

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Overview Statement

University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

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 Unit, through its research on social policy and clinical practice, has been effective in the pursuit of its primary research goal, which is to advance **social justice** and **welfare** for people in Hong Kong, mainland China and beyond. Our research on poverty, social security, social service management, social policy and social welfare has inspired changes in **social development policies** in Hong Kong. Likewise, our research on family and group work, youth work practice, bereavement and medical social work practice has had a substantial impact on the **service development** of social work agencies in Hong Kong and China. To maximise our research impact, we mindfully manage the relevance of our research to **key stakeholders**, actively engaging them as knowledge co-creation partners in research agenda setting, planning, data collection, data analysis and knowledge transfer. Our key stakeholders include policymakers, service providers in the statutory and voluntary sectors, social welfare practitioners, service users and welfare beneficiaries. Some major categories of stakeholders are:

- HKSAR Government departments (e.g. Labour and Welfare Bureau, Social Welfare Department);
- The Legislative Council and Advisory Committees (e.g. Commission on Poverty, Action Committee Against Narcotics, Social Welfare Advisory Committee);
- Statutory bodies (e.g. Equal Opportunities Commission, Hospital Authority);
- Non-governmental organisations (e.g. The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Oxfam Hong Kong);
- Professional and interest groups (e.g. social workers, youth workers, teachers and healthcare professionals working in child welfare, drug and alcohol services, parent education, family services, community development and social security); and
- Users and user groups (e.g. youth, children with special educational needs, women, people with disabilities, welfare recipients and elderly persons).

(2) Approach to impact

We mindfully manage research impact first by **prioritising social impacts and engaging key stakeholders**. In 2017, our Unit established a Task Force on Research Impact to fortify our research tradition of engaging key stakeholders in the co-creation of social impact through rigorous research. Our strategies include (a) early involvement of policymakers and key stakeholders in all research proposals; (b) programmatic training of staff on planning for impact through learning from invited seasoned researchers' sharing of their experience in incorporating social impact as major considerations in research planning and implementation; and (c) establishment of impact pathways partly by exploiting the support on media relations, public engagement and knowledge dissemination from CUHK's Communications and Public Relations Office. For instance, Professor Joyce MA and her team have collaborated with the Union Bank of Switzerland, Radio Television Hong Kong and the *South China Morning Post* to provide evidence-based transdisciplinary training and mentoring to 126 leaders from 110 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social enterprises and charitable foundations since 2014. Their research attested to effectiveness of the training in fostering the participants' leadership skills and inspiring new insights pertinent to advancing community initiatives, benefitting more than 3 million service users. In 2018, Professor WONG Hung's research had led to the launch of the Good Impact Assessment Institute, a social enterprise supported by the University's Sustainable Knowledge Transfer Project Fund. The Institute, since its establishment, has provided research support to NGOs and public bodies in the measurement and

management of the social impacts of their activities and programmes.

Aside from proactive engagement of social impact co-creators, the Unit has created a research impact expressway through **vibrant knowledge transfer activities**. We encouraged and facilitated staff to apply the learning from their research to improve the lives of social service users and the public. Between October 2013 and September 2019, we had successfully launched 117 knowledge transfer projects funded by government bureaux, NGOs and CUHK, with a total funding amount of HKD 35 million. Through these projects, our research results were applied to improve services and practices in active ageing, drug rehabilitation, management of caregivers, usability design in service and strength-based approaches to working with children with ADHD, benefitting both service users and professionals. For example, Professor Steven NGAI and his team have created an Integrated Humanistic and Cognitive-Behavioural Training Programme to enhance professionals' capacity in motivating change of attitudes towards drugs among drug abusers and facilitating their reintegration into society. This programme had served more than 2,300 practitioners and students in social work, healthcare and education since 2013. The Department will continue its longstanding support for administrative and technical staff, who are indispensable to the smooth operation of the knowledge transfer projects.

Another major impact pathway of the Unit is **strategic and extensive use of media exposure**. The Unit encourages staff to disseminate the results of their research through conventional and new media to (a) enhance the visibility of our research findings and (b) inspire exploitations of our findings in solving practical problems. The Unit has convened more than 10 press conferences since 2013. Through this effort, our research findings were widely covered in the media. Since 2015, our faculty members have published more than 35 articles in *Ming Pao Daily News* (a major Chinese newspaper in Hong Kong), offering advice on the handling of difficult family-related issues. The Unit has provided reliable administrative support to staff members in coordinating media dissemination of their research discoveries.

(3) Strategy and plans

To maximise our research impact through advancing **social justice** and **welfare**, the Unit plans to:

- Encourage and support collaborations with NGOs on applied research and participation in the governance of NGOs by reducing staff members' academic and administrative duties;
- Create opportunities for every staff member to partake in interdisciplinary research both within CUHK and with other universities, and to participate in the research projects of research centres/institutes at the faculty and university levels;
- Assign senior staff members to mentor and guide junior staff members to ensure inclusion of impact planning, monitoring and evaluation in the latter's research;
- Conduct evidence-based training projects in globalised contexts (e.g. extend training in cognitive-behavioural integrated therapy to mainland China and NGO-based leadership programmes to countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative); and
- Establish a social media platform to promote knowledge transfer to both academia and the public in local and global contexts.

(4) Relationship to case studies

Professor WONG Hung's research on the working poor vividly illustrates the success of the approach and strategies the Unit has taken to create social impact of its research. First, the impact of the research aligns perfectly with the Unit's mission to advance social justice and welfare in Hong Kong. Second, the case built on the Unit's close collaboration with influential local NGOs such as Oxfam Hong Kong and The Hong Kong Council of Social Service. The collaboration highlights the Unit's strategies of maximising impact through engaging key stakeholders, prioritising social impacts and encouraging faculty members to collaborate with local NGOs. The Unit has also provided essential administrative and technical support for knowledge transfer activities and media events that had enhanced the impact of the research on policymakers and the general public.