. In addition, the idea of organizing seminars/training for supervisors (Section 5(ii), appendix I), was embraced by the BPGS and one such training for all supervisors at CU was carried out in June 2018. The process of procuring an anti-plagiarism software to help monitor/check plagiarism in students' work was also initiated by the University Management in consultation with the chief Librarian.

The IDC PAP project was therefore of great help not just in enriching research practices in the FHSS, but it also had an impact on Chuka University at large.

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Appendix I

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES Guidelines Governing Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

1. Acronyms

BPGS	Board of Postgraduate Studies.
COD	Chair of Department
CU	Chuka University
CUE	Commission for University Education
DVC (ARSA)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic, Research and Student Affairs)
FHSS	Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences
FHSS-PC	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Postgraduate Committee Will be referred to as PC in short
FHSS-SPC	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Seminars and Publications Committee Will be referred to as SPC in short.
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
VC	Vice – Chancellor

2. Introduction

1. This document is prepared for use by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in order to help both students and supervisors navigate the course work and research process smoothly.
2. These guidelines apply to both fulltime and part-time students in the faculty.
3. There shall be a Faculty representative to the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPGS) who will act as a link between the Faculty and the board.
4. There shall be a Postgraduate Committee (FHSS-PC) in the faculty chaired by the faculty representative to the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPGS) to ensure that these guidelines are implemented.
5. There shall be Seminars and Publications Committee (FHSS-SPC) to organize academic seminars in the Faculty, which will allow academic interactions in the Faculty and in addition, assist students in attending learned conferences and publish their articles in referred journals.

This document has the following parts that are subject to approval by the CU Management/Senate:

1. Guidelines for students undertaking postgraduate studies in the FHSS at CU.
2. Best practices to improve supervision in the FHSS/ Monitoring and Evaluation
3. Obligations of CU Management to make these guidelines successful.

3. Obligations of Students Undertaking postgraduate Studies in the FHSS at CU.

a. Course Work

- i. Postgraduate students in the FHSS will undertake coursework in the first year as stipulated in the Chuka University catalogue.
- ii. Towards the end of the first semester of coursework, a seminar on proposal writing will be organized by the FHSS-PC.
- iii. During the second semester students shall draft their concept papers using the knowledge gained in class and from the proposal writing workshop.
- iv. A second workshop will be held in the second semester and all students shall attend in order to update their research skills and seek clarifications where necessary. For part time students and those disciplines that undertake three semesters of coursework, the second workshop will take place in the third semester/block.
- v. The proposal writing workshops are compulsory.
- vi. All students will present their proposal concepts to a committee of experts selected by the FHSS-PC, in consultation with the CODs and the Dean in the second semester of coursework.
- vii. Students whose concepts are passed will be allocated supervisors by the COD to proceed to their second year. These supervisors will be allocated following the guidelines provided by the CUE and such supervisors shall be approved by the BPGS once the proposal goes through the faculty defense.

b. Supervision Period

- i. At the beginning candidates and supervisors must meet to discuss:
 - a) Student/supervisor roles.
 - b) The frequency, duration and purpose of supervisory meetings.
- ii. There will be quarterly reports by the supervisor and the student submitted to the FHSS-PC.
 - a) Supervisors shall give reports for all students under their supervision, including those who have absconded studies.
 - b) Students shall submit reports of their meetings with supervisors to the FHSS-PC.
 - c) In the event that such meetings, mentioned above do not take place, both the student and the supervisor shall give a report to the Dean through the COD for further action.

- iii. Students must:
 - a) Negotiate the timing of periods of holiday/leave with their supervisors.
 - b) Advise their supervisors if they are unavoidably absent (e. g. due to illness or family obligations).
- iv. Students shall present their preliminary results of their research to a panel of experts proposed by the supervisor and the COD before proceeding to write their thesis. This panel will advise the student on how to make their research ideas better. Where results will be found wanting, students will be advised accordingly before proceeding.
- v. Students shall present at least one (1) article for Masters and two (2) for PhD students from their research in the academic seminars organized in the FHSS-SPC before submitting their thesis to the BPGS.

4. Best Practices to Improve Supervision in the FHSS/ Monitoring and Evaluation

- i. All members of the FHSS (lecturers and students) shall adhere to these guidelines.
- ii. All postgraduate students in the FHSS shall register with the PC.
- iii. There shall be organized academic seminars/workshops in the faculty at least twice per semester.
- iv. Novice supervisors will attend supervision seminars organized yearly by CODs in consultation with the Dean and DVC (ARSA). These seminars will be open to older supervisors who wish to refresh their approach to supervision.
- v. There shall be a thesis diary to be signed by the supervisor.
- vi. Supervisors shall give feedback to students two weeks after submission of their work.
- vii. Students shall work on their corrections promptly in a period agreed between them and the supervisor.
- viii. In the event of a breakdown in relations between the candidate and thesis supervisors, the student shall write a letter to the COD for such cases to be addressed.
- ix. Supervisors who delay students shall be consulted by the Dean and COD to address the issue.
- x. In cases where supervisors do not agree, a consensus will be reached through consultation with the Dean, COD and other experts in the field of student's research.

5. Obligations of CU Management to Make these Guidelines Successful

- i. To facilitate at least two workshops for postgraduate students in the faculty per year.
- ii. To facilitate yearly seminars for supervisors in the Faculty to refresh on handling of postgraduate students.
- iii. Ensure that there are enough qualified supervisors in every discipline and minimize admission of students on part-time mode.

- iv. Develop a written policy on outsourcing of supervisors.
- v. Revise the admission criteria for those who have freshly finished to be given the first priority.
- vi. Help expedite the process of the Ethics Committee at CU where students' proposals often delay.
- vii. Purchase an anti-plagiarism software to help monitor/check plagiarism in students' work.
- viii. To approve the FHSS proposal of actions to be taken by/on postgraduate students who delay in their studies as follows:
 - a) Once the expected period of study expires;
 - i. Students shall write a request for extension of the study period to the BPGS through the COD and the Dean FHSS.
 - ii. Once the one year extension expires, the students will be charged full fees afresh (yearly) until they clear their studies.
 - 1. Masters – after two years for full time students and three years for part time students.
 - 2. PhD – After three years for full time students and five years for part time students.

6. Bibliography

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