

**THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT**

4th SBM UG Student Representative Meeting 2019/20

Confirmed Minutes

Date and time of meeting:	May 20, 2020, 1:00pm – 2:39pm
Minutes Prepared by:	Maggie Yim
Attendance of SBM UG Programs Office:	Prof Anirban Mukhopadhyay, Prof Emily Nason, Ka Yee Lee, Maggie Yim
In Attendance:	Prof Allen Huang
Attendance of UG Student Representatives:	Donald Chan, Daniel Chan, John Chan, Paco Cheng, Vanessa Ching, Wan-Yun Chou, Phyllis Chu, Alexis Ho, Horus Leung, Gavin Li, Tasneem Muchhaka, Jason Ng, Anushka Srivastava, Saras Sutedja, Annie Tam, Cyril Tong, Winston Ye, Rex Yeung, Vincci Yeung
Absence with Apologies:	--
Absence:	Gordon Cheng, William Dong, Flame Lim

This meeting was conducted online using the Zoom platform.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

As no further comment was received, the minutes of the 2019/20 3rd Meeting held on March 2, 2020 was confirmed.

Matters Arising from Minutes

The Chair welcomed Prof Allen Huang to the Committee. Prof Huang has been appointed as the Associate Dean (Undergraduate Programs) starting from the new academic year 2020-21 and he would chair the next meeting.

The Chair updated that apart from the University One-Button online feedback form (about 340 student feedback received), the University had conducted several surveys in response to the possible questions or feedback relating to online teaching in Spring 2020. The first one was the interim course-level student survey conducted from March 5 to 11, 2020 and the overall result was very positive (about 40-50% response rate): only 10% of the courses were not going well and the remaining 90% were reasonably good. Another survey was conducted for faculty members and about 200-250 faculty members (out of 650) responded to the survey; the report for open-ended questions was 30-page long. The third one was another survey conducted in April and sent to all students at individual level but the response rate was low (less than 10%). The final survey would be the SFQ and the current response rate was relatively lower with around 27% response rate, as opposed to 40% in the past. Members were encouraged to channel their feedback by using the SFQ.

Members were informed that the feedback from Student Representatives about online teaching in Spring 2020 were shared with Committee on Undergraduate Programs as well as Department Heads for future planning. The issue of students turning their cameras off during class was brought to the attention of the Associate Provost (Teaching and Learning) and other Schools' Associate Deans. After several discussions, it had not yet come to a conclusion on how critical students should have cameras on and in fact, it varies across courses. In light of the recent news related to "ZoomBombing" which had brought concerns about data privacy and security issues of online teaching using Zoom, the ITSC provided protocol like Sign-in Zoom only with SSO using HKUST account. Problems usually occurred because the protocol was not followed such as accepting participants to join meetings with non-UST accounts. In addition, the Chair updated members that the University was invited by UCLA for an experience sharing on online teaching because UST was the first in the world exploring the option. Representatives from a total of 45 Universities attended the session held on March 18 and many senior management such as School Deans looked up to us for guidance. The Center for Education Innovation (CEI) shared the links on training resources, good practices and guidelines for online teaching and examinations with all participants and so far, the website had over 3,000 hits.

2. Information Items

2a Arrangements for Exchange-out Students Affected by the Suspension of Student Exchange Program in Fall 2020-21

Members noted that the University had made a decision to suspend sending and receiving students in the Student Exchange Program for Fall 2020-21 and announcements were made on April 6 to the exchange partners, as well as the exchange-in and out students affected by the decision. Members were also updated that due to Covid-19 spreading over the world, SBM students on exchange were recalled and asked to choose one of the three options: (1) to withdraw from exchange and resume study at UST; (2) to return home and continue with remote learning offered by host institutions; (3) to stay and continue with exchange at host institutions, which was strongly discouraged. A total of 21 students decided to resume study at UST.

Since exchange experience was the highlight of students' University life, affected exchange-out students would be considered again for exchange in the coming term(s) with two options: (a) re-apply using the old score and thus, no re-application or re-interview would be needed; or (b) re-apply and re-interview with the option to use the better of the old and new interview scores. For affected exchange-in students, partners would be given the flexibility to re-nominate the same students to the Spring 2021 exchange.

The exchange team would also relax the policy of not allowing students to go on exchange in the final term (Spring 2021 only) to affected final year students. This would be done on the condition that they had consulted with their major department to ensure that they could complete graduation requirements, and had carefully considered any uncertainties such as no guarantee of course enrolment or transcripts not arriving in time for credit transfer for graduation, etc.

2b Revised Declaration Statement under the HKUST Academic Honor Code

Members were updated that the CUS Secretariat revised the Declaration Statement under the HKUST Academic Honor Code including elements to address the specific needs of

online examinations. The Chair highlighted that all SBM courses were required to adopt this version of Honor Code. Students should not take exams together in a room or use another student's ITSC account. He was aware that some students were worried about online cheating and he assured that so far, online cheating cases that were caught were at the same proportion as those identified through offline cheating. He emphasized that students would be sanctioned if they were found cheating during online exams.

2c New Student Orientation Activities 2020

The Chair gave members a brief account of the schedules of the new student orientation activities for different groups of students like JUPAS, non-JUPAS, senior year entry students, etc. All the schedules would be subject to change depending on the development of the COVID-19. Same as the current Spring term, if students (especially international students) have concerns about the situation and would like to take leave, it would be fine as long as a plan on what would be done while on leave would be submitted along with the application.

2d Online Student Feedback

Members received for information the summary of feedback collected as of May 2020. The Chair went over each feedback one by one. The first one was related to a suggestion on student recruitment in the Mainland, which was forwarded to the UG Admission Team for consideration; the feedback, however, was not specific enough to address. The other feedback was about the late submission of the grade for MGMT3140 in Fall 2019-20. It was found that the department had submitted an extension of deadline for grade submission. The final feedback was a suggestion about students being allowed to view test papers and answer keys, but no course information was provided for further follow-up.

3. Discussion Items

3a Withdrawal and P/F exercise in Spring 2020

The Chair informed members that the feedback of online teaching in Spring 2020 was reasonably well and he appreciated the efforts of both students and faculty. As COVID-19 spread around the globe rapidly, many universities had made contingency plans to adjust the current and the ensuing Academic Year. Viewing the personal hardship encountered by students due to the pandemic, the University had launched the special one-off arrangement for Pass/Fail or late course withdrawal exercise in Spring 2020.

Students could submit three types of requests to the Associate Deans of the Schools based on personal hardships they had encountered during this pandemic. These were:

- (1a) Withdrawal from one or more courses to reduce the total course load;
- (1b) Elect to receive Pass/Fail grades on all the remaining courses in Spring Term;
- (1c) Request special approval to receive Pass/Fail grades on selected courses and maintain letter grade for others. Strong justification was needed to show that (1a) and (1b) above did not address the hardship encountered.

Strong justification would be needed for (1c) and students were informed that it was highly unlikely that (1c) applications would be approved. In SBM, out of more than 3,500 student population, a total of 909 requests were received and student's requests in (1a) and (1b)

were all approved while all 137 requests for (1c) reviewed by Associate Dean were denied. It was reflected that 69.1% of applicants (628 out of 909) submitted requests with (1b) option to receive Pass/Fail grades on all remaining courses and among them, over 50% were final year students (326 out of 628). It was observed that some students took advantage of this exercise to coast in the final term. Due to the poor job market and the fewer internship offers this year, final year students had great anxiety in job hunting. More Year 1 students applied for (1a) to withdraw from one or more courses. The Chair expressed that there were complaints about free-riding issues of students choosing P/F grading in group projects. Nevertheless, there was also evidence that students were grateful for this opportunity which had relieved their stress during this difficult period.

A student member also commented that her friend was the only person who did not apply for P/F grading in the group project and she felt it was unfair as the whole group relied on her for the project. She wondered if the instructors would know who applied for P/F grading and consider this aspect when grading the students. The Chair responded that course instructors were not supposed to know that a particular student had applied for P/F. He also added that SENG decided to exclude all courses with group projects from P/F grading. This was not feasible for SBM as at least 90% of SBM courses involve group projects. He also realized that some of the instructors did not have a peer evaluation mechanism for group work in their courses and hopefully these loopholes could be solved in future.

3b Looking forward to 2020-21

Members were informed that the Fall term 2020-21 would commence on Sept 7 and all classes in the first two weeks during the add/drop period (September 7 – 20, 2020) would be conducted real-time online. This arrangement would help new students to be prepared in case the situation changes rapidly and we all need to switch to online classes again. It would also serve as buffer time for students who may not be able to attend classes physically due to various reasons, including quarantine, delay in visa, and travel arrangements. Furthermore, it would enable students to sample different courses efficiently during the add/drop period.

Starting Week 3, i.e. September 21, 2020, all classes were expected to resume their normal teaching arrangements based on the course design and almost all classes would switch to the traditional face-to-face mode. The Chair expressed that there would be multiple contingency plans to cope with the social distancing guidelines set by the government. The School also observed that some students greatly appreciate the online teaching while some faculty also enjoy teaching online. There was evidence that some classes would be benefited from being online. For instance, some instructors of large classes like FINA2303 reflected that there were far more students interacting in online class than in previous years. Departments were requested to decide and report which classes should go online.

Student representatives shared their views on online teaching in Spring 2020 and the arrangements for the coming Fall 2020-21, as summarized below:

- Some members expressed that online teaching was useful as they could re-watch the lecture videos online and recap the major concepts, therefore maximizing learning efficiency as well as allowing more flexibility for their timetable. The Chair also reiterated that while most of the Zoom classes went reasonably well, there were some limitations like laboratory classes in Engineering School which were not feasible to be conducted on Zoom. The Chair added that Zoom was not the only solution and there were ways

for faculty to improve students' learning experience. For example, faculty could record 10-15 minutes of their lectures and let students watch it at their own pace to allow more in-class discussions.

- A WBB student was thankful for the experience in online learning as HKUST had gained more experience since Fall 2019 in arranging online classes than other parts of the world. She shared that some of her friends abroad had terrible experience as some professors did not know how to teach on Zoom and all the exams were cancelled. She found her OM course taught by Prof Ronald Lau amazing, in which there was a 10-15 minute "pre-lecture" video for each of the lesson so that students could go over the videos and understand the concepts before the lecture. As such, more time could be spent on interaction and practices as well as deepening the topics or concepts. The student was encouraged to fill out the SFQ regarding her comments.
- Another student added that one of his courses taken had adopted a comprehensive and transparent grading system. Students could refer to the grades of every assessment and the overall weighting of the course they had achieved in Canvas. He suggested that it should be adopted by all courses.
- A student member also reflected that she liked the IS online class, which was a computer laboratory course in which she could re-watch the video recording and follow all the programming codes at her own pace. She wondered if it would be possible for ISOM Department to arrange the same for all laboratory courses so that students could follow the class contents more easily.
- A member pointed out that online teaching was controversial and the comments were quite extreme; for example, why paying tuition for online learning. Students might feel uncomfortable and unfair that some classes go online while others can resume face-to-face teaching mode. The Chair responded that there had been opinions that real-time online teaching might be adopted as one of the several existing teaching and learning formats, even after the resumption of in-person classes. He believed that one important factor was that students have options and they could choose not to enrol in online elective courses if they felt uncomfortable for online learning. For required courses, it would be possible that both online teaching and traditional teaching mode would be available with some sections held online while others remained as face-to-face mode to cater different needs. In SBM, most of the MBA and MSc classes went hybrid and the experience showed that classes in hybrid mode required sophisticated infrastructure and technical set-up in the classrooms (e.g. audio part not available at this point.)
- Another student opined that our University was the pioneer in online teaching because of the social protests in Fall 2019 and he appreciated that the School had rapidly made changes to accommodate the situation, either in response to the social movements or the COVID-19 pandemic. He suggested to learn from the merits of online teaching and apply it to traditional classes in the future as much as possible. One feature he found useful was the Chatroom function which could engage and help students to ask questions more easily. The Chair summarized that the major advantages for Zoom classes included the polling function, Chatroom function as well as the breakout rooms for group discussion and faculty would be encouraged to continue using these functions in the future. The Chair agreed that simple clarification could be done via Chatroom by the teaching assistants and he advised that faculty should set aside time separately to teach or respond to Chatroom, but not both at the same time, to ensure teaching quality.

- A student member suggested to have more flexibility for online teaching such as waiving the attendance requirement due to time difference. Another student enquired if the P/F grading would be available in Fall 2020-21 and the Chair responded that the special arrangements in Spring 2020 was a special one-time arrangement. For Fall 2020-21, the University would have contingency arrangements, so P/F grading would not be offered again. A member was concerned about online exams which allowed students to have no video. The Chair replied that no exams should be conducted without video.
- There was a query from a student member on whether there would be any regulations for international students coming to campus in Fall 2020-21 to secure the public health of the HKUST community as there were some imported confirmed cases reported recently. The Chair mentioned the pertinent regulation was not finalized yet but as of the meeting date, all incoming students abroad would be required to undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days. The Conference lodge and some Halls would be reserved for such arrangement throughout August.

4. A.O.B.

- 4a A member expressed that the low response rate for SFQ might be attributed to the fact that students were dissatisfied with a particular course and sometimes they might think that SFQ failed to address their dissatisfaction. He wondered how SBM would handle the SFQ comments, especially when there were courses poorly rated. For SBM, if the SFQ course overall mean for a certain course was below 50, the School would conduct a triggered review and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) of the School would request the Head of the course offering department to discuss the feedback with the course instructor and report the review outcomes to the School. School would coordinate with departments to ensure that issues identified will be addressed and the courses will be improved in the next offering. In addition, every faculty undergoes annual evaluations on a three year rolling window. Teaching performance would be one of the criteria in the review process. If a faculty has a low SFQ course overall mean score, say 51 for three consecutive years, his/her contract might not be renewed because of the poor teaching performance.
- 4b The Chair thanked all student representatives who would be graduating in 2019-20, namely Daniel Chan, Tasneem Muchhala and Cyril Tong, for their fruitful contribution and active participation in the meetings.

5. Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:39 pm.

August 20, 2020