Scrutinizing the issues and challenges faced by postgraduate students: An effort to design specific programs to inculcate research culture

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Abstract

This paper presents issues and challenges faced by postgraduate research students who are enrolled in Master and Ph.D programs at the Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies (FSPPP), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor. The aim of this study is to explore students' feedback and evaluation pertaining to their research progress, issues and challenges which lead to the implementation and construction of a specific program to support them in their research work. A qualitative approach using verbal and written interviews involving 16 research students was undertaken within a two-month period (October – November 2015) and their feedback was analyzed. The findings of this study reveal that more than half of the respondents indicated that 'academic writing' is their main issue and challenge throughout their period of study. The respondents claimed that they have difficulties in conveying their ideas into writing, restructuring sentences, building research arguments and lack of writing skills. Aside from academic writing, the respondents stated that 'individual problems', 'personal problems', 'research method and techniques' and 'supervision' are among the main issues and challenges that they encounter during their study. Further, the respondents provided suggestions and expectations to the faculty to assist them in their research. Following the inquiry on issues and challenges as well as suggestions, the faculty has taken a number of initiatives to support the research students. One of the remarkable initiatives is the implementation of the Graduate Researches in Print (GRiP) program to assist students in academic writing with an effective support group among their peers. The faculty has also implemented a number of workshops and seminars at the faculty level. The research students were strongly encouraged to attend programs, seminars and workshops organized by the Institute of Graduate Study (IGS), libraries and others. This study concludes that exploring students' feedback on the issues and challenges as well as their suggestions and expectations is an effective way to design and implement initiatives and programs to support and assist them in their research journey. This can be considered as one of the best initiatives taken by the faculty to support research students, boost research culture and continuously encourage students to produce sound and quality research.

Keywords: Issues and challenges, academic writing, FSPPP's Graduate Researchers in Print (GRiP)

INTRODUCTION

Universities in Malaysia, regardless of their status in terms of research, focused or comprehensive universities are expected to focus substantially on 'research, publications, innovation and commercialization' as one of the main agendas of the Malaysian higher institutions. While there are many initiatives and approaches that have been undertaken in an attempt to boost research in the Malaysian public universities,

emphasis on enrolling and graduating postgraduate research students is also recognized as one of the strategies to promote more research being undertaken and subsequently support universities to meet the MyRA KPI for Malaysian University and finally increase the university status in QS Ranking Universities. Therefore, the contribution of research students to the university through their research work cannot be undermined. In some international universities, research students are recognized as pertinent and highly valued members. However, they are facing various issues and challenges in their study and their voices are less heard by universities (McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Golde, 2000). Similarly, this situation also occurs in Malaysia.

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) reported high drop-outs and dismissed cases among their postgraduate research students (A Majid, Mohd Shukor & Radzi, 2010). Among the reasons identified for the poor performance and high drop-outs rate include attitudinal and physical challenges faced by the postgraduate research students. If this situation persists and not effectively addressed by the university, it will lead to more impactful consequences such as poor quality of research, poor university reputation and status. Further, the students who are unable to complete their studies within the stipulated time will become a burden to the university. A study conducted by Smallwood (2004) states that one university can save up to one million dollars a year if they can reduce the number of over-enroll students. Hence, universities should pay substantial attention to improve the completion rates of their research students while simultaneously maintaining their research quality.

The Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies (*Fakulti Sains Pentadbiran dan Pengajian Polisi* – FSPPP) also faces a major problem in research completion among their postgraduate students. Since 2006 until 2016, FSPPP enrolled 146 Masters by research students. However, only 16 students completed their study (10.9%). Meanwhile, 56 Ph.D students were enrolled in FSPPP and merely only 6 students graduated (10.7%). The completion rate for research students in FSPPP for both Masters (AM780) and Ph.D (AM990) programs are very low, considering a number of factors such as: high drop-outs, additional commitments, lengthy students' candidature and many others. Poor performance and completion rates among postgraduate research students in FSPPP have triggered immediate extensive action at the faculty level. There is a need to apprehend the issues and challenges faced by the research students and following their feedback, strategies should be formulated to design specific programs and initiatives that are tailored to their needs. This paper argues that by listening to their voices and concerns, the root causes can be identified and subsequently techniques can be implemented to assist and support the students and their research work—this can be considered as the best approach to improve the completion rate and enhance the research culture among FSPPP postgraduate research students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of research to the universities, nation and the entire platform of education is undeniable—research can explore new ideas, understand issues and phenomena, solve problems, develop new and relevant curriculum and many others. For these reasons, research has become an important agenda focused on by universities in Malaysia and in many parts of the world. In 2016, there were five Research Universities (RU) in Malaysia that highly emphasized on research, publication, innovation and commercialization: *Universiti Malaya* (UM), *Universiti Putra Malaysia* (UPM; *Universiti Sains Malaysia* (USM), *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (UKM) and *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia* (UTM). However, other public universities in Malaysia (focused and comprehensive universities) are also expected to focus on research and publication. This is evident since higher educational reforms in Malaysia in the year 1990s and early 2000s, many college universities in Malaysia have been upgraded to the university status, that is, for instance, *Institut Teknologi MARA* which undergone a major restructuring and changed its status and name to *Universiti Teknologi MARA* (UiTM) in 1999 (UiTM official UiTM, 2017). In addition, *Institut Perguruan Sultan Idris* upgraded to *Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris* (UPSI) in 1997 (UPSI official website, 2016) and *Institut Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn* upgraded to *Universiti Tun Hussein Onn* in 2000 (UTHM official website, 2017). The reformation of Malaysia's higher education during that era subsequently has led to the development of higher education, including the emphasis on research university status since 2006. Since then, universities have begun to promote research as one of their main agendas of the Malaysian higher institution and the country. A similar wave of higher educational reformation occurs in other countries as well. That is, for instance, a number of institutions in Australia such as teacher colleges, institutes of technology, colleges of advanced education was upgraded to the university status in the 1980s and 1990s (Ebutt, 2002). Following these movements, Australian universities have given more emphasis on research activities and building research cultures (Ebutt, 2002).

There were a number of initiatives undertaken by universities to emphasize on research and promote research culture, such as securing research grants and consultancies (at the national and international levels), conduct multi-disciplinary research, publish the outcome of research in high-impact journals and research books, sharing new ideas with other scholars through conferences and seminars and many others. Notably, many universities in Malaysia and in other countries have given high attention on enrolling research students at Master, Ph.D and also at Post Doctorate level, as one of the strategies to drive research agenda and enhance research excellence. In early 2000s, research students were expected by the university to learn how to conduct a

systematic research enquiry in any field and extend or add new ideas to the body of knowledge (Mutula, 2009). However, in recent years, research students are acknowledged by the university not only for their contribution in research, but also their contribution to the university and country. This can prominently be seen in assessing the QS World University Ranking and meeting the MyRA KPI (Malaysian Research Assessment Instruments score and KPI for each Malaysian university)—in terms of quantity[*] and quality[†] of postgraduates. In other words, research students are among the important assets for any university and country.

Although research students are recognized as important and highly valued members, however, they face various issues and challenges in their study and their voices are less heard by the university (McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Golde, 2000). Hence, this paper argues that universities need to treat research students equally and appropriately as they are among the major contributors to the university and the country through their research work—this can be implemented through understanding their situation, listening to their voices (issues and challenges faced) and providing support and solutions to the plights they face. Among the recognized issues and challenges faced by research students in the world include academic writing (Barbeiro, Pereira & Carvalho, 2015; Carvalho 2012; Bair & Mader 2013; Mehar Singh, 2005; Shafie et al. 2010; Othman & Abu Bakar, 2009); getting support (Gonzales, 2015); feeling of isolation (Woodford, 2005); managing supervisor-supervisee relationship (Hotlman and Mukwada, 2014; Ezebilo, 2012; Butler 2011; Wisker, 2001); poor supervision (Ezebilo, 2012; Mutula, 2009; Wisker, 2001); inadequate facilities (Mutula, 2009); inconsistent postgraduate research guidelines (Mutula, 2009); conducting inter-disciplinary research (Golde & Gallagher, 1999); balancing work and lifestyles (Woodford, 2005), and many others.

While identifying many challenges of postgraduate research students, Mutulla (2009) categorized the challenges into three: (1) research capacity – the availability of research facilities and trained human personnel; (2) research utility – how the research outcomes relate to the national development agenda; and (3) research productivity – refers to the optimization of the resources available to enhance the quality of research. The author suggested intervention initiatives to be undertaken to minimize the challenges faced by the research students (Mutulla, 2009). Another study undertaken by A Majid, Mohd Shukor and Radzi (2010) in *Universiti Teknologi MARA* (UiTM) states that research students in UiTM face attitudinal challenges (obstacles in their study, new

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[*] Quantity of postgraduate students include: number of PhD graduated including MD; number of Ph.D enrollment; postgraduate enrollment and percentage of postgraduate students.
[†] Quality of postgraduate students include: fellowships or grants awarded to postgraduates via research mode.

research area and insufficient research experience) and physical challenges (inclusive of lack of support from family members, financial issues and working commitment). These challenges lead to poor performance and higher number of drop-outs or dismissed cases among postgraduate research students in UiTM.

Among all the challenges and difficulties, academic writing is believed to be one of the main challenges faced by research students all over the world (Barbeiro, Pereira & Carvalho, 2015; Bair & Mader 2013). There are many perspectives when discussing the challenges in academic writing highlighted by many scholars. These include: academic writing across cultures (Mohan & Lo, 1985; Hellen, 1994); academic writing problems and challenges (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Biber & Gray, 2010; Wisker, 2001); interaction and voice in academic writing (Mastuda & Trady, 2007; Thompson, 2001); peer support, feedback, motivation, academic writing (Kirchhoff, 2016; Bickford, 2015; Amstrong, 2015); support for academic writing (Kirchhoff, 2016; Brodensen et al., 2016; Bickford, 2015; Amstrong, 2015; Cuthbert & Spark, 2008), and many others.

While the above discussion focuses on the challenges and difficulties faced by postgraduate research students, many literature have moved towards researching the best approach, mechanisms and research tools to support research students. Among the actions or initiatives undertaken to minimize the challenges faced by research students include: conduct seminars and workshops (Mutula, 2009); providing regular reports of progress (Mutula, 2008); producing an annual report of postgraduate students' achievements (Mutula, 2008; Holdaway et al., 1995); providing access to internal and external funding (Ismail & Abiddin, 2009); the development of writing centre with peer tutoring, feedback and experiences (Kirchhoff, 2016; Bickford 2015; Amstrong, 2015); conducting thesis writing workshops (Raisig & Vode, 2016; Nzekwe-Excel, 2015; Cuthbert & Spark, 2008); improving curriculum (Bair & Mader, 2013); and many others. These are among the best practices that can be applied in assisting research students in UiTM generally and FSPPP particularly. However, this can be effectively implemented if their voices and concerns are heard by the university at all levels. This is the gap that this paper attempts to fill—scrutinizing the issues and challenges faced by postgraduate students and design specific programs tailored to their needs to promote research culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts the qualitative research method, using verbal and written interviews among the postgraduate research students. The main aim of applying the qualitative method is to derive in-depth feedback from the respondents regarding the issue and challenges they have faced during their study, challenges in academic writing and finally exploring their expectations and suggestions to the faculty to provide support to enhance their research journey.

Two qualitative approaches are utilized to maximize the feedback from the respondents: (1) semi-structured verbal interviews; and (2) semi-structured written interviews. The respondents who were among full time students and available on the campus were interviewed face to face. While part time and full time students who were not available were encouraged to respond in written via online open ended questions. The decision to collect data from these two approaches is also due to the preferences of the respondents to provide their responses. Written interviews were found more convenient for the respondents—they can respond at any time and any place, they feel more secure and have privacy to respond and they feel more confident to voice out their feedback. Notably, both verbal and written interviews used the same questions to ensure consistency of the respondents' feedback from both approaches.

The data collection for this study was undertaken within two months (October – November 2015). Findings from the verbal and written interviews were analyzed and presented according to the main themes of this study.

FINDINGS

A total number of 19 postgraduate research students participated in this study. Three respondents provided their feedback through verbal interviews and the remaining 16 respondents preferred written interviews to voice their responses. This paper presents the findings of this study based on key themes: (1) Profile of respondents, (2) Issue and challenges faced during the study; (3) Challenges in academic writing; and (4) Expectations and suggestions to enhance the research journey.

Profile of respondents

The findings of this study reveal that the majority of the respondents were female (15 respondents) and another four were male. Their age groups were: 25 years and below (11 respondents), 26 to 30 years old (3 respondents), 31 to 40 years old (4 respondents) and one participant aged above 50 years.

In terms of the research program enrolled, nine out of 16 respondents were among those who enrolled in Master of Administrative Science (AM780) program and another seven were among the PhD candidates. Slightly more than three quarter of the respondents were enrolled as full time students and only four of them were studying part time (Refer Table 1).

While most of the respondents were among full time students (15 respondents), however, only seven respondents indicated that they were not working and all of them were sponsored by scholarship bodies such as the Public Service Department (JPA), Ministry of Higher Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA and others. The remaining full time students (8 respondents) have to self-finance their education themselves or obtain financial support from their families or relatives. Further, three respondents indicated that they applied for loans to support their postgraduate education.

As presented in Table 1, the findings of this study also revealed that nine students were among those who are at the early stage of doing a research proposal (preparing chapter one to three). Four respondents have completed their pre-defence of research proposal (Pre-DRP), two respondents have gone through defence of proposal (DRP) and another two (2) respondents were at the data collection stage.

Table 1: *Profile of respondents (N=19)*

Characteristics	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	4	21.1
Female	15	78.9
Age		
25 years and below	11	57.9
26 – 30 years old	3	15.8
31 – 40 years old	4	21.1
40 – 50 years old	0	0.0
51 years old and above	1	5.2
Program		
Master of Administrative Science (AM780)	11	57.9
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	8	42.1
Mode of study		
Full time	15	78.9
Part time	4	21.1

Year of study		
Year 1 (Semester 1 and 2)	6	31.6
Year 2 (Semester 3 and 4)	3	15.8
Year 3 (Semester 5 and 6)	7	36.8
Year 4 (Semester 7 and 8)	3	15.8
Employment status		
Not working	10	52.7
Working part time	2	10.5
Working full time	3	15.8
Free lance	2	10.5
Others	2	10.5
Study finance		
Self-finance	9	47.4
Scholarship	7	36.8
Study loan	3	15.8
Study progress		
Early stage of preparing a proposal (Chapter 1, 2 and 3).	9	47.4
Pre-defence of Proposal	4	21.1
Defence of Proposal	2	10.5
Data collection	2	10.5
Pre-viva	0	0.0
Viva voce	0	0.0
Others	2	10.5

Issues and challenges faced during the study

The first question asked to the respondents was whether they have faced any issues or challenges during their study—all respondents stated that they have faced challenges during their study. Among the challenges faced by the FSPPP's research students were:

1) *Academic writing* [9]—difficulties in conveying the ideas into writing at PhD level, restructuring sentences, writing skills, writing chapter one and five, academic argument.
2) *Research method and techniques* [6]—reading literature, selecting the right method, searching research gaps, analyzing relevant information from journals, working/refining thesis title.
3) *Individual problem* [6]—self-discipline, staying motivated, planning (working plan), hard to give commitment, focus on research, time management.
4) *Process and procedure* [4]—Pre-DRP, DRP, Pre-VIVA and VIVA.
5) *University support* [2]—UiTM library distance, limited library resources, limited access to the current data/sources.
6) *English language* [2]—communicating in English, language barriers.
7) *Supervision* [2]—cannot get along with supervisors, meeting supervisors.
8) *Programs/workshop/seminars* [1]—little exposure to research at a higher degree.

9) ***Research area*** [1]—controversial research area/investigation.
10) ***Data collection*** [1]—getting adequate responses.
11) ***Personal problem*** [1]—house chores, family member activities, neighborhood commitment, bedridden mum.

Note: Number in [   ] refers to the number of respondents who indicated the response/responses.

The respondents were further requested to state their main challenge/challenges they have faced during their study and their responses include:

1) ***Academic writing*** [7]—writing a good thesis, conclusion, academic argument, writing a sound chapter, writing skills, difficulties in conveying the ideas into writing at PhD level.
2) ***Individual problem*** [5]—time for work and study, time management, self-motivation, time, study and working, time to concentrate on writing.
3) ***Personal problem*** [3]—bedridden mum, family commitments, commitment.
4) ***Research method and technique*** [2]—finding the right journals and methodology, do not know how to research (dig) as suggested by supervisor (research skills).
5) ***Supervision*** [1]—supervisor shifting (changing supervisor).

Note: Number in [   ] refers to the number of respondents who indicated the response/responses.

Following the questions on issues, challenges and the main challenges faced during their study, the respondents were asked about how they overcome the challenges. The feedback from the respondents are listed below:

1) ***Efforts taken at individual level*** [12]—focus more and spend more time to do research, keep motivating oneself despite slow writing progress, have self-discipline (wake up early, go to nearest libraries of other universities, separate time for families, neighbors and other commitments), stay late night at the library, do more reading and find appropriate materials, spend time wisely, stay focused and find specialists of the field to nominate the next supervisor, positive thinking), self-monitoring and seek help, push oneself to do it, force oneself to put extra effort, read explanations from books and other sources from the internet).
2) ***Supervisors*** [3]—corrections made by supervisors, support of supervisors, supervisors' assistance in writing and critical thinking.
3) ***Friends*** [2]—ask other postgraduate students regarding processes and procedures, inquire senior PhD students from FSPPP and other universities.
4) ***Faculty*** [1]—get a new supervisor.
5) ***External support and assistance*** [1]—proofreading services.
6) ***Refer other thesis*** [1]—refer previous thesis.

7) ***Program/workshop/seminars*** [1]—attend IGS workshop).

Note: Number in [   ] refers to the number of respondents who indicated the response/responses.

Challenges in academic writing

This study specifically asks the respondents whether 'academic writing' is one of their main challenges in conducting research. The findings reveal that eighteen (18) respondents agreed with the question and only (1) participant felt that academic writing was not one of the challenges she has faced while completing her thesis. Following the question, the respondents were asked about the reasons as to why academic writing has become one of their major challenges. The responses are as follows:

1) ***Academic writing skills and techniques*** [13]—difficult, to relate findings and theories, difficulties in delivering/conveying ideas, many errors in writing, writing an appropriate and convincing thesis, academic writing requires more knowledge and references, have to refer to many literatures, paraphrasing the writing, time consuming to create proper statements in thesis, non-acquaintance components of any kinds of academic writing.
2) ***Language (English)*** [2]—language barriers, language proficiency.

Note: Number in [   ] refers to the number of respondents who indicated the response/responses.

The respondents were further asked about aspect/aspects of academic writing that they would like to improve on and their responses are listed below:

1) ***Academic writing*** [11]—to relate theories and findings, write analysis and conclusion, literature review, problem statement, methodology, academic argument, making thesis more readable, everything, overall writing.
2) ***Styles of writing*** [5]—flow of ideas, sentence structure, writing styles, qualitative and quantitative styles of writing.
3) ***English and grammar*** [2]—grammar and sentence formation.

Note: Number in [   ] refers to the number of respondents who indicated the response/responses.

Expectations and suggestions to enhance the research journey

Finally, the respondents were asked to provide suggestions on ways to help or support postgraduate students to graduate on time and/or complete their studies. Their feedback are:

1) ***Continuously conduct effective programs/seminars/ workshops*** [7]—research method, workshop on qualitative and quantitative research approach.
2) ***Process and procedure*** [7]—reduce complicated procedure/ revise the process, reduce filtering sessions on defending a proposal to avoid confusion and demotivate students' passion in writing, make the process and procedure much clearer, provide guidelines/schedule for the students to follow, milestones for students to follow and students must have pre-defence and defence of proposal in semester two.
3) ***Person in charge/mentor*** [3]—other than allocating students with supervisors and research workshops, can the faculty provide us with personal advisor/mentor who can be reached at any time? […] considering supervisors' busy schedule […] we need someone who we can talk to and listen to our research and doubts […]; push the students to achieve their target; continuous guidance to proposal/academic writing, defense and viva preparation.
4) ***Supervisor*** [3]—good supervisor support and supervisors who know what to propose; provide consultation on writing and analysis on a regular basis.
5) ***Facilities*** [2]—conducive place, materials etc.
6) ***Motivation*** [1]

Note: Number in [   ] refers to the number of respondents who indicated the response/responses.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The FSPPP's postgraduate research students have faced a wide range of issues and challenges in their study. The findings of this study reveal that more than half of the respondents indicated that 'academic writing' was the main issue and challenge faced in their study. Among the challenges faced in academic writing include: difficulties in conveying their ideas into writing, restructuring sentences, building research arguments and lack of writing skills. Notably, academic writing is identified as one of the main challenges faced by Malaysian students (Mehar Singh, 2015; Shafie et al., 2010; Othman & Abu Bakar, 2009) and is acknowledged as the main challenge faced by research students all over the world (Barbeiro, Pereira & Carvalho, 2015; Bair & Mader 2013). Aside from academic writing, the respondents stated that 'individual problem', 'personal problem', 'research method and technique' and supervision' were among the main issues and challenges in their studies. Issues in relation to research supervision

was recognized as one the main issues faced by many scholars in the world (Hotlman & Mukwada, 2014; Ezebilo, 2012; Butler 2011; Wisker, 2001; Mutula, 2009). Meanwhile, challenges in 'research method and technique' was found consistent with the findings of a research undertaken among postgraduate research students in UiTM (A Majid, Mohd Shukor & Radzi, 2010). The findings of this study also reveal that more than three-quarter of the respondents indicated that they have taken individual efforts to overcome the challenges they faced. Some seek their supervisors' support, get help from friends and the faculty, get external support and services (proofreading) and attend program, seminars and workshops related to research.

Subsequently, the respondents were asked to provide suggestions to the faculty in assisting postgraduate research students. Their feedback includes: continuously conduct effective programs, seminars and workshops, improve the research process and procedures, consider allocating personal advisor/mentor that can be easily reached, supervisors need to improve their supervision approach, improve facilities and to continuously motivate students. Following the inquiry on issues and challenges as well as suggestions, the faculty has taken a number of initiatives to support the research students. One of the remarkable initiatives is the implementation of FSPPP's Graduate Researches in Print (GRiP) program to assist students in academic writing with an effective support group among their peers. The GRiP program is an effective writing support system for higher degree students pioneered by the Arts Faculty of Monash University, Australia. This program was introduced in March 2006 and funded by the Arts Research Graduate School, Monash University. The GRiP program is recognized as an innovative writing program for higher degree students (by research) at the Arts Faculty and has achieved remarkable success for its respondents (Monash University, 2010). The GRiP program helps to improve academic writing, in particularly: thesis writing, friendly support from co-ordinator and peer groups' feedback. The support provided during the workshop series has helped to hasten the writing process and these help students to submit their thesis on time.

The faculty, with approval and support from the Academic Affairs Division, managed to invite Dr. Kate Cregan, a GRiP Co-ordinator from the Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Australia to the faculty on 23rd to 25th November 2015, to conduct GRiP workshops among FSPPP's research students and publication workshops among the staff. Following this, GRiP-FSPPP was officially implemented on 10th March 2016, involving two groups of students: Master (8 students) and Ph.D (8 students). Currently, GRiP-FSPPP has been implemented more than 8 months and has shown significant improvement in supporting the research students in their thesis writing, research progress as well as research completion.

The faculty has also implemented a number of workshops and seminars such as qualitative workshops, using Mendeley as an effective citation and referencing tool and workshops on writing for publication. The research students are strongly encouraged to attend programs, seminars and workshops organized by the Institute of Graduate Study (IGS), libraries and others. Among the programs and workshops they have participated are inclusive of library search techniques, endnote as a tool for citation and referencing through SPSS workshops, Smart-PLS (Partial Least Square) statistical workshops and many others. Conducting seminars and workshops are among the most effective initiatives undertaken by many universities in other countries (Raisig & Vode, 2016; Nzekwe-Excel, 2015; Mutula, 2009; Cuthbert & Spark, 2008).

This study concludes that exploring students' feedback on the issues and challenges as well as their suggestions to the faculty is an effective way to design and implement initiatives and programs to support and assist them in their research journey. This can be considered as one of the best efforts taken by the faculty to support research students, boost research culture and continuously encourage the students to produce sound and quality research. However, to effectively enhance research completion and promote research culture in UiTM, aligned with the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020, all parties need to play and carry out their roles and responsibility respectively—individual level (students, supervisors), faculty level (programs, workshops, support, clear processes and procedures), university level (graduate school, for example, the Institute of Graduate Research (IGS), UiTM, Research Institutes and Centres) and finally, at national level (clear policies by the Ministry of Higher Institution, support provided, etc.). This will apparently ensure a holistic approach of promoting a profound and comprehensive research culture in UiTM and other universities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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