

**Research Assessment Exercise 2020**  
**Impact Overview Statement**

**University:** The University of Hong Kong (HKU)

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

**Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA:** 21

**(1) Context**

The Department has a long-standing and exceptional record of achievement in translating research outputs into practice and policy solutions that affect people's health and well-being locally, regionally and globally, with the aim of making a difference to health and well-being. In line with HKU's vision of orienting all research towards impact that benefits and makes a difference to communities, we organize our research activities into clusters corresponding with grand challenges that we have identified in collaboration with a range of stakeholders. These include Ageing, Mental Health, Evidence-Based Clinical Intervention, and Population Studies and Migration. Embedded within these clusters are three outward-facing, research centres, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, the Centre on Behavioural Health, and the Sau Po Centre on Ageing. The first two have generated our Impact Case Studies. The Sau Po Centre on Ageing has generated research that has been beneficial to policy makers, providers, family carers, family members and practitioners.

**(2) Approach to impact**

**i) Community-university partnership for impact:** The research clusters and centres serve as hubs for stakeholders and researchers to form partnerships to co-develop and test novel answers to key problems that face society at all levels. To support our members in finding innovative approaches to making a difference to these grand challenges, we draw on a long-standing and active Departmental Advisory Committee (DAC) that comprises users of our research. Membership of this Committee varies over time. Currently it includes CEOs of NGOs and a large family foundation, a senior official of the Hong Kong Council of Social Services, and two community members. The DAC helps ground our research in real-life policy and practice by influencing the research agendas we set and the questions we ask. Such joint working has transformed the nature of our research; all research activities are now impact-driven and measured by the quality and value of that impact. One example is the initiation of the Jockey Club Holistic Support Project for Elderly Mental Wellness (JC JoyAge) project under the Ageing and Mental Health clusters. The DAC members suggested that the government's efforts on geriatric mental health had been largely focusing on dementia, neglecting the other mental health needs of older adults. As a result, researchers in the Ageing cluster (Prof Lum and Dr Lou) and Mental Health cluster (Dr G. Wong, Dr P. Wong, Prof Wong, Prof Tse) worked together to secure funding to initiate the JC JoyAge project in 2016 and undertook the pilot study between 2016 and 2019.

**ii) Knowledge exchange activities** ensure the necessary capacity to build our impact. Locally, we collaborate with stakeholders and serve as advisors to NGOs, such as the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Society (Prof Chan) and Caritas (Prof Lum). Regionally, we advise key bodies such as the HKSAR government's Elderly Commission (Dr Lou), Minimum Wage Commission (Prof Lum), and Mental Health Commission (Prof Tse). Internationally, we advise key international organizations such as the International Association of Suicide Prevention (Prof Yip), and the World Health Organization (Prof Lum, Dr Lou and Prof Yip); and nonlocal government ministries such as the Singapore Ministry of Education (Prof Yip), and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea (Dr Emery).

**iii) Sustainable funding for impact:** Our community-university partnership has inspired community-initiated practice research and knowledge exchange projects, together with substantial funding (totaling HK\$199.3 million during this RAE period). Funders include the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the HKSAR Government, and major local and overseas charitable foundations. This funding has supported research activities and outputs that have changed policy and practice, in addition to those demonstrated in the two Impact Case Studies; Lum received HK\$24 million from the Social Welfare Department to develop a new long-term care assessment instrument and services matching protocol for Hong Kong.

### **(3) Strategy and plans**

**Our plans are evolving to increase the impact of our research in three specific ways:**

**i) Develop new research clusters:** We seek to build on the substantial achievements of this RAE period and will continue to expand our community-university partnership for impactful research through identifying new grand challenges and building corresponding research clusters. We built a new research cluster on Big Data on Physical and Mental Health in 2019 and plan to develop a new cluster on Social Entrepreneurship in the next few years.

**ii) Continue to increase staffing to enhance our impact:** To further extend our reach; in 2019, we established two permanent joint appointments at Assistant Professor level with the School of Public Health (Dr Lee) and the Faculty of Business and Economics (Dr Chui). We also gained external funding to appoint three 3-year fixed term, non-teaching Research Assistant Professors, focused on co-developing and implementing impact-driven research and knowledge exchange in evidence-based clinical intervention, mental health, and aging. Further such appointments will ensure continuing expansion of the associated policy and practice benefits. Commitment to knowledge exchange is now one of our key staff selection criteria ensuring that new staff members bring fresh interdisciplinary perspectives and networks to expand the reach and significance of our impacts.

**iii) Continue to seek sustainable external funding that targets impact:** We will encourage and support our researchers to apply for external funding with community partners to expand our substantial impact driven research activities. For example: Dr G. Wong, Prof Lum, and Dr Luo obtained a RGC Research Impact Fund grant in 2019 for a project entitled “Tools to Inform Policy: Chinese Communities’ Action in Response to Dementia” (HK\$4.3 million). The project was supported by the Elderly Commission of the HKSAR Government to develop long-term care policy in Hong Kong and the region.

### **(4) Relationship to case studies**

Our two long-standing case studies have been core to Departmental research since the last RAE. They embody our community-university approach to finding innovative solutions to pressing social challenges locally, nationally and internationally. The two associated research centres, the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, and the Centre on Behavioural Health, are fully supported by the corresponding research clusters, the Faculty of Social Sciences and HKU.