

## **GRADUATE ASSISTANCESHIP PROGRAM-REVISED (2025)**

In May 2025, the Postgraduate Studies, Research & Innovation Committee (PSR&IC) undertook the technical and editorial review of the Graduate Assistanceship Program policy document entitled “*Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP) Revised (2018)*”. It was noted that several technical and editorial changes are required in the policy document. Major changes required in the policy document are:

1. The academic departments at PNGUoT have been reorganized into Schools, which are now grouped under various Faculties.
2. The Postgraduate School (PGS) has been renamed the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research, and Innovation.
3. The Postgraduate School Office, previously referred to as the PG Office, is now called the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research, and Innovation Office.
4. The Postgraduate Committee (PGC) is renamed as Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation Committee (PSR&IC).
5. The Bachelor's programs under the Faculty of Engineering no longer award Degrees with Merit or Council Medals. Instead, they use different achievement descriptors in line with accreditation requirements.
6. Subsections 6 to 13 of the document *Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP) Revised (2018)*, along with their contents, require revisions to embrace the structural and governance re-organizations undertaken by PNGUoT since 2018.

Accordingly, the suggested revised sections are as follows for the *Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP) Revised (2018)*:

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

The Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP) was introduced at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology (PNGUoT) in 2001. It was established to address various shortcomings of the Assistant Lectureship (AL) Program, which had been in place since 1974. While both programs aimed to develop national academic capacity, they differed significantly in their focus and objectives.

The primary objective of the AL scheme was to accelerate the training of national staff to assume academic positions within the University. However, the program

was eventually discontinued due to challenges arising from "structural adjustment" policies mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as well as prolonged delays in securing scholarships for staff. In contrast, the GAP was designed with a broader and more sustainable vision-to promote postgraduate studies and research at PNGUoT. In doing so, it also served the secondary purpose of accelerating the development of qualified national academics, thereby achieving the original goals of the AL scheme through a more research-driven approach.

Graduate Assistantship Program was introduced at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology (PNGUoT) in 2001. It was intended to overcome many of the shortcomings of the Assistant Lectureship (AL) Program that was in place since 1974. The two Programs differed in their objectives. The objective of the AL scheme was to accelerate training of national staff to take up academic positions in the University. Due to "structural adjustment" as required by IMF and the World Bank and, long delays in securing scholarship, the AL scheme was discontinued. On the other hand, the main objective of GAP was to promote postgraduate studies and research at PNGUoT. This would also accelerate the training of national academics thereby fulfilling the objective of the AL Scheme.

Shortly after its introduction, the GAP faced challenges, primarily due to incorrect perception of its objectives. Some academic schools, unable to mount postgraduate programs, treated GAP students as junior academic staff, similar to assistant lecturers. In some cases, they were assigned the role of Technical Instructor (TI). Conversely, schools with established postgraduate programs treated Graduate Assistant as postgraduate students and admitted them to PG diploma or Master's Programs.

This inconsistency led to suspension of GAP award since 2003. In 2005, a sub-committee was formed to review the program and support the development of postgraduate studies and a research culture at PNGUoT.

There was also a common perception at the University that GAP scholars will be employed after completing their studies. In light of changing needs and the urgent requirement to increase the number of staff with doctoral qualifications-particularly for the accreditation of engineering programs-a special sub-committee was established in 2018 by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic) to review the GAP under specific terms of reference.

## **2.0 GAP REVIEW IN 2018**

The Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP) was revised, continued, and further strengthened following the 2018 review. Given the increasing demand for skilled professionals across various sectors in Papua New Guinea, including academia, the review was timely. It aimed to expand the scope of the GAP scholarship program and align it with the PNG University of Technology's Strategic Plan (2019–2023) and the training and manpower development goals outlined by the LNSDC. The following sections provide details of the revised program.

## **3.0 JUSTIFICATION FOR REVIEW IN 2018**

The Papua New Guinea University of Technology (PNGUoT) is the only technological university in Papua New Guinea. Since its establishment, the university has graduated more than 17,000 students, including over 400 with postgraduate degrees—among them about 25 PhDs—who are now contributing to various technological fields, government departments, businesses, industries, and academia. These graduates play vital roles in the nation-building process. Postgraduate studies and research are central to PNGUoT's mission to produce skilled, knowledgeable, and competent engineers, scientists, and technologists for multiple sectors, including academia. In the 21st century, postgraduate education is a necessity rather than a luxury, leading to critical research and innovation. Without research, there can be no innovation, and without innovation, sustainable national development is unattainable. Highly skilled professionals are essential not only for creating innovations but also for effectively applying them to enhance individual well-being and drive national progress.

Since its inception, PNGUoT has been at the forefront of postgraduate education and research. It currently runs the largest postgraduate programs in the country, with around 200 enrolled students. All 13 academic schools offer postgraduate programs up to the PhD level, supported by qualified supervision. At present, the university offers 22 doctoral and 40 master's degree programs.

To support effective course delivery, the university has introduced a Postgraduate Certificate in Student-Centered Teaching to train academic staff in modern educational technologies and pedagogies. Additionally, PNGUoT is working to externalize its programs to reach students who are unable to attend

full-time on-campus classes, in alignment with its Vision 2030. Many academic schools now also offer postgraduate courses via distance learning.

PNGUoT's engineering programs have recently been accredited, with one requirement being that 80% of academic staff hold PhD qualifications. To meet and sustain this benchmark, the university must expand and strengthen its in-house postgraduate programs with adequate resources. This aligns with one of the strategic focus areas of PNG Vision 2050: human capital development, which emphasizes research in national development priority areas.

To address these needs, the 2018 Review Committee recommended that the Graduate Assistant Program (GAP) be revitalized with adequate resourcing and policy reform to better align with the university's strategic goals. The review aimed to provide opportunities for graduates to contribute to PNG's Vision 2050 by increasing the pool of skilled and knowledgeable technological professionals, helping to build a Smart, Wise, Fair, Healthy, and Happy Society.

The 2018 review took into account the demands of academic schools and the university's broader goals as a national institution of higher education, science, and technology. The committee emphasized that GAP is not solely intended to produce future PNGUoT academic staff, but also to generate a pool of technologically trained professionals to meet the needs of the country's growing industries.

Importantly, GAP scholars are not guaranteed employment at PNGUoT upon completing their studies. Securing a position within the university is contingent upon meeting employment criteria and the availability of vacancies. This aligns with international practice, where universities offer a range of scholarships to support talented and deserving students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. At PNGUoT, scholars who meet these conditions may be employed by academic schools. Otherwise, they are expected to contribute to other sectors in the country. This approach helps build national capacity, allowing the university to bring scholars back into academia when the need and interest arise.

## **4.0 OBJECTIVES**

The Graduate Assistant Program (GAP) aims to attract high-performing graduates with bachelor's or master's degrees, and preferably relevant industrial experience, to pursue further studies at the master's and PhD levels.

The program is structured to achieve the following objectives:

- 4.1 To promote and strengthen postgraduate studies at the University.
- 4.2 To foster a strong research culture within the University.
- 4.3 To align the GAP with the manpower training and development strategies of the Long-Term National Strategy for Development of Human Capital (LNSDC) and the PNG University of Technology (PNGUoT) Strategic Plan.
- 4.4 To build and enhance local capacity in postgraduate studies, research, and academic supervision.
- 4.5 To encourage research and publication in indexed journals, thereby improving the University's visibility and reputation in the international academic community.
- 4.6 To strengthen collaboration between the University and industry through a robust research culture.
- 4.7 To develop human capital for priority sectors in Papua New Guinea, supporting the realization of *PNG Vision 2050*.

## **5.0 FINANCE**

Highly educated and skilled human capital is the most valuable resource a country can possess to effectively harness its natural and economic potential. Education and research are the pillars of sustainable national development. The higher education system plays a vital role in driving a country's intellectual, economic, technological, cultural, and social progress. It is central to the development of a knowledge- and innovation-based economy and is responsible for preparing the future professional workforce, cultivating leadership, creating jobs, fostering regional and economic success, and facilitating international cultural and trade relations.

Investing in higher education and research lays the foundation for long-term, sustainable national development. PNGUoT must continue to prioritize funding for the GAP, not only to train academic staff to the PhD level, but also to fulfil its broader role as the country's only technological university—by producing skilled

professionals for various sectors across Papua New Guinea and the wider South Pacific region.

To attract funding for postgraduate research and studies, PNGUoT can consider the following strategies:

- Build partnerships with public enterprises, private industries, and business houses to attract funding for joint research projects by actively marketing its postgraduate programs and research capabilities;
- Align research activities with the needs of industry to ensure relevance and impact;
- Develop national and international collaborations for joint research initiatives;
- Engage and advocate with DHERST (Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology) to secure funding and scholarships for postgraduate studies, leveraging the department's commitment as outlined in the *Higher and Technical Education Strategic Implementation Plan 2017–2038 (2018)*, which emphasizes increasing scholarships to promote research in tertiary education.

In addition, it was suggested in 2018 GAP Policy Review that University should consider reviewing its current policy of sponsoring academic staff for postgraduate studies at overseas institutions. The funds currently used for this purpose could be redirected to support in-house GAP scholarships at the PhD level. This would result in several benefits:

- Increased staff supervision capacity and continuity of higher degree supervisory skills within the schools;
- Cost-effectiveness and increased productivity, with staff contributing at least six hours of work per week during their studies;
- Focused research on national priorities and issues;
- Potentially higher completion rates, as many personal and logistical challenges faced abroad could be mitigated by studying locally.

Under this approach, responsibility for securing overseas scholarships would rest with individual staff members, with the University providing support where feasible. This shift is expected to yield better outcomes and foster a more sustainable academic workforce development strategy.

## 6.0 FIELDS OF SPONSORSHIP

Graduate Assistantship may be offered in any of the academic disciplines of the University provided there is a postgraduate program available. However, special priority will be given to the academic schools that have staff shortage.

## 7.0 REVISED ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

7.1. Graduated with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.70 out of 5.00 or an equivalent percentage in their previous program of study.

7.2. The students will be eligible for GAP scholarships within 4 years of graduation.

7.3. Students on business mode programs will not be eligible for GAP.

7.4. Non-GAP students on course-based programs can apply for GAP after **one year** of studies on positive recommendations from the Principal Supervisor and the Head of the School (HOS) provided that they have a weighted average mark of 80% and above or a cumulative GPA of 4.25 out of 5.00 and above.

7.5. For Research based degrees (MPhil and PhD), the Non-GAP students can also be considered for GAP on completion of **one year** with at least one research publication in a peer reviewed journal and positive recommendation from the Principal Supervisor and the Head of the School.

## 8.0 SELECTION PROCEDURES

Selection procedures of GAP scholars will be as follows:

8.1. The Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation Office will advertise the GAP scholarship along with the rest of the Postgraduate programs at PNGUoT.

8.2. The Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation Office will collate applications submitted in the prescribed format (Form 12) and send them back to the respective academic Schools.

8.3. The schools will carry out vetting of applications to make sure the entry requirements are met.

8.4. The schools may carry out interviews with assistance from the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation Office wherever the schools evaluate it necessary, and send the recommended applications to the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation Office.

8.5. Upon receipt of the applications from the Academic Schools, Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation office will process the applications through the PSR&IC and make recommendations to the Academic Board for final approval.

8.6. All administrative process will be facilitated by the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation office and the offer letters will be issued by the Registrar.

## **9.0 DUTIES OF THE GRADUATE ASSISTANT**

9.1. The Graduate Assistant on appointment must register for a Master or PhD Program in the respective academic School of the University.

9.2. The duration of Assistantship is as follows

**Master's Program** - **2 years**

**Doctor of Philosophy Program** - **4 years**

9.3. A Graduate Assistantship scholar will be allocated **six** (6) teaching hours per week.

9.4. A Graduate Assistants will be required to present at least **one** (1) seminar each year.

9.5. The GAP will be for full time studies and there will be no extension of the duration beyond that specified in 9.2

## **10.0 ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM CONDITIONS AND ASSOCIATED COSTS**

The University will offer up to 15 GAP scholarships each year for both Master's and PhD studies. The number of available scholarships remains unchanged from previous reviews. In such a case, the total fiscal costs will remain as was in the past.

The following benefits will be provided to the GAP Scholars. Graduate from other institutions with outstanding academic results may also be considered.

10.1. Assistantship Program Conditions (Stipend)

**(a) For Master's Program**

**Year 1 K18, 849.00**

**Year 2 K19, 626.00**



**(b) For PhD Program**

**Year 1 K29, 392.00**

**Year 2 K30, 359.00**

**Year 3 K31, 357.00**

**Year 4 K32, 324.00**

10.2. These amounts will be paid to the Scholars as stipend and there will be no annual adjustments with CPI as these are not salaries. However, the PSR&IC will review these rates from time to time as and when deemed necessary

10.3. An annual book and equipment allowance of K500.00 will be paid to the Scholars.

10.4. Principal supervisor and HOS will submit progress report of GAP students after every semester to the PSR&IC. Students who fail to meet the requirement set by the schools might have their Scholarship withheld on recommendation from the Principal Supervisor and HOS.

10.5. University hostel accommodation may be provided and appropriate rentals deducted from the allowance.

10.6. The Graduate Assistants will be required to pay charges for water, sewerage, and garbage collection in respect of accommodation rented by him/her from the University. The supply of electricity to rented accommodation will be by agreement between the Graduate Assistant and the Papua New Guinea Power Ltd.

10.7. The University will waive tuition fees including other approved training expenses; however, all compulsory fees be paid by the GAP students including the application processing fees and thesis printing and binding.

10.8. One biennial return ticket from Lae to his/her home province for the PhD candidate.

10.9. The GAP Scholars have to execute a bond with the University that he/she will not accept any other scholarship (in country or overseas), and/or employment during the study period. In the case of the scholars accepting another scholarship, getting an employment and/or leaving the University without completing the degree, he/she must refund all the money that was spent towards the scholarship including the tuition waiver.

10.10 In the case of termination of a GAP student on disciplinary reason, the scholar has to return all the money that the University spent on him/her

## **11.0 TERMINATION**

11.1 If a Graduate Assistant fails to make satisfactory progress in his/her studies, the assistantship will be automatically terminated. The Supervisor will officially warn the student before they are automatically terminated.

11.2 If a Graduate Assistant accepts another scholarship, the assistantship will be automatically terminated.

## **12.0 PAYMENT OF ASSISTANTSHIP ALLOWNACE**

The Graduate Assistant will be paid an allowance as stipend every fortnight and will receive no other entitlements.

## **13.0 RECREATION LEAVE**

Recreation leave is 3 weeks per year and in the case of sickness, 2 weeks of leave may be granted. Candidates should take their recreation leave during the long vacation at the end of the academic year.

## **14.0 REFERENCES**

- GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM (GAP) REVISED (2018)