

Heriot-Watt University

The Confucius Institute at Heriot-Watt University was founded in 2014 as a partnership with Tianjin University of Finance and Economics (TUFU).

A recruitment form produced by TUFU and translated by UK-China Transparency gives details of the recruitment process for staff at the Heriot-Watt Confucius Institute.¹ Applicants must:

- Provide details of their “political characteristics” and “ethnicity”
- Have their university evaluate their “political qualities” and whether or not they are “patriotic”

Although this is not stated explicitly by TUFU, 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 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, Heriot-Watt stated:

“All staff recruited from China by the [Confucius Institute] are seconded staff authorised via Tier 5 Certificates of Sponsorship. They therefore have access to services to facilitate the use of essential IT systems which allows them to perform their learning and teaching duties such as email, file storage, the virtual learning environment, printers and the library. They are treated in a similar way to visiting scholars and managed in accordance with relevant HR policies. [...] All secondees are inducted via relevant training and are expected to uphold and abide by the University's formal Values and Strategy.”

¹ Please NB that this is a link to download a Word document

<https://images.eduego.com/Uploads/Ueditor/file/20180109/1515460522835419.docx>

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”.

The document shared by Heriot-Watt alongside this response states that:

“The University has the same responsibility to Visiting Scholars as it does to current staff and students using the University’s facilities on campus and remotely”.

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 Heriot-Watt has signed agreements to this effect, the University stated:

“Article 1 of the Agreement between Tianjin University of Finance & Economics (TUFEC) and Heriot-Watt University dated December 2020 references the nature and scope of the SCIBC activities which is to operate according to the laws and regulations of Scotland and the UK.”