

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: Lingnan University

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 31 - English Language & Literature

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 5

(1) Context

The Department of English at Lingnan University (LU) has engaged with local and international cultural organisations, educational institutions and government bodies with the objective of making contributions to society, culture and quality of life, aligning itself with LU's vision of a liberal arts university distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement. This commitment brings various benefits to local people, ranging from secondary school students to civil servants. To achieve impact, this UoA has a) extended public discourse and enhanced public understanding of literature and linguistics, b) enriched the cultural environment and built the capacity for creative expression and intercultural reflection, and c) informed educational practices in local secondary schools. Public engagement with our research expertise has been delivered via workshops, lectures, cultural events and media outreach. Impact is embedded into the UoA's research strategy, with staff members being encouraged and assisted to build impact into their research activities and longer-term projects.

(2) Approach to impact

Our approach involves building staff members' awareness of impact into our research culture and research activities, and then initiating or maintaining partnerships with community groups and organisations. Among the diverse groups and organisations that have benefited from staff members' impact activities during the census period are the Education Bureau, the Hong Kong Civil Service Bureau, the Hong Kong Fringe Club, the English Speaking Union, the Royal Asiatic Society of Hong Kong, the Complete Shakespeare Group, and Yan Chai Hospital No. 2 Secondary School. Administrative support is provided by both the university and the UoA, and staff members can apply for Knowledge Transfer funding for longer-term projects. The three main areas of impact and engagement are outlined and illustrated with examples below.

a) Extending public discourse and enhancing public awareness of literature and linguistics.

UoA staff frequently work with local organisations such as the Hong Kong Civil Service Bureau and the Education Bureau to enhance awareness of contemporary issues in English literature and linguistics. Outreach activities often take the form of training workshops that deal with issues of contemporary interest and professional relevance, such as English accents and communication (for language officers in the Civil Service Bureau) and techniques for writing about film (for teachers in government secondary schools). Another form of outreach is via local and international media exposure that aims to raise awareness of important issues in language and communication. The channels for this have included RTHK (television and radio) and the South China Morning Post, with topics ranging from Leonard Cohen's songs and lyrics to the debate over falling standards of English in Hong Kong.

b) Enriching the cultural environment and building the capacity for intercultural reflection.

Staff members have established close and ongoing relationships with a number of cultural venues and organisations, including the Hong Kong Fringe Club, the English Speaking Union and the Royal Asiatic Society, and through them have co-directed drama productions, organised monthly play readings and given public lectures. These activities have brought authors such as Shakespeare and Samuel Beckett to the attention of local audiences, highlighting the relevance of

their work for contemporary social conditions and at the same time building local capacities by transferring knowledge of writing, performance, and adaptation. In 2018 a UoA member co-founded the Complete Shakespeare Group; this meets on a monthly basis to discuss the historical context and present-day relevance of Shakespeare's plays, and attracts up to 20 local professionals from a variety of backgrounds. UoA staff have been active in curating local cultural knowledge, for example by introducing Hong Kong documentary film to new audiences through a public lecture at the Royal Asiatic Society.

c) **Informing educational practices.** UoA staff have applied their research to the educational domain in various ways. Two staff members have collaborated to produce a textbook focusing on critical literacies for students of English (published by Routledge). A one-year project funded by an internal Knowledge Transfer grant has engaged both students and teachers at Yan Chai Hospital No. 2 Secondary School in exploring the potential of digital literacy for approaching literary texts. UoA research findings have informed a contribution to a research project aimed at reforming language testing descriptors in a local examination for secondary school students. Media outreach in venues such as the South China Morning Post has also been directed at educational issues, for example by drawing attention to the use of English as an international language and the limitations of conventional approaches to language testing.

(3) Strategy and plans

Our impact strategy is framed by the university's mission of community engagement, along with the specific needs of Hong Kong society in the areas of literary and linguistic knowledge, language and communication, and cultural development. We will continue with our strategy of building impact into our research culture and activities, maintaining and establishing links with community partners, and exploiting unforeseen opportunities that arise during or after the completion of research activities. We plan to further strengthen our approach by building impact into internal procedures such as the initial review of grant proposals, and by encouraging staff members to incorporate impact and knowledge transfer into their annual activities and research plans. The university's framework for performance review already includes knowledge transfer as one of the criteria for advancement and our mentoring procedures encourage junior staff members to develop this aspect of their profiles. Illustrating this and showing our commitment to extending public discourse, a new UoA member included various outreach activities in a recent grant proposal, including public lectures, school-based talks and media articles. The project will re-interpret selected literary portrayals of weather and landscape, and the impact activities aim to foster public conversations about the environment and sustainability in Hong Kong.

(4) Relationship to case studies

Our submitted case study focuses on the work of a UoA member who has been particularly active in enriching the cultural environment and extending public discourse by adapting works of English literature for the Hong Kong context, bringing impacts to audiences and participants beyond the confines of academia. This case study illustrates our goal of increasing public engagement with English language and literature and maximising the community impact of our research activities. The particular benefits detailed in the case study occur in all three areas of engagement identified above.