

# 香港浸會大學教職員工會

## Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty and Staff Union

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### Newsletter ( 51 )

#### **Protecting Ourselves against New Pay and Reward Structure**

4 May 2005

Dear Colleagues,

As Dr. M.H. Mok has reminded us with his memo dated 25 April 2005, the University Administration is set to convert the employment terms of all teaching staff into the New Pay and Reward Structure (NPRS) this coming July. In face of the imminent demand that we give up our existing employment contracts for the NPRS, we write to alert you the pitfalls of the new pay structure and urge you to exercise utmost caution against attempts to put serving BU staff under new terms of employment.

Colleagues must be extremely cautious in response to the demand that we join the NPRS for the following reasons:

- (1) We must be on guard about the threat the NPRS may pose to our job security. Despite repeated questions from the Union, the Administration has not clarified the status of the statement in the Chinese version of the NPRS document issued last November that one possible cause for terminating the appointment of a substantiated staff is “financial stringency”, and has declined so far to declare categorically that “financial stringency” will not become a cause to terminate appointment after colleagues join the NPRS, or that, despite the conversion, all existing protection against appointment termination will continue to apply.
- (2) In the NPRS, the Administration could vary the University’s contributions to the gratuity / superannuation without seeking our consent. As the reduction in the rate of contribution could stay throughout our employment, our financial loss would be much larger than a one-off reduction in our salary.
- (3) The performance-related reward system that is to be introduced with the NPRS could endanger the integrity of HKBU as an academic institution. In the “consultation paper” Dr. Mok sent to us with his memo on April 25, no account is offered on the requirements of a workable performance-related reward system in organizational governance. Nor is there any mention of the well-documented perverse effects of performance-related rewards in educational settings. As proposed by the SAC, the performance-related system could give broad power to the administrators to rate subjectively our performance. It would ruin collegiality, destroy students’ learning experiences, and remove our autonomy as teachers and scholars.

- (4) In the NPRS, our salary can be frozen because of “substandard performance”, or inadequate funding, or any measure selected by the SAC on external comparability and internal relativity. According to Annex 4 of the “consultation paper”, the SAC will issue, with little transparency, the guidelines for salary adjustment, and salary adjustment will depend also on funding allocated to each Faculty / School by the Senior Executive Committee. In other words, a salary freeze can result either from a verdict of “substandard performance” by the Administration or factors totally outside our control. Colleagues with salary frozen because of inadequate funding or arbitrarily chosen measures of comparability will suffer a double-penalty as they are liable to be perceived as having performed below standards.
- (5) In the NPRS, general salary adjustment for all staff in response to cost-of-living adjustments in the civil service or market pay trends is at the discretion of the SAC. The SAC has the power not to recommend to any adjustment or a general adjustment at a rate that is only a fraction of the increase in the cost of living.
- (6) The Staff Affairs Committee (SAC), a secretive body that discloses next to nothing about itself, is given wide and decisive power over salary adjustment in the NPRS. There is no reference to the composition, power, and duties of such a committee in the University Statutes.

Given the problems we identified above, the position of the Union Executive Committee is that colleagues should refrain from joining the NPRS until the University Administration has addressed satisfactorily our concerns. According to the advice the Union received from its legal advisors, the surest way we can protect ourselves is to decline to sign any document that could indicate acceptance of changes in terms of employment. We urge you, therefore, to withhold your signature from the consent letter that is legally required to move you over to the NPRS. It is simply our legal right to refuse to accept any unilateral changes in our employment contracts. And it is simply unwise to sign away our existing protection for job and income security.

Colleagues at Baptist University have worked very hard to make the University what it is today. It is sad that the University is now being threatened by a unilaterally imposed pay and reward system that will drastically augment the unaccountable power of the Administration at the expense of our autonomy and security. However, we are confident that, in solidarity, we will be able to persuade the Administration to listen to our questions and come face to face with the damages ill-considered attempts to push through new terms of employment can bring to our University.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

Executive Committee  
HKBU Faculty and Staff Union