OPENING REMARKS

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OPENING REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING THE TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON PhD SUPERVISION HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2016 AT CENTRAL CATERING UNIT AT 9.00 A.M.
Deputy Vice-Chancellors present,

Programme organizers,

Programme facilitators,

Invited guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,
I am gratified to open this very important Training of Trainers on PhD supervision being held for our staff today, which is part of our broad efforts aimed at producing quality graduates who meet the expectations of industry.

More specifically, this training is meant to enhance PhD supervision in order to produce more consistent and high quality theses which are completed on time. We also want to avoid delays and avoidable failures of PhD students.

Currently the University of Nairobi has approximately 700 registered PhD students. In the past, the university has been awarding between 40-50 PhDs per year. This figure has risen to a combined total of 126 PhDs in 2015 (September and
December). We have the challenge to maintain our position as the leading university in the region in all aspects of our primary pillars; quality academic programmes, research and service to the community.

One of the ways of tackling the challenge is continue setting new standards in PhD and indeed postgraduate education. In 2014, we set a target for ourselves to increase the number of our PhD graduands from 40-50 per year to 100 PhDs per year over a period of three years. So far, we have worked steadily towards achieving this target, having awarded 94 PhDs in 2013, 123 in 2014 and 126 in 2015.
However, we cannot just look at the numbers we graduate but also the quality of the PhDs we produce, ensuring that our graduates continue to be internationally competitive as well as setting the pace for the UoN to implement an effective and efficient PhD supervision structure.

This is indeed the third series of the PhD supervision training. The first one was held in November 2012 (35 trained) followed by June 2014 (59 trained) and a training of trainers in May 2015 (34 trained). To-date, a total of 120 academic staff members have been trained in PhD supervision.
The training is purposed to minimize inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the following areas of PhD supervision;

- Rules and Regulations,
- Administration procedures
- Supervision/Examination,
- Preparedness of PhD students,
- Information/Communication

We are aware that our academic staff members are a diversified group, ranging from relatively newly graduated doctorates to esteemed professor emeriti.
Many have had to take a part or all of their education abroad and have been exposed to other ways of conducting higher education and organising university management. They have ideas on how to improve the system, but as individuals they may not possess enough authority to foster the changes that are now needed.

This training will provide skills for supervision and impel attitudinal changes necessary for effective PhD training. I hope that it will also create understanding of the additional benefits derived from successful and satisfactory PhD training which will no doubt benefit the university and the country as the graduates take up positions of responsibility.
For these reasons and since University of Nairobi intends to remain the leader in higher education, this Project has my full support and it is my hope that the training will eventually be extended to all academic staff members who are involved in supervising PhD students in the first instance, with the intention to extend it to all academic staff members involved in supervising postgraduate students.
With those remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare this training on PhD supervision officially open.

God bless you all.

PETER M.F MBITHI, PhD, EBS
VICE-CHANCELLOR
AND
PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY SURGERY