

A. Email correspondence with Division Head



Merit salary review 2007

Carsten A. Holz <socholz@ust.hk>

Fri, Jul 13, 2007 at 4:11 PM

To: [Head, Division of Social Science]

Cc: [Vice-President for Academic Affairs]

Dear [Division Head],

thanks for giving me a one-time lump-sum award.

--- One thing about the outcome [of the merit salary review]: it does not match your previous mentioning that economists in the division would get a salary increase due to the salaries of economists being generally higher than those of other disciplines in the social sciences.


I do not understand this change of mind.

Regards,
Carsten

No answer received.

Economists continue to be treated the same as the sociologists. (August 2024)

B. Email correspondence with Vice-President for Academic Affairs (VPAA / provost)

 **Gmail** Carsten08 Holz08 <carstenholzprejune08@gmail.com>

Feedback on merit review 2007

Carsten A. Holz <socholz@ust.hk>

Fri, Jul 13, 2007 at 4:13 PM

To: [VPAA]

Dear [VPAA],

the outcome of the 2007 merit review triggered my following thoughts about the merit review system.

From my point of view, my research performance in 2006 was about the very best that's possible for me, and my performance in 2005/06 was solid. If that does not translate into a salary increase, then I won't get one ever (or the whole exercise is a random process).

The message that arrives is:

- (i) do nothing but research in order to leave HKUST, or
- (ii) look for alternative sources of income support.

If 80% of your faculty are highly productive and you only remunerate 20-30% of them, then 50-60% of them are likely to be looking for another job.

Alternatively, if the 20-30% rule leads to a rotation of salary increases: an increase very six years is not serious (and I doubt that every three years would be).

The rumor is that you have issued instructions to remunerate preferentially junior faculty (and your agents, the most senior faculty, are always in a position to help themselves). If you have done so, can you please let me know which institution investigates wrong-doing by the VPAA? You would have violated AP25.0, the regulatory framework for merit review. AP25.0 does not allow for any directives from the VPAA.

Regards,
Carsten

[VPAA] Fri, Jul 13, 2007 at 6:45 PM
To: "Carsten A. Holz" <socholz@ust.hk>
Cc: [Secretary; Head, Division of Social Science; Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science]

[VPAA responded in blue color in between]

On 7/13/07, Carsten A. Holz <socholz@ust.hk> wrote:
Dear [VPAA],

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From my point of view, my research performance in 2006 was about the very best that's possible for me, and my performance in 2005/06 was solid. If that does not translate into a salary increase, then I won't get one ever (or the whole exercise is a random process).

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The SS division formed a review committee and reviewed each and every colleagues based on T, R, S and came up with a average score of performance. The DH and Dean then came up with a salary increase based on the score. I have not gone into details of each of the 400+ cases, but thumbing through the record, I notice that all 3 aspects (TRS) are important, and not just R. So you don't have to do nothing but research.

If 80% of your faculty are highly productive and you only remunerate 20-30% of them, then 50-60% of them are likely to be looking for another job.

You are wrong. There are over 40% of colleagues received an increase of the base salary, and another 50% of colleagues received a one-time bonus. Only a few (single digit in %) receive neither. This mean 90% of our colleagues are doing good work. I wish all 90% could get an adjustment, and a big one, in their base salary. But our budget does not allow it. We just came out of a 5-year hole with \$100m deficit per year (HKSAR reduced our budget in the order of 20% since SARS). Last year was the first year we don't have a deficit. Well, 90% of our colleagues shouldn't be looking for another job. Perhaps I should.

Alternatively, if the 20-30% rule leads to a rotation of salary increases: an increase very six years is not serious (and I doubt that every three years would be).

The rumor is that you have issued instructions to remunerate preferentially junior faculty (and your agents, the most senior faculty, are always in a position to help themselves). If you have done so, can you please let me know which institution investigates wrong-doing by the VPAA? You would have violated AP25.0, the regulatory framework for merit review. AP25.0 does not allow for any directives from the VPAA.

The Deans and I discussed how to do this round of salary adjustment, and the consensus is that we should pay more attention to junior faculty members since their entry salary was lower than that of the old timers, due to the recent change to S scale. The decision rest with the Deans. And the Deans made the decision, and I calibrated some uneven cases by asking questions. Most importantly, I need to make sure all the raises would add up to within the budget, otherwise, we would not be able to afford it. That was my directive, or to be more accurate, directing traffic and money. I don't know what part of AP25 I have violated. If I have, I better make sure what it is and repent, but I don't think I have.

I hope I have made the above clear.

[VPAA]

Regards,
Carsten

Carsten A. Holz <socholz@ust.hk>
To: [VPAA]
Cc: socholz@ust.hk

Mon, Jul 16, 2007 at 9:46 AM

Dear [VPAA],

AP 25.0, item 2.1, states that "Merit salary increases or one-time merit awards are based on academic attainment, performance, and internal and external relativity of the current salary level attained as appropriate."

If "internal relativity" covers giving preference to junior faculty, as I now think it does, I herewith apologize for finding fault with the preference policy. The more I think about 2.1, the more I wonder if the relativity part of 2.1 doesn't give division heads and deans completely free hand.

As to my own teaching and service, I feel perfectly OK. (-- My type of internal service is chosen by the dh.)

Regards,
Carsten

[VPAA]

Mon, Jul 16, 2007 at 6:41 PM

To: "Carsten A. Holz" <socholz@ust.hk>, [Head, Division of Social Science; Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science]

Cc: [Secretary]

Carsten

Yes, your understanding of internal relativity is correct. It gives some flexibility to DH/Deans/VPAA to adjust salary for colleagues who came to HKUST at the bottom of the economic/SARS crises with a low starting salary. I personally went through these cases to calibrate with the outside market, the performance of these colleagues as judged by the Dept performance review committee, and the recommendation of DH/Dean (even though I am not in any of the research areas and not qualified to make performance judgment according to you). In some cases, I even went through the raw teaching evaluation data, and read their CV.

Please rest assure that we have gone through many many rounds of check and balance to make sure it is fair and square. I am not saying that It is perfect like any other performance evaluation systems, but it is the best we could do.

]VPAA]