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Your Merit Salary Review 2015 letter, dated 31 August 2015

Carsten Holz <carstenholz@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 13, 2015 at 4:30 AM

To: [Division head]

Cc: {SOSC faculty, Provost, Dean}

13 October 2015

To: Division Head, SOSC, cc EVPP, DHSS, SOSC faculty

From: Carsten Holz, Prof., SOSC

Re: Your Merit Salary Review 2015 letter, dated 31 August 2015

Dear [Division head],

since there is a written record of your letter to me, here is my written response to one particular item in your letter:

“we encourage you to submit papers completed during your sabbatical leave to international journals that are highly ranked”.

The most highly ranked journal in my field of the Chinese economy is the China Economic Review, in which I have been consistently publishing. If you are encouraging me to continue doing what I am doing, then I am happy to get an “excellent” research evaluation and this letter ends here.

If it's otherwise, then please read on

My current research is not suitable for publication in the top China journals (The China Quarterly, The China Journal) as it is too technical for a general social science China audience.

If there were an expectation that I consistently publish in top general economics journals (and I have published in top general economics journals, but that is not the rule), then I would like to point out two items.

First, does HKUST expect me to publish in top economics journals, while at the same time it prohibits me from teaching economics? The prohibition appears to be at the UG level. Perhaps more importantly for research, HKUST also imposes a de facto impossibility of teaching PG courses in my field of development economics. Only once in 20 years of employment at HKUST have I taught a PG economics course, SOSC 544, Economics of Development, in spring 2010. This course was a selection from what is typically a 3-course sequence in development economics, following the syllabi of such courses at half a dozen top universities while incorporating my own input. – There was no audience for the course. Including four audits, I had seven students in the course, none of whom could follow the technical details of the papers covered in the course (and the papers center around technical details). Two students were from SOSC and were probably the ones least able to follow the course. A history student from HUMA managed to get a general grasp. The remaining four


students were from outside HSS; three of them audited the course and rarely attended. (As I recall, one was an Econ PG student, another one from physics, and two were UG students.)—If HKUST expect me to publish in top economics journals, while at the same time it prohibits me from teaching economics, then I do not understand how this can be considered fair in comparison to other faculty who are allowed to teach in their disciplines.

Second, salaries in Economics are significantly higher than in Sociology. I checked the most recent UCLA salaries. Salaries of professors in economics are (depending on how you count) 68 to 88 % higher than salaries of professors in sociology. Please find the details attached, in an Excel spreadsheet. I have grave doubts that my salary is 68-88% higher than that of the sociologists in the division. I would love to be wrong: in that case, please show me data.

Since HKUST is in all likelihood not paying me as an economist, and has never publicly declared me to be a sociologist (I was hired as an economist), i.e., since HKUST has not stated how I am to be evaluated, as far as I am concerned, HKUST has forfeited all rights to evaluate my research.

Best,
Carsten

PS: My formal grievance against the prohibition to teach economics has now been on the Provost's desk for somewhere on the order of 18 months.

 **UCLA-Econ-Sociology-Salary-11Oct15.xlsx**
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