

29 July 2024

Random censorship of internet access, including to HKUST websites

In the second half of May 2019 I was suddenly no longer able to access any of the HKUST websites from my home. I tried hkust.edu.hk, the faculty intranet, the library, the Canvas teaching website, and the university's finance office, on several days. None of these websites could be accessed. Non-HKUST websites were accessible as usual. My computer's internet access relies on a 5G mobile router from the telecommunications company '3.'

My cell phone uses an eSim from the same telecommunications company '3.' The three browser apps on my cell phone that I tried were equally unable to access any HKUST webpages from my home. The HKUST apps on my cell phone also did not work.

In contrast, using my cell phone in downtown Hong Kong, I was able to access HKUST webpages and use HKUST apps without problem.

This means that the location of my home within Hong Kong made the telecommunications company '3' censor my access to the internet and my use of cell phone apps. (HKUST's Information and Technology Service Center, who I asked for help, saw no problem on the HKUST side.)

My solution was to have a VPN automatically kick in whenever I started the computer, placing me in the U.S., and I then had no problem accessing HKUST (and other websites) on my computer.

I contacted the telecommunications company '3.' Three weeks later it responded with a request for information about my account.

As of July 2024, removing the VPN autostart, I am again able to access HKUST websites without VPN, via the '3' network. An explanation from the telecommunications company '3' is still outstanding.