

Carsten A. Holz

**HKUST evaluation of my application for full professorship 2007/08, and my response**  
6 Sept. 08 and June/Sept. 09 (**deletions 12 Nov. 08**)

### **A. My review file and review outcome**

Apart from my application, my review file contains

- 5 strongly positive external letters
- the division review with 3 ‘Yes’ and 0 ‘No’
- the school review with 1 ‘Yes’ and 2 ‘Abstain’
- the dean’s report (“**DELETED following VPAA’s confidentiality concern**”) supports promotion
- the report of the University Appointments and Substantiation Committee (UASC) with 4 ‘No’ and 2 ‘Yes’
- the letter of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) to the dean with a ‘No’

The membership of the various committees is in Appendix 1.

### **B. Shortfalls noted in the UASC and VPAA reports**

The UASC explicitly noted the following shortfalls

- “**DELETED**”
- “**DELETED**”

The VPAA explicitly noted that “**DELETED**

- **DELETED**
- **DELETED.**”

These four points cover

- (1) Research: He should publish some manuscripts in better-ranked economics journals.
- (2) Teaching: He should be encouraged to participate more extensively in graduate teaching and needs to put in more effort in PG supervision.
- (3) Service: He needs to put in more effort in services to the Division and the School.

The complete, relevant passages in the UASC and VPAA reports are in Appendix 2. Appendix 2 also considers a sentence in the UASC report that is quoted from the school report without any indication that the particular issue is viewed negatively by the UASC.

### **C. Response to the shortfalls noted in the UASC and VPAA reports**

- (1) Research: His research record would be improved, if he had chosen to publish some manuscripts in better-ranked economics journals.

The UASC does not specify if it feels my research record *needs* to be improved beyond its current state in order to deserve full professorship. If the UASC comment were to imply that I

have not published *enough* in “better-ranked” economics journals to deserve full professorship, it would contradict the external reviewers.

The full professor from the HKUST Economics Department who was a member of the division review committee voted for my promotion and thus agreed that my research record was “excellent” (the term used in the division’s academic review committee report).

The university rules do not give the UASC the authority to decide which field a faculty member has to publish in. AP 20.1 Section 2(2) states the general criteria for academic review, in terms of research, are:

excellence in research and scholarship, as reflected in both the ability and the achievement of the faculty member in contributing significantly to the acquisition of knowledge, and in being innovative or demonstrating powers of independent thought (suitably witnessed by having his/her research published in appropriate esteemed periodicals, books, etc., or otherwise subjected to peer evaluation and deemed to be acceptable, e.g. by learned societies or other professionals, either individually or communally;

In other words, the UASC has grossly overstepped its authority and violated the university guidelines and procedures.

The UASC also contradicts itself. In my previous review, for substantiation (associate professor) in 2001/02, the UASC voted 6 ‘Yes’ and 1 ‘Abstain’ in favor of my substantiation. In terms of research, the UASC then said that I am an institutional economist whose research on China has been applauded by all independent referees. There is no mentioning of any publications in economics journals. My publications in economics journals since then are significantly more weighty than earlier. If the UASC has changed its policy, that has not been announced. (As to the UASC’s use of the term “institutional economist” to describe me, I do not consider myself an institutional economist.)

Any reference to publishing in economics rather than China journals is new to me. It has *not* been promulgated within the division. It is new to the division review committee, too. It overrules division policy, but there has been no response to this UASC guidance decision by the executives in the division or school; presumably because they don’t know of the decision, with the UASC review document stamped confidential and the UASC not informing school or division of the policy decisions it makes for school and division.

The division review committee says: “It is necessary to emphasize that while the Economics Department at HKUST insists on publications in the top 5-10 Economics journals as one of the criteria for substantiation or promotion, the Division of Social Science readily accepts publications by its Economics faculty in the top China journals, such as *The China Quarterly* or *the China Journal*. Our focus is the production of theory-informed empirical knowledge, and we have consistently applied this criterion to evaluate the quality of research outputs of all faculty members, including economics colleagues.” ... “In the end, the committee viewed Carsten’s Research as Excellent.”

There is a trail of oral as well as email evidence of the promotion of our division as interdisciplinary. One piece: Alvin So, when division head, compiled the division’s publication record in the top three China/Asia area studies journals and measured the division’s record solely by this standard (where SOSC ranks at the very top worldwide). The President publicly promoted this information.

None of the external reviewers found fault with my publishing outlets. “The peer-reviewed journals in which Carsten is publishing ... are solid ...”

My publications in economics journals, in terms of ranking, are no inferior to the publications of the existing SOSC full professors *in the disciplines in which they received their PhD and in China studies* (at the time of their promotion if not even now). I have asked the UASC to clarify how it evaluates disciplinary vs. inter-disciplinary publications and while I know that the UASC has received my inquiry, it has not responded as of nine months later.

Please compare my publications to those of Erik Bark, Ding Xueliang, Alvin So, Raymond Wong, and David Zweig. (At the time of my review, James Kung was not yet full professor. It's fine to compare to him, too. I wonder how the UASC could find his publication record in interdisciplinary journals sufficient?). If those with a PhD in economics are discriminated against and evaluated differently from other full professors in the division, I expect that to be made explicit.

My publications also compare favorably to those of economists in the economics department, for example, to those of Francis Lui, a full professor in the economics department who is on the UASC. An author search for Francis Lui in the economic publications database EconLit in June 2009 and a visit to his homepage (he does not make his CV available on his homepage and only lists "selected articles") shows four articles in a, by impact factor, top economics journal, the *Journal of Political Economy* (1983, 1985, 1991, 1999), with the latter two articles co-authored with one and the same author. All of these four articles are in one and the same journal when there is a wide range of top-level economics journals (unlike in China studies). This one journal is published by the department from which Francis Lui obtained his BA degree; I am not in a position to ascertain if any personal connection is involved.

Francis Lui, in addition to (a) the four articles in one top economics journal, has published (b) one article in a medium-ranked economics journal, the *Journal of Public Economics* (1986), (c) four articles, of which three co-authored, in lower-ranked economics journals (*Economic Letters* [co-authored, 1991], *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control* [co-authored, 1997], *Economic Inquiry* [co-authored, 1998], *Contemporary Economic Policy* [1996]), (d) one article in *Mathematical Social Sciences* (co-authored, 1992), a journal that isn't ranked in economics in the Journal Citation Reports, and (e) working papers, comments, book chapters and books.

Here is the direct total journal publication comparison, with co-authored articles given half-weight:

<i>By impact factor (1-year, 5-year)</i>	Francis Lui	Carsten Holz
Top economics journals	(3) <sup>a</sup>	1
Top China journals		3
Medium-ranked economics journals (continued)	1	1.5+ <sup>b</sup> 2.5
Lower-ranked economics journals	2.5	2
Journals not ranked in the economics index	0.5	
Lower-ranked economics journals, lower- or medium-ranked China journals, or unranked		7.5 <sup>c</sup>

The table does not consider 'time since PhD' or the date at which Francis Lui became full professor.

a Four articles, of which two co-authored; all articles are in one and the same journal published by the department in which Francis Lui received his BA.

b Two published articles, one of which is co-authored, plus one revise and resubmit.

c I don't want to decide where to draw exact boundaries between lower- and medium-ranked journals, and how to compare areas studies, regional, and economics journals.

The details for me are: I have published (a) one article in a top economics journal (*Review of Economics and Statistics*), (b) three articles in a top China journal, *The China Quarterly*, (c) two articles in *World Development* and *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, medium-ranked economics journals but leading journals in the specific field of development economics (plus a revise and resubmit for the *Journal of Development Economics*, also in this category), (d) three articles in the *China Economic Review* (of which one co-authored), a medium-ranked economics journal and the one China economics journal, (e) two articles in the *Review of Income and Wealth*, a lower-ranked economics journals but again the appropriate, leading journals in the specific fields of studies of national income accounts, (f) nine further articles in *Journal of Contemporary China* (two), *China Information*, *The China Review* (co-authored), *International Review of Applied Economics* (co-authored), *Journal of Asian Business*, *Asian Development Review* (co-authored), *Comparative Economics Studies*, and *Journal of Asian Economics*, probably all lower-ranked economics or lower-/medium-ranked area studies journals, (g) two published exchanges with senior economists (Angus Maddison, Gregory Chow), and (h) working papers, comments, book chapters and books. For none of the journals do I personally know the editor. For the *China Economic Review*, I know a co-editor since my last publication in this journal.

Any attempt to evaluate me differently from any other person in SOSC by requiring economics publications violates a VPAA decision of spring 07. The dean informed me orally on 8 June that on order of the VPAA the economists in SOSC would obtain salary rank increases in the upcoming salary review, in line with the salary variations between economists and other social scientists. When the salary review was announced less than a month later, my salary rank was unchanged. Thus, there is not only the issue of if social science division China economists should publish in different journals than non-country studies economists, but also the VPAA's decision that *any* economist in SOSC (or just I) is to be treated like any other social scientist in SOSC, and *not* as an economist.

(2) Teaching: He should be encouraged to participate more extensively in graduate teaching and needs to put more effort in PG supervision.

(2a) He should be encouraged to participate more extensively in graduate student teaching.

None of the external reviewers found fault with my graduate student teaching.

The UASC asks me to override a division head decision, which all along I would have loved to do, but which was and still is not in my power.

The division head imposes a quota of maximally one PG course per academic year per faculty. This quota is occasionally broken, and was (exceptionally) broken for me in 2006/07 to teach two core methods courses. In the 1990s, there was a rule that someone who taught a methods PG course could teach one more (non-methods) PG course; this rule has disappeared.

As far as I know, the UASC has never in the past, nor now, informed the division head of its decision to have me teach more PG courses.

I have never objected to teach any graduate level course that I was asked to teach.

I have not been able to teach a course in my field of research of development economics since I joined SOSC 13 years ago, except in one instance with consequences that prevented a repeat in SOSC.

When I joined HKUST, I was told not to teach economics courses—that is the realm of the economics department (which in exchange would not teach China courses). Since substantiation, I taught the core methods course SOSC 511 “Social Science Research Methods” in every academic year except in 2003/04

when I was on sabbatical leave. It builds on a sociology textbook following the recommendation of the division head when I first taught the course. In 2006/07 I also taught the methods course SOSC 534 “Quantitative Analysis” (given the qualifications of our students, using an undergraduate econometrics text). Neither course is in my field of research; I use econometrics in some of my research.

In spring 1998 I tried to teach a course related to my field: “China’s Economic Growth.” The SOSC students in the course threatened to walk out if I did any economics; I dropped much of the economics, lost all the B-School students in the course, had an enrollment of two SOSC students (one of whom audited) and one physics student. Through 2007, I did not dare to propose to the division head again that I teach a PG course in my field; I do not think it makes sense for the division if I replicate an experiment that had yielded such a clear answer.

In fall 2008 I am teaching a “Chinese Economy” course at the PG level for the first time; the course is identical to one I taught at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University in spring 2008 except for some updating. In 2008/09 I expect to teach a PG level “Development Economics” (already put on the books). These courses are hardly suitable for SOSC students. I tried to co-list the “Chinese Economy” course with the economics department, but co-listing is not possible at HKUST. In addition, the economics department has scheduled core courses for its MSc students in the same time slot as my course.

(2b) He needs to put in more effort in PG supervision

None of the external reviewers found fault with my PG supervision.

I have made every effort in supervising PG students and am not aware of any criticism of my handling of PG supervision, neither in the review file nor outside.

Should this refer to the number of PG students supervised (two), the HKUST *Handbook for Research Postgraduate Students 2008-09*, p. 29, states “...each MPhil student is assigned an interim supervisor. This supervisor works with the student to map out a tentative program of study and research, and to identify a thesis supervisor.” In SOSC, the PG committee assigns the interim supervisor.

I have never turned away a student assigned to me by the PG committee for supervision.

I am not aware that I have ever declined (or shown disinterest) to supervise a student discussed with me by a member of the PG committee (which may have happened about three times over the past 13 years).

I have never turned away a student who asked me to supervise.

Accepted RPg students rarely dare to switch their supervisor. I explored this issue in SOSC 511 about three or four years ago: I read out the university guidelines on thesis supervision, which speak of an interim supervisor in the first year until the thesis supervisor is jointly identified, and students broke into laughter. In SOSC, the interim supervisor as assigned by the PG committee is the final supervisor. Students do not dare to switch away from the “interim” supervisor. I have repeatedly suggested in the division to admit students into our program and to let them choose their supervisors themselves (that is, follow university regulations), to no effect.

I have on several occasions offered myself as a fallback option to an RPg student who talked to me about their problems with their supervisor. (I also make clear that I will want to talk to their current supervisor before implementing the switch.) I know of only one student among SOSC RPg students who switched supervisors; that student switched from Erik Baark to me.

The statement by the VPAA that “He needs to put in more effort in PG supervision” implies that I am to somehow violate university rules (the rules for which the vice-president is

responsible) but does not tell me how. If the VPAA has a secret set of rules on PG students that replaces the published rules, I ask that I be told and that they be published.

I give honest advice to RPg students and to prospective RPg students.

I get about one inquiry per year by a prospective RPg student. (The couple of times when I exceptionally taught International Finance, an economics course, at the third-year UG level, the chances of being asked were higher.) Typically, once I explain what SOSC has to offer, it turns out the student is much better off at HKU, CUHK or abroad. I write letters of recommendation to wherever the student wants to apply, including to SOSC if the student chooses so.

One of my MPhil students asked me to supervise for PhD. I made it a condition that she sit in on all ECON PG core courses. I also made it clear that I thought it was in her best interest to get into a top school. I wrote a strong letter of recommendation. She is now at INSEAD. When she inquired about the (hypothetical) possibility of still doing her PhD with me rather than go to INSEAD, I declined because I felt having her in SOSC would be irresponsible to her.

When I get one of the mass mailings from prospective mainland students, I urge them to apply through our professional selection process. We have a rigorous program following U.S. standards and a fair selection process into this program.

I have been unhappy since the 1990s about the character of SOSC which makes it near-impossible for me to have RPg students. I have expressed my dissatisfaction for years, including, in the last two years, in writing. I have made concrete proposals for innovations that would increase the likelihood for me to be able to teach in my field and to have RPgs. I have repeatedly brought it to the attention of division head, dean, and eventually the VPAA. These executives chose not to act.

Given that this VPAA requirement for me to obtain full professorship is logically inconsistent with university rules and is logically inconsistent with the VPAA-determined character of SOSC, I have no possibility to ever meet the (illogical) VPAA requirements for full professorship at HKUST.

Even if there were some innovations, say, a joint program with the economics department, with a focus on China, something simple to do and proposed by me for a decade, including in writing, it would take on the order of five to ten years before I can have supervised a substantial number of RPGs.

(3) Service: He needs to put in more effort in services to the Division and the School.

None of the external reviewers found fault with my services to the Division and the School.

The service section of my application shows a regular faculty load of committee service.

In addition, in 2006/07 I participated in the meetings of both the division's UG major planning committee and of the division's strategic planning committee even though I was not appointed to these committees by the division head (then Erik Baark).

I regularly give feedback to division head and dean on division and school matters, some of it solicited and in response to mailings from division head or dean, and some of it out of my own initiative. This is perfectly factual feedback, usually in writing. A few of these initiatives I documented in the service section of my application.

The *division* report calls me a "solid citizen." One committee member "commented that Carsten had a terrific sense of responsibility to the Division and always took on

administrative tasks willingly. ... He fulfills his tasks with enthusiasm. Carsten joined the school Senate, actively voices the concerns of the faculty, and is a strong advocate for transparency. The committee recognizes and appreciates these efforts, and ranks his service as very good." The *school* report summarized my service as "more than satisfactory." --- Contrast this to the VPAA's : "~~DELETED.~~" [underlining by C.H.] The VPAA relabels "black" as "white" and has no problem pretending that black *is* white.

In the review file, the only evidence of a shortfall in service comes from the dean's report. The dean (Erik Baark) writes:

10. Dr. Holz has carried a number of committee assignments at the Division, the School, and the University – notably as an elected representative of the School of Humanities and Social Science to the University Senate during 2007. However, I cannot agree with the evaluations proposed in the Division report and the School Committee report. In my own experience as Acting Head of the Division of Social Science, I have repeatedly had to make sudden rearrangements of committee assignments because of Dr. Holz's lack of co-operation. [a] In one case, the Chair of the Search Committee for the International Political Economy Position in 2007/08 [2006/07] complained to me that Dr. Holz had created difficulties for the Committee's work at their first meeting, and asked me to re-assign Dr. Holz to the Search Committee for the Chinese Economy Position. [b] In another case, Dr. Holz informed the Chair of the Division's Academic Review Committee one day before the ARC should meet that he refused to review a candidate for promotion because this candidate was a Sociologist. We therefore had to quickly persuade another faculty member to serve on ARC in Dr. Holz's place.

11. It is very difficult for me to consider such actions as representing "a terrific sense of responsibility to the Division" and I would therefore evaluate Dr. Holz's service record as less than satisfactory.

--- The overall conclusion of the dean in his report is: "I believe that he deserves to be promoted to Full Professor." It is only the VPAA who focuses on this "shortfall" to deny promotion. Yet the evidence of this "shortfall" is false.

(a) "Dr. Holz created difficulties for the Committee's work at their first meeting"

In an email to colleagues in SOSOC of 13 September 2006, two days after the search committee met for the first time, I wrote:

"I am on the IPE search committee. While, to me, either an econ or a poli sci candidate fits the job title, David [committee chair] had clear feelings about this being a political science position. I abstained from resisting, and the position then turned into a political science advertisement."

In my understanding, the dean's assignment was for an open, inter-disciplinary job search (which would also justify the appointment of me as a non-political-scientist to the committee) and not a search specific to political science. Letting division faculty members know that a position has been re-focused narrowly into a political science position by the search committee chair is labeled "creating difficulties" by the then division head. On the same day, 13 Sept. 2006, the division head informed me that I had been moved to another search committee.

The complete email correspondence on this topic in my email system is in a separate file on the IPE search in fall 2006.

(b) Refusal to review a sociologist candidate for promotion

When I was on the review committee for Cecilia Cheng (a psychologist) many years ago I found myself unable to evaluate the quality of her writings. I didn't understand the jargon. I decided back then that I would not again review a case where I could not understand the person's research papers.

Michelle Yik, a *psychologist*, was one of the two persons to review in 2006/07, and I declined to review her. In 2006/07 we also had two other persons to review, one of whom is a sociologist, and I said that while I was not qualified to properly review these two, I am willing to go along in these two cases because I have at least an inkling of their fields.

Re the one day notice: I was informed in the afternoon of 5 March that the committee was to review these cases (the email is dated 14:16pm, but I think I only read it in late afternoon) and I emailed the division head Erik Baark in the morning of 6 March that I cannot evaluate Michelle and therefore will not review her case.

The complete email correspondence on this topic in my email system is in a separate file on the academic review in spring 2007.

The whole review file contains only these two service "shortfalls." When the VPAA says "**DELETED**" that Carsten Holz needs to put in more effort into services to the division and school (in direct contradiction to the division and school report), these two items are the only ones he can echo. The VPAA denies full professorship for being honest with one's colleagues.

## Appendix 1. Review committee members

Academic Review Committee, SOSC:

Yanjie Bian (SOSC)  
Siu Fai Leung (ECON)  
David Zweig (SOSC)

Humanities and Social Sciences Appointments and Substantiation Committee:

Chang-tai Hung (HUMA)\*  
Fung Yiu Ming (HUMA)  
Alvin So (SOSC)\*

Dean: Erik Baark (/SOSC)\*

University Appointments and Substantiation Committee:

Leonard K K Chan (HUMA)  
Inchi Hu (ISMT)  
Chin Tau Lea (ECE)  
Dik Lun Lee (CSE)  
Francis T Lui (ECON)  
Maria Lung (Chair, BIOL)  
Yundong Wu (CHEM)  
David Zweig (SOSC)

Vice-President for Academic Affairs: Roland Chin

Senate Standing Committee for Academic Review Procedure

I do not know the membership. I think HSS is represented by William Tay\*.

\* I once pointed out a heavily biased composition of some search committee that Chang-tai Hung was the head of, which triggered an acrimonious response by Chang-tai and an inquiry from the president.

Particularly in 2006/07 I repeatedly spoke out against unprofessional practices in SOSC/HSS. Alvin So was acting dean in 2006/07 (and division head in some earlier years) and Erik Baark was acting division head in 2006/07 (and then acting dean in 07/08).

William Tay single-handedly, and in my view in violation of university rules, turned down my application to pass the floating salary bar in 2004/05 (as documented separately).

## Appendix 2. Relevant details of the UASC and VPAA reports

All underlining in this section is by me (C.H.)

The VPAA's evaluation is "**DELETED.**"

What follows is two paragraphs copied from the UASC report; the UASC report otherwise includes a factual date-of-meeting introductory paragraph and a final paragraph reporting the results of the vote (both omitted here). The VPAA report otherwise contains one brief introductory paragraph and two brief end paragraphs that do not evaluate me (also omitted here).

The two paragraphs in the UASC report are:

**DELETED**

**DELETED**

These two (above paragraphs) of the UASC report contain cited negative passages from the School report and the Dean report without, however, stating that the UASC agreed with these citations (in the last case explicitly disagreeing). These citations are:

- **DELETED.**
- **DELETED.**
- **DELETED.**

The only element in the above paragraph that is new (not made explicit by the UASC or the VPAA and covered in section B) is the School Committee's questioning of my international visibility as an economist.

The School report includes the following passage re international visibility:

6. With all due respect to Dr. Holz's attainments as an original researcher on China's statistical economy, members of the School Committee raised a few questions regarding his scholarship. First, given his status as a most accomplished and influential scholar in the statistical analysis of China, he should enjoy a very high level of visibility in the international economics arena [a]. There is no such obvious indication in terms of the citation index which he has not provided [b] to the Divisional ARAC for his publications; nor has he been significantly noticeable at the international level through conference participation and professional service. He could, for instance, have been invited to serve on the editorial committees [c] of the renowned journals through which he has published regularly. One possible explanation considered by the School Committee for this peculiar phenomenon might relate to the relatively narrow focus of his research, which "falls outside the domain of what economists typically do." (Reviewer 1 [d])

The above paragraph is problematic:

- [a] The School Committee contains not a single economist (Appendix 1) but evaluates my visibility as an economist. It ignores the reports provided by five external economists(?) and the report of the division review committee, which comprised a full professor from the HKUST Economics Department.
- [a] As to the expectation of a faculty member in SOSOC (when there is a separate economics department at HKUST) to work along strictly disciplinary lines, see section C.1 above.

- [a] The school level committee makes no mentioning of the visibility in the China field even though it contains a previous division head who is a most ardent proponent of interdisciplinarity and changed the name of “Division of Social Sciences” to “Division of Social Science” (one social science).
- [a] The link between “influential scholar in the statistical analysis of China” and “[therefore] he should enjoy a very high level of visibility in the international economics arena” is weak; the Committee neither specifies the link nor what it means by “international economics arena.”
- [b] The university regulations list in great detail what an application file consists of; this list does not include a citation index.
- [a,b] The School Review Committee draws conclusions on my “visibility in the international economics arena” with reference to a non-existent citation index.
- [c] My application file includes a CV that lists two dozen events over the past six years where I have presented my work either at conferences or at seminars (including at the world’s top universities).
- [c] My application file includes a statement on service which lists me as a member of the editorial board of the *Review of Income and Wealth* and of the *China Economic Quarterly*. I.e., I am on the editorial committees of two, in the words of the school review committee, “of the renowned journals through which he has published regularly,” which the school review committee fails to see.
- [d] The Committee quotes a reviewer on the relatively narrow focus of my research as falling “outside the domain of what economists typically do” but does not interpret this quote. If anything, this quote would suggest that the Committee *should not* evaluate me as an economist.
- [d] The Committee report quotes the reviewer in a distorting fashion. The quote in context is  
 “As I noted then [previous passage is blotted out in the copy of the file that I obtained], Carsten’s record is slightly difficult to assess because much of his research now falls outside the domain of what economists typically do (or are thought to do). This makes it no less important however.”

Further on in the report, this reviewer says “There is clearly room for someone with his skills in the profession, and having an appointment in Social Sciences provides more leeway for this kind of work than would one in Economics.” [The UASC and the VPAA prove the reviewer otherwise.]

And finally, this reviewer says “Carsten has demonstrated an ability to do work that matters, and that will have a lasting effect on the profession.” And “In short, I enthusiastically support Carsten’s promotion. There are lots of economists in HK and China working on China, but there are few whose work I consider it imperative to read.”