

## Research Assessment Exercise 2020 Impact Overview Statement

**University:** City University of Hong Kong |  
**Unit of Assessment (UoA):** 27 - Sociology and Anthropology |  
**Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA:** 12 |

### (1) Context

Echoing CityU Strategy to create applicable knowledge to support social and economic advancement, the UoA (Sociology and Anthropology) is committed to conducting applied research on marginality and deviance (criminological) that adopts methodologically innovative and diverse approaches. Our research aims to debunk conventional understanding of matters of conflict, social problems and order, ‘embracing humanistic values and social justice’ (the departmental motto). Applied research conducted in the four research clusters (Criminology & Criminal Justice, Delinquency & Bullying Studies, Migrants & Mobilities, and Social Capital & Impact Assessment) covers some important marginal and deviant groups in contemporary urban society, including juvenile delinquents and offenders (**Lo TW, Wong SW and Chan HC**); targets of school bullying and cyberbullying (**Wong SW and Chan HC**); peasant-workers, sex workers and ethnic minorities in mainland China (**Zang XW, Tsang YH, Zhang ZN and Ho WC**), and vulnerable citizens (e.g., elderly, at-risk youth) affected by rapid change in welfare provision model or town planning (**Cheung CK and Ho WC**). Our impact related activities have benefited policy makers, frontline practitioners, the media, and citizens.

### (2) Approach to impact

In line with CityU Knowledge Transfer Committee’s mission to ‘enlarge capacity for knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship’, the UoA has been building up a research culture that can be translated into consultations for policy makers and training for practitioners to enhance service provision, and ultimately benefit service users. Our research activities that have made impacts on various beneficiaries are highlighted below:

**Policy makers**, in particular, in the youth-related commissions/departments in Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore and Guangzhou governments have benefited from **Lo TW**’s series of commissioned studies related to youth-at-risk. Major implications have been made to inform youth work and correctional services policies and practices in these places. Besides, as invited by the US Department of Defence, he delivered training for its staff on issues related to Chinese organised crime. (See Impact case study) Our team (**Lo TW, Zhang ZN**) was commissioned by the Macau government to develop ‘The Ten-Year Rehabilitation Programme Plan (2016-2025)’.

**Frontline practitioners** include youth workers, school teachers, criminal justice professionals, and District Board members with whom the UoA collaborates in the planning, conduct and dissemination of research projects to contribute to changes in practice and policy. For example, **Ho WC** conducted the first Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the HKSAR government in the context of Kowloon City District in Hong Kong. The study helped to consolidate the use of SIA in future urban renewal programmes, and some of the recommendations of the SIA report have been realised. **Cheung CK**’s Evaluation Study of Cyber Youth Outreach Project funded by the Social Welfare Department informed the government’s decision to routinize funding for cyber youth outreach work services in Hong Kong from December 2018 onward.

**The media** has benefited from our research, particularly our work to increase understanding of criminological studies and specific deviant behaviour. Members of the UoA have regularly reached broader audiences via newspaper columns and television. During the assessment period, 6 UoA members were invited for over 100 media interviews to discuss their research findings. For example, **Lo TW** was invited to be interviewed about his research on the dynamics of triad society by CNN, Bloomberg and BBC. **Chan HC** was also interviewed on ViuTV, RTHK Radio 3, and CNBC. **Wong WY** was recently interviewed by a National Geographic-sponsored journalist about illegal wildlife trade. **Tsang YH** was interviewed by BBC and Denmark News about sex workers in China.

**Citizens** include mainly hidden-youth (in the youth-at-risk programme), students (in the school bullying programme), residents (more specifically, the elderly, ethnic minorities, mainland migrants and business people in the urban renewal programme) and adolescents (in the cyber youth outreach programme). For example, **Wong SW**'s school bullying programme and **Lo TW**'s cyber counselling for hidden youth have benefited hundreds of young people. (see Impact case 5.1 & 5.5)

Strategically, the UoA has endeavoured to **identify and sustain relationships and networks with beneficiaries** at all stages of our research, from project conception to dissemination. These collaborations bring our socio/criminologists closer to the end users of our research, help refine and develop impactful research agendas and assist in the dissemination of findings. For example, a number of research reports and guidelines developed by **Wong SW** for tackling bullying and cyberbullying have been shared with primary and secondary schools, NGOs and the public.

Public engagement through **media** represents a key element in our approach to maximising impact. Apart from the UoA members' regular contribution to the local and international media, our PhD alumni Dr. Dan Garrett (supervised by **Lo TW**) testified at the US congressional hearing on Hong Kong's protests (17 September 2019), and offered recommendations for the US.

Some of our researchers **apply** their expertise by acting as leaders – e.g., as directors, founders or chairpersons of NGOs or activist groups – to inform audiences well beyond academia about the implications of the research findings. For example, **Wong SW** is the founder and director of the Center for Restorative Justice, which promotes the importance of conflict mediation and launches programmes to reduce interpersonal conflict and violence. **Ho WC** is the chairman of the Institute for Integrated Rural Development, a Hong Kong-based charity that helps marginal groups in China. **Lo TW** chairs Caritas Social Work Services with over 3,700 staff.

### (3) Strategy and plans

Over the next six years, we aim to enable everyone in relevant areas to conduct knowledge transfer and impact activities through the following mechanisms: (i) Research project PIs will be required to submit annual summaries of all impact activities. We will implement a research impact framework to help researchers systematically identify specific and verifiable impacts related to their work. (ii) We will assist staff in optimising the impact of our work beyond academia. We will continue to actively pursue opportunities for raising research impact among stakeholders to staff and research students and will build their skills to do so. (iii) The UoA will advise the department to offer extra funding to support staff when they are able to demonstrate that their activities will make a difference to beneficiaries. (iv) To build relationships with policymakers further and improve the communication of our research to non-academic audiences, the UoA will make strategic use of NGO or activist group platforms to stimulate more dialogue with the local community. For example, **Wong WY** plans to increase public awareness of environmental crimes, specifically the trade in endangered and protected animals, through the activist group she leads. **Ho WC** plans to conduct more impact-oriented research in mainland China through his charity in Hunan province. **Chan HC** plans to increase public and stakeholders' awareness of the dire need for anti-stalking legislation in Hong Kong.

### (4) Relationship to case studies

The impact case study developed by **Lo TW** and **Wong SW** exemplifies the success of the UoA's impact strategy – i.e., to foster sustained relationships with policy makers and community stakeholders over time to build the trust of non-academic beneficiaries. The case also reflects our approach to impact, which emphasizes a systematic approach to training, formalising relationships and auditing impact activity. New welfare and restorative solutions were proposed and adopted by government and non-government units that benefit thousands of young people, their families and teachers in Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore. The two professors have been proactively conducting studies into welfare and restorative solutions to youth offending, and suggesting effective alternatives to court intervention and institutionalized sanctions. Their evidence-based practice helps government officials and service practitioners address and tackle imperative social issues. And, the scope of impacts is not limited to Hong Kong and the Asian contexts, but potentially extends to the international communities.