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

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**University: The University of Hong Kong (HKU)**
**Unit of Assessment (UoA): 24 - Psychology**
**Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 17**

**(1) Context**
The Department of Psychology at HKU—the first in Hong Kong—encompasses both experimental and professional sub-disciplines and actively facilitates synergistic interactions between basic scientists and professional psychologists. The department has a rich track record of translating empirical findings into real-life practice, from directly enhancing the psychological well-being of the general public and disadvantaged populations, to collaborating with governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in helping specific local and regional communities in need. The UoA's research teams work closely with service users, such as professionals and laypersons from the fields of education, public policy, law enforcement, and social services. Our partners range from the Education Bureau to Caritas to the police Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau. The teams also reach out to society through public education, aiming to increase the general public's understanding of both psychology and its application to mental wellness and quality of life. Talks, seminars, TV programmes, workshops and camps for children have been designed and organized to engage a wide spectrum of the population. Such partnerships have resulted in the creation of contextualized knowledge and research collaboration between frontline providers and the UoA and increase in public's understanding of the empirical and translational values of psychological sciences.

**(2) Approach to impact**
The department has adopted two major approaches to impact: evidence-based intervention and public education. Its impact projects are grounded in basic research findings. The department's research teams endeavour to translate their empirical results into professional guidelines for practices. Researchers use an array of methods, such as population-based household surveys, validated questionnaires for psychological assessment, structured and open-ended interviews, ecological momentary assessments, experiments, quasi-experiments, physiological measures and brain imaging. Such a variety of methodologies allows the research teams to study societal problems from multiple perspectives, thus advancing a more integrative understanding of problems and creative solutions.

The department's impact projects, including the two described below, use evidence-based interventions to address societal problems. Finally, some of the department's impact projects focus on enhancing the general public's awareness of certain psychological phenomena and problems that influence their mental health and quality of life. Such awareness is essential for prevention. Many of the projects target children and adolescents because the researchers maintain that public education, wellness promotion, and problem prevention can and should start at a young age. Public talks and experiential learning camps are some of the avenues the department uses to deliver layperson-friendly knowledge and skills to strengthen awareness of the prevalence and adverse consequences of the problems and how to prevent them. From these community-based exercises, we are able to elucidate the real-life challenges in disseminating and implementing science and thus design subsequent research projects to overcome them.

**(3) Strategy and plans**
**(i)     Collaboration with stakeholders:** One of the department's major strategies is to collaborate with the public and private sectors to address and prevent serious social problems. For example, to help mitigate the impact of cybercrimes, the cyberpsychology research team collaborated with both governmental (Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong

Kong Police Force) and non-governmental (Communications Association of Hong Kong) organizations. The team summarized their survey findings on demographic differences in cybercrime susceptibility in a handy guide to help the bureau design community outreach programmes for cybercrime prevention. This collaboration was commended by their senior management and was selected to be presented by the bureau at a police studies symposium in December 2018. To further benefit the local communications industry, the cyberpsychology team also compiled their findings into a best practice report, which was published in the Communications Association of Hong Kong's 2018 yearbook.

**(ii)** **Train the trainers:** In accordance with the department's strategy of contributing to the mental health of the community, researchers have devised various "train the trainer" programmes. The service users include both mental health professionals and non-professionals. Evidence-based workshops have been developed to train the latter to become neighbourhood para-professional service providers. For example, the department's neuropsychology research teams designed workshops to train front-line social workers and clinicians in cognitive screening. Researchers in the department's community action laboratory partnered with local government, academic institutions, faith-based organizations and NGOs in the Philippines. The team has directly trained over one thousand local service providers and laypeople in the foundational knowledge and skills to assist people whose mental health has been affected by a natural disaster.

**(iii)** **Early exposure and intervention:** A third important strategy is to cultivate knowledge of and interest in psychology from an early age. The department's research teams have designed workshops and activities using a "gamification" approach, which is especially effective in creating interest and motivation among young users. For example, the cyberpsychology team designed a workshop on cyber-wellness based on the quality-of-(real)-life theory, and this workshop was implemented in a number of member schools of the team's community partner, Junior Achievement Hong Kong. Primary school students played a series of games and watched cartoons in order to acquire knowledge of topics such as cyber-security and digital citizenship. Moreover, based on their research into eye movements and facial recognition, the cognitive psychology team designed a camp for local primary school students. There, children were first shown demonstrations of eye-tracking techniques and facial recognition tasks before engaging in an interactive learning game. It was essential for participants to utilize what they had learned in the first part of the workshop in order to proceed to the game. Student participants applied their knowledge in the gameplay and reported immense enjoyment during the learning process.

**(iv)** **Future strategy for impact:** The department is committed to research producing outcomes with a strong translational impact. We will apply strong information technological support to the implementation of strategies for materializing the empirical and translational impact. The aim is to expand and reinforce our partnership with community stakeholders, resulting in wider research and funding opportunities for research outcomes that will have a favourable impact on policymaking that promotes psychological well-being and social harmony.

**(4) Relationship to case studies**
The department has submitted two impact case studies to exemplify the significant impact of its research on society. In the first, researcher adopted the evidence-based approach and worked closely with users and beneficiaries to develop validated screening and assessment tools for identifying those with specific learning difficulties. The Education Bureau has adopted the tools and intervention models for implementation at local schools. The second case developed and evaluated a comprehensive service delivery model for preschoolers with special educational needs. After the research team had empirically demonstrated the effectiveness of this model, it was adopted by the government in all preschools in Hong Kong. Both case studies are good examples of the department's commitment to and success in implementing evidence-based practices that bring positive benefits to Hong Kong society.