



Faculty Higher Degrees Committee

General Guidelines on Supervision of Research Postgraduate Students

Faculty members who are eligible to serve as supervisors of Research Postgraduate (RPg) students are invited to note the following guidelines when recommending students for admission. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the regulations and procedures for the degrees of MPhil/PhD and the “Good Practices for Supervisors” published in the Graduate School Handbook for MPhil & PhD Programmes (http://intraweb.hku.hk/reserved_1/gradsch/19/gshdbk1920.pdf)

1. Maximum number of RPg students

For professoriate staff members serving as principal supervisors:

- (i) The recommended maximum student to supervisor ratio for professoriate staff is 6 students to 1 principal supervisor.
- (ii) In considering recommendations for admission of RPg students under the Faculty Type B pool, the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC) will consider the number of students currently being supervised by the prospective supervisor, minus the number of current students who are expected to graduate within one year (based on the expiry date of students’ study period). If the net total number of students is equal to or greater than 6, the FHDC normally would not allocate any additional student to the supervisor concerned under the Faculty’s Type B quota. The FHDC may ask the supervisor or the Departmental Research Postgraduate Committee (DRPC) concerned to nominate another suitable supervisor.
- (iii) However, if a professoriate staff member has been allocated an RPg quota directly from the University (e.g. HKPF/UPF/HKU-PS, Central Pool places, places for Outstanding Young Researcher, Outstanding Research Postgraduate Student Supervisor, Strategic Research Themes, Areas of Excellence, Theme-based Research Scheme, etc.), he/she would not be subject to maximum quota mentioned in (ii) above.

For Research Assistant Professors serving as principal supervisors:

- (i) Given that the normal duration of the contracts of RAPs is usually 2-3 years, the recommended maximum student to supervisor ratio for RAPs is 2 students to 1 principal supervisor, and they will only be allowed to supervise MPhil students.



- (ii) To ensure that structured supervision is provided to RPg students without interruption, at least one co-supervisor, who should be a Full-time Teacher of the University with RPg supervision experience, must be appointed in cases where the principal supervisor is an RAP.

2. New supervisors

- (i) For new supervisors without previous RPg supervision experience, i.e. having at least one RPg student graduated under their supervision (as the principal supervisor), at least one co-supervisor, who should be a Full-time Teacher of the University with RPg supervision experience, must be appointed for joint supervision of their students.
- (ii) For new staff of the Faculty, their supervision experience at their previous institutions would also be taken into consideration.
- (iii) The FHDC would, as far as practicable, give priority to new staff members for the admission of their first RPg student.

3. Eligibility of supervisors

- (i) Supervisors who have a research higher degree (e.g. PhD/MD/MS) may supervise both MPhil or PhD students.
- (ii) Supervisors who do not have a research higher degree may only supervise MPhil students.

4. Special circumstances/Supervisors for students transferring from MPhil to PhD

- (i) Applications for transfer from MPhil to PhD of students whose principal supervisors do not have a research higher degree will not be considered by the FHDC, unless a new principal supervisor with a research higher degree is arranged for the student.
- (ii) If an MPhil student of an RAP is qualified and approved by FHDC to transfer his/her candidature to PhD, the supervisor concerned may be allowed to continue their principal supervision of the student, subject to consideration by the FHDC on a case-by-case basis and on the condition that the supervisor's employment contract at HKU can cover the student's extended candidature after the transfer.
- (iii) In the above case, a co-supervisor, who should be a Full-time Teacher of the University with RPg supervision experience and a research higher degree, must be appointed.



- (iv) The co-supervisor will be asked to undertake to assume the role of principal supervisor, in the event that the employment contract of the new supervisor/RAP ends before their student's extended candidature after the transfer to PhD.

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