

## A Message from the Provost and Vice-Presidents

Friday, 18 October 2019 9:31 AM

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Dear members of HKUST community,

Despite disruptions of transport and classes in the past week, we appreciate that members of the HKUST community have exercised patience and consideration. At this difficult time, standing together as a community with mutual respect and support is more important than ever before.

However, it came to our attention that in social media, there are ungrounded statements about the University.

On behalf of the University, we would like to clarify the following:

1. *Inaccurate statement: The University has made registration of all students from Mainland, Macau and Taiwan to the Mainland Students and Scholars Society, UG Section (MSSSUG) automatic and mandatory.*

Clarification: The University has adopted the principle not to make registration of any students to specific students' societies automatic or mandatory. Students are free to register in any societies on a voluntary basis.

2. *Inaccurate statement: The University passes students' personal information to MSSSUG.*

Clarification: The University does not and will not pass students' personal information to any student societies. Members should rest assured that the University complies strictly with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance of Hong Kong in handling personal data.

3. *Inaccurate statement: The University remains unresponsive to students who are arrested. The 24-hour Helpline cannot be reached when students called in emergency situations.*

Clarification: The University has all along been supporting students in need. The Helpline is well-maintained on 24-hour basis by DSTO colleagues. All Helpline calls are documented in proper records. For the calls received for assistance from students and parents, advice and follow-up help were rendered. Also, in collaboration with DSTO, the University's four Schools/IPO, student hall masters and HKUST's Counselling and Wellness Center have all stepped up counselling and guidance for students who have emotional needs. While the University has referral contacts for voluntary legal advice available to students in need, it is noted that some chose to tap into external legal assistance offered by other community groups.

We are also deeply distressed by a derogatory comment about the President's integrity. As senior management members working closely with the President, we attest to his unwavering commitment to uphold the University's values. He has worked steadfastly to foster an inclusive campus that allows and respects differing views; and has always placed the safety, well-being and interests of students in the forefront. We respect everyone's right to the freedom of expression but it must be exercised with civility and mutual respect. Personal attacks are completely unacceptable.

The University is committed to the academic mission of providing a safe and inclusive place for learning. It would jeopardize the HKUST community's harmony if a particular individual or group of people are denigrated. It would also generate undesired misperception if inaccurate information is circulated. This message serves to clarify the concerns.

With warmest regards,

Lionel NI, Provost

Mark HODGSON, Vice-President for Administration and Business

Nancy IP, Vice-President for Research and Development

Sabrina LIN, Vice-President for Institutional Advancement