

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Overview Statement

University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 24 psychology

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 20

(1) Context

Psychology is inherently both a basic and an applied science of the human mind and behavior. This UoA takes a comprehensive approach towards translating studies on basic psychological processes into applications with impactful societal benefits. Translational science is, in fact, in our discipline's DNA. Thus, we have well established, applied subspecialties, including educational, industrial-organizational, human factors, health, and clinical psychology. At the local level, our efforts have resulted in different forms of assessment and professional practices. For example, 8 of our 20 full-time staff have created diagnostic tools for use by the Chinese community in the context of clinical care, education, neuro-cognitive functioning, or personnel selection. Extending these efforts internationally, we have pushed for the development of more culturally sensitive and/or universal applications, taking into consideration modern issues associated with globalization and migration. For example, as President of the International Test Commission (<https://www.intestcom.org>), Fanny CHEUNG set a number of standards on testing across cultures.

(2) Approach to impact

The UoA's tradition of creating impact involves four key approaches. First, to achieve societal impact, we actively seek external collaborators in government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and across disciplines and institutions locally and globally. Some of our ideas for impact have emerged from local needs: for example, Hong Kong agencies such as the Food and Health Bureau of HKSAR Government, Hong Kong Police Force, Hospital Authority, Child Assessment Service of the Department of Health, and New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association have collaborated with and sought advice from us on screening and training needs to promote educational success, mental well-being, and physical health. Our services to the community have gained substantial recognition, including the Gold Prize in the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme in 2015. Beyond these local partners, we collaborate with international NGOs and companies such as AXA and AIA. Second, we seek to institutionalize links between research and relevant external entities. For example, our Clinical and Health Psychology Centre was established to improve practice for the general public. Moreover, our Assessment and Training Center (ATC) provides evidence-based advice on staff selection and development and consults on organizational management in the business community. Both Centers additionally help our faculty members and students to connect with the community. For example, the Macau government has engaged the ATC for over 10 years to guide their personnel decisions in various civil service domains.

Third, our UoA aims to secure research support and resources to create impact. For example, we have obtained funding for four post-doctoral fellows whose primary objective is to translate research into applications for the public. Additionally, five faculty members have won individual knowledge transfer grants directly aimed at supporting social impact and entrepreneurship. We also created and leveraged opportunities for time-off from teaching and administrative duties to develop non-academic applications of our research. This includes, among others, the RGC's Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme, which has been won by three faculty members.

Fourth, media strategies are pursued to connect with the public. We invest in technical support for the presentation of research findings and their potential impact on our institutional website, on Facebook, and through impact specific online initiatives. For example, the website "Early Literacy for Chinese Children" developed by Catherine MCBRIDE is supported on our Unit's server. Winnie MAK maintains a StoryTaler Facebook page with over 37K followers and over 1M reaches. Additionally, we regularly post relevant information for visitors and share insights and applications

in public seminars held in our UoA as well as in outside institutions with an interest in research application and transfer.

Finally, the UoA's encouragement of international outreach has boosted both our ideas and strategies vis-à-vis impact. This was made possible with the UoA's support for overseas travel to meet with partners and collaborators and our strong commitment to international students, including those from Ghana, the USA, Canada, Zambia, Iran, and the Philippines.

(3) Strategy and plans

To facilitate the translation of academic research into societal practice, aside from continuing our current effort, we will make actionable psychological knowledge a central theme of the ethos of the UoA. This theme will permeate all practices in the UoA, including research, education and administration. With respect to education, we offer an undergraduate course called "Psychology in Action" in which small groups of students are introduced to a number of ways in which psychological insights can translate into public benefits. We also facilitate undergraduate and graduate practicum courses with schools, hospitals, Centers for the Elderly, and NGOs. Additionally, a prize (Psy-Connection Award) is awarded to students who demonstrate excellence in applying psychological theory for the public good. For graduate students and staff, we conduct seminars to raise awareness about the significance of creating impact and to outline directions for how impact might be achieved. Moreover, colleagues are encouraged to exploit relevant training opportunities. For example, the University offers workshops on social impact, entrepreneurship, and technical skills-building and distributes grants supporting one-on-one coaching in social enterprise development and sustainability. Several of our staff have benefited from these initiatives.

With respect to administration, our Unit has implemented two strategies to incentivize socially impactful research. One strategy centers on creating time for impact. To this end, we allow flexible teaching arrangements (e.g., all courses in one semester) and encourage faculty members to apply for regular sabbatical leave or, periodically, for a semester with reduced teaching duties and administration works. The other strategy is to supplement the manpower of ongoing impact work that is not supported by other grants. For example, the UoA allocates some graduate student assistant work hours to colleagues who are pursuing knowledge transfer. Finally, the UoA considers impact along with other performance indicators during the annual appraisal exercise. As such, impact can play a role in salary adjustment and contract decisions.

(4) Relationship to case studies

Both case studies put forward grew out of the Unit's commitment to local and international impact. Patrick LEUNG's case builds on the validation and norming of seven different tests for children and adolescents that are critical for assessing mental health in Hong Kong. Catherine MCBRIDE's case highlights an indigenous screening tool for children at-risk for reading difficulties in Chinese. Both featured impact cases target not only local but also international beneficiaries. Both cases benefited strongly from the Unit's approach to impact as described above. For example, the Unit's efforts at attracting international, high-quality Ph.D. students and supporting their travel for translational research in the home country were instrumental in creating impact opportunities and infrastructure. Additionally, LEUNG's impact case has benefited from the ongoing activities of the Department's Clinical and Health Psychology Centre and support of his interdisciplinary collaborations. MCBRIDE's case details her efforts to facilitate the teaching of reading in a MOOC across different scripts and languages. The UoA strongly supported her effort. It enabled MCBRIDE to take advantage of a 10-month EU Fellowship to work in Germany on a book about dyslexia for teachers, parents, and academics. During her sabbatical, she advanced practical work in the Philippines and created a MOOC partly based on her book and presented by NGO World Learning. After her return to the UoA, she received graduate student assistant work hours to facilitate the running of her MOOC. Through these experiences, LEUNG and MCBRIDE solidified their impact on mental health and early learning across cultures, respectively.