# China Institute 2023 Report

## Introduction

We started 2023 still unable to travel to China due to the continuing restrictions related to the COVID pandemic. Thankfully, the situation changed rapidly in the first months of the year, meaning that travel became possible once more – this was akin to a cork coming out of a bottle as we rushed to plan how to catch up on all of the missed opportunities over the previous three years.

The first tangible consequence for the University was that our staff from the School of Mathematics who teach in our Joint Institute with Jinan University in Guangzhou (‘J-BJI’) were able to return to face-to-face teaching in February – making Birmingham the first UK university fully to return to in-person teaching of a joint education programme/institute since the pandemic. In those first months of relaxed restrictions, we started to plan how best to re-engage with our partners of many years that we had only seen on Zoom since early 2020.

I was lucky enough to be one of the first UK university senior leaders to return to China when I visited Nanjing and Guangzhou in April. It all felt a little strange, at least in the anticipation of that trip, but as soon as I was on the ground in China, meeting our China Institute team in Guangzhou and then some of our long-standing partners, the years of the pandemic quickly seemed like a distant memory! I enjoyed every meeting on that first trip and crammed as much as possible into the week – an experience that became something of a trend as I returned three more times this year.

One visit stands out for me from that first trip in April because it exemplifies how our teams in China and Edgbaston managed to maintain effective communication and project development in spite of all of the difficulties imposed by the pandemic and out of which grew new and exciting projects. This was my first time to actually be in the new Borui Life Science Research Institute in Nanjing, which in part is a collaboration with the University of Birmingham. This exciting new institute concept evolved during the pandemic involving many Zoom meetings and interviews with potential funders and supporters. The Borui Institute, directed by Southeast University (SEU) Professor Yu Sun, a Birmingham alumna and now honorary professor, will focus on brain science and involves Birmingham together with SEU, the Nanjing municipal and Jiangning district governments as well as some private investors.

Without doubt, the highlight of 2023 was the degree awarding ceremony at the J-BJI in Guangzhou. Presided over by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adam Tickell, this was the first cohort of three to graduate from the J-BJI that was actually able to receive their University of Birmingham degrees in person. Almost 180 students graduated in a ceremony that can only be described as joyous, if somewhat hot and humid, especially in full academic dress! The Vice-Chancellor not only handed the degrees to each student, he also posed for photographs with each and every one and all of their parents as the culmination of a truly great day.

Several very large-scale events have also typified the last few months as communication and exchange between Chinese and foreign universities began to pick up. I was fortunate to be able to participate in a World President’s Forum in Beijing at the end of July, which was impressive in terms of the huge number of senior university leaders who attended, as well as a UK higher education mission in September that brought 20 universities to meet with counterparts, funders, and UK government representatives.

Of course, the UK-China people traffic has not been unidirectional from the University of Birmingham perspective – we have already received a whole host of Chinese visitors on the Edgbaston campus, all of them eager to revitalise pre-pandemic activities and explore new opportunities around education and research. I was particularly pleased in March to receive a delegation from the Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST) in Wuhan, led by Vice President Professor Jianguo Chen, whom I have known for many years. Over the years of our acquaintance, Professor Chen and I have worked towards establishing links in medical-related disciplines, which culminated during the pandemic in us formulating the plans for a dual degree programme in biomedical science and pharmacy. This programme, which is due to launch on the new HUST international campus in 2024, is expected to be the first of several joint education initiatives with HUST in healthcare education and will complement our established mathematics education programmes in the J-BJI in Guangzhou.

I am always looking forwards to the future of our work with our Chinese partners and colleagues, many of whom I would call true friends. I suspect that 2024 will be the beginning of a new era for our University in China as we continue to capitalise on our successes with the J-BJI, start teaching biomedical science in Wuhan, and push the boundaries of research in areas ranging from medical imaging and healthy ageing, to environmental science, climate action, and energy sustainability.

***Professor Jon Frampton***

*Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (China)*

*Director of the University of Birmingham China Institute*

## 2023 year in review

Information correct as of 1 December 2023

* 31,464 WeChat followers (17.57 per cent growth)
* 36,533 Weibo followers (5.59 per cent increase)
* 6,000+ Chinese students studying at UoB (including Transnational Education)
* 1,000+ Publications with Chinese Partners
* 9,300 Chinese media publications mentioning UoB
* £2.6 billion Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE)

## High level visits

### Nina Morris

Global Partnerships Manager, Birmingham Global

As travel between the UK and China has become viable once again, high-level visits in both directions have taken place during 2023.

In June 2023, a Vice-Chancellor-led delegation to Hong Kong and to Guangzhou took place. This was the first visit that Professor Adam Tickell had undertaken to the region since coming into post as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Birmingham (UoB). The visit was timed to coincide with the first in-person graduation ceremony of the UoB degree awarded through the Jinan University-University of Birmingham Joint Institute (J-BJI), about which a case study is provided later in the report. Also during this visit, Professor Tickell and the delegation met with key partners from our sister cities of Guangzhou and Nanjing and signed a number of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Agreements to take our partnerships from strength to strength. Professor Tickell also undertook alumni engagement whilst in Hong Kong, culminating in a special ceremony with Birmingham’s Hong Kong Foundation, marking the sterling service of its inaugural chair Dr Conrad Wong by presenting him with the University of Birmingham Hong Kong Medal.

Also in June, the City of Birmingham received a visit from the Chinese Ambassador to the UK and we were delighted to welcome him to our campus. Ambassador Zheng Zeguang, along with his wife Counsellor Hua Mei, and members of his delegation, met with senior University staff including Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Tickell, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) Professor Robin Mason, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (China) Professor Jon Frampton, and other senior professors from the University of Birmingham.

During this visit, Ambassador Zheng heard from UoB colleagues on areas of important research across engineering, health sciences, and environmental sciences, and joined senior UoB leaders to unveil the English Heritage Blue Plaque to UoB alumnus and geology pioneer

**Li Siguang.**

In August, a delegation from the Nanjing Municipal Government (NMG) visited Birmingham, and the China Institute hosted a visit in the Exchange, bringing together leaders from Birmingham City Council, the delegation from NMG, and UoB colleagues to discuss civic links and opportunities for future collaboration.

As well as the events above, many other visits from partners and colleagues have taken place during 2023, clearly demonstrating that there is a strong appetite to resume and revitalise collaborations in the post-COVID era.

## Case studies

An exciting time to work together with China after the COVID years.

**Professor Yufeng Zhang**

Chair in Operations Management, Head of the Department of Management, Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA), Turing Fellow.

We are at an exciting time for working with China. Although collaborations with China continued in the COVID years, communication was less effective due to travel difficulties. This complex environment was both a challenge and a stimulus for working together with our partners in China. Thankfully, visiting China became possible in the early part of this year. I got my visa in May and planned two visits to China soon after that.

One of my visits was in the North—Beijing, Qingdao, Xuchang, and Harbin—and the other in the South—Hongkong, Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Hangzhou. My previous visit to the country was four years ago! The changes, and especially their pace and scope, were breath-taking! I noticed the incredible progress of digitalisation across the economy, society, and industry. The country has produced a series of sophisticated plans to advance digital economy, ranging from technology foundation, infrastructure, urban planning, and governance and administration. I needed to carry my mobile phone all the time from the moment of preparing immigration check to paying for a cup of coffee. I attended a wide range of conferences, meetings, and seminars during the visits. In nearly all the events there was someone talking about digital innovation and smart applications. The unbelievable speed of changes updated my perception on technology/economic development in China. I was a regular visitor of Zhejiang University before COVID due to my visiting professorship there. It was a mind-blowing experience to see the new extension of the Zijingang campus — it has been transformed from a construction site to a fully functioning, massive scale, beautiful campus just in the past a few years. See the stunning view from the Dean’s office of Qingshan College at the end of a gallery of Chinese paintings!

## Establishing a collaborative centre for health research with Sun Yat-sen University First Affiliated Hospital

**Professor KK Cheng**

Professor of Public Health and Primary Care

**Lin Hu**

China-UK Project Manager, Institute of Applied Health Research

Over the last decade, we have collaborated with Sun Yat-sen University First Affiliated Hospital (FAH-SYSU) in several areas, including clinical trials and general practice training. In 2022, a major new programme was initiated (PI: KK Cheng). This covers several areas, including the development of a community-based cohort study, up to three clinical trials, and the enhancement of research capacity within the discipline of Geriatrics.

The clinical trials being planned are in the area of Anaesthesia and Obstetrics. Through these beacon efforts, we aim to establish multicentred networks that would facilitate future clinical research. The community-based cohort study encompasses broader healthcare settings in Guangzhou and will involve institutions such as the Guangzhou Center for Disease Control and Prevention and those in primary care, with the endorsement of the Guangzhou Municipal Government and Guangzhou Health Commission.

Designing our work requires methodological innovations within the health and social care sector, and involves complex interventions, qualitative studies, health economic assessments, and patient-reported outcomes, among others. Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) is also central to our approach.

Our early successes in the programme initiated in 2022 have led us to explore new ways to expand our collaboration. After lengthy discussions, both parties decide that research in healthy ageing could form a new focus for our next phase of collaboration. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two institutions. As one in three babies born this year in Guangzhou are likely to live until 100 years of age, and that one third of the Chinese population would be over 60 by 2050, the importance of healthy ageing cannot be overemphasised. Our plan is to launch an international, multidisciplinary research institute on healthy ageing in the Greater Bay Area in summer, 2024.

## The Joint Birmingham-Shenzhen Clinical Research Institute

**Professor Fang Gao**

Professor of Anaesthesia, Critical Care and Pain, Birmingham Acute Care Research, Institute of Inflammation and Ageing

**Claire Lindow**

Birmingham-Shenzhen Joint Clinical Research Institute, Project Manager

**Dr Jinqiu Jacky Yuan**

Associate Director, Clinical Research Centre, The Seventh Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University

The University of Birmingham and the Seventh Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University signed a collaboration agreement to set up a Joint Clinical Research Institute in 2021. From the UoB side, the Institute is led by Professor Fang Gao (Institute of Inflammation and Ageing) as the Director, with Professor Georgios Gkoutos (Institute of Cancer and Genomic Sciences) as Co-Director. From the SYSU side, Professor Changhua Zhang (Centre of Gastrointestinal Cancer) is the lead with Dr Jinqiu Yuan (Epidemiology and Statistics) as Co-Director.

Our collaboration aims jointly to develop high-quality clinical studies, disseminate findings, and promote the translation of our findings into clinical practice. We have worked together to secure external funding from China and the UK over the last few years and are now developing education and training in clinical research.

In 2023, Professor Gao and Dr Yuan succeeded in obtaining funding from the UoB Institute of Advanced Studies for a Vanguard Visiting Fellowship and a Workshop. Dr Yuan spent four weeks visiting UoB and University Hospitals Birmingham and the inaugural workshop was held on 4 October. The workshop was hosted by Professors Gao and Gkoutos and Dr Yuan and involved both colleagues from the Seventh Affiliated Hospital, who attended online, as well as UoB colleagues in person from Applied Health; Earth and Environmental Sciences; Cancer and Genomic Sciences; Mathematics; Biosciences; Immunology and Immunotherapy; and the Birmingham Clinical Trials Unit. In addition to providing an introduction and overview of the Joint Institute, there were extensive scientific discussions on a wide range of topics of interest to both institutions and many exciting opportunities for collaboration were identified.

## Sustainable Cooling and the Cold Chain

**Dr Xinfang Wang**

Assistant Professor, Birmingham Energy Institute, School of Chemical Engineering, University of Birmingham

**Professor Yifeng Zou**

Research Centre for Cold Chain and Standardization, School of Management, Guangzhou

**Junzhang Wu**

Doctoral Research Fellow, University of Padova (Italy) and a visiting PhD researcher at the School of Chemical Engineering, University of Birmingham

Around one-third of all human-produced food worldwide is lost or wasted in the supply chain, with poor temperature management being one of the main contributors. Temperature-controlled delivery is an integral segment of the cold chain for perishable foods and vaccine supply chains. Globally, over four million refrigerated vehicles are currently in operation with an annual growth rate of 2.5 per cent. In China, the annual growth rate of refrigerated vehicles reached 19.1 per cent, with over 340,000 units in 2021, which is likely due to the increasing demand for perishable food cold chains. The Internet of Things (IoT) technology has been explored as a potential solution to achieve real-time temperature monitoring throughout food cold chains.

Existing ‘rule-based’ monitoring solutions are limited to the direct use of air temperature data of the vehicle used for transport, which can differ significantly from the real temperature of the food being assessed. Thus, this study focuses on developing a new artificial neural network (ANN) model precisely to estimate the temperature of food products that are stored in multi-temperature refrigerated transport vehicles with minimum sensors. In addition to identifying the temperature in the car, the model also receives input from a multi-source dataset that includes various information such as the outside temperature, initial food temperature, door status, and loading and unloading times.

The project, led by Guangzhou University in collaboration with the University of Birmingham and the University of Padova, aims substantially to enhance estimation accuracy and reliability with fewer temperature sensors in the transport vehicle. The model developed could decrease the root mean square error of food temperature estimation by 77 per cent and 79 per cent for chilled and frozen zones, respectively. Our study precisely tracks the real-time food temperature even with sudden ambient changes, thus enabling precautions to take place when required [1].

Reference:参考文献：[1] Zou, Y., Wu, J., Wang, X., Liu, G., Antonio, S., Manzardo, A. (2023). An improved artificial neural network using multi-source data to estimate food temperature during multi-temperature delivery. Journal of Food Engineering. Volume 351, 111518. sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0260877423001164 [1] 邹毅峰, 吴俊章, 王欣芳, 刘广海, Antonio, S., Manzardo, A. (2023). 《利用基于多源数据改进的人工神经网络评估多温环境运输中的食品温度》，《食品工程期刊》第351卷，111518。sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0260877423001164

## The cooperation between Nanjing Borui Life Science Research Institute and the University of Birmingham in the UK opens a new chapter in the field of intelligent medical engineering and brain health

**Professor Yu Sun**

Director of International Laboratory for Children’s Medical

Imaging Research, The University of Birmingham (UoB) and Southeast University (SEU), Co-Director of Joint Research Center of Biomedical Engineering, UoB and SEU University (China), Director of Nanjing Borui Life Science Institute

The establishment of Nanjing Borui Life Science Research Institute (BRI) is based on the support of the University of Birmingham, Southeast University Joint Research Centre for Biomedical Engineering, and Nanjing Jiangning Development Zone High-Tech Industrial Park. This new research institute is a high-tech industry-university research platform founded by a Chinese-British team

led by Professor Yu Sun. The institute has a high-level R&D and innovation team and aims to focus on intelligent medical engineering, medical imaging, brain science, and brain health.

The institute objective is to explore the industrialization of high-end scientific research and technological innovation deriving from these principle areas.

In June this year, the BRI and the University of Birmingham launched a formal collaboration. Professor Adam Tickell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, and Professor Sun Yu, Director of

the BRI, signed a cooperation agreement at a ceremony held in the University of Birmingham China Centre in Guangzhou. This collaboration will focus on cutting-edge research in the field of brain science, including the application of artificial intelligence.

The two parties will carry out in-depth research in the fields of brain diseases and brain science, aiming to develop new intelligent multi-modal brain disease and health decision support systems, and using data science better to understand the mechanisms and functions of the brain, including strengthening the role of brain science in the field of education practice. This cooperation will give full play to the respective advantages of the University of Birmingham and the Nanjing BRI Institute, jointly promote cutting-edge research in four key areas, and make more contributions to the implementation and industrialisation of artificial intelligence in the field of brain diseases and health.

Professor Adam Tickell spoke at the launch ceremony: ‘The signing of this agreement marks the beginning of what I hope will be a fruitful partnership. I look forward to the University of Birmingham and the Nanjing BRI working together to achieve a huge success in health in the future. We are a global university with a civic outlook and this collaboration builds on our partnerships with Southeast University and Nanjing. Our new industry-university-research platform can help improve China and beyond the health of millions of people in the region.’

## MA Education and MSc TESOL Programmes

**Dr Meng Tian**

Associate Professor in Educational Leadership, Global Engagement Lead for the School of Education

**Hailing Zhang**

MSc TESOL student

**Tianyi Liu**

MA Education student

In the School of Education, we proudly offer two popular postgraduate programmes: MA Education and MSc Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Our programmes attract students from various countries, including Bangladesh, Chile, China, Cambodia, Ghana, Germany, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Vietnam, the UK, and the USA.

Currently, we have established a programme based on the 1+1+1 model in collaboration with two esteemed partner universities in China; namely, Zhejiang University and Northeast Normal University. This collaborative effort ensures a seamless transition for students across institutions, enriching their learning experiences.

In addition to the non-pathway route, the MA Education programme offers four specialist pathways designed to equip students with profound knowledge and skills in leadership; Social Justice, Inclusion and Disability; and Comparative and International Perspectives. Meanwhile, the MSc TESOL programme provides a well-rounded curriculum covering modules on second-language teaching and learning, alongside educational research modules. To further enrich a student’s experience, they have the opportunity to go abroad for short-term overseas placement or summer/winter school with the support of the Turing Scheme.

Graduates from both programmes have the opportunity to enhance their qualifications with an International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS) at our University of Birmingham Dubai campus. Our MA Education and MSc TESOL graduates have consistently achieved a remarkable 100 per cent employment rate over recent years. They have ventured into diverse career paths, securing employment in state schools, international schools, national and local education authorities, universities, and language training institutions.

**Dr Meng Tian**

Associate Professor in Educational Leadership, Global Engagement Lead for the School of Education

To offer a glimpse into student experiences, I’ve invited two of our current Chinese students to share their perspectives below. We are enthusiastic about fostering further partnerships with Chinese universities and extending our collaborative network.

‘The University of Birmingham holds an exceptional reputation for its academic programmes, and the School of Education is widely recognised as having excellence in teaching languages and research, which are the reasons why I chose to study here. Having knowledgeable and motivating teaching faculty with MSc TESOL skills and experience is beneficial for my academic studies. After studying here, the open and multicultural learning environment really impressed me. As a Chinese student, I made an effort to take opportunities to interact with a diverse community of students and teachers in order to improve my entire educational experience and acquire a worldwide perspective on teaching and learning languages.’

**Hailin Zhang,**

MSc TESOL student

Every day at the University of Birmingham and the School of Education is fortunate and exciting. In the MA Education programme, teachers and students from around the world presented many fresh perspectives in response to the age-old topic of education, sharing observations and reflections in different contexts. During the course, we had the opportunity to critically examine the position and problems of education in the process of globalisation, and to learn about the richness of the profound proposition of how school improvement is measured. At the same time, we are provided with comprehensive guidance on how to conduct educational research and how to write a dissertation.

**Tianyi Liu,**

MA Education student

## Health Sciences collaboration with Southern Medical University

**Nina Morris**

Global Partnerships Manager, Birmingham Global

One partnership that has flourished despite the travel restrictions of the previous year is our partnership with Southern Medical University in the fields of Applied Health Sciences, Sport and Physiotherapy, which provide routes for students to enter onto PGT programmes in the University of Birmingham. Binglin Han (韩炳琳小姐) one of our students from the MSc Health Economics and Health Policy has shared her experience:

‘In 2021, I enrolled in the collaborative programme between Southern Medical University and the University of Birmingham. Subsequently, I embarked on a journey to study Health Economics and Health Policy in the University of Birmingham. This educational voyage not only provided me with specialized knowledge in Health Economics but also afforded me the opportunity to get acquainted with exceptional teachers in Health Economics Unit. Throughout this journey, I gained a profound appreciation for the charm of cross-cultural learning, while also nurturing my capacity for independent thinking and problem-solving. My tenure of study in Birmingham has etched the most treasured memories in my heart.’

## Global Futures Programme, Hong Kong

**Dr Sammy C.H. Li**

Assistant Director of Student Affairs (Postgraduate and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion)

In June 2023, 32 Birmingham Scholars who came from widening participation backgrounds in higher education embarked on the Global Futures programme in Hong Kong. The four-week programme consisted of three stages: Immersion, Internship, and Reflection. The programme began with a week-long leadership development training course with peers from the University of Hong Kong before providing the Scholars the opportunity to apply these new skills in internships with various organisations in Hong Kong. During the month-long programme, Birmingham Scholars went beneath the surface of the city through cultural immersion activities and spent time with businesses, government agencies, and NGOs in the local communities. Three weeks were spent in an organisation on a work placement to gain workplace experience and contribute to real-life projects that would make a meaningful difference to the organisation.

The programme was fully funded through the University of Birmingham, the Turing Scheme, and donations from our alumni in Hong Kong. This summer opportunity offered Birmingham Scholars a real opportunity to explore new places and gain confidence and intercultural skills. The cohort joined the Vice-Chancellor to meet with our Hong Kong alumni at the evening reception of the University’s Hong Kong Foundation, and also engaged with local alumni for social and professional development activities during their time in Hong Kong.

‘I wanted to embark on a journey of professional development, gain confidence, and immerse myself in a new culture. Little did I know that this decision would lead to an adventure that would change the course of my life.’

**Muna Khalif**

Birmingham Scholar and Global Futures programme student.

‘I have never had exposure to a new setting as I chose to live at home for university, thus this global experience has elevated my emotional and cultural intelligence, and I have met various individuals on this trip, some of whom have become my lifelong friends. This global experience was truly life-changing and I encourage everyone to do this.’

**Eman Sanaullah**

Birmingham Scholar and Global Futures programme student.

**Rachel Du Croz**

Transnational Education Officer, College of Engineering and Physical Sciences

In June 2023 we were delighted to hold our first in person graduation ceremony in Guangzhou, for the Jinan University-University of Birmingham Joint Institute (J-BJI). After two online graduations (due to the pandemic), Professor Adam Tickell presided over the ceremony in his first visit to Guangzhou since taking up the role as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Birmingham.

The President of Jinan University (JNU), Professor Song Xianzhong attended the ceremony, where the students received their certificates in front of family and friends.

The ceremony included traditional elements of the Birmingham graduations, with staff attending from the UK and a special ceremonial mace that had been commissioned especially, shipped out to China. Professor Tickell also took time to meet and have photos taken with students, providing great memories for them and their families.

This year we are also delighted to report that over 300 of our undergraduate students have progressed to postgraduate programmes, with 76 per cent of this year’s cohort gaining places at global top 50 institutions. The UK remains the most popular destination, with students securing places at Cambridge, Edinburgh, and LSE, amongst others. Around a quarter of students have chosen to continue their education in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau. Meanwhile those embarking on their careers have secured roles in Fortune 500 companies such as Tencent, Huawei, Bank of China, PwC, and Deloitte.

Recruitment for the new 23/24 academic year was also very positive, with the incoming class receiving the highest Gaokao scores to date. 273 new students joined the J-BJI in September and began their exciting journey to becoming graduates. Later this academic year will see the launch of our Alumni Association and we look forward to engaging with more of our graduates and developing exciting events for our students and alumni.

## UoB alumnus Shenshou Zhang honoured at the Study UK Alumni Awards 2023-24

**Faye Fei**

Project Manager

The Study UK Alumni Awards is an internationally acclaimed accolade hosted by the British Council, recognising the exceptional achievements of UK alumni in China s. 2023 marked the tenth anniversary of this award ceremony, and it received an overwhelming response with over 1,450 applications from international UK alumni in more than 90 countries, representing over 140 UK higher education institutions.

This year, among the distinguished recipients, a UoB alumnus, Mr Shenshou Zhang was recognised with the Social Action award for his contributions and commitment to creating positive social change and improving the lives of others. Other recipients included alumni from the University of Cambridge, University College London, among others.

Mr Zhang Shenshou graduated from the University of Birmingham in 2014, having studied MSc Human Resource and Development Management. During his studies, he undertook a module in NGO Management and was inspired by his dissertation tutor Dr Adrian Campbell. Mr Zhang consequently achieved his vision in setting up his own foundation in China, the Shanghai Yizhiling Foundation. These welfare programmes have benefited over 10,000 youth in distress, and have won national and Shanghai public welfare awards.

## Media engagement and digital communications

We promote our work in China through a variety of channels, including social media both in the UK and in China. We also work closely with partner institutions in China to engage with Chinese media and raise the profile of our education and research collaborations through print, online, and broadcast coverage.

The University of Birmingham engages with Chinese students, staff, and stakeholders based in China and in the UK through its official WeChat and Weibo accounts.

In the past 11 months (1 January to 1 December), both our Weibo and WeChat accounts have continued to grow. With only organic activities this year, our total Weibo account follower number is 36,533, an increase of 5.59 per cent (a net growth of 1,933). Our total WeChat account follower number is 31,464, an increase of 17.57 per cent (a net increase of 4,702).

Our top WeChat post celebrated the University’s 123rd birthday, demonstrating the cultural importance of recognising such landmark dates. Other popular posts focussed on our QS rankings, graduation ceremonies, and top-level delegation visits such as that by the Nanjing Municipal Government, and the visit from Huazhong University of Science and Technology, during which we signed our collaborative agreement to deliver a Dual Degree in Biomedical Science and Pharmacy.

Top Weibo posts also focussed on partnerships and the University’s 123rd birthday, but also included our response to the City of Birmingham’s bankruptcy declaration, in which we sought to reassure stakeholders that this would have no material impact on the University or students’ studies. It was important for the University to act quickly to address concerns from the market, and Weibo offered us a quick and wide-reaching platform by which to do this.

In terms of international media coverage, over the course of 2023, there were 9,300 articles published in Chinese media that referenced the University of Birmingham, and we achieved an Advertising Value Equivalent of £2.6 billion.

## Lunar New Year

Each year we celebrate the Lunar New Year with a special concert, and in February 2023 we were able to hold our concert in person for the first time since 2020! This concert was doubly special because it represented the tenth anniversary of our concert series. To celebrate the Year of the Rabbit, world-class pianist Di Xiao was joined by a host of phenomenal performers, including dancers Hanghou Zhou and Dan Du, percussionist Beibei Wang, multi-instrumentalist Michael Skelton, flautist Max Gittings, face-changing artist Shuai Zhao, and young artists from the Overseas Chinese Association School.

The audience heard several well-loved pieces including Colourful Cloud Chasing a Silver Moon (Peixun Chen), Bull Fights Tiger (Baocan Wang), Marimba Spiritual (Minoru Miki), and My Homeland.

The concert also featured greetings messages and warm words from our partners celebrating the Lunar New Year around the world, in China, Singapore, Malaysia, USA and more!

## Guangzhou office relaunch

The University of Birmingham’s representative office in Guangzhou opened in 2011 and has been supporting University of Birmingham partnerships for twelve successful years. As we move forward, the decision to update the facilities was made! The relaunched office features open plan flexible working spaces, a conference room for meetings, a catering area, and space to welcome visitors. We were delighted to hold a grand opening on Dragon Boat Day, with the University of Birmingham’s Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adam Tickell, inviting friends and partners to join us.

If you are visiting Guangzhou or wider China, please do not hesitate to contact the office to see how they can support your activity.