

Item 10.h East Asian studies

Report compiled by Derek Hird, East Asian Studies rep., based mainly on responses to an anonymous survey conducted across the sector.

Issues of concern

1. The Communist Party of China's aggressive attempts to curtail academic freedom through the Hong Kong National Security Law and the sanctioning of academics who speak up about the Chinese state's oppressive targeting of Uyghurs.

When passing through Hong Kong or China, teachers and students of any countries' citizenship could find themselves arrested based on evidence from lecture notes, recorded lectures, or recorded class discussions because these include content that the Party-state deems subversive. The risks are especially high for individuals from mainland China and Hong Kong who study at or who previously studied at British universities.

There is a consequent danger of academic self-censorship.

The British Association for Chinese Studies has called on Universities to clearly re-state their pledges to academic freedom and to actively uphold academic freedom in the light of the National Security Law.

2. Universities' collaborations with Alibaba Cloud to provide students in China with quicker internet speeds when accessing university materials, including teaching material, and the issues of censorship and safeguarding that these collaborations potentially raise.
3. Funding cuts: ODA, UKRI generally, access to EU funding.
4. Exhaustion and burnout because of excessive workloads and exploitative employers (especially precarious contracts).
5. More defence of languages required: a perennial problem, but getting worse not better because of the government's anti-humanities stance.

Upcoming events

1. Publication of special Chinese Science Fiction issue of the British Science Fiction Association (BSFA)'s magazine, Vector. This issue is available to all BSFA members, including new members who sign up by 31 May 2021. <https://vector-bsfa.com/current-issue/>
2. British Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference 2021. Birmingham, 6-10 Sept, online.