

Research Assessment Exercise 2020 Impact Overview Statement

University: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) |
Unit of Assessment (UoA): 34 History |
Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 3 |

(1) Context

PolyU's mission statement calls for a commitment to pursuing "impactful research that benefits the world." We believe that historians can play an active role in dealing with some urgent problems Hong Kong, the nation, and the world are facing today, including the erosion of traditional values, the lack of historical understanding in the young generation, and the escalation of social and political conflicts. Despite the small size of the team (there were only three historians at PolyU during the period between 2013 and 2019), we strove to exert our influence on our non-academic user-groups, including the middle school students and their teachers and parents, senior citizens, rural community leaders, and the general public. During the assessment period, the three historians held public lectures, appeared on radio programs, and wrote numerous short articles for newspapers and online forums to share their historical knowledge and insights and to participate in public discourses. These activities covered a wide range of topics, including Chinese traditional culture, particularly Confucianism, China's relationship with foreign countries, ethnic relations, and Chinese military history, which were all related to the research the historians had conducted. The department was always willing to offer necessary support, including funding, to enable the historians to participate in impact-generating activities.

Benefits to the target audiences and user groups have been in the following broad areas of impact:

- 1) Cultural life (e.g. sharing knowledge about books with the general public)
- 2) Public discourse (e.g. media engagement)
- 3) Education (e.g. through providing training and advice)
- 4) Public policy and services (e.g. through participation in discussions about policies)

Key target groups are the **general public** (public lectures, articles catering to the general readers), **secondary school teachers and students** (lectures, participation in training programs for teachers and forums providing extra-curricular readings for the students), **policy makers** (through participation in policy discussions), and **the media** (commenting on various issues pertaining to the research interests of the historians).

(2) Approach to impact

The department supports impact activities by granting leave to staff members and permitting them to use departmental and university facilities when necessary, and also by counting these activities as community service so that the staff members get credit during annual appraisals and when applying for promotion and contract renewal.

During the current RAE period impact has been achieved via:

1. *Public lectures:* In addition to Chu Hung-lam's series of public lectures on Confucianism and traditional culture, which are presented in detail in the impact case study, Wicky Tse also delivered several public lectures, including one about premodern Chinese history to local history teachers, which was reported by local media (Impact areas 1 and 3);

2. *Advisory work*: During the assessment period, Chu Hung-lam served as adviser to numerous committees, companies and academic institutions, including Sik Sik Yuen Cultural, Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, Confucius Institute of Hong Kong, Modern Education Research Society Ltd, Lingnan University's history department and Chu Hai College; Han Xiaorong served as a specialist on the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, a mentor and interview panel member for the Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme (HKSES), Education Bureau, HKSAR, and the deputy head of the board of directors of the Great Bay Area Association for the Promotion of Chinese Traditional Culture; Brian Tsui served on the Archives and History Advisory Committee of the Hong Kong Anglican Church (Impact areas 2 & 3);
3. *Engagement with the media*: Brian Tsui was involved in the RTHK Radio 1 program "China on the Dot" to present newly-published books to the general audiences; Wicky Tse was interviewed by the TVB program Scoop (東張西望), the electronic media HK01 and South China Morning Post on various topics related to his research; Han Xiaorong published numerous articles on current and historical issues in a major newspaper and an online-forum catering to secondary school teachers and students. Chu Hung-lam's involvement in radio programs is detailed in the impact case study. |

(3) Strategy and plans

We will continue to offer support and assistance to staff to enable them to initiate and participate in impact-generating activities. Specifically, we will continue to grant leave to the staff members and permit them to use departmental and university facilities to engage in activities leading to impact on the wider society. We will continue to count these activities as community service so that the staff members can get credit for the service they provide. We will encourage the historians to embed impact expectations in their research agendas and will consider allowing the historians to use their personal research grant to support their impact-generating activities. We will ensure that there will at least one or two Cantonese speaking historians in the department so that we can maintain close connections with the diverse local communities.

One specific plan is to launch a Chinese language journal entitled Environment, Culture and Engineering, which will focus on the interactions between environment, culture and engineering, and the target readers will be the local and non-local general public. The editorial team will consist of both the historians and the area studies specialists at PolyU plus colleagues from other relevant PolyU departments.

Another plan is to launch a series of public lectures on Chinese culture catering to the general public, with the purpose of enhancing public understanding of the history and culture of China. This will be a joint project of the Department of Chinese culture and the Confucius Institute of Hong Kong, with support from both the faculty and the university. Both the historians and area studies specialists of PolyU will be involved in this project. |

(4) Relationship to case studies

The case study incorporates all four of the impact areas listed above, namely, cultural life, public discourse, education, and public policy and services. The public lectures and radio programs presented in the case study served to enrich local cultural life, educate the public on traditional culture, and enhance the popular understanding of socio-cultural issues and policies.

The department supported Chu Hung-lam's public lecture series through a publicity campaign, and by providing personnel and logistical assistance. |