

Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

University: The Education University of Hong Kong

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 35 Area studies (e.g. Japanese studies, European studies, etc.), cultural studies and other arts/humanities

Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 7

(1) Context

Area Studies in EdUHK addresses both contemporary and historical issues with an emphasis on reaching out to the wider community via policy research. One of its aims is to promote public awareness and understanding of social issues. Many of its research projects, particularly those funded by the Public Policy Research (PPR) Scheme, have inherent social and academic impacts and corresponding implications for government and public policy. Its funding sources enable UoA 35 to establish channels of communication with beneficiaries of its research. The Academy of Hong Kong Studies (AHKS) provides the research infrastructure through which UoA 35 promotes its research findings. AHKS also conducts commissioned projects for local business (e.g., the business association of the construction industry), political parties (e.g., the New People's Party), and non-governmental organisations (e.g., Society for Community Organization). Users of our research include:

- A) Policy makers: funded by the PPR Scheme, projects on Hong Kong as a hub for international non-governmental organisations, and the situation of its professional communities under regionalisation, examine policy-relevant issues. This accords with AHKS's main research theme of Hong Kong as a global city.
- B) Local civic and political organisations and regional policy research institutes: AHKS develops a strong network with local civic and political organisations by undertaking commissioned projects with them. It has also developed collaboration with major policy research institutes within the region (e.g. the Centre of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan Governance based in Fudan University, and the Institute of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau Development Studies based in Sun Yat-sen University).
- C) Media and the general public: As a columnist for *Mingpao* and *Hong Kong Economic Times*, two popular newspapers, Professor Lui Tai Lok is a publicly known social and political commentator. The AHKS engages with current social and political debate through publishing in news media and through organising talks and seminars on campus (e.g., a forum on big data and Legislative Council Election in 2016). To further develop and strengthen the interface between researchers and the wider community, it collaborates with Commercial Press Bookstore to develop a regular series of talks on Hong Kong Studies entitled "Reading Hong Kong Series"

(2) Approach to impact

In terms of maximising its impact, AHKS's approach is characterised by an emphasis on embeddedness. Impact is inherent in the policy relevant research that is its focus. It actively disseminates research findings and analysis by publishing in popular news media and organising outreach activities such as the "Reading Hong Kong Series". It also focuses on building and strengthening ties with key agents in policy-making networks (e.g., meeting relevant government departments after completing PPR projects and exchanging views with civic and political organisations). Postgraduate students attached to the AHKS, its research assistants, and post-doctoral fellows, are all encouraged to engage in knowledge transfer activities.

AHKS makes academic research accessible to the general public. Professor Lui Tai Lok is an experienced columnist and one of Hong Kong's most sought-after speakers on social and public affairs in public forums and seminars. He offers mentorship to members of UoA 35 and to other young researchers, advising them how to better engage readers and audiences in public debate. He also advises on appropriate media channels and venues for disseminating different kinds of research.

Readiness to reach out to stakeholders and the public is a key feature of UoA. |

(3) Strategy and plans

[As previously mentioned, the research projects undertaken by AHKS frequently have inherent social impact. This is particularly true of those projects funded by the PPR Scheme or commissioned by local civic organisations. Resources for dissemination, and for establishing channels of communication with government departments and policy makers, are planned and budgeted from the beginning. Such practices emphasise the importance of research impact (i.e., high awareness of the need to identify potential beneficiaries, project possible impacts, and audit those potential impacts while conducting research) in UoA 35.

At the University level, the Knowledge Transfer (KT) Fund is open for application. Colleagues can use such financial support to develop KT initiatives based upon their research projects. The KT Sub-Office is an administrative unit that manages the KT Fund and provides help in disseminating research findings to interested parties.

The establishment of the AHKS offers administrative support for KT activities related to Hong Kong Studies and Hong Kong-relevant research (e.g., maritime history, the Belt & Road Initiative, colonial history, etc.) Its networks with local media, civic and political organisations, and the school sector, encourage and help members of UoA 35 to identify and reach its target audience. Many researchers are unfamiliar with the logistics of organising KT activities. More importantly, they have limited experience of how to transmit their research to the wider community either directly or via news media. The mentorship mentioned in Section 2, and the facilities provided by the AHKS, significantly reduce the burden of UoA members with regard to arranging knowledge transfer. |

(4) Relationship to case studies

[The distinctive feature of this UoA is its emphasis on public engagement. Given the size of this UoA, we will submit one case for review. Professor Lui's popular book *Four Generations of Hong Kong People* (Sidai Xianggangren) is an example of how grounded sociological and historical research may be used to map social trends, and of how social phenomena and social trends can be analysed in simple language to set an agenda for public discussion. It exemplifies how to make Hong Kong Studies accessible to the general public and arouse public interest. It has drawn responses from a range of social sectors (from government officials to individual authors, and from literary circles to the political commentators). It also demonstrates how a study's impact can persist and even grow beyond the period of its initial reception and continue to inform social and political discussion. |