

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: City University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 28 - Social Work and Social Policy

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 14

(1) Context

The motto of the UoA 28 Social Work and Social Policy (henceforth the UoA) is ‘integrating scientific knowledge and clinical practice.’ It emphasises innovations in practice and policy issues. All scholars have frontline experience in various aspects of social work. The diversity of service users and rapid social change in Hong Kong call for evidence-informed practice on macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. The UoA’s research covers some important fields in contemporary practice, including bullying and cyber-bullying (Annis FUNG), crime and delinquency (Eric CHUI and Christopher CHENG), hidden youth (Cherry TAM), sexual assault (Lai-ching LEUNG), volunteering (Elaine AU and Jerf YEUNG), suicidal ideation (Sylvia KWOK), mental health (Marcus CHIU and Man-yee HO), narrative therapy (Esther CHOW), service users (Ping-kwong KAM), parenting (Andrew LOW), and positive youth development (Sylvia KWOK and Tak-yan LEE). Our impact-related activities are research-led and evidence-informed. The beneficiaries cover policy-makers in the government and NGOs, frontline practitioners, and the general public locally and internationally, demonstrated by faculty’s collaboration with local NGOs and scholars from Macao, mainland China, Singapore, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

(2) Approach to impact

The UoA prioritises the development of evidence-based practice (henceforth EBP) to inform and impact at all three levels of prevention, i.e., primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, based on the core notion of person-in-environment. Its faculty members have established extensive collaborations with practitioners and non-academic beneficiaries to provide services, both local and international. Knowledge transfer via teaching, practice, and research is our key to create benefits for society. We have made impacts on various beneficiaries in the following ways.

Policy makers: The UoA stresses the importance of assessing impact on the environment from a social welfare policy perspective. Impact is demonstrated by the NGO Forum (an annual joint event with the Correctional Services Department) and staff service on government advisory committees, including the Elderly Commission, Commission on Youth, and Women’s Commission of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

Strategic Partners: The UoA undertakes contract and collaborative research projects with external partners to develop EBP. For example, we have received funding to support an anti-school-bullying project for two rounds, with another round signalled as likely; a faculty was a core member of a HK\$750 million university-government-department project called “P.A.T.H.S.” on positive youth development (2006-2015). Another example is the HK\$4.77 million-funded UoA project (2019-2021) to formulate and validate support service model for family caregivers of frail elderly people. Together with sociology and psychology faculty members, the UoA is also collaborating with the Macao government to implement a knowledge transfer project to develop “The Ten-Year Rehabilitation Programme Plan (2016-2025)”. The US\$1 million Templeton World Charity Foundation funded project “Building More Forgiving Communities around the Globe through Engagement to Complete Do-It-Yourself REACH Forgiveness Workbooks” (starting June 2019) involves university partners from Ukraine, Ghana, Indonesia, South Africa, Columbia, China and USA.

Professionals and frontline practitioners: Many social work service users are from secondary settings, such as hospitals, schools, and correctional institutions. To develop EBP for people in need, we work with these organisations on a regular basis. The UoA has a good history of involvement with these organisations, and every faculty member has years of direct front-line experience, with more than half being from middle management and two retired faculty members being former NGO heads. The UoA staff profile thus facilitates close collaboration with those who benefit from our

evidence-based services. For example, since 2013 we have organised the annual ‘NGO Forum’ attended by more than 1,500 professionals from about 100 social service organizations to maintain and initiate new collaborations for innovation, development, and dissemination of EBP. We also organised the International Outreach Social Work Conference in 2015 and 2019 respectively, attended by over 1,000 practitioners and academics from different parts of the world.

Nurturing future innovative professionals: The UoA has the largest intake of social work students (145 undergraduate students and 60 master students per year) among all training institutes in Hong Kong. It equips these future social workers with approaches and techniques based on the latest research. In addition, social work teachers, particularly practice teachers have engaged these students in discovery through the creative design of interventions and programmes, in line with CityU’s Discovery Enriched Curriculum initiative (DEC). Four undergraduate students won the DEC Award hosted by the College since 2015. Two faculty members won the prestigious University Grants Committee Teaching Award in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

Media and the general public: Members of the UoA regularly contribute to the local and international media. Wide press coverage of our research findings allows the UoA to raise public awareness and understanding of pressing social issues. During the assessment period, 9 UoA members were invited for 54 interviews to discuss their research findings. For example, Professor Eric CHUI was interviewed about his research by South China Morning Post (28/07/2017, 30/11/2017, and 03/05/2018), by RTHK Radio 3 (05/06/2018), and by China Daily (30/07/2018).]

(3) Strategy and plans

[The UoA emphasises the importance of cultivating a culture of impact. We assigned 40% of weighting to the research and impact aspects in annual staff performance appraisal to encourage faculty to continually generate research that has an impact on the professions and society. For the next 6 years, the UoA plans to enhance its impact in four aspects. **First**, it will maintain and expand current collaborations with the existing partners and beneficiaries of our research. For example, the UoA will collaborate with the NGOs in the Greater Bay Area and invite more organisations to participate in the annual NGO Forum. **Second**, it will continue to encourage the faculty members to serve on advisory boards of government bodies and statutory committees. **Third**, it believes strongly that the latest advances in technology such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality offer tremendous possibilities in developing new services. Thus, the UoA will work closely with the Departments of Computer Science and Creative Media to conduct interdisciplinary research, by forming a task force or a research centre to increase the reach and significance of its impact on the general public. This is in alignment with CityU’s strategy. **Fourth**, it will adopt a proactive approach in the dissemination of research findings, using a wide range of media technologies (e.g., television, radio, the print media, Facebook homepage, YouTube channel, etc.) to reach potentially interested audiences. Implementation of the impact strategy and plans will be jointly led by the Department Head and the Knowledge Transfer Committee.]

(4) Relationship to case studies

[The impact case study developed by Dr. Annis FUNG exemplifies the success of the UoA’s impact strategy – to proactively identify social challenges and systematically provide EBP to tackle social problems. The selected case study demonstrates the UoA’s approach to impact, which emphasises the development of EBP with impact to person-in-environment at all three levels of prevention. In the impact case, new anti-aggression approaches were designed to reduce bullying and aggressive behavior among school-children. Based on her anti-aggression research, Dr. FUNG proactively identifies the problems need to be addressed, and then subsequently designs and conducts research projects to collect and analyse the relevant data. Thus, EBP was developed to improve the social well-being of the relevant beneficiaries. Children, teachers, frontline practitioners, government departments, and social service organizations were all positively receptive of the work.

Thus, EBP developed by the UoA helps social workers better address imperative social issues. Crucially, the scope of influence is not limited to Hong Kong. For example, the project P.A.T.H.S. was recognized by the World Health Organization as an evidence-based program in one of the seven strategies for ending violence against children in 2016 and promoting life-skills in 2018.]