

Department of Communication Studies

Department Meeting Minutes

1st Departmental Meeting

2023/2024

Date: 15 September 2023 (Friday)

Time: 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Venue: CVA1022

Chairperson: Prof. Vivian Sheer (Head)

Participants:	Prof. Kara Chan	Dr. Leanne Chang
	Prof. Regina Chen	Dr. Henry Fung
	Prof. Kineta Hung	Dr. Vivienne Leung
	Prof. Meina Liu	Dr. Jiemin Looi
	Dr. Angela Mak	Dr. Keon Young Park
	Dr. Florin Serban	Dr. Elina Tachkova
	Dr. Stephanie Tsang	Prof. Wei Ran
	Dr. Lola Xie	Dr. Dominic Yeo
	Dr. Vivien Zhou	Ms. Agnes Kwok (Recording Secretary)
	Ms. Mimi Yip	
Apologies:	Dr. Jos Bartels	
	Dr. Anfan Chen	

I. Matters for Information

1. Welcome to New Faculty/Staff Members

Prof. Vivian Sheer, the Chair, introduced and welcomed five new faculty members, Dr. Anfan Chen, Prof. Meina Liu, Dr. Jiemin Looi, Prof. Wei Ran and Dr. Lola Xie.

2. Dean's Search

The Chair updated members that the University had made an offer to the third candidate for the Dean's position, but that candidate had not yet accepted the offer.

3. Department Succession

The Chair informed faculty members that she would be on sabbatical leave in semester 2, 2023/24 and this semester was the last semester for her headship. Prof. Regina Chen and Dr. Dominic Yeo were penciled in for the succession per her discussion with Prof. Steve Guo, the Interim Dean. Their succession would be official only after the President signed off on the appointments.

4. Director of the Organizational Communication (ORGC) Concentration Program

The Chair announced that Dr. Henry Fung would serve as the ORGC Program Director

from 2023/24 to 2024/25 for the last two cohorts of ORGC students.

5. Egalitarian, Rational Management at the Department

The Chair reminded faculty members that the Department emphasizes egalitarianism, respecting and encouraging our new and/or young colleagues to express their ideas.

6. Policy and Norms of Outside Practices

The Chair reminded faculty members that a total load of outside practice should not exceed 1/5 of the staff's full-time workload/teaching load at the University, which the related regulations and application forms are available on the staff intranet.

II. Matters for Discussion and Sharing

1. Academic Consultation Panel (ACP) Visit on 13-15 March 2024

The Chair briefed members that the ACP Visit is a major exercise to ensure that the standard of our programs is on par with recognized higher education institutions worldwide. ACP visits our school once every six years.

The Department was asked to submit a list of ACP membership nominations of four local and non-local individuals to the University, the Chair said the type of panel membership should be academics (typically at the rank of Associate Professor or above), professionals or practitioners at a senior level. Members agreed that the panel membership for local nominations should not be from local university competitors. Members suggested that considering a retired person and working in a non-UGC university would be a good way to search for nominations.

2. Percentage of assessments between course documents and course syllabi

To follow the university practice, course instructors were advised to keep the percentage of assessments as stated on the official course documents as possible. However, it was resolved that course instructors were allowed to lower the percentage by 5% of assessments including examination to allow for flexibility.

3. Strategic Directions for the Department

The Chair explained that the possible new Department name of "Department of Public Relations and Advertising" was rejected by the senior management of the University due to it being associated with business. The new Department name would be on hold until the new Dean assumes duty. This delayed the makeover of the department website.

Dr. Dominic Yeo added that faculty members could download the necessary forms, including the APR, tenure and promotion guidelines, letterhead etc. on the department intranet.

Prof. Regina Chen reported that the Department was taking a proactive approach to developing an integrated promotion plan regarding social media communication management. The Department had hired a freelancing Social Media Communication Specialist to create content for three social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn). It aims at increasing the number of followers by posting one post per month. Faculty members were asked to fill in the social media monthly plan on OneDrive to indicate the special class activities or events.

Prof. Chen also reported that the construction of the Strategic Communication and Creativity Lab was suspended because the renovation work would be much over the budget. The construction of the lab would be restarted until the new Dean's decision.

4. Student Request for Change of Concentration and Major Transfer

The Chair thanked Prof. Regina Chen, Dr. Vivienne Leung and Dr. Elina Tachkova for developing the student grade appeal policy, which is available on the student intranet.

The Chair informed faculty members that student requests for changes of concentration within the Department were not allowed because the Department had a concentration allocation policy and assigned quotas distribution (i.e., Advertising and Branding concentration accounts for 40% of intake number while Organizational Communication concentration had been merged with Public Relations concentration accounts for 60%).

For the major transfer between Schools/Faculties, the transfer-in applicant would need to first obtain a recommendation from their current departments. They should have a minimum cGPA of 3.0 and the relevant Program Director would interview the applicant. For the transfer-out applicant, the Department would recommend them as it accounts for a very small number of students. The protocol for major transfers is available on the staff intranet.

5. Informal Count of RPg Student Intake for COMS

The Chair updated members that Dr. Vivien Zhou would serve as the Associate Chair of RPg Admission Committee of the School starting this academic year and thanked Prof. Regina Chen for her effort in supporting the RPg admission of the School last year.

The RPg Recruitment Committee/Team at the Department level was formed last year, aiming at helping the Department identify RPg talents whose interests to fit the Department's research strengths in strategic communication, including AB, PR, health communication etc.

Dr. Angela Mak added that the Committee could advise and support those talented RPg

to apply for the University's scholarships and fellowship scheme to attract the talent.

Prof. Regina Chen said that the basic selection criteria for identifying potential applicants would be their outstanding GPA (3.5 or above) and if they graduated from a reputable university.

The Chair pointed out that PhD student supervision was one of the research performance indications under a new APR guideline, in which academic faculty members (except Research Assistant Professor, unless they were one of the authors) supervising two PhD students would receive full APR supervision points and academic faculty members were reminded not to supervise more than four PhD students at the same time.

The Chair also mentioned that some advertising, Public Relations and corporate communication-related new courses would be added to the RPg curriculum, expected to be offered in the next semester.

6. Department Research Subsidy for COMS RPg students

The department endorsed the research subsidy allocation for COMS RPg students whose first advisor is a COMS faculty member, with effect from the academic year 2023-2024. The total amount of subsidy is HK\$10,000 and it is up to two reimbursements. The Research Development Team would follow up and decide on the administrative methods and further improvements to the subsidy arrangement.

7. COMS RPg Top-paper Award

The department endorsed the COMS RPg top student paper award of HK\$5,000, allocated to the first COMS RPg student author and presented at one of the four international conferences (ICA, AEJMC, NCA, and AAA). It was agreed to be renamed "COMS Excellent Student Research Paper Award".

Members discussed the procedure for reviewing and selecting the awardee, some suggested forming a committee. The Chair added that the COMS RPg top-paper award was a merit award. The Research Development Team would follow up and decide on the administrative methods for the awards program.

8. The New Annual Performance (APR) System

The new performance appraisal system was completed in August 2023. Dr. Dominic Yeo, who participated as a School Review Panelist, observed two factors that may affect the APR scores for research outputs of the COMS faculty members. They were the authorship percentages and the journal/publisher APR points. If the faculty members who were not the first authors and whose publications were not published in SSCI or AA journals, tended to have lower points.

Dr. Yeo commented on several issues and problems that arose from the exercise:

1. Number of research output and claiming output: faculty members could report a maximum of four outputs, however, out of the four outputs, one output could be rolled over to the next year and be counted twice within a 3-year window.
2. The impact factor of the journal: could be found in the Journal Citation Reports.
3. Authorship percentages: sole authorship automatically earns 100%. The first author (out of two) earns a maximum of 90% under the APR exercise. The School's Research and Development Committee (RDC) would further discuss the guidelines on the percentages.
4. Book chapters: no more than two book chapters could be reported, which RDC would further discuss.

The Chair said that the Department would adopt a rotation strategy among members of similar performances due to the University-guided distribution of performance. The Chair also highlighted the discrepancies between the APR criteria and the tenure/promotion criteria, that is, the journal requirements, grant/funding/donation, book chapter, authorship, PhD student supervision. The Department/the School would convey this to the University.

9. Team Planning for AY2023/24 (from November)

Teaching and Curriculum Development Team

Prof. Regina Chen reported that the team would review the Honours Project handbooks, and teaching assessment in consideration of AI. Prof. Chen also mentioned that the School and the Department would have activities for Year 1 and Direct Year 3 freshmen this semester, providing a good platform for academic advisors to meet with their advisees. Besides, the team would invite industry experts to discuss the latest topics in strategic communication.

Prof. Kara Chan added that faculty members are welcome to approach her when applying teaching development grant, community of practice grant, or planned learning grant.

Research Development Team

Dr. Leanne Chang reported that the team would follow up on the new RPg subsidy and the COMS Excellent Student Research Paper Award. Prof. Regina Chen added that there would be a pre-conference for ICA to be held at the University of Technology Sydney, the team would call for an abstract when more information is available.

RPg Student Recruitment Team

Dr. Vivien Zhou reminded the faculty member that the application deadline for the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme would be in December while the main round of

RPg recruitment would be in late March and the team would review the application on behalf of the Department in April.

Intranet and Communication Team

Dr. Henry Fung reported that the social media helper boosted the number of the Department's Instagram followers by 30%, of which were almost 300 followers. Dr. Fung also invited the helper to interview the new faculty members.

Internship Practicum and Industry Relations Team

Dr. Henry Fung reported that 90% of Year 4 students had completed the internship. He added that the Career Center would no longer sponsor the subsidy for the unpaid internship starting this year.

Dr. Fung also reported that Mr. Spencer Chan, a PRA student who graduated last year, was selected as an executive trainee of Jardine Matheson. He would be invited to give a sharing at the coming internship briefing on 13 Oct 2023.

Student Relations and Experience Team

Dr. Angela Mak reported that two finalists were shortlisted for the Hong Kong Public Relations Awards, and the presentation ceremony would be scheduled on 1 Nov 2023. Besides, two groups of Year 4 students were joining the Disney Imaginations Design Competition under her supervision.

III. Any Other Business

Prof. Wei Ran, the new chief editor of *Communication and Society*, invited faculty members to serve as a reviewer or propose manuscripts to the Journal, a Chinese-language journal affiliated with ICA.

IV. Adjournment

There was no other business. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.