

Research Assessment Exercise 2020:
Impact Overview Statement

University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 29 communications & media studies

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 15

(1) Context

The School of Journalism and Communication (SJC) is a leading center of communication education and research in the Asia-Pacific region. As an education hub for future communicators, SJC seeks to equip our students with innovative and analytical competence and a strong commitment to professional ethics and social responsibility. As a research institute, SJC generates knowledge and insights for the industries and the society at large in local, national and transnational contexts.

To maximize the impact of research, SJC has focused on three strategic objectives:

1. *Establishing strong connections with media industries* to enhance the practical reach of education and research activities
2. *Active public engagement and media work* to stimulate public awareness of media-related and societal issues, especially topics of critical importance for public interest
3. *Providing training for the public sector* to improve governance on media-related issues

Faculty members engage in various principal impact activities. They have established long-term relationships with various media industries, ranging from news media to advertising, from public relations agencies to cultural industries. For example, Professor Anthony FUNG has conducted studies on gaming in Greater China and other Asian countries, contributing to substantive impacts on local and national cultural policies as well as Asian gaming industries. Some SJC staff, such as Professor Joseph Man CHAN, Professor Clement SO and Professor Francis LEE, wrote a series of highly relevant articles to publicize their research findings, including in *Ming Pao* and *Initium Media*. Alongside her research interest on media literacy education, Professor Donna CHU has conducted collaborative projects with schools to promote media and information literacy among Hong Kong youngsters. Many SJC researchers have also participated in consultancy work and training for public and private sectors. For example, Professor Francis LEE was invited to give seminars on media and public opinion at the Leadership and Public Policy Executive Education Program in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Participants were mostly senior civil servants in various government departments.

(2) Approach to impact

The SJC has established the following mechanisms to advance potential impacts:

- Gaining institutional support and resources inside and outside the university
- Developing collaborative projects with civil society organizations and the education sector
- Publishing findings in the media to improve the public and policy debate

In terms of institutional support, many members of SJC, including Professor Francis LEE and Joseph Man CHAN, have regularly received grants from the Research Grant Council (RGC) of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). In 2018, Professor Anthony FUNG received national funding from “Key Grant of the National Social Science Foundation of China” for his digital media innovation projects. At the university level, Professor Donna CHU had established a social enterprise

under the support of Sustainable Knowledge Transfer Project Fund (S-KPF) of CUHK. Internally, SJC has integrated the resources to better render research support and services to faculty members and the larger community. For example, it has established the Centre for Chinese Media and Comparative Communication Research (C-Centre) and the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey (CCPOS).

SJC researchers have conducted collaborative projects with external actors, resulting in co-production of practical knowledge. Professor Jack QIU, for example, has worked with labour organizations in South China and Hong Kong on critical media literacy and social media training projects for journalists, labour activists, and vocational-school teachers.

SJC members have contributed to public debates and public opinion through media engagements. This becomes more important in post-handover Hong Kong, as the ongoing political transition calls for evidence and reliable ground for more reasoned discussions. This includes research on political development since the large-scale occupation protest in late 2014. Professor Francis LEE's extensive work in this aspect is described in the submitted case study.

(3) Strategy and plans

SJC aims to maximize future research impact by offering a more supportive atmosphere for staff members to develop impactful research projects. To do this, first, SJC will strengthen the connection with media industries and relevant stakeholders, ranging from civil society organizations to the secondary education system, to improve the practical applications of research activities. Collaborative research work with these external actors will be encouraged within the School. Second, SJC will identify potential ongoing projects among academic staff for long-term development of impact. Internally, more substantial support (e.g. human and material resources) will be provided to document progress and for knowledge accumulation. SJC will also investigate including impact-relevant activities in individual staff workload models. Third, SJC will reinforce its effort in publicizing research findings across different sectors of society through various platforms such as book launches, receptions, and special events.

(4) Relationship to case studies

The chosen case study details research conducted by Professor Francis LEE (as principal researcher) and colleagues (most notably Professor Joseph CHAN and Professor Clement SO) on media, politics and public opinion in Hong Kong. In the post-handover era, Hong Kong society has experienced an uncertain process of political transformation. Many political controversies and highly important phenomena arose. This series of research provided credible evidences and insights to inform media discourses, public deliberation, and institutional decision-making. Professor Francis LEE had been invited to give talks and seminars on media and public opinion to senior civil servants. Most recently, he was solicited as an expert witness to a highly prominent court case surrounding the 2014 occupation movement – the first time in Hong Kong's history that a court accepted an academic survey as evidence.