

# CUHAS POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

*"Supervision is an opportunity to bring someone back to their own mind, to show them how good they can be"*

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and Innovations

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Studies

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# **CUHAS POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SUPERVISION GUIDELINES**

## **1. PREAMBLE**

The Strategic Plan (2016/17-2020/21) of the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences (CUHAS) highlights the importance of fostering a culture of research at all levels of the studies leading to the production and publication of high quality research work geared towards the betterment of the community we serve and for the creation of local and global knowledge.

The aim of this document is to clarify the role and responsibilities of supervisors and students at CUHAS, with reference to institutional policies, the CUHAS 2017-2021 Strategic Plan and the CUHAS Research Policy. The guidelines provide an overview of the postgraduate education at CUHAS, describe the postgraduate lifecycle and the relationships between supervisors and supervisees. They will guide the academic staff involved as postgraduates' supervisors and the students who embark on a postgraduate cycle and the students embarking on their elective undergraduate researches.

## **2. THE POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME AT CUHAS**

At CUHAS, research at higher degrees' level is viewed as an essential training for future academics and researchers. CUHAS therefore privileges a research-oriented curriculum to provide a foundation for applied research. Preference is given to research related to national priorities. The Directorate of Research and Innovations has the responsibility of promoting, monitoring and reporting research activities at the University through its Ethics and Review Committee. It calls for research proposals, scrutinizes them, recommends allocation of funds for proposals that meet the criteria set by the University. It also scrutinizes the ethical aspects of the research proposals that are to be conducted under the umbrella of the University.

CUHAS offers a doctoral degree and a variety of master's degrees, which may require slightly different styles and intensities of supervision. In the light of CUHAS Strategic Plan's emphasis on the expansion of graduate education at Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and PhD level, a School of Graduate Studies (SGS) was established with the mandate to support schools, institutes and departments in the provision of graduate programmes. A Higher Degree Committee (HDC) oversees the higher degrees training and scrutinizes scientific merits of the higher degrees proposals, the academic qualifications of the supervisors and recommends to the Senate all issues pertaining to higher degrees for approval.

The Master's programmes are designed primarily as a training course by the means of which the Student will: -

- i. Acquire new knowledge, skills and techniques.
- ii. Be exposed to the fundamentals of research.
- iii. Learn how to present the results of research in a scholarly manner.
- iv. Make some important contribution to knowledge even though it may not be original.
- v. Because he/she lacks previous research experience, the Master's student requires close and careful supervision at all times, but more so during the early stages of learning the research techniques and when presenting the results of research in a scholarly manner.

The PhD programme is the recognition of a successful postgraduate research experience. Here, the supervisor should recognize that the student had already acquired some training experience in research when he/she underwent a Master's programme. What is expected of the PhD student is thus far more advanced than what has been outlined above for the Master's student. Here the supervisor expects the student to: -

- i. Make a distinct contribution to new knowledge of facts and/or theory.
- ii. Produce considerably more original work than required for the Master's programme.
- iii. Manifest great depth and breadth in his/her review of the relevant literature.
- iv. Be critical in his/her analysis of the data he/she has collected.
- v. Exercise initiative in his/her research than for the Master's degree research Student.
- vi. After the first or second year, the PhD student should be able to work independently and to be guided rather than directed by his/her Supervisor.
- vii. A PhD graduate should then become competent to supervise and evaluate the research of others in the area of specialisation.

#### *PhD and Masters' cycles.*

The sequence of all the steps which constitute the pursuit of a Master or a PhD determines a series of processes, each with its respective responsibility in term of support, supervision and environment. Broadly, the cycle can be divided into three major phases:

- The outset of postgraduate research entails admission and registration, supervision assignment, seeking for resources and support, completion of a research proposal and agreement on a topic of research, the ethical approval.
- The actual conduct of postgraduate research entails the formulation of a research work plan and timeline, the compilation of periodical research reports, the preparation of the thesis or articles to publish.
- The final stages of postgraduate research entail the submission of the thesis, the examination process and defence.

For Master's courses, the cycle follows the academic calendar as described in the yearly almanac. For PhD degrees, the cycle may begin and end at any time.

### **3. INTRODUCTION TO SUPERVISION**

Supervision is a specialised form of teaching, which is considered of paramount importance in the shaping of new researchers and the personal growth of mentors and supervisors at CUHAS. It is closely related to the three phases of the research cycle described above. At the outset of the process, the supervision aims at ensuring that the partnership is right between the parties. For the advantage of all parties, it is recommended that the student and supervisor give each other a trial period to get to know each other, define their mutual expectations and the modalities of their collaboration and observe if expectations of both parties can be fulfilled. Therefore, it is paramount to achieve harmony between a supervisor and his/her supervisee. For this to happen, communication, negotiation and a certain degree of compromise are essential; both parties should work in a climate of trust and mutual respect. During the momentum of the research project, the supervision will ensure regular writing of reports and promote regular contacts between the parties with precise feedback. This longer step should be motivating for all involved and should also aim at resolving crises if they occur. In the final stages, the supervision should broaden to involve an interest for the prospects of the student and ensure the quality of the final product. In conclusion, the role of a supervisor is one of guiding and directing but also moderating all along the partnership.

Though not detailed here, the supervision of undergraduate projects should be based on similar principles of trust and communication.

#### 4. QUALIFICATIONS AND CHOICE OF SUPERVISORS

Every student who undertakes postgraduate research studies will be assigned a main supervisor and one or more co-supervisor(s) who are specialists in the field of study. However, the student-supervisor contract is often determined during the preliminary discussion period. This agreement can then later be formalized in the registration process. The student is often dependent on his/ her supervisor(s), for the success of the research project. The supervisor, on the other hand, will gain a great benefit from a competent and efficient student, who represents an important driving force in the research work. A student should identify at least two supervisors based on the specialty in which the student will conduct the research. The School of Graduate Studies retains the right to assign a different supervisor to the one selected if the need arises.

##### *Criteria for selection and approval process:*

The quality of the research work achieved in the pursuit of higher degrees greatly depends on the relationship between the student and his/her supervisor. The supervisor is the main source of guidance in all the steps of the research work from proposal preparation to the final compilation of the research report or the publication of a peer-reviewed article

- a. For purpose of quality assurance, in case of PhD supervision the main supervisor must be a PhD holder with a rank of Senior Lecturer and above who is an expert in the field. The co-supervisor should be a PhD holder with at least 1 year Post-doc experience in the research area
- b. For quality assurance in case of a Master's degree, the main supervisor must be at least a Lecturer with 3 years' experience in the research topic. The co-supervisor should have demonstrated a special expertise in the specific field of research and have at least 1 year experience in the research field with at least one publication in the relevant field.
- c. To ensure that the students are adequately supervised, the Departments should limit the number of students a single staff member can supervise at a time.
- d. The staff member supervision responsibilities should be taken into consideration by the Head of Department when assigning the teaching load.

While in co-supervision, the maximum number of students per supervisor should be 5. However, for PhD degrees, where it is shown that the supervisor has formed a strong research group and possesses sufficient resources, the number of students under his/her supervision may be increased. Co-supervision of students should be encouraged. Supervision will end when the student will have submitted the dissertation/thesis for examination and received and incorporated final corrections.

## **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORS & STUDENTS**

### **A. Roles & Responsibilities of the Supervisor**

The supervisor is the University's agent in ensuring that: -

- i. Higher degree students are maintaining satisfactory progress.
- ii. The students receive adequate advice and encouragement on the coursework and thesis / dissertation research project.
- iii. The work being done on the thesis/dissertation is reviewed critically and on a continuous basis since the very start of the partnership.

#### ***5.1. At the outset of the postgraduate research:***

- 5.1.1. The supervisor should know the respective research expectations for a Master's programme and a PhD programme.
- 5.1.2. Since the supervisor is the agent of the University, ensuring that the student's work attains a satisfactory standard, he/she has the duty to acquaint himself/herself with all the University's Higher Degree Regulations.
- 5.1.3. A positive attitude and relationship between the supervisor and the student is essential in order to:
  - i. Ensure that the student completes his/her studies successfully.
  - ii. Be able to identify difficulties which may arise in the preliminary processes of the research early enough to avoid unnecessary frustrations for the student.
- 5.1.4. The supervisor also has the responsibility to assess his/ her student ability to undertake the proposed research.
- 5.1.5. The supervisor should become familiar with the student's background, needs, expectations and constraints.

- 5.1.6 The supervisor has the responsibility of assisting the higher degree student in the formulation of an appropriate professional research development plan, including training which might be necessary (e.g. academic writing, computer skills, research methodology, etc.).
- 5.1.7 The supervisor must assist the student to arrive at an appropriate formulation of the identified research topic and assist him/her to prepare a research proposal, following the format recommended by the University.
- 5.1.8 The supervisor should encourage the student towards relevant reading and guide him/her to develop a set of research questions.
- 5.1.9 The supervisor should assist the student to finalise the proposal and its presentation for ethical review. At this stage, the supervisor should be convinced that the student has a sound conceptual grasp of the topic under research and its context.
- 5.1.10 The supervisor should make sure that the student has a basic understanding of research ethics and a knowledge of possible ethical issues related to his/her research.
- 5.1.11 The supervisor must sign the copy of the research proposal presented for ethical review to signify its approval of the work.
- 5.1.12 The supervisor has the responsibility to focus ahead and to see the potential and limitations of the research problem before the student goes too far in the research work.
- 5.1.13 The supervisor should assist the student to formulate a plan for supervision, setting up a regular schedule for meetings, reporting periods, including a provision for unplanned absences that may occur.
- 5.1.14 The supervisor may advise the student on ways to ensure funding for his/her research.

## ***5.2. During the conduct of the Research:***

- 5.2.1. Generally, the supervisor should be accessible to the student, as per arranged schedule and be flexible if need arises. Additional informal meetings may be organized. Each meeting should be reported in the ***Postgraduate Supervision Tracking Form*** available online. The form summarises the feedback given by the supervisor and the conclusions reached in the meetings. At least one monthly consultation should be reported in the forms.

- 5.2.2. In providing feed-back, the supervisor should acknowledge strong points, identify the problem areas and make suggestions for improvement. Those should be reported in the *Postgraduate Supervision Tracking Form*. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to communicate to the Student any inadequate progress or any sub-standard quality of work.
- 5.2.3. Where an external supervisor is involved, accessibility should be planned carefully so as to ensure that adequate contact time is provided.
- 5.2.4. It is suggested that if the student's main supervisor should be away from the University for more than three consecutive months, an acting supervisor should be appointed.
- 5.2.5. The supervisor should be capable of spotting whether the student will get meaningful data over the period assigned for the research and re-direct the scope of the research.
- 5.2.6. The supervisor should guide the student in assessing knowledge gaps and identifying short courses/programmes which could be of assistance.
- 5.2.7. The supervisor has responsibility to monitor the student's progress throughout the research period. There are various methods through which he/ she can be kept in close touch with the student's research progress:
  - a. Demanding the student to submit periodic reports about his/her research findings. The reports may well constitute drafts of the final dissertation/thesis. In reviewing them, the supervisor shall take the opportunity to advise the student on matters of the presentation and if necessary, to give suggestions where modifications are required. The supervisor shall also have the responsibility to ensure that student submit to the School of Graduate Studies (SGD) Directorate a progress report every six months.
  - b. The supervisor shall use those reports as a basis for writing his own report to the Higher Degrees Committee on the student's research progress and the basis for recommending the upgrading of the student's registration from the Master's to PhD programme, or if need be recommending him/her for discontinuation from studies.

- c. Encouraging the student to organize seminar presentations. Seminar presentations by the student to the relevant Department/Panel about his/her research work give him/her an opportunity to think more critically about his/her work, and is also a unique opportunity of being criticized by others while standing on his/her own.

### ***5.3. At the final stages of the Research***

- 5.3.1. The supervisor has the responsibility of guiding the student in his/her thesis/dissertation writing. Here it should be emphasized that although the writing of the thesis/dissertation is entirely the responsibility of the higher degree student, it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the student submits a thesis of a standard which is acceptable for the degree for which it is intended.
- 5.3.2. The supervisor should therefore be accessible, should show interest and enthusiasm in the student's research works and should have a positive and friendly relationship with the student.
- 5.3.3. The supervisor should read and discuss the dissertation/thesis drafts with the student all along the writing process. To save the student's time, the supervisor should undertake to meet the student and to discuss his/her dissertation/thesis draft within two weeks of receiving the manuscript.
- 5.3.4. The supervisor should read the student's drafts carefully and critically, giving constructive suggestions on how and where the dissertation/thesis could be improved.
- 5.3.5. The supervisor should advise the student on the appropriate format to present the body of research investigated by the student, including illustrations, appendices, graphs, etc.
- 5.3.6. In the end, the supervisor should read the entire final draft and satisfy himself/thesis himself/herself that the dissertation/thesis is ready for examination.
- 5.3.7. The supervisor may exercise his/her duty to refuse to sign the submission of a work that he/she believes is sub-standard.
- 5.3.8. The supervisor should make sure that errors of spelling and language have been corrected, the table of content and numbering order are correct, the referencing complies with guidelines and the necessary appendices have been attached.

- 5.3.9. The supervisor has the responsibility of recommending to the Head of the Department/Faculty/Institute, potential External Examiners for the Students' dissertation/thesis.
- 5.3.10. The supervisor has the responsibility of guiding the student in the revision of the dissertation/thesis if such revisions are recommended by the External or Examiners.
- 5.3.11. The supervisor must support the student in preparing for any oral examination
- 5.3.12. The supervisor must submit a non-evaluative *Supervisor's Report* in line with the SGS guidelines.
- 5.3.13. The supervisor should discuss the generation of a publication(s) from the research and assist the student in the steps for publication.

It is also suggested that, to have uniformity in the information brought in by supervisors to the postgraduate studies committee on their postgraduate student's research progress, the use of a standard progress report form for higher degree research students be used. Information provided shall be used by the SGS to report student's progress to their Sponsors and/or employer when requested to do so.

## **B. Roles & Responsibilities of the Student**

### ***5.4. At the outset of the postgraduate research:***

- 5.4.1. It is the responsibility of the student to be conversant with all the Higher Degrees' regulations and guidelines and to abide by them.
- 5.4.2. Though the selection and appointment of a supervisor is ultimately the University's responsibility (via its Higher Degree Committee), the student should play a role in the choice and acceptance of his/her Supervisor and report to the relevant authorities any breach in the expectations from the partnership.
- 5.4.3. The student should comply with the dates, processes and documentation required for registration for a higher degree.
- 5.4.4. The student, in discussion with the supervisor, should refine a research topic and start developing a proposal.
- 5.4.5. The student should take responsibility for developing a research plan for his/her research education if need arises.
- 5.4.6. Once the proposal is ready for submission for ethical clearance, the student should make sure to obtain the signature of all supervisors prior to submission.

- 5.4.7. The student should become familiar with all the services offered by the University, such as Library, and start collecting information on his/her research subject.
- 5.4.8. The student should be pro-active and seek contact with his/her supervisor, informing his/her supervisor about the stages of his/her work.
- 5.4.9. It is the student's responsibility to keep the *Postgraduate Supervision Tracking Forms*, compiled at each meeting with a supervisor, and produce this form at each supervision meeting. The form will be used from the first meeting onward.
- 5.4.10. The student should be committed to the research and plan sufficient time to complete a thesis or a project, including time for gaining sufficient background and skills in the research area before initiating the study, time to undertake field work, and time to produce a thorough manuscript.

### **5.5. During the conduct of the Research:**

- 5.5.1. The student is expected to maintain regular contact with his/her supervisor and inform him/her about progress but also about factors which cause delays, interruptions or problems.
- 5.5.2. The student should seek clarity on any aspect of uncertainty with the supervisor but is expected to take initiative in his/her research.
- 5.5.3. All students are expected to adhere to ethical standards in undertaking research and follow the protocols in use in Tanzania.
- 5.5.4. All students are expected to attribute other work to their respective authors and quote references accordingly avoiding plagiarism.
- 5.5.5. It is the student's responsibility to discuss problems stemming from his/her research with his/her supervisor(s) and Head of Department.
- 5.5.6. It is the student's responsibility to write and submit to supervisor(s) progress reports on time as stipulated in the regulations, to keep all supervision tracking forms and forward copies to the SGS.
- 5.5.7. It is the student's responsibility to start writing drafts early on and submit preliminary chapters or sections to his/her supervisor for review. This can be based on an agreed timeframe.
- 5.5.8. The student should incorporate comments made by his/her supervisor and agreed upon during the supervision meetings.

5.5.9. The student should participate to any activity organised by the University as determined by the supervisor or relevant authorities, e.g. Seminars, workshops, symposia and conferences.

**5.6. *At the final stages of the Research:***

5.6.1. It is the student's responsibility to complete his/her research on schedule and to write up the thesis/dissertation as stipulated in the general guidelines.

5.6.2. The student should discuss with his/her supervisor if the dissertation is ready for submission and attend to all revisions recommended by the supervisor.

5.6.3. It is the responsibility of the student to write the bulk of the dissertation though the supervisor's role is to assist with the content, form, structure and the development of the research argument.

5.6.4. It is the responsibility of the students to keep track of administrative matters concerning the dissertation submission (timelines, fees, exams' planning, etc.)

5.6.5. It is the responsibility of the student to submit copies of the dissertation or thesis in line with CUHAS examination policy.

5.6.6. The students should comply with the corrections, revisions and extensions recommended by the examiners and re-submit the document in line with the time line prescribed by the CUHAS examination policy.

5.6.7. The student should produce a final bound hard copy and an electronic copy of his/her thesis/dissertation to the CUHAS Library before graduation.

5.6.8. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that subsequent publications from a thesis/dissertation submitted for a degree of CUHAS must contain a statement that the work is based on a thesis or a dissertation submitted for a degree of the CUHAS

## **6 CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

While supervising a higher degree student, a situation may crop up whereby one or more of the following relationships develops:

- i) Breakdown in communication between the supervisor and the student.
- ii) Personal clashes and conflicts between the supervisor and the student.
- iii) Hostile relationship between the supervisor and the student.
- iv) Refusal of the student to follow the supervisor's advice.

When such a situation occurs, it is recommended that both the supervisor and the student report the problem in writing to the Head of the Department/Dean of the School. The Head should study the nature of the problem and recommend to the School and subsequently to the Higher Degree Committee for one of the following actions:

- a. The student be warned in writing, about his/her weakness (if it is established that he/she is the cause of the problem);
- b. The student be transferred to another Department (Where possible and where necessary);
- c. The supervisor be told/warned of his/her weakness (if it is established that he/she is the cause of the problem), but continue to supervise the student;
- d. A new supervisor be appointed to guide the student (if the Head is convinced that this would be the best solution);
- e. A small advisory panel be established by the Head of the Department to guide the student if there is no other single person in the Department who has the expertise to supervise the student;
- f. Any other reasonable action, including discontinuation of the student.

Nevertheless, the authority for the appointment of supervisors rests with the senate of CUHAS, through the Board of the SGS. The supervisor(s) may be changed with the permission of the SGS.

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