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Our Position Regarding Teaching, Research and Individual Conduct

Office of the President HKUST <ophkust@ust.hk> Fri, Mar 26, 2021

Reply-To: Office of the President HKUST <ophkust@ust.hk>

To: [all staff, all ug, all pg]

Dear Members of HKUST:

As exchanges and comments on matters related to teaching, research and other activities of HKUST members are played out in public from time to time, we wish to remind everyone that the University is guided by certain principles:

(1) All activities of our members should comply with the law. Hong Kong's judicial system, through its due process, addresses allegations of illegal conduct. The University has a responsibility to uphold our own standards, and will assess and review the implications of members' conduct after, not before, any legal process is concluded.

(2) Under the HKUST Ordinance, Senate is the supreme academic body of the University, and has the responsibility and authority to plan, develop and review academic programs, and to direct and regulate the teaching and research conducted in the University.

(3) Professional expectations and University regulations govern individual conduct, including matters such as plagiarism, falsification of evidence/data/information, ethical conduct of research, discrimination and harassment (including sexual harassment), etc. Allegations of misconduct or violation of the University's policies are investigated and acted on according to guidelines and procedures established by the University.

(4) Underpinning our activities as members of the University is academic freedom, a principle so fundamental that it is enshrined in Hong Kong's Basic Law Article 137: *"Educational institutions of all kinds may retain their autonomy and enjoy academic freedom."*

HKUST's curriculum, course contents, and delivery of teaching are the province of the faculty, subject to the Senate's oversight. They are always handled transparently and openly through collective discussion and debate by all Senate members, together with the University community. In addition, academic freedom is an internationally respected norm, deemed important to the successful pursuit of knowledge and the concomitant betterment of society: scholars are supported to explore and communicate ideas and evidence (including those that may be inconvenient, disagreeable, or contentious to certain groups or individuals) without repercussion.

Other than in an officially appointed capacity, no one can speak on behalf of HKUST. Of course, all our members are free to express themselves as individuals, as long as such action is not in conflict with either (1) or (3) above. At the same time, all others in the society are free to openly respond, whether supporting or challenging expressed individual viewpoints. Such exchanges should focus on the issues, not the individuals.

Our position is that we encourage everyone to think independently, to reason logically based on evidence and facts, and then to expect and engage with public scrutiny and comments. All our academic publications are subject to such critical tests, and the same standard applies to our regular conduct as members of the academic community.

I ask all of us to be united under these principles to move our beloved institution forward with an open, respectful and tolerant atmosphere.

Wei Shyy
President