

Research Assessment Exercise 2020 Impact Overview Statement

University: The University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 22. Business

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 31

(1) Context

HKU's research mission is 'To engage in innovative, high-impact and leading edge research with and across disciplines' (<http://hku.hk/about/vision.html>). The UoA is committed to knowledge co-creation and research excellence through partnering with non-academic communities. Members of the UoA work closely with a range of partners in empirical and applied research, consultancy and executive education. Engagement takes place on an individual level and through the Faculty's research centres such as the *Asia Case Research Centre (ACRC)*, the *Centre for Asian Entrepreneurship and Business Values (CASEBV)* and the *Contemporary Marketing Centre (CMC)*. The main users and audiences of the UoA's research include:

- **Government departments:** such as the *Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit*, *Efficiency Office*, *Social Welfare Department* and the *Hong Kong Cyberport*.
- **Public and third sector organisations:** such as *Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service*, the *China Stroke Association* and hospitals in Mainland China.
- **Companies:** listed companies such as *Sinomax Group Ltd.*, *Jacobson Pharma Corporation Ltd.*; and startup companies in blockchain and cryptocurrency (*PolariX*, *Next InsurTech*, *Datax*), mobile-based technology (*Campus Circle*, *Pin-K*), EduTech (*TotSmart Education*), medical equipment technology (*Time Medical*), and cloud-based anti-bribery (*The Compliance Table*).

The UoA's research creates impact on

- **Public services and social well-being:** by improving the performance of government services and thereby supporting the citizens and businesses of Hong Kong; changing the national clinical guidelines on stroke care, neurological disease and improving healthcare management practice across China; and enhancing the capability of *Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service* by establishing blood donation centres at the right locations to ensure the steady supply of blood.
- **Firms and organisations:** by enhancing managerial capabilities for addressing market changes and customer needs; and fostering innovation in companies, especially start-ups, to help them gain a unique competitive position in the market.

(2) Approach to Impact

HKU's Knowledge Exchange Office provides funding for Faculties and staff to undertake capacity building and impact projects. The Faculty provides seed funding for research centres, incentive awards for impact projects, event management and publicity support for knowledge exchange activities, funding for producing user-friendly versions of research articles, skills audits in appraisal and focused staff development and training. With this enabling infrastructure and supportive mechanisms in place, the UoA delivers impact through a variety of approaches. The more direct ones are consultancy, commissioned research and contributing expertise in company boardrooms, all of which have significant influence on policymaking and business decisions. The less direct approaches are through executive education, the production of educational materials, and knowledge exchange activities.

Commissioned research, advisory and consultancy: Many senior faculty members go beyond publishing their research findings in top academic journals by offering research-based solutions to the government, third sector organisations and companies through applied research, consultancy, and acting as strategy advisors (for start-ups) and independent non-executive directors (for listed companies) to influence the organisations' decision-making.

Provision and delivery of research-based training tools and executive education: There has been an increasing demand for Asia-based business cases for teaching by universities and training by corporates, government authorities and other organizations worldwide. Through the Faculty's ACRC, the UoA developed and distributed context-rich cases drawn from a wide range of industries, underpinned by research in multinationals' strategy in China, corporate governance, value creation through IT investment, for example. In addition, members deliver and co-develop executive education. One example of the UoA's open programmes is the *Women's Directorship Programme (WDP)*, which promotes gender diversity in the boardroom. Of those who participated in the WDP programme in 2017, 30% have since gained their first board role and a further 35% have achieved some form of promotion.

Knowledge exchange activities: During the RAE period, the Faculty earmarked annual funding and provided venues to support the research centres acting as the interface for collaboration and networking with non-academic stakeholders. Conferences and round tables such as the *Hong Kong Marketing Scholar Forum*, the first *Hong Kong Research Symposium on Startup Founding Team*, and the *Cross Strait Conference of Information Management Development and Strategy* foster knowledge exchange in research and practice in marketing, management, business analytics, digital innovation, and smart-city technologies. UoA members are also active in promoting thought leadership, and are often invited to give keynote speeches, such as the *National Branding Summit* in China (**Tse**), the *World Executive Summit* in Hong Kong (**Kim**), and the *Global Marketing and Innovation Conference* in China (**Zhou**).

(3) Strategy and Plans

Through various levels of engagement, senior faculty members are highly active in influencing the world beyond the classroom. In return, some of these applications help modify and enrich research projects conducted by UoA colleagues. The UoA will focus on *(i) Embedding impact in Faculty's policy and practices*. Emphasis will be placed on recruiting seasoned and senior academics who can stimulate and foster an environment in which younger faculty aspire and are enabled to pursue the impact agenda; *(ii) Empowering staff to develop and maximise research impact*. The Faculty designated new administrative positions and is building a team of communications and external relations professionals to support the development of research impact, identifying potential impact from new and ongoing research projects and seeking further funds from the University, RGC and the government, preparing marketing materials and press releases, maintaining media contacts, developing webpages, and collecting data, enabling the UoA to collate, monitor and review its dissemination and pathways to impact activity. A CRM system will be deployed to improve relationship management with non-academic partners, including the UoA's wide network of alumni around the world; *(iii) Fostering strategic collaboration*. The Faculty is actively pursuing strategic relationships for deeper and longer engagement. New agreements have been signed or are under negotiation with large corporations such as *China Resources Group* and *China Life Insurance (Overseas)*. These long-term relationships enshrine collaboration in research, teaching and executive education, and will bring in new resources (financial support, proprietary data, and industry connections) to yield sustained impact.

(4) Relationship to Case Studies

The chosen case studies demonstrate the UoA's commitment to co-creation of knowledge and the reach and significance of its impact, through sustained engagement and partnerships, building on the UoA's pioneering research. **Yim's** case describes how the UoA's commissioned research successfully cultivated a long-term relationship with government decision-makers and resulted in major service improvements for citizens and businesses. **Shen's** case exemplifies the UoA's active application of big data research to the international, joint-institutional and interdisciplinary collaboration between scholars and medical practitioners, transforming the care of stroke patients in China. **Tse's** case shows how the UoA successfully transferred its original research on innovation strategy to an entrepreneurial corporate sector start-up.