

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Overview Statement

University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 25 political science (incl. public policy & administration & international relations)

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 14

(1) Context

The UoA's research strengths cut across Political Science and Public Administration. Its expertise in Chinese Politics, including Chinese political development, policymaking processes and China's role in the global order is globally recognized. The UoA is also known for its research on the politics of Hong Kong, including the development of its institutions, its political culture, and its relations with Greater China. Although the regional specialism of our research underpins a significant portion of impact, our strategic goal is to achieve impact beyond the region. The current user groups and beneficiaries of our research include: (a) Hong Kong and Chinese lawmakers, (b) non-governmental organizations and advocacy coalitions, (c) corporate and financial actors, and (d) domestic and international publics. The impact we have achieved includes (i) influence on policies and the reform of public institutions in the region, (ii) contributions to improved practices in corporate and financial sectors, and (iii) framing and shaping the directions of public debates and cultural development in regional and international contexts.

(2) Approach to impact

The UoA has created multiple pathways to social impact of our research. First we recruit influential external stakeholders (e.g., Legislative Council members, government representatives) to be our honorary faculty members. These honorary faculty members actively participated in and contributed to the teaching and research activities in the UoA (e.g., research seminars, academic conferences). The strong connections between our honorary faculty members and researchers have helped to identify key political and policy issues in our research, providing a conduit to inform policies and shape political discourses directly through our honorary faculty members and indirectly through their networks. Examples of our honorary faculty members are Mr. Jasper TSANG Yok Sing (former President of the HK Legislative Council), and Hon. MO Claudia Man-ching and Hon. AU Nok Hin (current Legislative Council Members).

We were able to cultivate these relationships largely due to the high standing of faculty members in the community and the individual efforts of staff to engage stakeholders and the general public. Indeed, to create a second major impact pathway, our faculty members have actively participated in the strategic development of Hong Kong and Mainland China. For example, WANG Shaoguang, drawing on his research expertise in the development of China's political economy, advised on Hong Kong's strategic development through his non-official membership in the HKSAR's Commission on Strategic Development from 2006 to 2013. The UoA also publishes a bi-annual newsletter to promote its research activities and accomplishments to stakeholders (e.g., former students now working in government).

Internally, the UoA incentivizes faculty members to disseminate their research discoveries by recognizing in its annual appraisal exercise the visibility and prominence that our researchers have achieved through *media exposure*, creating a third major impact pathway. It would be impossible to count the number of local and international media appearances that our colleagues made during the assessment period, but it would certainly be a figure in the high hundreds. Although media visibility itself is not research impact, as our case study illustrates, media exposure performed an agenda setting role, oftentimes effectively steering the directions of public policy and political discourses through our research discoveries. For example, JIANG Junyan researched into the patterns of loyalty and behavior among Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials. The coverage of his research in US media (cf. *Washington Post*, March 15, 2018) added new dimensions to the global discussions on XI Jinping's removal of term limits to sitting Presidents. Likewise, Ivan CHOY's analysis of Hong Kong's anti-Extradition protests, referenced in the *New York Times* (June 9, 2019), *Washington Post*

(June 13, 15, 18, 2019), and *Bloomberg* (July 2, 2019), offered new perspectives on the ramifications of the Hong Kong protests for global collective movements.

Finally, the UoA also encourages and recognizes in staff appraisal consultancy work that colleagues carry out for local and international stakeholders. For example, William SMITH prepared a 2014 report on ‘legitimacy in global governance’ for the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (a non-governmental organization set up in response to United Nations Security Council Resolutions in 2008 and 2010). James DOWNES has written reports on issues such as the far-right in Europe for impact-orientated bodies like the Center for Research & Social Progress (Florence, Italy) and the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (London, UK).

Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement is an excellent example of how a local movement in Hong Kong could create global political impact. Our UoA has helped to create and sustain this impact by engaging the local and international actors in vibrant public debates on the political institutions, culture, and international relations of Hong Kong and Mainland China. The *bilingual* research culture supported by our UoA has been instrumental to our success in reaching out to both English-speaking and Chinese-speaking audiences, as well as local and international actors. For example, JIANG, like most faculties in the UoA, primarily publishes in English, which allows for easy dissemination of research findings through international media outlets. CHOW Po Chung, by contrast, publishes primarily in Chinese, which reaches people across the region. He has, for instance, generated a huge social media following on platforms such as Facebook and Weibo. This has enabled him to enhance awareness and understanding of Western political philosophy through numerous well-regarded Chinese-language books on the subject.

(3) Strategy and plans

The UoA will continue to strengthen its current research impact strategies. In addition, it will further *consolidate* and *measure* our current impact in regional contexts, and further *expand* and *increase* the reach of our impact beyond the region. The UoA’s Research Panel recently implemented a ‘*Pathways to Impact*’ scheme to pursue this strategy. The Scheme aims to enhance the culture of research impact in our UoA through supporting colleagues in impact-generating and impact documentation activities. We believe that research impact requires institutional support at multiple levels, with the UoA Scheme operating alongside emerging Faculty and University initiatives. The Scheme will offer administrative and financial support for impact-related activities, such as strategic outreach to stakeholders and sharing best practices among colleagues. The UoA will, through this Scheme, identify and support ongoing or future research projects that generate or have the potential to generate impact within and beyond Hong Kong. For example, the UoA plans to invest in support staff for Carlos LO’s research project on the development of the ‘Hong Kong Business Sustainability Index’. The Index, launched in 2015, aims to promote the adoption of corporate social responsibility as a progressive model to achieve business sustainability among listed companies in Hong Kong. The project has been identified as a priority for the UoA, because it aligns with our research goal to improve evidence-based practices in both the corporate and government sectors. The UoA also plans to further invest in Pierre LANDRY’s ongoing research project on ‘The Comparative Study of Governance, Local Development and Urbanization’. This collaborative project aims to provide the tools, data, and theoretical foundations to understand variation in local governance and its consequences for human development, and hence has the potential to impact policy debates across multiple societies and regions.

(4) Relation to case study

The UoA’s approach to impact has directly and indirectly shaped the individual case study on ‘Functional Constituency Elections in Hong Kong’, led by MA Ngok. First, the case study reflects commitment to support research on the politics of China and Hong Kong. Second, the impact of the project, on public policy debate on the reform of the functional constituency system, was enabled by longstanding relationships with stakeholders in the local political community. These relationships were cultivated by MA, supported by UoA’s efforts to encourage participation of stakeholders in our research. Lastly, the impact of the research has been enhanced by the high public profile of MA in bilingual, local and international media outlets.