

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Overview Statement

University: The University of Hong Kong (HKU)

Unit of Assessment (UoA): UoA 31, English Language and Literature

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 13

(1) Context

Research in the School of English (UoA) centres broadly on English Language Studies and English Literary Criticism, including the study of literature(s) written in English, linguistics, and critical and cultural theory, with a strong cross-cultural orientation. A related cluster of practice-focused research leading to outreach and impact spans creative writing, performance and drama, with the HKU Black Box theatre as a hub. Drawing on our research expertise, we create impact in three strategic areas: enriching Hong Kong's cultural sector; improving communication in social settings such as healthcare and legal interactions; and promoting the learning of the English language and literature in schools. Beneficiaries include school students, cultural and non-governmental organisations, local writers and performers, healthcare professionals, members of the public facing genetic and mental health care issues, and the wider community in and outside of Hong Kong.

(2) Approach to Impact

The UoA's approach to impact is predominantly focused on investing in infrastructure, establishing partnerships and taking up advisory roles with cultural, educational and healthcare organisations.

Developing Infrastructure for Innovative Performances: The HKU Black Box is a unique, flexible performance venue developed on the Centennial Campus by Richards, who directs the UoA's creative writing programme and researches the history and performance of drama. The HKU Black Box was established in 2012 and has, since 2013, hosted numerous innovative productions, which are developed in collaboration with local and international playwrights, actors and partners and are open to the public. In 2016, it hosted a six-week research and performance collaboration in conjunction with the UoA's international conference *Island Cities and Urban Archipelagos*. Recent performances include an experimental staging of the opera *Hansel and Gretel* (2017) incorporating puppetry, and the premiere of the play *Weird Pool Party* (2018), which was directed by Richards, and championed the work of young, local artists. In 2018, the HKU Black Box hosted 42 events, raised HK\$7.2 million in donations and performed to audiences totalling over 5,000.

Building Partnerships: The UoA has established strategic partnerships related to two key research strands: the critical examination of English literature and the analysis of communication in healthcare and mental health settings. The UoA has been involved with the annual Hong Kong International Literary Festival (HKILF) since its establishment in 2001 with the aim of broadening local audiences for literature. Several members have served in advisory roles (Kuehn, Richards), are involved in the Festival's programming, act as moderators in line with their research expertise in literary and performance studies, and coordinate the hosting of large-scale public talks at venues around Hong Kong. In 2018, the HKILF put on 52 events for over 10,000 audience members, including schoolchildren. Since 2013, the UoA has financially supported HKILF events with authors such as Carol Ann Duffy, Germaine Greer and Jung Chang. The events provided local audiences with opportunities to directly engage with international authors and, in cases where writers were less well-known in Hong Kong, expanded their readership. Zayts' research into healthcare communication practices in Hong Kong has raised awareness of the impact of both sociocultural and linguistic factors on successful healthcare delivery in the areas of genetic counselling, prenatal screening and mental health services. Collaborations with external partners such as Queen Mary Hospital, Tsan Yuk Hospital, Mind HK and the City Mental Health Alliance have led to the application of this research to the development of enhanced training programmes and improved online resources for patients.

Advisory Roles and Engagement with Schools: We are actively involved in promoting the learning and enjoyment of the English language, literature and cultural history in events for schoolchildren and teachers. Impact initiatives include offering summer creative writing courses for secondary school students through the UoA's *Moving Poetry* programme or in collaboration with the Hong Kong Young Readers Festival; advising on Hong Kong's Diploma of Secondary Education curriculum for English language and literature; and the writing of materials and teacher training for the Education Bureau (EDB). In 2018–19, Ho and Valdez organised, wrote teaching materials for and led two EDB workshops for 60 secondary schoolteachers. Members regularly collaborate with external organisations such as the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, I-Learner and the Learning Resources Centre at the King George V School. Jaworski's research into language and art has resulted in the development of primary and secondary school worksheets for teachers and students visiting the 'Love Long: Robert Indiana and Asia' exhibition at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center in 2018.

Media Engagement and Online Resources: The UoA seeks to promote a better understanding of literary, cultural and language-oriented questions amongst the general public through local and international media. Examples include Lim's fortnightly 'Language Matters' column in the *South China Morning Post*, members' appearances on RTHK's 'The Big Idea' radio programme (Heim, Hutton, Johnson, Kuehn, Valdez), and public lectures for Asia Society, M+ and the West Kowloon Cultural District (Jaworski). Members have promoted their research online – through websites like 'Linguistic Minorities in Hong Kong' (Lim) and the 'Hong Kong Literature Database' (Ho), which are language awareness-raising and anthologising online resources, respectively – and on Facebook.

Funding and Staff Support Mechanisms: There are various mechanisms for enabling impact at UoA level through our Enterprise and Impact Committee, as well as at Faculty and University levels, including mentoring, giving advice on funding applications, and hosting Knowledge Exchange (KE) talks and workshops. Impact is now integrated into HKU's staff appraisal and tenure and promotion processes to emphasise the translational potential and value of research to the wider community. Since 2013, Zayts and Lim have both secured five rounds of HKU KE funding, totalling HK\$873,000, to support their projects and both are recipients of the Faculty KE Award.

(3) Strategy and Plans

In line with Faculty initiatives, we will continue to expand and strengthen our infrastructural support for research impact in our three strategic areas. A discussion of impact is currently built into new staff recruitment and included in all research plans that the UoA develops and coordinates. The Enterprise and Impact Committee will a) make use of existing mentoring systems to share best practices; b) advise and train members on impact funding; c) help members identify and reach beneficiaries; d) provide guidance on impact measurement and evidence gathering; and e) facilitate partnerships with external organisations. Future plans for impact-related partnerships include the HKU Black Box's collaboration with the Asia Society Hong Kong Center in the staging of *Contingent Futures*, and with South African artists for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival; members' participation in programming for the upcoming 2020 Hong Kong International Literary Festival; and the continuation of Zayts' mental health communication project with Mind HK, for which HK\$4 million in funding has been secured from Morgan Stanley. We will further integrate Research Postgraduates (RPGs) in our impact activities, and an upcoming conference will showcase RPG-led impact.

(4) Relationship to Case Study

The case study showcases the UoA's research on communication in healthcare settings. It exemplifies the strength of the UoA's primary research with beneficial outcomes to the wider community supported by our success in attracting external funding and our emphasis on building partnerships with external organisations. Zayts' collaborations with hospitals and mental health organisations have made a substantial difference to healthcare communication practices, and her research was vital to securing funding from Morgan Stanley for Mind HK initiatives.