

UNIQUENESS AND FOCUS OF UTAMU GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

1) INTRODUCTION

Uganda Technology and Management University; acronymised as UTAMU, has a range of graduate programmes all accredited by National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Constructed around a deliberate philosophy of making graduate education flexible to a number of working class students but maintaining the necessary rigor and tradition of graduate training in accordance with national and regional legislations, the programmes offered broadly integrate technology and management. The programmes also intelligently integrate theory and practice. Each of the disciplines has a deliberate inclination to understanding the practices of that particular discipline as well as an understanding of its evolution as an area of academic field of study. A review of the curriculum line up on both postgraduate diploma programmes and masters degrees will show this philosophical justification.

A second; and more important characteristic of all our programmes is the interdisciplinary approach taken. There are for example courses which are shared by most disciplines partly because they represent the important management challenges faced in the world of work today across a number of organisations. At a Master's level for example, each of the students is expected to have practical skills of entrepreneurship, consultancy skills and a deep understanding of the legal and ethical issues in general terms but specifically also tuned to the specific areas of specialization. The specializations in each of the programmes have been carefully crafted by a highly knowledgeable team of experts in each of the fields. The line up of the courses aim at giving **knowledge, skills** but also touching on **competence** enhancement as well as **changing attitudes** and **behaviors** of our graduates to work and personal life in a world characterized by intense competition, change and moral deficit.

2) THE STRUCTURE OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

The university through its 'think-tank' of intellectual priests has done extensive comparative analysis of graduate programmes in different countries. This think-tank of the university's curriculum doctrine comprised of people who have been at the helm of graduate education in Uganda. Using experiences of the major weaknesses and strengths of graduate education in Uganda and region, the team crafted the structure of the graduate programmes. Each of the programmes has the thinking and input of top experts in the field within the country.

2.1. Postgraduate Diploma Programmes

There are currently seven postgraduate diploma programmes run under the two schools of computing and engineering as well as the school of business and management. These include:

- I. PGD in Computing
- II. PGD in Project Monitoring and Evaluation
- III. PGD in Project Planning and Management
- IV. PGD in Oil Governance and Management
- V. PGD in Human Resource Management and Development
- VI. PGD in Public Administration
- VII. PGD in Public Procurement

The distinctiveness of each of the above programmes lies on its integrated nature as well as its focus on imparting knowledge, skills and changing attitudes. The list of courses covered under each of these programmes is testimony to this assertion. The courses logically deal with each of the disciplines in terms of both practices and theoretical developments. There is a philosophical logic imbedded in the lineup of each of the courses and this is intended to produce a graduate with sharp analytical and conceptual reasoning to improve decision making in organizational set ups of all contexts-public sector, private sector NGO and the CSOs in general. The country's national planning frameworks namely the National Development plan and the Vision 2040 (which tally with what other countries in Africa have done) has also shaped the curriculum line up. This was combined with the key disciplinary developments in each of the field. By going through the PGD courses at UTAMU, the students should have an experience they will not obtain in any other institution. This remains our promise.

2.2. Masters Degree programmes

There are currently several specialized master's degrees each with different specializations. These programmes offer the best any student desirous of attaining a robust qualification with 21st century thinking can desire. The following Master's degrees are on offer through the respective schools:

- 1) Masters in Project Monitoring and Evaluation
- 2) Master's in Public Administration and management
 - a. MPA (Public Administration)
 - b. MPA (Public Policy)
 - c. MPA (Public Procurement)
 - d. MPA (Institutional Leadership and Governance)

- 3) Executive Masters in Business Administration (EMBA) with following specializations:
 - a. Financial Management
 - b. Human Resource Management and Development
 - c. Oil Governance and Management
 - d. Public sector Management
 - e. Project planning and Management
- 4) **Master of Business Administration (MBA)**
 - a. MBA (International Business)
 - b. MBA (Accounting & Finance)
 - c. MBA (Oil and Gas Management)
 - d. MBA (Human Resource Management)
 - e. MBA (Institutional Management & Leadership)
- 5) Master of Science in Computing with the following specializations:=
 - a. MSc. Computing (Information Systems)
 - b. MSc. Computing (Mobile Computing)
 - c. MSc. Computing (Computer Networks)
 - d. MSc. Computing (Computer Security)
- 6) **Masters in Monitoring and Evaluation**
- 7) **Master of Information Systems**
- 8) **Master of Information Technology (MIT)**

3) THE MODE OF DELIVERY

Both PGDs and Master's Degrees are offered on a block release mode of delivery. The block release mode is cohort-based; meaning the group of students who enter this program will begin together and continue together through the specified sequence of required courses leading to the award. The courses in each cohort will be offered only once, so a student must be prepared to take the courses as they are made available in the next offer. It will be in line with UTAMU admission periods. However, it is possible for a student doing a Master's degree to do recommended courses (where transfer of credits has been offered) with the PGD students in the semester where they are offered. The university has also the option of arranging special face to face sessions for those students directly on the Master's with additional courses to offer as recommended.

Block-mode of study is ideal for students in full-time employment who find it easier to take few weeks away from work rather than being at the university or institute for full

time. Under the Block mode courses are taught in a block (could be one week, two weeks or any other preferred mode). These constitute the face to face sessions (f2f). At UTAMU, a face to face session is for two weekends defined to include Friday 6.00pm to 9.00 pm, Saturday from 8.00am to 7.00 pm and Sunday from 8.00 am to 7.00 pm. Under this arrangement, students are only required to be on campus for the specific weekends that each of the face to face sessions is arranged. During this face to face, all courses in the semester are taught. The teaching ensures that half of the units to be covered for a semester are intensively covered. Students are then given all learning materials through our e-learning platform together with the access on e-library. On the e-learning platform, there is a discussion forum where lecturers post discussion issues and all students are expected to respond. The system monitors when and how long a student is on the e-learning platform.

In the 8th week of the semester, students come back for their second f2f and they are required to do tests in each of the modules for the first one hour of each of the course. On completion of the second f2f, students are released to go and prepare for their end of examinations in the last weeks of the 17 weeks that constitute a semester.

During the time when students are not on f2f, they are expected to complete all the required assignments, research and revision but will be required to consult the professor's responsible for respective courses. Specific block-mode courses are offered in designated weeks in line with the university scheduling. Block-mode courses are compulsory and are normally run on campus, but may also be delivered, by arrangement, at an organization's own site especially for those students who are outside the country.

During the f2f, intensive teaching models, otherwise known as 'accelerated', 'time-shortened', 'block format', 'compressed' courses or 'intensive modes of delivery' (IMD), is applied. Some institutions define these differently and the definitions, and the different terms used, are crucial to understanding how the system works. Trials have been conducted with block teaching in the tertiary sector and they have met with some success (Gaubatz, 2003). There is a growing demand for flexible/distance delivery graduate programs. Support is given for innovative programs that demonstrate high quality, provide students with genuine professional development and lead to opportunities for further study. Block mode teaching has been successfully implemented in other countries for over two decades. Block mode allows students to remain as part of their work employment and specifically targets those students who:

- Are currently employed full-time;
- Are foreign students,
- Are busy managers and administrators;

- are from rural, regional and remote or isolated areas; or
- Have family/kin obligations that do not allow them attend regular classes.

This mode of delivery provides opportunities for students to complete a university course whilst still living in their rural or remote communities or while continuing to do their official work. However, block mode demands that students work well independently and are able to pace themselves so that the inter-block period is utilized effectively. This creates discipline and independent time management; a culture that UTAMU prides in as far as its approach to education is concerned. The university avoids class-room knowledge-giving but adopts student-centered approaches to teaching and learning. Students may also be required to undertake placements in surrounding locations and within their work places, or local communities, depending upon the requirements of a particular unit of study.

The nature of management and administrative problems experienced in the world of work today demand graduates with the right attitude, skills and competencies to service as a vacation. The use of guest speakers in addition to the above mode further cement the capacity of the students to blend theory with practice. As professional programs, emphasis is placed upon learning administrative concepts, processes, and techniques that are associated with managing organizations within the changing environment but also inculcate a thinking about the practical challenges of work environments. This second goal is attained through experience sharing with industry experts. All programmes are designed with the learner's expectations at the forefront, and carefully blend the theoretical concepts with practical dimensions which encourage a broadened academic and professional perspective.

4) RESEARCH AND SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENT

Research and supervision is core at the Master's level. The Managers of different programmes have extensive knowledge of the challenges graduate students that often go through especially at the research level. Our synergy and uniqueness will be around how we manage this core academic process. Our philosophy shall always be that a student MUST complete in a period where he or she is expected to complete. This has to be attained within the highest quality and ethically sound standards as well as the necessary scientific rigor. Research and supervision arrangements are clearly understood through the following lenses.

4.1. Student obligations

The University expects its graduates to have the following attributes:

- Think, act and behave like researchers and this entails the characteristics listed below
- Have a profound respect for truth and intellectual integrity, and for the ethics of research
- Have an advanced ability to initiate research and to formulate viable research questions within their areas of specializations and taking into account workplace organizational problems and the developments in their fields of specialisations
- Have a demonstrated capacity to design, conduct and report sustained and original research for a graduate study programme
- Have the capacity to contextualise research within an international corpus of specialist knowledge in each of the disciplines
- Have an advanced ability to evaluate and synthesize research-based and scholarly literature
- Have an advanced understanding of key disciplinary and multi-disciplinary norms and perspectives relevant to the field of specialization
- Have highly developed problem-solving abilities and flexibility of approach
- Have the capacity to disseminate the results of research and scholarship by oral and written communication to a variety of audiences
- Have the capacity to cooperate with and respect the contributions of fellow researchers and scholars
- Have an advanced facility in the management of information, including the application of computer systems and software where appropriate to the candidate's field of study (those specializing in Computer science)
- Have an understanding of the relevance and value of their research to national and international communities of scholars and collaborators
- Have an awareness where appropriate of issues related to intellectual property management
- Have an ability to formulate policy applications to relevant agencies based on the findings emerging from research

The above skills and competences will be imparted through how the research methods courses in each programmes are to be taught. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques from inception of the research process to its conclusion are covered. This course is only taught by senior experts with more than 10 years of experience teaching the same course to graduate students. Research methods is taught from a practical point of view by experts who have supervised graduate students and are conversant with most common challenges faced by this group of students and the international best practices.

4.2. Supervisor requirements

The main supervisor must be a PhD holder in the same discipline and with at least two years of research experience and should have published at least three papers in either referenced journals or as book chapters in a book with an ISBN number published by a recognized publisher. Only under minor exceptional circumstances may this requirement be waived as it distinctively will differentiate UTAMU from other institutions in similar business. The detailed guidelines on supervision as indicated in the Graduate student Handbook of the university apply. Flexibility may be possible beyond the guidelines specified by the handbook on a case by case basis but at no time will the university tolerate supervisors who do not give adequate time to their student. Each supervisor will account for students allocated and who have completed. We pay our supervisors handsomely and on time and at no time will a supervisor claim to be busy and cannot afford adequate supervision time to the student.

As a university, management detests bad or worst supervisors who often share three unforgivable characteristics which will be addressed by the universities:

1. They do not read student's written submissions
2. They never attend supervisory meetings
3. They are selfish, career-obsessed bastards

Different supervisors inevitably have different styles. However, the university encourages supervisor of graduate students to adapt their personal styles to suit the needs of particular students and expectations of the scientific community. The following suggestions will be important:-

- Decide on the right style for you and your student;
- Find an appropriate balance between heavy-handed dominance and hands-off neglect;
- Consider questions such as;
 - How much should you push your views as opposed to giving them freedom to learn from their mistakes?
 - How much should you do for them?
- Be sensitive to how students respond to your style and be prepared to adjust it, if appropriate;
- Seek help from more experienced colleagues if you have any concerns.

4.3. Research Coordination

The university has a graduate school which effectively coordinates all issues to do with research for graduate students. Scheduling methodology workshops, timely

appointment of examiners, timely feedback to students who have submitted their work for examination etc will characterize the systems.

4.4. Senior administrative staffs

The university has a team of senior staffs that handle graduate students from application to graduation. All these staffs have extensive experience and all are graduate with good Master's degrees. They have a high degree of analytical ability and they are supported by a highly competent director of academic affairs.

5) STUDENT MANAGEMENT

Unlike other universities in this country; and considering the philosophy under which the university was conceived, graduate students will be treated as such. Every staff that interfaces with graduate students is under 'oath' to deal with them as adults and mature. The language and expressions that will be applied while dealing with graduate students has been prescribed to all staffs. More importantly during face to face sessions, all graduate students are entitled to:-

- (1) Free tea served throughout the day at each person's pleasure
- (2) Free drinking water provided throughout the days of the sessions
- (3) Free wireless internet for those with laptop computers and an easily accessible computer lab for students who don't have the laptop. This computer lab is open throughout the night
- (4) Free parking, secure space
- (5) Free access to the online-library with all reading materials
- (6) Access to all administrators and managers of the university

6) CREDIT TRANSFER POLICY AND EXEMPTIONS

UTAMU recognizes previous qualifications obtained from recognized universities and institutions.