

REPORT ON THE PRESENT STATE OF CHINA RELATED STUDIES IN THE UK 2021-22

The British Association for Chinese Studies



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Executive Summary

Aims

This report provides a survey of China related studies in the UK. It considers: student figures for Chinese studies; Chinese students studying in the UK; China related undergraduate and postgraduate courses on offer; and China related departments and research centres in UK institutions.

Summary

- Year-on-year numbers of students enrolled on Chinese studies related programmes in UK HEIs have fallen each year since 2017 according to HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) but, considered across different approaches to the data, are now rising again according to the survey conducted annually for the Universities' China Committee in London (UCCL).
- The continuing fall in the HESA numbers is partly explained by an ongoing shift towards joint degrees, because HESA counts students on joint degrees as fractions. HESA's categories for Chinese studies mean that this data misses the increasing availability of Chinese language and culture studies as part of other degree programmes.
- HESA institutional figures do provide consistent comparisons – though these should be treated with caution – and are probably of most use as a dataset provided as a service to the field for use by individual HEIs.
- The average total number of students per institution has increased 13% over 2020/21, in which year Single honours and taught postgraduate (PGT) numbers saw a big drop due to the pandemic. The resulting figure of 72.6 is still 10 points down from the last pre-Covid year (2019/20), but the direction of travel is welcome.
- Anomalous figures in the UCCL data, such as the apparently plummeting average for Joint honours students, are evened out when data substitution is adopted to provide estimated numbers. This method has been particularly important this year because the number of survey returns fell back from 29 to 21.
- Different methods for counting undergraduate (UG) numbers produce wildly different results, but taking these figures together we may suggest that the trend for UG numbers is probably upwards.
- Single honours Chinese increased more than Joint honours by every method in 2021/22, but Joint honours still normally outnumber Single honours by at least two to one.
- PGT courses continue to be the big success story, and show strong recovery after last year's dip. Depending on the set of figures used, PGT enrolments are up between 26% and 67% compared to the peak year of 2019/20, strongly driven by students from the PRC.
- Research postgraduate (PGR) numbers have also shown significant recovery towards the figures for the last pre-Covid year. By some measures this is a record year for PGR, also primarily due to the return of international students after Covid restrictions eased.
- HESA figures suggest that UK PGRs remain static, and that EU students stopped coming after 2018, which is probably another Brexit deficit.

- Staff numbers have increased since 2020/21, but remain worse than in 2019/20. Staff : student ratios, however, have improved, by as much as 32% for undergraduates, though workloads remain unsustainably high for other reasons.
- In 2020/21, institutions with Confucius Institutes (CI) had dramatically more students on average than those without, but 2021/22 saw the return of more balance, assisted by the closure of the CI at SOAS, which transferred its large student numbers from one category to the other. The difference in staffing also fell.
- The number of Chinese students studying at UK HEIs fell in 2020/21 due to Covid but is now on track to once again exceed 100,000 enrolled students. Chinese students now make up 26% of first year non-UK domiciled students at UK HEIs. Students from India, however, are increasing much more rapidly, and are projected to overtake PRC students no later than 2023.
- More universities than ever are now running Chinese studies related programmes, with 45 HEIs now represented in the UCCL annual survey and more to be added for 2023. There is huge variety in what is offered.
- In 2021/22 a number of universities are teaching out Chinese courses closed during the pandemic. Others, however, have taken the first intake onto new programmes, notably St Andrews. The number of new entrants to the field appears to be outnumbering those who are departing.
- A searchable spreadsheet of all 45 HEIs included in the UCCL survey for 2021/22 has been attached to this report, containing a list of undergraduate and postgraduate Chinese studies programmes, tables of the latest statistics by institution from both HESA and UCCL, separate tables for comparable institutions on two different sets of criteria, and for those with Confucius Institutes, and the figures submitted for the UCCL annual report.
- Factors to keep in mind for future reports include the continuing impacts of Covid, Brexit, the government's 'hostile environment' intended to dissuade immigration, relations between China and the West, the Chinese economy, the war in Ukraine, PRC efforts to extend its reach internationally, incoherent policies emerging from the UK government, and the government's stated intention to 'double funding to build China capabilities across government'.

Aims and considerations

This is the latest version of a report originally commissioned by the Universities' China Committee in London (UCCL), and owned and updated annually by the British Association for Chinese Studies (BACS). It has been compiled and issued six months later than usual due to administrative issues that prevented the acquisition of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data on the usual timescale.

The aim of this report is to provide researchers, students and other interested parties with a broad survey of the present state of studies relating to China in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It seeks to ascertain student demand, course offerings, and research activity in the UK. The survey focuses on: numbers of undergraduate and postgraduate students of China related studies; the number of PRC and Hong Kong students coming to the UK; the provision of undergraduate and postgraduate courses related to China in the UK; and the presence of Chinese departments and research networks in the UK.

There has always been great difficulty in gaining an accurate picture of study and research about China, and this is getting harder. Research and academic exchange activities can be situated within any topic, discipline, partner relationship, or institution. Researchers located in disciplines across the arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and medicine may be carrying out research with a China focus. Any UK institution may be engaged in academic exchanges and collaborative projects with partners based in China. Thus, the scope of China focused study, research and UK-China academic exchange in the UK extends across the full range of HEI participants and activities. Furthermore, staff and student numbers may be recorded in different ways by different HEIs, while the categorisation of subjects by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), together with the granularity of freely available data, make accurate numbers for Chinese studies harder to obtain. This report presents an overview of the state of the field through an examination of student numbers, institutions, research activity and Chinese international students in the UK.

We should begin with some initial contextual remarks. As of February 2023, Covid-19 remains present though it is no longer regarded as a dominant problem by HEIs. However, as observed last year, long term effects are being felt in the shape of reduced staffing in some areas, Covid-induced or Covid-adjacent restructuring, and greater use of online or hybrid teaching and meeting. Not all of these effects are negative; for instance, online options have sometimes allowed or encouraged greater international communication and participation in, for instance, research seminars and postgraduate programmes, although in the case of the PRC this can require creative approaches to enabling digital connections. There are also unanticipated ongoing consequences, including the impact of Long Covid, often on staff whose institutions required in-person teaching from September 2020, when understanding of the virus was underdeveloped and vaccines were not available. The numbers collected here may tell us something about staffing levels, but because we do not (currently) distinguish in-person and distance learning, they cannot provide clear evidence of any trends in this area.

As to relations between China and the rest of the world, these have simultaneously become more extensive and more complex, so that just a few examples are listed here. We are seeing PRC efforts to quell protest extending beyond its borders (not only in Hong Kong but also, for instance, at the Manchester Embassy).¹ We are seeing institutional criticism – in the UK parliament and in the UN – of the PRC's anti-Uyghur policies as genocidal. There is a mix of welcome and rejection of PRC engagement among the Pacific states. And most recently we have seen the PRC offer of a route to peace between Russia and Ukraine, and its uncertain reception. The increasing complexity of such issues means that any effects on student numbers may well be indirect; for instance, national pride

¹ Josh Halliday and Emma Graham-Harrison, 'Chinese diplomat involved in violence at Manchester consulate, MP says', *The Guardian*, 18 Oct 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/18/china-claims-hong-kong-protester-entered-manchester-consulate-illegally>.

and government policy may send more students abroad even if those people disapprove of what they expect or actually find here.

On the domestic front, it is now clear that Brexit is a major problem for HEIs, as UK students and institutions have been effectively cut off from most sources of EU funding, while being offered inadequate substitutes that have drastically reduced their opportunities for study and research at or with EU partners.² As EU students now have to pay inflated International fees, this source of student numbers has also been affected. Over a longer period, market models have become so embedded in discussions about higher education that policymakers and institutional leaders no longer even question concepts such as 'value for money' and future earning potential as measures of degree programme quality.³ We may hope that the round of programme closures and restructuring seen in the last few years is now at an end, and take heart at the advent of several new programmes. However, since languages will always be relatively 'expensive' to teach, and since for women, at least, 'the financial gains of studying ... languages remain "close to zero"',⁴ the survival of degree programmes in Chinese, in company with other Modern Languages, continues to be at risk under the present administration.

We will return to these considerations in the analysis that follows.

Students taking Chinese studies in the UK

There are currently two main sources for student numbers enrolled in 'Chinese studies' courses at UK HEIs. One set of figures is obtained for the UCCL by means of an annual survey. The other set of figures is purchased as a bespoke dataset from HESA. Taken together, these datasets can help us to build a picture of student numbers for Chinese studies in UK HEIs, but both also have significant drawbacks that make an accurate assessment of real world numbers almost impossible. Both sets of figures will be discussed below.

UCCL figures

The UCCL carries out an annual survey of the number of staff and students participating in Chinese studies programmes in UK HEIs, which forms part of its annual report. For each university, numbers are recorded for staff; Single and Joint honours undergraduates (UG), taught postgraduates (PGT); and research postgraduates (PGR), in all cases distinguishing between full time and part time. Figures for distance learning students have not so far been collected.

Each university identified as potentially offering a 'Chinese studies' related degree is sent a proforma requesting numbers of staff and students based on the following definition of Chinese studies:

Chinese Studies is here understood as a degree programme consisting of Chinese (Mandarin) language study with some additional element of China related study, such as culture, history, politics etc. However, the term can apply to language degree programme students who study Chinese jointly with another discipline or language.

² Though there is now hope that the UK can resume its membership of these programmes. Nicola Davis, 'UK scientists hope to benefit from €100bn Horizon Europe programme', *The Guardian*, 28 Feb 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/feb/28/horizon-europe-programme-uk-scientists-brexid>.

³ Sean Coughlan, 'Value for money' review of £1.3bn university funding', 18 Jan 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51136353>; and 'Universities warned over courses for "bums on seats"', 7 Jun 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-44399444>.

⁴ Sean Coughlan, 'Biggest earners and biggest losers from degrees', 29 Feb 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51676530>.

While it is important to identify that Chinese studies is more than just the study of Mandarin language, the above definition makes it challenging for any individual in each HEI to provide a complete set of numbers, as both the staff and students covered by this description could – and usually do – appear in several different departments in the HEI. Perhaps as a result, a large percentage of institutions either do not respond to the proforma or caveat their response with a statement that the numbers may not be accurate across all departments or reflective of the university as a whole. With discrete ‘Chinese studies’ departments increasingly being divided up and their staff incorporated into the wider structure of the HEI – for instance by transfer into Modern Languages or sometimes disciplinary departments such as Film studies, Politics or Sociology – obtaining accurate numbers is only becoming more difficult. A methodological tweak initiated in the 2019-2020 report is that in the full data table (attached) are included comments on the statistics, where colleagues have elected to supply these, so that users can sometimes see how responding institutions were choosing to define candidates. This allows readers to better understand the differences between institutions and the difficulty in trying to create a definition that works for the entire range of HEIs represented.

This year, of the 45 institutions identified in the UCCL survey, 21 responded to the proforma with student numbers. This is down on last year’s record response of 29, and closer to the 19 or 20 respondents of the three years before that. The full data, of which the raw totals are given in Table 1, covers five years from 2017/18 to 2021/22. However, because there are some differences each year in which universities respond, this report normally limits the directly comparable data to that from institutions that have provided figures in each of the last three years. This period is the minimum useful span, while aiming to maximise the number of qualifying institutions by not setting the bar too high. However, for 2021/22 a number of institutions that normally respond did not submit any data, so only a disappointing 8 HEIs can be compared directly over the last three years: Cambridge, Edinburgh, King’s College London, Oxford, Regents London, Sheffield, SOAS, and Warwick. This selection of the data is given in Table 2. Some of the missing institutions contribute relatively large numbers to the exercise, such that excluding them can convert otherwise rising figures into falls, and *vice versa*. Without consistent returns from these larger contributors it becomes impossible to track trends for the last three years in a straightforward way.

In an effort to make, nonetheless, some reasonable assessment of trends, this report considers the three year data alongside that from a larger set of institutions that have returned survey responses in three of the last four years. This selection adds Bangor, Cardiff, Exeter, Glasgow, Heriot-Watt, Lancaster, Newcastle, Nottingham, Trinity St David, and Westminster, to give 18 in total. These numbers are given in Table 3. Any student data missing for this year is also substituted by repeating last year’s figures, if any were returned (shown in parentheses and in red). While this is of course not wholly satisfactory, it is hoped that it will maintain some degree of consistency in the patterns observable.

For an alternative perspective on likely trends, we also analyse the average number of students per institution, shown in Table 4. We might expect this approach to allow relatively consistent assessment of years with different response rates. However, even here the figures for the last two years suggest how missing returns or those that diverge notably from previous patterns can skew the results. So once again any data given in 2020 but missing for this year is also substituted with 2020’s figures, shown in red and in parentheses. While caution is obviously required, this method does produce less anomalous patterns.

We will compare all four tables throughout this section of the report, and they are placed together here to enable ready consultation. Considering various versions of the data together has the advantage of throwing up differences that can highlight issues that might otherwise be hard to identify. Staff and student numbers for individual HEIs can be found in the main spreadsheet attached to this report.

Table 1: Staff and student total numbers from UCCL surveys 2017/18 to 2021/22

Year	Responses	F/T Staff	P/T Staff	Staff Total	F/T UG Single Honours	P/T UG Single Honours	F/T UG Joint Honours	P/T UG Joint Honours	F/T PGT	P/T PGT	F/T PGR	P/T PGR	Student Total
2017	20	111	20	131	380	40	648	0	373	8	153	14	1616
2018	19	87	26	113	272	1	738	1	346	13	140	13	1524
2019	19	116	37	153	286	0	618	2	436	13	186	9	1551
2020	29	124.6	36.75	161.35	315	0	1020	1	308 (416)*	20	197	6	1867
2021	21	100	35	135	353	1	395	17	544	22	186	6	1524

Table 2: Staff and student total numbers from HEIs that responded to the UCCL survey in all years 2019/20 to 2021/22 (n = 8)

Year	F/T Staff	P/T Staff	Staff Total	UG Single Honours	UG Joint Honours	UG Total	F/T PGT	P/T PGT	PGT Total	F/T PGR	P/T PGR	PGR Total	Student Total
2019	49	14	63	232	197	429	260	12	272	107	5	112	813
2020	45.6	11	56.6	241	184	425	250	15	265	120	3	123	813
2021	62	17	79	228	212	440	437	18	455	157	2	159	1054

Table 3: Staff and student total numbers from HEIs that responded to the UCCL survey in three of the four years 2018/19 to 2021/22 (n = 18), plus substitution of 2020 figures (in red and parentheses) for institutions not reporting in 2021

Year	F/T Staff	P/T Staff	Staff Total	UG Single Honours	UG Joint Honours	UG Total	F/T PGT	P/T PGT	PGT Total	F/T PGR	P/T PGR	PGR Total	Student Total
2018	86	24	110	273	704	977	346	13	359	140	13	153	1489
2019	111	31	142	287	555	842	436	13	449	186	9	195	1486
2020	89.6 (95.6)	22	111.6 (117.6)	253	502	755	284	15	299	175	6	181	1235
2021	66	18	84	267 (279)	219 (538)	486 (817)	444 (478)	21	465 (499)	157 (212)	2 (5)	159 (217)	1110 (1533)

Table 4: Students and staff per institution, plus substitution of 2020 UG figures (in red and parentheses) for institutions not reporting in 2021

Year	HEI	Staff Total	Avg/ HEI	Single Hons Total	Avg/ HEI	Joint Hons Total	Avg/ HEI	UG Total	Avg/ HEI	PGT Total	Avg/ HEI	PGR Total	Avg/ HEI	PG total	Avg/ HEI	Stud'nt Total	Avg/ HEI
2017	20	131	6.55	420	26.0	648	32.4	1068	53.4	381	19.1	167	8.4	548	27.4	1616	80.8
2018	19	113	5.95	273	14.4	739	38.9	1012	53.3	359	18.9	153	8.1	512	26.0	1524	80.2
2019	19	153	8.05	286	15.1	620	32.6	907	47.7	449	23.6	195	10.3	644	33.9	1550	81.6
2020	29	161.4	5.56	315	10.9	1021	35.2	1336	46.1	328	11.3	203	7.0	531	18.3	1867	64.4
2021	21	135	6.43	354 (396)	16.9 (18.9)	412 (1086)	14.2 (51.7)	766 (1482)	36.5 (70.6)	566 (605)	27.0 (28.8)	192 (251)	9.1 (12.0)	758 (856)	36.1 (40.8)	1524 (2238)	72.6 (111.3)

The UCCL survey has historically always asked about part time students. The first three tables clearly show that part time study is extremely rare at undergraduate level, with the exceptions of 40 students recorded at SOAS in 2017, and 17 at Regents in 2021. Both appear to be anomalies created by changes in the method of counting adopted for these submissions. The part time figures remain more significant among postgraduates, though still small. Tables 1 to 3, despite their different datasets, consistently show a slight rise for taught courses and maybe a slight fall for PGR. The first probably reflects the out of pocket cost of a PGT degree, for which UK students have only recently been able to obtain student loans. The second may indicate that more PhD students have full funding, perhaps because more are now international students, and so can or need to study full time. Conversely, it seems likely that fewer people are willing to self fund a PhD course, a route that for UK students is likely to entail part time study alongside paid employment.

Overall student numbers

In Table 1 we see that the raw UCCL data shows some wide fluctuations in overall student numbers, dropping to a low of 1524 in 2018 but then climbing slightly in 2019 and over 20% in 2020 for a total of 1867, but falling back to the low of 1524 again in 2021. However, the 2020 figure reflects the record 29 responses of that year. Discounting that year places the number for 2021 broadly in line with a four year trend in which total numbers remained fairly static around 1500, following the drop by nearly a thousand students from 2017's figure.

Meanwhile, our selection of eight consistent responders in Table 2 shows a 30% increase in their total student numbers this year (from 813 to 1054), while adding ten more institutions in Table 3 generates a 10% fall (1235 to 1110). If, however, we substitute missing data with that from 2020, we see in Table 3 a 24% rise (1235 to 1533) that may corroborate Table 2's figures.

The average per responding institution (Table 4), where the number of responses was steady, hovered around 81 or 82 between 2017 and 2019. In 2020, however, with more institutions responding and larger numbers overall, the average was just 64.4, an apparent one-year drop of 21%. Those figures might have suggested that a larger number of students were being shared around a still larger number of HEIs, but beneath the headline figures was a complex picture of closures or restructuring (e.g. Aston, Nottingham, Regents), renewed response to the survey by some larger programmes (e.g. Chester, Leeds), some apparent expansion (e.g. Liverpool, Manchester), and the effects of Covid travel restrictions on international students, who contribute significantly to the PGT and to a lesser extent the PGR cohort.⁵

Against this background, the 2021 overall figure for students per institution is an apparently gloomy 72.6: down nearly 10 points from the steady state before the complex circumstances of 2020. If, however, we again substitute for data missing this year, we arrive at 2238 students overall and an average per HEI of 111.3 students. This increase of 36% over the last pre-Covid year magnifies the rise suggested by Table 2 and the substituted figures for Table 3, and we may reasonably take this as confirmation that the direction of travel is upward, and perhaps comfortably so. After years of worrying prognoses, this is a welcome result.

We may perhaps cautiously suggest that a corner has been turned, and that numbers for Chinese Studies may finally be benefitting from, among other things, the general rise in the student population. We must next consider whether this encouraging shift is reflected consistently in all categories.

Undergraduates (UG): single and joint honours

⁵ These changes may be observed in the attached spreadsheet.

2020/21 and 2021/22 lie at the bottom of the demographic curve in which the number of 18 year olds has been falling,⁶ while at the same time overall university applications, offers and grades have all been rising. Whereas universities were once subject to quotas for undergraduate recruitment, since 2011 HEIs have gradually been allowed to take many more students, normally up to a 'cap' and provided that applicants attain a minimum set of A level grades. In general, language degrees – apparently including Chinese studies – have not seemed to have been significant beneficiaries of these circumstances, and the UK's resulting lack of language skills continues as a major concern of a diverse set of public bodies from the British Academy to the Association of School and College Leaders.⁷

Variations between the different datasets for undergraduates make it hard to ascertain a clear picture at a more granular level. Once again the possible patterns only emerge by attending to substituted figures. UG totals found in Table 1 and 4 showed a 48% surge between 2019 and 2020 (from 907 to 1339 students), which we might be tempted to attribute to the creation of a bumper cohort of new students due to government policy during the early stages of the Covid pandemic.⁸ This group, across all subjects, will be working its way through programmes for one or two more years. Yet the raw total for responders to the survey fell right back to 766 undergraduates in 2021, an apparently catastrophic drop of 43%. Table 3, drawn from 18 institutions, shows UG numbers not rising in the 'Covid year' but falling by 10%, and then again by 36% to just 486 students in 2021. However, the eight directly comparable institutions in Table 2 show essentially steady figures down to the most recent year.

Including substituted figures in Tables 3 and 4 completely changes the picture to one of modest or significant UG growth, by 8% in Table 3 and 11% in Table 4, in both cases showing recovery from a previous low year falling in 2020 for Table 3 and in 2019 for Table 4. Averages per HEI for responding institutions show notable declines of 10.5% in 2019 and another 21% this year (46.1 UG per HEI to 36.5), but the substituted figures show a sudden leap of 53% to 70.6 UG per institution. This, however, is due to the addition of several large programmes that did not submit their usual return, and should be treated with caution.

The significant variations between datasets, whether or not we include substituted figures, prevent firm conclusions about the overall direction of travel in UG numbers. Nonetheless, the more positive readings suggest that any overall increase in student numbers would include UG figures as a component.

⁶ Darren Smith and Andreas Culora, 'A study of Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) policy' (2018), Figure 2: National demographic trends for 18-19 age group in UK, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/National-demographic-trends-for-18-19-age-group-in-UK_fig1_331345966.

⁷ [Towards a national languages strategy: education and skills](#). Proposals from the British Academy, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Association of School and College Leaders, the British Council and Universities UK, July 2020.

⁸ The lockdown starting in March 2020 coincided with the university application period, and somewhat unexpectedly, there proved to be increased rather than reduced demand for university places, resulting in a record number of applications for September 2020. Because the lockdown had prevented a great deal of school attendance, an algorithm was applied to that summer's A level results seeking to ensure comparability with previous years, but this approach had to be abandoned due to applicant protests after it produced a downgrading of 39,000 results. Many universities had by this time filled all their places, but were legally required to take all the students whose reinstated grades meant they had met the offer they had been made for entry. In turn, this forced the complete removal of the cap on undergraduate numbers for that year. Ben Quinn, 'UK exams debacle: how did this year's results end up in chaos?', *The Guardian*, 17 Aug 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/aug/17/uk-exams-debacle-how-did-results-end-up-chaos>; Fiona McIntyre, 'Department for Education abandons student number cap', 17 Aug 2020, <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-he-government-education-2020-8-department-for-education-scrap-student-number-cap/>.

Every year since 2013 this report has noted a long term trend towards a rebalancing of student numbers from Single honours Chinese towards joint degrees, either with another language or with another subject area such as business, political science or media studies. This year, however, we observe that the comparable institutions in Tables 2 and 3 show relatively steady figures for both Single and Joint honours over the last three or four years. The HEIs in Table 2 include 5 of the 7 oldest Chinese studies programmes in the UK, and evidently these five (Cambridge, Edinburgh, Oxford, Sheffield, SOAS) continue to have healthy Single honours programmes.⁹ Not only that, but Single honours slightly outnumber Joint honours students. Oxford does not offer joint degrees with Chinese, and it seems that almost nobody combines another subject with Chinese in the Cambridge Tripos – one student is recorded in the last five years – but good numbers at Edinburgh, Regents London, Sheffield and SOAS compensate handily.

Table 3 gives similarly steady figures for Single honours, and in most years roughly twice as many Joint honours students. Then in 2021 it shows a 56% drop for Joint honours (502 to 219), following year on year falls of 21% (2019) and 9.5% (2020). But once again the substituted figures suggest instead for 2021 a small rise (502 to 538) of 7%.

The raw totals in Tables 1 and 4 show more variation. This data suggests that Single honours fell 35% in 2018 (420 to 273) and have since been recovering slowly, with still a little way to go. The Joint honours numbers are more volatile, rising by 14% in 2019 then falling back again, then leaping 65% in the 'Covid year' but then collapsing 60% to 412 in 2021. But the collapse is again due to the absence this year of several large Joint honours programmes that normally submit returns. Substituting the 2020 figures suggests instead a continuing increase of 6%, in line with Table 3's substituted figures.

Meanwhile, averages per HEI show Single honours increasing 55% to 16.9 per institution, with the substituted figures increasing that another 18% (for a total of 73%) to 18.9 students. This seems to be because institutions with large Single honours programmes make up a greater proportion of the responses this year.

For Joint honours the averages per HEI are steadily in the 30s down to and including 2020, but then, in parallel with Table 3, fall 60% from 35.2 to 14.2 students per institution in 2021, which is fewer than for Single honours. With substitution, however, this year's Joint honours average instead leaps by 47% to a record 51.7 students. Both the large fall and large rise are out of line with previous patterns. If we discount the anomalous 14.2 unsubstituted average for 2021, then once again Joint honours students usually (since 2018) outnumber Single honours by at least two to one.

Being obliged to attempt some kind of overall assessment for 2021, it seems most reasonable to take the steadier sequence of figures in most of the tables to suggest a continuation of previous patterns. That would mean this year's Single honours figure remaining fairly steady or possibly rising a little, with fewer programmes likely to result in one missed return having a bigger impact on the overall data. The previous pattern for Joint honours was more varied and so we should be wary about what we might have expected from a full set of figures for 2021. But considering all the data together, and bearing in mind the numerous large missing programmes, we might cautiously suggest that these numbers are rising, and potentially by a significant percentage. Rather more confidently, it does seem most likely that there continue to be more Joint than Single honours students, and probably still at least twice as many.

The preference for Joint honours seems to be common across the field of Modern Languages as well as in Chinese studies. In most Joint honours programmes the language component of the degree is the same as for Single honours: usually 40 credits out of 120 in each of the first two years of UK based study. For a full joint degree, students will then take a non-language option in Chinese studies to make up their credits to 60 – half of the credits required each year. Where Chinese studies is

⁹ The other two are Durham and Leeds.

taken as a minor, the 40 credits of language will take up all the available credits. Accordingly, the student preference for joint degrees including Chinese studies does not imply any reduction in graduate language competence. It does, however, suggest that students taking Chinese alongside another subject, such as history, linguistics or sociology, are getting a full disciplinary training alongside their language acquisition, and it is easy to see why this might be attractive to so many students.

This preference could be seen as part of a wider trend away from Area studies in UK HEIs over at least the last decade that has led to closures first of smaller departments but more recently even large centres such as at Nottingham. On the other hand, some of the larger departments, such as English, History or Politics, which were traditionally deeply Eurocentric, are increasingly undergoing 'internationalisation', 'globalisation' or 'decolonisation', primarily by recruiting staff to teach specialisms in different world regions, sometimes including East Asia. Having such regional expertise in these departments is creating more opportunities for Joint honours students to complement their language study with specialist teaching on China in the wider disciplinary context of a different department.

Non-degree study

At the same time, many non-language degree programmes allow, encourage or require students to include in their degree some study of a different discipline, sometimes for credit and sometimes not, and languages are a fairly popular option for this purpose. Students studying for credit will typically join first year Chinese studies students in language classes taught for four or more hours a week, while uncredited offerings are typically less demanding, and usually work like an evening class, meeting for perhaps two hours a week. Students taking either option are usually only able to fit a limited amount of language into their programme of credited study or their informal study schedule, and thus many colleagues responsible for Chinese language teaching find themselves with large numbers in introductory classes, most of whom do not continue much further with the language. This phenomenon, however, may provide the most comparable measure of student uptake of Chinese language study, since it is relatively straightforward to count how many students are enrolled in first year Chinese (for credit), or in uncredited classes. Accordingly, in an effort to provide at least one consistently comparable measure of trends in Chinese studies across UK HEIs, the UCCL survey last year began to ask for these two numbers. It is hoped that over time these extra pieces of data will enable us to build a more systematic picture of this key activity in Chinese studies. The number on first year modules would include all those taking Chinese studies degrees, but the balance would represent those registered for degrees in other subjects.

Most Chinese studies degrees are four years long, including a year abroad. The total number of undergraduate students for 2021 is 766, or 1482 with substitution, which gives us roughly 191, or 370, in the first year. If we take these away from the total of 660 students taking first year Chinese (or 1100 with substitution), we have either 469 or 730 students taking Chinese language as part of a different degree.

Although some free text comments indicate that there may still be occasional complications in how these students are counted, in general this should provide a more stable comparison of Chinese language uptake from year to year. So far the raw data suggests a drop from 704 to 660 students taking first year Chinese in 2021, but this reflects the considerably smaller number of institutions included for this year. However, the average per institution rose by 29% from 24.3 to 31.4, or to 52.4 with substitution, which is 116%. These figures reflect the very large cohorts taking first year credit-bearing Chinese at some institutions, such as 139 at Edinburgh and 103 at Warwick.

The 396 students taking extracurricular Chinese language is down 30% from 566 last year, but with substitution this becomes a rise to 739 and an increase of 31%. These numbers are considerably smaller than those taking the language for credit. That may indicate that students recognise the extra effort involved in learning Chinese compared to a European language, and see sense in committing

to studying it for credit. From the other direction it may also be that more students in non-credit classes drop them either because they find progress too slow, or just because these studies have a lower priority. We will continue to track these figures in future years in pursuit of longer term patterns.

Taught postgraduates (PGT)

Last year, 2020/21, taught postgraduate numbers in Chinese studies dropped 27% compared to the previous year, even with many more HEIs included. PGT courses classed by survey respondents as Chinese studies frequently recruit significant numbers of international students, and the media reported that, looking across all subjects, universities unexpectedly recruited a record number of such students in 2020, mostly to PGT courses. There is in principle no limit to such recruitment since neither PGT degrees nor international students have ever been subject to direct quotas or caps. At undergraduate level Chinese studies seemed to benefit in 2020 from the general increase in student numbers, but the reduction in Chinese studies PGT numbers stood in contrast to increased PGT admissions across all subject areas.

Happily, there was a sharp recovery in 2021/22, seen in every one of Tables 1 to 4. Figures for the 18 HEIs in Table 3 give 465 PGT, just 4% up from the last 'normal' year in 2019, but with substitution this grows to an 11% rise to 499 students. The total collected data in Tables 1 and 4 show a similar rise of 26% compared to 2019, to 566 students. The eight comparable institutions in Table 2 show a 67% rise between the same two years (from 272 to 455). These rises occur despite the absence, again, of several large PGT programmes from the 2021 data, so we may be confident that these figures are underestimates. In terms of averages, 27 PGT per institution represents a 26% increase over the last 'normal' year in 2019, which itself showed a 25% increase over 2018. The substituted data only confirms these upward trends. PGT figures have resumed their previous role as the undoubted success story of Chinese studies recruitment in the UK.

Last year this report suggested that the drop in numbers for 2020's PGT courses may have been due to Covid, new immigration restrictions, or lack of clarity resulting from Brexit, and this year's strong rises seems to at least partly corroborate this assessment. Although immigration remains somewhat fraught and the effects of Brexit are ongoing, much the biggest effect seems to have come from the lifting of Covid travel bans, particularly for the PRC students who make up a significant proportion of international PGT students in Chinese studies programmes. If this is the case then we might anticipate that PGT numbers could rise still further in future years, since all Covid restrictions in the PRC have now been removed following remarkable widespread popular protests.¹⁰

Research postgraduates (PGR)

PGT courses generally last for 12 months and numbers can accordingly be volatile, whereas a PhD involves three years of registered study, and so annual figures change more slowly. PGR numbers appear to have remained quite steady between 2019 and 2021, rising in Tables 1 and 4 from 195 to 203 students last year, with its larger survey response rate, and dropping again this year to 192.¹¹ Table 2, however, suggests a steady increase, by 10% last year and 29% this year for 159 students recorded for 2021/22. Table 3 shows numbers for the last four years fluctuating between 153 and 195, though the substituted figure for 2021 shows a 20% rise to a record 217. If we consider the

¹⁰ Helen Davidson, 'China scraps tracking app as zero-Covid policy is dismantled', *The Guardian*, 12 Dec 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/12/china-scraps-tracking-app-amid-widespread-dismantling-of-zero-covid-policy>.

¹¹ PGR numbers overwhelmingly consist of PhDs, but include a very small proportion of research based Masters degrees.

number of PGR per institution, however, we can see in Table 4 that the peak year so far was 2019, with an average of 10.3 students, which fell the next year by roughly a third to 7.0. That drop could be attributed to UK students hesitating to embark upon a PhD amid the uncertainty of Covid and Brexit, and international PGR sharing with international PGT the same concerns about Covid, Brexit and immigration regimes. The figure might also have been affected by receiving more responses from institutions with fewer PGR or, more worryingly, to a real fall in numbers. Happily, there has been significant recovery (30%) this year to a 9.1 average, which most likely reflects China's partial reopening. The remaining gap is more than compensated by the substituted figures, which give us a rise to 251 students at a rate of 12.0 per HEI, handily beating the record year of 2019. These increases suggest the trajectory for PGR is generally upwards.

The PGR figures are in any case a significant undercount. In the first place, PhDs on China topics can be undertaken in any subject area, and universities rarely have a system for collecting the relevant data from every department in a university. And secondly, some known large cohorts do not appear in these figures. Glasgow, for instance, no longer submits a survey response despite hosting the Scottish Centre for China Research and a healthy complement of PhD students, and Manchester's return of 2 or 3 students for the last several years seems far too low for the number of China related academics in Modern Languages and Cultures¹² and at the research centre, the Manchester China Institute.

Staff

As defined here, language teaching is an essential component of UG Chinese studies. We should note that some PGT programmes also include a language component, such as the MSt degrees at Oxford. Language training, particularly for conversation, requires smaller classes if it is to be most effective. This makes language teaching notably vulnerable to one-size-fits-all cost-saving exercises. For europhone students, Chinese takes more time to learn than another European language, so requiring more hours in the classroom per credit earned than French, German. or even *ab initio* options such as Portuguese or Czech. While we learned during the pandemic that almost anything can be taught online if there is no alternative, screen-based language classes are more unsatisfactory than for many other subjects due the difficulty of conveying subtleties of pronunciation and gesture.

Pandemic or no, staffing numbers appear to have fluctuated considerably in the last five years. This makes substituted figures more unreliable than useful, and for this reason they are not used for staff this year. Tables 1 to 3 all show peaks in different years, suggesting that the differences may have less to do with Covid than was surmised in last year's report.

Accordingly it is most useful to compare staff per institution (teaching at all levels) and staff : student ratios (SSR) for undergraduates.¹³ We see in Table 5 how average staffing numbers (UG and PG) fell faster than average student numbers between 2017 and 2018, damaging the UG SSR, then bulged remarkably in 2019 (a 35% rise) to give an UG SSR of under 1 : 6, before the staff average collapsed again in 2020, despite the larger student body and fairly steady student average of that year.¹⁴ 2020's UG SSR rose 40% to 8.28, more than wiping out the previous year's fall, and placing considerable

¹² This is a sub-unit of the huge portmanteau School of Arts, Languages and Culture, which may well make it harder than usual to track the numbers needed for the UCCL survey.

¹³ These figures give SSRs that are better than the reality because it is too complicated to disaggregate the four institutions that have only postgraduate programmes, which inflates the total number of staff in relation to undergraduate teaching,

¹⁴ Full staff figures were not provided for 2020/21 for Newcastle which, as the previous years's figures show, has a healthy number of staff, but scattered over several departments. However, including these figures would only have mitigated, not changed, the overall trend for 2020.

and sometimes excessive strain on teaching staff, particularly in the context of extra work due to teaching in Covid conditions. As in other subject areas, workloads were not sustainable.

Table 5: Staff per institution, with percentage changes year on year, and staff : student ratios (SSR) for UGs and all students

Year	HEI	Staff Total	Avg/ HEI	% Change	UG Total	Avg/ HEI	SSR (UG)	% Change	Stud'nt Total	Avg/ HEI	SSR (Total)	% Change
2017	20	131	6.55	--	1068	53.4	8.15	--	1616	80.8	12.3	--
2018	19	113	5.95	-9.2	1012	53.3	8.96	9.9	1524	80.2	13.5	9.8
2019	19	153	8.05	35.3	907	47.7	5.93	-33.8	1550	81.6	10.1	-8.9
2020	29	161.4	5.56	-45.0	1336	46.1	8.28	39.6	1867	64.4	11.6	14.9
2021	21	135	6.43	15.6	766	36.5	5.67	-31.5	1524	72.6	11.3	-2.6

With the onset of lockdown universities immediately began to seek cost savings; their first recourse in many cases was not to renew temporary contracts, and in some cases redundancies followed, whether voluntary or compulsory. In some cases there was also closure of degree programmes or even ending language teaching altogether (e.g. Aston). The UCCL figures do not specifically record temporary contracts, and although many of these are also fractional (part time), it is also the case that language teaching particularly lends itself to fractional contracts that may be permanent or renewed on a rolling basis. The more rigid maximum size of conversation classes may have helped to protect some jobs. We may further observe that from March 2020 many universities expressed concerns about their fee income, which is now their main source of revenue. In 2020 they were, however, taking fees from more students overall, including more international students, who are charged much more, while paying fewer staff.

The situation in 2021 is more positive. From the responses in Table 5 we see that staff numbers per institution have risen somewhat while UG numbers are down, giving the best SSR for the last five years, as it fell over 30% to 5.67. Including postgraduates reduces the fall, but the overall SSR is still the second lowest in this period. One may hope that SSRs continue to reflect the needs of language teaching in relation to the numbers of students actually enrolled.

Summary

We have considered a rather complex set of data comprising the raw survey numbers, two sets of comparable institutions, and averages per HEI. When taken together, these various sets of figures do provide some useful indications of the state of Chinese studies. Where there are still disparities between the basic data and the comparable figures, we have reason to reflect on why that might be. Substituting last year's figures for data missing in the current year does seem to even out many of the disparities and provide a clearer sense of trajectories. 2020/21 was of course an extraordinary year, but longer term trends may now be reemerging.

Those trends suggest that UG numbers are fairly steady, and if there is any change then it is upwards, with Joint honours continuing to be roughly two or three times as popular as Single honours. Research postgraduates seem to follow similar patterns: if they are not simply steady then they may be rising slowly. The continuing success is taught postgraduates; setting aside the disruptions of the 'Covid year' of 2020/21, PGT numbers just keep rising. Staff figures are much more volatile, and even though overall SSRs look relatively steady, they are somewhat down from 2018. Meanwhile, the large swings in UG SSRs must add to administrative labour, and there will be a significant impact on staff workloads and thus wellbeing, and accordingly on teaching.

HESA Figures

Figures for students enrolled in Chinese studies at university level are provided by HESA. Subject level data by institution is no longer freely available from HESA, so the data used here comes from a bespoke request, for which a charge is made.¹⁵ The HESA subject areas included are (101164) Chinese studies, together with (101165) Chinese languages, (101166) Chinese literature, and (101167) Chinese society and culture studies.¹⁶ The most recent bespoke HESA figures are always for the previous year, so the use of this data below confines discussion to 2020/21.

The request covers undergraduates, Masters and doctoral students, all listed separately for each HEI.¹⁷ The HESA figures can only provide an impression of enrolments on Chinese studies programmes as the numbers have been apportioned; that is, they have been calculated by counting students studying Single honours Chinese as 1.0, Joint honours as 0.5 and as a minor subject as 0.33. Part time students are also counted according to the proportion of their course that they are completing in the relevant year, which will normally be 0.5.¹⁸ Therefore, these figures do not refer to individuals, but to the number of notional places taken up by a larger number of real students on a range of programmes where Chinese studies comprises different proportions of the degree. Furthermore, HESA provides all of their data rounded to the nearest 5, which removes very small programmes from the figures altogether.

Due to the large proportion of students taking Chinese studies as part of a joint degree or as a minor subject, the HESA data offers a significant undercount of the number of actual students taking Chinese studies. It seems likely that the HESA numbers represent no more than half of those actual undergraduates involved in Chinese studies. Moreover, HESA figures will not count postgraduate students working on a China focused research topic if their degree title does not contain the word 'Chinese' as in the four HESA categories listed above. This may be less of a problem at PGT level, since Masters courses in Translation or Interpreting provide probably the largest proportion of PGT students in Chinese studies. However, it becomes a much greater problem at PGR level, where more students with China interests are registered in disciplinary departments such as History or Sociology. Hence a student working on an aspect of Chinese politics and registered for a PhD in Politics will not feature at all in the HESA data requested. Thus the HESA data shares with the UCCL figures this problem of how to count (or even locate) those engaged in China related study where this is not mentioned in their degree title.

This issue is highlighted by the ten HEIs that appear in the UCCL list but not in the HESA data (Cambridge (!), Edge Hill, Glasgow, Heriot Watt, Hertfordshire, Portsmouth, Regents, St Andrews, Southampton and Ulster, even though several responded to the UCCL survey.¹⁹ Some of these ten have no HESA data because they have no degrees (Edge Hill, Southampton, Ulster), some because they only have minors in Chinese (Hertfordshire, Regents), some either because their degrees do not fit the HESA subject definitions or because the HEI did not provide HESA with data (Portsmouth, which has joint degrees where Mandarin is one of a suite of language options), and some because their relevant programmes had 2.4 or fewer students and so would have been rounded down to zero. We also note here that the University of Bedfordshire and Glyndwr

¹⁵ Totals by subject for all institutions are still freely available, but this is of limited value for this report.

¹⁶ These are the HECoS (Higher Education Classification of Subjects) codes, which were adopted by HESA in 2019/20.

¹⁷ The HESA figures for Masters students include research Masters and taught Masters in the same count, whereas the UCCL figures count research Masters as PGR along with PhDs.

¹⁸ For more details see HESA, 'Count of students vs full-person equivalent (FPE) vs full-time equivalent (FTE)', <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/students>.

¹⁹ Cambridge continues to have a programme, but recruitment is low, and may not have reached the threshold to provide a number greater than zero.

University are included in the HESA table but were not on the list used to request the UCCL figures. These institutions will be sent UCCL proformas for next year's report.

One result is that, as shown in Table 6, more students are consistently recorded as enrolled in Chinese studies in the UCCL data than there are by HESA from at least ten more institutions. The patterns of average number of students per HEI are also quite different, with UCCL figures suggesting more students distributed over more smaller programmes where the HESA figures fluctuate considerably with a student body that was falling consistently until 2020/21. As we have seen, this is explained because this was the 'bulge' year for UG recruitment, due to government policy decisions relating to Covid. The HESA data thus agrees with the survey data to this extent. Since HESA data is only available for the previous academic year, it is impossible to check whether these figures will revert to previous patterns in the same way that the UCCL figures broadly have done.

Table 6: HESA data – most recent four years available²⁰

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
UCCL All Students	1616	1524	1551	1867	1524
UCCL Average/HEI	80.80	80.21	81.63	64.38	72.57
HESA All Students	1315	1200	1105	1115	
HESA Average/HEI	29.89	41.38	31.57	30.97	

These differences are important for anyone seeking to use data to support arguments for defending, starting or expanding Chinese studies offerings. Senior management teams are likely to use HESA data and thus may interpret Chinese studies as a broadly declining subject, even though the UCCL data is far more granular and representative, in spite of its incompleteness and the difficulties of capturing the complexities of the field. Providing the institutional HESA data may thus be seen as a service to the field, of interest to colleagues making comparisons for specific institutional purposes.

We may make a few comments on the data for individual institutions found in the attached spreadsheet. The HESA figures show the huge fall in numbers at Nottingham over the last three years due to the closure of the Chinese Studies department and the reallocation of staff, resulting in the teaching out of Single honours, of which the last year was 2019/20. The numbers also appear to show no students at Essex, even though its programme is in the strongly recruiting area of Translation studies (MA Translation and Professional Practice). Numbers have been steady or rising across 3 years of HESA data at Bangor, Cardiff, Chester, Durham, Kings, Lancaster, Liverpool, Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan, Newcastle, Trinity St David, Warwick and Westminster (13 institutions, two fewer than the previous year), but appear to be falling at Bristol, Goldsmiths, Leeds, Nottingham Trent, Oxford, SOAS and Swansea (7 institutions). Others (Edinburgh, Keele, Sheffield) may be recovering after a couple of years of reduced numbers. The programmes with steady or rising numbers include only one of the half dozen oldest programmes that traditionally focused on Single honours (Durham), while those with falling numbers include three of these (Leeds, Oxford, SOAS), which tend to have larger enrolments. The other two, Edinburgh and Sheffield, are among those that may be rising again.²¹ None of the data here yet includes the new programmes at St

²⁰ The HESA data records the total number of students as 1110, but a check of the calculation shows that this is an error.

²¹ Until the beginnings of expansion in the field in the 1990s, there were Single honours Chinese programmes only at Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Leeds, Oxford and SOAS, joined by Sheffield a little ahead of a wider

Andrews, which had their first intake in 2020/21, since students in the Scottish system are not counted on their degrees until they reach the final two Honours years.

In terms of the field as whole, the greatest value of the HESA figures is that they are recorded robustly for all UK HEIs and therefore should offer a more consistent picture than the UCCL data. The HESA data that is freely available also offers national totals for different categories, including international students, and we now consider these overall figures.

Table 7 shows the total number of students enrolled in Chinese studies degrees in each academic year from 2014/15 to 2021/22, using freely available HESA data, which at time of writing was available for one year later than the bespoke data.²²

Table 7: HESA total student numbers for Chinese studies 2014-21

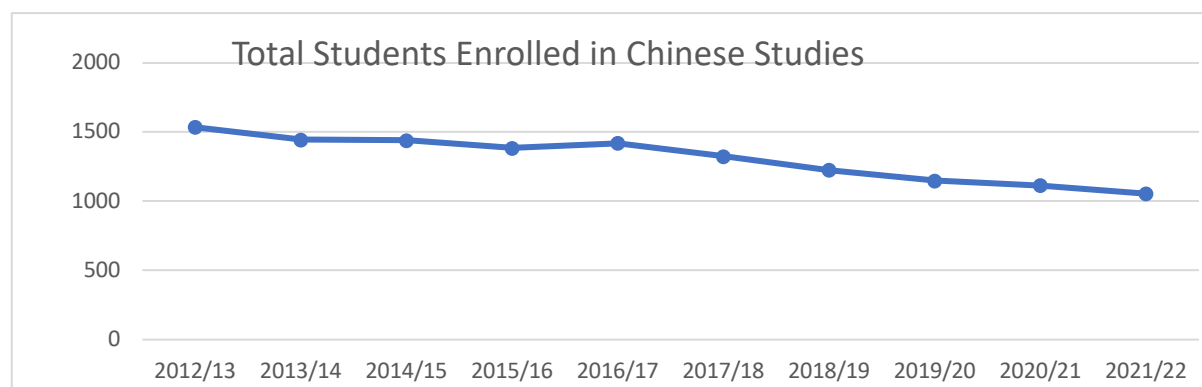
Year	Total Students Enrolled	From UK	From EU	Non UK
2014/15	1440	850	190	395
2015/16	1385	895	175	315
2016/17	1420	925	180	315
2017/18	1325	885	170	270
2018/19	1225	805	160	260
2019/20	1150	785	160	205
2020/21	1115	760	145	205
2021/22	1055	735	115	215

According to these figures enrolments in Chinese studies have been falling overall since at least 2015. If we include the total numbers for 2012/13 and 2013/14 that were recorded in the previous versions of this report, the downward trend only becomes more apparent. In the graph below we can see how student numbers have fallen from 1535 in 2012 to 1055 in 2021/22, a drop of 31% in less than a decade. From the high point of 2016/17 the drop for UK students is 21% to 2021/22, 36% for EU students, and 32% for non-UK students, who even show a marginal recovery in the most recent year. In general, however, there is no sign here of a Covid 'bulge' improving the figures even temporarily.

growth and diversification in offerings. There were no joint programmes, but Leeds required a minor in a different discipline.

²² These total figures currently come from a filter using detailed Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) categories in HESA Table 52 (dt051).

Graph 1



As noted, however, the HESA data is not representative of actual student numbers. A likely factor contributing to the decrease is the redistribution of students from Single to Joint honours degrees, noted above. Since HESA counts Joint honours students as only 50% in Chinese studies, the shift towards Joint honours indicated in the UCCL data since 2018 would more than compensate for the year on year decrease suggested in the HESA figures.

Tables 8, 9 and 10 show the HESA data for undergraduates, and for taught and research postgraduates. The tables record the total number of students for each academic year along with the number of first years, full and part time students, and the shares that come from the UK, EU and non-UK/EU countries.²³

Undergraduates

The figures in Table 8 confirm an overall downward trend in HESA undergraduate numbers to 2021. There was a small recovery in 2019 as an unusually large cohort commenced their studies, but the fall appears to have been accelerating again in the last two years recorded here, with falls of over 6% and over 8% year on year, as against a 2% fall in 2016. UK numbers have been most volatile, with rises of 6% and 4% in 2015 and 2016 wiped out, and more, by the subsequent falls ranging between 2% and 8.5% a year. EU numbers have been the slowest to change, but the best they have done is remain the same from year to year (though usually falling), until 2021, when they fell by 26%. Clearly this is due to the removal of free movement to the UK from the EU and the corresponding imposition of high international fees. While lamenting another damaging effect of Brexit, we may take it as testament to the value of UK Chinese studies to EU students that the fall is not larger. Non UK/EU undergraduate figures had been plummeting by no less than double figures every year, with the biggest fall (31%) in 2016, but in 2019 and 2020 they rose by 8% each year, before falling back again by 7% in 2021.

Table 8: HESA undergraduate Chinese studies breakdown 2014-21

Year	Total UG	Yr 1 UG	F/T UG	P/T UG	UK	EU	Non UK/EU
2014/15	1110	330	1060	50	790	150	165
2015/16	1120	385	1070	50	835	140	145
2016/17	1100	320	1045	55	865	135	100

²³ These figures are obtained by applying filters to the online version of HESA Table 52.

2017/18	1030	300	985	45	820	135	75
2018/19	940	250	915	30	750	130	60
2019/20	960	325	910	50	735	145	65
2020/21	905	265	870	30	700	135	70
2021/22	830	245	805	35	670	100	65

Aside from reductions due to the shift towards more joint degrees, it seems likely that the large falls in non UK undergraduates can be at least partly explained by the combination of international fees and the ‘hostile environment’ towards international students that applies even for temporary stays for study purposes. These policies, in their many versions, are now of at least ten years’ standing, and the damage to recruitment continues to be felt.²⁴ Conversely, the change to visa rules which allows students to remain in the UK to work for two years after completing degrees, which came into effect in September 2019, does not seem to have spurred a rise in non-UK undergraduate recruitment.²⁵ The figures suggest no visible impact of the Covid pandemic.

Postgraduates (taught)

Postgraduate programmes are less likely to be joint degrees and so are much less subject to reductions created by HESA’s counting method. Until 2019 the PGT figures in Table 9 show a more stable picture than undergraduates, where annual PGT fluctuations reflect the fact that most such courses are just 12 months long. 2019, however, saw a sudden 38% drop, unrelated to Covid, followed by partial recoveries of around 9% in each of the last two years recorded. This seems to be largely the effect of the 46% drop in non UK/EU recruitment in that year again followed by similar partial recoveries. For PGT, UK figures have been most stable, while EU students have fallen for the same reasons as undergraduates. The relatively small numbers in the table are affected by HESA’s policy of providing data rounded to the nearest 5, which will tend to magnify the percentage changes and thereby distort their significance, but we note that the pattern is entirely at odds with that provided by the UCCL figures, which show an overall rising picture punctuated by a clear ‘Covid effect’ in 2020.

Table 9: HESA Taught Postgraduate Chinese studies breakdown 2014-21

Year	Total taught PG	F/T PGT	P/T PGT	UK	EU	Non UK/EU
2014/15	270	260	10	50	30	190
2015/16	235	225	10	60	30	145
2016/17	280	265	15	55	40	185

²⁴ One early incident suggesting the specific targeting of students was the Border Agency’s revocation of London Metropolitan’s ability to sponsor non-EU students for visas in 2012, followed by the Home Office’s response to reports – later found to be wildly exaggerated – of organised cheating in English language exams for foreign students in 2014. David Batty, ‘Border Agency decision threatens thousands of international students’, *The Guardian*, 30 Aug 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/aug/30/border-agency-international-students-threat>; Rajeev Sayal, ‘Home Office ‘rushed to penalise’ students accused of cheating’, *The Guardian*, 28 Sept 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/18/home-office-rushed-to-penalise-students-accused-of-cheating>.

²⁵ British High Commission New Delhi, ‘UK announces 2-year post-study work visa for international students’, 11 Sept 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-2-year-post-study-work-visa-for-international-students>.

2017/18	260	240	20	60	35	165
2018/19	250	235	15	55	25	175
2019/20	155	145	20	45	20	95
2020/21	170	155	15	55	10	105
2021/22	185	170	15	55	10	115

With such small numbers a handful of programmes that recruit well can make a big difference. Hence it seems likely that the HESA numbers here come largely from Translation and Interpreting programmes, and from a couple of large PGT programmes in Chinese studies or in other departments. Some of these programmes mention China in the title, such as the MSc China and Globalisation in the Politics department at Kings College London, but this is relatively unusual, as seen for example in the suite of PGT courses with China content in various departments at Sheffield. In 2021/22 Kings had 60 PGT students enrolled, while Sheffield recruited 261 students in the same year.

It is disturbing that this data is now showing a fall, when until 2019 Chinese studies was broadly maintaining its position in the busy and competitive field of PGT programmes. This, too, in a context in which overall PGT numbers in all subjects continue to rise, in some places dramatically, but – as at UG level – Chinese studies is not benefitting.²⁶ One explanation for this at PG level could be the language barrier for those yet to acquire Chinese language skills sufficient for postgraduate study. Such skills are harder to obtain outside the context of a first degree, which colleagues observe acts as a deterrent to some potential PG students.

Set against that, these HESA figures for Chinese studies are certainly an undercount. As already noted, it is clear from the UCCL figures – partial though they are – that PGT students are studying and researching China related topics in growing numbers in programmes that do not mention China options in the title, but these students are impossible to count systematically.

Postgraduates (research)

The trend in HESA's numbers for PhD programmes is less positive than the UCCL figures for PGR. PhD programmes are not affected by HESA's counting of joint degree or part time students, because joint PhDs are essentially non-existent and the data show that there have been 5 Chinese studies PhD students on part time routes since 2014 or possibly earlier. These 5 were recorded in the year most affected by Covid, and we may imagine that some UK students adopted a part time route in those circumstances. However, since all of these numbers are obviously small, they are affected both by HESA's rounding policy and by the disproportionate effect on calculations of percentage change.

Taking all this into account, we can see that PhD numbers have remained essentially stable since a 50% fall between 2014 and 2015. Since these numbers are so small to start with, we did not automatically need to be worried about the falls to zero for both UK and EU students in 2018/19, but the failure of the EU numbers to recover seems most likely to be another Brexit deficit. By 2018 the likely possibility of Brexit being confirmed was already causing confusion among students, and since 2020 EU students have been liable for international fees.²⁷ Since there is strong competition at this level from EU institutions, many of which also work in English, there is a reducing benefit to EU students from coming to the UK for a PhD, unless they are seeking a very specific supervisor.

²⁶ See HESA SB265 Figure 1, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he#numbers>.

²⁷ Universities UK, 'Changes for EU students in the UK: FAQs on fees, immigration, Erasmus+', 20 Dec 2022, <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/topics/international/changes-eu-students-uk-faqs-fees>.

Table 10: HESA Research Postgraduate Chinese studies breakdown 2014-19

Year	Total Research PG	F/T PGR	P/T PGR	UK	EU	Non UK/EU
2014/15	60	55	0	10	5	40
2015/16	30	30	0	0	5	25
2016/17	35	35	0	5	5	25
2017/18	35	35	0	5	5	30
2018/19	35	35	0	0	0	30
2019/20	30	30	0	0	0	30
2020/21	35	30	5	5	0	30
2021/22	35	35	0	5	0	25

Once again, however, we must note that significantly more students are now working on China related topics outside Chinese studies departments, although institutional structures mean that it remains impossible to get anything like an accurate count of just how many there are.

Impact of Confucius Institutes

The growth of Confucius Institutes (CI) at UK HEIs (and internationally) has been a subject of much discussion, concern and sometimes controversy, whether within the field of Chinese studies,²⁸ among right leaning thinktanks such as the Henry Jackson Society,²⁹ strongly critical parliamentary caucuses such as the China Research Group,³⁰ or in the wider media.³¹ In July 2022 Rishi Sunak promised to close CIs, a process that will be enabled by provisions in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill.³² At time of writing the government is considering amendments to this bill made in the Lords, as the last stage before proceeding to royal assent.

The 2020 update of the BACS report on the state of the field added the first assessment of the impact of CIs on the uptake of Chinese studies at UK HEIs. Of the 45 institutions in the UCCL

²⁸ For example, Andreas Fulda, 'Chinese propaganda has no place on campus', *Foreign Policy*, 15 Oct 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/15/confucius-institute-chinese-propaganda-campus-communist-party-censorship/>.

²⁹ Sam Dunning and Anson Kwong, 'An investigation of China's Confucius Institutes in the UK', September 2022, <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Confucius-Institutes-in-UK.pdf>.

³⁰ China Research Group (CRG), 'Briefing: Confucius Institutes in the UK', <https://chinaresearchgroup.org/research/confucius-institutes-in-the-uk>. This China Research Group should not be confused with the international academic collaboration of the same name based at Nottingham University and including many China-based scholars: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/business/who-we-are/centres-and-institutes/crg/research.aspx>.

³¹ For example, Pratik Jakhar, 'Confucius Institutes: The growth of China's controversial cultural branch', BBC News, 7 Sept 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-49511231>; Poppy Wood, 'Confucius Institutes in UK universities 'are part of China's propaganda system', report finds', 13 Oct 2022, <https://inews.co.uk/news/confucius-institutes-uk-universities-china-propaganda-1908756>.

³² Tao Zhang, 'Expert Blog: CRG's campaign on Confucius Institutes in the UK', 19 July 2022, <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/about-us/news/news-articles/2022/07/expert-blog-crgs-campaign-on-confucius-institutes-in-the-uk>; David Matthews, 'Universities silent as UK government seeks to close Confucius Institutes' 10 Nov 2022, <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/universities-silent-uk-government-seeks-close-confucius-institutes>.

survey for 2021/22, 22 continue to be linked with a CI.³³ SOAS closed its CI in 2021, which had been the first established (in 2005).³⁴

8 of the respondents to the UCCL survey this year have a CI. The average number of students on Chinese studies courses at HEIs with a CI is 87.4 for 2021, compared to 63.5 for those without, a difference of 38%. This is similar to 2019 but a far smaller gap than in 2020, when CI institutions had well over twice as many students as universities without a CI. The 2020 figures appear to have been skewed by unusually large figures returned by De Montfort and Manchester (both having CIs), neither of which made submissions in 2019 or 2021. This indicates the importance of disaggregating the raw data.

Table 11: Averages per institution for those with and without Confucius Institutes 2019-22

Year	With CI	Staff with CI	Staff no CI	Avg. stud'ts with CI	Avg stud'ts no CI	Avg UG with CI	Avg UG no CI	Avg F/T Sing Hons CI	Avg F/T Sing Hons no CI	Avg F/T Jnt Hons CI	Avg F/T Jnt Hons no CI	Avg PGT with CI	Avg PGT no CI	Avg PGR with CI	Avg PGR no CI
2019/20	12	3.8	3.6	52.1	37.6	30.4	18.1	14.9	13.6	15.3	4.6	18.8	8.4	2.9	11.0
2020/21	14	3.8	2.5	51.9	21.8	33.9	9.7	13.1	6.0	20.8	3.7	13.7	6.5	4.3	5.5
2021/22	8	7.4	5.9	87.4	63.5	43.4	32.2	17.5	16.4	25.8	14.5	36.9	20.9	7.1	10.4

Considering undergraduates, in 2019 and 2021 CI institutions had around one and half times as many as those without a CI, while in 2020 it was four and a half times. These differences affect Joint degrees far more, with more than five times as many at CI than non CI institutions in 2020, dropping to under twice as many in 2021.

In previous years institutions with CIs also had twice as many PGTs, but in 2020 PGTs at CI institutions dropped 27%, before leaping up again this year by two and half times. CI institutions lose their advantage when it comes to PGR students, though the gap has been narrowing. In 2019 non CI institutions had nearly four times the PGR of CI establishments, but in the last two years the difference has been between a fifth and a third more PGR for non CI institutions. Although last year such differences looked like a Covid effect, this year's figures show that the pandemic was not a significant factor. Nonetheless, it may still have been the case that international postgraduates were pushed into CI institutions in China or other countries considered better at managing Covid, rather than coming to the UK.

The advantage in staffing also rose in 2020 then fell slightly this year. Whereas CIs enjoyed only 5.6% more staff until 2019/20, by 2020/21 this had risen to 25%. This is a curious result given that CIs may be more likely to use temporary contracts, which many HEIs did not renew due to Covid, and at the same time staff seconded from China could not come to the UK. More interesting is the general rise

³³ There are 30 CIs in the UK, more than any other country. Those not currently included in the UCCL survey are at Coventry, Huddersfield, the Institute of Education (University College London), London South Bank, Open, Oxford Brookes, Queen Mary and Strathclyde. There are also Confucius classrooms in all four parts of the UK, working with the Institute of Education, Strathclyde, Cardiff and Ulster. These manage the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) that brings high quality language teaching into secondary schools, funded by the UK government. List of CIs provided in the CRG briefing paper, <https://chinaresearchgroup.org/research/confucius-institutes-in-the-uk>. On the MEP: Department for Education and Nick Gibb, MP, 'Pupils across England start intensive lessons in Mandarin, 7 Sept 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pupils-across-england-start-intensive-lessons-in-mandarin>; 'UCL-led Mandarin language programme for schools to continue for a further three years', 18 Aug 2021, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2021/aug/ucl-led-mandarin-language-programme-schools-continue-further-three-years>; 'Mandarin Excellence Programme', <https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/mandarin-excellence-programme/>.

³⁴ <https://chinaresearchgroup.org/research/confucius-institutes-in-the-uk>

in figures for all categories down to 2021, even though fewer CI institutions made returns this year, including some large programmes, such as those at Newcastle and Nottingham.

It would appear that CI institutions have more staff and teach more students than non CI institutions, except at PGR level. Unfortunately, a clear explanation for this is not immediately apparent, and this report avoids speculation.

Numbers of Students of Chinese Nationality in the UK

The numbers of students of Chinese nationality in the UK are drawn from HESA's publicly available statistics.³⁵ These figures used to represent actual student numbers, but now they are apportioned like the rest of the HESA data, which has changed the numbers discussed in previous versions of this report. Last year's update reanalysed the data using that year's most recent figures, and found the result to be fundamentally the same. In the last two years, however, both available at time of writing, we clearly see the dip due to Covid, but also the beginnings of a recovery.

The number of students of Chinese nationality studying in the UK grew at record rates until the pandemic induced a reduction in 2020/21. From 2006, the earliest year in the HESA data, to 2019, the number of Chinese students at UK HEIs more than quadrupled, and that year HESA's website noted that 'Since 2012/13 the number of entrants from China each year has exceeded the number from all EU countries combined'.³⁶ The 2017/18 figure of 76,825 Chinese nationals studying in the UK represents a 15% increase over the 66,705 enrolled in 2016/17. This was at the time the largest single year on year increase (both in real terms and as a percentage) since the massive growth (topping out at 28% year on year, in 2009/10) that occurred between 2008 and 2012 when numbers almost doubled across a four year period. That bulge was linked to the global financial crisis, which made it cheaper for Chinese students to study in the UK. The 2018/19 figure of 86,895 is a further 13% increase on the recordbreaking year before. 2019/20's increase was a remarkable 20%. Furthermore, it was in this academic year that apportioned figures for new entrants – an undercount of the number of actual students – exceeded 100,000 for the first time, making China the first country ever to have this many first-year students concurrently registered at UK HEIs.³⁷

Then, of course, came the pandemic. Some institutions suspended programmes for 2020/21 partly because international students could not travel, as was the case with Glasgow's MSc International Relations. On the other hand, anecdotally, many institutions experienced an increase in Chinese students taking distance learning routes during 2020/21, and we may presume that it was this that kept the dip in numbers to a mere 5000 students (from 104,165 to 99,160), or 4.8%. In 2021/22 the numbers crept back up nearly 1% to 99,965, and on past performance there is no reason to suppose that the rise in numbers has not resumed.

The increase in enrolled students from China is set against that of other countries in Graph 2 below.

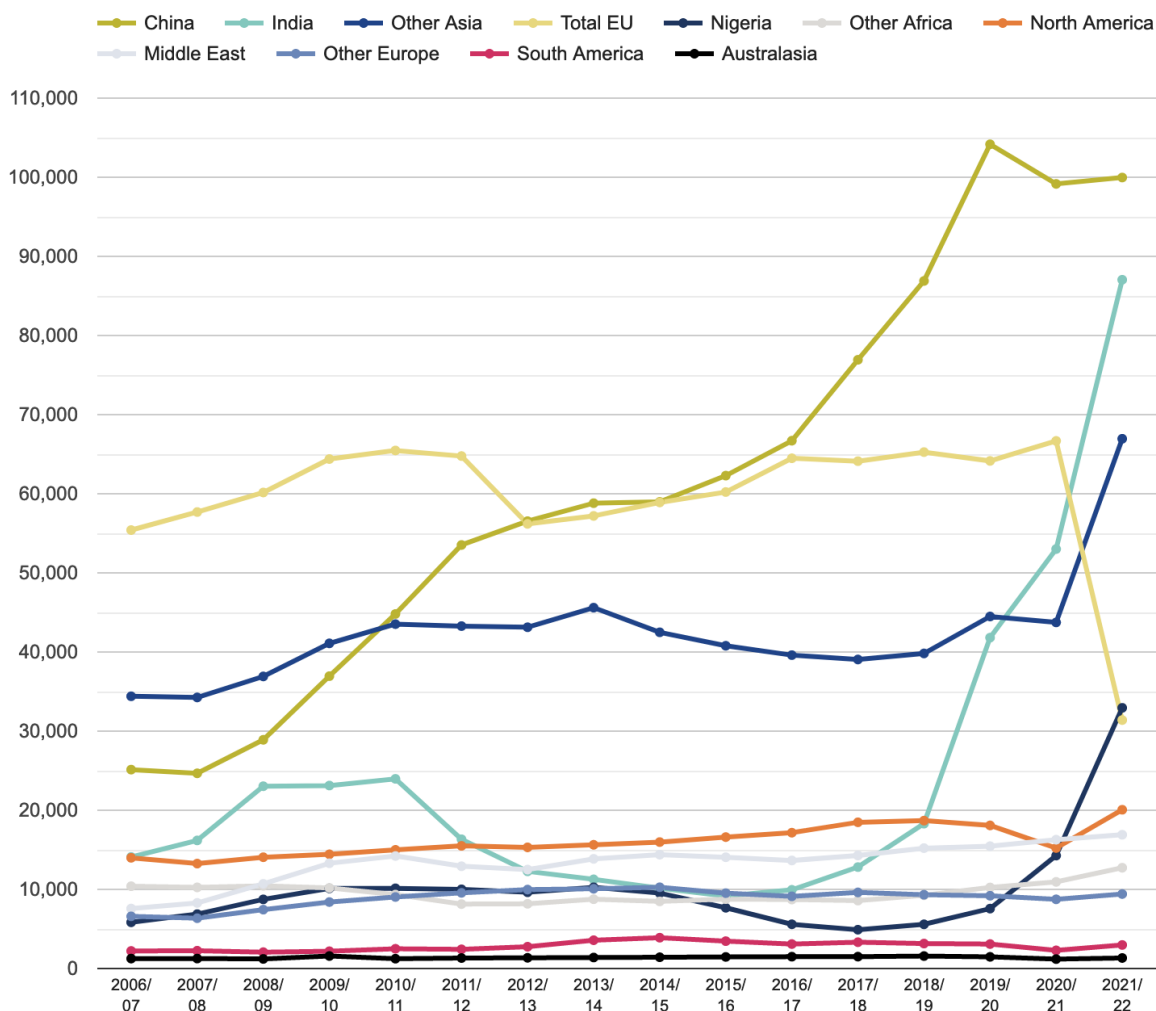
³⁵ HESA Chart 6 – First year non-UK domiciled students by domicile 2006/07 to 2019/20, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/chart-6>, CC-BY-4.0 licence.

³⁶ HESA, 'Where do HE students come from?' as accessed 30 Aug 2021, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from>.

³⁷ The data available for the 2020 update indicated that this threshold was first passed in 2017/18, but this was calculated on the basis of actual students, whereas the current data is apportioned, so that students on joint or part time degrees, for instance, count for 0.5 and not 1.0.

Graph 2 (source: Chart 6 - First year non-UK domiciled students by domicile 2006/07 to 2021/22, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/chart-6>, CC-BY-4.0 licence)

Chart 6 - First year non-UK domiciled students by domicile
Academic years 2006/07 to 2021/22



Here we see a sustained steady picture for much of the world, but we should pay particular attention to the figures for India which, like those for China, also rose significantly in 2008-11 in the wake of the financial crisis. But unlike for China, these numbers fell again from 2011 onwards, to a low in 2015/16. Since 2017 more students have begun to come to the UK from India, and in 2019/20 the growth rate was an astounding 128% over the previous year. This was moderated to just a 27% growth in 2020/21 and jumped back up to a 64% rise in 2021/22, suggesting that in this case the Covid effect was merely to reduce rather than reverse the growth rate. This gives a total of 87,045 Indian students, just 13,000 shy of the China total. Even if the number of Chinese students reverts to its previous growth rate, Indian students studying in the UK look set to overtake them in 2022 or at latest 2023.

Consequently, Chinese students have fallen from 33% of first year non UK domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2019, to 26% in 2021, a share that seems likely to fall further in future years.³⁸ These

³⁸ Calculated from HESA Chart 6, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/chart-6>.

students are concentrated at 40 institutions (out of a total of 247 listed) where the percentage of Chinese students exceeds the overall figure, with the highest rates being at York (58%) and Sheffield (57%).³⁹ Of the Chinese students at UK HEIs in 2021/22, almost 70% were newly enrolled that year, a 4% fall from the last pre-Covid year of 2020.⁴⁰ If most students were beginning three-year first degrees or PhDs we would expect the proportion of first years to be closer to a third, so this large disproportion suggests that a lot of these students are taking shorter degrees. Accordingly these figures are likely to reflect the popularity of taught Master's programmes for international students coming to the UK as these courses normally run for 12 months (full time). The Russell Group's 2018 report on *Links between China and Russell Group universities* confirms that, in these research intensive universities, over 54% of all Chinese students are enrolled on PGT courses.⁴¹

That same Russell Group report – not yet updated – also has some useful information not available in the HESA data about what Chinese students in the UK are choosing to study. The most popular courses among Chinese students at research intensive universities until 2018 were: business studies (33%), engineering and technology (17%), social studies (10%), mathematics (6%) and architecture (5%).⁴² For those institutions that do not already have a large proportion of Chinese students, these subjects may represent opportunities to internationalise the student body, as well as untapped recruiting possibilities at a time when UK HEIs continue to be increasingly dependent on student fees, and especially on inflated international fees.

The PRC Ministry of Education reported that in total, there were 703,500 Chinese students studying abroad in 2019 (including part of the 2019-20 academic year), up 6.3% from the previous year, which had itself seen an 8.8% rise from 2017/18. The UK's share to the end of 2019 was not quite 14% of all Chinese international students, up 2% from the year to the end of 2018.⁴³ Statistics after this date have not been published by the PRC government, and webpages reporting on the 2019 figures have been taken down.⁴⁴ According to the Statista website, Huaon.com estimated that the number of PRC students abroad halved in 2020, but the basis for this estimate is unclear.⁴⁵

A final point worth mentioning is that since September 2019, international students may once again apply for two year work visas after they graduate from a UK HEI.⁴⁶ In 2018 – the last year for which data from the PRC is available – over 78% of Chinese international students returned home after

³⁹ HESA Table 28 – Non-UK HE students by HE provider and country of domicile, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-28>, CC-BY-4.0 licence.

⁴⁰ Calculated from HESA Table 28, *ibid.* and HESA Chart 6, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/chart-6>.

⁴¹ Russell Group, 'Links between China and Russell Group universities', Jan 2018, <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5680/russell-group-universities-links-with-china-january-2018.pdf> (as of 2023 there is no update to this report).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1143787.shtml> (accessed 12 Oct 2021 but now removed); 'Ministry of Education: The total number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2019 is 703,500', 14 Dec 2020, <https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2020-12-14-%0A---ministry-of-education--the-total-number-of-chinese-students-studying-abroad-in-2019-is-703-500%0A--.B1xOB6iV3D.html>; Chart 6 – First year non-UK domiciled students by domicile, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/chart-6>.

⁴⁴ Webpages removed: 'Statistics on Chinese learners studying overseas in 2019', https://en.moe.gov.cn/news/press_releases/202012/t20201224_507474.html; and 'Brief report on Chinese overseas students and international students in ...' (partial title only, gleaned from a search engine), https://en.moe.gov.cn/documents/reports/201901/t20190115_367019.html.

⁴⁵ 'Number of students from China going abroad for study from 2010 to 2020', <https://www.statista.com/statistics/227240/number-of-chinese-students-that-study-abroad/>. The Huaon site returns no hits for searches seeking information on foreign university study.

⁴⁶ Richard Adams, 'UK work visas for foreign graduates to be extended to two years', *The Guardian*, 20 Sept 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/sep/10/uk-work-visas-for-foreign-graduates-to-be-extended-to-two-years>.

completing their degrees, a rise of 8% over the previous year, but since the numbers going to study abroad rose by slightly more (8.8%), there was a net drop in returnees.⁴⁷ It may be that options to stay in the UK could be incentives to some students to choose to study here.

The UK's handling of the virus was widely perceived as disastrous in China, but this has since been overtaken by popular anger at Xi Jinping's continued harsh lockdowns.⁴⁸ While last year it seemed fairly likely that Chinese parents, and students themselves, might rethink decisions to come to the UK, in fact the pull of international study has proved greater than any such concerns, particularly as the pandemic abates.

China Focused Programmes at UK HEIs

Several of the universities with undergraduate options appear not to have postgraduate offerings (for example, Cardiff, Chester, and Manchester Metropolitan). More unusually, others offer only postgraduate courses, including Glasgow and King's College London. New entrants to the field tend to start out with a focus on one level or the other, such as undergraduate courses at St Andrews, PGT translation and interpreting at Birmingham, and teacher training courses (PGDEs) at Strathclyde.

Undergraduate Level

A survey of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered for 2020 was conducted through the UCAS catalogue in August 2020 and compared with a similar survey in August 2021 for entry in 2021, being careful to include all programmes and not just those in Clearing. Using the search terms 'China' and 'Chinese', the course offerings were compiled into a table by each institution. The spreadsheet (attached) shows the list compiled for entry in 2021, corresponding to the data in this year's UCCL survey.

These two surveys, 12 months apart, show some rapid changes. In August 2020 41 UK institutions were offering a degree to commence that year that usually included the option of credited Chinese language modules alongside some other element of Chinese culture; of these, only 9 offered the study of China or Chinese language as a single honours subject, a drop of 4 institutions from the previous year. In September 2021 nine new institutions (Birmingham City, Cardiff Metropolitan, Coventry, Northern College of Acupuncture, Queen Mary, Reading, St Andrews, Strathclyde and Surrey) enrolled the first students on new China related programmes, while Hertfordshire, Hull, Nottingham Trent and Regents either ceased their offerings in such programmes or did not recruit for 2021.⁴⁹ Exeter, Goldsmiths, LSE and Swansea appear to have closed their undergraduate

⁴⁷ <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1143787.shtml> (webpage removed since last access 12 Oct 2021); <https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2020-12-14-%0A---ministry-of-education--the-total-number-of-chinese-students-studying-abroad-in-2019-is-703-500%0A--.B1xOB6iV3D.html>.

⁴⁸ Billie Thomson, 'China brands Britain's handling of coronavirus as a "mess" as it blasts Boris Johnson for urging people to get back to work', 14 May 2020, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8319159/amp/China-brands-Britains-handling-coronavirus-mess.html>. I have not been able to locate the original *Global Times* article.

⁴⁹ By way of comparison, 29 UK institutions offered a degree with a Chinese language and culture element for entry in 2013 when this survey was first established. A search of UCAS course offerings for the year 2000 found 13 institutions offered programmes under the language heading Chinese, and another 8 programmes under Asian, East Asian or Asian Pacific studies. It is possible that there is some overlap in the count of institutions offering Chinese language and Area studies as the names of institutions are not given. Replicating the 2000 catalogue survey for comparison is not possible as the expansion of course offerings means the categories have changed.

programmes but retained postgraduate options.⁵⁰ Numerous institutions undertook major revisions of their offerings by dropping many courses and adding new ones, notably Bangor, Chester, Lancaster, Liverpool and SOAS. Others reduced or streamlined their offerings for 2021-22, either temporarily or permanently, for instance, Central Lancashire, Chester, Manchester Metropolitan and Warwick.

While the changes in offerings for 2021 were certainly affected by the pandemic, overall the survey results attest to the variety of programmes presently on offer with a China focus and show clearly that more institutions than ever are offering China related programmes.

The most common course offering for entry in 2021 remained a joint degree course with Chinese and another subject. Popular courses are in combination with other languages, politics, and business management. Thus Chinese studies will continue to be underrepresented in the HESA statistics, as universities respond to student demand for Chinese language skills combined with a disciplinary specialism.

Postgraduate Level

Postgraduate courses with a China focus likewise indicate a trend in offerings for Chinese language skills combined with professional or discipline-based training. According to the UCAS website, 89 Chinese studies PG courses were offered by 21 institutions for entry in 2021. These included 31 Translation and/or Interpreting degrees with various emphases, for example conference interpreting, or combined with subjects such as professional practice or entrepreneurship. But while the number of courses appears to have risen, these seem to be concentrated at fewer institutions: 12 as opposed to the 16 recorded in the survey for 2013. These courses are particularly popular with Chinese students in the UK, and may accordingly find favour with senior managements seeking international student fees. These courses find it much harder to find or recruit students for whom Chinese is an additional language. Conversely, there is also a growing number of courses aimed at teaching Chinese as an additional language, such as those at Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Leeds, Nottingham and Trinity St David, and a whole new suite of PGDEs (Postgraduate Diploma in Education) including Mandarin at Strathclyde.

Other disciplinary areas include law, politics and international relations, business, contemporary art, biomedical science, and Chinese medicine. Even more than for undergraduate courses, traditional Sinology is now in the minority.

As a further illustration of the diversity of offerings at this level, two degree awarding institutions not currently listed in the UCCL table were those at the auction houses Sotheby's and Christies. In 2021/22 these offered postgraduate qualifications in Chinese art, which catered to those with a personal or professional interest in this segment of the art trade.

Lastly in this section, we note that more institutions benefitted from links with Chinese partners to offer summer schools or periods abroad in China as part of their postgraduate degrees. Double degrees, where students gain a qualification from both a UK HEI and a Chinese university from the same course, have been quite popular in the Chinese education market. For example, LSE offered UK based students a range of postgraduate double degree courses with Peking University and Fudan. Such programmes capitalise on the appeal of future careers in business and diplomacy with China, and offer the prospect of increased two way exchange of students between the UK and China. The PRC approach to the pandemic means that the future of such programmes remains in question. Throughout the pandemic China strongly restricted foreigners from entering, and the strict lockdown regime only lifted early in 2023, partway through the academic year. Whether the

⁵⁰ LSE was planning to start a BSc in Chinese Language and International Relations in 2020/21, but this was not listed on the UCAS pages in August 2021.

pandemic in the long term forces institutions here and in China to greatly rethink their commitment to such transnational programmes remains an open question.

HEIs with China Focussed Departments, Research Centres or Research Networks

The situation for research and academic exchange between the UK and China is extensive and varied. In order to gain a sense of China related research activities in the UK, this report presents a list of China focussed departments and research centres compiled from an internet search. The list cannot be considered as fully comprehensive; because of the time constraints on this survey it was not possible to look at every HEI in the UK. Although not definitive, the list can provide an idea of the focus of research at doctoral and higher levels in UK HEIs. As can be seen, China related research is being conducted in the areas of business and management, contemporary Area Studies, translation and language teaching, social sciences, and, less frequently, in health, arts, archaeology, religion and media across the UK.

Institutions with Chinese Departments or Sections

- University of Birmingham – [Chinese Studies](#) in School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music
- University of Cambridge – [Department of East Asian Studies](#) in Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
- Cardiff University – [Chinese](#) in the School of Modern Languages
- Central Lancashire – [Asia Pacific Studies](#)
- University of Chester – [Languages and Cultures](#)
- University of Durham – [Chinese Studies](#) in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures
- University of Edinburgh – [Asian Studies](#) in the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures, and Scottish Centre for Chinese Studies
- University of Exeter – [Chinese Studies](#) in Modern Languages and Cultures
- Heriot-Watt University – [Languages and Intercultural Studies](#)
- Lancaster University – [Languages and Cultures](#)
- University of Leeds – [East Asian Studies](#) in the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
- University of Liverpool – [Chinese Studies](#) in the Department of Languages, Cultures and Film
- University of Manchester – [Chinese Studies](#) in Modern Languages and Cultures
- Newcastle University – [East Asian Studies](#) in the School of Modern Languages
- University of Oxford – [University of Oxford China Centre](#), [Centre for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language](#)
- Queen Mary University of London – [Chinese](#) in School of Languages, Linguistics and Film
- University of Reading – [Department of Languages and Cultures](#)
- St Andrews – [Chinese Studies](#) in the School of Modern Languages
- School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) – [China and Inner Asia Section](#)

- University of Sheffield – [School of East Asian Studies](#)
- University of Surrey – [Centre for Translation Studies](#)
- Swansea University – [Mandarin Studies](#)
- University of Wales, Trinity St David – [Chinese Studies and Sinology](#)
- Warwick – [Translation Studies](#) in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures

With China Research Centres

Some of these offer courses whereas others are purely research networks.

- University of Aberdeen [Chinese Studies Group](#)
- Birmingham Institute of Art and Design & Birmingham City University – [Centre for Chinese Visual Arts](#)
- University of Birmingham – [China Research Cluster](#)
- University of Bristol – [China Educational Research Network](#)
- University of Durham – [Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies](#)
- University of Exeter – [Global China Research Centre](#)
- Universities of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt, Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Dundee – [Scottish Centre for China Research](#)
- King's College London – [Lau China Institute](#)
- Lancaster University – [Lancaster China Management Centre](#) and [Lancaster University China Centre](#)
- Universities of Leeds and Sheffield – [White Rose East Asia Centre](#)
- University of Manchester – [Manchester China Institute](#)
- The University of Northampton – [China and Emerging Economies Centre](#)
- University of Nottingham – [China Research Group](#) in the Business School
- University of Oxford – [Oxford Chinese Economy Programme \(at St. Edmund Hall\)](#)
- SOAS – [SOAS China Institute](#)
- University College London – [China Centre for Health and Humanity](#) and [International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology](#)
- University of Warwick – [Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalism](#) (expertise in China)
- The University of Westminster – [Contemporary China Centre](#)
- [Russell Group-China Collaborative Programme](#)

Conclusion

It remains impossible to count all students engaged in China related study. A consistent picture is not immediately obvious from the disparate and variously problematical data available for this year's update, but nonetheless this year's analysis indicates that, for a variety of reasons, overall student interest in Chinese studies is strong and strengthening, with clearly rising PGT numbers showing the

start of a post-Covid recovery, and undergraduate and PGR numbers both increasing too. Although some institutions left the field last year, usually for fundamentally economic reasons, others are pursuing opportunities. Overall, the number and diversity of courses is rising, along with the number of institutions. Staff numbers, too, show some increase in terms of average per institution, and staff : student ratios for undergraduates have fallen to their lowest in the last five years. Workloads continue to increase, however, maintaining earlier concerns about sustainability. As we emerge from the pandemic, the general picture for Chinese studies in the UK is hopeful, although developments within the higher education sector as a whole – and even more so, broader political events and economic trends – will have effects that remain to be seen.

Although the effects of Covid have now largely abated, some changes have been permanent, such as the routine use of online communication and sometimes teaching methods such as Zoom or Teams. Major restructuring in universities also remains with us, and the cost of living crisis has given extra edge to the ongoing strikes by university staff in 2021/22 and beyond. Relations between China and the West and the fallout of Brexit – now joined by the war in Ukraine – continue to worsen the possibilities for open academic exchange, although their real effects on institutional finances are less self-evident. It remains necessary to keep a watching brief on the effects of such major global events on the numbers of people choosing to study China related subjects and on the number of Chinese students able and desiring to study in the UK. Although often overshadowed by more dramatic news, a further factor of concern is the state of the Chinese economy, and any global repercussions that might ensue from major changes, or from any serious unrest in the PRC such as that which prompted the sudden abandonment of Covid precautions in December 2022.⁵¹

In addition, we once again note the increasingly urgent need for more China expertise in government, commerce and industry, the media and education.⁵² The UK government is coming to recognise this need, as seen in the *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (March 2021) and its 2023 ‘refresh’, which emphasises the ‘epoch-defining challenge’ posed by China. The 2023 refresh declares an intention to ‘double funding to build China capabilities across government to better understand China and allow us to engage confidently where it is in our interests to do so’.⁵³ Whether this includes additional funding for developing expertise in universities remains to be seen, but we note that periodic tranches of special government funding have for decades played important roles in the development of UK Chinese studies. Accordingly, this report will watch with great interest what impact this pledge of investment has on the state of Chinese studies in UK universities next year and beyond.

⁵¹ Helen Davidson and Martin Farrer, ‘How fall of property giant Evergrande sent a shockwave through China’, *The Guardian*, 25 Sept 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/sep/25/how-fall-of-property-giant-evergrande-sent-a-shockwave-through-china>; Frances Mao, ‘China abandons key parts of zero-Covid strategy after protests’, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-63855508>.

⁵² Michael Natzler, *The study of China and Mandarin in UK schools and universities*, Higher Education Policy Unit (HEPI) Report 148, n.d.

⁵³ HM Government, *Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (March 2021), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>; and *Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world* (March 2023), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-refresh-2023-responding-to-a-more-contested-and-volatile-world>.