



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局

Education Bureau

Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Clerk to Panel on Education
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Ms Mina Chan)

Dear Ms Chan,

**Matters relating to the appointment of academic staff in
University Grants Committee-funded universities**

I refer to your letter dated 8 May 2018 relaying a letter from the Deputy Chairman of the Panel on Education and five other members on the captioned issue to us. Having consulted the University Grants Committee (UGC) Secretariat, our reply is as follows.

The eight UGC-funded universities are independent autonomous bodies established pursuant to their respective ordinances and each has a council to serve as the governing body. The ordinances and statutes of the universities have set out their objectives, functions and governance structure and provide them with the power to carry out their objectives and functions. The UGC Notes on Procedures clearly state that UGC-funded universities enjoy autonomy in the development of curricula and academic standards, selection of staff and students, initiation and conduct of research, internal allocation of resources, etc, and they are accountable for their decisions in these matters. The Government and the UGC have all along supported and safeguarded academic freedom and institutional autonomy in accordance with the Notes on Procedures, in the context of appropriate financial and public accountability.

Appointment of academic staff is a matter within the autonomy of the universities. Based on their individual circumstances, the eight UGC-funded universities have their personnel policies and mechanisms for handling the appointment of academic staff in accordance with the circumstances and teaching needs, with an appeal mechanism to ensure that the matter is handled fairly and impartially. The policy and mechanism are also made known clearly to the staff through suitable channels, e.g. publication of internal circulars or the universities' intranets, etc. The eight UGC-funded universities will review and enhance in a timely manner the relevant arrangements as necessary. Academic staff may convey their views to the universities through different channels, including the university staff members sitting in the university council, the senate, and relevant committees as appropriate.

On the other hand, while the mission of a university is to teach, teaching and research are the two closely-linked central foci in the universities. Academics acquire cutting-edge knowledge through quality research, which facilitates the transmission of knowledge and in turn fosters teaching. The UGC has always attached great importance to quality teaching and learning. Over 75% of the Block Grant to universities is purported for teaching. In addition, UGC has always encouraged and enhanced universities' teaching and learning through various teaching and learning initiatives, including the annual UGC Teaching Award to honour those who excel in teaching in the UGC sector; and implementing the Funding Scheme for Teaching and Learning Related Proposals in the 2016-19 Triennium to incentivise universities in exploring and developing further in the sector-wide strategic areas of teaching and learning, language enhancement and internationalisation, under which 38 proposals with a total project cost of \$256 million were supported. The argument that the UGC's funding policy focuses on research at the expense of teaching is totally unfounded.

We are pleased to note that Professor TANG Tuck-hong, James, the Secretary-General of UGC, will meet with the Legislative Council (LegCo) members who expressed concerns about the captioned issue on 28 May 2018. We believe that the meeting will be helpful for the LegCo members to gain a better understanding of such matters.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Sharon Ko)
for Secretary for Education