Representatives of King’s College London Visit HKU

To strengthen the partnership between HKU and King’s College London (KCL), Professor Vaughan Robinson, Director of the Graduate School in KCL, and Ms Anna Debska, Manager of King’s Worldwide Office, visited HKU in March 2012. Professor Paul K.H. Tam, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Dean of the Graduate School, and Professor Nirmala Rao, Executive Associate Dean, together with representatives from Faculties, met them to discuss ways to enhance the KCL–HKU Joint PhD programmes and share valuable experiences of programme administration.

The Office of International Student Exchange and the Postgraduate Student Association (PGSA) also held fruitful discussions with KCL delegates to explore the possibility of building further connections between students from both institutions.

Swire Scholarships for Research Students in Residence at Robert Black College

Through the generosity of a donation by the Swire Company, the Swire Scholarships were established to provide a learning opportunity for young members of the University’s academic community to reside in the Robert Black College, and thereby interact with international scholars. Swire Scholars are provided free accommodation with breakfast at the College and are expected to actively interact with the visiting academics residing in the College, so as to enrich their learning experiences, and to provide the visiting academics with good company.

All full-time research students who are registered for an MPhil or a PhD degree at the University are eligible to apply for the Swire Scholarships. Applications are normally called for—via bulk mail, the HKU intranet, and the Research Services website—in September every year.

For the Swire Scholarships 2011–12, the selection process concluded in December 2011. The recipients of the Scholarships are as follows:

Mr. Erick Onyango K’Omolo
PhD student, Department of Law

Mr. Pei Qing
PhD student, Department of Geography

Mr. Hari Krishna Yalamanchili
PhD student, Department of Biochemistry

Many congratulations to the three recipients on their achievements!
Graduate School Award Presentation Ceremony 2011

To recognize the achievements of outstanding research postgraduate (RPG) students who have obtained various fellowships, prizes and awards in and outside HKU, an award presentation ceremony was held in mid-December 2011.

The most prestigious awards are the Li Ka Shing Prizes, which are highly competitive and the recipients are the best of the elite students. Following a video presentation, the audience had a deeper understanding of the awardees’ research.

Li Ka Shing Prizes (2009-2010)

Best MPhil and PhD Theses in the Faculties of Architecture, Arts, Business & Economics, Education, Law and Social Sciences

Mr PEI Qing (MPhil, Department of Geography)
Thesis Title: Climate Change and Grain Market in Pre-industrial Europe

Dr PAN Lu (PhD, School of Humanities (Comparative Literature))
Thesis Title: In-visible Palimpsest: Memory, Space and Modernity in Berlin and Shanghai

Dr XU Jianhua (PhD, Department of Sociology)
Thesis Title: Motorcycle Taxi Drivers and Motorcycle Ban Policy in the Pearl River Delta

Best MPhil and PhD Theses in the Faculties of Dentistry, Engineering, Medicine and Science

Mr ZHANG Zheng (MPhil, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Thesis Title: Passivity Assessment and Model Order Reduction for Linear Time-invariant Descriptor Systems in VLSI Circuit Simulation

Dr CHAN Chuen Wing (PhD, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Thesis Title: In vivo MRI Study of the Visual System in Normal, Developing and Injured Brains

Dr CHEN Leilei (PhD, Department of Clinical Oncology)
Thesis Title: Identification and Characterization of CHD1L in Hepatocellular Carcinoma

Awards for Outstanding Research Postgraduate Students were presented to RPG students who have submitted a thesis of exceptional quality and demonstrated outstanding performance in other academic aspects. A maximum of 10 students receive these awards each year and the 2009–2010 winners are as follows:

Miss CASTILHO Antonia Genevieve (MPhil, Department of Pathology)
Mr CHAN Ka Shing Kevin (MPhil, Department of Psychiatry)
Miss CHOI Sin Man (MPhil, Department of Mathematics)
Dr LEE Wing Sze Wincy (PhD, Faculty of Education)
Miss LI Cheuk Yin (MPhil, Department of Sociology)
Dr LIU Xinyuan (PhD, Department of Chemistry)
Dr MA Shing Ka’l (PhD, Department of Earth Sciences)
Dr MACRI Franco David (PhD, School of Humanities (History))
Dr SO Hon Cheong (PhD, Department of Psychiatry)
Dr TANG Sze Man (PhD, Department of Psychiatry)

For the complete list of recipients of various awards, please visit http://www.gradsch.hku.hk/gradsch/2011_awardees.pdf. Our heartfelt congratulations to all of the awardees!
Some Thoughts on Research Strategies

Professor Victor O. K. Li, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

Irrespective of the field of research, identifying a suitable research topic is perhaps one of the most important decisions to be made. The advice provided in this article is generally applicable to most fields of research in science and technology.

First, researchers should learn the history of the field and identify the research trends, key inventions, and key challenges. Understanding the present state and future development of the field will help to build a solid foundation. Moreover, analytical skills (e.g. theories and certain techniques) and practical skills (i.e. the ability and patience to learn the details of existing work) should also be acquired to perform research.

Before starting research, existing research approaches should be understood to pick a research strategy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evolutionary Approach</th>
<th>Revolutionary Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds on existing research, identifies its strengths and weaknesses, and comes up with improvements</td>
<td>Starts a new research field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk and Impact</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be relatively low risk and impact</td>
<td>• May be high risk as one needs to convince others the proposed problem is important and the proposed solution is appropriate. It may run into dead ends after a long research process</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May be an important contribution to the research community</td>
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</table>

RPg students should note the following when formulating their research strategies:

- Do not be afraid to challenge established beliefs. Something published may not be correct or the best solution. After all, technology is advanced as earlier mistakes are corrected and improvements are made on prior state-of-the-art innovations;

- There is a certain element of luck in research. Very few researchers start out determining to start a new research field, or to correct an established theorem. However, if one runs into such a ‘high risk, high return’ problem, one should not shy away from it;

- Take the time, up to one-third of the PhD programme duration, to formulate the appropriate research problem. New students tend to jump into a problem without undertaking a comprehensive literature review and investigating the alternatives. Ensure one has formulated a problem which is enjoyable to work on;

- Problem formulation is much more than just identifying the research topic. Perform extensive survey to understand the important issues related to the problem (e.g. why does a certain researcher solve a problem in a certain way? Is it the best way or just an easy but inappropriate way?) Come up with research approaches and contingency plans. Discuss the selected topic with other researchers, including the supervisor;

- Browse the internet and read recent conference proceedings for ideas. Attend conferences to talk to fellow researchers if possible. Websites and forums will also introduce innovations and new ideas but be cautious as often internet material is not refereed. Work published in journals is important and of good quality but may be outdated due to the long journal review cycle. Technology applications provide a different perspective from theoretical research and can help stimulate new research problems;

- Focus on important problems that are relevant, in which any progress made, albeit small, will have impact; and

- Investigate problems that can be at the intersection of different disciplines or at the intersection of different specialties within the same discipline. Researchers can employ ‘a new method to solve an old (established) problem’ or employ ‘an old (established) method to solve a new problem’.
Mr Richard Abrahams is now pursuing his study in the Department of Geography at the University of Hong Kong. The HKPF is a prestigious fellowship established by the Research Grants Council in 2009 through which top students from around the world are selected to pursue their PhD studies in Hong Kong. A monthly stipend of HK$20,000 and a conference and research-related travel allowance of HK$10,000 is provided each year for a period of three years, and about 135 PhD fellowships were awarded in 2011–2012.

Unlike many other foreign students new to Hong Kong, Richard has already developed close ties with the Chinese and oriental culture. After his undergraduate study in History and Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Nottingham in the UK, Richard stayed in Ningbo and Hangzhou for his postgraduate study and work for several years. Spending his childhood in the national parks of the UK close to his home, Richard developed a fondness towards nature. His stay in China has deeply impressed him with the good mix of nature’s wonders that the vast country has to offer. ‘You can find beaches, mountains, grasslands and even deserts, all in China. The wide diversity of natural landscapes in this country is simply awesome,’ he explained enthusiastically.

Drawing on the strong network of his supervisor, Richard conducts research on ‘Identity and Power in Tourism: Ideology and the ‘Other’ in China’s Tourist Industry’. The natural landscape of the dragon’s back terraced fields in Guilin, populated by ethnic minorities, has become an important tourist destination. From the perspective of human geography, the PhD student is studying the change of land use from agriculture to tourism, the sustainability of eco-tourism and its potential environmental impacts. Being a foreigner who speaks fluent Mandarin has given Richard ample advantages in conducting interviews, as past experience has shown him that villagers are more willing to talk to him because ‘they were friendly as well as curious’!

Richard enjoys being a foreign student and an expatiate in Hong Kong. Among the factors that made him favor HKU as his research base in Hong Kong, it was his supervisor’s extensive network, the excellent library resources and the freedom of research that impressed the Nottingham scholar most. ‘The academic freedom and friendly study environment at HKU have made my study here an even more pleasant experience!’ he added.

Like every other scholar who is an expert in his specialized areas, Richard possesses a dream to further contribute to the academic arena after he has obtained his doctoral degree. He is particularly interested in taking up a teaching post at a local university, where he can deliver his specialized knowledge to students who possess enthusiasm in human geography and are also interested in studying the interlocking relationship between nature and society – just like him!
RPG Candidates Showed Their Talent Through Music

As well as presenting their ideas in words and numbers, our research postgraduate students also express themselves through musical notes. In the concert ‘A Musical Celebration’—to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Department of Music in February 2012—three HKU composers performed their pieces to an audience of music lovers in a very enjoyable evening.

Gordon Fung Dic Lun
*A Mid-Autumn’s Daydream* (秋聲夢迴)

Gordon is studying music composition for an MPhil degree. He has performed in Zagreb, Amsterdam and Germany and received an Honorary Award in the Migratory Journeys International Composition Competition and 3rd prize in the 9th Italy Percussion Competition for Composition.

Daniel Lo Ting Cheung
*Galactic Gala* (天外天)

Daniel is studying the perception of sonic order/structure in contemporary music for an MPhil degree. He won 3rd prize and a special prize for the best chamber music in the 1st Annual International Antonín Dvořák Composition Competition in Prague and 1st prize in the MeA Competition Contest in Italy. His works have been performed by world renowned ensembles and performers such as the Piccolo Orchestra (Italy) and violinist Yao Jue.

Austin Yip Ho Kwen
*A Tomb Odyssey* (遊塚)

After receiving a high distinction from the University of California Berkeley, Austin’s PhD study at HKU is about how a composer should identify him/herself in the globalized world. His work has been widely performed in Asia, the USA, Australia and Germany and his latest commissioned work will be premiered during the Hong Kong Arts Festival 2012.

University Consortium on Aquatic Sciences – How Research Students Can Go Beyond Publishing Papers

Kevin Ho PhD Candidate, School of Biological Sciences

Postgraduate students can achieve much more beyond the important scholarly activities of producing theses and journal papers, and the University Consortium on Aquatic Sciences (UCAS) Postgraduate Symposium is a good example. Established by postgraduate students from HKU and Xiamen University in 2008, UCAS aims to bring together students from different backgrounds to communicate ideas, exchange knowledge and foster potential collaborations among research students for shaping them into future top global scientists.

UCAS has organized 4 annual symposia. We aim at building the confidence of students in presenting research, and also encourage interdisciplinary networking amongst aquatic scientists. Oral presentations, debates and eco-tours have been conducted and over 140 participants from 12 institutions have joined the events. Several collaborations have been initiated. The 4th UCAS symposium was held in March 2012 and the participants from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan enthusiastically shared their research experience.

UCAS will proactively expand the network and opportunities for engaging and nurturing more budding aquatic scientists in the region. We will co-organize a public education programme with the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence of China in summer 2012, and the 5th symposium will be held in Taiwan in 2013.

Please visit http://mel.xmu.edu.cn/ucas/index/ for further details about UCAS.
HKU MPhil Graduate Receives Prestigious American Fellowship

Miss Melody Li Yunzi, an MPhil graduate from the School of Chinese in HKU, has been named a McDonnell International Scholar and is pursuing her doctorate study in comparative literature in the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL). Melody was also an awardee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government Scholarship, the People’s Choice Award in the 3MT™ Competition and the Hong Kong Youth Literary Award in the Translation Championship.

Melody’s research area is translation studies, along with cultural and literary theories, in the investigation of Asian diaspora literature. She believes that understanding diaspora literature and writers’ struggle for their own identities contributes to a deeper understanding of diasporas in mainstream society.

The McDonnell International Scholars Academy is a programme for future global leaders to obtain PhD or master’s degrees. It provides an opportunity for international graduate and professional students to join the WUSTL community and brings together top scholars from the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America to pursue education and research. WUSTL has established a network with universities and corporations around the world with an eye to increasing opportunities for joint research and global education.

The Scholars are provided not only with graduate education, but also with cultural and social activities designed to prepare them as leaders knowledgeable about the United States, other countries and critical international issues.

Each Academy Scholar is matched with a distinguished member of the faculty who serves as a mentor and an Academy ‘Ambassador’ to the university partner from which the Scholar has graduated. The mentors assist the McDonnell Scholars in academic and professional life and travel annually with them to the partner university to build relationships between the two institutions.

Dr Nancy Morrow-Howell, the Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey Professor of Social Work in WUSTL’s Brown School, is Melody’s faculty mentor-ambassador. She is a national leader in gerontology, widely known for her work on productive and civic engagement of older adults.

The McDonnell Academy Scholars receive funding for full tuition and living expenses for the time it takes to get a degree at WUSTL. The Academy also provides support for an annual trip back to the Scholar’s alma mater. To help the Scholars better develop a sense of community, many reside in two WUSTL apartment buildings near campus.

Funding is provided through a sustaining endowment from John F. McDonnell, vice chair of WUSTL’s Board of Trustees and retired chairman of the board of McDonnell Douglas Corp. Additional support comes from 22 multinational corporations, foundations and individual sponsors. Sponsoring corporations also offer internships and on-site educational opportunities for the Academy’s Corporate Fellows.

(Part of this article is extracted from http://news.wustl.edu/news/Pages/23147.aspx.)