

**Research Assessment Exercise 2020**  
**Impact Overview Statement**

**University: Lingnan University**

**Unit of Assessment (UoA): 20 - Accountancy**

**Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 6**

**(1) Context**

The unit focuses on taxation research and its impact, and also conducts research in auditing and other areas of financial accounting. In the last six years it has ranked in the top fifty worldwide in taxation research (Brigham Young University Accounting Research Rankings 2018), and is ranked number 1 in Hong Kong for tax research. A recent study by BYU professors shows that Prof. Nancy Su's research relevance to practice is ranked #42 worldwide and in the area of financial accounting, her research put her in the top 15.

The unit's primary impact is in changing professional practice through dissemination of research to practitioners via the provision of CPD training programs for HKICPA, CPA Australia, and AICPA/CIMA members, as well as its strong social media presence which is used to disseminate research findings to a range of public subscribers. The unit has further impact on professional practice through its tax consultancy work, commissioned by the Guangzhou Lvyuan Information Technology Company.

Its policy research, commissioned by the Shenzhen Accounting Association, also has impact on policy debates. This impact is underpinned by research that examines how countrywide factors and firm-specific characteristics shape corporate incentives to avoid income taxes.

**(2) Approach to impact**

The unit achieves impact through sustained engagement with industry, professional associations and practitioners. This engagement is primarily conducted through participation in policy research, tax consultancy, and dissemination to professional practitioners.

**Participation in policy research**

Impact on policy has primarily been achieved through the appointment of the unit's researchers to key roles. For example, the Shenzhen Accounting Association has appointed Lin as an Accounting Specialist for its research funding and projects. The Guangdong Zhihui Finance & Taxation Research Center (广东省智慧金财税工程技术研究中心), funded by the Guangdong Science and Technology Department, appointed Lin as a member of a Specialist Committee set up to carry out non-academic research into the economy, finance, and taxation of the Greater Bay Area. The Inland Revenue Department of the Hong Kong SAR has appointed Lin and Shi as panel members of the Board of Review, an independent statutory body.

Members of the unit also actively contribute to policy debate: for example, Lo submitted comments on the Inland Revenue (Amendment) (No.7) Bill 2018 regarding the double non-taxation issue of Hong Kong residents working in mainland China.

**Engagement with industry via tax consultancy**

Members of the unit regularly run workshops for practitioners which draw on the unit's research. Lo has run workshops on Transfer Pricing Research and Tax Audits in China for professional accountants, including HKICPA (workshop delivered on 17th Dec. 2018), CPA Australia (on 8th May 2019), and CIMA (on 16th May 2019). The total attendance of these workshops is around 120 practitioners. Simmons has been a regular speaker at the HKICPA Professional Ethics Workshop (International Tax) since 2012, attended by around 50 practitioners each year.

In addition, Lin and Shi have been invited to provide consultancy services to Guangzhou Lvyuan Information Technology Company (廣州綠源資訊科技有限公司) for a government-funded project that uses artificial intelligence to help local SMEs automate their financial and tax reporting.

### **Dissemination to professional practitioners**

Unit members regularly contribute research-based articles to practitioner journals. These articles have disseminated research on tax planning to audiences including HKICPA practicing members. The unit has also organized an academic–practitioner event, “Creating an impact: Lingnan Transfer Pricing Forum”, to bridge the gap between academic research and professional practice. This was attended by 75 practitioners, alumni, students and faculty members, who benefited from learning about tax planning, tax audit and tax litigations through transfer pricing. About 500 subscribed and viewed the forum from the online WIND platform. This forum also illustrates how the unit supports staff to achieve impact, in this case through providing funding and venue space, and liaising with internal departments and external professional bodies.

## **(3) Strategy and plans**

The unit plans to build on its current approach to impact, broadening and deepening it to reach a wider set of stakeholders, with an emphasis on those with the greatest potential for significant impact. The key elements of this strategy are:

1. Fostering research excellence, especially in tax research, to underpin strong impact. The unit’s emphasis will be on research with clear pathways to impact. As evident by the high ranking of Prof. Nancy Su’s research relevance to practice, excellent research underpins strong impact to the practice.
2. Reinforcing researchers’ awareness/understanding of impact mechanisms. The unit regularly collects data on knowledge transfer activities, and provide grants and other financial support to encourage researchers to work with non-academic partners, engage with industry, and conduct knowledge transfer.
3. Extending relationships with key stakeholders. The unit will exploit its alumni network, which provides a linkage between academia and middle-level and senior management across the business, commercial and not-for-profit sectors in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area, to disseminate our research and foster collaboration. This will enable it to design and conduct joint research, engage with local businesses, and engage in knowledge exchange activities.
4. Raising external funds to enable effective methods for incorporating research results into practice. The unit will target one million in funding per year from sources including *GRF/ECS* and *Public Policy Research funding*, as well as non-UGC funding sources through engaging in consultancy and professional training.
5. Joint Research Centre. Unit members are using their expertise to participate as specialists in carrying out applied research in the Guangdong Zhihui Finance & Taxation Research Center (广东省智慧金财税工程技术研究中心), funded by the Guangdong Science and Technology Department, to further increase our industrial engagement. This research is expected to lead to impact on government and businesses in the greater bay area, who will benefit by learning the implications of tax policy and practice and automating their financial and tax reporting.

## **(4) Relationship to case studies**

The case study is based on the tax research which is core to our impact strategy, and exemplifies the unit’s approach to impact through: (1) communicating tax avoidance mechanisms to stakeholders, (2) engaging with industry practices via the provision of training programs and consultancy services, and (3) participating in practice research to inform tax policies.