This newsletter has been prepared by the PG Secretariat. If you have any feedback or suggestions on this newsletter, please contact Vincent Cheung at aackc@ust.hk or Katherine Wong at aakwong@ust.hk.

Deadline for Converting the ‘Incomplete’ Grade (I) into a Regular Course Grade

As stipulated in the 1999-2000 Academic Calendar, the ‘Incomplete’ (I) grade is used when work is necessarily delayed through no fault of the student, such as a medical problem or an equipment breakdown. This grade must be converted to a regular course grade by/at the beginning of the next semester, otherwise it is converted to F.

There have been a few cases where students involved alleged that the deadline for converting the ‘I’ grade was confusing. In order to avoid any ambiguity in interpreting the phrase ‘by/at the beginning of the next semester’ as used in the Academic Calendar, the PG and UG Secretariats of the VPAAO have proposed to amend the regulations on ‘Incomplete’ grade to read ‘The Incomplete grade must be converted to a regular grade at least one working day before the start of the following semester, otherwise, it is converted to F.’ The changes have been endorsed by the Committee on Postgraduate Studies, the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and the Senate, respectively. This amendment comes into effect immediately.

Removal of the ‘No-drop’ Rule on the Last Day of the Add/Drop Period

Senate approved in October 1997 as part of the course withdrawal policy that the dropping of courses on the last day of the add/drop period was not allowed. This was adopted in view of the fact that some students took up excessive course places until the last day of the add/drop period. Course places which were released on the last day might be too late to be taken up by other students.

In the new web-based course registration system that was introduced to UG students in Fall Semester, 1999/2000, a waiting list function has been incorporated. UG students can now add their names to a waiting list when the class quota for a course is full. When places for a course become available later, students on the waiting list will automatically be registered for the course according to the order on the waiting list, subject to no timetable conflict. On the other hand, the quota for PG courses are usually more flexible and can meet the needs of students, thus there is no need to limit students from dropping courses on the last day of the add/drop period.

Taking the above into consideration, the VPAAO has recently removed the ‘no-drop’ rule on the last day of the add/drop rule. The decision has been reported to the Committee on Postgraduate Studies, the Committee on Undergraduate Studies, and the Senate for information.

Revised Proforms on PG Course and Program Proposals

At the request of the Committee on Postgraduate Studies, PG curricular and course proposal forms were revised and issued to schools and departments in late November 1999. The new forms require the program/course offering department to provide more in-depth information to help CPS members make decisions on curricular matters. The forms can be downloaded from the VPAAO homepage (http://www.ust.hk/~webaa).
Channels for Voicing Grievance
If a student has any grievance about their program, their thesis work, their study and supervision arrangements, etc., channels are readily available to help them settle their grievance or alleviate their concerns.

When a student encounters any difficulty or has any concern that they feel should be conveyed or disclosed to the University, the first stop should normally be the PG coordinator. If this does not work, the next stop is the head of the department. If the issue cannot be settled satisfactorily in the department, the student may approach the Associate Dean of the school responsible for PG studies for advice. If the issue still cannot be resolved within the school, the next stop is the Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs (PG Studies) who represents the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

If the issue-in-question involves existing academic policies, the matter may be referred to the Committee on Postgraduate Studies or Senate for consideration.

If the grievance is of a personal nature, the student may consider talking to a student counselor from the Student Counseling Service and Careers Center of the Student Affairs Office for advice.

On-line English Learning Resources – AutoLANG and WordPilot
You can now use handy on-line English learning applications to improve your written English – AutoLANG and WordPilot, prepared by a team from the Language Center, can help you become a more effective writer.

AutoLANG is a self-access interactive English tutorial which helps you learn to recognize and correct common errors in your English. Each time you open an AutoLANG passage, you see a different combination of errors. You may find the exercises difficult because they contain very common errors in the writing of speakers of Chinese. If you can learn to identify and correct these errors in your own writing, your writing will be more accurate and effective. WordPilot is a writing aid and vocabulary development tool to increase your vocabulary and find the right words while writing. When you are writing, you can use WordPilot to help you compose and proofread your writing, and acquire an effective and professional vocabulary of words and phrases.

AutoLANG and WordPilot are pre-installed on all PCs in the HKUST computer barns. If you wish to install WordPilot in your PC at office or at home, please visit the URL for details and download instructions: http://home.ust.hk/~autolang/

Safety Clearance at Graduation for Research Postgraduate Students
To enhance the safety management system of the University, the Environmental Health and Safety Committee has endorsed the establishment of an exit safety clearance system for students. This measure ensures that graduating PG students will not leave behind hazardous materials or setup which may present hazard to other people, or create difficulties in waste disposal. In addition, this clearance procedure provides proper closure for records maintained by the Safety and Environmental Protection Office (SEPO) on hazardous operations such as laser work, respirator use, biohazardous work, etc. Each department is recommended to incorporate clearance procedures into the graduating requirements of PG students. Departments may also consider initiating clearance procedures as soon as the experimental work of the PG student is completed. This will leave ample time for necessary action, if any, by both the department and SEPO.

In order to further improve the safety clearance process, the PG Secretariat has recently revised the ‘Notice of Intention to Take Thesis Examination’ Form to be completed by research PG students. A reminder reading ‘If applicable, I will carry out safety clearance for the above student before he/she leaves the University.’ has been included under Part B of the form to be signed by thesis supervisor. The ‘Student Safety Clearance at Graduation Form’ should be duly completed and sent to SEPO direct at least two weeks before the expected departure date of the students. You may contact Dr Sam Yu of SEPO if you have any questions or concerns regarding this issue.

Release of the 2000-02 PG Prospectuses
The new PG Prospectuses were available for distribution to applicants for PG studies in early January 2000. As the majority of PG program curricula have stabilized in recent years and most of the annual updates for the PG Prospectuses in the past few years have involved minor changes, the PG Prospectuses will now be published in alternate years, beginning from the current issue.