



Deanship of
Postgraduate Studies
Sultan Qaboos University

Supervision Guide

(Postgraduate Students)

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Preface

At Sultan Qaboos University, PhD programs and some master's programs require doing research and writing theses. Therefore, supervision, whereby one or more faculty members takes responsibility for developing the research skills of postgraduate students and helping them complete their degrees, is considered an integral part of the requirement. Due to the necessity of forming healthy and interactive relationships between the postgraduate student and their supervisor on one hand, and the postgraduate student and their committee on the other, the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies has prepared this supervision guide.

The guide aims at providing guidelines and advice which can contribute to effective and mutually-beneficial supervision. It also includes clarification on the responsibilities of various bodies during the supervision period in order to ensure that postgraduate students enjoy the best possible supervision and form healthy and interactive relationships with their supervisor and supervisory committee.

It goes without saying that proper supervision pushes the student towards realizing their research abilities. It also helps create a supportive environment to enable the student to learn more about research methodologies and values while also enhancing discipline. Overall, supervision leads to producing a high quality thesis which benefits the student, the university, and even the local community and Omani society at large. Therefore, a good supervisor is like a captain that sails with the student throughout the journey in the program. The supervisor is equipped with a clear vision of the program's requirements, regulations and procedures and the ability to solve emerging problems clearly and open-mindedly.

Good supervision is a shared responsibility which greatly depends on interactive and effective communication between the student and the supervisor and the extent to which each understands and accepts their roles and responsibilities. It also means commitment to reaching common goals.

The department to which the postgraduate student belongs plays a vital role in ensuring clarity, transparency and commitment to the academic regulations and professional standards of its postgraduate programs. Some of the roles played by the department are admission of postgraduate students based on transparent and clear approved standards, the formation of supervisory committees, and ensuring effective academic supervision.

The deanship hopes that the postgraduate student and supervisory committee refer to this supervision guide as it clearly identifies the people and bodies in charge of supervision and their responsibilities during every phase of supervision. It also helps postgraduate students learn more about crucial aspects of each stage and handle challenges that may hinder them from achieving their degree.

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Whom to Contact

Deanship of Postgraduate Studies

The body responsible for ensuring that postgraduate students meet thesis requirements starting from the formation of the supervisory committee through to the selection of the examination committee and external examiners and submission of the final copies of the thesis.

Assistant Dean

College assistant dean for postgraduate studies and research.

Program Coordinator

A faculty member in the department to which the student belongs. The program coordinator coordinates matters relevant to the program's requirements and student advising.

Main Supervisor

A faculty member who supervises the student during the thesis stage.

Thesis Committee/ Supervisory Committee

A committee composed of the main supervisor, a co-supervisor and one or more PhD holders according to the nature of the program.

3 Write-up Stage and Responsibilities of Thesis Committee

1

Academic Supervision

- Assist the student to find a topic.
- Advise the student to find references.
- Discuss proposed research methodology.
- Establish an outline for thesis completion.

Thesis Registration

Proposal

2

First Seminar

- Give feedback on the topic background, objectives and proposed methodology.

Preliminary Oral Examination for PhD Students

- Evaluate the student's readiness to conduct the proposed study.
- Direct the student towards references and research methodology.

Second Seminar

- Give comments about the research results.
- Decide on a date to submit the thesis to the thesis committee.

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Thesis Preparation for Defense

- Submit thesis copies at least two weeks before defense.
- Fill out thesis readiness form.

Defense

- Ask questions.
- Give comments.
- Guide students to incorporate comments into the final version.

Completion of Graduation Requirements

- Ensure comments are incorporated.
- Inform the deanship that degree requirements are completed.

"Flow Chart of the Stages and Committee's Responsibilities"

Advising and Supervision

The faculty member and students are collectively responsible for the success of advising. Both are given a set of responsibilities to ensure a healthy and interactive relation full of mutual respect which ultimately reflects positively on the student's study and results in effective completion of the research within the specified time.

Below we identify the bodies responsible for advising and supervising and their diverse roles.

Program Coordinator

Each postgraduate program will have a coordinator to help students with the following:

- a. Orient students to the Postgraduate Academic Regulations.
- b. Advise and assist students.
- c. Follow up with the students' degree plan requirements.
- d. Ensure students register in their courses every semester.
- e. Be available during the hours specified for advising.

Doctoral Supervision

Upon admission into the doctoral program by thesis option, the program coordinator shall form a thesis committee for the student. Like students admitted into the doctoral program by coursework and thesis, a thesis committee must be formed in the final semester of their coursework. The committee is then approved by the department board. The thesis committee consists of a Supervisor, Co-Supervisor and one or two faculty members.

Master's Supervision

The program coordinator will assist the student in choosing a thesis committee, and in obtaining the approval of the committee from the department's board. The thesis committee is composed of a supervisor, co-supervisor and one or two members.

Responsibilities of the Thesis Committee

- a. Develop student research and reporting abilities.
- b. Help students to identify a viable research topic and guide them to references and sources which enable them to complete their research.
- c. Be available during the hours specified for supervision.
- d. Read chapters and work done by the students and provide them with comments and constructive feedback which guarantee the completion of the research in the best form possible and in a timely manner.
- e. Give necessary suggestions to solve any problem faced by students during the write-up phase of the research.
- f. Continue the supervision process until an official letter is issued by the Deanship announcing the end of supervision.
- g. Inform students about their unavailability when attending conferences or going on official trips and coordinate with them about means of communication while away so that their absence does not have a negative impact of the supervision process.
- h. Include the student's name as a researcher and/or author in the scientific papers they publish when the paper relates to the student's thesis.
- i. Do not assign the students work outside the scope of their research project.
- j. Follow up with students to ensure registration for thesis in every semester until graduation.
- k. Do not interfere with the student's personal or private affairs.

Thesis Registration

Below are necessary alerts when registering for the thesis:

- a. The student must register in each semester during the official registration period, from admission to graduation.
- b. The student who has registered for the thesis must submit a progress report in order to be able to register again for the thesis in subsequent semesters.
- c. The student and the supervisor must sign the progress report.
- d. Master's student may register for thesis after completing at least 12 credits.

Thesis Proposal

The student seeks advise from the thesis committee, more specifically from the supervisor, to produce a proposal based on the program's requirements. Below are the main points that the student must consider during the proposal phase:

Master's:

- a. The thesis need not be entirely original research
- b. It should be an innovative application of ideas.
- c. It is a culmination of the student's efforts, and, not a mere copy of a previous study.
- d. The topic should be ethically-sound and should not violate people's rights.

Doctorate

The student is required to conduct significant and original research, demonstrate competence to implement sound methodology, and conduct research independently. The thesis should contribute to the scientific field by making a contribution to knowledge in the student's specified area.

Seminars

Students enrolled in a program requiring a thesis must give two seminars during their course which should be scheduled as part of their respective department's seminars. These will enable students to receive constructive feedback from faculty and students, and will also help them to develop their argumentation and presentation skills.

First Seminar

The first seminar should cover the background, objectives and methodology of the research. The Assistant Dean will notify the Dean that this requirement has been fulfilled.

A. Doctoral Programs

The first seminar for doctoral degrees must be held after the first semester of thesis registration and before the end of the second semester.

B. Master's Programs

The first seminar for master's programs must be held before the end of the first semester of thesis registration.

Preliminary Oral Examination

A student enrolled in a doctoral by thesis program must sit for a preliminary thesis examination at the end of the third semester. Based on the student's research proposal, the examination is intended to assess the student's readiness to engage in the proposed research. The preliminary oral examination is assessed by the thesis committee and an external examiner nominated by the HoD. The examination is chaired by the HoD or a delegate. The committee assigns the student either a "pass" or "no pass" result. The college reports the results of the examination to the deanship. The relevant department may give those who fail in the examination another attempt to take it provided that the repeat is within a semester. However, failure in the repeat attempt will result in withdrawal from the program.

Second Seminar

The second seminar should be held before the thesis defense for doctoral and master's programs. It should include a summary of the research and the main findings. The Assistant Dean will notify the Dean that this requirement has been fulfilled.

Thesis Defense Session

Involvement in the thesis defense is limited to members of the Thesis Examining Committee. Members of the Thesis Committee may attend the defense, which includes the following procedures:

- a. Preliminary Session: The Examining Committee goes briefly over the Thesis Report Forms before the candidate is invited into the room.
- b. Thesis Presentation: A presentation, not exceeding half an hour, is made, covering the thesis objectives and major findings.
- c. Question Session: The Chair regulates the time so that the whole process should not exceed three hours. At the end of the question session, the student is requested to leave the room.

d. Decision Session: The Defense Committee decides by majority vote to place the thesis in one of four categories:

1. “pass”
2. “pass pending minor revisions”
3. “deferred pending major revisions”
4. “no pass”

Letter grades with numerical values apply to the thesis by coursework and thesis option (Please refer to the Postgraduate Academic Regulations for details).

Graduation

Doctoral Programs

A doctoral degree will be conferred on students fulfilling the following conditions:

1. Completion of all degree requirements.
2. Enrollment in the program for not less than three academic years.
3. Publishing a paper, or receiving acceptance for publication, in a specialized, peer-refereed journal.
4. Presenting a paper at an international scientific conference for the doctoral program by thesis.
5. Submitting the final approved version of the thesis along with the required copies.
6. Obtaining clearance of all debts to the university.
7. A master’s degree in the same specialization may be awarded to a student who withdraws from the doctorate by coursework and thesis program, after completion of 36 credits with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00.

Master’s Programs

A master’s degree will be conferred on students fulfilling the following conditions:

1. Completion of all degree requirements.
2. Enrollment in the program for no less than two academic semesters.
3. Achieving a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00.
4. Submitting the final approved version of the thesis along with the required copies (if this is required by the program).
5. Passing the comprehensive examination (if this is required by the program).
6. Obtaining clearance of all debts to the university.
7. A postgraduate diploma may be awarded to anyone who withdraws from the master’s program after completion of 21 credits with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75.

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Responsibilities of the Student

It is the student's responsibility to fully understand the rules and regulations regarding the degree requirements as well as all other academic regulations. Ignorance of these rules and regulations does not constitute grounds for waiving or breaching them. Below are the main responsibilities of the student:

1. Adhere to the Postgraduate Academic Regulations and the decisions issued by the concerned bodies of the university.
2. Respect the supervisor and take into account their teaching and administrative commitments.
3. Respect the established time schedules for the research phases and accomplish the required tasks in the agreed upon time.
4. Follow their supervisors' advice and incorporate their comments.
5. Attend the agreed upon supervision hours.
6. Maintain contact with the supervisor and keep the supervisor informed about the progress made at all research phases.
7. Acknowledge the contributions of the supervisor or any member of the thesis committee in the scientific papers they publish.

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Conclusion

The Deanship of Postgraduate Studies has prepared this guide to ensure that the postgraduate supervision process at the university goes smoothly, and that every one responsible for supervision is aware of their responsibilities. This will hopefully result in effective and beneficial supervision. For more information, please refer to the Postgraduate Academic Regulations, or visit the deanship's website at:

www.squ.edu.ps