

香港浸會大學教職員工會
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

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NEWSLETTER (213)

With varied procedures, fairness and justice are hollow words
With no legal principles, calamity to the University is imminent

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Dear Colleagues,

Recently, UGC has issued guidelines to universities to ensure that good grievance handling mechanisms and appeal procedures would be set up. The guidelines embrace specific recommendations including appointment of mediators, involvement of external parties in the final level of appeal and safeguards against retaliation etc. However, when an Assistant Academic Registrar at our University was terminated with immediate effect, the procedures involved have nothing in common with these guidelines. The procedures are also quite different from our University's submission to UGC regarding the existing mechanisms. The Personnel Office has issued an announcement regarding this termination case last month. It has admitted that the termination was approved by the P/VC and the appeal was also considered by him. The absurdity and unfairness of the mechanism are obvious. To the media and also in the Personnel Office's announcement, the University has emphasized that the case "has properly followed all the procedures". Then, we have to ask:

1. Annual performance appraisals are required under the New Pay & Reward System (NPRS). However, the Academic Registrar has assumed duty for 15 months and he has never conducted any performance appraisal for the staff before he requested the University to initiate the termination process. Has he "properly followed all the procedures"?
2. The Personnel Office always asks offices to issue written warnings before initiation of termination process. However, the Academic Registrar is not required to do so. Why could procedures vary among staff? The University has a Committee on Conflict Resolution. (It is also stated in the UGC document.) Why hasn't this case been referred to this Committee? Is it a deceit to UGC or a sentence before trial?
3. That colleague was responsible for postgraduate programmes and research projects. However, the Review Panel did not interview any staff who have close working relationship with her, such as the Director and other staff of Graduate School, the Postgraduate Program Directors in Faculties/Schools and Departments, the Vice-President and Professors who are in charge of research projects etc. Then how could the Panel prove that colleague is with "a terrible working attitude or poor performance"?

4. That colleague has produced e-mail records to prove the Academic Registrar's accusations are fabricated (such as accusing her of not providing any details and reports when preparing for the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Office and not attending meetings etc.). Why did the Panel ignore these records? Why hasn't there been any investigation on whether the Academic Registrar has brought false charges against his subordinate? Does she have any genuine "chance for defense" ?
5. That colleague is an alumna and has served the University with good performance for more than 20 years, with almost 8 years in the Academic Registry. However, the current Academic Registrar hold extreme views against her and the accusations against her include, surprisingly, even body language and facial expressions. For other accusations about her "in-subordinate behaviour", there are not any documentary proofs and some even involve fabrications. How can the University be so sure that the problem is not with the Academic Registrar?
6. It is absurd if a termination case that "has properly followed all procedures" is a case with no performance appraisals, no written warnings and the approval and appeal are handled by the same person. How can a public university have such absurd procedures? What kind of leadership does it imply?

Procedures and integrity are most important for the work in the Academic Registry. However, in this termination case, the Academic Registrar has shown his neglect of due process and legal principles. Furthermore, to blame a sub-ordinate for his own "management crisis" is to shirk responsibilities. Such working attitudes could bring calamity to the University. As what the Personnel Office has stated, "Termination is a serious matter and must be handled with care." There are a lot of doubts regarding the inside information and the handling procedures of this case. If the queries stipulated above cannot be answered by the University in detail, how can the colleagues in the Academic Registry and other offices be relieved from worries? Furthermore, would it be fair for the colleague terminated? The Union would like to request the new senior management to review the Personnel procedures as soon as possible so they will be in line with the UGC guidelines.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Executive Committee
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty And Staff Union