

## **Information and Resources for Research Postgraduate Students (Academic Year 2009-2010)**

Visit the HKU Graduate School Homepage:

<http://www.hku.hk/gradsch/web/student/>

### **Good Practices: HKU Graduate School**

Read these and other Guidelines so that you are aware of what you can expect of the University, and what the University expects of research postgraduate students, Supervisors, and Departmental Research Postgraduate Committees

Good practices for Research Postgraduate Students:

<http://www.hku.hk/gradsch/web/student/good-stu.htm>

Good practices for Research Supervisors:

<http://www.hku.hk/gradsch/web/supervisor/good-super.htm>

Good practices for Departmental Research Postgraduate Committee (DRPC):

<http://www.hku.hk/gradsch/web/supervisor/good-drpc.htm>

### **Basic Duties of Postgraduate Students**

1. Research studies –Requirements set by/with Research Supervisor(s)
  - Laboratory work
  - Theoretical knowledge
  - Research discussions and presentations
  - Thesis writing
2. Postgraduate courses -Required by the Graduate School
  - GRSC6001 Thesis writing
  - CHEM6101 Chemistry seminars
  - Additional courses
3. Studentship duties – Required by the Department of Chemistry

### **Regulations Governing Postgraduate Studentships**

- The purpose of Postgraduate Studentships is to provide selected students with financial assistance in the form of a scholarship to study full-time for the degree of MPhil or PhD
- Thus PG students are not allowed to hold any formal employment other than the studentship duties

### **Studentships Regulations:**

- By accepting the PG Studentship you have entered into a Studentship contract:
- If you hold a postgraduate studentship your Head of Department may require you to undertake teaching assistance or associated duties up to a maximum of 100 to 250 hours each year
- Continued tenure or renewal of a PG Studentship remains conditional upon :
  1. the PG holder continuing to make satisfactory academic (research and studies) progress;
  2. the holder continuing to perform PG studentship duties to the satisfaction of the Department

### **Postgraduate Studentship Duties are opportunities**

- To contribute to the Department of Chemistry
- To gain knowledge and hands-on experience in similar or alternative fields of chemistry
- To learn and gain experience in communication with students or the public
- To gain experience in organization and team-work
- To learn transferable skills that could be used one day when you enter academia as a teacher, or a leader of a group in industry, or join a team of researchers in an institute...

### **Types of Studentship Duties**

1. Undergraduate teaching assistants (TA):
  - Course tutors
  - Markers
  - Teaching Assistants

- Lab demonstrator
  - Exam/test invigilation
2. Teaching, organization, and induction in Departmental activities to the public
  3. Duties for aiding Departmental operations

### General Expectations

- Remember that you are representing HKU and our Department to the students and the public
- The official teaching language at HKU is English: effective communication is essential
- Well-prepared and knowledgeable of the subject
- Cooperative and responsible
- Punctual
- Good preparation
- Do not leave before duties are fully completed
- Good, positive attitude

### Teaching of Undergraduates

- Teaching is the PRIME mission of the University
- Teaching is regarded as a fundamental activity of the University
- As teaching assistants (TAs), you are contributing to the teaching at the university

### General Expectations of TAs

- Teach in the official teaching language: English
- Timely communication with teachers and course coordinators
- Permission for absences must be obtained from coordinators at least 2 weeks in advance;
- Permission to execute significant changes to duties must be obtained from coordinators ahead of time, unless otherwise indicated by the relevant course coordinator
- Be fully devoted to the assigned work while on duty
  - Active presence on site
  - Phone calls should be minimal
  - Be attentive to emergencies or irregularities

### Tutors

The Course tutor works closely with the course coordinator and teachers to teach additional lectures or problem solving sessions for undergraduate students .

The tutor must be:

- Well-versed and highly knowledgeable of the subject
- Well-prepared for each tutorial
- Effective communicator
- Encouraging students to learn
- Attentive to students' needs and questions

The tutor will receive adequate preparation and specifications of how to discharge duties from the teacher/course coordinator

### Markers

The Marker works closely with the course coordinator and teaches by grading assignments, problem sets or tests

- The marker must be clear about grading scheme (full marks, part marks) and possible correct answers
- The marker must work out a schedule with the teacher and hand back graded work and enter grades punctually
- The marker should identify and inform teacher of cases of plagiarism

### Teaching Preparation

Teaching preparation assistants work closely with teacher in the preparation of teaching materials to be used in classes or labs, or execution of other duties related to teaching .

Teaching preparation assistants will receive adequate specifications of how to discharge duties from the coordinating professor

### Lab Demonstrators

The lab demonstrator teaches students laboratory practical skills in lab sessions

The demonstrator must:

- Arrive in the lab early
- Have performed the experiments personally at least once
- Well-prepared beforehand in the theory, practice, and details of the experiment

- Communicate effectively with students
- Work together with the technicians and other demonstrators
- Be examples of good practices and safety
- Teach students safe practices
- Be responsible for the safety of students
- Monitor and mark student performance/reports
- Be fully devoted to teaching over the entire lab time
- Be encouraging

The demonstrator must not:

- Leave before all students have left the lab
- Unduly hurry students to finish experiments ahead of time
- Do experiments for the students
- Change experiment procedures or requirements without prior consultation with the coordinators
- Leave students unattended without informing the Lab Technician or Head Demonstrator
- Leave without informing the Lab Technician or Head Demonstrator

### **Exam/Test Invigilators**

The invigilator ensures that the exam/test is being conducted under acceptable and fair conditions

If exams are not conducted in a fair manner under your supervision, this will be a very serious matter for the University

Any complaints will be taken very seriously, at the University level

The University regulations and “Notes for the guidance of Invigilators” are distributed with each assignment

#### Exam Invigilators must:

- Arrive at the exam site at least 20 minutes before the exam time
- Report arrival to the Chief invigilator
- Report to the Teachers, co-sign arrival record
- Help set up the exam venue, eg. distribute papers
- Take roll call/ check photo ID for all students present after 30 minutes into the exam, and note any irregularities, absences and latecomers
- Stay VIGILANT and attentive to students’ needs and any irregularities
- Collect and count exams, deliver to teachers

#### Test Invigilators must:

- Arrive at the test site at the required time set by the teacher in charge
- Upon arrival, co-sign the arrival record with the teacher
- Help set up the exam venue, eg. distribute papers
- Stay VIGILANT and attentive to students’ needs and any irregularities
- Collect and count exams

### **Teaching and induction at public events**

Such as: University Open days, Department Open days, Chemistry-in-Action days, high school visits are important events to the community .

Important to act as ambassadors to visitors, to show a positive image to the community, and to attract student enrollment in the Chemistry program

Requires:

- Good teamwork
- Good communication
- Cooperative and organized
- Welcoming and friendly attitude
- Helpful and knowledgeable

### **Evaluation**

- Starting September 2008, all RPG will be evaluated by students and Course Coordinators on the performance of their duties
- All performance evaluations will be kept filed with PG student records in the Department
- All teaching staff will have access to these files for writing recommendation letters, etc.

**Evaluation Criteria-Example**

1. This demonstrator was knowledgeable of the lab, chemistry and techniques:
  - Strong disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
2. This demonstrator was friendly and helpful during the lab
3. This demonstrator had a good attitude toward teaching/managing the lab class
4. This demonstrator communicated ideas clearly to the group
5. This demonstrator inspired me to develop an interest in chemistry and to learn
6. This demonstrator was overall a very good teacher
7. Open-ended comments?

**Feedback**

- Starting academic year 2008-2009, performance evaluations and comments will be given back to each demonstrator
- The results of the evaluations will be discussed with the relevant coordinators and/or supervisors, and/or the DRPC
- All TAs are expected to learn from the evaluation and feedback and improve their performance

**Improvement of Performance**

1. English Improvement help from the Centre for Applied English Studies (CAES)
    - iPAST: Interactive Pronunciation and Speech Tutor
    - SpeakEasy: a resource to improve presentation skills
  2. Learning How to teach: Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning (CETL)
    - Certificate of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education-Stage 1 and Stage 2 [offered by the]
    - <http://www.cetl.hku.hk/certificate-courses>
- If certain assigned duties are found to be difficult for a particular individual for valid reasons, more time will be assigned for extra preparation
  - If there is poor performance due to exceptional reasons, students may meet with DRPC and be assigned alternative studentship duties

**In Summary: Postgraduate Studentship Duties are:**

- A duty/duties required of each RPG holding a postgraduate studentship;
- Fulfilling a contract between the RPG and the Department of Chemistry
- Not optional, not extra work, and not personal favors to the Department or any individual teaching staff

In fact, failure to perform duties to expected standards results in penalties (Regulations 9, 10).

**Unsatisfactory performance in Studentship duties could result in:**

- . 1. Complaint filed with the PG student records
- . 2. Warning letter(s)
- . 3. Denial of departmental support/approval for CRCG conference grant applications
- . 4. Citation of unsatisfactory teaching performance in recommendation letters
- . 5. Further sanctions, according to Studentship regulations:
  - Reduction of stipend
  - Suspension and termination of postgraduate studentship

**Good performance in Studentship duties could result in:**

1. Invitation to promote to higher levels of PG studentship, and perform additional work hours subject subject to additional TA work needed, and to the Research Supervisor's permission

Level 1	\$13,100
Level 2	\$13,840
Level 3	\$14,580
Level 4	\$15,320

2. Inclusion of performance details in recommendation letters
3. Recognition of outstanding teaching performance by the Department: **Award for Outstanding Teaching Assistants**