

From: Carsten Andreas HOLZ <socholz@ust.hk>
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 1:41 PM
To: [Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science (SHSS); Social Science faculty list]
Cc: [Head, Division of Social Science]
Subject: Re: Dean-Carsten communications on sabbatical leave

Dear [Dean],

Attached please find a more elaborate sabbatical leave completion report that I hope meets the length expectations while remaining within the space limitation set in the approval letter (“You are required to submit a short report (in no more than a page) [...]”).

I expect my (expanded) sabbatical leave completion report to satisfy the Hong Kong taxpayer as I have pursued full-time academia at the world’s foremost center for the study of the Chinese economy, at one of the world’s top-ranked universities, and fully in accordance with HKUST’s stated purpose of sabbatical leave and its requirements.

Regarding the original 21-word paragraph which includes “I am glad HKUST management again complies—at least partly—with HKUST’s sabbatical leave rules,” I apologize that I missed that in my previous response to you. The context: For about a decade, HKUST management imposed a blanket prohibition on sabbatical leave. Subject to special approval, faculty members could re-allocate their teaching duties such as to create a teaching-free period, which, subject to meeting certain conditions (identical to those listed in the HKUST sabbatical leave regulations), could be spent away from HKUST. HKUST management labeled this period away from HKUST “sabbatical leave” and continues this practice for “sabbatical leave” exceeding 6 months. The very first tenant of science is precisely defined language. Sabbatical leave is a clearly defined term and it does not involve “re-allocation of teaching duties.” Labeling a cat ‘dog’ doesn’t make the cat a dog.

Best,
Carsten

-- My previous email was (and this one is) also shared with the substantiated HUMA faculty; I am not allowed access to one collective HUMA email address and starting an email with a large number of email addresses (cc’ed) is unseemly. I have a HUMA group in my gmail account that is updated based on the HKUST online communications directory. I’ll send this group’s email addresses to [Manager, School of Humanities and Social Science].

[Attachment: CarstenHolz-Sabbatical-FinalReport-16May-6Jul2026I.pdf]

From: [Dean, SHSS]
Sent: Monday, July 6, 2026 3:36 PM
To: Carsten Andreas HOLZ <socholz@ust.hk>; [Social Science faculty list]
Cc: [Head, Division of Social Science]
Subject: Re: Dean-Carsten communications on sabbatical leave

Dear Prof. Holz,

Let me respond to your message briefly.

First, I cannot accept your Sabbatical Final Report (which you posted online in your sharing with SOSC colleagues - attached here for information again). The report contained 228 words, without sufficient detail that I consider crucial for my decision to endorse/approve of it. (Note that 228 words included 21 words of the last paragraph which is irrelevant to the contents of the report.)

Second, let me reiterate that Sabbatical Leave is not an entitlement, but a privilege of faculty members serving an institute of higher education likes ours. That's why I think your last paragraph (21 words) is out of place. We are publicly funded University and as such, we are using taxpayers' funds to do our work (teaching, research, and knowledge transfer). We are therefore held accountable for the way we spend public funds. I simply cannot approve of a report of 200-ish words lacking crucial content after a colleague has taken a six-month leave using public funds.

Finally, for you and other colleagues' information: I have been a faculty member in two institutions in North America for 25 years, and I am well aware what Sabbatical Leave Final Reports should look like (in spirit they are the same as required by HKUST — see attached requirements in the word doc). Please see an example of the my own that I submitted after I completed my sabbatical, as an example.

Kind regards,
[Dean]