

Fifth Confucius Institute to be set up at Heriot-Watt



Heriot-Watt agreement signed during FM meeting with Hanban.

Scotland's educational links with China have been taken to the next level, after an agreement was struck to establish Scotland's fifth Confucius Institute at Heriot-Watt University.

The prestigious award, which builds on the growing educational links between Scotland and China, was made during the First Minister's meeting in Beijing with Hanban – the organisation that is charged with promoting Chinese learning and language across the globe.

The First Minister and Xu Lin, the director general of Hanban, discussed the flourishing education partnership between the two countries before signing the agreement that will see Heriot-Watt become a Confucius Institute for Business and Communication.

Heriot-Watt will now work to establish the institute and become the fifth Scottish University to be awarded the prestigious status, following the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Aberdeen.

The First Minister said:-“The collaboration on education between Scotland and China is flourishing, and today's announcement that Heriot-Watt is to become the fifth Scottish university to establish a Confucius Institute is a sign that the relationship is moving to the next level.

“I am absolutely delighted that the hard work of all the staff and students at Heriot-Watt has paid off and they can now

celebrate this outstanding success as they prepare to join a network of 350 similar institutes around the world.

“The Heriot-Watt application was hugely innovative – with a focus on promoting Chinese language for business and Chinese business culture in Scotland. Its work will clearly complement the aims and ambitions Scotland has in increasing trade with China through a greater understanding of our respective cultures.”

Commenting on Scottish Government efforts to secure a resolution of visa problems faced by two Chinese teachers to enable them to continue teaching in Scotland, Mr Salmond added:-“Today’s announcement will make Scotland the most successful Confucius country in Europe, making it all the more imperative that we resolve the visa issues currently being experienced by two Chinese teachers looking to return to Scotland and help our children learn in our network of Confucius classrooms.

“During my discussions with Hanban today, I was able to assure them that the Scottish Government will do all it can to remove the nonsensical obstacles being placed in the way of these teachers returning to Scotland’s Confucius classrooms by the UK Border Agency.”

Welcoming the agreement to establish a new Confucius Institute, Gillian Hogg, Deputy Principal for external relations at Heriot-Watt University, commented:

“We are delighted to sign an agreement with Hanban to set up a Scottish Confucius Institute for Business and Communication at Heriot-Watt University. Hanban has an excellent record of promoting Chinese culture and language and we look forward to joining the worldwide network of Confucius Institutes.

“This new SCIBC complements the work of the very successful Confucius Institutes in Scotland and draws upon Heriot-Watt University’s particular strengths in working closely with

business and teaching interpreting and translating. Heriot-Watt University has state-of-the-art digital interpreting labs which are among the best in Europe. The SCIBC will enable us to promote understanding of Chinese business, language and culture, attract more students to train as Chinese interpreters and to support the Scottish governments China strategy.

“We are very grateful for the support of the First Minister, the Scottish Government and the various organisations that endorsed our bid, including the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, SDI, SFE, RSE, CBBC, RZSS, SCEN and Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce.”

Heriot-Watt University’s Principal Professor Steve Chapman said:-“Against the background of increasing business links with China and the learning of Chinese for business purposes, the setting up of Scotland’s first business and communication Confucius Institute at Heriot-Watt will facilitate forging new partnerships and joint research collaborations, and offers our expertise to meet the needs of Scottish businesses engaging with China. We are delighted at today’s news and we look forward to working together with Scotland’s other Confucius Institutes.”

Photo from The Scottish Government Flickr archive.