

PUSA ALERT 23
March 2021

Dear Colleagues,

In this Newsletter, we are going to update you on four issues that are relating with different aspects of university policies. Thank you for your kind attention.

Disappointment to the 19/20 MBSA Announcement

In the past six months or so, PUSA has been engaged in such a dialogue with the Central Management on the MBSA arrangement that was unprecedented, both in terms of the lengthiness of discussion and of the scale of exchange. PUSA emphasized that the period of review (July 2019-June 2020) should be understood as the most difficult period that staff members of the University could have experienced (the PolyU Siege followed by the COVID-19 disruption) during which staff members had experienced an extraordinary yet must-overcome condition. We may now proudly claimed that staff had overcome it in flying colors – in terms of improving of University ranking, securing of large research grants, and achieving of research innovation that we have been well told of. Although the economy of Hong Kong has turned sour since the second half of 2020, this was not matching with the review period of the MBSA coverage. Precisely so, PUSA did understand the possible social pressure on the University and so proposed boldly that the Central Management (CM) could get the understanding of the staff if the annual MBSA salary increase/merit, which should have a recurrent meaning to staff remuneration thereafter, be changed to a one-off appreciation merit at a much down-trimmed percentage of increase in accordance with one's appraisal grading.

Unfortunately, this extremely humble request did not get us anywhere. In the Council Meeting held on Tuesday, 23 March, a zero-percentage increase proposal was submitted by the Central Management, and the result was announced by HRO in a mass mail on the same day. We at PUSA were extremely disappointed with this outcome. In the same Council meeting, staff representatives on Council made the last appeal by proposing that at least those junior grade colleagues with Excellent performance be rewarded with a one-off appreciation merit as a thank you of their effort in such a difficult time. We hope this request be responded.

Teaching Track Career Ladder

On a separate note, after almost five years of repetitive requests, PUSA is delighted to see the announcement of the ‘Refinement of the Staffing Structure of Teaching/Clinical Track’ by the current Central Management. Basically, three most important issues that PUSA has so far voiced out – the opening of senior posts, the serving length of individual contracts, and the availability of regular term option to those long-serving and outstanding colleagues in the Teaching Track – are being taken care of. We hope the recruitment of new posts and the contract renewal process would be transparent and fair. PUSA always welcomes updated information and questions from colleagues – be they from the staff side or the administrative side of individual Departments – if and when they come up with difficulties in applying and implementing the concerned policy.

Concerns from Non-Academic Units (NAUs) on Quality Assurance Mechanisms and related exercises

PUSA has been in touch by administrators and different ranks and files of colleagues from NAUs relating to issues surrounding efficiency enhancement (EE) and evolving of the new Quality Assurance Mechanism. Whereas PUSA understands CM’s desire to promote for accountability-based management via EE and outcome-based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), the transparency and two-ways communication among stake holders are of utmost importance. PUSA has already passed the collected concerns related with the issue to the CM, including (i) a clearer elaboration of the scale and direction of the EE to unit leaders, (ii) whether EE is involving a cost-saving aim in a percentage sense to be achieved within a duration, or that it has a direction of involving headcount saving also ***on top of*** cost-saving endeavor, and (iii) whether the evolving new QA mechanism is to be assessed by relevant parties that can really evaluate the performance of the concerned NAUs in an achievable and meaningful manner. PUSA understands that the CM has been addressing with the NAUs on related matters on 25th March 2021, and we hope the administrators of NAUs may communicate in a genuine manner with their colleagues to share on the possibilities and constraints they are facing. PUSA will continue to follow up the issue closely, and will provide necessary updates when deem necessary.

Upcoming of a new Master Trust Scheme of the University MPF Scheme

After almost a gap of ten years, the two staff representatives to Council on behalf of PUSA are of much delight to witness the bringing in of a new Master Trust Scheme for all colleagues under the MPF Scheme coverage, a message sent by the Finance Office on 19th March 2021 to all members of the University MPF Scheme. We believe this new entry will bring about a more competitive mood among the Scheme providers, which will in turn give better service, more choices, and hopefully greater returns to members. In this connection, PUSA would like to reiterate once more that it is to your own benefit to review your current MPF package with a view to optimizing your retirement benefits. If you have missed the briefing sessions arranged by FO, please feel free to review the briefing captures via links provided by FO.

PUSA Officers are always prepared to help you in all matters concerning your employment at the University. Needless to say, we are not able to fight for your well-being without your support. Please join PUSA as a member by completing the Application form for PUSA membership (https://www.polyu.edu.hk/PUSA/final%20version%20of%20PUSA_Application_Form.pdf)

at your earliest convenience. More information about PUSA may be obtained from PUSA website (<https://www.polyu.edu.hk/PUSA/>).

With warmest regards

PUSA Executive Council

29th March 2021