

# School of Graduate Studies Roadmap

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2014-2020

# SGS ROADMAP 2014–2020

## 1 SGS Overview

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) is a service and administrative centre established to assist postgraduate students in the processes involved from their registration at UPM up to the completion of their studies. SGS is the core support system which helps ease and enhance the postgraduate experience for UPM students, and plays a crucial role in fostering the relationship between UPM and its graduates.

Initially set up as a Graduate Study Unit in 1978, SGS then proceeded to become a fully functioning Graduate School Office (GSO) in February 1993, to serve the growing population of postgraduate students at UPM. In March 2002, it continued to flourish as it was officially renamed the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) and was established as a service centre which had a status equivalent to a faculty at the university. This entailed its bigger role in the coordination of all postgraduate programmes and activities at UPM.

In its original inception, its key role also included an active involvement in research and development in postgraduate studies. In other words, SGS was conceptualized not only as a service centre to facilitate the general running of matters related to postgraduate students, but it was deemed to play a more active and crucial role in bolstering UPM's status as a research university.

Among its main roles as stated in the 1992 proposal for its establishment are:

- i. To cultivate and nurture a research culture through efficient and effective management of postgraduate research activities
- ii. To help the university produce graduates who are knowledgeable and skilled in order to meet the nation's needs
- iii. To improve the quality of postgraduate programmes and therefore reduce the need for overseas postgraduate training
- iv. To increase the international student population and contribute to UPM's internationalization through the intensification of publication and research training for staff.

## 2 Current Status, Needs and Constraints

As UPM continues to evolve and transform into a global institution of higher education that is serious in its efforts to cultivate knowledge and research, most of its development has centred on and revolved around the upgrading of its postgraduate programmes. The School of Graduate Studies now offers more than 250 fields of study, offering internationally recognized academic programmes at Master's and PhD levels.

UPM currently has the highest percentage of academic staff with PhDs in Malaysia. The university's varied programmes, as well as its facilities and conducive learning environment, has attracted students from more than 80 countries to pursue their postgraduate education here.

In our roadmap towards 2020, we plan to build on our strengths in providing quality services to our students. We also plan to revive the 1992 mandate as part of our mission statement, that is to support UPM's status as a research university by extending our role to include postgraduate research and development.

We believe that SGS holds the key to UPM's currency and sustainability as a research university, and needs to play a greater role in contributing towards meeting the national requirements for intellectual growth.

### Our core business

Our core business as the service provider for all things pertaining postgraduate studies involves the coordination and management of the following areas:

1. Admission and registration of new students
2. Academic programmes and record, registration of courses, add-drop, deferment, and status upgrade
3. Student supervision
4. Thesis evaluation
5. Scholarships, financial assistance
6. Information systems – iGIMS, website
7. Learning support and student affairs
8. Award of degree and graduation matters
9. Development and improvement of study programmes, courses, PG supervision
10. Industrial relations, international collaborative programmes and mobility programmes

## **Student enrolment**

As SGS continues to play a vital role at UPM, the number of students enrolled for postgraduate study at UPM has also shown a marked increase. From 2004, the total number of student enrolment has increased almost threefold. As of the first semester of 2013, UPM now has a total number of 10,806 postgraduate students, 3179 of which are international students from 84 countries.

SGS manages 42 Masters without thesis programmes, and seven Masters with thesis programmes, covering more than 250 fields of study offered by the 16 faculties and 9 research institutes of UPM. This is done efficiently, using an Internet-based student management system, from online application, to student management and record, and thesis submission.

Compared to other institutions of higher education in Malaysia, UPM is currently leading in the number of PhD students graduating each year. In 2011, 358 PhD students graduated, with 25.5 percent graduating on time. In 2012 and 2013, the numbers of PhD students graduating increased to 457 and 440 respectively, with 42.7 and 55.1 percent graduating on time.

There is also an increased percentage of study completion, from 92 percent to 95 percent over the period of the last three years.

## **Financial Assistance**

As a service centre for postgraduate studies, SGS also manages financial assistance in the form of scholarship/sponsorship programmes. Scholarships offered by UPM and directly managed by SGS include the Graduate Research Fellowship (GRF), the International Graduate Research Fellowship (iGRF), the Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA), the Special Graduate Research Allowance (SGRA), and the international Graduate Student Scholarship (iGSS). Other types of financial assistance which SGS helps to oversee include the My Brain 15 (My Master) programme, the My Brain 15 (My PhD) programme, all local sponsorships, and all overseas sponsorships.

## **Graduate Employability**

SGS believes in the importance of improving our students' graduate employability. Thus, we work hard at organising activities and learning support programmes which are geared towards increasing students' value and potential holistically. An upsurge of student participation in such programmes show motivation and interest in adding value to their postgraduate experience. The percentage of students who participated in self-improvement activities reached 70 percent, while the percentage of students who participated in activities which inculcate a dynamic knowledge culture in preparation for contemporary challenges rose to 55 percent. As a result, the graduate employability of our students when measured shows a significant increase, from 77.2 percent to 90 percent.

## **Learning Support**

The Putra Sarjana programme, started in 2008, is a series of learning support seminars/workshops specially designed to help ease students' journey in postgraduate education and help them grow and mature into their roles as graduate students and academics. The programme comprises of seminars/workshops with experienced academics or practitioners, covering topics deemed relevant to the students' development as researchers and scholars.

At the end of the programme, students are expected to have acquired the necessary knowhow and skills to be well-rounded individuals and trained academics, able to cope with high standards of communication, language competence, leadership, creative and critical thinking, and to have worked towards developing a sound moral integrity and professional ethics. At the same time, students will be able to form strong networks of like-minded scholars through the social opportunities provided by such events.

In the last three years, the number of seminars run under this programme has increased, from 49 in 2011, 53 in 2012, to 79 in 2013. In internationalizing the Putra Sarjana programme, a collaborative programme with the University of Otago, New Zealand, was introduced in 2013. Postgraduate supervision workshops were organized over the period of 2012 to 2013 as part of the UPM-Otago collaborative programme. Further, the Handbook for Postgraduate Supervision was published in 2012 to be a guide for supervisors as part of SGS's effort to strengthen postgraduate supervision.

## **Industrial Relations**

Awareness of the importance of industrial relations as part of students' professional development has led to UPM offering programmes which have direct links with the industry. To begin this effort to strengthen industrial relations, the DEng and PhD industry programmes were started in the academic year 2011/2012. UPM currently has 16 students following the DEng programme.

## International Collaborative Programmes

Through MoAs with various international universities, SGS has secured seven international programmes as follows:

- University of Nottingham, UK - Dual PhD Degree Programme
- Ajou University, Korea - Dual Degree Programme in Master of Science (Computer Science)
- Kyushu Institute of Technology, Japan - Dual PhD Degree Programme
- University of Sheffield, UK - Jointly Awarded PhD Degree Programme
- University of Newcastle, Australia - Jointly Awarded Research Higher Degree Programs
- Université Pierre et Marie Curie, France – *Cotutelle* PhD programme
- Imperial College London – Split PhD

## Mobility Programmes

Mobility programmes are also offered for students who would like to have part of their postgraduate experience overseas. Mobility programmes offered include the non-graduating programme known as *IRANG* for inbound students, and the *IRAMP* programme for outbound students.

SGS also supports students desiring to attend international seminars. In 2013 alone, 35 postgraduate students were able to attend international seminars with SGS's support.

## 3 Strategic Objectives 2014–2020

UPM has identified ten (10) key challenges which will be the areas of focus in the implementation of its 2014-2020 strategic plan. These key challenges or areas of focus include: academic rating (ranking and star rating), graduate employability, internationalization, mobility of students and academics, academic entrepreneurship, globalization, curriculum and programmes of study according to market needs, collaboration with other universities and research institutions, competition for research funding, and research programmes, development, commercialization, and innovation, in order to propel the economy of the country.

The SGS roadmap is designed to support UPM's strategic plan for 2014-2020 in areas which are of concern and relevant to SGS. Ultimately, we plan to drive and establish excellence as a culture in postgraduate supervision, teaching and research practices at UPM. This corresponds with one of UPM's strategic plans, Putra Global 200 (PG200). PG200 refers to UPM's goal of attaining a position within the world's top 200 universities in the QS World University Ranking. Specifically, the four criteria that are spotlighted on to help UPM achieve this goal are: research quality, teaching quality, graduate employability, and internationalisation.

## Vision

In line with UPM's vision, SGS's vision is to be a leading graduate school of international standing.

## Mission

The mission of SGS is to ensure that we provide the best programmes which prepare students for the rigours of postgraduate study and the challenges of academia. SGS also plans to be the leading School of Graduate Studies in Malaysia and in the region by providing a conducive academic environment and friendly customer services.

## Goals

In order to fulfil SGS's role as planned during its inception, the roadmap involves strategic planning for the enhancement of its role as a service and research centre. More specifically, its goals are as follows:

1. To improve the quality of supervision
2. To improve the quality of research output
3. To enhance the quality of thesis publication
4. To increase the quantity of postgraduate research publications
5. To provide support for students and supervisors' academic and professional development

## 4 Objectives, Strategies and Action Plan

The SGS roadmap comprises four (4) main objectives. Each objective has its own set of strategies as detailed below.

### OBJECTIVE 1

To improve the quality of academic programmes

#### Strategy 1:

Increase graduate student enrolment in order to be ranked in the QS Top 200 by 2020

#### Strategy 2

Improve quality of students admitted into postgraduate programmes at UPM

#### Strategy 3:

Strengthen collaboration with the world's top universities

#### Strategy 4:

Improve quality of graduates

#### Strategy 5:

Improve quality of supervision and academic programmes

#### Strategy 6:

Improve research infrastructure for postgraduate studies

### OBJECTIVE 2

To intensify innovation in teaching and research

#### Strategy 1:

Improve quality of academic staff

#### Strategy 2:

Intensify research on postgraduate education

### OBJECTIVE 3

Improve student potential and competitiveness

#### Strategy 1:

Create an avenue for student publication of international standard

#### Strategy 2:

Develop the Putra Sarjana Learning Support Programme to be more holistic to produce well-rounded graduates

#### Strategy 3:

Provide more opportunities for postgraduate students to gain academic experience overseas

### OBJECTIVE 4

To establish UPM's reputation as a centre of excellence in agriculture

#### Strategy 1:

Enhance international collaborative programmes and student mobility with international agricultural institutions

## **5 Summary**

As indicated in the document, the mission of the School of Graduate Studies is to ensure that we provide the best programmes which prepare students for the rigours of postgraduate study and the challenges of academia. SGS also plans to be the leading School of Graduate Studies in Malaysia and in the region by providing a conducive academic environment and friendly customer services. In achieving this mission, the three phases of development as outlined in the detailed descriptions of the four main objectives, will be continually assessed to ensure that our strategies show an upward progress towards the vision of the school: to be a leading graduate school of international standing.



[www.sgs.upm.edu.my](http://www.sgs.upm.edu.my)