

Nottingham University

The Confucius Institute at Nottingham University was set up as a partnership with Fudan University in 2007.

On its website, Fudan University details the recruitment process for Chinese staff going to the Confucius Institute at Nottingham 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, 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 request asking about whether Confucius Institute staff are staff of Nottingham University, the University stated:

“The Co-Director and Chinese language teachers are seconded to the Nottingham Confucius Institute from China and have associate staff member status to enable access to relevant University premises and resources to support their teaching. Prospective candidates are interviewed by the University to confirm their language capability and to ensure alignment with the University’s values, policies, and procedures. [...] We are unable to share [documentation that defines the legal status of the Confucius Institute roles] as this is part of the individual staff members employee files, which is defined as personal data in accordance with Section 40 (2) of the FOIA 2000. [...] our Employees have a reasonable expectation that their personal data will not be disclosed.”

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/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”.

In response to a Freedom of Information request about the applicability of Chinese law to the Confucius Institute at Nottingham University, the University stated: “The agreement between the University of Nottingham and the Confucius Institute Headquarters of China states that activities should not contravene relevant laws and regulations, both in the UK and China”.