

Guidelines for Handling Underage Students

Background

It is acknowledged that there are students who join the University under the age of 18 (“underage students”) as the University mainly considers an applicant’s academic ability and potential to succeed rather than age when assessing their suitability for a program of study.

The University has a duty to take reasonable care in respect of all its students, and underage students may require a higher level of care. In particular, students under the age of 16 at the commencement of their program of study at the University may require additional support for their transition to university life. Under appropriate circumstances, the University will give due consideration and take necessary measures in handling the affairs of underage students but the University will not act in loco parentis (i.e., not assuming parental responsibility), while the responsibility resides with the parents/legal guardians.

The purpose of this guideline is to provide the operational guidelines for admission, teaching, accommodation, access, privacy, exchange and risk prevention for underage students.

An Adult Environment and the University’s Responsibilities

HKUST is an adult environment created to advance learning and knowledge through teaching and research. The University will undertake the following steps to ensure the welfare of underage students studying at the University:

Teaching and Learning

It is the responsibility of teaching colleagues to ensure that written, audio and visual materials used in class are suitable for the entire student group. Teaching colleagues may need to consider adjusting age-sensitive teaching materials when there are underage students in the group without jeopardizing the learning outcome. Schools and teaching faculty members should communicate at the start of term to determine on necessary adjustment.

Some courses may involve excursions away from the University. Subject to the University’s existing Risk Management Policy and Process, the University is not able to take any additional responsibility for an underage student in relation to such activities. Unless indicated otherwise, by signing the *Parental Consent Form and the Assumption of Risk Release Form*, parents give consent for their child to take part in such activities on this basis.

School’s academic advisors hold regular meetings with students based on teaching and learning needs regardless of their age. Staff of each School would meet with new students at least once in their first term of study. Advising sessions may be conducted individually or in groups, according to Schools’ teaching practices. Additional advising support will be provided to students, catering to their learning needs. Specific information will be arranged during orientation and/or advising sessions to acquaint underage students with an adult learning environment and its implications.

Any welfare concern should be referred to the Dean of Students' Office. Due consideration will be given to the impact on student experience, progression and well-being when making such decisions.

For students who are under the age of 16 at the commencement of their program, a more stringent approach would be adopted. Schools will meet with the parents/guardians and the students to agree on a learning contract, tailored to the specific program of study and educational needs of the student, before commencement of the program; and this learning contract is to be reviewed and renewed annually until the student reaches the age of 16.

Admission and Enrolment

University units making admission offers to students should ensure that this guideline and respective consent forms are sent and completed by both the parents/legal guardians and students during the admission process.

Schools planning to admit students under the age of 16 MUST conduct pre-admission interviews with the student and the parents/legal guardians before making an offer. Schools must explain the implications of entering an adult learning environment in this meeting and ensure that the parents/legal guardians had completed the consent form *Consent Given by the Parent/Legal Guardian of a Student who will be Underage at Commencement of Program of Study at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology*.

Accommodation

All students accepted to the University are eligible to apply for hall residence. Underage students will need to present written approval from their parents/legal guardians indicating their acknowledgement and understanding that allocation of hall space does not constitute the University acting in *loco parentis*. For students under the age of 16, additional assessment will be conducted on students' readiness to reside without their parents/legal guardians in an adult environment.

Students' residence at university halls are not supervised on a regular daily basis for the most part. Students are free to come and go without the need to sign-in/sign-out as long as their resident status is verified. Nonetheless, student's safety, security and general well-being are of importance to the University. Hence, common areas are covered by CCTV, equipped with electronic access system via student cards, and stationed with attendant staff. Turnstiles may be installed to regulate proper access to student halls.

Each student hall has a Residence Master (RM) to provide intellectual and pastoral guidance to respective residents, and deal with any behavioural issues. RMs are assisted by a number of Hall Tutors, who are postgraduate students, and hall staff members who take care of residents and help with hall administration.

All students, including underage students, are expected to assume adult-level responsibility within any hall of residence, comply with respective hall rules and regulations, and voice out their need for assistance when situation calls.

Internet and Library Access

Internet access at the University is not routinely restricted by parental controls, although access to certain inappropriate websites is restricted centrally. Underage students will be allowed the

same level of access as all other students and will be expected to observe the same regulations relating to acceptable use of the internet.

Library spaces and collections support adult learning activity. Underage students will not be permitted to check out category III audio-visual materials in accordance with the laws of Hong Kong.

Licensed Premises

The University observes guidelines from the Department of Health to maintain HKUST as an alcohol free campus. All student activities arranged by the University or by student groups should be alcohol-free.

However, some restaurants and the supermarket on campus are premises licensed for the sale of alcohol to people who are at least 18 of age. According to the laws of Hong Kong, sale and supply of alcohol to underage persons is against the law. Underage students are reminded against alcohol consumption.

Privacy

Underage students are protected by the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. While parents/legal guardians generally have the right to access the personal data of underage students (e.g. academic records), the University will review each request on a case by case basis to ensure proper protection of the personal data of underage students. It is the normal practice of the University to correspond directly with students but not their parents/legal guardians. However, the University acknowledges that it is necessary to maintain updated contact details of the parents/legal guardians of underage students, in particular for emergency. If appropriate, parents/legal guardians may also provide other relevant information to the University for the interests of their underage student.

Outbound Exchange/Study Abroad

All full-time students at the University are eligible to apply for outbound exchange/study abroad programs when they satisfy the program requirements. Students accepted to an outbound exchange/study abroad program are required to sign an undertaking. For underage students, the undertaking is to be signed by the parents/guardians.

The University takes no responsibility for the welfare of students during their leisure time and holiday periods, unless they are undertaking activities which are specifically organised by the University.

Parent's Responsibilities

While the University, in appropriate circumstances, will give due consideration and take necessary measures in handling the affairs in regard to underage students, it should be noted that parental responsibility remains with the parents/ legal guardians. The University does not take on the usual rights, responsibilities and authority that parents/guardians have in relation to a child, and does not act in the place of parents/guardians in relation to underage students.

To assist the University in processing the acceptance of offer of admission, the parent/legal guardian of an underage student at the commencement of his/her program of study (defined as the

first day of the first term of study) is required to complete and sign the enclosed Consent Form 1 which should be submitted to the University during the registration period along with a copy of the student's birth certificate. Without the required consent form, the University may have difficulty in arranging some of the teaching and learning activities, and accommodation for an underage student and therefore, his/her studies may be affected.

Student's Responsibilities

The University offers students an adult environment and treats them as mature, independent individuals. All students are expected to assume adult level responsibility, behave respectfully towards themselves, others and university property, and be abided by the Academic Regulations, Regulations for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, and all University policies and procedures.

Underage students are also expected to lead their academic and social lives in the University as other students. During the process, they will have access to a variety of information and materials (including those normally suitable for adults only) and non-parental controlled internet access, as common in a free academic environment. All students should observe the same regulations relating to acceptable use of information and the internet. When underage students participate or engage (pursuant to a course requirement or otherwise) in academic, training, social and other activities (e.g. field trips, internships, placements, tours outside Hong Kong, late night meetings or gatherings, overnight programmes and high-risk sports) which may involve various kinds of risks, they must submit to the University the signed *Parental Consent Form and the Assumption of Risk Release Form*.

Underage students are reminded against alcohol consumption in any occasion. If underage students encounter any situation which they find dubious, e.g. being offered alcohol within university accommodation, students are encouraged to take charge of their residential life including pro-actively seeking help from the RM, hall tutors and hall staff should situation calls.

Consent Given by the Parent/Legal Guardian of a Student who will be Underage at Commencement of Program of Study at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

To: The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("University")

I, the undersigned, am the _____ * of _____ ("Student" with Application No.: _____). I confirmed that I have read and understood the Guideline for Handling Underage Students. To the extent that the matters and activities are legal under the applicable laws, I irrevocably agree and give consent to the following should the Student be admitted to the University:

1. I understand that parental responsibility in respect of the Student shall remain with me and the University will not act in *loco parentis* (i.e. not assuming parental responsibility) for the child but is committed to the safeguarding of all those who access our services and facilities;
2. I understand that the University is an adult environment and that the Student will generally be treated as an adult, abided by any regulations, rules, policies and procedures of the University;
3. I will provide the needed consent to the teaching activities that the student will be undertaking;
4. if I do not wish the Student to participate in teaching activities that any student is normally expected to undertake, I must inform the University during the University's add drop period. If this decision may, in the University's reasonable opinion, have a significant detrimental effect on the Student's learning experience in the course, the Student can be advised to withdraw from the course;
5. the Student will be excluded from certain activities and spaces due to his/her age, including but not limited to premises such as some laboratories and laboratory preparation areas, plant, machine and electrical switchboard rooms, chemical storage areas, construction sites, licensed venues for alcohol consumption, and loading and delivery bays;
6. the Student may have access to any information and materials provided by the University or through the facilities of the University (including those normally suitable for adults only);
7. [for non-local students only] I will appoint a local guardian for the Student and provide full contact details to the University in the space provided below;
8. I shall be responsible for providing the University the updated contact details, and any information in respect of the special needs and requirements of my child;
9. I am liable for the Student's debts to the University;
10. I shall fully indemnify the University from any actual or threatened claims, losses or damages which may be suffered by the University arising out of the Student's presence on University premises and/or this agreement (including without limitation, any injury or damage to property caused to any third party); and
11. I agree that, in the unlikely event of a medical emergency where the Student is unable to consent and it is not possible to contact a parent or local guardian, the University may authorize emergency medical treatment, acting on medical advice in the best interests of the Student.

The above agreement and consent shall lapse upon the Student reaching the age of 18. However, this shall not affect the parental responsibility and duty of care of the relevant parents / legal guardians (including myself) in relation to the Student.

INFORMATION OF LOCAL GUARDIAN: (For Non-Local Students Only)	
Name:	<input type="text"/>
	(English) <input type="text"/> (Chinese, if applicable)
HKID:	<input type="text"/>
Tel:	<input type="text"/>
Email:	<input type="text"/>
Address in HK:	<input type="text"/>

Signature of Parent/ Guardian

Name:

HKID/Passport:

Tel:

Email:

Date: