

# 香港浸會大學教職員工會

## Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

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### Newsletter 33

February 2, 2005

Dear colleagues,

#### **Re: Say “No” to the Re-titling Exercise, “No” to the New Pay Structure**

We strongly advise you to reject the re-titling exercise as part of the conversion arrangements for the new pay and reward structure (hereafter referred to as “the new structure”).

The Personnel Office has written to all academic staff, proposing that they be re-titled to a certain rank under the new structure. We understand that some colleagues have received an additional letter from their seniors who ask for their consent to the re-titling. Staff may opt out of the re-titling exercise. However, they will still be assumed to agree to switching to the new structure. Although we have been given a form to declare our pick, we indeed have no choice in not agreeing to join the new structure.

We object to this misleading personnel practice that conveys the wrong impression that conversion arrangements for the new structure do not require the consent of staff members concerned. It is particularly unacceptable when the conversion exercise is questionable and the new structure totally disagreeable. One major concern is job security, which is shaken by proposed new terms for terminating substantiated / continuous appointments. Under the new terms, academic staff members on substantive appointment may be terminated on grounds of “financial stringency.”

Although the President reportedly told the press that the new terms would apply only to new employees who joined after September 2004, it is not clear whether we would be defined as new employees once we join the new structure.<sup>1</sup> The CPRO subsequently clarified that the new terms would apply to newly appointed teaching staff from 1 July 2004, and to non-teaching staff from 1 January 2006.<sup>2</sup> But University authorities have made no guarantee that the so-called conversion arrangements would be permanent rather than transient. We are concerned that in case the University Council decides any “new terms” under the new structure to be applicable to serving staff, our terms of appointment may need to be adjusted accordingly.

In short, someday after conversion, we may be subject to the new terms if the Council deems it necessary. Unless and until the Council declares that it will never apply the “new terms” under the new structure to serving staff (substantiated and contract staff members included), the danger of being laid off on grounds of financial stringency can hardly be excluded.

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<sup>1</sup> “BU Staff Unhappy with the New Employment Mechanism, New Terms Will Enable BU to Terminate Employment on the Basis of Financial Conditions”, *Wen Wei Po*, 8 December 2004, A30.

<sup>2</sup> CPRO, “Clarification to newspaper report”, 8 December 2004.

Adding fuel to this anxiety is the important discrepancy between the Chinese and English versions of the New Pay and Reward Structure document. The Chinese version has listed “financial stringency” as one possible cause for terminating academic staff members on substantive appointment.<sup>3</sup> This is not in the English version, which the Council apparently approved at its June 2004 meeting. Naturally, such a discrepancy has caused remarkable distress among colleagues. But the University authorities have so far remained tight-lipped on this point.

For the re-titling exercise, greater transparency and consensus is badly needed. While the conversion proposal suggests that re-titling and promotion are conditional upon ‘good and excellent’ performance, these are vague adjectives open to different interpretation. Since many departments have yet to develop a transparent system for the appraisal of teaching, research and service, we are concerned that such standards could be easily manipulated in a discretionary manner. Approval for this proposal would be analogous to signing a blank check, authorizing the administration to intensify teaching, research and service workload on staff.

The University authorities should also provide adequate background information for colleagues to make a well-informed decision. However, the re-titling proposal makes no mention of any strings attached to the proposed conversion and promotion exercise, i.e., quota, financial constraints. In the past, a number of colleagues have experienced much frustration when the administration failed to deliver its promises. For instance, some colleagues

who applied for substantiation were honored with the label of substantiable but not substantiated; others recommended for promotion were classified as “promotable” but not promoted in the end.

In the absence of Council’s commitment of never applying the new terms to serving staff, and in the absence of such basic information as quotas and eligibility of substantiated appointment as well as sufficient criteria for promotion, the proposed re-titling is inadvisable at best. It is an irreversible path leading to frustration and loss of security.

We hereby call on colleagues to say “No” to the re-titling proposal. Let’s first wait for the President or his delegate to summon enough courage to come out and answer our legitimate concern.

Executive Committee,  
Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

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<sup>3</sup> Academic Staff Grade (*New Pay and Reward Structure*, p.3):

Staff members on substantive appointment may be terminated on grounds of (a) poor performance, (b) redundancy, (c) misconduct and/or other good causes as determined by the University and in accordance with the established procedures.

(Chinese version p.3):

服務條件：

同事入職時將先以合約形式聘用（一般一至三年）。大學或同事如要終止聘約，雙方可以提前三個月通知，或以三個月薪金代替通知期。

經過觀察期後（一般為期最少六年），大學可考慮基於同事的工作表現而給予實任。在合理情況下，倘若實任的同事工作表現欠佳，或行為不當，又或大學面臨財政困難，裁員的情況，大學可依據有關程序而與實任同事終止聘約。