

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: Lingnan University

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

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 8

(1) Context

Social policy is a strong example of how Lingnan University **concentrates** research on key strategic areas where it has **expertise in depth**. Our liberal arts ethos emphasizes projects with direct **relevance for policy and the local community**. The combined impact of our research has **improved thousands of lives** in Hong Kong and the wider region.

Many of the most **pressing social issues** for local people bunch into three phases of their lives: wellbeing as children, the transition to adulthood and maintaining active ageing. Our research groups are set up to **address the specific needs** of each. For example, workshops that research staff have held with policy makers and NGOs in Hong Kong, Macau and the Greater Bay Area have presented **new data** on poverty exclusion. Other work has raised awareness of the particular problems faced by ethnic minority children in Hong Kong.

Also useful for policy makers, service providers and NGOs, is our research on the difficulties school-leavers face at university and when embarking on careers. Higher education policy and governance is a key feature. Research staff have written **high-profile pieces** for international outlets such as Times Higher Education on university expansion and graduate employment.

The Age-friendly City project tracks age-friendliness of four local districts, and designs and tests ways to improve it. With surveys, data collection and report-writing, research staff have gathered the evidence to **train** local residents and NGO staff, **organise** public forums, **develop** action plans for district councils, help these councils win supporting funds from the WHO, and -- where necessary -- to modify the homes of elderly people in the remote areas of Tuen Mun and Yuen Long. Over **650 elderly people** have now been trained as Age-friendly Ambassadors to promote the concept in the four local districts.

(2) Approach to impact

Forging close links to civil society organizations

Our approach to interacting with non-academic users, beneficiaries and audiences is based on forging close links to the local community. To achieve this, research staff can draw on a number of links with NGOs and university-wide initiatives and facilities. One example is the university's Knowledge Transfer Fund which provides up to HK\$80,000 for projects that aim to do KT activities. One key knowledge transfer fund project promotes the well-being of children and young people in Hong Kong. Led by Stefan Kuhner of the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, this project **directly addresses the challenge** outlined by Carrie Lam, Hong Kong chief executive, who in her recent inauguration speech argued that policy should be based on the **genuine needs** of young people, and must be designed with their active **cooperation and participation**. To achieve this, the project looks beyond the traditional framing of Hong Kong "youth-at-risk" as problems associated with gangs, substance abuse, delinquency and social withdrawal. Instead it looks at broader social concerns: the transition of young people into work, families and secure housing, by working with organisations such as the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and UNICEF. Early results include new findings on the social gradient children's multidimensional well-being and emerging generational inequities in social and economic outcomes in Hong Kong. Collectively, these findings have been used to advocate for broad policy changes to diminish structural barriers that

have continued to allow a small, but sizeable number of children in Hong Kong to fall so far behind their peers that it adversely affects their ability to reach their full potential.

Engaging with local communities

The unit promotes the concept of intergenerational learning and staff organise forums to **stimulate new thinking** on the quality of life for elderly people. There is a close connection between the unit's research on the well-being of the elderly and the Jockey Club funded programme *We Care, We Serve & We Learn @ Tuen Mun* which is organised by the Office for Service Learning. Intergenerational learning and active ageing is promoted through the collaboration of faculty members, students and community partners in offering better elderly services for the community and in organising forums to stimulate new thinking on the quality of life of elderly people. In 2018/19 alone these kinds of activities served more than **7,000 elderly people** in the local community.

The unit's sustained program of media engagement contributes to its impact on public discourse. Researchers in the unit have contributed to over 300 print and online articles. This includes 19 commentary articles in publications with international reach such as Voice of America and the International Public Policy Review. The unit further achieves impact through Prof Mok's advisory roles and committee memberships in external organisations, including the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, Yan Chai Hospital, the New Territories West Elder Academies Cluster, the Tin Ka Ping Foundation, and a number of HKSAR government bodies including the Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee., the Insurance Appeals Tribunal and the Curriculum Development Council.

(3) Strategy and plans

Our goals and plans to support impact from research in future include **developing and strengthening** multidisciplinary projects and collaborations with educational institutions and policy makers in mainland China and Africa. One **tangible way** to achieve this is the upcoming appointment of a new administrator and events coordinator to be shared by our Centre for Social Policy and Social Change and the newly established Greater Bay Area Joint Centre on Social Policy and Governance. This position will promote a **systematic and sustained** approach to the dissemination of research findings beyond the university.

The major new HK\$20 million project on **Gerontechnology and Smart Ageing**, funded by the Jockey Club, addresses key challenges of demographic ageing including new forms of inequality and transformations in family structures. Community education has already been organised for over **500 participants** from government, NGOs and business organisations. Well-attended Socialpreneur and Gerontech courses have been held. The demonstration X Lab opened in November, 2019 and the project has featured prominently in local media and on official HK Government sites.

Special donations were secured with Research Matching Grant of around HK\$17 million to support research in the areas of social policy / policy studies. The matched donations will be deployed to support newly established Joint Research Centres for Greater Bay Area with South China University and Wuyi University in China with particular research focus on social policy and governance, and ageing in place. The joint research centres will also offer training programmes and consultancy to local governments, health and welfare practitioners.

(4) Relationship to case studies

The case study draws on the work of a wide range of staff across a number of research projects, building on the extensive support provided to specific ageing related research through the long established Asia-Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies. Further institutional support was provided by the creation in 2018 of Centre for Social Policy and Social Change, which creates a **platform for community engagement** and knowledge transfer via the centre's website, workshops and public lectures.