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Comments re the division merit review guidelines

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To: [SOSC faculty]

Dear colleagues,

(1) Why are you so eager to agree to have your salaries cut every year?

HKUST management cut our salaries by 4.42% in nominal terms (and thereby also in real terms) on 1 October 2002.

HKUST management cut our salaries by 3% in nominal terms (and thereby also in real terms) on 1 January 2004.

HKUST management cut our salaries by 3.106% in nominal terms (and thereby also in real terms) on 1 January 2005.

In early 2005, HKUST management abolished the triannual review which, if passed, yielded a one-step salary increase on a salary scale in each of the following three years. Sometime around here, HKUST management abolished the automatic annual inflation adjustment.

In 2006, civil servants received a 0% salary adjustment and so did we – i.e., we had a real salary cut.

From 2007- 2011, our salaries were adjusted in exact correspondence to the civil service pay adjustment, and while civil servants, in addition, moved up a salary scale, we (or at least I) received no additional salary rank increase. This period includes a 5.38 nominal salary *cut* (and an even worse real salary cut) on 1 April 2010 in accordance with civil servant pay adjustments. At some point, the salary scale was abolished.

In 2013, HKUST management abolished the link to civil servant (i.e., economy-wide) same-position, *non-performance-based* pay adjustments. HKUST management no longer passes on to us the civil servant pay adjustments that HKUST management collects from the government, but passes on only one-half. (HKUST management supposedly distributes the other half.) So far, in 2013, 2014, and 2015, this implied a real salary cut.

Now you are being asked to agree to evaluation guidelines that cement HKUST management's default real cuts to our salaries.

The DMSRC (Division Merit Salary Review Committee) draft guidelines in the first section suggest that these guidelines for faculty performance evaluation only apply to salary compensation *above* the economy-wide same-position non-performance-based salary adjustment (captured by the civil servant pay adjustments).

If you agree, then this means that unless HKUST management issues an assurance that any

upcoming civil servant salary adjustment is fully passed on to faculty members, the DMSRC does not do a merit salary review. (There is nothing to review for merit compensation; the civil servant = economy-wide pay adjustment is the non-merit part of our peers' salary adjustment.)

(2) Why would you want to agree to merit review guidelines that can't guide

According to HKUST management's rules, DMSRC members fill in the evaluation forms individually / privately, after discussion of a faculty's performance with other DMSRC members in a meeting. Whether a DMSRC member adheres to whatever guidelines the division or anyone else has passed, nobody can check. The DMSRC members are not accountable. The DMSRC meeting is a joyous event where pizza and beer flow freely.

(3) Why would you want to agree to merit review guidelines that are a farce?

The DMSRC fills in forms. What HKUST management does with these forms, is anyone's guess. There is zero transparency and zero accountability.

(4) Why do you want to take responsibility for something that the Provost doesn't want to take responsibility for?

The Provost hasn't asked for anything, and hasn't put any limitations on anything. Why do you want to take responsibility for creating guidelines that are as meaningful as your guidelines for CY Leung on how to run HK?

If you still want to have guidelines, then the Provost has given us total liberty to say and do whatever we want; he has nothing to do with it.

The Provost in the next round of merit review may come around with new evaluation forms and/or new items for faculty to fill in online, and some or all of them may contradict or invalidate whatever guidelines we come up with.

(5) Why would you want to adopt guidelines which, realistically, can't be implemented?

If you read through the guidelines, you'll see that on several items information is required from management, such as on special deals struck by management with individual faculty members in exchange for service to management. Service performance evaluation requires transparency on service deals that are already being compensated (and possibly under- or over-compensated in the eyes of the DMSRC), and transparency and accountability is about the last thing you get from HKUST management.

Thus, if we lack the information necessary to do a fair evaluation, do you want the DMSRC to disregard the guidelines and to disregard fairness and just fill up on as much beer as needed to be able to fill in the forms with the entries management wants (has biased the findings towards, by not sharing information on deals)?

(6) What's the use, then, of these guidelines?

Please let me know!

The only use that I can think of is that management then has a long list of items to choose from to "justify" not giving you a salary increase, and you asked for it. ("Your performance on item 3.a.4(i) could be better....")

Or is it the usual cover-up? HKUST management wishes to cover up their sweatshop practices with the pretense of being a university? What better way to do it than have faculty themselves do it voluntarily, and take responsibility for it!

--- Do you not notice what's going on, or do you not care?

Do you not notice the systematic thievery?

Do you not notice that we are spending all this time drawing up guidelines pretending they are meaningful when, in effect, DMSRC members can do whatever they want? HKUST management can do with the DMSRC evaluations whatever it wants.

Do you not notice that the Provost doesn't take responsibility for the existence or non-existence of guidelines, let alone for their content?

Do you not notice that the DMSRC is in no position to evaluate service? That, in the case of teaching, the DMSRC can only evaluate faculty under the assumption that students are consumers, consumers are the kings (and queens) at HKUST, and these students know best what kind of teaching serves them best for the rest of their lives – and the DMSRC has made this assumption this unquestioningly for a decade (presumably goaded on by forms handed down from HKUST management, and never being questioned by obedient slaves).

Do you not see the absurdity of it all? Does it not call up images of a mental institution where the inmates have taken over and are imposing a warped "logic?" Does it not look like the worst excesses of Communist Mafia brainwash? Is the answer really to just obediently follow?

-- Best,
Carsten