POLICY FOR DISSERTATION ADVISEMENT PROCESS

(Last revised: January 16, 2015)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:

(1) To have consistent contracts all for the departmental supervisors across all the departments of IVS.

(2) To streamline the dissertation advisement process so that effective and consistent guidance to students across all departments is achieved.

(3) To enhance the quality of dissertations produced by students.

HIRING AND LINE MANAGEMENT OF DEPARTMENTAL SUPERVISORS

The Departmental Dissertation Supervisors are paid by their respective departments. However, all departmental supervisors are to be hired through a joint agreement amongst the HoD/CoD, the Dissertation Coordinator and the Internal Advisor (to ensure that properly qualified Supervisors are employed). Although their contracts are handled by their relevant Department, the departmental Supervisor reports to the Dissertation Coordinator and therefore the Liberal Arts Programme.

To a greater or lesser extent, Supervisors should be able to exist between Liberal Arts and their respective Departments easily and comfortably, able to report to Dissertation Coordinators and their Heads concerning any issues, requests, trouble students, etc. Often HoDs/CoDs can be very useful in this regard – communication should be kept open so that no relevant faculty-member falls ‘out of the loop’.

The HoD/CoD is responsible for ensuring that every dissertation supervisor in his/her own department understands all contractual obligations, is putting in the requisite hours and maintaining the required paperwork (progress reports).

The role of the LA team, that is, the Internal Advisor and the Dissertation Coordinator, is to help all departmental supervisors with the following:

(1) Providing effective and consistent guidance to students across departments.

(2) Ensuring that deadlines are communicated clearly and met with consistently, by students as well as supervisors.

(3) Ensuring that the dissertation requirements and policies are clearly understood by all supervisors across departments.

(4) Maintaining consistency in grading and feedback across departments.

(5) Helping departmental supervisors with trouble-shooting difficult cases.

(6) Providing pedagogical training, as and when required, to all supervisors.

(7) Liaising between departmental supervisors and Academics Office / Registrar.

SUPERVISOR-STUDENT RATIO

No single departmental supervisor should advise more than 15 students for the 12-month period. Most supervisors are part-time and it is highly unlikely they can give students the attention they need given the hours they usually put in. Dissertation process is as much about conducting sound research as it is about solid writing. Controlling the numbers of students per supervisor will ensure quality across the board, and will produce strong writers who will be more equipped to tackle “real-world” problems by the time they are graduating.
WORKLOAD FOR DEPARTMENTAL DISSERTATION SUPERVISORS

The entire dissertation process lasts just over 12 months – with no break. It begins in August of the 6th/8th semester and winds up just after August of the 8th/10th semester (with Vivas running into October).

Workload for a departmental supervisor, however, lasts exactly for a 12-month period, because they are required to submit grades and progress reports to the Dissertation Coordinator and Internal Advisor in the August of the Viva term.

The workload for one departmental supervisor, per student, for a 12 month period, in accordance with the task list above, breaks down to the following:

- Minimum 8 meetings of 30 minutes each in the Fall term + Minimum of 12 meetings of 30 minutes each in the Spring term, (with a cluster of meetings in April and May) = 4 + 6 = **10 hours** of one-on-one advising per student for 2 semesters.

- 8 drafts minimum to be read and critiqued, spread over 2 semesters. Each draft, on average takes almost 2 hours to read/critique, adding up to = **16 hours** for reading & critiquing drafts for 2 semesters for one student.

- Final reading + preparation of progress report + final grade = **4 hours per dissertation during submission Summer**

- **Grand total of time needed per student for a full year = 10 + 16 + 4 = 30 hours**

- In addition, each departmental supervisor is required to attend a minimum 4 meetings per semester with the Dissertation Coordinator/Internal Advisor = **8 hours of faculty/management meetings in 12 months**

PAYMENT FOR DEPARTMENTAL DISSERTATION SUPERVISORS

Based on the yearly workload as given above, the payment for the Departmental Dissertation Supervisors is calculated as follow:

(30hrs x no. of students) + 8hrs of LA meetings x Hourly Rate

An hourly rate of Rs 750 is approved for the year 2015.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENTAL DISSERTATION SUPERVISOR:

It is the Supervisor’s responsibility to:

- Advise students on every aspect of the dissertation research & writing process through two semesters – from August to June.
- Read student drafts (according to deadlines) and provide comprehensive written feedback on time
- Maintain a regular & detailed progress report for each student (see below).
- Check for plagiarism-related issues throughout the year.
- Make sure that all students meet with the Internal Advisor (Arshad Faruqi) and the Dissertation Coordinator at least once in the Fall term and twice in the Spring term.
- Troubleshoot issues with Internal Advisor (Arshad Faruqi) and Dissertation Coordinator (Omer Wasim), including highlighting issues with any students falling behind.
• Ensure as much as possible that students are not missing advisement meetings: that means, sending official warning letters, in a timely manner, to consistently delinquent students (so that failing grades may not be contested on this count).
• Mark all students’ final dissertations (progress grade and final paper grade) by the deadline agreed upon with the Internal Advisor & Dissertation Coordinator.
• Find, vet & book external readers for every advisee, by May (all external readers should be approved by HoDs/CoDs and the Internal Advisor and Dissertation Coordinator).
• Arrange vivas for their department (in consultation with other markers, supervisors and students).
• Hand in final grades to the Dissertation Coordinator by the deadline agreed upon with the Internal Advisor & Dissertation Coordinator.
• Meet at least once a month with the Internal Advisor/Dissertation Coordinator to go over all the details (these meetings are mandatory and will be part of each departmental supervisor’s contractual obligations).

Progress reports are extremely important to the supervisors’ work and their ability to give a progress grade at the end of the dissertation process. Supervisors should ensure that students read and sign their monthly progress reports. If students are not turning up for meetings, this should be marked on progress reports and it is therefore required for supervisors to keep registers, though registers should never replace progress reports. Progress reports ensure that students are aware of their status in relation to other students and that Supervisors have evidence of students’ development should they fail or underperform. These reports therefore allow dissertation management to determine the extent to which supervisors are supporting students, (particularly important if students fail).

Samina Khan
Executive Director

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