

12 November 2008

To: Professor Roland Chin, Vice-President for Academic Affairs

From: Carsten Holz, Associate Prof., SOSC

Dear Professor Chin,

I am in receipt of your confidential letter dated 4 November 2008.

(1) On RPg supervision you state that you (presumably the Acting Dean and you) would like to encourage me to take on a more proactive role in mentoring more research students in my field. This is a rephrasing of your statement dated 13 June 2008 (part of the review file).

As I have documented earlier (also in a copy given to you on 10 October 2008), I have done every normal action regarding RPg supervision that I think one can possibly expect of me, but you dismiss that summarily as not good enough.

You do not specify what exactly I failed to do. I do not know what the (to me unknown) additional practices are that you expect me to follow.

(2) On service, you tell me that you expect a China economist to evaluate a (non-China) psychologist. Nobody else (including the Dean) found this a problem that prevents my promotion to full professorship.

I continue to believe that my action of declining to review a case that I am unqualified to review (as I have documented) is correct.

I learn from your letter that if a faculty member feels incapable of properly evaluating a colleague in a different discipline, that faculty member does not deserve full professorship at HKUST.

(3) You inform me that my research excellence is commended by all reviewers. The UASC, in my reading, lists research as one of two problem issues. As far as I understand, the UASC will be involved again in any future review of me for full professorship, and you are not ruling out the UASC's involvement in such a review.

You finish with a general exhortation urging me to be more "proactive and constructive" in committee service at the level of the Division as well as the School and to put in more effort in recruiting RPg students, a slightly rephrased repetition of your statement dated 13 June 2008 (part of the review file) and of your much earlier oral statements. Your letter does not give me any indication of what I should have done differently, apart from telling me that I must review colleagues no matter how unqualified I feel to do so.

I draw the following conclusions:

- (i) I have gone through an academic review process whose outcome, as I have documented, makes no sense to me and only informs me that I will never be able to get full professorship at HKUST.
- (ii) I have lodged an appeal on procedural grounds which was ignored by an appeal committee that was unable to refute my claim of procedural misconduct. (The result of a “vote” does not address my appeal.)
- (iii) I have requested the UASC to clarify three basic principles that are highly relevant in its evaluation of applicants for full professorship. It did not respond to my request.
- (iv) You as VPAA reject my application based on general assertions related to internal service. You do not tell me how I should have performed differently, except that I must review a colleague no matter how unqualified I feel to do so.
- (v) In my academic career I am aware of widely accepted standards of professional service, teaching, and research. There is an additional item of internal service, where the criteria are set locally; the local environment in which I operate has evaluated my internal service as “very good” (division review committee report). At HKUST, in addition, there is a VPAA who states that he doesn’t like my internal service to this same division (and the school), who doesn’t care what the division review committee says in this respect, who doesn’t specify what he wants, and who regards this as so overwhelmingly important that professional service, teaching, and research pale in comparison.

Sincerely,  
Carsten Holz

c.c. Acting Dean of Humanities and Social Science  
Head, Division of Social Science [“Humanities” in the VPAA’s letter of 4 Nov. 2008]