Updated Guidelines for Travel Outside Hong Kong under the Pandemic Situation

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the University has been discouraging non-essential travels for the safety of our staff members. In view of the recent development of the situation and the introduction of vaccines, the restrictions on business/research trips have been reviewed and adjusted accordingly. The followings are the updated guidelines.

Approval for Leave for Business/Research Trips

2. Travel outside Hong Kong should be covered by appropriate type(s) of leave (e.g. annual leave if the trip is for personal reasons, professional leave if the trip is for research/professional activities, duty leave if the trip is assigned by the Dean/Head) subject to the usual approval mechanism for the leave. The “work from home” arrangement during the critical pandemic situation does not obviate the need for application for leave for travel outside Hong Kong.

3. Heads would consider the following factors in approving applications for business/research trips:
   
   (a) The critical business/professional benefits of the trip, e.g. whether the colleague has to be physically present to collect field data or use a specific equipment; whether the benefit of a trip to attend a collaborative meeting may equally be achieved virtually, etc.;

   (b) There should be a definite plan for the trip, and the quarantine period has to be completed before commencement of the new semester. Proof of return (e.g. booking confirmation of return flight and hotel room for mandatory quarantine upon arrival at Hong Kong) is requested to justify the duration of the leave application; and

   (c) Heads should have a contingency plan in case the colleagues are unable to return on schedule due to unexpected lockdown and/or flight cancellation.

4. Following the advice of the HKSAR Government, trips to places categorised as “extremely high-risk” or “very high-risk” (https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/high-risk-places.html) are not encouraged.

5. Colleagues should consult their Heads before making any arrangements for their trips, as the approval for taking professional leave is subject to, inter alia, the aforementioned considerations and is not guaranteed.
6. Colleagues should be fully aware of the risks associated with the trips and are strongly advised to:

(a) consider receiving full vaccination before departure;

(b) consider taking out extra medical coverage in addition to the University’s group travel insurance as necessary (Note: The University’s Medical Benefits Scheme does not cover medical care outside Hong Kong. Medical conditions of staff members during business trips are covered by the University’s group travel insurance. Please check the Finance and Enterprises Office’s website at [https://intragweb.hku.hk/reserved_2/finance/staff/insurance.html](https://intragweb.hku.hk/reserved_2/finance/staff/insurance.html) for the latest terms and coverage); and

(c) regularly check the website of the HKSAR Government ([https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/inbound-travel.html](https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/inbound-travel.html)) for the boarding and quarantine arrangements for persons arriving at Hong Kong, and adjust the travel plan where necessary.

*Leave Arrangements for Contingencies*

7. There have been cases where staff members cannot return to Hong Kong due to unexpected lockdown/flight situation after the initial annual/professional leave period. In such event, the further period outside Hong Kong will be covered in the order set out as follows:

(a) Professional leave will be granted for the dates the colleague has on-line teaching or other service duties as confirmed by the supervising Head/Dean/VP/Provost, which will be outside the normal provision for professional leave;

(b) All annual leave accumulated up till the end of the period outside Hong Kong will be exhausted; and

(c) Up to 50% of the remaining period may be covered by professional leave (if the staff member is still eligible for professional leave pursuant to the respective terms of service), and the rest will be covered by unpaid leave.

(d) Exceptional cases other than (b) and (c) above are to be considered and approved on a case-by-case basis. Approving authorities are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Application by</th>
<th>Approving Authority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deans</td>
<td>Provost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heads of academic departments</td>
<td>VP(AD) (on the recommendation of the Dean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professoriate and academic-related staff</td>
<td>VP(AD) (on the recommendation of the Dean and Head)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All professional services staff</td>
<td>EVP (on the recommendation of the Dean and Head)</td>
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8. If it is the staff member’s own personal choice not to come back to Hong Kong after the initial annual/professional leave period, the further period outside Hong Kong will be covered by annual/unpaid leave.

**Arrangements for Mandatory Quarantine upon Return to Hong Kong**

9. If the Head is satisfied that the staff member can discharge his/her duties at full capacity from home/hotel during the mandatory quarantine period on arrival back in Hong Kong, the staff member will not be required to take any leave.

10. If the staff member can only discharge his/her duties partially, the Head is to ascribe the appropriate portion of duties being discharged, and the remaining portion would be covered by annual leave (or unpaid leave if annual leave is exhausted).

11. An illustration of the guidelines for leave arrangements during contingencies and mandatory quarantine on arrival back in Hong Kong as set out in paragraphs 7 to 10 above is at the Annex.

**Enquiries**

12. For enquiries, please contact the respective HR Managers serving your department/centre/unit (https://www.hr.hku.hk/about/).

(Ms.) Yvonne Ho
Director of Human Resources

June 30, 2021

cc: Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor
    Executive Vice-President (Administration and Finance)
    Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development)
    Deans of Faculties
    Heads of Departments/Centres/Units
    Faculty Secretaries
Illustration of the Proposed Guidelines for Travel Outside Hong Kong Under the Pandemic Situation

Professor X took annual leave for 1/1/2021 – 18/1/2021 and left Hong Kong. While she planned to return on 18/1, the flight was cancelled. She eventually returned to Hong Kong on 7/2, and conducted online teaching on 3 days during the intervening period. As of 7/2, her earned but unspent annual leave was 3 days. She was in mandatory quarantine for the period 7/2 – 27/2. The Head determines that Professor X is able to deliver 70% of her normal duties during the quarantine period.

According to the proposed guidelines, her absence will be managed as follows:

(a) For the period outside Hong Kong from 19/1 to 7/2 (20 days):
   (i) 3 days: special **professional leave** for online teaching, outside of normal professional leave provision
   (ii) 3 days: clearance of **annual leave** earned up to 7/2
   (iii) 7 days (50% of the remaining period): **professional leave**
   (iv) 7 days (the rest of the remaining period): **unpaid leave**

(b) For the quarantine period in Hong Kong from 8/2 to 27/2 (20 days excluding the 1st day of arrival, i.e. 13 working days excluding public holidays and weekends):
   (i) 9 days (approximately 70% of 13 working days): **work from home**
   (ii) 4 days (the remaining 30% of the quarantine period): **annual/unpaid leave**

Human Resources Office