

**Research Assessment Exercise 2020**  
**Impact Overview Statement**

**University: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

**Unit of Assessment (UoA): 33 Linguistics & Language studies**

**Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 44**

**(1) Context**

Pursuing “impactful research that benefits the world” is a key component of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s (PolyU’s) mission statement. The two PolyU departments that constitute UoA33: Department of Chinese & Bilingual Studies (CBS) and Department of English (ENGL) have put this commitment to translational research into practice through close collaboration with external partners. There are five main non-academic beneficiary groups: 1) Schools; 2) healthcare service providers; 3) businesses and commercial companies; 4) government agencies and public bodies; and 5) NGOs. Broadly speaking, the impact takes the form of professional development; development of children’s learning in schools and speech therapy clinics; improvement of communication strategies or policies (in companies); and change of policies and/or practices (in government agencies, NGOs etc).

**(2) Approach to impact**

Our strategic approach has been based on a combination of two avenues: (a) the **pro-active approach**, where impact is factored into the research design from the beginning, and stakeholders are actively approached by researchers and/or involved by commissioning the research, contributing to its design or participating in it; and (b) the **reactive approach**, where we respond to the newly arising needs of external partners or society at large by bringing existing research to bear on the issues in hand. In some instances, both have come into play.

Regardless of the approach in any given research project, one key strategy has been to

- **Build strong relationships with external stakeholders** in health care, education, commerce, NGOs and the policy community, and actively reach out to new partners;
- Make sure all relationships with external partners are **mutually beneficial**, enabling scholars to collect data from those partners in return for expert information and advice.

Another plank in our impact strategy has been for UoA33 experts to make themselves available for **consultancy roles**, individually or as members of committees, boards etc.

Examples of mutually beneficial stakeholder relationships that have led to impact include:

- The three projects chosen for our **Impact case studies (details under 4 below)** all built substantially on stakeholder relationships with patients and practitioners; the Education Bureau of Hong Kong (EDB), students and teachers; and NGOs assisting migrants, respectively.
- One example of UoA33 researchers being approached by organisations with a specific need would be Forey, Hu, Sampson and Polias’ Language Across the Curriculum projects, which were requested and funded by the EDB. The projects benefited more than 1,200 secondary school teachers through **participatory learning and training, web resources** etc. The EDB changed its **professional development policy** as a result.
- Watson and her team in the International Research Centre for the Advancement of Health Communication (IRCAHC) have conducted research into how miscommunication leads to adverse patient events, with findings included in a report to the Hospital Authority. This research has led to **workshops for clinicians** on a number of key clinical issues.
- IRCAHC researchers have also examined the role of mHealth technologies (mobile and wireless) in promoting safety in the home for elderly people in Hong Kong with a view to improving the **quality of life and wellbeing** of this group.

- Lockwood and Forey’s call centre communication research was carried out in response to identified needs of commercial partners, such as HSBC and Manulife. The data harvested by the researchers was used to create **professional development workshops and conferences** for businesses and professional organisations in Hong Kong, as well as **staff training sessions** for call centre staff and virtual team leaders in the Philippines and India.
- Lockwood and Forey achieved some of their commercial impacts through **building international industry networks** through FuturePerfect Inc Ltd, a communications consultancy domiciled in the Philippines. Through this channel they achieved **knowledge transfer** to a range of multinational companies including HSBC and ANZ.

### (3) Strategy and plans

Our strategy for generating and enhancing future impact supports PolyU’s stated commitment to impact through translational research. The Faculty of Humanities, of which UoA33 staff are part, puts great emphasis on applied research and on making research findings useful to people in society, including those who are marginalized or disadvantaged in different ways.

Our strategy rests on three pillars:

1. **Development of Service-Learning subjects where research is applied to teaching** and PolyU students will use specific research-related skills and expertise **to share with people in the community**. Examples include IRCAHC facilitating early literacy development in disadvantaged young people and working with local housing communities to stimulate memory and brain activity in elderly people; and Liu Yi developing a community project to teach Chinese pronunciation to South Asian students. Such projects encourage researchers to develop synergies between their research, teaching and service activities.
2. The unit recognises the long-term nature of research impact by **identifying potentially impactful projects at an early stage of their development**. These projects are then **nurtured through internal funding**, including grants distributed through the unit’s two Departmental Research Committees and the Faculty Research Committee. Examples include work by Cummings on establishing pragmatic markers of early cognitive impairment in people with neurodegenerative diseases, and research by Watson on the use of mHealth technologies as tools in health promotion.
3. The unit actively works to **include stakeholders in the development of our research, including the framing of our research priorities**. This is illustrated by the regular consultation meetings held between UoA33 researchers and EDB officials, which ensure that our research addresses the EDB’s strategic priorities and the needs of Hong Kong’s English language teachers. Our work with this key stakeholder has resulted in funding worth HK\$5,363,800 for projects conducted between 1/2/2018 and 2/11/2020.

### (4) Relationship to case studies

All of our submitted UoA33 case studies illustrate the various ways in which the UoA supports and encourages impactful research through mutually beneficial partnerships:

1. M. Leung and D. Lau’s work in speech therapy has developed further our strengths in impactful research in healthcare, not only by contributing to the professional development of practicing speech therapists but also by responding to the need for early years language screening and diagnostic services. [Impact Case Study 1]
2. S.D. Chan’s research on teaching Chinese to non-Chinese ethnic minority children is built on our strategy of building strong relationships with educational institutions to improve aspects of curricula, teaching and learning in Hong Kong. [Impact case study 2]
3. H. Ladegaard’s research on domestic migrant workers in Hong Kong builds on the emphasis of service to disadvantaged communities in our impact strategy, highlighting the challenge of societal re-integration faced by these workers. [Impact Case Study 3]