

**Completion report, sabbatical leave 1 September 2025 – 28 February 2026**

My 6-month sabbatical leave was spent on ‘academic research, scholarly pursuits and professional development’ (HKUST sabbatical leave rules). Regarding ‘research,’ as stated in section 10 of my Application for Sabbatical Leave (“Details of the activities”), I continued work on my research project *The Process of Economic Development in West Sichuan, China*. This included going back to West Sichuan for two weeks; drafting an introductory chapter for a monograph, sketching the individual chapters, sorting through 500,000 words of field notes, and sifting through a multitude of primary and secondary sources. Sorting and sifting grew increasingly tedious and thereby unproductive; I set it aside temporarily and since completed a short monograph on academia in Hong Kong and at HKUST. Regarding ‘scholarly pursuits and professional development’ (“Particulars of institution/location”), I affiliated with Stanford University’s Stanford Center for China’s Economy and Institutions (SCCEI), the world’s leading center for research on the Chinese economy. I typically attended two seminars a week and regularly met with China scholars.

The approval letter of my sabbatical leave application requires me to specify income and expenses. My HKUST salary was my sole source of income. Expenses included monthly rent of USD 6,000 in Palo Alto, moving costs of USD 20,000, car, plane tickets/hotel, major dental expenses.

This sabbatical leave was much needed. I am glad HKUST management again complies—at least partly—with HKUST’s sabbatical leave rules.

Questions for the Provost / Provost’s Office:

1. Please clarify the rationale for capping sabbatical leave at 6 months. A six-month period is incompatible with a productive sabbatical leave: Moving out of an apartment in Hong Kong consumes two months (I have neither HKUST housing nor a housing allowance and retaining an empty apartment at half my salary would leave, after tax, only 35% of my salary); shipping to the U.S. and back takes a total of four months; finding an apartment in the U.S. (standard minimum rental period 12 months) and settling takes time, as does buying/selling a car; eventually, another apartment has to be found back in Hong Kong. The logistics exceed six months (and are stressful). Additionally: What is your justification for translating 9 years of sabbatical leave credit into only 6 months of sabbatical leave, contrary to HKUST rules?
2. You cut my annual ‘leave passage’ allowance in half due to my 6-month sabbatical leave. Please explain your rationale for “The faculty member incurs *extra expenses* to exercise their profession during sabbatical leave and we *reduce their income*.”
3. Please explain why sabbatical leave does not earn annual and short leave credit. (Do you equate “sabbatical leave” with “vacation?”) Separately, what is your rationale for forcing me to take all my annual leave credit *before* going on sabbatical leave?

I appreciate scientists who provide a cogent rationale for the restrictions they impose on fellow scientists.