

# FUNDING IN THE UK FOR HIGHER LEVEL NON-SCIENTIFIC CHINA RELATED STUDIES

The British Association for Chinese Studies



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Aims:** This survey aims to give a broad overview of funding available to students and researchers of China related subjects. It also provides information on funding available to Chinese students and researchers coming to the UK.
- **Method:** A spreadsheet format was introduced in 2019 to make it easier to search for relevant funding opportunities. This was checked and updated in 2020-21 for the report of that year. It has been checked and updated again in Autumn 2023, in particular adding opportunities advertised through various mailing lists.
- **Chinese studies funding:** The survey shows that the funding available to students and researchers specifically for Chinese studies covers a range of activities, but the number of opportunities is limited compared to the demand. The funding comes from government organisations, research bodies, charitable organisations, corporations and, occasionally, universities or colleges.
- **Generic funding:** Also listed are selected funding opportunities that are not specific to China focussed research, for which the competition will be greater. There are also selected sources of funding which have highly specific eligibility criteria, but for which some researchers within the broad spectrum of 'Chinese studies' might plausibly apply. Relevant prizes and awards are included for different career stages.
- **Brexit:** The UK's continuing participation in EU research funding programmes has finally been confirmed, restoring the access of UK based scholars to this major source of funding.
- **Covid:** The Newton Fund, of which China was a target country, was renewed after its suspension during the pandemic, but closed in 2021. The replacement, the International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF) is more strongly focussed on science and technology, suggesting it will require significant creativity to obtain grants from this programme for research in Chinese studies. New British Council programmes (e.g. internships, apparently replacing Generation UK) appear to have moved largely online, but there are now also GREAT scholarships for one-year postgraduate programmes.
- **Government funding:** Chinese government funding continues to outweigh that of the UK, both in bringing students from China to study in the UK, and in sending students and researchers to China, through the China Scholarship Council (CSC) and Hanban. This greater reliance on PRC funds may become more problematical in the face of the current regime's policy and behaviour towards researchers and research that are felt to offer criticism.
- **Taiwan:** Taiwan continues to provide some reliable, though far smaller, programmes for Chinese studies through the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation (CCKF), and awareness of these is beginning to improve.
- **Charitable funding:** Charitable trusts in the UK have demonstrated year on year growth since this report was first commissioned in 2013 (both in assets and grants given). Signs of this growth are less visible in Chinese studies funding, with both the Universities China Committee in London (UCCL) and Sino-British Fellowships Trust (SBFT) reducing spending during the pandemic and only in the most recent sets of figures showing the beginnings of uneven returns to previous levels. However, the intended growth in Wellcome Trust awards may benefit some Chinese studies projects or scholars.
- **Corporate funders:** Companies also provide scholarship funding, limited to specific universities and courses.

## AIMS

This survey aims to provide a broad overview of funding available to students and researchers of China focused studies in the UK. It also aims to provide an overview of funding available to students from the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan to come as students or researchers to the UK. The report was originally commissioned by The Universities' China Committee in London (UCCL), and is updated and owned by the British Association for Chinese Studies (BACS).

## SOURCES

The spreadsheet that accompanies this report was created in 2019 to make it easier for anyone in the field to find funding relevant to their career stage and research requirements. The original search included multiple funding bodies, charities and databases. Every two years – most recently in September and October 2023 – the spreadsheet is checked, additional searches are conducted, and new sources are added. The list provided in the funding table cannot be considered definitive but hopes to provide a broad range of available funding options. For the purposes of this survey 'Chinese studies' includes studies related to mainland China and the SARs of Hong Kong and Macau, and Taiwan. Funding specifically for scientific or medical research has not been included.

The original survey in 2013 began with well known supporters of Chinese studies, such as the BACS website, the Great Britain-China Centre (GBCC), The British Council, China Scholarship Council (CSC), and a search through the BACS mailing list archive. The search then fanned out to examine funding options with major research councils and associations, and following up links. A large proportion of the work for this survey went into examining educational trusts to see if their coverage included Chinese studies research or funding for students from China. Potential funders were identified, their annual reports reviewed, and if the scope was not clear they were approached by email or letter. The Scottish equivalent, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, was also searched. In subsequent years, the report has been updated to remove any funding that is no longer available and to add new arrivals on the funding landscape (as well as to ensure that all of the web links remain active). For this update, additional opportunities advertised through subject area mailing lists have been added as they have been spotted.

For postgraduate funding, in previous years scholarship databases including Postgraduate Studentships (<https://www.postgraduatestudentships.co.uk/>), The Scholarship Hub ([www.thescholarship.org.uk](http://www.thescholarship.org.uk)), Scholarship Search (<http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk/>) and Scholarships4Development (<http://www.scholars4dev.com/>) were searched for the terms 'China' and 'Chinese'. The first two of these sites can now only be searched by broad generic categories such as 'Arts and Humanities' or 'Eastern, Asiatic, African, American & Australasian Languages, Literature & related subjects'. The latter two sites allow user defined keyword searches, and these results have been followed up. All four sites are still listed in the funding table so that users have the links to hand should they wish to pursue potential further funding through these routes.

Since this report is updated every two years, opportunities may be withdrawn, and those listed are included regardless of deadlines. Users of the table will need to confirm the existence of opportunities of interest, and their deadlines, before making an application.

In addition to the above, university funding was also examined but with some limitations. University funding is only included in this survey when it is specific either to Chinese or Taiwanese students or to China studies, or if it is for fieldwork. CSC scholarships for students from China are not included unless this is in partnership with the hosting university. Within these parameters, individual university websites were checked in previous years and all relevant links were followed up. These have been checked and updated in 2023, but it is

important to note that funding from specific universities, especially for taught postgraduate (PGT) programmes, is highly fluid, and users are urged to check the funding pages for universities to which they are considering making an application.

A further limitation of the survey regards internal funding. Researchers may have internal funding options from their university that will vary in amount and availability. This survey cannot hope to show all of the funding specific to individual institutions or departments. Therefore, funding opportunities for existing students and staff at an institution have been limited to just those that have a specific China or clearly related focus (e.g. funding for Zoroastrian studies at SOAS). The survey also does not include awards that are dependent on a student or researcher accepting a long term position outside the UK, for example, as a tenure track scholar in the United States.

A final exclusion from the results is short term funding, such as funds related to a one-off call for research proposals. Such opportunities may be found on the websites of the major funders such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). This kind of call for applications increasingly appears with short deadlines, and the best advice for those positioned to consider an application is to join the funders' mailing lists and to be in ongoing contact with their own institution's research support staff.

Funding opportunities fall into five categories. 1) Funding for research and study activities with a China specific focus for UK based students, researchers and institutions; 2) Non China specific funding but for which UK based Chinese studies students, researchers and institutions could apply; 3) Non China specific funding with a narrow scope for which UK based Chinese studies researchers and students could apply; 4) Prizes and Awards; 5) Funding for Chinese or Taiwanese students and scholars for study and research in the UK. The list consists of a spreadsheet accompanying this report.

## THE 2023 FUNDING TABLE

The table is a separate, searchable spreadsheet to make it easier to find funding opportunities relevant to the specific requirements of individual students, academics or institutions. The table is divided into nine columns. Each column has a filter at the top to help narrow down the selection for the user:

### 1. FUNDING TITLE

The name of the specific funding.

### 2. FUNDER/ADMINISTRATOR

The name of the funder or administrator of the fund in question.

### 3. FUNDING TYPE

The available funding is divided into eleven different funding types:

- Scholarship – any funding for students to help them complete their studies
- Language Training – funding specifically for language study
- Competition/Prize – any competition, award or prize with some form of financial reward
- Research Expenses – small grants to defray research costs for individual research, at various levels
- Project – funding for a specific individual or group research project
- Fellowship – postdoctoral or more senior fellowships involving time away from a scholar's 'home base' for individual research
- Fieldwork – funding to participate in a fieldwork project (note that funding to start your own fieldwork project would be listed under 'Project')
- Conference/Travel – funds to cover travel costs or attend conferences, usually abroad

- Publication – financial support for the completion of a monograph or article intended for publication
- Outreach – funding specifically targeted at public facing projects
- Internship – paid or unpaid internship opportunities
- Institutional Funding – funding for universities to assist in developing a department or hiring new staff

While there may be some crossover between these categories, the table uses ‘Various’ for funding schemes that meet the requirements of several different funding types.

#### 4. CHINA/ASIAN STUDIES SPECIFIC

Whether the funding is specific to the field of Chinese or Asian studies. This is likely to affect the level of competition for any given funding.

#### 5. ACADEMIC LEVEL

The academic level at which the funding is aimed. This has been divided into seven different categories:

- UG – for individuals applying for or currently enrolled on an undergraduate degree course
- Graduate – for individuals who have completed a first degree but are not imminently continuing to further study
- PGT – for individuals applying for or enrolled on a taught postgraduate programme, usually an MA
- PGR – for individuals applying for or enrolled on a research based postgraduate programme, usually a PhD
- Postdoc/Early Career – funding specifically targeted at individuals who are within a few years of having completed their PhD, and often below a certain age threshold
- Academic – for established academics, usually in post
- Emeritus – for those who have retired from an academic post

Where more than one of these categories is eligible, the spreadsheet again states ‘Various’.

#### 6. UK SPECIFIC

This is marked as ‘Yes’ if the funding requires the individual applying to be either a UK resident or attending a UK institution. This column was previously labelled ‘UK/EU specific’, but due to Brexit, EU students no longer qualify automatically for ‘Home/EU’ course fees. This change has also affected some important sources of support, most notably the Erasmus scheme that encourages undergraduate mobility around the EU, which has been replaced in the UK with lower funding for the Turing scheme. However, the situation may be different in relation to certain funders, such as private foundations. It is important that EU citizens check carefully the specific eligibility requirements of schemes listed in the funding spreadsheet.

#### 7. CHINA/HONG KONG TO UK

This column is marked as ‘Yes’ if the funding is aimed at bringing scholars from China or Hong Kong to the UK. Research for this update has not identified any funding specifically to bring scholars or students to the UK from Taiwan, although such applicants to UK institutions are usually eligible for general ‘international’ funding.

#### 8. UNIVERSITY SPECIFIC

This column indicates funding that is only available to individuals attending or applying to (a) specific institution(s). If the restriction is to a single institution or a small specific group, they

are named in this column; if the funding is available to a larger group of institutions, the column is simply marked as 'Yes'.

## 9. WEBSITE

Here is listed the relevant web address for the funding in question. These have been checked in September-October 2023 to ensure that all web links remain active at time of writing, although as noted above, the funding situation remains in a greater than usual state of flux due to the ongoing effects of Brexit, Covid and the resulting economic and policy impacts, and some sites may be taken down or the addresses changed as a consequence.

## THE FACE OF FUNDING

In light of the updated survey, a few observations about the state of China focussed funding can be made. There is a range of funding available specifically for Chinese studies, including funding for PhD and Masters studentships; research projects and fellowships for established and early career scholars/postdocs; research expenses and fieldwork; arranging or attending conferences, seminars and lecture series; and for language work and internships. There continues to be a further set of opportunities, usually discipline based, that are not specifically China related, but to which students or scholars of Chinese studies can apply, for instance, from the British Educational Research Association (BERA) or the Royal Geographical Society (RGS). Meanwhile, the China Scholarship Council (CSC) continues to provide generous funding for PRC scholars and students to conduct research abroad, as well as funding UK students to study in China. Prestigious UK schemes such as the Newton Mobility Grant, which brought international scholars to the UK from countries including China, have now ended. However, foundation and university scholarships directed at students coming from China seem to be gradually on the increase.

## PRC FUNDING

The CSC and Hanban provide the most funding for the inflow of scholars and PhD students from China, and for UK students travelling to the PRC for language training or degree study at all levels. Several UK universities have joint projects with the CSC to provide a large total number of scholarships for Chinese students studying for UK degrees. In addition, PRC academics and to some extent PhD students are given incentives or requirements to spend a period as a visiting fellow in a university outside the PRC, and these trips are funded by the CSC.

In the other direction, in 2013-14 CSC gave scholarships to 151 UK students and Hanban awarded a further 88.<sup>1</sup> Since then the numbers have expanded, but the CSC publicises scholarships awarded by individual institutions rather than the overall figures. The CSC application process has been notoriously complicated and opaque, and although the web address now leads to a somewhat more helpful webpage, it includes a list of 42 documents to get through (one has been added since the last report) in order to complete an application and scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Thus it requires particular determination to make it through the requirements, but once that is achieved, the scholarship benefits are quite generous, and there is a readiness to support continuation from one level of study to the next. Several individual universities in China also offer their own scholarships to foreign students, which have mostly not been included here but are worthy of note.

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence with the Education Section of the Chinese embassy in London, August and September 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Some are guidance documents, but these are mixed in with key application forms without differentiation: <https://www.chinesescholarshipcouncil.com/> (accessed 29 October 2023).

We should observe, however, the growing intolerance of the PRC leadership towards anything they perceive as criticism, regardless of the source. While foreign scholars may be unlikely to suffer the fate of PRC citizens such as Professor Rahile Dawut, imprisoned for life for her research (often government funded) on Uyghur intangible cultural heritage,<sup>3</sup> it would be prudent for applicants for PRC funding to anticipate increased scrutiny of their research topics and methods. In this context it is worth noting the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) fellowships for scholars forced to flee their previous location.<sup>4</sup>

## TAIWAN FUNDING

Taiwan has for decades provided language scholarships through the Ministry of Education. The Huayu Enrichment Scholarships (HES) are a global programme to encourage students from around the world to move to Taiwan for a period to study Mandarin. In the UK, this scholarship continues to be administered by BACS. For the last few years the competition has offered scholarships for 2, 3, 6 or 9 months. Table 1 shows a fairly consistent pattern of awards given, including for the 9 month scholarships. The 2020 cohort were not able to go to Taiwan that summer due to the pandemic, but since 2021 students have again been travelling to Taiwan to take up their scholarships. In 2021/22 the Ministry of Education increased the number of study months available as partial compensation for the scholarship opportunities lost to Covid.

Table 1: HES-BACS scholarships, 2019-2024<sup>5</sup>

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Number of scholarships</b>	56	5	55	48	69
<b>Total months of study</b>	216	18	315	231	264
<b>9 month scholarships</b>	5	Covid 19 period	6	3	5

For scholars, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation (CCKF) has since the 1990s provided a range of Chinese studies research and conference funding, and at times also institutional support. Currently the Foundation offers short term research grants, database grants, conference and seminar grants, lecture series grants, publication subsidies, writing-up fellowships for PhD students, postdoctoral fellowships, and dissertation fellowships for Taiwanese students abroad. The CCKF webpage notes that the Foundation will give priority to collaborative projects with counterparts in Taiwan.<sup>6</sup> CCKF also funds a library travel grant administered by the European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS). The most recently published statistics remain those for 2017-18, when the Foundation's awards to those based in the UK included 6 research grants, 7 doctoral fellowships (and 2 more on the reserve list), and 1 postdoctoral fellowship (with 1 more on the reserve list). In 2016-17, UK

<sup>3</sup> Rachel Harris, 'China has sentenced Rahile Dawut to life in prison and would like the world to forget her. We must not', <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/12/china-uyghur-rahile-dawut-prison> (accessed 29 October 2023).

<sup>4</sup> CARA, 'Cara's Fellowship Programme', <https://www.cara.ngo/what-we-do/caras-fellowship-programme> (accessed 29 October 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Personal communication, British Association for Chinese Studies, 26 October 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, 'European region', <http://www.cckf.org/en/programs/european/> (accessed 25 October 2023).



based recipients were awarded 6 research grants, 7 doctoral fellowships (plus 2 reserves) and 2 postdoctoral fellowships.<sup>7</sup>

The Taiwan government also provides funding for postgraduate study or research fellowships in Taiwan. Complete figures for the current range of scholarships are not available. However, according to their published figures, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not award any Taiwan Fellowships to UK recipients in 2021, but did give 2 in 2023, 1 in 2022, 2 in 2020, 3 in 2019, 4 in 2018, 5 in 2017, 3 in 2016, 5 in 2015, 3 in 2014, and 3 in 2013.<sup>8</sup>

Not long before the pandemic Taiwan announced its ambition to become a bilingual country by 2030, unveiling a new set of programmes run by the Ministries of Education and of Foreign Affairs to bring many more English speakers to work on the island. Publicity for these programmes has been somewhat muted, but as awareness begins to grow it will be interesting to see what impact these new ventures have on the study of Chinese or on the range and nature of research in Chinese studies.

## UK GOVERNMENT AND EU FUNDING

The UK's departure from the EU has affected funding opportunities for China related study from the UK Government and the EU, though in different and sometimes unexpected ways for each.

After a number of periods of uncertainty, it was confirmed on 7 September 2023 that the UK would associate to Horizon Europe under a bespoke agreement. Horizon Europe has a budget of €95.5bn running to 2027. This arrangement restores access to European Research Council (ERC) programmes for UK scholars and institutions.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, funding awards and participation have been affected. The BBC reported that the percentage of Horizon funding awarded to UK led projects fell from 16% in 2015 to 11% in 2018.<sup>10</sup> There were also anecdotal reports of UK researchers being removed from EU research teams by colleagues on the European mainland who were concerned that their UK partners would become ineligible for ERC funding.<sup>11</sup>

While it is not known if anyone in Chinese studies was affected in this way, we should note that UK colleagues in the field have led or participated in several major ERC projects in recent years, including 'Communication and Empire: Chinese empires in comparative perspective' (Leiden University and Kings College London), and 'China, Law and Development: An interdisciplinary study of the nature of order underlying China's globalism' (Oxford and colleagues in several EU and other countries).<sup>12</sup>

The extent to which this kind of UK participation in ERC schemes will recover to pre-referendum levels is unknown, while the wider impact of how Brexit will affect research

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<sup>7</sup> Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, 'Grant Recipients', <http://www.cckf.org/en/programs/recipients> (accessed 25 October 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 'Taiwan Fellowship Fellows', <http://taiwanfellowship.ncl.edu.tw/eng/scholar.aspx> (accessed 25 October 2023).

<sup>9</sup> UKRI, 'Horizon Europe: help for UK applicants', <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/horizon-europe/> (accessed 25 October 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Pallab Ghosh, 'Brexit hits UK science funding and workforce', <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-50044659> (accessed 24 August 2021).

<sup>11</sup> For example, from 2016, Ian Sample, 'UK scientists dropped from EU projects because of post-Brexit funding fears', <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jul/12/uk-scientists-dropped-from-eu-projects-because-of-post-brexit-funding-fears> (accessed 20 August 2021).

<sup>12</sup> 'Communication and Empire: Chinese empires in comparative perspective', <https://chinese-empires.eu/>, 'China, Law and Development: An interdisciplinary study of the nature of order underlying China's globalism', <https://cld.web.ox.ac.uk/home#> (both accessed 31 August 2021).

funding in the longer term, particularly in areas outside the sciences, continues to emerge. At the very least the more stringent immigration rules for EU citizens could put a damper of extra bureaucracy on collaborations with other European colleagues, and make such cooperation more expensive. On a webpage that is no longer accessed by the original link, the UK research councils emphasised their intention to continue to strengthen relationships with partners in countries such as China, but the new page content states no specific goals in this respect.<sup>13</sup> A search on the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) website shows numerous project-specific collaborations with partners in China, though none appear to be in Chinese studies.<sup>14</sup>

Research exchange with China was assisted by the UK-China Research and Innovation Partnership Fund that commenced in 2014 as part of the UK government's Newton Fund.<sup>15</sup> Together with a sister programme directed towards lower income countries, the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), these Funds were part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget until August 2020, when the Department for International Development (DFID) was closed and the aid budget cut.<sup>16</sup> DFID's duties were absorbed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), but the Newton Fund and GCRF were placed under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (DBEIS).

The Newton/GCRF programme required funding to be matched by recipient countries, which ultimately numbered sixteen, including China.<sup>17</sup> Funding partners in each country offered PhD programmes, training support, researcher links and fellowships with partner countries. UK partners for Newton Fund projects included the British Academy, the Royal Society, the British Council, and UKRI, and in China the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Ministry of Education.<sup>18</sup> Notwithstanding these partners, the Newton Fund and GCRF primarily supported scientific collaborations.

These Funds ran until 2021, with a suspension in 2020 due to Covid. They were not immediately replaced but their successor, announced in March 2023, is the International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF), now under the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). Despite a similar list of partners, the new fund's name and its departmental home reflects the current government's increased emphasis on the sciences, though the funding for ISPF phase one is just £119 million, compared to the £291 million total for the final year of Newton/GCRF.<sup>19</sup> From a Chinese studies perspective, the greatest loss is the Newton Mobility Grant programme, which ran partly through the British Academy and brought international scholars in any subject to work for periods in the UK, from Newton partner countries including China.

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<sup>13</sup> Research Councils UK, 'RCUK Statement on International Collaboration post EU Referendum', <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/160706/> (originally accessed 16 August 2016; the content was different as of 23 August 2021 and is updated regularly. The original statement is still available on a number of external sites, including <https://confap.org.br/news/rcuk-statement-on-international-collaboration-post-eu-referendum/>).

<sup>14</sup> UKRI, 'Search results for "China"', <https://www.ukri.org/?s=china> (accessed 25 October 2023).

<sup>15</sup> Newton Fund/GCRF, 'China', <https://www.newton-gcrf.org/impact/where-we-work/china/> (accessed 25 October 2023).

<sup>16</sup> 'Reducing the UK's aid spending in 2021', <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9224/> (accessed 20 August 2021).

<sup>17</sup> This is up one from the early years, with fifteen partner countries.

<sup>18</sup> Newton Fund, 'About us', [www.newtonfund.ac.uk/about/](http://www.newtonfund.ac.uk/about/) (accessed 24 August 2021).

<sup>19</sup> DSIT, 'Notice: International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF)', <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-science-partnerships-fund-ispf/international-science-partnerships-fund-ispf>; DBEIS, *Research and Innovation for Development at BEIS: Annual Review 2021*, <https://www.newton-gcrf.org/resources/> (both accessed 25 October, 2023).

As to programmes linked to the study of China, the Chevening Programme brought 89 scholars from China to the UK in 2012/13.<sup>20</sup> Chevening in China now targets PGT students and mid career professionals, co-funding an expanded programme with numerous UK universities.<sup>21</sup> The British Council's Generation UK programme started in 2013. It sent 80 students to study in China in 2013/14, and offered over 100 places for the year 2014/15.<sup>22</sup> In 2017, numbers had increased to over 10,000 and it was hoped that by 2020, the scheme would have reached over 80,000 UK students.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately the scheme was suspended for 2020/21 due to Covid, and has now been replaced with a programme of online internships. More positively, the British Council now partners with numerous UK universities in the GREAT programme that provides funds for international students taking one-year PGT degrees.<sup>24</sup>

EU students have provided a steady flow of Erasmus and postgraduate students pursuing topics in Chinese studies in the UK, drawn by the range of PGT courses, by particular PhD supervisors, and in some cases by the relative lack of Chinese studies capacity in their home country. The academy in Spain, for instance, is fairly new in the field of Chinese studies, and some have accordingly sought postgraduate training abroad, including in the UK. It remains unclear to what extent the UK will continue to benefit from such students now that they have to pay international fees, although data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) suggests that after 2018 PGR students simply stopped coming to the UK from the EU.<sup>25</sup>

## CHARITIES AND CHARITABLE TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS

The original 2013 report found that some charities involved with funding China studies and Chinese students had been affected by the financial downturn. The 2016 version noted that some charities had ceased to operate or were making fewer grants available. Charities making awards to international students and for study and research on China were among those affected, including the Sir Shiu King Tang Educational Trust (administered by the British Council) and the Hammond Trust, intended to give financial aid to students from Asia.<sup>26</sup>

The overall situation among charitable trusts has improved in the intervening years with reports of a steady increase in both revenue and grants awarded since the low point in 2013 when this report was first commissioned. The most recent report on foundation (or trust) giving trends by the Association of Charitable Foundations, from 2022, shows that grants awarded in 2020/21 by all foundations or trusts in the UK amounted to £8.95 billion,<sup>27</sup> and

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<sup>20</sup> FCO, 'Chevening in China', <http://www.chevening.org/china/> (accessed 17 May 2013; as of 24 August 2021 the page content has changed).

<sup>21</sup> FCDO, 'Chevening in China', <https://www.chevening.org/scholarship/china/> (accessed 29 October 2023).

<sup>22</sup> Correspondence with British Council Beijing, April 2015.

<sup>23</sup> British Council, 'About Generation UK', <https://www.britishcouncil.cn/en/programmes/education/generation-uk/about> (accessed 24 August 2021).

<sup>24</sup> British Council, 'GREAT Scholarships', <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/scholarships-funding/great-scholarships> (accessed 29 October 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Naomi Standen, *BACS Report on the Present State of China Related Studies in the UK, 2021-22*, <https://bacsuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BACS-State-of-the-Field-2021-22-Report.pdf> (accessed 29 October 2023).

<sup>26</sup> Correspondence with The Hammond Trust, 20 April 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Calculated from figures given in Catherine Walker, *Foundation Giving Trends 2022: Top 300 foundation Grant-Makers*, p. 55, <https://www.acf.org.uk/acf/ACF/Research-and-resources/Research%20content/Research.aspx?hkey=013d15bf-323d-4d0a-bd19-a9f246f53d33#example> (accessed 26 October, 2023).

grants by the Top 300 Foundations showed a real increase of 13% over the previous year. The highest spender is the huge Wellcome Trust, which is a valuable fund for those working in the History of Medicine. Its awards reached £794 million, showing recovery towards the £845 million of 2018. Overall the Trust is heading for an increased average spend of over £1 billion a year.<sup>28</sup> Of wider interest is the third biggest grant provider, the Leverhulme Trust, which specifically seeks to fund projects deemed more ‘risky’ or unusual, and so may be more open to funding projects in Chinese studies.<sup>29</sup>

While it is difficult to gauge the effect of this increased spending (or extra availability of funds) on grants awarded to Chinese studies in particular, there are some charitable trusts that are worth looking at in a little more detail. The Universities' China Committee in London (UCCL) administers the remains of Britain’s share of the Boxer Indemnity (1900), which it uses to provide funding for PhD students undertaking periods of China focussed research in China, and also in support of research exchanges for UK- or China-based academics working on China focussed topics.

Table 2: UCCL financial history (from Charity Commission website)<sup>30</sup>

<b>Income / Expenditure</b>	<b>30/06/2018</b>	<b>30/06/2019</b>	<b>30/06/2020</b>	<b>30/06/2021</b>	<b>30/06/2022</b>
<b>Total gross income</b>	£75.63k	£73.61k	£71.44k	£822.17k	£72.39k
<b>Total expenditure</b>	£68.72k	£120.68k	£104.67k	£111.78k	£102.73k

Table 2 shows the fund’s usual pattern of adding interest from invested capital each year but giving out a larger amount in grants. This was positively disrupted in 2021 by the sale of a set of paintings in UCCL’s possession. 2019/20’s drop in expenditure may have reflected to some extent the period of lockdown from March 2020 that removed the usual opportunities for the kind of activities that UCCL funds, such as research trips, so that some grants awarded may not have been claimed. On the other hand, the rise the following year is unlikely to reflect the resumption of in-country travel possibilities since China remained closed to foreigners and in sporadic local lockdown through most of 2022. UCCL spending has still not recovered to 2018/19 levels though 2022’s expenditure is fractionally above the average spend of the last five years (£101.72). Over the longer term, the consistently greater expenditure than income reflects the fact that the trust is spending out its endowment.

A more substantial funder of UK-China research and exchange is the Sino-British Fellowship Trust (SBFT), which usually pays out annual grants in the region of £500k a year to support China related research and study, as shown in Table 3. The SBFT has longstanding funding arrangements with several UK based institutions including the British Academy and SOAS,

<sup>28</sup> Tim Schwab, ‘Covid-19, trust, and Wellcome: how charity's pharma investments overlap with its research efforts’, *BMJ*, 372: n556, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210320113021/https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n556>.

<sup>29</sup> Leverhulme Trust, ‘Our approach to grant making’, <https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/funding/our-approach-grant-making> (accessed 29 October 2023).

<sup>30</sup> Charity Commission for England and Wales, <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/314133/financial-history> (accessed 26 October 2023).

and helps to fund scholars from mainland China and Hong Kong to travel to the UK for study and research, and vice versa, as well as supporting Chinese language study.<sup>31</sup>

Table 3: SBFT financial history (from Charity Commission website)<sup>32</sup>

Income / Expenditure	31/12/2018	31/12/2019	31/12/2020	31/12/2021	31/12/2022
<b>Total gross income</b>	£387.88k	£533.24k	£440.81k	£418.58k	£619.10k
<b>Total expenditure</b>	£585.57k	£572.87k	£391.32k	£286.31k	£574.59k
<b>Grants to institutions</b>	£417.1k	£374k	£237.5k	£113k	£263k
<b>Grants to individuals</b>	£52.7k	£63.1k	£16k	£21.2k	£57k

SBFT grant spending fell to a low in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, with individual grants suffering most due to China’s extended travel restrictions. Nonetheless, despite China’s continued closure through most of 2022, SBFT outlay in that year rose significantly for both institutional and individual grants. This seems likely to reflect a creative refocussing of applications, as well as the Trust’s intention to restore pre-Covid levels of spending and reduce its reserves to 12 months of normal expenditure.<sup>33</sup> It is to be hoped that this policy will make it a little easier to obtain Chinese studies funding in the coming few years, particularly as travel to China is once again possible.

## UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS AND DISCOUNTS

The survey for this report shows that universities rarely offer full postgraduate scholarships specific to a China focussed (or closely related) course, whether doctoral or masters level. There appear to be just two of these, both at Cambridge: the Louis Cha scholarship for research on dynastic China, established in 2015 at St John’s College and likely to be offered next for 2024; and the new Silk Roads studentship at King’s College.<sup>34</sup>

Most postgraduate funding from universities offers a contribution towards fees or sometimes also living costs, and does not specify a subject area, with rare exceptions for Chinese studies at, for instance, SOAS and Oxford. Sometimes this funding is for all comers, sometimes for UK students, and sometimes is targeted at international students. Since the international fees paid by Chinese students are so high, international or general scholarships, while they can give important assistance to those intending to come to the UK to study anyway, nevertheless defray only part of the substantial costs of study here. They are thus also a recruitment tool for universities, acting as encouragements in the decision making

<sup>31</sup> The British Academy, ‘Sino-British Fellowship Trust’, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/supporters/sino-british-fellowship-trust/> (accessed 24 August 2021).

<sup>32</sup> Charity Commission for England and Wales, <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5106297/financial-history>; and The Trustees, ‘The Sino-British Fellowship Trust: Report and Financial Statements’ (2018-22), downloadable from <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5106297/accounts-and-annual-returns> (accessed 27 October 2023).

<sup>33</sup> The Trustees, ‘The Sino-British Fellowship Trust: Report and Financial Statements’ (2022), downloadable from <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5106297/accounts-and-annual-returns> (accessed 27 October 2023).

<sup>34</sup> St John’s College, ‘The Louis Cha Scholarship’, <http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/louis-cha-scholarship>; Kings College, ‘The Silk Roads PhD Studentship’, <https://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/graduate/funding-for-graduates/silk-roads-studentship> (both accessed 27 October 2023).

process rather than offering any meaningful number of funded places. Scholarships specific to a university but open to all courses are not systematically listed in the table.

Universities are also likely to have internal funding available to current students and researchers, but this has also not been sought or listed here.

## CORPORATE FUNDERS

Historical links and new fundraising activities mean that corporate funders are providing opportunities. Santander, for example, is in partnership with 86 UK universities; each university allocates funding differently, but in general they provide grants for travel and study, including funding for those engaged in China focused research.<sup>35</sup> Financial groups such as Jardine Matheson continue to fund scholarships to the UK for Chinese students.

## IN CONCLUSION

There remain significant sources of funding for study and research on China related topics, but there is never enough to meet demand, most especially for taught Masters (PGT) courses and language training. This survey update shows that some universities are offering greater support for PGT (and to some extent PGR) study, but a common complaint is that it is never certain how long such schemes will be continued, which makes it hard to plan or predict. The generic nature of this kind of funding means that those working on China related studies have to face more competition, but at the same time there is growing general recognition – including among those who determine the recipients of generic funding – of the importance of studying China related topics. China is no longer a niche subject.

The several shocks and ongoing issues arising from Brexit and Covid have left their mark on funding opportunities. We may be glad to see some recovery in grants made by organisations such as the SBFT, and be relieved that the situation is not worse. UK researchers are again eligible to apply for EU funds, but the higher student fees and more strenuous UK immigration regime for EU citizens seems likely to make collaborations with EU colleagues less seamless and more expensive, for those in Chinese studies as in other subjects.

At home the reduction of UKRI resources cannot but make grant success even more elusive, and the cessation of the Newton Fund has for the last couple of years removed a sizeable source of assistance that specifically included China in its remit, and reserved some funding for non-science subjects. The replacement for Newton is so science focussed that it seems likely that considerable creativity will be required to carve out any space for Chinese studies in applications made to this programme. It is also disappointing that the replacement for the British Council's Generation UK programme is a set of online internships, without the previous programme's invaluable element of a period spent in China.

While Taiwan remains a steady and valuable source of accessible funding at several levels, it would be wise for researchers on China related topics to give some thought to the potential implications of what has begun to be a growing reliance on PRC resources. In the UK, the spending of charitable trusts specific to Chinese studies is only slowly recovering, while the Wellcome aims to have more money available than ever before, although this can only benefit a small subgroup within the China related research field as a whole.

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<sup>35</sup> For more details see Santander, 'Santander Partner Universities', <http://www.santander.co.uk/uk/santander-universities/about-us/our-partner-universities/> (accessed 27 October 2023).

Overall, the picture is not entirely unhelpful. Generic sources of funding have been damaged in several ways by external shocks, but there are also signs that recovery is commencing. We can at least say that in these cases Chinese studies is no worse off than other subject areas. Specific funding for China related work continues, albeit at a somewhat lower level. Perhaps the most important need is to raise awareness of the various sources of funding that do exist for China related work at all levels, a goal which this reports aims to further.