

From: Carsten Holz <carstenholz@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 8, 2021
To: [Division head, cc to relevant staff]
Subject: Sabbatical leave application Re: Course Planning (AY21-22)

Dear [division head],

I wish to apply for sabbatical leave in 2021/22.

Attached please find my application. This, HKUST's official sabbatical leave application form states (in Note 1, at the top) that the "Applicant should study the regulations on Sabbatical Leave available on Human Resources Office's homepage (<http://www.ab.ust.hk/hro>) carefully before submitting this application." I confirm that I have done so—searching the Human Resources Office's website, I found the sabbatical leave regulations at <https://staffmanual.hkust.edu.hk/leave/full-time-staff-regular-terms-of-service/sabbatical-leave>—and that I completely fulfill the university's requirements for applying for sabbatical leave. After 6 years of non-stop working at HKUST, I apply for sabbatical leave in the academic year 2021/22.

I don't know if you still work with hard copies. If so, [staff], would you mind printing out my application for Wenfang?

Best,
Carsten

RE: Sabbatical leave application

[Division head]

Mon, Mar 1, 2021

To: Carsten Holz <carstenholz@gmail.com>

Dear Carsten –

I had a meeting with the Dean of SHSS today and we discussed your application for sabbatical leave. I am sorry to tell you that the Dean did not see enough justification for your application. One problem is that the research topic in your proposal seems to be the same as the one 6 years ago in your last proposal in 2014-2015. The other related problem is that there is not enough evidence to show sufficient output from your last sabbatical leave. You mention that two articles came out in 2018 and 2020, 3 and 5 years after your last sabbatical. These are just not strong enough evidence of your productivity. Some faculty members produce two articles in a single year without sabbatical leave.

I am sorry to bring you the unfavourable news. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best

[omitted]

Head, SOSC

Carsten Holz <carstenholz@gmail.com>
To: [Division head]

Tue, Mar 2, 2021

Dear [division head],

I have formally submitted my application for sabbatical leave and the administrators can approve or deny it.

If your email were to try to transmit an underlying expectation that I withdraw my application: I am not doing so. My formal application stands.

As to the dean's two points that you present:

(1) "One problem is that the research topic in your proposal seems to be the same as the one 6 years ago in your last proposal in 2014-2015."

That is false.

(2) "[a]The other related problem is that there is not enough evidence to show sufficient output from your last sabbatical leave. You mention that two articles came out in 2018 and 2020, 3 and 5 years after your last sabbatical. These are just not strong enough evidence of your productivity. [b]Some faculty members produce two articles in a single year without sabbatical leave."

Ad 2a: The previous Dean obsessed about citations, this Dean obsesses about article numbers, and the next Dean maybe counts words? The Dean is free to pass judgment on the output from my last sabbatical leave (using whatever criterion she wishes). By the Dean's own decision, one article every three years means that one is "research-active."

That still misses the point: The HKUST "sabbatical leave" regulations do **not** have any criterion related to output of past sabbatical leaves, or to productivity. I.e., the Dean's "argument" is irrelevant to my application for sabbatical leave.

Ad 2b: "Other children do more meaningful things with their pocket money than you do, so no more allowances for you."

Or, in more formal terms: If one were to use productivity as a criterion (in violation of HKUST's sabbatical leave rules), the comparison needs to be between Carsten on sabbatical leave vs. Carsten not on sabbatical leave. The Dean's comparison of Carsten vs. others is irrelevant to the question of the effect of sabbatical leave on the productivity of Carsten. The cross-person comparison may be relevant to things like the distribution of candy among the little ones, but that's not the issue here (and in the HKUST sabbatical leave regulations).

And that still ignores that according to the English language definition of sabbatical leave, HKUST's "sabbatical leave" does not constitute sabbatical leave. What the Dean is actually saying is that I will not be allowed to concentrate my teaching obligations in a fashion that allows me to have a teaching-free period of one year. Or, in other words, the dean wants me inside rather than outside the detention center (and all of this has nothing to

do with productivity, let alone sabbatical leave in academia and the proper use of language).

I am pleased to see the Dean this openly convey that HKUST's published rules are irrelevant.

Best,
Carsten