

PUSA ALERT
Issue No. 20 (April 2020)

SUMMARY

In this issue, PUSA would like to report on three issues that she has exchanged with the Senior Management, namely, the MBSA arrangement, the Leave Accrual concerns, and impact of extraordinary circumstances of this academic year on the performance of staff members. Lastly, there is also an update of PUSA personnel changes and the A.G.M. arrangement.

MBSA Issue

PolyU colleagues should have received the announcement from the HRO on Friday (17th April 2020) on the ‘downward adjustment’ of the 2019 Merit-based Salary Adjustment (MBSA) due to the macro-economy developments and the financial situation of the University.

PUSA was involved in meetings with the Senior Management in February and March 2020 on the MBSA issue. The PUSA ExCo officers have been striving very hard to persuade SM that it would be very demoralizing if the entire MBSA were to be removed; likewise it would be equally disheartening if only appraisees receiving VS and E ratings were to enjoy the MBSA rate increase while leaving out the S rated staff members – both of these options had in fact been considered by Senior Management.

Eventually, the SM agreed with the counter-proposal from PUSA and we ended up with the final rates as appeared in the HRO email last week. The stance of PUSA is that all staff members who have been recognized for their performance according to the current yardstick of the Appraisal system deserve recognition from the SM. This will also be the stance that PUSA will maintain in the Review of Pay Level, Benefits and Salary Review and Reward System (PBSRRS), which came to a halt last November and, according to our understanding, will be re-engineered by the SM in light of the current macro situation of Hong Kong. PUSA needs your support and recommendations on this discussion, and please feel free to share your views with us.

Leave Accrual Issues

PUSA has been approached by staff members raising the issue of having difficulties in clearing leave because of the extraordinary events this academic year. This is especially of concern for staff who would have to fulfil essential duties throughout the summer months. PUSA approached the Senior Management on this issue and has explored the

possibility of relaxing the leave forfeiting practice for staff members who have reached the ceiling of their accumulated leave balance.

In reply, the Director of HR (DoHR) has informed PUSA that only a small number of staff have a leave balance that has reached the maximum limit, including those providing 'essential services' in the past few months. The DoHR reiterated that HRO would take into account the extraordinary events of this year while reviewing each leave application on a case by case basis. In the meantime, any staff member with concerns about leave forfeiture should write to their HoD for leave adjustments and copy the letter to the HR liaison officer of that Unit/Department so that HRO would work with the officer-in-charge on warranted cases.

Extension of Tenure Clock and Extra Consideration in Reappointment Process

The headline-grabbing PolyU siege that took place in mid-November had virtually stopped access to the campus laboratories, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further restrained or called a halt to travel and social interactions at an unprecedented scale. As such, a lot of laboratory work, research activities, and field visits were suspended. Consequently, a negative impact on the research progress of academic staff has surfaced, and this is particularly of concern for colleagues who are approaching the tenure clock/reappointment process as they worry that their research performance would be greatly affected.

Furthermore, for professorial track staff with teaching responsibilities, the adjustment to online teaching has been extremely taxing. By the same token, for staff in the teaching track, similar adjustment process exists though much more demanding and stressful due to the large number of subjects that require extra effort.

PUSA has passed this message to the Senior Management and we hope they may, like some local and overseas universities, allow for extension of tenure clock and/or offer a more flexible approach when considering the reappointment of colleagues from both tracks.

Updates on PUSA ExCo Movement

The original AGM 2019 scheduled to be held on 13 November was called off due to the PolyU Siege. We postponed the AGM to 6 February 2020, which was again called off because of insufficient quorum. PUSA could not arrange of a re-convened AGM as the campus was to follow more stringent open-up policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, the ExCo of PUSA has voted to appoint CHAN Luen-chow of the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering as the temporary treasurer of PUSA until a permanent treasurer is elected in the re-convened AGM to take place at the nearest possible future.

Call for joining PUSA

The Polytechnic University Staff Association (PUSA) is a registered trade union for full-time staff of the University. We at PUSA strive to represent staff interest on all matters, with special emphasis on those concerning conditions of service. Please support us by joining PUSA as a member (if you have not done so) so that we can help to reflect your views and sentiments to Senior Management of the University. The application form for PUSA membership can be downloaded via the link here:

https://www.polyu.edu.hk/PUSA/final%20version%20of%20PUSA_Application_Form.pdf

We wish to alert you that PUSA membership is NOT the same as PolyU Staff Club membership.

We take this opportunity to wish you all good health during this difficult moment of Hong Kong.

PUSA Executive Council