

In response to my division head's three suggestions re sabbatical leave application

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18 October 2021

(1) Further justification, such as a record of the last sabbatical leave with a description of what was accomplished

HKUST's sabbatical leave regulation does not list such a requirement.

The university's sabbatical leave regulation speaks of sabbatical leave for "purposes of academic research, scholarly pursuits and professional development." – On my last sabbatical leave, I visited the Economics Department at Harvard University, worked in an office at the Fairbank Center every day, participated in seminars at the Fairbank Center and elsewhere at Harvard University, and gave two seminars myself. I did research on physical capital measures and on the People's Republic of China's fixed asset investment statistics, and eventually published a paper on physical capital measures for the PRC using the fixed asset investment statistics, as well as a paper on the quality of the fixed asset investment statistics.

-- I have documented this before and would have expected that HKUST administrators don't lose documentation submitted by faculty members.

(2) A detailed description of the proposed new project and justification of the need for sabbatical leave to complete it

HKUST's sabbatical leave regulation does not list such a requirement.

The university's sabbatical leave regulation states "granting of sabbatical leave shall be subject to sound justification."

I provide sound justification in my sabbatical leave application.

Interestingly, the HKUST sabbatical leave regulation violates academic freedom. In his September 2000 welcome email to all staff and students, HKUST President Wei Shyy wrote: "We remain steadfast in our support for academic freedom (see, e.g., <https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/about/faq/what-is-academic-freedom/>; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/academic-freedom>; <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/12/21/defining-academic-freedom>) and scholarly endeavours." The third link, the most qualified definition of academic freedom, yields:

"5. Academic freedom gives both students and faculty the right to study and do research on the topics they choose and to draw what conclusions they find consistent with their research, though it does not prevent others from judging whether their work is valuable and their conclusions sound. [...]"

Academic freedom allows judgment of my *work* only – not of my *planned or proposed* work. Academic freedom gives me the right to study and do research on the topics I choose. Academic freedom does not allow vetting of my ongoing or future research.

If one wishes to interpret “the granting of sabbatical leave shall be subject to sound justification” as somehow referring to justification of the *need for teaching-free time* to conduct the research—then why does the university’s sabbatical leave regulation not say so explicitly?, and how would that be compatible with the definition of sabbatical leave?— my answer can be found in the first paragraph of HKUST’s sabbatical leave regulation: I apply for sabbatical leave “for purposes of academic research, scholarly pursuits and professional development.”

-- It’s not my fault if HKUST’s administrators don’t want to play by professional sabbatical leave practices and produce an incoherent sabbatical leave regulation. And it says a lot about a university president when he trumpets academic freedom while he upholds university regulations that violate academic freedom.

(3) Plans for making up the teaching requirement

HKUST’s sabbatical leave regulation does not list such a requirement.

HKUST Human Resources confirmed that “The posted Regulations are accurate and include all relevant information” (see <https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Initiative/2021-3-4-SabbaticalLeave-HR.pdf>). What I find posted are these two documents regarding sabbatical leave:

<https://staffmanual.hkust.edu.hk/leave/full-time-staff-regular-terms-of-service/sabbatical-leave> and

https://w5.ab.ust.hk/jsecm/ecm_policy_download?documentTypeName=HRO:%20Circulars&policyId=PC%20No.%204/1994.

If anyone wishes to claim that sabbatical leave means re-arrangement of one’s teaching duties to create a teaching-free period, please point me to such a definition in an accepted dictionary.

-- If HKUST managers wish to call blue “red” and call red “yellow,” then at least have the guts to do so openly and let the world know about HKUST’s re-definition of “sabbatical leave.”

If the HKUST administration denies my sabbatical leave application, I request a written explanation as to why. Hopefully, this time it will be an explanation that goes beyond “oh, we don’t feel like it.” If my application does not meet the HKUST sabbatical leave regulations, please argue specifically what requirement listed in the sabbatical leave regulation it does not meet.

Please skip the lies and the arguments that are irrelevant by HKUST’s sabbatical leave regulations which I was given last year (<https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Initiative/2021-2-8-SabbaticalLeaveApplication.pdf>; on the whole episode last year also see the March 2021 item at <https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Initiative.html#Initiative2021March>) It just does not reflect well on people who (may) want to be taken seriously as university administrators.