Revised Policy on Course Auditing

In the past, only full-time students may register as course auditors, that is, to attend a course and to participate in activities up to and including writing the final examination but not receiving a formal grade. However, there has not been a clear statement regarding whether part-time students are allowed to register as course auditors, and the number of courses a student is allowed to audit.

To refine the policy on course auditing, the Senate has, at its 51st meeting held on 11 October 2000, considered and endorsed the following recommendations made by the Committee on Postgraduate Studies.

1. With the permission of the course instructor, a PG student, full-time or part-time, may register in a course as an auditor.

2. The workload of audit courses should be included when counting the study load of a student.

3. Students on taught master’s programs may not audit courses without registering for normal course attendance in the same semester. Exceptions may be made for Summer and Winter Sessions with the approval of the PG Coordinator concerned.

4. For students who are on taught PG programs adopting a per-credit tuition fee system, the tuition fees for the audit courses should be the same as that of other regular courses.

Annual Progress Reports for Research Postgraduate Students

The Annual Progress Reports for research postgraduate students (RPgs) are official and systematic records maintained by the University to keep track of the annual study progress made by RPgs in terms of research and thesis writing. These reports are not only useful for recording the progress of RPgs, they also provide very helpful information in the event students encounter difficulty in their study progress. However, as of early January 2001, a total of 3% of RPg progress report forms for the 1999/2000 academic year failed to reach ARRO for undisclosed reasons.

Framework for Postgraduate Non-degree Qualifications

In recent years, different part-time diploma programs at the postgraduate level have been offered by schools on self-financed basis. In the absence of any guidelines on what these diplomas stand for, the title as well as the duration (total instructional hours) and the admission requirements of these diplomas vary considerably. While to date there is no well-defined framework for non-degree qualifications in Hong Kong, as a responsible public institution, the University should stand by the non-degree qualifications it awards.

On the recommendation of the Committee on Postgraduate Studies (CPS) and the UAC Subcommittee on Continuing and Professional Education (SCCPE), the Senate has endorsed a proposal at its October 2000 meeting to establish a framework for postgraduate non-degree qualifications. The Senate resolved that

a) Any credit-based program that bears a minimum of 15 credits can be termed a graduate diploma, and that which bears 8 credits or more can be called a professional diploma. (To be cont’d on p.2)
b) Non-credit bearing programs that require a minimum of 90 instructional hours may be called “advanced diploma”, “executive diploma”, or “diploma” programs.

c) Under delegation by the Senate, the approving authority for graduation cases of credit-bearing postgraduate programs should rest with CPS. The award issuing body of credit-bearing diplomas is the University.

d) For graduates of non-credit bearing diploma programs, the approving authority for their graduation should rest with the school offering the program and the award issuing body should also be the school concerned.

e) To avoid confusion, the title “postgraduate diploma” should not be used in the University’s qualification framework, regardless of whether a program is credit-bearing or non-credit bearing.

**Meeting with H&SS RPg Reps**

At the request of a group of research postgraduate students (RPgs) from the School of Humanities & Social Science, the PG Secretariat has recently reviewed the total tuition fees paid by RPgs of the University. A draft proposal to create a writing-up fee for RPgs progressing beyond their normative period of study has been proposed. The draft proposal, well-received by H&SS RPg representatives at the meeting held in early December 2000, was supported by deans and endorsed by the Committee on Postgraduate Studies.

**Meeting with PG Coordinators**

The PG Secretariat had met with the PG coordinators from the Schools of Science, Engineering, and Humanities & Social Science informally in December 2000 to exchange views and information on policies and issues pertaining to postgraduate studies. Topics discussed included sources of information on PG studies, PG studentships, monitoring of student progress, course availability, communication between students and departments, and UGC’s Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR) visitation in August 2001. A meeting will be held with the PG coordinators from the School of Business & Management later this month.

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**Government Directive on Study Leave Taken by Mainland Students**

According to Immigration Regulations of the HKSAR Government, permission given to a person to land in Hong Kong as a student shall be subject to the following conditions of stay (Section 2(1) of Immigration Regulation, Chapter 115, Subsidiary Legislation, Laws of Hong Kong)

a) He shall become a student only at a specified school, university or other educational institution and undertake such course of study as may be approved by the Director of Immigration;

b) He shall not (i) take any employment, whether paid or unpaid; or (ii) establish or join any business.

The Immigration Department recently advised the University that for Mainland students who have been approved to take leave from study, they should not remain in or enter Hong Kong using their still valid student visa as they do not fulfill the status of “student” when they are on leave. The Immigration Department has taken into consideration the length of time required for these students to apply for re-entry to Hong Kong and has decided that Mainland students taking leave for 3 months or more shall apply for fresh entry permits to resume their studies. Universities are also required to inform the Immigration Department of any leave Mainland students may take even if the period is less than 3 months.

In view of the above development, Mainland students should be advised to avoid taking study leave unless there are extenuating circumstances. This can help minimize the difficulty and inconvenience they may face when they apply for fresh student entry permits to resume their study. ARRO will be responsible for advising the Immigration Department any leave Mainland students will be taking or circumstantial changes that may take place.

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**FROM THE PG SECRETARIAT**

This newsletter has been prepared by the PG Secretariat of VP-AA Office. 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.