

# PG UPDATE

Issue 21

September 2010

## **Aims and Objectives of Research Postgraduate Education**

Research postgraduate education is a main component of the degree programs offered by the University. A set of statements about the aims and objectives of research postgraduate education was endorsed by Senate, at its 99th meeting held on 9 December 2009. The statements provide clearer guidelines for departments and program offices in the design of research degree programs. To view the full content of the statements, please visit [http://www.ust.hk/provost/pg/aims/Aims\\_and\\_Objectives\\_of\\_RPg\\_Education.pdf](http://www.ust.hk/provost/pg/aims/Aims_and_Objectives_of_RPg_Education.pdf).

## **The 2010 Quality Assurance Council Audit**

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) was established under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC) to assist in assuring the quality of student learning through institutional audit processes. Subsequent to audit visits made to CHUK, HKU and BU last year, HKUST was the fourth institution audited by QAC. The audit visit was made in mid-March 2010. University Management worked closely with various academic and supporting units for the visit. The visit was an invaluable exercise for the continuous advancement of quality education of the University. A public report of the audit visit will be released in the latter part of 2010.

## **Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme**

As a measure to attract top-quality doctoral students to come to study in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme was launched during the year by the Research Grants Council (RGC) of Hong Kong. The Fellowship Scheme provides generous awards for out-standing PhD students from all places, local, Mainland and overseas. Awardees will receive a monthly stipend of HKD20,000 for 3 years, plus a conference travel allowance of HKD10,000 a year. For details, please visit <http://www.ust.hk/hkpfjs>. At the time this newsletter is uploaded, HKUST has secured 33 awards out of a total of 118 for the whole of Hong Kong. Among the seven participating institutions, the University has secured the highest number of awards in its first year of recruitment.

## **Membership of Thesis Supervision Committees (TSC)**

The University requires all research students to work under the guidance of a thesis supervision committee when they start their thesis research. TSC serves to ensure the quality of thesis research and would help enhance the learning experiences of research postgraduate students. Previously, a TSC would comprise three members of whom one was the thesis supervisor and also the committee chairman. To allow departments more flexibility in the

formation of TSCs, starting from Fall Semester, 2009/10, the membership for TSC was reduced from three members to two. For details on the change, please refer to Section 9.2 of the Handbook for Research Postgraduate Studies or visit the following

URL: [www.ust.hk/provost/pg/rpghandbook](http://www.ust.hk/provost/pg/rpghandbook).

## English Language Requirement for Admission to Postgraduate Programs

English proficiency is essential to the pursuit of postgraduate studies in Hong Kong. University Senate at its meeting of 19 June 2009 on the recommendation of CPS, had resolved to introduce explicit admission requirements for English Language. Starting from July 2009, all applicants whose first language is not English, and whose previous degree or equivalent qualification obtained was awarded by an institution where the medium of instruction was not English, have to fulfill the following language requirements:

- (a) TOEFL – Paper-based test score of no less than 550; or Internet-based test of no less than 80; OR
- (b) IELTS – an overall score of 6.0 with no sub-score lower than 5.5.

Attainment in other equivalent international English Language Proficiency tests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the PG Admissions Team of ARRO.

The above measure will help to make clearer the English standard required of applicants for PG programs. In turn, this helps to establish a useful threshold of

English Language proficiency for PG students whom the University admits.

## The Versant Test for New Research Postgraduate Students (RPgs)

To help RPgs improve their spoken English, particularly in relation to the discharge of their TA duties where English is used in classroom settings, all full-time RPgs admitted from Fall Semester 2009/10 are required to take the Versant Test at the beginning of their first semester of study at HKUST. The Versant Test is an international test of Spoken English proficiency for non-native English speakers. Each test only lasts for about 10 minutes. Testees may view their test results online within half an hour after taking the test. To learn more about the Versant Test, please visit the following URL: <http://lc.ust.hk/~support/versant>.

Students who are unable to meet the threshold test scores laid down are required to take LANG 500 Foundation in Listening and Speaking for Postgraduate Students, which is an English course designed to help enhance the Spoken English proficiency of PG students. In addition, those students may not participate in TA duties that entail classroom interaction with UG students until they have passed LANG 500.

## New English Language Courses for PG students

To further strengthen language support provided to research postgraduate students (RPgs), the Language Center started offering three new English language courses in 2009/10. LANG 500 Foundation in Listening and Speaking for

Postgraduate Students is a general course in Spoken English suitable for students who have scored below 51 (out of 80) in the Versant Test.

LANG 507 Job-seeking and Workplace English and LANG 508 English for Classroom Facilitation were introduced as optional language courses to help enhance RPs' English skills in different settings. All three new courses will carry 1 credit each. To learn more about these courses, please visit <http://lc.ust.hk>.

### Overseas Research Attachment Awards for PhD Students

This award scheme was launched in 2006/07. Feedback from participating students and faculty has been very encouraging. The overseas experience not only provides students with exposure to a foreign culture and environment which better prepares them for their academic development, but also widens their circle of professional contacts which may help them in their career development. In 2009/10, a total of 11 PhD students were selected by the scheme to go overseas to major research universities worldwide (see table) for a period up to six months each. For the 2010/11 round, VPAA Office will call for nominations in mid-September.

To learn more about this award scheme, please visit the PG website of VPAAO at [https://www.ust.hk/provost/pg/forms\\_stu](https://www.ust.hk/provost/pg/forms_stu). Enquiries should be made to the appropriate School Office.

Below is a list of selected institutions past and current awardees of this scheme have gone to:

Region	Host Institute/ University
United States	Columbia University
	Duke University
	Georgia Institute of Technology
	Harvard University
	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
	Princeton University
	University of California Berkeley
	University of California, Los Angeles
	University of Maryland, College Park
	Canada
Asia	National University of Singapore
	Shinshu University, Japan

### Be Well-Prepared for Teaching Assistant (TA) duties

Full-time research postgraduate students are mostly likely to engage in ancillary duties related to teaching or research. To better equip them to take up the work, when they first arrive, they need to attend a series of workshops organized by the Center for Enhanced Learning and Teaching (CELT), which includes orientation sessions, induction programs, competency enhancement workshops, and departmental briefing sessions with experienced TA coordinators (TAC) in respective departments. To learn about the training sessions that will be offered for Fall Semester 2010/11, please visit <http://celt.ust.hk/ta/news.htm>.

## Introduction of Turnitin

The exponential growth of information on the internet and other online sources has made the issue of promoting originality in academic work more complex. Students are likely tempted to create 'patchwork' pieces of writing without realizing the need to properly cite previous work others have written. Responding to the needs of students, the University has been piloting an originality detection software, called Turnitin, since Fall 2009.

Turnitin (<http://turnitin.com>) is a text-matching software that helps check the originality of a piece of writing and thus can help to reduce plagiarism. It covers over 11 billion pages of web content and articles and 100 million student papers. Starting from Fall Semester 2009/10, workshops on Turnitin will be conducted for postgraduates to orientate them in the use of the software. In academic work, using the words of others without acknowledging the source is an unacceptable behaviour. If you have any questions about Turnitin, please contact CELT at [turnitin@ust.hk](mailto:turnitin@ust.hk).

## Video-Recording for RPg Student Presentation – Aid to polish your presentation skills

If you would like to be better prepared for your thesis examination and research presentation, here comes the good news. "RVC" (Remote Video Capture) is a well-developed video recording service offered by the Publishing Technology Center (PTC) of the University. Every year, hundreds of lecture videos are recorded. PTC is now offering the "RVC" service to all research postgraduate students.

By video-recording their presentations for real or merely for rehearsal purpose, they can use the taped materials to review their performance and improve their presentation skills. Just a few simple booking steps will start you on the service, which is completely FREE of charge! Act now and don't hesitate. More details can be found at <http://publish.ust.hk/remote-capture>.

## RPg Alumni Career Development Survey 2009

HKUST has been striving to provide its students with fruitful and rewarding learning experiences. The University is interested in the career development of its RPg alumni. It values feedback from alumni on the quality as well as the content of the program they experienced at the University. In this connection, a Career Development Survey is conducted at 3-year intervals to collect relevant data and feedback from RPg alumni.

The most recent survey, the second of its kind, was extended to cover both MPhil and PhD alumni. It was conducted between January and April 2009. The information gathered help various offices and academic units of the University work out career planning strategies for RPg students. Members of the University can access the Alumni Career Development Report at the following URL: <https://www.ust.hk/provost/pg/RPgAlumniSurvey>. The report will tell you locations the respondents were working in, employment sector they were in, their income range, and their views on the program of study. These are useful information for both current RPgs, faculty and program administrators.

**=Reminder Corner=****Employment Restrictions for Students Receiving PGS**

Although the Hong Kong Immigration Department has relaxed employment restrictions for non-local students from Summer 2008, RPgs should note that the restrictions imposed on them about taking up paid and unpaid work as stipulated under the Terms and Conditions of Postgraduate Studentships (PGSs) 2010/11 are still valid. The PGS award is provided to ensure that students need not concern themselves with looking for other sources of income to support themselves. Hence, recipients of PGS should devote full efforts to their studies. They are NOT allowed to take up any employment, full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid with the University or any other employers during the academic year. Violation of the above rulings may lead to the immediate termination of their PGS award. For details of the Terms and Conditions of PGS, please visit [https:// www. ust.hk/provost/pg/forms stu/](https://www.ust.hk/provost/pg/forms_stu/).

**Online RPg Annual Progress Reporting**

As a measure to keep track of the study progress of RPgs, students are required to submit through their home department an online annual progress report around May/June every year. In this exercise, feedback on their performance is also provided by their supervisors. Please refer to the ARRO's notice on the submission deadline of the report which was sent to all RPg students in May.

**CPS and Senate Meeting Dates**

CPS and Senate meetings for the new academic year will be held on the following dates:

CPS meets on...	Senate meets on...
Wed, 15 Sept 2010	Tue, 5 Oct 2010
Wed, 17 Nov 2010	Wed, 1 Dec 2010
Wed, 19 Jan 2011	Wed, 16 Feb 2011
Wed, 16 Mar 2011	Tue, 12 April 2011
Wed, 11 May 2011	Wed, 8 June 2011
Fri, 8 July 2011	

**We Care for You**

Life is full of twists and turns. Pursuing PG studies at HKUST may not be as easy as one might think it is. If you are running into difficulties related to your studies or other personal matters, please try your best to share your feelings with someone you trust. If you have no one to talk to, you can make an appointment to talk to one of the University's counselors. For more information, please refer to "Appeals and Grievance Channels" section in *Hand-book for Research Post-graduate Studies*. Alternatively, you may access the URL (<https://sao.ust.hk/counseling>) of Student Life Center of the Student Affairs Office and make a booking to meet with a student counselor.

**COMMENTS WELCOME!**

This newsletter has been prepared by the PG Secretariat, Office of the Provost. Please send us an email at [pgsec@ust.hk](mailto:pgsec@ust.hk) if you have any feedback or suggestions on this newsletter.