

Quality Assurance of Research Postgraduate Education at the University of Hong Kong

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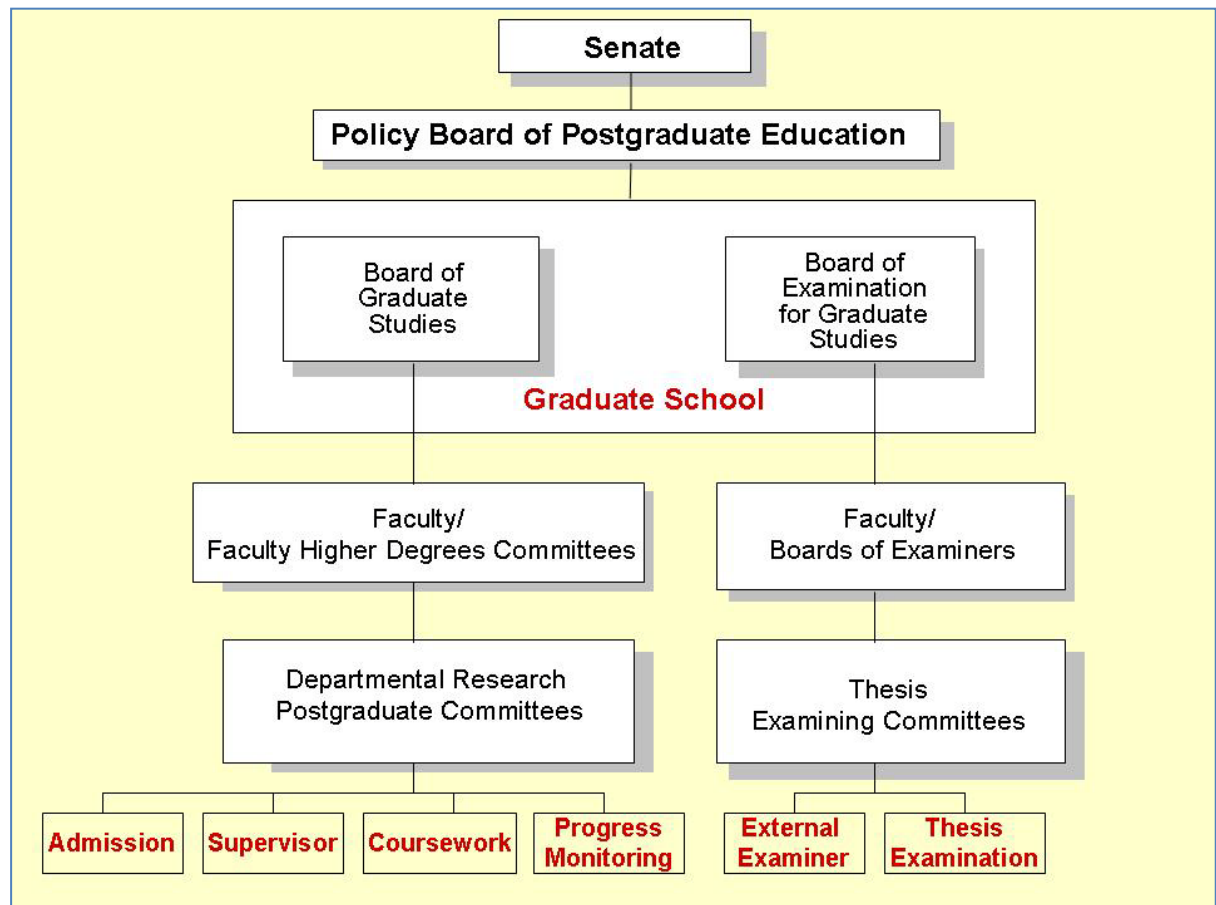
HKU's Mission on Research Postgraduate Education

- To provide First Class research postgraduate education and learning that meets the Highest International Standard



Founded in 1911





RPG Administration (Shared Responsibilities)

- **Students**
- **Supervisors**
- **Departmental Research Postgraduate Committee (DRPC)**
- **Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC)**
- **Graduate School**
- **Board of Graduate Studies (BoGS)**
- **Board of Examination for Graduate Studies (BoEGS)**
- **Policy Board of Postgraduate Education (Policy Board)**

Role of Graduate School

- The Graduate School is responsible for implementing and enforcing policies and practices on research postgraduate education and for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of such policies and practices.

Quality Assurance

- Allocation of RPg places
- Admission of students
- Postgraduate studentships
- Supervision of students
- Assessment of student performance
- Coursework and training
- Thesis examination
- Feedback systems

Allocation of RPg Places

- 80% of RPg places are allocated to Faculties based on student performance (quality of intakes and thesis outputs) and staff research performance.

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Admission of Students

- Clear admission requirements and approval procedures have been established by BoGS to ensure that candidates of high quality are admitted.
- Admission requires approval by BoGS on the recommendation of DRPC and FHDC.
- The Graduate School checks whether admission requirements are met for all admission cases.

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Postgraduate Studentships

- Continued tenure or renewal of a Postgraduate Studentship (PGS) is subject to the student's satisfactory academic progress.
- If academic progress is unsatisfactory, the DRPC can recommend to FHDC that the whole PGS be suspended for initially up to 2 months.

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Supervision of Students

- **Supervision of research students is one of the items to be evaluated in performance review for academic staff**
- **Training workshops on supervisory skills for new supervisors are held by Graduate School and CAUT (Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching).**



Supervision of Students

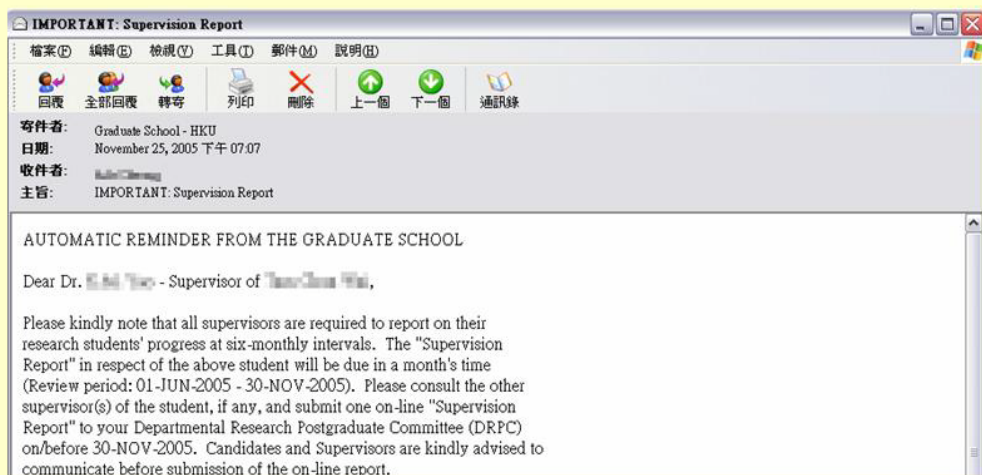
- Supervision of research students is one of the items to be evaluated in performance review for academic staff
- Training workshops on supervisory skills for new supervisors are held by Graduate School and CAUT.
- **Teacher with no previous supervisory experience can only be co-supervisor**
- **Some Faculties establish a supervisory panel for each student to further enhance supervision of students.**

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Assessment of Student Performance

- **6-monthly progress report**
 - completed by student and supervisor on compulsory basis
 - considered by DRPC and FHDC, which monitor the progress of students and deal with study problems



Assessment of Student Performance

- 6-monthly progress report
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- **Faculties report to BoGS on student performance and problem cases regularly.**
- **Student has to go through a probation period within which his/her research ability and study progress are closely monitored.**
- **Student can only continue if assessment is satisfactory.**
- **Qualifying exam before confirmation of candidature are required.**
- **Extension or shortening of probationary period requires approval by FHDC. Extension of candidature needs BoGS' approval.**

Quality Assurance

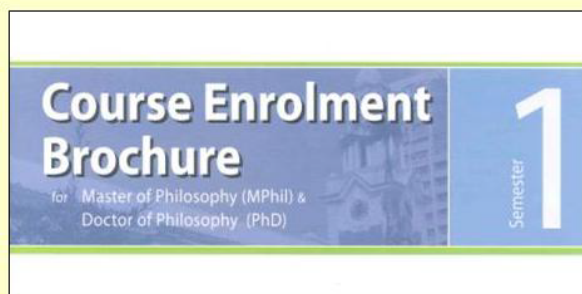
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Coursework

- **All MPhil and 4-year PhD students have to take coursework**
- **Optional for 3-year PhD students**

Types	Objective	No. of Subjects
Offered by the Graduate School	To upgrade students' thesis writing skills and to equip them with basic research skills and methodology	2 compulsory
Offered by Faculties/ Depts	To upgrade students' knowledge in their field	3 to 13 (depending on departmental requirements)

- **On-line course selection: approval by supervisors and DRPC**
- **Course quality monitored by BoGS**



Coursework

Outcomes Based Approach to Student Learning (OBASL)

- The Senate endorsed the action plan for implementation of OBASL in April 2008.
- Development of OBASL framework is in progress and all new courses and existing courses will adopt OBASL by 2012-13.
- All Graduate School courses have already switched to OBASL.
- RPg courses offered by departments will change to OBASL gradually.

Teaching Training

- **A postgraduate studentship holder may be required to undertake, under supervision, duties which carry educational benefits for the holder (up to 100 hours per year).**
- **“Certificate of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education” offered by CAUT**



Other Training

- **Supporting courses and service:**
 - **Cantonese course**
 - **Statistical Advice Centre for Students jointly managed by SSRC and Graduate School**
 - **Graduate Student Writing Support Service**
 - **English enhancement courses (starting in 2009-10)**
- **Conference and travel grant** – provide students with opportunities on international exposure and training
- **Scholarship and awards** – e.g. HKU-Cambridge Hughes Hall Scholarships allow HKU PhD students to receive education at University of Cambridge for one year during their candidature.
- **Exchange programmes** – with overseas universities both at Faculty and University levels (e.g. King's College and Imperial College)
- **Jointly Awarded PhD degree programmes (in preparation)**

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Thesis Examination

Principles: Meet international standards of excellence; examination process is rigorous, fair, appropriately standardized and carried out with integrity

- **Thesis Examining Committee (TEC)**
- **Faculty Board of Examiners**
- **Board of Examinations for Graduate Studies**
- **Random plagiarism check Examiners (mandatory through sampling - Turnitin)**
- **External examiner system: The TEC includes at least one external examiner, usually overseas expert in the specialized field of the thesis, to be appointed by the Faculty.**

Thesis Examination

Monitoring of thesis quality

- The examiners and TEC are required to rate RPg thesis quality.
- For the period Sep 2005 to Aug 2008, a majority of the thesis are graded 'Excellent (36.9%)' and 'Very good (33.9%)'.

Thesis Ratings
Outstanding (Top 5%)
Excellent (Top 10%)
Very Good (Top 25%)
Good (Top 50%)
Pass
Fail

Quality Assurance

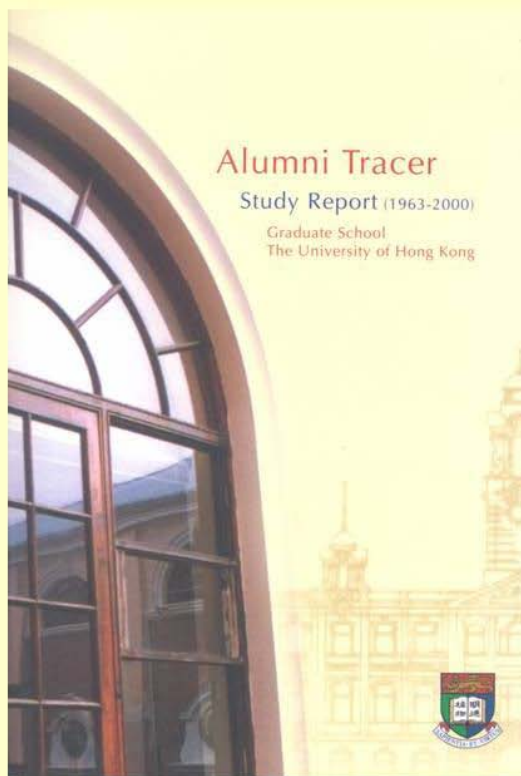
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**** Feedback Processes ****

- **BoGS (Admission, Supervisors, Course Evaluation, Progress Monitoring, Coursework)**
- **BoEGS (External Examiners, Thesis Examination)**
- **Collection and Analysis of RPg Statistics**
- **Exit Survey**
- **Alumni Tracer Study**
- **Graduate Employment Survey (Higher Degrees) (Careers Education and Placement Centre)**
- **Staff-RPg Student Consultative Committee at both Graduate School and Departmental levels**
- **Graduate School Dean's Forum with RPg students**
- **Vice-Chancellor's meeting with RPg and TPg students**
- **Graduate School Dean & Associate Deans' Meetings with FHDC and DPRC**

Information collected from the studies/surveys/meetings will be conveyed to and considered by relevant departments/offices for future improvement.

Alumni Tracer Study

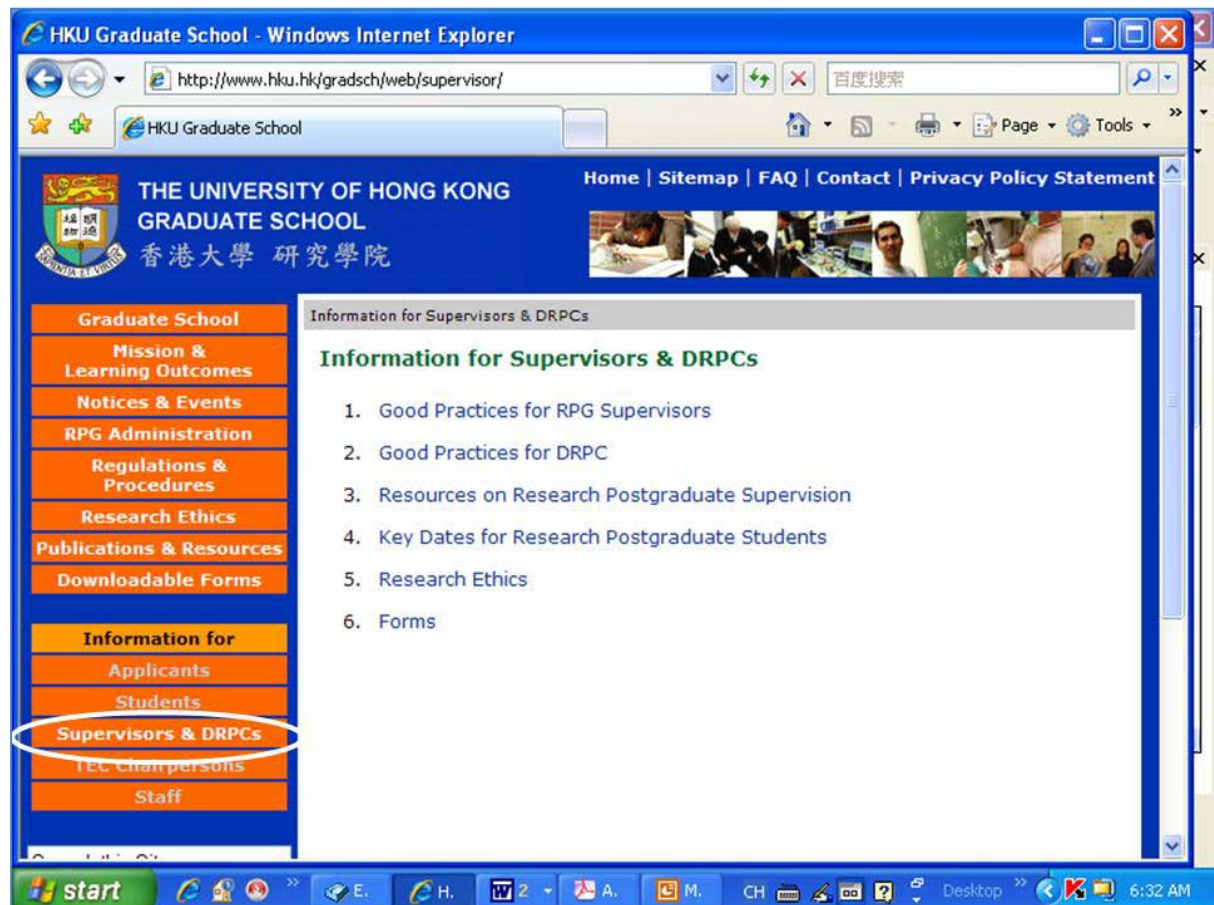


Other Communication Channels

- Graduate School orientation programme for new students
- Departmental induction programme for new students
- Graduate School website, handbooks, newsletters and other publications
- Websites and publications of individual faculties and departments

Good Practices

- **Guidance**
 - Good Practices for Research Postgraduate Students
 - Good Practices for Supervisors
 - Good Practices for Departmental Research Postgraduate Committee (DRPC)



Encouragement

- **Outstanding Research Student Supervisor Awards**
- **Li Ka Shing Prizes**
- **Outstanding Research Postgraduate Student Awards**
- **University Postgraduate Fellowships**

External Reference Points

- External examiners
- Regular meetings and communication with Deans and Directors of Graduate Schools of overseas institutions (e.g. U21 DDOGS, Council of Graduate Schools conference in the US)
- PG Administrators' Circle among local institutions

Outcomes and Accomplishments

- Admitting Better Students
- Better Completion Time
- Maintaining Good Quality Output (*theses and research papers*)
- Better Research Community (*seminars and conferences by departments and faculties*)

Improvements

Admission year	2000-01	2004-05	2008-09
No. of Applications	1,791	3,473	3,378
Application Success Rate	23.8%	14.4%	18.8%
Admissions of students with 2 nd A or above	81.3%	85.8%	84.2%

Improvements

Academic year	1997-98	2002-03	2007-08
Completion Time (year)			
MPhil – Full-time	3.46	2.22	2.02
Part-time	4.82	3.01	2.69
PhD – Full-time	4.55	3.76	3.73
Part-time	5.52	5.03	4.73
Attrition Rate	6.1%	2.8%	3.4%

Improvements

Publications

Year	2000-01	2003-04	2006-07
Scholarly books, monographs & chapters	9.80	17.18	21.32
Journal publications	90.21	179.46	239.60
Conference papers	158.53	264.11	345.41
Total	258.54	460.75	606.33