



Carsten Holz <carstenholz@gmail.com>

Academic Registry's "shopping cart"

Carsten A. Holz <socholz@ust.hk>

Mon, Mar 25, 2024 at 3:53 PM

To: [Quality Assurance, Academic Registry]

Cc: [Head, Social Science Division; Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science]

Dear Quality Assurance Team in the Academic Registry,

As a faculty member in the Division of Social Science I am astounded by the Academic Registry's use of the term "shopping cart" (and 'to shop') for students' course selection. (At <https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/how-select-classes-and-put-them-shopping-cart> , and at several further locations elsewhere on the Academic Registry website.)

(1) The idea that students shop for courses (and instructors) degrades professors and the profession. Academia becomes just another shopping mall, and professors just a bunch of shop attendants hawking their wares.

It also suggests a market place where the suppliers (faculty members) compete to offer the cheapest product in order to be able to sell (and get good teaching evaluations).

Shopping for courses contrasts sharply with an academic view of a community of scholars, and probably with every possible view on learning in a tertiary level education environment. (See, for example Palmer's *The Courage to Teach*.)

I do not think such an abasement of tertiary level education is conducive to HKUST's standing in the scholarly as well as the local community.

(2) HKUST is not [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). It is not a retail company. If you regard it as such, perhaps you could initiate the appropriate name change from HKUST to HKRST (Hong Kong Retailer of Science & Technology)?

The mission needs an update, too, to reflect the great shopping experience in the ARO mall. Rather than the current mission -- to advance learning and knowledge through teaching and research; to be a leading university with significant international impact and strong local commitment -- perhaps something along the lines of HKRST advancing the local retail industry and providing a great shopping environment may do?

Sincerely,
Carsten Holz,
Professor, Social Science Division

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[Academic Registry staff]

Tue, Mar 26, 2024 at 11:16 AM

To: Carsten Andreas HOLZ <socholz@ust.hk>

Cc: [Head, Social Science Division; Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science]

Dear Prof. Holz,

Thank you for expressing your concerns regarding the terminology used in the Academic Registry's course registration process. We appreciate your feedback and understand your perspective.

It is important to note that the terminology "shopping cart" and "to shop" used in the course registration process is not unique to HKUST but is a common practice in many educational institutions that utilize off-the-shelf software solutions like Peoplesoft. Peoplesoft is a widely used software package that provides a pre-defined framework for managing various administrative processes, including course registration.

While we acknowledge your concerns about the implications of using retail-related terms in an academic context, it is important to consider that the terminology is primarily a reflection of the software's functionality and not a deliberate attempt to undermine the value of academia or the profession of teaching. Renaming or customizing the terminology may not be feasible as it would require significant modifications to the software, which is not a custom-built solution.

We understand that you have reservations about the market-oriented language and its potential impact on the perception of academia. However, it is worth noting that the course registration process is just one aspect of the overall educational experience at HKUST. The University's mission remains focused on advancing learning and knowledge through teaching and research, and it is not intended to emulate a retail company.

We appreciate your concern for the reputation of HKUST and its commitment to scholarly pursuits. Rest assured that the use of specific terminology in one aspect of the administrative process does not diminish the University's dedication to academic excellence and the pursuit of knowledge.

Regards,

[omitted]

Senior Manager (Registry Systems)
Academic Registry