

# Defenders of academic freedom 'deserve a statue'

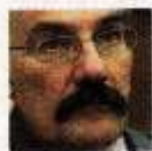
**Plaudits at forum for former HKIED president and his deputy who stood up to government pressure**

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The Hong Kong Institute of Education should erect a permanent reminder of its fight for academic freedom in the form of a stone tablet or statue, speakers at a forum on the topic said yesterday.

Academics at the forum, organised by staff from HKIED and other institutions, praised the role of former HKIED president Professor Paul Morris and his deputy Professor Bernard Luk Hung-kay in defending the insti-



tute's autonomy during a row over academic freedom that led to a high-profile government inquiry in 2007 and a judicial review two years later.

Dr Robert Chung Ting-yiu, a pollster at the University of Hong Kong, lauded the efforts of Morris (pictured) and Luk as the first case in the city in which leaders of an academic institution had made a stand for the cause of academic freedom.

Another speaker, Professor Ma Shu-yun from Chinese University, said the case constituted a greater

source of pride than any rise in rankings and should be remembered with a permanent memorial.

Others supported his idea, warning that commitment to academic freedom had declined in the city in recent years. They cited concern over allegations that HKU ingratiated itself with the rich and powerful during its centenary ceremony last year and the controversy over the early release of a poll on the chief executive race by the former dean of Baptist University's communications school.

HKU was criticised for its heavy-handed security and attitude to visiting Vice-Premier Li Keqiang (李克強) during the anniversary celebration.

Chin Sai-hung, a final year HKIED student, said a stone tablet could be a good reminder not just to students at the teacher-training institute but to the entire sector of the importance of academic freedom. "It is a core value in Hong Kong."

Baptist University journalism academic To Yiu-ming criticised his university's investigation into the polling controversy, in which partial results of a survey were released to the media before the research was completed. The dean of communications, Professor Zhao Xinshu, resigned over the scandal.

"The investigation was conducted entirely by internal staff and did not include any views from outside the university," said To, who criticised the results as "flawed".

"We needed more convincing arguments," he said.

A concern group has launched an online signature campaign at [www.hkptu.org/ac-freedom](http://www.hkptu.org/ac-freedom) to solicit support for stronger safeguarding of academic freedom prior to a special Legislative Council hearing on the issue next month.

Morris and Luk accused the former permanent secretary for education, Fanny Law Fan Chiu-fun, of infringing academic freedom by trying to silence academics critical of reform plans. An inquiry agreed there was evidence Law had pressured Morris to "curb" two academics.