

Edinburgh University

The Confucius Institute at Edinburgh University was founded in 2006 as a partnership with Fudan University.

On its website, Fudan University details the recruitment process for Chinese staff going to the Confucius Institute at Edinburgh University.¹ According to a recruitment form downloaded and translated by UK-China Transparency, applicants must:

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

Although this is not stated explicitly by Fudan University, 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

In response 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, Edinburgh University stated:

“Fudan University staff working in the CIS do not have the rights and privileges of UoE staff. However, UoE does provide the necessary working facilities and support. UoE also requires that all colleagues working within the CIS, from both the UoE side and the Fudan side, comply with the regulations and policies of the UoE and the laws of UK and Scotland, and receive the same staff training in GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and other core areas as is undertaken by UoE staff. [...]

“The Chinese Director of the CI shall be appointed by Fudan to provide educational and administrative services with the mission and responsibilities of the CI. The Chinese Director shall comply with the regulations and policies of UoE and the laws of UK and Scotland, and shall receive

¹ <https://archive.vn/pBfvc>

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/I5FsF>

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”.

the same staff training in GDPR and other core areas as is undertaken by University of Edinburgh staff.”

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 Edinburgh University has signed agreements to this effect, the University stated:

“Staff from the PRC at the University’s Confucius Institute for Scotland do not have to abide by Chinese law on campus. The University does not place a contractual obligation on staff to do so.”