

Paper to the Senate

Proposal to the HKUST University Council (Human Resources Committee)

PURPOSE

1. This paper proposes that the Senate recommend to the University Council that department heads be elected by faculty.

BACKGROUND

2. It appears standard practice at universities that faculty members elect their department heads. The current practice at HKUST constitutes an aberration from the standard.

3. The current practice of having department heads appointed by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs may have served a purpose at the early development stages of this university, when the faculty consisted predominantly of Assistant Professors freshly out of graduate school. HKUST today is different in that it has a sizeable body of substantiated faculty.

4. Academic self-administration is an inalienable part of a full-fledged university. Academic freedom extends beyond the immediate research to the creation of a corresponding research (and teaching) environment by the faculty themselves.

5. The current arrangement of three layers of top-down management is not conducive to the long-run development and stability of HKUST. It treats a group of highly qualified professionals like casual laborers. HKUST stands to benefit from faculty as stakeholders, and thereby as active participants in the university and in its future development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Have all regular faculty, independent of rank, elect their department head on a bi-annual or tri-annual basis in an equal (one-faculty-one-vote) and secret election. This procedure also applies to the hiring of a new faculty as department head.

7. If the Council wished to retain some veto right for the Dean or VPAA, this should be tightly regulated and the department faculty should be able to overrule such a veto with a suitably large supermajority (such as a two-thirds majority).

8. Faculty should have the power of recall (with a suitably large supermajority).

9. The variety of technical aspects (nomination process, deadlines, etc.) should consider the administrative needs of the university but otherwise be as amenable to faculty as key stakeholders as possible.

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