

Students Reviewed by the Committee on Discontinuation *Observations and Analysis*



Professor Anthony Yeh
Vice-Chairman
Committee on Discontinuation

31 August 2016

Committee on Discontinuation

- ❑ A committee under the Senate
- ❑ Each Faculty has a representative sitting on the Committee
- ❑ Review students recommended for discontinuation by Faculties on the ground of unsatisfactory academic performance or progress
- ❑ Decision is final, i.e. no appeal

Under what circumstances would a student be discontinued from studies?

- ❑ Failed to complete successfully 36 or more credits in two consecutive semesters (not including the summer semester), except where they are not required to take such a number of credits in the two given semesters; or
 - ❑ Failed to achieve an average Semester GPA of 1.0 or higher for two consecutive semesters (not including the summer semester); or
 - ❑ Exceeded the specified maximum period of registration of the curriculum (normally equivalent to a period which is 150% of the curriculum's normative period of study)
- * There may be other reasons for discontinuation such as failing a particular course or requirement three times.

Under what circumstances would a student be discontinued from studies?

- Review of the student at the Faculty level by the **Faculty Review Committee (FRC)**
 - Students may appeal to their **FRC**, but only on the basis of extenuating non-academic circumstances
- If FRC decides to uphold the discontinuation recommendation, students will be further reviewed by the **Committee on Discontinuation**
 - a further and final opportunity for students to appeal

Students Referred to the Committee on Discontinuation in 2013-14, 2014-15 & 2015-16

	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016	
No. of students discontinued	41	39%	34	32%	32	33%
No. of students allowed to continue	26	24%	28	27%	25	25%
No. of students withdrawn voluntarily	39	37%	43	41%	41	42%
Total No. of students	106		105		98	

About ¼ are allowed to remain and continue

Note:

Students withdrawn voluntarily from studies were not reviewed by the Committee on Discontinuation. Thus, the total number of students reviewed by the Committee in a year should be the sum of the number of students discontinued and the number of students allowed to continue.

Analysis of Cases in 2013-14, 2014-15 & 2015-16: Hall Residents vs Non-hall Residents

% of hall residents are declining because Halls are paying more attention to academic performance

(i) Academic Year 2013-2014																	
Type of Students	Hall Residents*								Non-Hall Residents								Total
	No. of Students Discontinued	%	No. of Students Allowed to Continue	%	No. of Students Withdrawn Voluntarily	%	Sub-total	%	No. of Students Discontinued	%	No. of Students Allowed to Continue	%	No. of Students Withdrawn Voluntarily	%	Sub-total	%	
UG	22	26%	16	18%	8	9%	46	53%	12	14%	10	12%	18	21%	40	47%	86
PG	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	7	35%	0	0%	13	65%	20	100%	20
Total	22	21%	16	15%	8	7%	46	43%	19	18%	10	10%	31	29%	60	57%	106
(ii) Academic Year 2014-2015																	
Type of Students	Hall Residents*								Non-Hall Residents								Total
	No. of Students Discontinued	%	No. of Students Allowed to Continue	%	No. of Students Withdrawn Voluntarily	%	Sub-total	%	No. of Students Discontinued	%	No. of Students Allowed to Continue	%	No. of Students Withdrawn Voluntarily	%	Sub-total	%	
UG	12	15%	9	12%	9	12%	30	39%	13	16%	18	23%	17	22%	48	61%	78
PG	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	9	33%	1	4%	17	63%	27	100%	27
Total	12	11%	9	9%	9	9%	30	29%	22	21%	19	18%	34	32%	75	71%	105
(iii) Academic Year 2015-2016																	
Type of Students	Hall Residents*								Non-Hall Residents								Total
	No. of Students Discontinued	%	No. of Students Allowed to Continue	%	No. of Students Withdrawn Voluntarily	%	Sub-total	%	No. of Students Discontinued	%	No. of Students Allowed to Continue	%	No. of Students Withdrawn Voluntarily	%	Sub-total	%	
UG	4	6%	6	9%	6	9%	16	24%	14	21%	17	25%	20	30%	51	76%	67
PG	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	14	45%	2	7%	15	48%	31	100%	31
Total	4	4%	6	6%	6	6%	16	16%	28	29%	19	19%	35	36%	82	84%	98

*Students who have resided in hall in the two semesters before they were referred to the CoD.

Copy of the CoD Letters to Committee on Halls

1st letter sent on Aug 18, 2010.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



18 August 2010

Dr. Albert Chau,
Dean of Student Affairs
Centre of Development and Resources for Students

Dear Dr. Chau,

Discontinuation of Studies – Hall Activities

I am writing to express the concerns of the Committee on Discontinuation (CoD) on the adverse impact of hall activities on students' academic performance and to call for action from you and the hall wardens for rectifying the situation.

2. As you may know, over commitment in hall activities is a major factor cited by many students for their poor academic results when they are faced with the discontinuation of their studies. From what we heard from the students during the CoD meetings, it is often the case that they did not know how to strike a balance between studying and hall activities until it was too late. Many of these students were in the early years of their studies (Year 1 or Year 2 Semester 1 students) and this was the first time they enjoyed full autonomy in managing their time. Without adequate or timely guidance and advice, they easily over-estimated their ability and ruined their academic results by devoting all their time on hall activities. And for those who had managed to marginally meet the minimum progression requirements, they found themselves difficult to catch up in their senior years because of their weak foundation in the fundamental Year 1 courses.

3. Studying should be the primary responsibility of a student and halls should provide a conducive environment for students to study in the University. It is worrying to hear that some hall activities were arranged in such a way that directly clashed with classes or made it impossible for students to attend classes on the next day (e.g. sports training in the morning which made it necessary for the participants to skip their morning lectures and tutorials; activities which stretched overnight and thus caused the students to be unable to wake up for the morning lessons). In particular, we are very concerned to hear the peer pressure felt by the students when they wanted to reduce their commitment and how they handled this on their own without receiving any support and guidance from wardens, tutors or teachers. They might not know where to turn to for help or not dare to do so for fear of upsetting their peers.

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Appendix B

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4. We value hall education as a part of student learning experience. But from the cases that we have dealt with in the CoD meetings, it seems that there are problems with halls in providing a conducive studying environment for our students. It is difficult for students to get admitted to HKU. It is a great pity that the CoD has to discontinue students from their studies because their academic performance has been hindered by hall activities. May I therefore invite you and the wardens to look into the matter and take steps to improve the situation.

Yours sincerely,

Professor A. Yeh
Chairman

Committee on Discontinuation

cc: Vice-Chancellor
Chairman, Committee on Halls

Copy of the CoD Letters to Committee on Halls

2nd letter sent on May 11, 2012.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



May 11, 2012

Dr. Albert Chau
Dean of Student Affairs
Centre of Development and Resources for Students

Dear Dr. Chau,

Discontinuation of Studies – Hall Activities

Further to my letter dated August 18, 2010, I am writing again to express the concerns of the Committee on Discontinuation (CoD) on the adverse impacts of hall activities on students' academic performance and to solicit your assistance in bringing this to the attention of the Committee on Halls for consideration of ways to rectify the situation.

I understand that the Committee on Halls has discussed the issues raised in my letter and taken actions on them. However, since I last wrote to you, the CoD continued to deal with students who cited hall activities as a factor contributing to their poor academic results. Below are the statistics for the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 academic years:

Students who appeared before the CoD	2010-2011	2011-2012*
Number of full-time undergraduates who appeared before the CoD	29 (100%)	21 (100%)
Number (percentage) of full-time undergraduates who appeared before the CoD and cited hall activities as a factor contributing to poor academic results	13 (45%)	8 (38%)
Number (percentage) of full-time undergraduates who were required to discontinue their studies and cited hall activities as a factor contributing to poor academic results	8 (28%)	5 (24%)

* from September 2011 to April 2012

The statistics reveal that over 40% of the full-time undergraduate students being recommended for discontinuation in 2010-2011, and nearly 40% of those from September 2011 to April 2012, cited hall activities as a factor contributing to poor academic results. As I have stated in my last letter, many students cited over-commitment as a major factor for their poor academic performance when they appeared before CoD. Some did not know how to strike a balance between studying and hall activities until it was too late, while others, in the absence of adequate or timely guidance, easily over-estimated their abilities and ruined their academic studies by devoting all their time to hall activities. It is a pity that some students who were previously involved greatly in hall activities failed to lay a solid foundation in their junior years, thus failing to catch up in their senior years. It is worrying to hear that some students were absent from classes, as they were unable to get up for the morning classes due to participation in hall activities which stretched overnight. It is equally worrying to learn that some students faced

peer pressure when they wanted to reduce their commitment yet did not know how to handle this on their own.

Notwithstanding there are often multiple factors leading to students' unsatisfactory academic performance, the CoD views that the Committee on Halls should be made aware of the fact that these students thought that their academic results had somehow been affected by hall activities. UGC gives us funding and land to build student hostels in order to provide better living and learning environment to our students, particularly to those who live far away from the University. It seems that we are not achieving the good intention of UGC. Students living in student hostels are receiving more UGC's support, and should at least pass all courses and not appear in the CoD, if not perform better than those not living in student hostels. What is more, with the implementation of the 4-year curriculum, the University will start admitting HKDSEE students in September 2012. As these students will be one year younger than the HKALE students when they enter the University, it is very likely that they will be less mature than their HKALE counterparts in handling studying and hall activities at the same time. It is a pity that the CoD has to discontinue students from their studies because their participation in hall activities has somehow adversely affected their academic performance. It will therefore be highly appreciated if you and the Committee on Halls could look into the matter and ways to improve the situation.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Anthony Yeh
Chairman, Committee on Discontinuation

c.c. Vice-Chancellor
Chairman, Committee on Halls

Copy of the CoD Letters to Committee on Halls

3rd letter sent on Sep 21, 2012.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

香港大學



September 21, 2012

Dr. Albert Chau
Dean of Student Affairs
Centre of Development and Resources for Students

Dear Dr. Chau,

Discontinuation of Studies – Hall Activities

I understand that the halls and the Committee on Halls have been dealing with the issues that the Committee on Discontinuation (CoD) has raised in my letter of May 11, 2012.

However, in the last round of CoD meetings, which were held in August 2012, we saw, among the students recommended for discontinuation, a significant number of them being hall residents and indicating that their studies had been affected by hall activities in different extents. According to the information gathered, of the 24 full-time undergraduates appearing before CoD (excluding those who withdrew voluntarily), 15 (or 63%) of them were hall residents in 2011-2012 and 6 out of the 15 (or 25% of the total number of full-time undergraduates appearing before CoD) were eventually required to discontinue their studies as recommended by the Faculty Review Committees.

Members of CoD were concerned that for the full-time undergraduates who appeared before CoD, the hall residents actually outnumbered the non-hall-residents, noting that in 2011-2012 the hall places of the University could accommodate less than half of the full-time undergraduates only. UGC provides funding and land to construct student hostels in order to minimize the commuting time and provide a better living and learning environment to the students. The privileged students living in halls should perform better if not the same as other students in the University. It is regrettable that the figures tell a different story when it comes to discontinuation which is a very traumatic and disheartening experience for both the students and their parents and families.

Furthermore, some non-local students complained that the halls were not helping them to adjust to the University and Hong Kong. One of them told the CoD that he had difficulties in living with his peers and adjusting to the life in the hall in view of his unpleasant, humiliating experience in the hall's orientation activities two years ago (he stated that he was treated differently since he was a non-local student). Members of the CoD were of the view that the halls should be alerted to this which may be the tip of the iceberg and devise measures to prevent its recurrence. The support and guidance of the University is important to non-local students in adjusting to the new environment. Halls should create a more positive experience rather than a negative one.

I understand that it takes time for the measures that the halls are now developing to take effect. However, the CoD would like to share with you the observations in its last round of meetings, especially the complaints from non-local students, so that the above concerns could be addressed and improved.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Anthony Yeh
Chairman, Committee on Discontinuation

c.c. Professor Lap-chee Tsui, Vice-Chancellor
Professor Amy Tsui, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)
Professor Y.S. Chan, Chairman, Committee on Halls

Breakdown of Hall Residents Referred to CoD in 2013-2014

Nationality Type	No. of Hall Residents *				
	Local	Non-Local			Total
		Mainland	International	Sub-total	
Students discontinued	11 (50%)	8 (36%)	3 (14%)	11 (50%)	22
Students allowed to continue	7 (44%)	4 (25%)	5 (31%)	9 (56%)	16
Students withdrawn voluntarily	1 (13%)	3 (37%)	4 (50%)	7 (87%)	8
Total	19 (41%)	15 (33%)	12 (26%)	27 (59%)	46

*Students who have resided in hall in the two semesters before they were referred to the CoD.

Breakdown of Hall Residents Referred to CoD in 2014-2015

Nationality Type	No. of Hall Residents *				
	Local	Non-Local			Total
		Mainland	International	Sub-total	
Students discontinued	8 (67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	4 (33%)	12
Students allowed to continue	5 (56%)	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	4 (44%)	9
Students withdrawn voluntarily	3 (33%)	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	6 (67%)	9
Total	16 (54%)	10 (33%)	4 (13%)	14 (46%)	30

*Students who have resided in hall in the two semesters before they were referred to the CoD.

Breakdown of Hall Residents Referred to CoD in 2015-2016

Nationality Type	No. of Hall Residents *				
	Local	Non-Local			Total
		Mainland	International	Sub-total	
Students discontinued	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4
Students allowed to continue	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	1 (17%)	6
Students withdrawn voluntarily	5 (83%)	0 (0%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	6
Total	14 (88%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	2 (12%)	16

*Students who have resided in hall in the two semesters before they were referred to the CoD.

Analysis of Cases in 2013-2015: by Reasons of Poor Performance (Put Forth by Undergraduates)

	Reasons for poor academic performance	No. of Undergraduate Students											
		Local				Non-local				Total			
		2013-14:	39	2014-15:	34	2013-14:	21	2014-15:	18	2013-14:	60	2014-15:	52
1	Engagement in hall activities	4	10%	6	18%	0	0%	0	0%	4	7%	6	12%
2	Engagement in extra-curricular activities	10	26%	4	12%	6	29%	1	6%	16	27%	5	10%
3	Engagement at work	18	46%	14	41%	2	10%	1	6%	20	33%	15	29%
4	Family problems	8	21%	12	35%	8	38%	5	28%	16	27%	17	33%
5	Irresponsible attitude in studying	11	28%	6	18%	5	24%	1	6%	16	27%	7	13%
6	Medical reasons	8	21%	9	26%	11	52%	11	61%	19	32%	20	38%
7	Poor time management	17	44%	6	18%	2	10%	1	6%	19	32%	7	13%
8	Adaptation problem	2	5%	0	0%	3	14%	2	11%	5	8%	2	4%
9	Poor study strategies	5	13%	5	15%	3	14%	1	6%	8	13%	6	12%
10	Others	12	31%	11	32%	5	24%	6	33%	17	28%	17	33%
11	Not specified	4	10%	1	3%	1	5%	1	6%	5	8%	2	4%

Notes:

1. Students who withdrew voluntarily from studies were excluded from the analysis.
2. Some students put forth more than one reason for poor academic performance.

Analysis of Cases in 2013-2015: by Reasons of Poor Performance (Put Forth by Hall Residents)

	Reasons for poor academic performance	No. of Hall Residents											
		Local				Non-local				Total			
		2013-14:	18	2014-15:	13	2013-14:	20	2014-15:	8	2013-14:	38	2014-15:	21
1	Engagement in hall activities	4	22%	5	38%	0	0%	0	0%	4	11%	5	24%
2	Engagement in extra-curricular activities	6	33%	2	15%	6	30%	1	13%	12	32%	3	14%
3	Engagement at work	11	61%	3	23%	2	10%	1	13%	13	34%	4	19%
4	Family problems	3	17%	4	31%	7	35%	3	38%	10	26%	7	33%
5	Irresponsible attitude in studying	5	28%	2	15%	5	25%	0	0%	10	26%	2	10%
6	Medical reasons	2	11%	4	31%	10	50%	6	75%	12	32%	10	48%
7	Poor time management	6	33%	5	38%	2	10%	0	0%	8	21%	5	24%
8	Adaptation problem	0	0%	0	0%	3	15%	2	25%	3	8%	2	10%
9	Poor study strategies	4	22%	2	15%	3	15%	1	13%	7	18%	3	14%
10	Others	6	33%	4	31%	5	25%	2	25%	11	29%	6	29%
11	Not specified	2	11%	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%	3	8%	0	0%

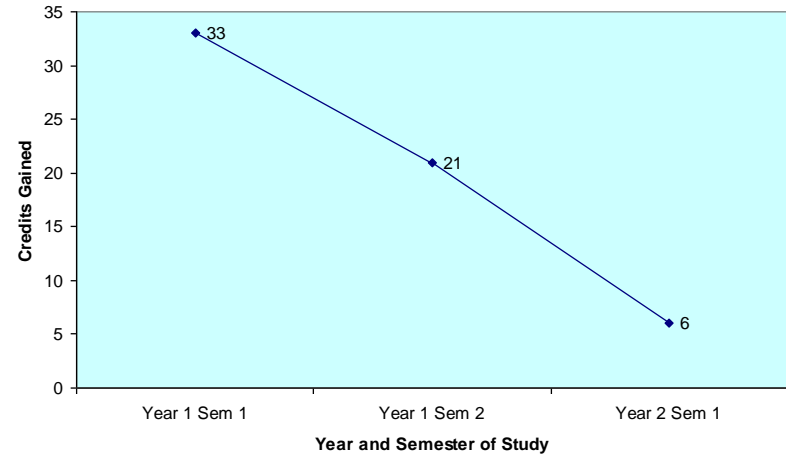
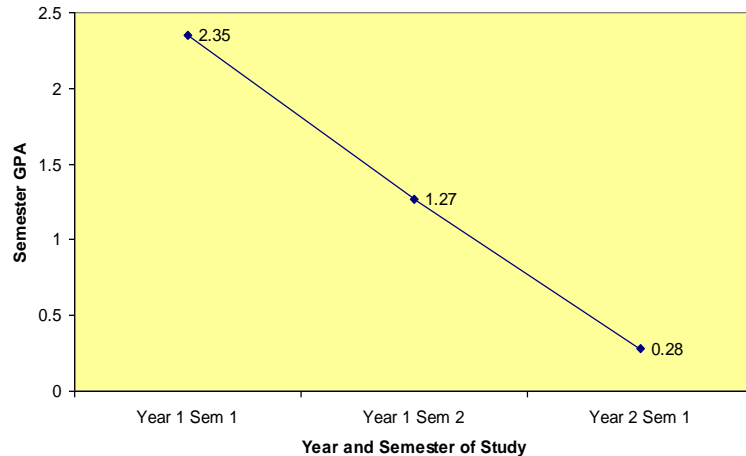
1. Students who withdrew voluntarily from studies were excluded from the analysis.
2. Some students put forth more than one reason for poor academic performance.

Local hall residents expressed hall activities and poor time management as possible causes

Problems of Undergraduate Students observed by the Committee on Discontinuation

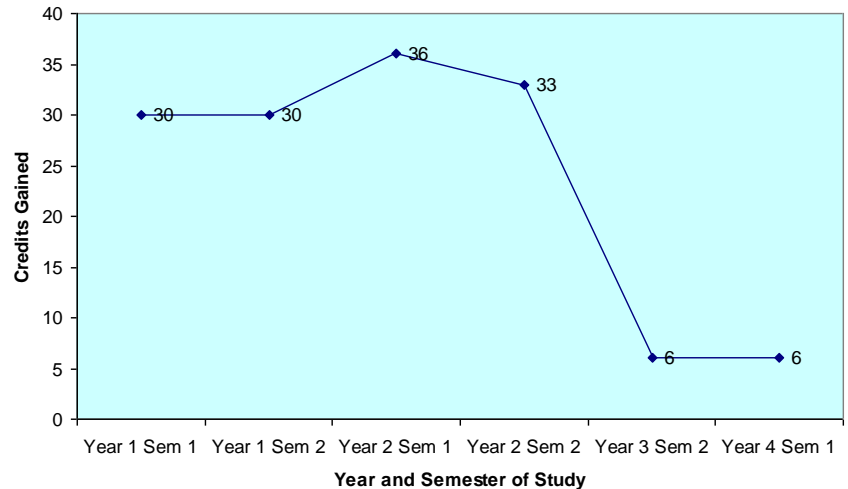
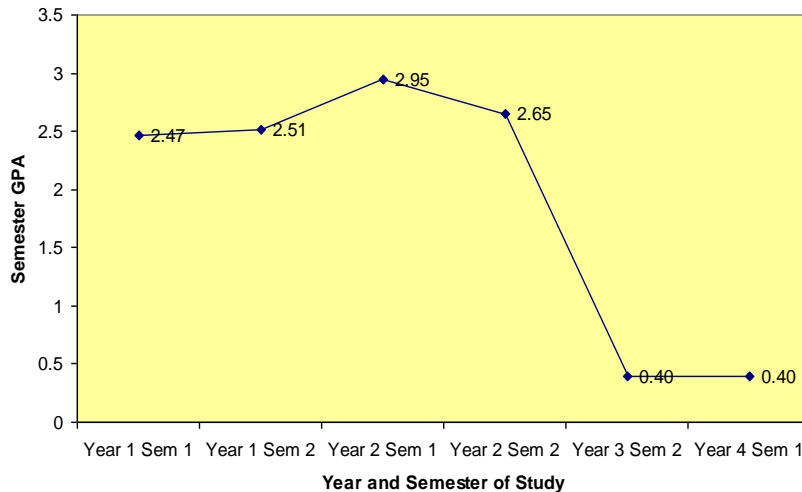
- ❑ **Prioritization/Time management issues:** academic studies vs non-academic activities (e.g. hall activities, extra-curricular activities, part-time job)
- ❑ **Learning style/management:** Inefficient learning or studying method/Inadequate time for studying
- ❑ **Personal academic interests:** Choice of programmes or specialisms not matching own interest
- ❑ **Personal/Family problems**
- ❑ **Difficulties in adjusting** to the culture and living in Hong Kong - leading to emotional/mood problems (non-local students)

A Typical Discontinuation Case



- Acceptable performance in the first semester of Year 1
- Performance deteriorated in subsequent semesters (due to participation in hall activities, extra-curricular activities and taking up of part-time job)

A Discontinuation Case with Sudden Drop of Performance



- Good performance in the first 5 semesters
- Performance deteriorated after returning from overseas exchange (exchange in the second semester of Year 3)

What Can be Done?

- ❑ Early identification of signs of deteriorating academic performance (by tutors and students themselves) ? (*Early Warning System*)
- ❑ Academic advices on choice of major / minor programmes and courses?
- ❑ Early transfer to another program/courses with appropriate counseling?
- ❑ Fully informed of available assistance from various offices (e.g. Faculties / Departments / CEDARS) for personal / family / adjustment problems?