



The Graduate School Newsletter

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Research Grants for Research Students

“Applicants are required to provide an itemized budget, with justification, for the expenditures proposed..”

Applications are invited for the November round of allocations from the *Research Student Support Fund*. All research students within their minimum period of study, whether full-time or part-time, are eligible to apply for a grant to help them cover part of the costs incurred in their research. These grants will not, however, exceed \$4,400 in total during 1998-99. Students who applied in March 1998 are not eligible to apply again, since no student may receive a grant more than once in any 12 month period.

Applicants are required to provide an itemized budget, with justification, for the expenditure proposed and applications must be endorsed by the supervisor and head of department.

There are limitations on the purposes of the grants and the manner in which expenditure will be approved e.g. the grants may not be used to meet expenses incurred in attending international conferences, and all requests for expenditure must be made on departmental draft purchase order. The total sum which may be held in the budget at any one time must not exceed \$4,400, and students who have money left in their account from previous years (as at October 31st 1998) will only have the balance made up to \$4,400. Please note that the Finance Office will need



a minimum of 14 working days to process any expenditure request. All unspent balances in grant accounts will be automatically cancelled on the expiry of a candidate's minimum period of study, their completion of candidature or their withdrawal from study - whichever occurs earliest.

Application forms and their accompanying explanatory notes (which include an example of how to present a budget and its justification) have been distributed to departmental and faculty offices and are also available from the Graduate School Office. Please read the explanatory notes carefully.

The application forms are also available on the School's home page at




<http://www.hku.hk/research>

The closing date for applications is:
Friday, November 20th.

Late applications will not be accepted.

The Curator
Hung On-To Memorial Library

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The Forum



Miss Ester van Steekelenburg, a PhD candidate in the Department of Real Estate and Construction, tells you in first person the hints and tips on how to realise your study goals....

Why Pursuing PhD: Expectations and Realities Ups and Downs in the PhD Process

When I started here at HKU as a full time PhD student I was full of expectations, hundreds of thoughts spinning through my mind. I felt privileged that I had a chance to spend a period of three years concentrating on one particular subject, getting to know it inside out. Where in today's fast moving world would you ever get a chance like that? Well I was given such a chance; when my proposal was accepted and I felt ready to dive into the library and to devour anything there was available on the subject.

Soon I found out that my view was somewhat idealistic. The first month of my intellectual challenge was spent on battling for working space, a computer, attention of my supervisor and access to the sports center and library. Around me everyone was very much focused on their own research. When I heard my fellow postgraduates talking about their first drafts and I saw what they had accomplished over the years I witnessed it as an enormous achievement and I felt no inspiring motivation but discouragement. My aspirations were brought back to level zero: how could I ever face this work load, establish a good relationship with my supervisor and colleges and come as far as they'd got.

Then I made myself realize that there was only one person who had to do the job and that was me and what followed after was a period of pleasure and discovery: I pictured myself writing a brilliant thesis. I enjoyed reading materials, spending hours in databases, going on field trips and attending the Graduate School workshops. I realized a supervisor is actually there to help you and give directions in the search for information and data collection. He is someone you can throw your ideas at, often ending in lengthy but inspiring discussions motivating you to go back to your collection of materials and study those again and again....

Off course there had to come an end to this period. I discovered that doing a PhD was a very individual thing. There was no one waiting for my reports in the morning, there were no deadlines to meet and the submission date for the thesis was still very far away. There was little incentive to work and self motivation was on a low level. No-one in the department seemed to be bothered, I felt isolated, feed back from my supervisor and peers raised more questions than answers and all the 'brilliant' ideas that I came up with had been thought of by someone else. Instead of narrowing down I was floating in a sea of data from one subject to another in the hope to come up with something original.

Attending a conference to present a paper brought back the motivation. It forced me to write down my research progress and define the purpose and the goal of my research. When presenting the paper, for half an hour I had the full attention of an audience of experts. It was a difficult and nerve-racking task but the questions and comments that were raised helped me very much in the focus of my research. This was different than the usual feed back and made consider things that I'd otherwise not thought of. The flame that had died a little was burning alive again.

I am now in the phase of writing up the actual thesis, but encouraged by the rewarding experience of the last paper, I'm now trying to put together another paper with my supervisor. It helps me to narrow down and structure the thinking process. I've recognized that PhD is process of many little steps and seldom of big leaps, but with one step taken at the time I should be able to eventually finish the thesis and in the meantime enjoy an interesting and meaningful learning process.

"Then I made myself realize that there was only one person who had to do the job and that was me..."



**You must
apply early:
courses
will be
cancelled
if
there are
no applicants
by 5 pm
on the
closing
dates.**

The Induction Programme 1998

The Induction Programme was held on Saturday, the morning of September 26, 1998 in Lecture Theatre 7, Meng Wah Complex. More than 100 students and staff attended the Programme.

Professor Howell Tong, our Interim Dean, opened the Programme by introducing the Graduate School's services as well as support to students. Heads of the University's service centres/units spoke on their facilities and also participated in the panel display at the Information Fair.

The Programme was well-received. Many students were pleased to have the opportunity to meet students and teachers from other faculties and to learn about our various training programmes in thesis writing, statistical research skills, and transferable skills.

To remind students of where we are, the Graduate School office is located in the Eliot Hall (see photo below), and open to all research students. All the course brochures are displayed and for dispatch in the School Office. We also have a small library. All books are available for loan (maximum four weeks), and some weekly/daily and local/overseas academic journals are for consultation.



Eliot Hall
the home of The Graduate School
(the Chong Yuet Ming Amenities Centre
is in the foreground)

Graduate School Courses

Since the beginning of the first semester, the School has run a total of 13 courses in the use of computer, teaching skills, English writing and oral skills, and statistical methods. All courses were oversubscribed.

Web Publishing - Design and Creation

A new course in Internet technology, which aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to create a Web site.

You will develop an overall design plan for your Web documents that will help identify target audiences, as well as define goals for putting information on the Web, design the style of Web pages, apply design rules and guidelines, and learn about tools or resources that may be needed to continue developing the Web site. You will also begin creating your own home and Web pages.

*Dates: November 17, 18 & 19, 1998
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday*

Time: 9:30 am - 4:30 pm

CLOSING DATE: Friday November 6

Teaching and Learning

Can you explain that?

Explaining is defined as giving understanding to someone else. Whether we give explanations in lectures or laboratory demonstrations, explaining is at the core of the teaching and learning process. The purpose of this session is to help you identify the underlying components of effective explanations so that you can apply these principles to your own teaching context.

Date: Wednesday, January 13, 1999

Time: 10 am - 12 pm

CLOSING DATE: Tuesday, January 5



Thesis Writing

The English Centre will be running the second series of six three-hour workshops designed to help postgraduate students realize the demands of thesis writing.

The workshops focus on such aspects of writing as how to make the purpose of the research clear to an appropriate audience, how to organize ideas coherently, how to place one's own research within the present field of knowledge, and how to use language effectively and appropriately.

Dates: January 18, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30

Time: Monday and Thursday 4 - 7 pm

Saturday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

CLOSING DATE: Wednesday January 6

Oral English for Academic Purposes

The course will concentrate on the oral interaction skills required for successful communication within the academic community, with an emphasis on a seminar presentation and participation and will also cover skills needed to lead tutorials in English and to communicate with academics in a more informal setting.

Dates: January 18, 22, 25, 29

February 1, 5, 8, 12

Time: Monday and Friday

9:30 am - 12:30 pm

CLOSING DATE: Wednesday January 6

The School will run another two rounds of *Thesis Writing Workshop* (March, May/June 1999), three rounds of *Transferable Skills Programme* (March/April), and two rounds of the *Computer Induction Programme* (Jan./Feb., and April 1999).

Courses are advertised through the *Newsletter*. Poster and course leaflets are available for dispatch in the Departmental and Faculty offices, the School office and on the School home page in the Internet. (<http://www.hku.hk/research>). Please apply well before all deadlines.

Announcements

Hung Hing Ying Scholarships 1998/99

Two scholarships of the value of HK\$15,000 per annum each are available for award to M.Phil. or Ph.D students in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Computer Studies who have completed the first 12 months of their period of postgraduate study, but who have not exceeded their minimum period of study either.

Applications are to be made on forms obtainable from the Academic Services Enquiry Office, Room UG-05, Upper Ground Floor, Knowles Building, and they should be completed and submitted to Miss Cordelia Chan, Secretary, Board of Academic Awards, Registry, through the relevant Head of Department by no later than November 13, 1998.

RGC Postgraduate Student Conference/Seminar Grants 1998/99

This scheme is intended to support and promote inter-institutional and interdisciplinary contacts among postgraduate students of the UGC-funded institutions and to provide opportunities for postgraduate students of these institutions to meet and interact with eminent scholars outside Hong Kong.

A postgraduate student body should be involved either as the organizer or as a primary partner of the proposed conference/seminar, and the conference/seminar should be open to all postgraduate students in the UGC-funded sector.

Applicants will be accepted all year round, provided they are submitted through a UGC-funded institution, and applications should be made using the prescribed form (pgsconfm.doc) which is downloadable from the RGC homepage "<<http://www.ugc.edu.hk/RGC>>" under "RGC Forms".

Completed application forms should be sent in the first instance to: Mrs. Wendy Ma, Research Services Section, Registry, 9/F, Knowles Building. Tel.: 2859-2443.

