

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

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Newsletter (64)

How Can We Sign a Blank Check?!

June 15, 2005

Dear Colleagues,

As the deadline for signing our consent to the NPRS is closing today, we urge our colleagues to give a second thought about submitting your consent. Since many details of the NPRS are still under consultation and not yet finalized, your consent would seem to be signing a blank check to the NPRS. Would you sign this blank check?

The Union has received a lot of inquiries about the written consent for conversion into the NPRS. Many colleagues expressed doubts about the implications of the NPRS for substantiated terms of appointment. Some colleagues are concerned that whether the consent is compulsory, while the others are worried about the consequences of not signing.

After our scrutiny of the consent letter, the NPRS and its conversion arrangements, we urge our colleagues to consider seriously before making your decision to sign the letter of consent or not. First, we have to consider whether the formulation and consultation of the NPRS is fair, reasonable and transparent. Second, joining the NPRS is irreversible and the impact can be detrimental and lasting. It affects not only the serving staff, but also the future staff.

1. Procedurally, it is highly problematic that we are required to submit our consent to the NPRS while the performance related reward system is still under consultation, and the mechanism to vary contribution of retirement benefits is still missing. Before we sign ourselves to the NPRS, we have to first make sure that the mechanism, principles and methods of performance assessment and varying contribution of retirement benefits are fair, reasonable and transparent. That we are pressured to sign the consent letter before we are even informed of the details of the NPRS, not to mention given an opportunity to discuss its pros and cons, is totally unfair.
2. The pronounced changes in terms of appointment are inconsistent and unclear. While the letter of consent indicates changes only in salary adjustment and retirement benefits, the President had once mentioned about the introduction of dismissal arrangement due to financial reasons. Since the consent letter only provides a brief summary of how existing

terms of appointment and benefits could be affected by NPRS, we should be skeptical of the implications of our written consent. It is really doubtful whether changes to the existing terms of appointment and benefits are only limited to those indicated by the letter. Our consent to joining the NPRS may very well be the proverbial tipping point to more and more drastic changes to our existing terms of appointment which have never been revealed in detail.

3. According to our legal consultation, any written consent is irreversible. The written consent to the NPRS implies that one has given up the rights of the existing contract, especially the terms of appointment and benefits under a substantiated contract.
4. Offering academic and non-academic staff different conversion arrangements is a divide-and-rule tactic. Under the NPRS, the income and employment security of non-academic colleagues are threatened by volatile market rates and financial decisions that they have no control. Academic and non-academic staff should join hands to fight against the imposition of an unfair and unreasonable system.

During this difficult period of pay reduction and structural adjustment, we should defend our interest and dignity only through solidarity with each other. If you would like to know more about the NPRS, please browse our web page, <http://www.buunion.org.hk>, or contact our exco members.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

Executive Committee
HKBU Faculty and Staff Union