

## Research Assessment Exercise 2020

### Impact Overview Statement

**University: Lingnan University**

**Unit of Assessment (UoA): 27 - Sociology & Anthropology**

**Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 6**

#### (1) Context

The unit has developed research links with many governmental and non-governmental organizations locally and globally. Its particular strengths include impacts from the sociology of justice cluster (Chan, David, Phillips) and the social theory cluster (Baehr, Chen, O'Connor) (see Environment Overview). Our research has informed, and resulted in impact on, public and social policy and policy communities in Hong Kong (Equal Opportunities Commission, Elderly Commission, and specialized government consultation groups); overseas (various governmental and non-governmental groups and stakeholders in Ghana, Myanmar and Ukraine) and on international and global policy organisations (WHO, USAID, UNESCAP); mass media; and the general public represented in a variety of unofficial forums.

#### (2) Approach to impact

With the increasing importance of Knowledge Transfer, the unit's approach to impact has evolved from the individualized system towards a team-based system, encouraged by the university's Knowledge Transfer policies and funds.

1. From the perspective of the individualized approach, *all members of the unit were able to generate impact* beyond academia. **Phillips** has worked with official networks on health and ageing for many years including WHO and UNESCAP, which has informed many policy areas (see below). His policy impact was a result of collaboration with networks of health researchers from Britain (Southampton University), Ghana (KNUST), Kenya (African Population and Health Research Centre), Beijing (BNU), Canada (McMaster and Queens Universities) and Australia (Macquarie University, work featured in a national newspaper). **Annie Chan's** work on women in policing has widely informed the gender-based questions in policing in Hong Kong; and her research on gender contributed to the Equal Opportunities Commission and gender mainstreaming. **David's** work on transitional justice was utilized by the Association of Former Political Prisoners in Myanmar; and by USAID and various stakeholders in Ukraine (see the Impact Case). A former member of department **Alfred Chan** (until 2016) acted in Hong Kong as Chairperson of the Elderly Commission, Chairperson of the Equal Opportunity Commission, and Convener of the Expert Group on Dementia of the Food and Health Bureau and held other public duties. **Baehr's** book on *Unmasking* is featured in a British film - "Unmasking and Ethnography" - produced by Shortcut TV, which specializes in behavioural science videos for the UK, North America, Austral-Asia and China market. **Chen's** book in the area of the sociology of religion *Catholicism in Macau* served as a major reference for the Macau Diocese, including ecclesiastical authority and active lay members, who used the book for the implementation of the Catholic social teachings in Macau, future church development, and the further opening of the Church to laity participation. **O'Connor's** work on Skateboarding and Well Being, partly funded by a Sino-British Fellowship grant, guided the HK Leisure and Cultural Services Department's efforts to facilitate skateboard use while not compromising public accessibility to urban space.

2. Key elements of the new approach are characterised by taking a wide range of actions to embed its research in policy and practice communities and public debates.

- **Providing expert guidance and assistance to policy communities** such as the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (formerly the Central Policy Unit) that advises the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR on social policy matters. Internationally, the unit provides expert advice to UN organizations such as UNESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). Expert advice to the United Nations Program on Ageing informs international practice via the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). The unit contributed to the 2017 Expert Group Regional meeting on Ageing and Health in the Western Pacific. This work informed

policy decisions, regulations and service standards in the region and contributed to a widely cited policy publication: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO Geneva, 2015.

● **Informing and shaping policy and practice through commissioned research and stakeholder driven research.** This includes (1) Public Policy Research Grants from the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office that have formed the basis of policy suggestions on optional retirement and retirement planning in Hong Kong; (2) Research on gender mainstreaming in Hong Kong, co-funded by the Women's Coalition for Equal Opportunities and the Jockey Club; (3) research on sexual harassment commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission of Hong Kong; (4) Government funding to devise surveys of judges and produce reports on Trust (both for the Ukraine government); (5) Research on complementary and traditional medicine in Africa, first presented to policy makers in the Ministry of Health of Ghana Health Service and now being integrated into the education curriculum of Ghana to enable better intercultural health delivery and healthcare access.

● **Disseminating research findings to the wider public.** Research findings are conveyed through interviews for local media, research reports, documentary, outreach to local schools, Church clergy (for instance, diocesan meetings of Catholics in Macau), and heritage organizations (producing, for instance, a picture book on Chinese funeral rituals in Hong Kong for the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust). Research on youth and young adults provides a bridge between officialdom and local citizens, for instance facilitating – by public presentations and by informal contact – communication between skateboarders and the management of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. Research on policewomen resulted in a Chinese mass-market book on the history of policewomen in Hong Kong that is cited extensively by the Hong Kong Police on its official webpage. The unit's research appears often in local media such as the *South China Morning Post* and *Radio Television Hong Kong* (RTHK). Its research is also conveyed through outlets with a large international audience. Research on public attitudes to inequality appeared in *Scientific American Mind* (a magazine for the general public) and on the American Sociological Association's blog *Work in Progress: Sociology on the economy, work and inequality*, which registers over 3,000 unique views per month, and is followed on Twitter by journalists from the New York Times, Washington Post, NPR, MSNBC, Al Jazeera America, BBC and other outlets.

### (3) Strategy and plans

The unit plans to incorporate users and beneficiaries into its main research foci (see Environment Overview). Its impact strategy will be advanced by:

- Improving the mentoring system for new colleagues and extending to new and mid-career members, to build on the unit's capacity for translating excellent research into impact and encouraging them to apply for Knowledge Transfer grants.
- Continuing research partnerships with colleagues and graduates who obtain academic and policy-related posts locally and internationally, extending the unit's network to enable new pathways to impact.
- Strengthening liaison with the university's PR unit to better utilize institutional resources for publicizing research impact; increase use of social media and websites to present findings and increase accessibility and impact.
- Developing existing and new links with research networks, international research projects and multi-country studies, generating impact with international and global reach.
- Maximising the impact potential of existing local and international research links by better engaging users and practitioners, including NGOs, governments, UN and multilateral agencies, such as HK EOC, the Elderly Commission, UNESCAP, the WHO and the World Bank.

### (4) Relationship to case studies

The case study exemplifies the three key elements of the unit's approach to impact:

- **Providing expertise**, which is informed by primary research (prize winning comparative research on justice programmes in Central Europe, the Middle East and South Africa).
- **Informing and shaping policy** i.e. policies designed to move Ukraine from despotic to democratic modes of government towards justice-based system based on trust.
- **Disseminating research findings** in research reports, video conferences, and public meetings with jurists, legislators and civil society groups, which have been discussed in the Ukraine parliament, in newspapers and on television. It illustrates a vernacular-plus approach: translating academic research into socio-legal policy in a nation with limited experience of democracy and human rights.