



The rise of China has presented us a strong economy, and a new environment of global cooperation that requires us to increase our engagement with China in many ways. As a result, there will be great opportunities and potential for people who can demonstrate proficiency in Chinese language.

When billionaire American investment guru Jim Rogers told the public in 2003 that the best gift they could give their children is to let them learn Chinese, the University of Birmingham had already been offering Chinese language courses for nearly a decade. Nowadays, Mandarin Chinese is undoubtedly one of the most popular language courses on campus. The number of students taking various Chinese modules has been increased consistently. By 2012-13, there are up to 200 students taking Chinese courses at different levels. Students taking Chinese as a minor will be given the opportunity to study intensively in China for at least half a year. We currently send our students to 5 Chinese universities, they are:

- **[Beijing Language and Culture University](http://www.blcu.edu.cn/blcuweb/english/index-en.asp)** (<http://www.blcu.edu.cn/blcuweb/english/index-en.asp>)
- **[Fudan University \(Shanghai\)](http://www.fudan.edu.cn/englishnew/)** (<http://www.fudan.edu.cn/englishnew/>)
- **[Tsinghua University \(Beijing\)](http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/then/)** (<http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/then/>)
- **[Ningbo Nottingham University](http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/index.aspx)** (<http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/index.aspx>)
- **[Sun Yen San University \(Summer school\)](http://summerprogram.sysu.edu.cn/)** (<http://summerprogram.sysu.edu.cn/>)

We are very happy that our students have greatly benefited from such a collaboration and the international exchange programmes. One of our students has provided us with the following feedback:



"Hearing the language every day and seeing it written all around me definitely helped to improve my language skills. Speaking with the locals and bartering with the taxi drivers who are always surprised when westerners speak their language was the perfect opportunity to practise first-hand all that I had learnt. My time in Shanghai has definitely changed me. I am much more confident as I now know I can cope in new and challenging situations. Speaking Chinese and knowing something about the culture will surely help me to stand out to employers who are expanding and looking for candidates with skills appropriate to the modern world of business. I cannot wait to go back!"

Based on what we have achieved in recent years, we are exploring the possibility of expanding the current Chinese courses to Joint Honours Mandarin Chinese studies. Modules beyond focussing on cultural and business related will be created in the next few years, and further links with China will be set up in the near future.

Other engagements and contact

Beyond the focus on developing linguistic skills to position Birmingham graduates in a world in which China will be a major economic and political power, the Schools within the College of Arts and Law have an expanding network of connections and contacts with Chinese universities which strengthen international ties and collaboration, enhance Birmingham University's global outlook and status, and assist the exchange of knowledge and the integration of Chinese scholars into the wider academic world. A growing series of formal agreements with Chinese universities is reinforced by less formal personal links which see academics from Birmingham both making regular lecture visits to universities across China, including Renmin University of China (Beijing), Wuhan University, and Capital Normal University (Beijing), participating in fieldwork projects (Inner Mongolia Research Institute for Cultural Relics and Archaeology and Jilin University) and attending conferences. These visits are reciprocated by a steady stream of Chinese scholars who come to Birmingham to acquire research materials and exchange ideas. The College's recognition of the growing importance of China in the modern world and commitment to multi-disciplinary academic links with China is exemplified by recent appointments in the department of History which embed East Asian history in its curriculum; while in 2009 a party of academics from the departments of History and English, under the auspices of the College's Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies, collaborated with Wuhan University's School of History in a 'Symposium on Political and Cultural Changes in Late Medieval and Early Modern England', the papers from which will be published in China in 2013.