

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: Hong Kong Baptist University

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 29 – Communication and Media Studies

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 23

- (1) Context.** The individual case studies are selected from several instances of researchers in the UoA addressing issues of high social relevance in Hong Kong and beyond. The case study on health communication responds to Hong Kong’s rapidly ageing population and the strain this puts on health services. Although Hong Kong’s healthcare system has been ranked among the best in the world, a chronic shortage of staff and resources spells a looming crisis. Effective communication about health related matters is vital to improving the efficiency of the healthcare system. Aside from the submitted case, several other faculty members are engaged in health communication research that has impact in this space. The case study on media and democracy is drawn from among the UoA’s faculty who are producing research addressing worrying social and political trends in the region. They include the growth of self-censorship and market pressures on journalism, the polarizing effects of social media, and rising intolerance and hate in public affairs. The Annual Reports of the Hong Kong Journalists’ Association and of international watchdogs indicate that media freedom is under intensified pressure. The UoA’s research on media freedom, media ethics, and media literacy is used by international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- (2) Approach to impact.** The School has placed a strong emphasis on research, and sees impact as a necessary consequence of high-quality research. To facilitate impact beyond the academy, the University and UoA provides opportunities, time, and resources for researchers to engage non-academic sectors. Faculty have been supported by six Knowledge Transfer Grants, two of which were Presidential Grants. Seminars and workshops that bring together researchers, practitioners, and other stakeholders are routine in our UoA’s calendar. At the international level, the UoA was UNESCO’s sole partner in organizing a conference on journalists’ safety as part of the official observance of World Press Freedom Day 2017, and staff have worked with other industry and professional bodies on current media problems. Organizing such opportunities for intellectual exchanges beyond academia are a key mandate of the UoA’s research centers. The UoA has an ongoing dialogue with the Hong Kong Department of Health and interested NGOs to facilitate application of our research. The Academy of Film has close links with the local and national industries and many staff work in production contexts. Journalism faculty include leaders in professional associations. Film and journalism faculty serve as judges in local and international professional awards, thus directly applying their research-based insights in defining excellence in their respective industries.

(3) Strategy and plans. The University has adopted three research priorities upon which it will concentrate its resources in the next period. All are important for the School's approach to impact, concentrating as they do upon fields in which there is existing expertise and research initiatives. The Creative Media Practice focus links directly to the work of the Academy of Film. The Health, and Drug Discovery focus provides an opportunity for closer collaboration between the School's research on health communication and work, including clinical practice, in Chinese Medicine and overall well-being undertaken elsewhere in the University. The Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence focus provides a bridge to the School's developing work on data journalism, algorithmic journalism, the digital dissemination of media artefacts and, more generally, to the use of artificial intelligence in journalism. All three of these build on existing research strengths of the School: for example, the concern with freedom of expression links to research on the impact of "fake news" and the potential of AI to enable greater user-discrimination between reliable and unreliable news. All three of these priorities also have very strong potential to develop research that has a broader impact in society and this will be strongly encouraged. The University and the School are both funneling financial and temporal resources into these broad areas. Staff will continue to be supported if they wish to pursue individual research interests in any relevant area, but both in terms of recruitment and resourcing there will be a greater emphasis upon these central priorities and their potential impact outside of the academy.

(4) Relationship to case studies. These case studies grow naturally out of the work of the School and represent the best examples from a range of possibilities. The two researchers' engagements beyond academia have been supported with time and funding. The development of impactful research is one of the main criteria for the award of sabbatical leave and there is generous funding available at both the School and University level to assist in developing the impact of research. The overall profile of School in the relevant areas of Health Communication and Journalism research has helped open doors with governmental, commercial, professional and non-profit organizations.