

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Overview Statement

University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 26 geography

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 16

(1) Context

This UoA work towards urban and regional sustainability and have delivered a wide range of impacts on various sectors beyond academia. These include: (i) providing scientific evidence and transferring specialized knowledge to governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and industries, (ii) offering expert advice and inputs to governments for effective resource management and policy formulation, (iii) developing tools and products for use by governments, industry, and the general public in environmental monitoring and management, and (iv) enhancing public understanding, awareness, and participation in various environmental, economic, and social issues.

Key beneficiaries include: **international organizations** (e.g. World Bank, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), **departments of the HKSAR Government** (e.g. Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department; Drainage Services Department; Planning Department; Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office), **provincial and national governments** (e.g. Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China; Planning Department of Nansha Government in Guangzhou), **non-governmental organizations** (e.g. The Better Hong Kong Foundation; The Nature Conservancy; World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong), **industrial and commercial sectors** (e.g. ESRI China; Federation of Hong Kong Industries), **community groups** and the **general public**.

(2) Approach to impact

The UoA establishes a long-term engagement with key non-academic beneficiaries through the following approaches:

Competing for external competitive funding that facilitate impact: The UoA provides staunch infrastructural and administrative support to colleagues who carry out research projects supported by external competitive funding (e.g. Public Policy Research Funding Scheme, Environment and Conservation Fund) in line with the priority research themes of the government to generate immediate policy impacts.

Conducting contract research and consultancy studies: The UoA has established strategic links with various governments, organizations, and industries, and has carried out basic and applied research commissioned by and in collaboration with users such as the Water Supplies Department, the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, ESRI China (Hong Kong) Limited, etc.

Engaging actively in impact initiatives at the Departmental and University levels: The UoA has established the Centre for Environmental Policy and Resource Management, which has generated broad and significant impacts to non-academic users through active research and outreach activities on environmental governance. Our colleagues have also taken leadership roles in various University-wide interdisciplinary research institutes, e.g. the Institute of Environment, Energy and Sustainability (Advisor and Former Co-director (2013-2019): LAU NC), the Institute of Future Cities (Director: FUNG T), and the Institute of Space and Earth Information Science (Director: KWAN MP).

Offering expert advice to governments and NGOs: Colleagues in the UoA are active in government advisory committees (e.g. Advisory Council on the Environment, Country and Marine Parks Board, Steering Committee on Population Policy) that provide inputs on various environmental and social issues. Colleagues are also involved in individual advisory roles, e.g. as a lead author of Ch. 14 in the IPCC 5th Assessment Report (LAU NC), as an expert reviewer for the Drainage Services Department on river flood risk study (NG SL), and as a member of the Board of Governors of Conservation E3 Foundation Limited (CHEN YD).

Participating in knowledge transfer activities: The UoA strongly supports staff members to take part in knowledge transfer initiatives (e.g. training workshops, community engagement programs) that translate their research findings into broader impacts for the community.

Organizing public outreach activities: The UoA is committed to raising public awareness on geographical issues by organizing various outreach activities, such as public forums, secondary school talks, focus group meetings, and the Hong Kong Geography Day.

Media exposure: Colleagues in the UoA are actively engaged in media outreach activities through newspapers, television, and radio, to disseminate research findings and expert opinions to maximize impacts for the community.

(3) Strategy and plans

The UoA has formulated a strategy to further maximize the non-academic impacts of our high-quality research and broaden the range of our beneficiaries through the following:

Seizing new funding opportunities: Encourage colleagues to apply for UGC's Research Impact Fund and CUHK's Knowledge Transfer Project Fund to translate academic research into social impacts.

Promoting impactful research: Capitalize on the existing strength of the UoA and promote interdisciplinary research with societal impacts that aligns with CUHK's strategic theme on Environmental and Sustainability and the UoA's new concentration area in Smart Sustainable Cities through various University-wide research institutes.

Supporting consultancy activities: Encourage colleagues to take part in consultancy studies actively with different government departments, NGOs, and industries that involve the delivery of non-academic impacts to develop stronger working relationships with users.

Providing resources: A Departmental Research and Teaching Enhancement Grant (HK\$10K/year) has been set up for individual colleagues to undertake different research and knowledge transfer initiatives with non-academic impacts.

Increasing incentives for impact activities: Include impact-related activities in the annual staff development review exercise for performance appraisal. Give priority to applications for sabbatical leave that involves a significant impact-related component.

Designating a Departmental Impact Coordinator: The Impact Coordinator will work with colleagues in different concentration areas to formulate the impact pathway, map out the key stakeholders, and identify the future impact growth areas.

Implementing mentorship initiatives: Senior staff members will mentor junior colleagues, guide them through the process of impact planning and delivery, and help them establish and expand their network with different beneficiaries.

Strengthening public engagement: Increase the use of social media to disseminate research findings. Participated in the Faculty's Actionable Social Knowledge campaign that a public relations company was engaged to write and publish news articles based on recent research. The website of the Department of Geography and Resource Management will have a major revamp, with a new page added specifically to highlight impacts of our research.

(4) Relation to case study

The two selected case studies demonstrate the successful translation of our research findings to various types of impacts on a range of beneficiaries. **“POPHK: Urban population dynamics in Hong Kong”** shows how the findings of urban population dynamics can inform policy formulation and generate societal impacts on the problems of fertility decline and population ageing through active engagement in government advisory bodies as well as media interviews. **“Urban and environmental monitoring and modeling with advanced spatiotemporal analytics”** exemplifies the use of geospatial technologies and associated products in tackling various environmental, economic, and social challenges in cities. The results have led to significant, positive impacts to both national and local governments, private companies, as well as the general public through a range of knowledge transfer activities.