

Committee on Student Affairs

Minutes of the 62nd Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 23 March 2018 at 9:30pm at Room 5015

- Present : Prof Karl Tsim (Chairman), Prof Siu-Fai Leung, Prof Lam-Lung Yeung, Prof David Banfield, Prof Emily Nason, Prof Jin Wang, Miss Chloe Chan, Mr Kwong-Hoi Tsui, Miss Jasmine Ho, Prof Robert Wessling (Member and Secretary)
- Apologies : Prof Chi-Ying Tsui, Mr Ka-Shing Chan
- Resource Persons : ARO: Mr James Prince
FMO: Mr Jerome Hon
- In Attendance : FMO: Ms Joann Au Yeung
ISO: Mr Thomas Mok & Mr Steven Wu
HKUST SU Council: Mr Barry Chow, Mr Dennis Yip
HKUST SU: Mr Timothy Poon, Mr Isaac Hung
DSTO: Mr Donny Siu, Mr Raymond Tang, Ms Daisy Kwan

Welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed Prof Jin Wang, who was joining the meeting for the first time and Mr James Prince, Academic Registrar, and Mr Jerome Hon, FMO, for being CSA's resource persons.

Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

2. Minutes of the 61st Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs (CSA) was confirmed without amendments.
3. For the consideration of the Report on the Student Enrichment Activities Fund 2016-17:
 - a. Members discussed the report and sought clarification on various aspects of the Fund including the approval process, mechanisms to ensure intended outcome and proper use of funds, outcomes of the activities. Mr Donny Siu noted that approval was conducted twice annually via a panel of faculty members and students and based on a set of agreed criteria. Student organizers would receive on-going advice on project planning and execution, including proper budgeting and use of funds. They would also be required to submit end-project reports with self-evaluation and reflection.
 - b. Members were satisfied with the clarifications. It was suggested for the funding panel to review selection criteria if support to similar events should be continued throughout the years or if opportunity be given to newer initiatives to encourage new ideas.
 - c. Prof David Banfield proposed to endorse the report. Members agreed unanimously.

New Outstanding Payment Non-Compliance Policy

4. Members receive information from Ms Joann Au Yeung on the Finance Office's New Outstanding Payment Non-Compliance Policy. The information was tabled for members' comment and feedback before submission to the University's administration for approval in April 2018.
5. A key to the policy was the withholding of university services (access to university wifi, library, facilities booking, and issuance of transcript / diploma) and levying of administrative fees on students who neglect repeated reminders of fee payment and with outstanding fee of over

HK\$250. This was to address the increasing bad debt incurred by the University due to non-compliance.

6. Members sought clarifications from Ms Au Yeung and were satisfied that proper mechanisms were in place to ensure students with financial difficulties would receive proper assistance and would not be marginalized under this new policy. Members were also satisfied that student consultations were held and feedback were collected and addressed when formulating the policy.
7. Members had no additional suggestions and comments towards the new policy.

Issues on Disqualifying Student Candidates Standing for Election

8. Members received report from Mr Barry Chow, HKUSTSU Council, on the disqualification of student candidates standing for election. It was clarified that the claimed disqualification cases were actually declined applications due to late submissions.
9. After a long negotiation on terminologies, the forms of language being used and their implied meaning, Mr Chow noted that SU Council would take the matter into consideration. The Chairman expressed gratitude to Mr Chow's sharing, consensus to explore improvement measures to student election regulations, and willingness to consult CSA.
10. The following suggestions for improvement were discussed:
 - a. Eliminate unnecessary judgement calls to avoid potential arguments e.g. employ online submission systems with time stamp as proof of submission time.
 - b. Increase transparency to standard procedures and discussed the level of flexibility available to applicants opting to stand for election.
 - c. Include channels to collect feedback, even negative ones, as basis for review and improvement to the system.

Issues on SU Welfare Company

11. Members received report from Mr Dennis Yip on the background and operation of the SU Welfare Company. Members discussed in details the reasons for setting up the company, its operation of vending machines, and potential risks to students, SU and the University.
12. Most CSA members were of view that risks were high with the current set-up of the SU Welfare Company. The Chairman asked Prof Robert Wessling to speak with Mr Mark Hodgson, VPAB, expressing CSA member's concern and urging for appropriate advice and actions on this matter.

[Post meeting notes: The SU Welfare Company has dissolved. Funds previously hold by the company have been returned to the University for proper handling and will be allocated back SU. The contract related to vending machines is now being handled through the Purchasing Office.]

Issues on Management of the Big Character Posters

13. Members discussed the management issues of the Big Character Posters (BCP) wall as raised by Prof Robert Wessling, who was concerned towards the effectiveness of current management and proposed improvements, such as setting up an action committee for prompt response to any misuse, for discussion.
14. Members discussed the Rules and Regulations for posting BCP and HKUSTSU's Guidelines for the Use of Big Character Poster Wall. It was noted that concerns raised might be resulted from simplification of SU Guidelines from the original Rules and Regulations along the SU's history thus creating ambiguity.

15. Miss Chloe Chan and Miss Jasmine Ho, who were current and past SU members, shared that SU ExCo had been benchmarking practices of other local universities for improving their current practices.
16. The Chairman requested SU to review current practices, comparing the original Rules Regulations with their current Guidelines, and set out workable procedures in handling mis-use of the BCP wall. CSA would appreciate receiving the procedures so to further advise SU in addressing the University communities' concerns. Miss Chan and Miss Ho agreed to communicate the request to SU.

Report on the Student Election Campaign 2018-19

17. Members received report from Mr Timothy Poon on the Student Election Campaign held in February 2018 and sought clarifications to the details on violations, penalty issuance and effectiveness of the monitoring team.
18. The Chairman sought contribution from Mr Jerome Hon, who confirmed Mr Poon's presentation and commended efforts made, noting the following observations:
 - a. Counter decorations had evolved from 2-dimensional to 3-dimensional, increasing loading to counter structure and may be potentially problematic.
 - b. Mentality of student societies were like playing hide and seek games with venue regulators.
 - c. Noise nuisance generated from the lucky draw at the Atrium was no less than that of chanting in terms of decibel as student societies repeatedly shout "who are we", "who are you"... etc. It was student societies' tactics towards the banning of chanting at the Atrium.
 - d. Verbal warning acted as a leeway for societies to violate twice without penalty. Hence, statistics in the report, which only account for penalties being issued, might not have captured the true picture in full.
19. Miss Chloe Chan and Mr Poon stood by the valuable learning opportunity behind the issuance of verbal warning which allowed the monitoring team to explain to societies their wrong doings and provide space and time to change. This could facilitate communication between the monitoring team and the societies, lobbying cooperation rather than growing hate with straightly administered penalties.
20. Mr Raymond Tang raised the preparation of higher big decoration in the future might be problematic as the latest revision in the laws of HK required workers working over a certain height to be professionally trained and to work on standard platforms. Members discussed on the implication of this revision. Mr Poon shared that the secondary school he attended had provide proper structures that allowed them to decorate for school performances. There were surely ways that could be further explored and discussed to make this work.
21. Prof Wessling proposed to endorse the report. Members agreed unanimously.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:09 pm.