

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Overview Statement

University: The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 22-Business

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 59

(1) Context

The UoA comprises three departments under the School of Business and Management: Information Systems, Business Statistics and Operations Management (ISOM); Management; and Marketing. Although specific research areas differ, the departments deliver research-based societal impact using similar mechanisms and outlook, often assisted by channels and measures established at School and University levels. Therefore, this UoA overview applies to all three departments.

The Unit's areas of focus cover management issues of global and local organizations, especially organization theory, business strategies, organizational behavior, and human resource management (Management); consumer information processing, and consumer decision-making (Marketing); and how technology, information, operations, and analytics can effectively be used by traditional and online companies to develop a competitive edge (ISOM).

Our main non-academic users are policy-makers, business and professional leaders, executives at domestic, mainland China, and international enterprises, and members of the public. Research projects and societal impacts include:

Economy: contributing to telecoms market liberalization in China (Xu - case); and enhancing understanding of entrepreneurship in developing economies (e.g. Garg).

Firms and organizations: improving systems and business practice, e.g. management and design of viral marketing campaigns (van der Lans - case); and fostering employee creativity and innovation (Gong).

Public policy: contributing to Hong Kong government policy on telemarketing (Hui - case) and Hong Kong's development as a fintech hub (Tam).

Society, health and culture: informing public debate and government, industry and healthcare decision-makers on consumer decision-making related to obesity (Mukhopadhyay - case).

In addition to our users, beneficiaries extend to the start-up community, namely entrepreneurs and their investors and clients; financial monitoring agencies; telecoms services firms and their employees; and food industry regulators, producers, and consumers, among others.

(2) Approach to impact

The Unit's overall goal is to support research excellence in all its forms. In particular, we see impact as an important and integral part of faculty's research profile. Over the years, the Unit has employed a combination of external channels and internal measures to foster engagement with non-academic users and build our societal impact. Channels over the review period included:

i) **Consultancies and working partnerships:** direct engagement between individual Unit members and the local, mainland China, and international business sector, leading to impacts on firms' practices (e.g. Tam for IBM China/Hong Kong, Hong Kong Telecom, and Tele Denmark; Xu for Huawei; and Hui and Thong for the Intellectual Property Department of the Hong Kong SAR Government). Faculty also carried out applied research in collaboration with companies (e.g. van der Lans' viral marketing research with Dutch marketing firm [text removed for publication], and Li's work on data-driven approaches in human resource management with two major companies in Hong Kong [text removed for publication]).

ii) **Forums for interactive dialogue between faculty, policy-makers, and practitioners:** such as a) participating in industry-related conferences (e.g. Mukhopadhyay's talks at Food Vision Asia (2016) and VitaFoods Asia Conference (2015), and Xu's panel presentation at the World Open Innovation Conference (2016)); b) inviting business leaders to join our own conferences (e.g. keynote by Marjorie Yang, Chairman of Esquel Group, at Symposium on Innovations and Sustainability (2017); and various talks by Joseph Phi, President of Li & Fung Group); c) organizing moderated

panel-discussions and round table talks that brought together academics and practitioners to discuss topical business-related issues (e.g. panel discussions on fintech at our symposium by Arthur Yuen, Deputy Chief Executive of Hong Kong Monetary Authority and by Simon Young, Chief Compliance Officer-Overseas at Ping An Group). These activities stimulated and informed policy and public debate. They also helped foster non-academic relationships with potential users for future impact-related projects and raised faculty awareness of needs of potential users and beneficiaries.

iii) **Dissemination of research findings through School-level communication channels and the media:** We widened awareness of our faculty's research through public presentations and extensive media dissemination over the review period, with support from the School's communications team. This resulted in a) 21 UoA faculty sharing their work with the business community and general public through the BizInsight@HKUST Lunch Presentation series (e.g. Xu on big data and online social networking; Zhang on online versus offline commerce in retailing and banking; Ng on innovations in supply chains; and Hong on counterfeit products); b) 83 Business Insight Selected Journal Publications, providing non-technical research summaries of faculty publications and accessible through the School's website and SCMP.com. In addition, Unit faculty's research and faculty's own commentaries and contributions to print and electronic media were extensively covered. In all, more than 420 articles were published and comments cited in local and international outlets, including the *South China Morning Post*, TVB, RTHK, *Economist*, *Financial Times*, Dow Jones, Nikkei, BBC, among others, and shared through, for example, Hui and Li's regular articles in the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* and *South China Morning Post*.

iv) **Service-related interaction:** Unit faculty participated in diverse government advisory boards/committees (e.g. Tam, member, Hong Kong Productivity Council, Hong Kong Deposit Protection Board, and Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Macao Fintech Alliance; Xu, member, Hong Kong Communications Authority; and Hui, member, Insurance Authority's Expert Panel on Cybersecurity), extending the reach and impact of their expertise and research insights.

v) **Direct engagement** with business executives via training programs: UoA faculty have taught over 240 training sessions for business executives and policy-makers through customized executive education programs and lecture series for policy-makers during the review period. Such programs enabled faculty to impact practitioners through original research-based training for corporate executives from a range of industries and to learn of industry challenges and changing needs. For instance, Hui presented courses on fintech and on cybersecurity and risk management to Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, and Bank of Communications; Garg gave training on digitally-enabled business innovation and corporate entrepreneurship to China Construction Bank; Li delivered courses on global market challenges and on managing strategic alliances and partnerships in Asia to Hana Financial Group executives; and Gong taught courses on managing creativity and innovation for government executive development programs.

vi) **Relationship-building through the Unit's research centers:** namely the Center for Business Strategy and Innovation, Center for Marketing and Supply Chain Management, and Tongyi Industrial Group Center for Electronic Commerce. The centers are funded (fully or partially) through donations from industry, and work as bridges between academics and the business sector. For instance, the Center for Marketing and Supply Chain Management was set up with a donation from Li & Fung Group, and organizes activities that bring academics and practitioners together to discuss challenges faced by the industry. Its recent events include organizing the Symposium on Innovation and Sustainability, attended by senior executives from major local companies and top scholars locally and from overseas. Major companies, including Li & Fung, P&G Greater China, and Hong Kong Post, have approached faculty for collaborations through the center.

vii) **Impacts through intra-University, inter-university interdisciplinary projects:** Unit faculty are project leader and major participants of the HK\$20M fintech project "Contributing to the Development of Hong Kong into a Global Fintech Hub", largely funded under Hong Kong Research Grants Council's Theme-based Research Scheme. The project consists of eight research tasks that cover a broad spectrum of fintech issues and services based on consultations with industry players, including regulators, financial institutions and technology companies, and startups. Since its

inception in January 2019, the project team has been engaged in exploring and establishing collaborations with industry on research and promoting fintech to the public. Specifically, the project team has organized a number of events for insight exchange among industry practitioners and promotion of fintech to the public, e.g. a public seminar “How AI and Deep Learning are Fueling the Financial Industry”, organized in collaboration with technology companies NVIDIA and NetApp. To upgrade the skillset of Hong Kong finance industry employees, the project team has partnered with Hong Kong Cyberport and the Financial Services and Treasury Bureau of the Hong Kong Government to provide training programs on a regular basis. To reach a wider community beyond Hong Kong, the project team has also co-developed a fintech professional qualification with the China Banking Association to certify bankers and executives in mainland China in this area.

viii) **Internal support mechanisms:** To build a research culture that invests significance in business and policy-relevant questions, non-academic user interaction to inform such questions, and the translation of research findings into societal impacts, Unit faculty are: a) allowed to consult for one day per week; b) given flexibility in organizing their time to participate in external engagements; c) recognized for their external impact visibility in their performance reviews for annual merit salaries and for promotion. The component of non-academic impact in a performance review was added and emphasized in recent years, helping to promote work with good societal impact among faculty. Through its alumni team and executive programs office, the School also actively assists faculty outreach to industry for collaboration in applied research (e.g. collecting industry data), and for recruiting speakers and audiences for our centers’ industry-related activities.

(3) Strategy and plans

In the six-year period ahead, we will continue to see impact as an important and integral part of the research profile of our faculty, without expecting impact to arise from all of our research. To sustain and build on our current approach, we are seeking to:

- Continue to consider the potential for impact as an important criterion in our recruitment, retention, and promotion strategies;
- Work with research centers and the corporate outreach team of the School to disseminate research findings through a diverse set of engagement contact points, including policy briefs, media exposure, keynote presentations, organized practitioner events and industry-academia conferences in an attempt to increase exposure and outreach;
- Encourage faculty to take up external advisory and consulting assignments and to collaborate with practitioners in conducting applied research that provide opportunities for achieving impact based on original research; and
- Grow the School’s executive education portfolio by developing customized programs that build on Unit faculty’s research, such as those on fintech and business analytics.

(4) Relationship to case studies

Our case studies illustrate different aspects of our approach to impact and highlight the diversity of beneficiaries and types of impact achieved. The Hui case shows our impact on local public policy by informing debate during a government public consultation on regulation of person-to-person telemarketing calls in Hong Kong and societal impact through stimulating public awareness of the trade-offs in direct marketing regulation. The van der Lans case demonstrates our international impact on the economy and practitioners through the introduction of new, research-based viral marketing campaign strategies at a Dutch marketing agency, benefiting the company, its employees, and multinational clients, and informing the wider marketing industry. The Mukhopadhyay case has benefited international policymakers and industry, and contributed to public debate locally and globally by bringing novel understanding to the highly significant global challenge of obesity through research linking the issue to consumer decision-making and food industry messaging. Finally, the Xu case illustrates our impact on the business sector and economy in a Chinese context by contributing to market liberalization of the Chinese telecoms services market under the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement between Hong Kong and mainland China.