Facilitating the Transition to Postgraduate Studies: What can we learn from first year experience?

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Professor
Faculty of Electrical & Electronic Engineering
# My Experience as Postgraduate Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>QUALIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994 – 1997 (AGE : 26)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITY TECHNOLOGY MALAYSIA (UTM)</td>
<td>Bachelor Science in Electronic Engineering (Electronic Communication) (Second Class Upper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 – 2007 (AGE : 36)</td>
<td>The University of Warwick</td>
<td>PhD Engineering</td>
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</tbody>
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Goals For This Presentation
Contents

• Changes that students face
• Beginnings: Transitions to Postgraduate Study
• Continuations: transitions to university
• Mind the Gap?
• Successful First Year Student
• Target outcomes
Student View ......

"I'm only here for a year and I want to take part in activities and focus on my studies and I find it difficult to find a balance."

"You want to experience something different to undergraduate freshers. It would have been great to have had a master focused freshers’ week."

"I was not prepared for the amount and intensity of work even compared to my final year undergraduate course. It's been a big step up."
Changes That Students Face

– Students undergoing the transition to university face changes in many life areas

– Academic
– Personal
– Social
– Cultural
Changes That Students Face

– Academic

• change to advance lecture format
• reading load and volume of learning increase
• responsibility: “nobody’s going to take attendance”
• time outside class increases & time inside classes shrinks
Changes That Students Face

- Academic (cont’d)
  - need to structure own time and study
  - need to balance work, school and social life
  - essay writing issues (e.g., academic honesty, citations, the writing process, argument versus exposition etc.)
  - understanding how ideas of the course go together and how they will be examined
  - learning how to study effectively
Changes That Students Face

– Academic (cont’d)
  • learning how to read and listen actively
  • need to develop critical and analytical thinking skills
  • changes in ways of knowing and with it a change in the meaning of learning and education
  • consequent change in perception of their own roles, the roles of professor /lecturers, and the level of difficulty of university work
Changes That Students Face

– **Personal/Social/Cultural**
  
  • entering new phase of adulthood; relationships with parents and peers change towards interdependence

  • being/studying away from home

  • life, career, and academic goal setting

  • “freedom” issues – social activities, time, family (if you are married), etc.
Changes That Students Face

- **Personal/Social/Cultural (cont’d)**
  - developing awareness of the new environment
  - fitting in and making new friends
  - navigating the help sources available on campus
  - becoming comfortable with size and diversity of campus
  - new institutional processes (e.g., services offered in the GUIDANCE office now divided into Counselling, Advising, Student Affairs, Career Services, etc.)
Beginnings: Transitions To Postgraduate Study

– Students report being concerned about:
  • Choosing the right program and the right school
  • Finances: tuition fees, scholarships, bursaries
  • Relationship of academic study to career aspirations
  • Influences from others regarding what/where to study
  • Knowing what to expect
Postgraduate courses usually a higher level of intellect and comprehension and a significant amount of independent study and research, alongside active participation within the academic community.

The short term nature of most postgraduates programmes, means that students must make a SWIFT transition to this level of study, in particular in terms of skills development, as well as having an eye on where they are going at the end.
Continuations: transitions to university –

- Many students under-estimate the challenge of master / PhD level
- Students more likely to under-estimate the time commitment required per course
- Poor time management skills
- Ability to write (or understand the need to write) structured prose variable
- Understanding ‘critical argument’ (evidence based argument)
- Integrating reference/resource material
- Underdeveloped or timid interpersonal communication skills
Continuations: transitions to university
Continuations: transitions to university
Mind the Gap...

- Students typically require some of the following:
  - Academic skills
  - Skills for living
  - Knowledge about purpose of higher education
Mind the GAP

- **Academic Skills**
  - Note-taking
  - Preparing for exams & test-taking
  - Effective reading
  - Research and library skills
  - Time management and planning skills
  - Self-regulatory skills (emotional, academic, motivational)
  - Writing skills
Mind the Gap

- Academic Skills (cont’d)
  • Public speaking skills
  • Critical thinking
  • Understanding learning styles
  • Computing skills
  • Connecting with faculty
Mind the Gap?

- **Skills For Living**
  - Career exploration
  - Learning in diverse community
  - Health and wellness
  - Self knowledge and personal awareness
  - Relationship and interpersonal skills
  - Stress and anxiety management
Mind the Gap?

Skills For Living (cont’d)

• Values clarification/decisions
• Goal setting
• Listening skills
• Volunteerism and community service
• Awareness of current societal issues
• Conflict resolution
• Money management
Mind the Gap?

– Knowledge about About Higher Education

• Purpose of higher education and institution
• Concept of disciplines and inter-disciplinary studies
• Value of community involvement
• Location of campus resources and facilities
• Policies, procedures, regulations (e.g., dropping courses)
• History of the university/college
• Institutional traditions
Target outcomes
Target outcomes

- an eagerness to attend, take part, and get involved on campus
- a sense of belonging and connectedness to the university
- an ability to identify those skills that will lead to success and a commitment to use them
- an awareness of success-supporting resources on campus and how to access them
- an openness to change and exploration
Target outcomes

- an acceptance that they are not alone, that others are experiencing the same kinds of changes
- the confidence that they can be successful
- the knowledge that success doesn’t just happen, but that success largely depends on them taking responsibility for their learning
- an understanding that the transition isn’t a singular event in time, but that it takes place over time
How to FAIL…..

– Rarely attend lectures & tutorials
– No prep for lectures/tutorials
– Do not find a social group within classes early in the semester (before week 4)
– Fail to complete all assessments/meet deadlines

– Don’t seek academic assistance
– High hours paid employment per week
– Spend too little time on campus engaged in research
– Spend too little time on campus
Congratulations Dr Mohammad!

Statement from the Chairman:
– “We have discussed and agree to award you the Doctor Philosophy subject to minor corrections” Congratulation Dr Mohammad....

With Great Power
Lies

Great Responsibility

With Small Knowledge
Lies

Great Responsibility
Key words to success postgraduate study

Induction and Transition

Good Practice Guide

feedback development mentoring
skills academic community guidance
communications achievement prospective
experience differences expectations
opportunities challenges belonging
students diversity holistic
meaningful partnership understanding
engagement
Conclude:
Successful First Year Students

– High level of engagement on campus (academic and social)
– Goal orientated (know why they are there)
– Competent **academic** English Language skills
– Good communication skills (not just electronic)
– High cultural capital in family
– Good work/study/life balance

AND ALWAYS…..”POT”
My Graduated Students

- My Graduated Phd students:
  - Dr Aws Zuheer Yonis (2013)
  - Dr Mayada Faris Ghanim (2013)
  - Dr Rahmat Talib (2015)
  - Dr Majdi Faraq Mohammaed (2017)
  - Dr. Bhagwan Das (2017)

- My Graduated Master Research students:
  - Nur Munirah bte Abdullah (2013) (Co-Suv)
  - Siti Zuraidah bte Zanudin (2015)
  - Laheeb Mohammad (2016)
My Current PhD Students

1. Ir. Mohd Riduan b. Mohd Shariff
2. Nur Munirah bte Abdullah
3. Ariffuddin bin Joret
4. Ali Abdulhafi Elrowayati
5. Noridah Mohd Ridzuan
6. Mohamed Mahmud Muftah Shomani

VIVA : 16 August 2018

7. Wafi Adam Bakhit Mabrouk
8. Anis Nabihah bte Ibrahim
9. Ahmed B. Feituri
10. Abdullah Qasim
11. Mohammad Salih
My Graduated Master Course
Work Students (Dissertation)

1. Mariyam Jameelah bte Mohd Yusof
2. Fatma AbdalKarim Tahir
3. Dineshwaran
4. Wafi Adam Bakhit Mabrouk
5. Hajer Abdulkrim T. Emhemed
6. Adeb Ali Mohammed Ahmed
7. Najlaa AbdKarem
8. Qawan Abdullah
9. Ahmed Saeed Obied
10. Hind Mowafaq Taha
11. Umi Mariana Bte Mamat
12. Intan Shafinaz bte Mohammad
13. Salmi bte Zakaria
14. Shahrul Radzi b. Mad Zaki@Abdullah
15. Azrini bte Idris
16. Mohammed Khaleel Ibrahim
17. Noridah Mohd Ridzuan
18. Bong Siaw Wee
19. Wong Sie Woo
20. Sylvia Ong Ai Ling
21. Amer-M-Aswadi
22. Majdi Farag Mohammed Elbireki
23. Aws Zuheer Yonis

My Graduated Bachelor Students :
47 Degree Project Thesis

Experience :
As External / Internal Examiner : 10
As Chairman Viva : 10
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

PLEASE CLAP AND DON'T ASK TOUGH QUESTIONS