

CHUSS holds the 6th Annual Gerda Henkel Graduate Supervisors Retooling Seminar for Cohort 2022

The important role of teaching and supervision and the fundamental competencies that ought to be developed in a successful postgraduate student may be affected by the supervisor-supervisee relationship and strategies used in negotiating the demands of teaching, supervision, administration and research

Currently universities are expected to churn out a cadre of graduates with strong research credentials and the rigor of a PhD programme is best placed to produce such people. Yet, many obstacles to the recruitment of qualified candidates into such programmes have been identified; principally the length of time spent on training, the human capacity and infrastructural gaps.

In addition, at the time of commencing PhD, the candidate is frequently an expert or even a leader in their own discipline. It is often difficult to identify a supervisor who actually knows more about the field than they do. Furthermore, they are mature students, with much life experience and a self-belief which substantially alters the power relationships between the student and supervisor.

It is against this background that Graduate supervisors and coordinators, Deans, Heads of Departments and administrative staff from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) on 23rd February 2023 converged at the Hilton Gardens Kamwokya to reflect on their roles and expectations as the university strives to become research led.

This was the sixth supervisors retooling seminar organized under the auspices of the CHUSS Gerda Henkel PhD Funded program for cohort 2022. The supervisors were called upon to be parental, empathetic and to use integrated approaches of supervision. This is not only important for a robust and timely mentorship for graduate students and improving their completion rates but also safeguarding the image of the university and improving the university ranking.

The seminar was facilitated by long serving senior academics who shared their expertise and experiences in teaching at Makerere university. Prof. Abasi Kyimba deliberated on the Approaches of Graduating Training in CHUSS and Prof. Edward Wamala on types of PhD supervision while the Deputy Director(Administration and Graduate Training) Assoc. Prof. Julius Kikooma covered the aspect of Policies and Processes of Graduate training at Makerere University;.

Associate prof. Grace Kibanja gave insights on the Ethical considerations in PhD Research while Dr. Edgar Taylor (Supervisor) and Dr. Deo Kannamwangi (a supervisee) from Kyambogo University shared their personal experiences on PhD supervision at Makerere University.

While opening the workshop, the Principal CHUSS represented by her Deputy Associate Professor Eric Awich Ochen commended the project coordinators for this initiative and supporting the university quest on focusing and improving graduate training.

“It is important from time to time to reflect on what our role is and what is expected of us. The university is in the process of becoming research led and we have made a stride already. For the third year running, we had over 100 PhDs which is very big for Makerere University and we all know that CHUSS has made a contribution to this.

In the recent graduation of February 2023 we had 25 PhDs, the previous one we had 22 and in 2021 we had 21 PhDs. It is our hope and request to you our supervisors and the seniors here including all of us to achieve more”, The Principal urged.

Dr. Awich appreciated the Gerda Henkel Foundation for supporting PhD training acknowledging that it has contributed significantly to the huge numbers of PhDs in the college and university as a whole .The Principal further commended the PhD training through the cohort system as efficient.

“Many colleges have funding from donors but I think CHUSS is a very good example in terms of how this cohort system has worked out. I would like to encourage the Deans and Heads of department to ensure and to make it easier for our students to go through the process. Our customers are the students so if we don’t make it easy for them, how will we attract more students”, Awich advised.

While closing the workshop the Dean School of Liberal and Performing Arts Assoc. Prof. Patrick Mangeni appreciated the college leadership, project committee members and staff for organizing a series of the retooling seminars.

“Our seniors in this area we also thank you so much. I know year in and year out, we do have these activities and there is a difference we are noticing on the ground. There is overall improvement though there are areas we still have to work on. In these particular workshops we get knowledge, feedback, which is very critical”, Prof. Mangeni said.

Prof. Mangeni thanked the participants for the open discussions and expressed the need for project coordinators to deliberate on getting exit meetings with graduate student, to fill forms before leaving so that the university can draw on their feedback and dedicate sessions for supervisors to improve on graduate training.

“We have to guide these students on what to do but these are also human beings. At times a person you are supervising is married. Ideally they have come up to study and get a degree and that’s what you should help them with. We need sessions to prepare our students,” the professor said.

Mak CHUSS Gerda Henkel PhD Scholarships

CHUSS projects’ Coordinator Dr. Edgar Nabutanyi said the college has been retooling supervisors for the last six years. He congratulated senior staff who have supported the college initiative by sharing their experiences and knowledge in regards to mentorship and supervision.

Gerda Henkel Foundation he said, is a humanitarian foundation based in Germany which, on African continent has funded research and graduate students through Lisa Maskell fund since 2009 -2010 when they partnered with the University of Stellenbosch under a premiership program which was called Partnership for Africa's Next Generation of Academics (PANGeA). PANGeA is a collaborative network of leading African universities developing research capacity and confidence in bringing African expertise to Africa's challenges. The universities involved in the PANGeA network are the University of Botswana, the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, the University of Ghana, Makerere University, the University of Malawi, the University of Nairobi in Kenya, Stellenbosch University, and the University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon.

In a bid to diversify in 2015 PANGeA got into contact with Prof Edward Kirumira who had was the then chairperson and Makerere University was added in November 2016.

Dr. Nabutanyi reported that, the 1st cohort (2017) have all graduated with a PhD in humanities of Makerere University except one candidate.

In 2018, CHUSS admitted the 2nd cohort (10 students) and are in various stages of completion but was greatly affected by the pandemic. In 2019 the college had the 3rd cohort of 10 students, in 2020 another cohort of 8 students and the 2021 cohort that had 10 students.

Dr. Nabutanyi also reported that not only has the Gerda Henkel support made a community of scholars in the college, but, has also made CHUSS a vibrant intellectual community.

“By the end with project, CHUSS would have educated around 57 PhD students. The funding from Gerda Henkel has been instrumental because it has supported in a significant way the departments in the college. The college has also benefited in terms of infrastructure. It has also contributed to the intellectual life in the college, convened so far seven symposiums, the CHUSS conversations and also seminars”. He added

He asked the staff and supervisors to treat the funded students as university students without special treatment pledging that the college and coordinating office was open to the supervisors to interact in any way possible in a manner that can help facilitate the training.

Report compiled by;

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