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Face-to-face teaching and Covid-19

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Mon, Aug 30, 2021 at 10:15 AM

To: [Vice-Provost for Teaching]

Cc: [Faculty members in the School of Humanities and Social Science]

Dear [Vice-Provost],

(1) As you must be well aware, the Hong Kong “government” says that “maintaining social distancing is key to delay the spread of COVID-19 in Hong Kong” and it therefore outright prohibits “group gatherings of more than four persons in public places” (https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/social_distancing-faq.html). A news item of 28 August 2021 documents police breaking up a gathering of 47 people as violating Covid-19 social-distancing rules (<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3146735/hong-kong-police-undercover-health-inspectors-raid-film>). I can thus reasonably expect that my 250-student class will equally be broken up by police. (I also don’t recall seats in LTB being spaced at 1.5m distance.) Or shall I assume that the luminance of our Great Leader—similar to Mao Zedong thought which was regarded as more powerful than a thousand nuclear bombs—will kill all viruses before they can enter campus?

(2) Sitting currently in quarantine prison, I find it a most traumatic experience as well as damaging to my physical health (I spare you the details). It is my understanding that the moment I have been in close proximity to a Covid-19 positive person I will be back in quarantine prison. With you / the university administration forcing me to be in a room with at least 120 students (I agreed to raise the quota to 250), can you please assure me that I will *not* be subjected to quarantine prison should I come into close proximity to a Covid-19 positive person in the exercise of my university duties? My employment contract with HKUST does not include an obligation for me to be willing to risk prison time in the exercise of my academic duties. If you cannot assure me: What significant compensation do you provide in exchange for mandating me to run a risk that I never contracted for, a risk so high and so serious as to lead the Hong Kong "government" to prohibit the gathering of more than four persons and to enforce that with police action?

(3) One item FYI: Now that I am know what quarantine prison means, I will not force my students to run the risk of quarantine prison and thus will not require face-to-face presence for any of my classes.

This email is shared with SHSS faculty.

Best,
Carsten

[I recall receiving an answer from the Vice-Provost, though I cannot find it in my email system, to the effect that the university is not aware of breaking any rules. CH]