

**VIEW COMMENTS FROM PANEL****Project Number :** 16603621**Project Title :** Academic Freedom at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology**PI Name :** Prof Holz Carsten A.

Overall Comments: Utilizing surveys and other research methodologies, this project aims to explore the current state of academic freedom at HKST. Project outcomes include one journal article, although PI also points to potential media interest in this study.

Strengths: Important and timely project.

Weaknesses: Tone of proposal seemed off at times (overly emotional, vindictive, and non-objective); research outcome (one article) is fairly limited;

This is of course a very important issue however the expert reviewers raise a number of questions about its viability, methods, and reach. There needs to be further academic discussion of the notion of academic freedom. Also the method is to apply an existing tool devised by Karran et al that employs 50 categories in the analysis. However, none of these categories is named or its efficacy assessed for this study. This is noteworthy as the PI does accept that academic freedom has different descriptions in different institutions and regions. The expert reviewers also question how the fact that much of the university procedures the PI will assess do not take place in the "public realm". It is unclear how this will affect the nature of the research and what can be accessed and disseminated. If these procedures are then being assessed through questionnaires with colleagues, how can anonymity be ensured? Will colleagues take part? And finally, the PI claims being shoehorned into "money-churning types of research" is a key motivation of this study. It is often unclear whether it is the fact that many universities are now regarded as functioning as "knowledge factories" or market-based institution that is being challenged or the idea that the PI's own university is regarded by him as not honouring its commitment to academic freedom. More is needed to differentiate the different aspects of these two kinds of university.

Potential Research Impact Comment:

It is not clear that the project will have much impact beyond academia

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