

Summary of two ‘grievances,’ 2013 and 2014

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August 2024

The HKUST grievance procedures define grievance “to be an expression of feeling of injustice and unfairness by staff members about the treatment received from the management or other University staff members which adversely affects their general welfare at the workplace and/or their terms and conditions of employment at the University.”¹

I have lodged two grievances in accordance with HKUST’s formal grievance procedures. Here is a summary of my experiences.

1. The first grievance started as a grievance against the Department of Economics in the Business School for systematically blocking faculty members in the Division of Social Science with a PhD in economics from teaching economics courses.² The grievance progressed into a grievance against the HKUST President for abusing his authority in this grievance. The matter ended with the Council Chair asking the President and me to reach an agreement. In that process I experienced the President as a liar and, not wanting to deal with such a person, agreed to the matter being passed on to the Executive Vice-President & Provost for resolution, and if that were not successful, for the matter to be brought to the Senate (which would be a pointless exercise since HKUST’s “Senate” is predominantly a collection of top-down selected and appointed managers, under the President).

I never hear from anyone again about my grievance or the agreement. The Executive Vice-President & Provost did not take any action (and may never have been informed of the agreement). For a lengthy documentation of the matter see <https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Grievance/GrievanceEconomics2014.html> .

At some point my division head, together with some colleagues, met with the Department of Economics, a meeting I was not invited to nor informed of, and accepted an arrangement

¹ See <https://staffmanual.hkust.edu.hk/policies-guidelines-procedures/procedures/staff-grievance> , which is an internal document. A summary is accessible to the public at <https://hro.hkust.edu.hk/sites/default/files/Staff%20Grievance%20Procedures.pdf> , suggesting that HKUST managers wish the public to know about the existence of a grievance procedure at HKUST

² This follows a history of rather peculiar treatment of faculty members in the Social Science Division with a PhD in economics. (1) Supposedly the Division of Social Science and the Department of Economics had an agreement whereby the Division of Social Science, given its exclusive focus on China, only hires ‘China economists’ and the Department of Economics does *not* hire China economists. The Department of Economics promptly broke the supposed agreement but continued to block faculty members in the Division of Social Science from teaching economics courses when a course on a similar topic was already on the books of the Department of Economics. (2) Then there was the division head who announced that economists in the Social Science Division would be (newly) paid as economists rather than as sociologists, a promise promptly broken (and the inquiry as to ‘how come?’ was ignored). (3) The university’s appointments and substantiation committee turned down my application for full professorship requesting more publications in economics journals (information on a publication in a top economics journal was suppressed by the administration) when for the China-focused division and the school China journals have always been the standard. (A formal inquiry to the committee as to if faculty members in the School of Humanities and Social Science are to be evaluated along disciplinary or along interdisciplinary and area studies lines was never answered.) Details on this history can be found in numerous entries at <https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Initiative.html> .

whereby economists in the Division of Social Science Division may teach the Department of Economics' existing economics courses in accordance with course-specific requirements set out, in the individual case, by the Department of Economics, and subject to ultimate approval of the Department of Economics. I don't think anyone in the Division of Social Science ever took up the offer of serving as lecturer in the Department of Economics and having one's course content regulated by the Department of Economics.

A related issue (never addressed) is that by 2018, the Business School had, through a particular combination of course requirements and course restrictions, managed to quietly and unobtrusively prohibit all students enrolled in the Business School from taking the one 'Introduction to Economics' course that the Social Science Division is allowed to teach (and that was taught by a colleague who eventually departed HKUST before I, and later others, took over the course).³

In summary, the Division of Social Science is only allowed to teach introductory economics, and only to students who are not interested in economics (i.e., students enrolled in Engineering or Science).

2. The second grievance is against the Provost and the Dean of SHSS for a system design failure in the merit review that directly impacts on how I am being evaluated: A merit review committee cannot reasonably review the service of a colleague when service is solely the outcome of division head and dean orders of who is to provide what service; all service assignments within HKUST are made top-down. The President rejects my grievance with the claim that it does not fall "within the scope of the Staff Grievance Procedure."⁴ I disagree and lodge a grievance with the Council Chair against the President for violating the Staff Grievance Procedures. The Council Chair sides with the President.⁵ The system failure that I point out is never addressed and continues to allow managers to pre-determine merit review outcomes.

³ For details see <https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Initiative/2018-3-14-UndergraduateEnrollment-NoBSchoolStudents-InSOSC1440.pdf> . There is yet another peculiarity, smacking of personal discrimination, which is described at <https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Initiative/2016-8-1-SOSC4260-Colisting.pdf> .

⁴ In my earlier, first grievance, the President tried the same "University's Staff Grievance Procedures are not the appropriate mechanism to deal with this matter" (without saying what, in his view, is the appropriate mechanism), at which point I took the matter to the Council Chair (who then asked the President and me to resolve the matter informally).

⁵ For details see the entry of 2014/10/23 at <https://carstenholz.people.ust.hk/Initiative.html> .