



March 13, 2009

## **CEDARS Statement on Students' Booking of Amenities**

The statement from CEDARS is a response to Ms Christina Chan's article posted at In-media and on the Democracy Wall of Students' Union of the University of Hong Kong. Please find below her article in full version and the response of CEDARS:

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On the Impossibility of Organising HKU Events As an Individual Student Union Member

週一, 2009-03-09 17:16 — 陳巧文

[Originally posted on the Democracy Wall at HKU]

10th March, 2009 (Tuesday) will mark the 50th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising. No one, regardless of their political views, can deny that this will be a historical day.

I was (and still am, to some extent) trying to organise a documentary screening as well as a open forum in which a Tibetan speaker from an international student organisation concerned with the human rights condition in Tibet could share her thoughts with us on the topic. I believe that no matter how controversial a topic is, there should be room to discuss it – especially in the university which is supposed to be a liberal institution (in fact the more controversial a topic is, the more reasons there are to talk about it).

However, I have spoken to the Student Union (SU), Global Lounge (GL), a member of CEDARS (in regards to the use of the rooms at the Amenities) within the last 2 days but no one is willing to offer any help to me as an individual student. Having finished my Bachelor's Degree in HKU, I am now doing my MPhil here. Though I currently do not belong to any student group/association, I have always paid tuition to the university and membership fee to the SU and am therefore a member of HKU and SU. Nonetheless, I have been told by SU and GL that I cannot book any facilities to host an event unless a student association hosts it under its name. I am also told that I can only book an indoor room (with no video facilities) at the Amenities for 30 minutes as an individual student, even though I am booking it for an event involving many more other HKU students as well as an international student group.



As most of us have heard or even seen, there is much politics involving joining/being a part of student groups/associations, be it the SU itself or an individual student association under the SU. Of course, it is absolutely fine if people want to join these groups/associations. However, I do not believe that a HKU student should have to deal with all that group politics to be able to organise something where we can speak up or take action within our own university, even if our speech or action is political in itself. I believe any tuition-paying individual student of HKU and fee-paying individual member of SU should be allowed to enjoy the same facilities or at least help from the University and SU that other group/association within the university would get. I believe we should be allowed to do something – even as an individual student who doesn't care for joining these privileged groups.

This is by no means an attack on the SU or the University itself, nor do I believe that I will be able to change anything by writing this. I am merely trying to share with you, as a fellow HKU student and SU member, one very frustrating and disappointing fact: that I am only one student, with no backing of any unions or associations but with a belief that something needs to be said and/or done on a particular historical day when no one else in the society seems to bother. I have tried my best. And I have failed.

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### **Response to Christina Chan**

Ms Christina Chan's message posted on the Democracy Wall of Students' Union of the University of Hong Kong and the website of In-media provides us with an opportunity to reiterate the University's policy and clarify some facts about the use of amenities by students.

The University of Hong Kong upholds the principle of freedom of association and freedom of speech on its campus. This tradition is deeply rooted in the history of the University and will be carried forward.

Tibet, like all other issues, has been the subject for which forums, exhibitions, and courses have been organized.

When Ms Chan approached the Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS) after 5.00 p.m. on Friday, 6 March (last week) , we briefed her that rooms administered by CEDARS for student activities might be booked by a student association or any five full-time



students. The policy was drawn up with a view to balancing the needs of students and addressing the facility and space constraints of the University.

We adopt a first-come-first-served principle for student users. We encourage students to make their reservation in advance as early as possible due to the severe shortage of space in the University. During term time, it is unlikely for students to be able to reserve a vacant room if booking is made less than two working days before an event.

We believe that our current booking policy provides enough flexibility for students to organize activities. Within the bounds of these guidelines and principle of fairness, we will explore all options within the University when students come to us for an urgent reservation. We always try every means to facilitate the full use of the facilities on campus by students to pursue their cause.

Students play an important part in deciding the booking policy and management of the amenities. There are student representatives on the relevant committees and we always welcome and encourage any students who have a suggestion on university affairs to come forward with their views. The willingness to ask for change has been the driver for development at the University which is another deep-rooted tradition of HKU.

Centre of Development and Resources for Students  
The University of Hong Kong