

Edge Hill University

The Confucius Institute at Edge Hill University was founded in 2013 as a partnership with Chongqing Normal University (CNU).

A post on the CNU website gives details of the recruitment process for staff at the Edge Hill Confucius Institute.¹ The post states that applicants must:

- “Generally” be under 35
- Have good “ideological ethics”

A recruitment form hosted on the notice page – which has been translated and reproduced by UK-China Transparency – further specifies that applicants must:

- Provide details of their “political characteristics” and “ethnicity”

Although this is not stated explicitly by CNU, the Chinese government agency responsible for Confucius Institutes (formerly Hanban, now Centre for Language Exchange and Cooperation, CLEC) states in publicly available material that staff from Chinese universities going to work at Confucius Institutes in other countries must fill in the ‘National Application Form for Teachers Going Abroad’ (国家公派出国教师申请表), which is available online.² Teachers must fill in the form at a central online portal (pmplatform.chinese.cn). UK-China Transparency has translated and reproduced both the form and the order mandating its use.

The form demands that applicants:

- Provide details of their “political characteristics” and “ethnicity”
- Promise to abide by the laws of the PRC (while abroad)
- Promise not to have a child whilst working in the UK
- Be evaluated by a Communist Party Committee
- Have their current employer give a reference detailing their:
 - “Political attitude”
 - Ability to comply with CCP *Discipline for Foreign Affairs* (外事纪律) guidelines

The *Discipline* guidelines demand, amongst other things, that individuals “act in strict accordance with the CCP’s policies in all foreign activities” and “strictly implement the request and report system” (the system is referred to as 请示报告制度).³ In CCP terminology, this refers to the system whereby CCP members pass information to their superiors: it mandates authoritarian practices such as peer surveillance, peer intimidation and informing.⁴

Edge Hill University did not respond to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request asking about the legal status of staff at the Confucius Institute and whether it has received advice on this matter.

In response to an FOI request asking whether staff at the Confucius Institute or the Institute itself have to obey Chinese law in the UK, or whether Edge Hill has signed agreements to this effect, the University stated: “No / Not to our knowledge”.

¹ <https://archive.vn/7hg0e>

² (NB that opening these pages may entail security risks): CLEC’s letter can be found here <http://www.yxnu.net/info/1426/23573.htm> – the ‘National Application form’ itself can be found here <https://archive.vn/15FsF>

³ See Baidu Baike, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/党的外事纪律/9640843>

⁴ See, for example, <https://archive.vn/unmso> This CCP announcement from 2019 states that the ‘request and report system’ is “an important way for our Party to maintain political discipline”.

An additional document released by Edge Hill University in response to an FOI request is identified by UK-China Transparency as a formal invitation to an individual to serve for two years as the ‘Chinese Director’ of the Edge Hill University Confucius Institute (recruited by CNU) The invitation states:

“Your visit is supernumerary and not to fill a job vacancy.”

This reflects the legal requirements of the Tier 5 dedicated visa scheme set up by the UK government to enable the staffing of Confucius Institutes in the UK. However, Edge Hill University’s 2012 agreement with the Chinese government agency responsible for Confucius Institutes (then called Hanban) states of Edge Hill and CNU demands that “each of the two collaborating parties appoints a director” to the Confucius Institute. It is generally the rule of the Chinese government agency responsible for Confucius Institutes that each Institutes should have a ‘Chinese director’ appointed by the Chinese side.