

PAPUA NEW GUINEA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY GRADUATE

ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM (GAP) REVISED (2018)

1.0 BACKGROUND

Graduate Assistantship Program was introduced at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology (PNGUoT) in 2001. It was intended to overcome many of the shortcomings of the Assistant Lectureship (AL) Program that was in place since 1974. The two Programs differed in their objectives. The objective of the AL scheme was to accelerate training of national staff to take up academic positions in the University. Due to "structural adjustment" as required by IMF and the World Bank and, long delays in securing scholarship, the AL scheme was discontinued. On the other hand, the main objective of GAP was to promote postgraduate studies and research at PNGUoT. This would also accelerate the training of national academics thereby fulfilling the objective of the AL Scheme.

Soon after its introduction, GAP ran into difficulties mainly because of the somewhat incorrect perception of its objectives. Some academic departments, unable to mount postgraduate Programs for the GAP students, treated them as academic staff similar to assistant lecturers. Some GAP students were also given the position of Technical Instructor (TI). Other academic departments with established postgraduate Programs treated Graduate Assistant as postgraduate students and admitted them to PG diploma or Masters Programs.

Because of the confusion, Graduate Assistantship was not awarded since 2003. A sub-committee in 2005 reviewed the GAP in order to promote postgraduate studies and research culture at Unitech.

There is also a perception in the University that GAP (Graduate Assistantship Program) scholars will be employed in the University on completion of the higher studies. Moreover, due to changed circumstances and the need for rapid increase in the number of staff with Doctoral degrees for accreditation of engineering programs, a Special sub-committee is again being formed in 2018 by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) with specific TOR (as attached in appendix) to review the GAP Scholarship Program.

2.0 PROPOSAL

It is proposed that Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP) be revised, continued and further strengthened. Due to the growing needs of skilled manpower for various sectors of PNG including academia, it is timely to review the GAP scholarship programs to increase its scope and align with the PNGUoT Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and the LNSDC training and manpower development plan. The details of the revised Program are given in the following sections.

3.0 JUSTIFICATION

The Papua New Guinea University of Technology is the only technological university in PNG. Since its inception, the university graduated more than 14000 graduands including 300+ with higher degrees (also includes 18 PhDs) who are working in various technological fields, government departments, business houses, industries including academia who are playing vital role in the nation building processes. Postgraduate Studies and research are the cornerstone for PNGUoT's mission to fulfil its obligation to produce skilled, knowledgeable and competent engineers, scientists and technologists for various sectors of PNG including the academia. The PG studies are more of a necessity in the 21st century rather than a luxury leading to research in critical areas and innovation. Without research, there would be no innovation and no sustainable national development. Highly skilled manpower is not only necessary for innovation but also for effective utilization of the innovation for individual and well-being for national development. The PNGUoT is in the forefront in PG studies and research since its inception. The University has the biggest PG programs in the country with about 200 registered students. All the 13 academic departments have the PG programs up to the PhD levels with adequate supervision. Currently, PNGUoT has 20 Doctoral, 29 Masters, 3 PG Diploma and 2 PG Certificate programs on offer. To facilitate successful and efficient delivery of courses, the University recently introduced a PG Certificate Course on *Student Centered Teaching* to train all the academic staff to equip them with latest technologies and developments. The University is focusing on the externalization of her programs to reach more students those who can't afford on campus full time studies. This is in line with PNGUoT vision 2030. Many of the University Academic Departments are also offering PG courses in distance mode.

The PNGUoT is now working towards accreditation of her Engineering Programs which requires that 80% of the academic staff should have PhD qualifications. To meet this crucial benchmark, there is no alternative but to

expand and strengthen the in-house PG programs with adequate resourcing. Moreover, one of the strategic focus areas of PNG Vision 2050 is human capital development. This also focuses on facilitating research in the national development priority areas.

To meet these demands, the Committee strongly feels that GAP program not only be reinvigorated with adequate resources but its policies be also reviewed to make it more suitable and aligned with the strategic goals and aspirations of the University. The overall aim of the review is to provide the opportunity to the graduates, and thus be a proud partner in meeting the National Government's Vision 2050 through increasing skilled and knowledgeable technological graduates to help build a *Smart, Wise, Fair, Healthy and Happy Society*.

This review of GAP will also accommodate the demand of the Academic Departments and the training and development aspirations of the University as a national institution of Higher Education, and Science and Technology to fulfil its obligations.

It is the Committee's view that GAP is not just a program to produce prospective academic staff for PNGUoT, but also to provide sufficiently and technologically trained manpower for the rapidly expanding industries in PNG.

In this context, it is to be clarified that the GAP Scholars are not for automatic employment on completion of their studies. It is not either an objective of the GAP scholarships. Rather, it is to build and supply the human capacity for the different sectors of PNG including academia, especially PNGUoT. In many universities worldwide, there are different types of scholarships both at the Under- and Postgraduate levels to support the talented and deserving students. At PNGUoT, on completion of higher studies, if there is any opportunity in the Academic Departments and also the scholars meet the employment requirements, Departments are encouraged to employ them. Otherwise, they will work in other relevant sectors. This way, we can build the numbers, and as and when necessary, the University can bring them back in academia, if they are interested.

4.0 OBJECTIVE

The aim of the Graduate Assistant Program is to attract first degree and Master degree graduates with good academic standing and/or industrial

experience. This program is intended for study at Masters and PhD levels. The scheme is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- 4.1 To promote and strengthen Postgraduate Studies at the University.
- 4.2 To promote a Research culture at the University.
- 4.3 To align the GAP program with the LNSDC and UNITECH Strategic Plan manpower training and development strategies
- 4.4 To build and strengthen local capacity in PG studies, research and supervision
- 4.5 To promote research and publications in the indexed journals to improve university's standing in the international arena
- 4.6 To promote university and industry collaboration through a Research Culture.
- 4.7 To build human capacity for different priority sectors in PNG to help materialize the goals of *PNG Vision 2050*

5.0 FINANCE

Highly educated and skilled manpower are the best resources a country can ever have to adequately exploit its resources. Education and research are the key to the sustainable development of a country. The higher education system in any country drives the intellectual, economic, cultural, technological and social development of a country. The sector plays a key role in the growing knowledge and innovation-based economic health of the country. The higher education sector is responsible to educate the future professional workforce, creating future leaders, job opportunities, driving economic and regional success, and facilitating cultural and trade links with other countries.

Investment in higher education and research builds the foundation for long term sustainable national development. PNGUoT should make priority allocation for the GAP scholarship programs not only to train her academic staff to the PhD levels but also to fulfil its obligations as the only Technological University of the country by training the manpower for various sectors of PNG and as well as for the South Pacific Islands Nations.

Moreover, to attract funding;

- the PNGUoT can build partnership with public enterprises, private industries, business houses, etc to attract funding for joint research

through marketing the PG programs and research capabilities of the University;

- align research activities to meet industry needs;
- develop national and international collaboration for joint research; and,
- liaise and lobby the DHERST for allocation of Scholarships and research fund for the PG studies and by taking advantage of their commitment that *DHERST will provide more scholarships for postgraduate programs to encourage research in tertiary education* (Higher and Technical Education Strategic Implementation Plan 2017-2038: 2018)

In addition, the University might re-visit the current policy of sending academic staff to overseas universities on PNGUoT funding. This money can be reverted to fund the in-house GAP at the PhD levels. This in turn would build the staff capacity to supervise, be cost effective, the staff would work for at least 6 hrs per week and would provide the opportunity to work on national issues and priority areas. The responsibilities for overseas PG studies should rest with the individual staff. They should manage their own scholarships, but the university would help wherever possible. Such an approach is envisaged to have greater success rate in terms of on-time completion of studies. Many academic staff have returned empty handed due to personal issues which could have been easily sorted out if the same staff were on training in PNG soil.

6.0 FIELDS OF SPONSORSHIP

Graduate Assistantship may be offered in any of the academic disciplines of the University provided there is a postgraduate Program available. However, special priority will be given to the academic departments that have staff shortage.

7.0 ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Due to high demand from graduates and final year students for the scholarships, all applications will be screened and those meet the following criteria will be selected based on urgent staff needs.

7.1 Graduated with Degree with Merit, and/or

7.2 Graduated with Council Medal, or

7.3 A cumulative weighted Average of 72% marks and above from year 2 to 4 or 5.

7.4 The students with a degree with merit, Council Medal, or 72% aggregated average marks (2nd year to final year) will be eligible for GAP scholarships within 4 years of graduation.

7.5 Students on business mode programs will not be eligible for GAP

7.6 Non-GAP students on course-based programs can apply for GAP after **one year** of studies on positive recommendations from the Principal Supervisor and the Head of the Department, provided that they have a weighted average mark of 80% and above.

7.6 For Research based degrees (MPhil and PhD), the Non-GAP students can also be considered for GAP on completion of **one year** with at least one research publication in a peer reviewed journal and positive recommendation from the Principal Supervisor and the Head of the Department.

8.0 SELECTION PROCEDURES

Selection procedures will be as follows:

8.1 The Postgraduate Office will advertise the GAP scholarship along with the rest of the PG programs at Unitech

8.2 The PG Office will collate applications and send back to the respective academic department.

8.3 The Department will carry out screening of applications to make sure the entry requirements are met

8.4 The Departments may carry out interviews with assistance from the PG Office wherever the departments feel it necessary, and send the recommended applications to the PG Office

8.5 Upon receipt of the applications from the Academic Departments, PG office will process the applications through the Postgraduate Committee (PGC) and make recommendations to the Academic Board (AB) for final approval.

8.6 All administrative process will be facilitated by the Postgraduate School and the offer letters will be issued by the Registrar.

9.0 DUTIES OF THE GRADUATE ASSISTANT

9.1 The Graduate Assistant on appointment must register for a Master or PhD Program in the respective academic department of the University.

9.2 The duration of Assistantship is as follows

Master's Program	-	2 years
Doctor of Philosophy Program	-	4 years

9.3 A Graduate Assistantship scholar will be allocated **six** (6) teaching hours per week.

9.4 A Graduate Assistants will be required to present at least **one** (1) seminar each year.

9.5 The GAP will be for full time studies and there will be no extension of the duration beyond that specified in 9.2

10.0 ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM CONDITIONS AND ASSOCIATED COSTS

The University will provide up to a maximum of 15 **GAP scholarships for both Master and PhD** studies in any given year of the program. The number of GAP slots remains the same as was under the previous reviews. In such a case, the total costs will remain as was in the past. In the past, the University could not fulfil the quota in any given year. So far, PNGUoT did not provide any GAP Scholarship at the PhD level. If that trend continues, it is assumed that the GAP Scholarships will be provided mostly at the Master Level for the foreseeable future. One of the factors for such a trend is that the PNGUoT staff those who enroll at the Master and/or PhD programs are supported under the LNSDC. If it is assumed, in a given year all the available 15 slots are allocated, the total costs during the first year of implementation would be K290,235/ (stipend and book allowance). However, from second and subsequent years the total costs per year would stand at K592,125/. This would be a small price to pay for a long-term benefit to the PNGUoT and the country in terms of teaching, research, human capacity building for the sustainable social and economic development of the country and being the proud partner in the implementation of PNG VISION 2050.

The following benefits will be provided to the GAP Scholars. Graduate from other institutions with outstanding academic results may also be considered.

10.1 Assistantship Program Conditions (Stipend)

(a) For Master's Program

Year 1	K18, 849.00
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Year 2 K19, 626.00

(b) For PhD Program

Year 1 K29, 392.00

Year 2 K30, 359.00

Year 3 K31, 357.00

Year 4 K32, 324.00

10.2 These amounts will be paid to the Scholars as stipend and there will be no annual adjustments with CPI as these are not salaries. However, the PGC will review these rates from time to time as and when deemed necessary

10.3 An annual book and equipment allowance of K500.00 will be paid to the Scholars.

10.4 Principal supervisor and HOD will submit progress report of GAP students after every semester to the PGC. Students who fail to meet the requirement set by the department might have their Scholarship withheld on recommendation from the Principal Supervisor and HOD.

10.5 University hostel accommodation may be provided and appropriate rentals deducted from the allowance.

10.6 The Graduate Assistants will be required to pay charges for water, sewerage, and garbage collection in respect of accommodation rented by him/her from the University. The supply of electricity to rented accommodation will be by agreement between the Graduate Assistant and the Papua New Guinea Power Ltd.

10.6 The University will waive tuition fees including other approved training expenses; however, all compulsory fees be paid by the GAP students including the application processing fees and thesis printing and binding.

10.7 One biennial return ticket from Lae to his/her home province for the PhD candidate.

10.8 The GAP Scholars have to execute a bond with the University that he/she will not accept any other scholarship (in country or overseas), and/or employment during the study period. In the case of the scholars accepting another scholarship, getting an employment and/or leaving the University without completing the degree, he/she must refund all the money that was spent towards the scholarship including the tuition waiver.

10.9 In the case of termination of a GAP student on disciplinary reason, the scholar has to return all the money that the University spent on him/her

11.0 TERMINATION

11.1 If a Graduate Assistant fails to make satisfactory progress in his/her studies, the assistantship will be automatically terminated. The Supervisor will officially warn the student before they are automatically terminated.

11.2 If a Graduate Assistant accepts another scholarship, the assistantship will be automatically terminated.

12.0 PAYMENT OF ASSISTANTSHIP ALLOWNACE

The Graduate Assistant will be paid an allowance as stipend every fortnight and will receive no other entitlements.

13.0 RECREATION LEAVE

Recreation leave is 3 weeks per year and in the case of sickness, 2 weeks of leave may be granted. Candidates should take their recreation leave during the long vacation at the end of the academic year.

14.0 REFERENCES

- LNSDC Minutes 06/96
- LNSDC Minutes 01/97
- PNGUT Cadetship for Training, Library and Administrative Departments, December 1975
- General Order 9, Public Services (Management) Act, 1986
- Copy of TOR for revision of GAP Program, April 14, 2018