

Sheffield University

Sheffield University's Confucius Institute was set up in 2007 as a partnership with Nanjing University.

Although no recruitment form for roles at the Confucius Institute published by Nanjing University could be found, Nanjing does publish information on its website to the effect that applicants must:¹

- “Love the ancestor-land [China]”
- Be no older than 30 years old
- Submit to a “political exam/screening”
- Have a clean CCP disciplinary record

Although this is not stated explicitly by Nanjing 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 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

A Freedom of Information request to Sheffield University asked: “Do the staff from the PRC at the University's Confucius Institute have to abide by Chinese law on campus? Has the University entered into agreements that demand as much?”

The University stated: “The University does not hold the information requested.”

¹ <https://archive.vn/Ax1ly>

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 querying the legal status of staff at the Sheffield University Confucius Institute and the question of whether they are employed by the university, Sheffield stated:

“The Institute engages staff in a variety of employment contracts and worker contracts. For staff who have employment contracts with the University of Sheffield, they are aligned to the University’s Terms & Conditions, and University reward package. The Deputy Director role is recommended by one of our partner Universities in China who are their substantive employer. [...] The University has not received legal advice for the legal status of the roles or the workers who occupy them within the Confucius Institute.”