

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: [Hong Kong Baptist University]

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 25 Political Science (incl. public policy & administration & international relations)]

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 8

(1) Context The Department of Government and International Studies (GIS) is committed to producing academic research that addresses salient socio-political issues and enhances discussion in the public sphere. Departmental members share an overarching narrative on comparative forms of regional integration; intra- and inter-state relationships, civil society in authoritarian or semi-democratic contexts and the changing bases of political legitimacy. GIS academics adopt a common approach to research impact. We adopt a multi-level approach to generate evidence-based data to examine socio-political changes, inform public policy debates, and address the needs of various stakeholders in Hong Kong and beyond. Through its academic programmes, research centers and programme and public events, GIS has established strong institutional linkages with practitioners in the civil society and policy communities locally and internationally.

(2) Approach to impact The GIS Department pursues two broad approaches to achieving impact for its research, based on enhancing Reach and embedding Significance, which refer to the *scope* of the beneficiaries involved and the *types* of research impact we engage in.

Reach is defined in terms of users, beneficiaries and audiences, with each group the target of a rather different level of impact:

- a. **User groups** are usually understood as direct stakeholders in the research process, and sometimes as co-constructors. In formal terms we use incentives (such as special and duty leave) to encourage colleagues to place themselves at the service of users, take part in advisory and consultancy groups and to write policy or position papers. Examples include Cabestan (advising the European Union and French Government on Chinese domestic and foreign policy as well as China-African relations); Cheng (whose research team into wellbeing has had on-going interactions with governmental bureaus and opposition actors in Hong Kong) and Chen and Kang (who serve on the boards of labor foundations and grassroots NGOs in China).
- b. **Beneficiaries** are at one level removed: our academics develop regular dialogue with the social and policy communities to address the concerns and adaptations of practitioners and build long-term relationships. GIS researchers regularly serve as interviewees or expert hosts in both the media and the Internet to engage the public on political issues and current affairs. They also publish policy reports and general books to make research public available and assessable. Their research outputs are disseminated in major international media (*AFP, Al Jazeera, BBC, Bloomberg, CNN, China Daily, Le Figaro, Le Monde, Liberation, Financial Times, Guardian, Radio France International, Reuters, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal*), local media (*Hong Kong Economic Journal, Initium, MingPao, NowTV, RTHK, South China Morning Post*), and influence magazines and journals (*China File, Conversation, Dushu, The Economist, Slate, Time, Twentieth Century*).
- c. **Audiences are the recipients of impact.** GIS research centres and programmes organize regular seminars, workshops and conferences to establish institutional engagement with various social and policy communities. The Comparative Governance and Policy Research Centre (CGPRC) collaborates with local and global partners such as the Civic Exchange and the World Values Survey Association. For its part, the European Union Academic Programme (EUAP), funded

by the EU from 2012 to 2017, performed a triple function involving research, outreach, and exchange and provided a venue for important public declarations, such as that of Chief Secretary for Administration Carrie Lam in 2016.

Significance is the second pillar. It captures the varied types of impact. Scholars in GIS:

- a. *Engage in advisory and consultancy activities based on sound academic research.* They have solicited competitive grants, been commissioned to write policy reports, served in NGOs or government's advisory and consultative committees, and presented expertise testimonies to the HKSAR legislature, to foreign consulates, embassies and governments, advocacy groups, and the mass media. For example, Cheng's 2014-15 GRF award findings were summarized in the Hong Kong Government's Report on the Recent Community and Political Situation in Hong Kong submitted to the National People's Congress in 2015.
- b. *Establish institutional engagements and demonstrate research entrepreneurship* The Comparative Governance and Policy Research Centre (CGPRC) hosted conferences on the Legco elections in 2016 and HKSAR 20th anniversary in 2017 which each attracted more than 100 attendees including scholars, journalists, government officials, Legco members, foreign consuls and NGO representatives. We were the lead partner in the EU-funded EUAP (which also involved the Chinese University and Lingnan). Its annual EU conference has been co-hosted by the EU Commissioner and Consulate Generals of France and Germany in Hong Kong. In the wake of EUAP Slivinski obtained two Jean-Monnet awards.
- c. *Enhance dissemination and perform the role of public intellectuals* Leading scholars such as Cabestan, Chan and Cheng have appeared in the media more than 80 times in the past five years, commenting on electoral politics, Chinese politics and foreign relations, Sino-Africa Relations, Hong Kong's protests, civil society development, and public opinion change.

(3) Strategy and plans GIS is developing various mechanisms further to embed impact into research practices. First, in terms of institutional monitoring and performance review, the incentive structure is clearly based on obtaining GRF awards, which themselves are rigorous in terms of the pathways to impact. A generous system of conference grant supports, and personal research accounts ensures that research outputs are quickly disseminated and their impact on public debate and policy formation systemically enhanced. Second, the system of research mentoring includes an impact dimension. As an additional innovation, we are designating an Impact Champion to coordinate our efforts. Third, in line with HKBU's Talent 100 scheme, we will target future appointments in the coming years in the fields of public policy, international relations, e-society, and big data analysis, all designed to strengthen further the visibility and capacity of GIS. Finally, we will consolidate our external networks and recruitment and retainment strategies to create an environment generating research impact and engagement as the norm.

(4) Relationship to case studies Our selected impact case study draws attention to one core dimension of the unit's work, mainly based on the work of Cabestan. The impact case study Promoting the Knowledge and Understanding of Chinese Politics in the International Community illustrates the breadth and significance of research activities across a range of sub-disciplines in political science. But work in the department encompasses broader dimensions, including inter alia comparative contentious politics, value change, political change in Hong Kong, EU-Asia relations, Chinese diaspora and investments, the Europeans in Hong Kong; in each of these fields, we could demonstrate strong links between the robust academic research being produced and broader stakeholder engagement and impact.