

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: Hong Kong Baptist University

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 27 Sociology & Anthropology

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 10

(1) Context

The Sociology Department at Hong Kong Baptist University is relatively small, comprising 11 academics (including one who joined in September 2018), who have a diversified research profile that focuses on families, social networks, and social inequalities in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, and the US, as well as 2 teaching-only staff (Leung and O Wong). Beneficiaries and users of the Department's research include: (1) **policy makers** in governmental and non-governmental agencies, especially those working in areas related to youth, aging, families, population, social well-being and social mobility; (2) **professionals, NGO workers and service users** in health, education, social services and creative industries; and (3) the **media and wider public** that are interested in the social issues addressed by our research. Members of the Department are engaged with potential beneficiaries of Departmentally-generated research through involvement in community organizations, public bodies and governmental agencies. Department members extend their research reach to members of the public through public lectures, the mass media, and online platforms.

(2) Approach to impact

Department research achieves its impact through the following approaches:

1. **Informing stakeholders via multiple platforms.** Research findings are disseminated on the Departmental website and Facebook on a monthly basis through research briefs written in non-technical language. Departmental staff are encouraged to present their research to diverse audiences. For example, Chan, Lai, and O Wong delivered their aging-related research findings to NGO workers and discussed with them strategies for building an age-friendly society in Hong Kong in the Department's Aging Symposium in June 2019; Barbalet and Leung delivered talks in the Department's public lecture series in 2016-17 with Leung's lecture edited for radio broadcast; Chan, Chu, Chew, Lai, Leung, Peng, and O Wong gave public lectures on family, gender, education, economic development, and housing in the Hong Kong Museum of History (2015-2019); Chew gave a public talk on the social characteristics of web novels to creative industry professionals in Shanghai in 2018; and D Wong lectured on sexual minority and family diversity at the Sex Cultural Festival and Hong Kong Literary and Cultural Festival in 2015. Staff also extensively disseminate their research via the mass media, e.g., Leung, Ruan, and O Wong discussed issues of retirement protection, higher education, family policies, and wedding practices to local and national TV programmes (2013-2017); and Leung wrote articles on nonstandard work (2013), and youth mobility (2016, 2017) in local newspapers and policy-oriented journals.
2. **Engagement in public services to provide expert advice.** Departmental staff offer expert advice on public policies and practices as members or advisors of government offices, public bodies, and community organizations. O Wong is advisor to Kowloon Women's Organizations Federation and a member of expert committee of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, and on advisory committees under the Education Bureau, Labour & Welfare Bureau, and Home Affairs Bureau of the HKSAR Government. D Wong is a member of the Information, Education & Communication Subcommittee of the Family Planning Association, committee member of Hong Kong Scholars Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity, and Midnight Blue (a male sex worker mutual support network), and advisor to the Transgender Resources Centre. Leung is advisor to a community association and an advocacy/self-help group for recent migrants from Mainland China, and gave evidence to the public hearings of the Retirement Protection Subcommittee of the Hong Kong Legislative Council in January and June 2018. Li is executive member for Taiwan Working Holiday Youth.
3. **Commissioned research to inform public policies.** Departmental staff conduct commissioned

research projects that gather data to inform public policies. For example, O Wong conducted surveys on eldercare provision and childbearing decisions for the Kowloon Women's Organizations Federation, and studied family caregivers for the Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres, the findings of which were presented at press conferences with policy recommendations to the Government; and Leung studied families living across the Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese border for Oxfam Hong Kong and vulnerable workers for Hong Kong Council of Social Service.

4. **Acquiring training** to enhance the skills of staff for developing research impact. The Department enlisted an academic advisor to give seminars on linking research and publications to achieve impact. Lai, Leung, and O Wong attended workshops provided by VV-Impact Tracker in 2017. Chew and Li attended workshops organized by the Knowledge Transfer Office of the University in 2017. O Wong attended five workshops on research impact organised by the University and UGC. The knowledge and experiences acquired through attending these workshops has been incorporated into the research of respective faculty members to enhance its impact.

The above approaches are well supported through the following means:

Departmental support: The Impact Committee develops media and NGO contacts for the promotion of staff research to a wider audience and explores ways to embed impact in research. The Community Outreach Committee identifies and informs stakeholders of the research interests and capabilities of the Department. The Applied Sociology Fund supports staff activities that promote their research to the community. Flexible class timetabling enables staff to be engaged in public services. Staff's contribution in developing research impact is given due recognition in annual performance reviews.

University support: The Knowledge Transfer Office provides services to facilitate academic-community collaborative research projects. The Knowledge Transfer Partnership Seed Fund offers funding of up to HK\$120,000 to support impact-related research activities. A university-wide reporting system allows staff to keep a record of media coverage and community activities related to their research and the Department to audit research impact for the unit as a whole.

(3) Strategy and plans

The Department's Impact Committee and Community Outreach Committee spearhead our goals to increase the Department's impactful research through the following strategies:

1. **Building research partnership with non-academic stakeholders.** Connections with stakeholders will be maintained through which their needs are understood; community partners with whom we can develop impactful collaborative research projects will be identified.
2. **Creating synergy in research impact.** Research projects around shared themes will be explored to create impactful synergy. Possible research themes are aging and social networks.
3. **Enhancing research dissemination to the community.** In addition to the use of the Department's website, social media, and public lectures, activities to facilitate dialogue with community stakeholders, e.g., research-practice symposiums, will be organized.
4. **Strengthening our capability to develop impactful research.** Communication professionals will be invited to provide training on effective communication and writing skills. Individuals successful in conducting impactful research will be invited to share good practice with the Department.
5. **Generating income to support impactful research.** Applications for funding to support research projects embedded with impact, such as the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme and Research Impact Fund, will be encouraged.

(4) Relationship to case study

The case study submitted for assessment, based on Ruan's pioneering research on elite education in China, is an element of her research on social networks and social stratification. In researching these and related topics, Ruan has worked closely with Department colleagues. Ruan's social commentator role, as a panelist in various local and national television programmes, is supported by the Department. The significant role of broadcast and print media in drawing attention to Ruan's research, and shaping public discourse, validates the Department's strategies for building connections with community stakeholders and communicating our research to the wider public through diverse media.