

From Chairman of The Council 校董會主席
Dr. Thomas K. Leung, JP 梁國輝博士太平紳士

31 December 2008

Clerk to Panel
Panel on Education
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Attn: Miss Odelia Leung

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your fax of 16 October 2008 regarding the motion of the Panel on Education of the Legislative Council in which the councils and administrative arms of all University Grants Committee-funded institutions are urged to enhance the transparency of their governance by making public the minutes of and papers for their meetings, as well as establishing an elected independent inter-institutional complaints committee.

As a publicly funded institution, we endorse and champion a higher degree of transparency in the governance of the Institute, albeit with exercise of restraint to ensure that any action we take does not:

- (a) Violate personal data privacy and the requirement to observe confidentiality, given that personnel, contractual and other sensitive matters related to institutional management are often deliberated by the Council of the Institute;
- (b) Inhibit freedom of discussion at Institute Council meetings; and
- (c) Infringe upon institutional autonomy.

At present, there are established channels for decisions of the Council to be promulgated within the Institute and, if appropriate, also to the public. These communication channels include placing of the Council meeting agenda, Council papers other than those classified as confidential and summaries of the Institute Council's decisions on the intranet and in the Staff Newsletters.

Furthermore, matters related to policies, regulations and statutory provisions of the Institute would normally have been communicated to the relevant persons by the respective administrative units and/or Council Committees, or through open consultation, before recommendations on such matters are submitted to the Institute Council for deliberation and approval.

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Nonetheless, we are in agreement that the Institute should strive to further enhance the transparency of governance and, as such, seek to reinforce the existing communication channels. The Council has recently resolved to do so by placing on the Institute's website and hence making available to the public, relevant open documents of the Institute. The Institute's community would also have enhanced access to other restricted documents except those containing confidential information of personal or commercial nature. The Committees and Sub-committees of the Council have also been requested to review the extent and means of disclosure of its documents.

Regarding the proposed establishment of an elected independent inter-institutional complaints committee, we have noted that the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) has on 16 October, 2008 presented their common stand on the said matter to the University Grants Committee and the Education Bureau, and has asked them to convey HUCOM's stand to the Panel on Education of the Legislative Council. The Institute Council agrees with HUCOM on this matter. This notwithstanding, the Council has considered it opportune to review the existing guidelines and procedures to induce greater independence in the current mechanism for handling staff grievances and appeals.

I trust the above has sufficiently addressed the requests of the Education Panel.

Yours sincerely,



Thomas K. Leung, PhD, BBS, JP
Chairman of the Council

c.c. Secretary for Education
Secretary-General, University Grants Committee