

Review of the China Centre

Final Report

Summary of Recommendations

This report presents the findings of the Review Panel that was set up by College Council to review the China Centre and its mode of operation. The report describes the background and development of the China Centre at Jesus College and explains the rationale for the seven-point plan presented in the final section of the report. We begin with a concise summary of the main recommendations. The Review Panel recommends that:

1. The China Centre should be given a remit by College Council to continue operating for a specified time period with a clearly defined academic purpose. It would be up to Council to determine the time period. It should be formally recognized that the central task of the Centre is to put together and run a series of seminars on China for the benefit of the academic community in Jesus College and in Cambridge more broadly. The College operates on the principle of academic freedom and this principle should be written into the aims of the China Centre and clearly stated on the China Centre website. The Centre should demonstrate its commitment to this principle by being bold and proactive in planning and running seminars, and not shying away from controversial topics.
2. The China Centre should be integrated more closely into the College community, and the Director of the China Centre should be asked to clarify the channels of communication he proposes to use in order to consult with Fellows and students on a regular basis concerning the topics to be addressed in the seminars. The China Centre Advisory Committee (CCAC) should monitor the effectiveness of these channels.
3. The relation between the China Centre and the University should be strengthened, and Council should consider implementing now two measures that would contribute to this:
 - i. Appointing up to three distinguished China scholars from the University to join the CCAC;
 - ii. Appointing a distinguished China scholar from the University as Deputy Director of the China Centre.
4. Council should review the funding arrangements for the China Centre and consider whether it is happy for the College to accept funds from the Cambridge China Development Trust (CCDT), bearing in mind the issues summarized in our report, or whether it considers it best for the College to discontinue these arrangements.
5. Future appointments to the key management positions, i.e. Director and Deputy Director, should be for a fixed time period. The responsibility for the day-to-day running of the seminar programme should be placed in the hands of a small, formally constituted management team that would report to the CCAC and would consist of the Director, the Deputy Director and at least one other Fellow.
6. The College should be fully transparent about the ways that the China Centre is funded and governed. An 'About Us' area should be created on the China Centre website with sections on Aims, People, Governance and Funding, with full details of the funding arrangements clearly presented there, and the Annual Report should be made publicly available on the website.

7. Council should, in due course, set up a working party to consider the long-term future of the China Centre, with a view to reporting to Council before the end of the time period specified by Council in relation to recommendation 1.

Background

The China Centre was formally established at Jesus College in 2016. Its origins date back to discussions in 2013-14 about a possible partnership between Jesus College and Peking University. The aims and purposes of the China Centre have evolved over time, but in recent years the Centre has become increasingly focused on one central aim: to deepen mutual understanding between China and the West through a programme of regular academic seminars and workshops. The Centre is currently housed in two offices in West Court. The roles of Director and Deputy Director are non-stipendiary, and the Centre has a part-time administrator; the current Director is Professor Peter Nolan, a Fellow of the College and Emeritus Chong Hua Professor in Chinese Development at the University of Cambridge. Governance of the Centre is the responsibility of the China Centre Advisory Committee (CCAC), which is required to meet at least twice in each academic year; the CCAC includes several Fellows and representatives from the student body and it reports to College Council.

In May 2021, the Master convened an open meeting of Fellows to discuss the China Centre and its role in the College. It was agreed at this meeting that the College should set up a Review Panel to review the Centre and its mode of operation, and to consider ways in which the Fellowship and the student body could become more involved in the Centre and its activities. College Council appointed Professor John Thompson to chair the review, and a panel of six senior Fellows of the College, drawn from the sciences, social sciences and humanities, was set up. Council approved the Panel membership and the Terms of Reference. It was agreed that the Review Panel would operate on the understanding that opinions expressed would remain confidential at all times and that nothing would inhibit the free and frank provision of advice or exchange of views.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Review Panel were established as follows:

1. **Role:** What role does the China Centre play in the life of the College and how does it fit within the wider context of the University? Is the role clear and well-defined? How unique and important is this Centre? What are the benefits and risks for the College? How could the Centre be developed in order to maximize its potential?
2. **Funding:** Should the Centre be relying on funding from the CCDT? Are there risks associated with this funding? Is the funding adequate? Could and/or should the Centre be funded differently?
3. **Director:** What are the roles of the Director and Deputy Director? How should these positions be filled and for how long? Is the Centre sustainable if the Director and/or Deputy Director were to leave? Is it sustainable if these positions are non-stipendiary?
4. **Governance:** What are the Centre's structures of governance and accountability? To whom does the Centre report and how often? What is the role of the Advisory Committee and how effective is it? How are its members chosen and what are their duties and responsibilities? What role does the Committee play in scrutinizing the Centre and shaping its activities?
5. **Operation:** How are ideas for seminars and other activities generated in the practical operation of the Centre, and how do ideas get implemented – e.g., how are topics for

seminars chosen, seminar participants selected, etc.? Could it and/or should it be done differently? Are there ways in which the Centre could more actively engage the Fellowship and the student body?

Procedure

To carry out the review, an information-gathering exercise was conducted between August and December 2021. Among other things we gathered minutes of relevant meetings of the College Council, Society and the CCAC; Annual Reports of the activities of the China Centre; details of the income and expenditure of the China Centre; Annual Reports and Financial Statements of the CCDT; data on the numbers of participants registered for seminars run by the China Centre and for events run by the Jesus College Intellectual Forum during selected time periods; the views of the Director and Deputy Director of the China Centre; the views of senior officers of Jesus College, present and past, who have been involved with the China Centre in one way or another; the views of Fellows (we solicited the views of a number of Fellows and we wrote to the entire Fellowship, inviting any Fellow who wished to express views about the Centre to write to the Chair); the views of a number of undergraduate and postgraduate students at Jesus College; the views of a number of alumni of the College; and the views of a number of distinguished China scholars external to the College.

We gathered most of these views by arranging a series of Zoom meetings throughout Michaelmas Term 2021. The discussions in these meetings were frank and wide-ranging; participants were encouraged to express their views freely, in a context where confidentiality and anonymity were assured. We explored in detail the history and pre-history of the China Centre and the issues mentioned in the Terms of Reference, soliciting views on these and other issues from a variety of stakeholders. Since the Terms of Reference made it clear that the task of the Review Panel was to review the China Centre, its mode of operation and its role in the College and the University, we kept our attention sharply focused on the China Centre and, except in so far as it was necessary in order to provide context, we did not seek to examine the activities, past or present, of other organizations based in the College. The Review Panel was not asked to review what is now known as the Global Issues Dialogue Centre, and it did not do so.

A Brief History of the China Centre at Jesus College

Jesus College has a long tradition of scholarly work on China. A Fellow of the College, Dr Laurence Picken, was a member of Joseph Needham's scientific mission to China in 1944, a trip that laid the foundations for Picken's later scholarly work on ancient Chinese music. Since then, a number of Fellows of the College have done outstanding work on China and/or developed research collaborations with scholars in China, collaborations which, in many cases, continue to this day.

The origins of the China Centre at Jesus College can be traced back to the period around 2013-14. At this time, there was a convergence of four factors that led to the establishment of a China Centre at the College.

The first factor was a broad contextual one that shaped the behaviour of many institutions – including many universities – at the time. During the first decade and a half of the 21st century, the general political culture in the UK and other Western countries was one of active

engagement with China, and this provided a supportive environment for collaborations of various kinds. The culture of engagement was a direct response to the dramatic change in China's role in the world during the era of reform, which opened up the possibility of developing much stronger connections between China and the West. When David Cameron visited Beijing in 2010, he set out a clear ambition for Britain to build a strong partnership with China, an ambition that was reiterated by the then Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, when he visited Beijing in 2015. This culture of engagement and collaboration was evident not only in the worlds of politics and business, but also in the spheres of research and higher education. Many universities in the UK, such as Nottingham, Liverpool and the LSE, established collaborations with Chinese universities, including in some cases setting up campuses in China, to offer teaching and training programmes and to facilitate joint research. Academic centres focused on China were also established in the UK: in 2014, for example, the University of Oxford opened a China Centre, housed in a building in the grounds of St Hugh's College and supported by a large donation from the Hong Kong philanthropist Dickson Poon. It was a 'golden era' of engagement with China in which collaborations were being actively encouraged by governments – not only by the British government but also by governments in Europe, North America and elsewhere.

A second factor was more specific to Cambridge. While Cambridge has a long tradition of research on China and many distinguished scholars working on China, these scholars were spread across different Departments and Faculties around the University, from the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES) to Economics, Politics, Anthropology, the Judge Business School and other departments and institutions. There were also many academics in Cambridge, including academics in the sciences and engineering, who were collaborating with researchers in China. But there was no one place in Cambridge – no single faculty, department or research centre – where these many different strands of work on and with China could be brought together. Moreover, given the institutional structures of the University, which is organized primarily in terms of discipline-based faculties and departments, it was not easy to establish an interdisciplinary centre of this kind in the framework of the University. There was therefore a strong argument for locating an interdisciplinary China centre in a college, where it is structurally easier to bring different disciplines together.

The third and fourth factors were specific to Jesus College. There were a number of Fellows of Jesus College, including Professor Peter Nolan and Professor Peter Williamson, who had strong connections with China, and in the course of 2013-14 the idea emerged of creating an interdisciplinary China Centre that would be based at Jesus College. This idea was supported by the University – in part for the reasons mentioned above. Some Fellows of the College were in discussion with senior officials at Peking University (PKU) at this time, and PKU expressed great interest in collaborating with Jesus College to establish a China Centre in Cambridge that would be based in the College. In the initial conception, it was envisaged that the Centre would involve five main strands of activity including joint research projects between members of the College and University and PKU; academic and student exchanges; and an interface with business, which would include an executive education programme. The idea was that PKU would become the College's 'anchor partner' in China, providing the College with a primary point of contact in China but not precluding collaborations with other Chinese institutions and universities; and, on the other hand, the China Centre would be

PKU's portal to the University of Cambridge, enabling it to collaborate not just with Jesus College but also with other parts of the University.

In a parallel development, the then Development Director at Jesus College was in discussions with the Jao Foundation about a possible donation to the College. At this time, Jesus College was involved in a major development project, having acquired Wesley House and embarked on an ambitious building programme to create a new court, called West Court, on the site of Wesley House; both the Master and the then Development Director were involved in a variety of fund-raising initiatives in relation to this project. The Development Director had been put in touch with the Jao Foundation by a Jesus alumnus living in Hong Kong. The Jao Foundation, based in Hong Kong, was a charitable organization established to commemorate the achievements of the Chinese sinologist and calligrapher Jao Tsung-I. The Development Director was exploring the possibility of a substantial donation from the Jao Foundation to fund a named building in West Court. The Development Director was also hoping that an endowment could be secured to cover the cost of a core permanent staff of the China Centre. It was envisaged that both the China Centre and the Jao Centre could become part of the broader range of intellectual and academic activities that would be located in West Court once the site had been re-developed.

In September 2015 the then Master, Professor Ian White, signed a Memorandum of Intent with PKU to establish a China Centre at Jesus College, and on 15 April 2016 the Master signed a formal Agreement with PKU at a ceremony in Beijing. In November 2015 the College established the China Centre Advisory Committee (CCAC), comprising the Master, the Bursar, the Development Director and eleven Fellows, to oversee the College's China initiatives. (In 2018, the number of Fellows was reduced to seven, and in 2020, the provision was made for student representatives to join the CCAC.) In April 2016, the Master signed a Memorandum of Intent with the Jao Foundation at a ceremony in Hong Kong. By late 2016, it seemed that the partnership with PKU, which would underpin the China Centre, was secured, and it seemed possible that a substantial donation from the Jao Foundation, which would fund a building in West Court that could house the College's China-related activities, would be forthcoming.

However, in the course of 2017 it became increasingly clear that the collaborations with PKU and the Jao Foundation were not going to work out as originally planned. There had been a change of leadership at PKU, and the proposed collaboration with PKU had not resulted in any significant outcomes or joint activities; moreover, the discussions with the Jao Foundation about a possible donation had come to nothing, and an endowment to cover staff costs had not been secured. At that stage, the Master reached out to Professor Peter Nolan to enlist his help in working out a new plan for a restructured China Centre that would have a clear purpose and rationale, and that could be taken forward without the active involvement of PKU or the Jao Foundation. A distinguished scholar of the Chinese economy and Chinese development, Professor Nolan had extensive contacts in China and a great deal of experience working with Chinese institutions, and he was therefore well placed to help the College restructure its plans. The Master, the Bursar and Professor Nolan prepared a joint paper, entitled 'Future development, organisation and governance of the China Centre, Jesus College', that was submitted to and received by College Council at its meeting on 2 October 2017. At the same meeting, Council approved the appointment of Professor Nolan as Director of the China Centre.

The October 2017 paper sets out the central purpose of the China Centre as it was understood from this point on – namely, to contribute to a better understanding of China’s relationship with the world. ‘It will be an independent, research-based institution that will investigate in a pragmatic and non-ideological fashion the issues that are important for meeting the common global challenges and satisfying the common interest of the whole of humanity’, explained Professor Nolan in a short text that accompanied the October 2017 paper.¹ In practical terms, the China Centre was envisaged at this stage as an umbrella organization within the College under which separate academic programmes, including research, conferences, lectures and publications, could be developed. The Centre would have administrative support and would be housed in two offices in West Court. Funding to cover the support staff, rent for the two offices and other running costs (e.g. travel expenses of visiting speakers) would come from the Cambridge China Development Trust (CCDT). CCDT is a UK registered charity that supports education and research ‘for the benefit of either British subjects on the one hand or citizens of the People’s Republic of China on the other, or both, in the field of economics, business studies, systems of governance and the development of leadership, managerial and business skills’.² CCDT’s funds come from annual donations by major non-Chinese global companies. In terms of governance, the China Centre would report to the CCAC.

While the October 2017 paper envisaged the China Centre as an umbrella organization that would bring together a number of different academic programmes and initiatives concerned with China, in practice there were two main China initiatives in the College at this time, headed up by two different individuals, and just one of these initiatives would become the China Centre as we now know it. Under Peter Nolan’s directorship, the China Centre from 2017 on became focused on the project of developing a programme of regular academic seminars and occasional workshops intended to deepen mutual understanding between China and the West. These seminars were intended primarily for the Cambridge academic community, understood as including both academics and students, and both members of the College and members of the broader University community. The China Centre’s seminar programme gradually evolved into its central and defining concern, and the China Centre as we now know it is just that: a vehicle for the organization and administration of lectures and seminars aimed primarily at the academic community in Cambridge and intended to deepen mutual understanding between China and the West. The China Centre in this current form does not undertake research, nor does it act as an umbrella organization for research projects or other programmes. Over time, the idea of the China Centre as an umbrella organization that would bring together different programmes and initiatives – an idea that had been sketched in the October 2017 paper – fell by the wayside and was replaced by the more narrowly defined idea of a centre that would organize lectures and seminars on China.

There is a separate initiative in the College that was initially part of the College’s China-related activity and that was previously placed under the umbrella described by the October 2017 paper, but it is entirely separate from the China Centre as it is now organized and

¹ Peter Nolan, ‘China Centre, Jesus College – China in the World’, a supplement to the document entitled ‘Future development, organisation and governance of the China Centre, Jesus College’; both documents were submitted to College Council for its meeting on 2 October 2017.

² Cambridge China Development Trust, Annual Report and Financial Statements, Year ended 31 July 2020, p. i. Available at <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4018866/accounts-and-annual-returns>

understood: this separate initiative is the project that was developed by Professor Peter Williamson and originally called the 'UK-China Global Issues Dialogue Centre'. Professor Williamson has a long-standing interest in China and has been involved both in conducting research on China and in developing executive education with China. He established the UK-China Global Issues Dialogue Centre in September 2018 as a research centre concerned with global issues in which China is relevant. Within the College's governance structure, the UK-China Global Issues Dialogue Centre reported to CCAC, but this Centre has always been, and remains, quite separate from the China Centre directed by Professor Nolan. However, the existence of two centres in Jesus College concerned with China – the China Centre directed by Professor Nolan and the UK-China Global Issues Dialogue Centre directed by Professor Williamson – was a potential source of confusion, not only for people external to the College but also for Fellows, students and alumni of the College. Moreover, since the activities of the UK-China Global Issues Dialogue Centre gradually moved away from its initial focus on China and became increasingly concerned with a broader range of global issues, it made less and less sense over time to treat this as part of the College's China-related activities. Hence, in February 2021, Professor Williamson proposed to drop the UK-China prefix, so that the Centre would henceforth be called the Global Issues Dialogue Centre (GIDC). The governance of GIDC was also moved out of CCAC and placed under the rubric of the Intellectual Forum. It was hoped that these changes, which clearly separated GIDC from the China Centre, would reduce the risk of confusion and create greater clarity about the College's China-related activities, which were now clearly and unambiguously focused on the China Centre directed by Professor Nolan, with its programme of lectures and seminars.

The Seminar Programme

Since February 2019, the China Centre has run an ambitious and impressive seminar programme that has addressed a wide range of topics, from the ancient Liangzhu civilization which flourished between 3400 and 2250 BC to China's Belt and Road initiative, from the role China could play in the global effort to address climate change to the risks of war with China. One of the outstanding features of this seminar programme is that it is truly interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary in character, spanning not only the humanities and the social sciences but also the natural sciences. Seminars on earthquake zones in China and on China's pursuit of semiconductor supremacy find a place alongside seminars on internal migration in China, on Chinese literature in translation and on the role of the Chinese Communist Party and its changing relations with the state. Drawing on his own expertise and extensive connections, Professor Nolan has done an excellent job of putting together a seminar programme that speaks to a wide range of intellectual interests, with contributions from scholars in STEM subjects as well as the social sciences and humanities. The intellectual breadth of the seminar programme is truly remarkable and it distinguishes the China Centre at Jesus College from the activities of other China centres, which tend to be focused more on the social sciences and humanities; it also enables the China Centre to make the most of the rich and diverse academic resources both of the College and of the University.

Prior to the pandemic, most seminars were held in the Webb Library in West Court, where they attracted a regular audience of around 40-80 people. The pandemic put in-person events on hold in Lent and Easter Terms in 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 academic year. The China Centre experimented with a virtual seminar in Michaelmas 2020 and then began a regular series of virtual seminars in Lent 2021. Individuals who wish to attend are asked to register and are sent a Zoom link. While virtual seminars lack the immediacy of face-to-face

events, going virtual has enabled the China Centre to reach a wider audience with its seminar programme. Data on participant bookings for the virtual seminars held between January and November 2021 show that the average number of participants per seminar across 19 seminars was 97; many seminars had over 100 participants, and several had 120 or more (see Appendix 1). The data also show active participation among College members, including Fellows, students and alumni, as well as high levels of participation from other members of the academic community in Cambridge who are part of the University but not members of Jesus College. Cambridge is a very busy academic environment with lots of lectures and seminars by distinguished scholars; given the plethora of options available and the demands on people's time, it is not easy to run a seminar programme that attracts a consistently high level of participation. The fact that the China Centre has run a programme of seminars throughout 2021 that has attracted an average of nearly 100 participants for each seminar is, in the Cambridge context, an exceptional achievement and a real tribute to the time, effort and creativity invested by Professor Nolan and his team. Moreover, the numbers of participants attending the China Centre seminars are comparable to the numbers of people who registered for online events organized by the Intellectual Forum at Jesus College over the same period: special IF lectures by high-profile scholars like Mary Beard and Lyndal Roper attracted significantly more participants, as one would expect, but a typical IF event attracted numbers that were broadly similar to the numbers participating in China Centre events.

Concerns Raised

Beginning in early 2020 and running through 2021, some concerns were raised in various quarters about the College's China-related activities. These included articles and reports in a number of newspapers, periodicals, websites and related media. Jesus College's China initiatives were also mentioned as a matter of concern in the House of Commons by Dominic Raab, the then Foreign Secretary, and Tom Tugendhat, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, in the context of discussions about academic freedom in British universities. Many of the newspaper articles expressed concern about the funding arrangements behind the College's China initiatives and the perceived lack of transparency about these arrangements; they also expressed concern about what appeared to be the avoidance of controversial topics, such as the political situation in Hong Kong and the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, in the China Centre's seminar programme.

Some of the press reports contained misunderstandings and misrepresentations, and they reflected considerable confusion in the public domain about the nature and scope of the College's China initiatives as well as the relation between different programmes – especially the relation between the China Centre, understood as a vehicle for the organization and administration of lectures and seminars on China, and the Global Issues Dialogue Centre (GIDC), which is an entirely separate entity. In some respects, this confusion is understandable: the College's China initiatives have evolved over time and have involved different strands, and the relationship between these strands was not always clearly communicated. But apart from some misunderstandings and misrepresentations, a number of important issues were raised in the press reports about the way in which the China Centre is funded, how it has addressed (or not addressed) some controversial topics and the need to ensure that academic freedom is not compromised.

Similar concerns were also raised by some Fellows, some students and some alumni of the College. A number of alumni wrote to the Master and the Director of Development and Alumni Relations about the College's activities in relation to China – in some cases to express support for these activities, and in other cases to express concern and to call attention to the reputational damage that could be caused to the College by the negative press coverage. Several alumni were dismayed by what they perceived as inconsistency or even hypocrisy on the part of the College, which was taking steps to remove the memorial to Tobias Rustat in the College Chapel because of his involvement in the slave trade, on the one hand, while the China Centre appeared to be turning a blind eye to the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, on the other. A number of Fellows also expressed their concern about the lack of speakers on controversial topics like human rights, press freedom, the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and the political situation in Hong Kong, stressing the importance of ensuring that academic freedom is rigorously upheld in practice; they also called for greater transparency with regard to the governance structures and funding arrangements for the College's China initiatives and they emphasized the need to avoid conflicts of interest, especially given the increasing sensitivity of issues surrounding China. Students have expressed similar concerns on various occasions and in various settings, including via their representatives on the CCAC.

While some of the concerns raised in the press and by some Fellows, students and alumni have been about specific issues, they also reflect a broader change in the geo-political environment. By 2020, the optimism of the 2010-2015 period, when both businesses and universities were being actively encouraged to engage and collaborate with China, had faded considerably; with Xi Jinping's rise to power and the cooling of relations between China and the West, the culture of collaboration and engagement had given way to a culture of growing suspicion and distrust. Academic institutions that had programmes focused on China were being subjected to increasing scrutiny. And a culture of growing suspicion and distrust – especially when it concerns a very powerful global player like China – provides fertile ground for rumours, speculation and conspiracy theories to flourish.

Hong Kong and Xinjiang

As mentioned above, in the course of 2020 concerns were raised in various quarters about the absence of seminars at the China Centre on some controversial topics such as the political situation in Hong Kong and the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, and it is not difficult to understand why some people might have felt at the time that the Centre was avoiding these topics. It is clear from the minutes that the concerns expressed in the press and elsewhere were being discussed both by College Council and by the CCAC. At its meeting of 13 July 2020 Council emphasized that the principle of academic freedom was fundamental for the College and reaffirmed its view that no subjects were 'out of bounds' for the seminar programme. From mid-2020 on, the CCAC was actively considering the question of whether seminars should be organized on the Hong Kong security laws and on the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. At the CCAC meeting on 24 February 2021, the Director reported that he had had discussions with various people about a possible event on the future of Hong Kong and that he was planning such an event for the Easter Term. In fact, in the course of 2021, seminars on both Hong Kong and Xinjiang, organized by the China Centre, took place – the Hong Kong seminar took place on 25 May 2021 and the Xinjiang seminar took place on 27 October.

Participation levels for both of these seminars were high: the Hong Kong seminar attracted 129 participants, including 10 Fellows and 9 Jesus College students, and the Xinjiang seminar attracted 140 participants, including 5 Fellows and 13 Jesus College students. While in many respects these seminars went well and provided an opportunity for Fellows, students and others to hear different views about the situations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, concerns were raised by some members of the audience about the decision that was taken by the Chair not to take questions from the audience in the seminar on Hong Kong. The Chair explained that he took this decision because several speakers had over-run their allotted time, which left very little time for questions, and he decided that it would be better to use the time remaining to give each of the speakers a chance to respond to issues raised by the other speakers rather than to take questions from the audience. However, this didn't go down well with some members of the audience, who felt – understandably – that the audience was being deprived of an opportunity to question and challenge the views that had been expressed by the speakers.

Of course, it is not always possible to control what happens in live online events – they can take on a dynamic of their own, and speakers can talk for too long. It is easy to understand why the Chair proceeded in the way he did on this occasion: he could see that time was running out and he had to take a decision, on the spur of the moment, about how to use the time that remained. In retrospect, given the level of scrutiny to which the China Centre has been subjected in recent years, this was probably the wrong call. It would have been better if the Chair had kept the speakers to their allotted time and allowed some time after their presentations for members of the audience to question and challenge them: allowing space for criticism is an essential part of academic freedom. But running online events of this kind, with several speakers located in different parts of the world, is not a simple and straightforward process, and it is easy for some things to go wrong: this is a learning process for everyone concerned. It is worth noting that in the seminar on Xinjiang, there was, by contrast, plenty of time for audience members to ask questions, and the Chair made a special point of prioritizing students when he called on audience members to put their questions to the speakers: this was noticed and appreciated by students.

While the seminars on Hong Kong and Xinjiang were very welcome developments and well-attended, there were downsides to the fact that they occurred 2-3 years after the events in Hong Kong and Xinjiang had become the focus of widespread public concern.³ The absence of seminars on Hong Kong and Xinjiang had contributed significantly to the negative press coverage that had been directed at the China Centre and the College in 2020, so that, by the time the seminars happened in 2021, some reputational damage had already been done. Of course, the China Centre is an academic institution, not a media organization, and the seminar programme should be driven by intellectual concerns rather than media agendas. But the political situation in Hong Kong and the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang are issues of genuine intellectual concern as well as being important and topical political issues, and it is clear that there were many Fellows and students in the College who were pressing for seminars to be organized on these topics. Had these seminars happened sooner, it might have helped to reassure both members of the College and those outside the College that the China Centre was tackling difficult and sensitive topics in a timely and proactive way.

³ BBC reports on the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang began in August 2018, and the Hong Kong protests against the National Security Law began in March 2019.

Looking Forward: A Seven-Point Plan

The College's China initiatives have evolved over time, and, as explained above, it is only since 2017-18 that the China Centre has assumed the form that it has today – namely, as a College-based organization that is focused on running a series of seminars on China for the benefit of the academic community in the College and in the University more broadly. The China Centre has been clearly separated from the Global Issues Dialogue Centre (GIDC), and the latter has been moved to the Intellectual Forum: this is a welcome change and it should help to ensure that these two organizations, which are entirely separate from one another, are not confused in public discussions about the College's China-related activities. The latter are now clearly and unambiguously focused on the China Centre and its ongoing programme of seminars.

Some people have questioned whether academic institutions in the UK should be engaging at all with China in the current climate, given the concerns that have been raised about human rights and other issues in China. But just as it is an essential part of academic freedom that students and academics should be free to discuss any topic and probe the views of speakers in a critical way, so too it is an important part of academic freedom that academics should be free to engage with countries – with their people, their culture and their history – even if the politics and policies of their governments are objectionable. Many academics in Cambridge and elsewhere work on aspects of China's history and culture and are widely recognized as some of the world's best scholars of China; many Cambridge academics also have collaborations with Chinese researchers in many different fields, from the natural sciences and engineering to the social sciences and humanities. Moreover, given the importance of China in the world today, with a population of more than 1.4 billion and the world's second largest economy, it is clearly important that we in the West deepen our understanding of China, its history and its role in the world. Indeed, it could be persuasively argued that it is precisely at a time of growing tension between China and the West that engagement, dialogue and mutual understanding are more important than ever.

A good case can be made for maintaining the kind of China Centre that the College currently has – namely, a streamlined organization that is focused on putting together and running a series of seminars on China for the benefit of the academic community in Cambridge. But members of Jesus College might reasonably ask: why should this Centre be in Jesus College, rather than in the University or in some other college? The answer to this question is partly historical and partly practical. The historical aspect is that, as noted earlier, Jesus College has a long history of interest in and work on China, dating back to the 1940s, and a number of its current Fellows work on China and/or have important research collaborations with Chinese scholars. Moreover, the College has been involved in a series of China initiatives, dating back to 2013-14, out of which the China Centre in its current form has emerged, and it therefore has a track record of engagement with China on which it can build. The Jesus College China Centre now has an institutional presence that is significant and valuable in itself; it does not have to be built from scratch because the foundations have been laid through the combined efforts of many individuals over many years. The practical part of the answer is that if the China Centre were not at Jesus College, it would probably not be located somewhere else in the University or in some other college: in all likelihood it would simply not exist. For the reasons mentioned earlier, if an interdisciplinary China Centre of this kind is going to exist in Cambridge at all, then, in the Cambridge context, a college will be a very suitable and practical home.

However, it is clear that in the current geo-political climate, having a China Centre carries certain risks for Jesus College, including significant reputational risks. In our view, the China Centre should be reformed and restructured in certain ways, and implementing these reforms should help both to improve and strengthen the China Centre and to reduce the reputational risks. Our recommendations take the form of a seven-point plan.

1 Maintaining the China Centre for a specified time period with a clearly defined academic purpose

We recommend that the China Centre be given a remit by College Council to continue operating for a specified time period with a clearly defined academic purpose. The time period would be for Council to determine – for example, it could be 3 years.

As our brief reconstruction of the history (and pre-history) of the China Centre makes clear, a multiplicity of aims and purposes have been involved in the College's various China initiatives from 2013-14 on, from fund-raising to conducting research to running an executive education programme to organizing seminars and workshops. This has led to a lack of clarity about what exactly the purpose of the China Centre is, and it has contributed to the confusion that is apparent in some of the media reports about the College's China-related activities. Since 2017-18, the China Centre has been focused on the central task of putting together and running a series of seminars on China for the benefit of the academic community in Cambridge: this clarity of purpose is to be welcomed. Our recommendation is that this task should be formally recognized by Council as the primary purpose of the China Centre.

In terms of the intellectual content, it makes good sense for the China Centre to take 'China and its relation to the world' as its overarching theme, where this theme is understood in a broad interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary way to include contributions from the humanities, the social sciences and STEM subjects. At the same time, it should be stated clearly and explicitly, on the website and elsewhere, that in developing its programme of seminars, the China Centre regards the principles of academic freedom as paramount: no topics will be excluded from discussion, and the seminars will provide a space for a multiplicity of views to be expressed, including views that are critical of the Chinese government and the Chinese state and their actions and policies. The principle of academic freedom was written into many of the College's China initiatives, and the College has often reiterated that, in relation to the seminar programme, no topic or subject would be out of bounds: our view is that this should be stated clearly and explicitly on the China Centre website and elsewhere so that there is no ambiguity on this fundamental principle. Moreover, it is important that this principle is exemplified in practice by the willingness of the China Centre to organize events on controversial topics – not just the political situation in Hong Kong and the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, but also other controversial topics like Tibet, Taiwan, the South China Sea, human rights in China, censorship in China and so on. We would urge the China Centre to be bold and proactive in planning and running seminars, and not to shy away from controversial topics, and/or from topics that might show the Chinese government or state in an unfavourable light. The Centre needs to demonstrate its commitment to academic freedom by taking the initiative in the way that it organizes seminars on some of the most controversial issues relating to China, and doing so in a timely and proactive way.

By renewing the China Centre for a specified but substantial time period, Council would be giving the China Centre time to develop and expand its seminar series, and it would give the College time to see whether the Centre could be put on a more secure foundation that would ensure its continued long-term development (see points 4 and 7 below). At the same time, Council would make it clear that this is not an unending commitment, and that continuation of the China Centre after a specified time period would be subject to a further review carried out by the College.

2 Integrating the China Centre more closely into the College community

Having a China Centre that is based in Jesus College only makes sense if there is a plurality of Fellows in the College who want it to exist and if the Centre and its activities are effectively integrated into the academic life of the College. On the whole, this works reasonably well. The Director organized a couple of ‘Fellows’ China Days’ as a way of enabling Fellows to share experiences and information about their work on China and their collaborations with researchers in China: this was an excellent initiative and these events – especially the first – highlighted both the large number of Fellows who are working on China or working with Chinese colleagues and the wide range of their research interests. The Director has also encouraged Fellows who are working on China to give seminars on their work.

However, more could and should be done to consult with Fellows and students in the College on a regular basis to get their views on what seminars they would like the China Centre to organize. Steps should be taken to build and strengthen direct channels of communication between the Fellowship and the student body, on the one hand, and the Director of the China Centre, on the other, so that the Director is aware of, and regularly updated on, what Fellows and students would like to see discussed in the seminars and is responding to their wishes where it is possible to do so. These don’t need to be formal channels: sometimes informal conversations over coffee are a more effective mechanism; but for this to work, the Director has to make a sustained effort to reach out to Fellows and students on a regular basis and actively solicit their views. Fellows need to feel a sense of ownership with regard to the China Centre: the China Centre will exist if and only if Fellows want it to exist; and they will only feel this sense of ownership if the Centre is in tune with what they want and responding to their wishes and concerns.

It is vitally important that there are direct channels of communication with the student body as well – both undergraduates and postgraduate students. In our meetings with students, it was clear that many of the topics they wanted to see discussed in the China Centre seminars were the same as the topics that were mentioned by Fellows: Hong Kong and the treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang were high in their list of priorities too. But the topics that students will want to see discussed won’t always align with the priorities of Fellows. For example, some students we spoke to wanted to see more seminars dealing with social and political movements in China and with issues like censorship and the state of the media in China. Some also felt that not enough effort was being made to allow Chinese voices to be heard in the seminars, and that too much emphasis was being placed on Western academics talking about China (‘the Chinese are being talked about, not talked with’, as one student put it). Of course, these are only the comments and suggestions of a small selection of students – no doubt other students would express other views and make other suggestions. The point here is not so much about content but about procedure: more could and should be done to make sure

that the China Centre is organizing seminars on the topics that Fellows and students would like to see discussed. It is also important that, apart from the selection of topics, other concerns that Fellows or students might have are listened to and addressed so far as possible by the Director and others responsible for the management of the China Centre, and that the seminars provide a safe academic environment in which all members of the College community – including students from China – feel comfortable participating.

The Director of the China Centre should be asked to clarify the channels of communication he proposes to use in order to consult with Fellows and students on a regular basis concerning the topics to be addressed in the seminars, and the CCAC should establish procedures to monitor routinely the effectiveness of these channels of communication.

3 Strengthening the relation between the China Centre and the University

If more could be done to integrate the China Centre into the academic life of the College, then more could also be done to integrate the China Centre into the academic life of the University. Indeed, this is one of the great missed opportunities of the China Centre. Having emerged as it did out of a specific set of initiatives that took place primarily in Jesus College over a period of 7-8 years, no attempt was ever made to connect the China Centre more directly with those faculties and departments in the University which are concerned with China, especially FAMES, and to involve in a systematic way some of the Cambridge academics who work on China but are not Fellows of Jesus College. As one Cambridge academic who is not a member of Jesus College said, ‘the relationship with the University is non-existent’. This is very different from the China Centre at Oxford, which, while also based in a college (St Hugh’s College), is linked to different departments and acts as a hub for various academic activities related to China at the University of Oxford. With the China Centre at Jesus College, we have the opportunity to do something similar, and it would be a win-win both for Jesus College and for the University. Jesus College would benefit because the China Centre would gain the contributions and expertise of other academics in Cambridge who are working on China. Moreover, given that some of these academics are among the world’s most distinguished China scholars in their fields, involving them in the Centre’s activities would also raise the profile of the China Centre as a centre of excellence for high-quality discussion about China. The University would also benefit because, while there is a China section within FAMES and there are China scholars spread around different faculties and departments, there is no one place or institution within the University where China scholars and students can be brought together. The Needham Research Institute is a research-focused institution and is concerned only with the history of science and technology in China, Korea and Japan. FAMES has a China Research Seminar, but this is a specialized research seminar geared to the needs of research students in FAMES who are working on China. There is an appetite in the University for a broader series of seminars on China aimed at the wider academic community – as evidenced by the high levels of participation in the China Centre seminars by members of the University who are not members of Jesus College.

There are two ways that the relationship with the University could be strengthened. One way would be simple and quick: Council could invite some distinguished China scholars from the University to join the CCAC. The mechanism for doing this already exists (the Terms of Reference for the CCAC allow for ‘Up to three persons appointed by Council for their special expertise’). This would immediately signal the College’s intention to strengthen the relationship between the China Centre and the University and would enable the College to

benefit from the expertise of some of the University's best China scholars. In making these additional appointments, Council should bear in mind the desirability of achieving a gender balance and of including one or more Chinese nationals on the CCAC.

There is a second way that the relationship with the University could be strengthened – and this is complementary to the first. As currently constituted, the China Centre has a Director and a Deputy Director (both non-stipendiary). Until recently, the Deputy Director was Dr Jin Zhang, who held a University Lectureship in International Business at the Judge Business School and was appointed Deputy Director of the China Centre in April 2019; however, Dr Zhang resigned from her University lectureship in October 2021 in order to take up a position as Vice President at the Centre for International Knowledge on Development (CIKD) in Beijing, and she subsequently stepped down as Deputy Director of the China Centre. Dr Zhang has given generously to the College in her role as Deputy Director, and the College has reason to be very grateful to her for the time and effort that she has invested, pro bono, to help ensure the success of the seminar programme. Her departure is a loss both for the University and for the College. At the same time, with the position of Deputy Director now vacant, the College has an opportunity to reset the arrangements for the senior management of the China Centre. The Panel recommends that a new Deputy Director should be appointed for a specified time period (linked to the time period set by College Council in relation to recommendation 1), and the Panel would encourage College Council to consider appointing as Deputy Director a distinguished China scholar from FAMES whose interests are complementary to those of the current Director. This would have two significant advantages: it would strengthen the relationship between the China Centre and the University, and it would involve another senior and distinguished China scholar, with a complementary set of interests and contacts, in the day-to-day running of the China Centre.

4 Funding

As noted above, since 2017-18 the China Centre has been funded by the Cambridge China Development Trust (CCDT). Since both the Director and the Deputy Director are non-stipendiary roles, the sums involved are relatively small: the total funding received from the CCDT for running the China Centre was £13,549 in 2017-18, £39,636 in 2018-19 and £27,978 in 2019-20. (In 2018, the CCDT also funded a research associate on a five-month contract who was employed through the China Centre for a total cost of £22,000.) The running costs include an annual rent of £13,000 that is paid by CCDT to the College for the use of two offices in West Court. Most of the remaining costs are accounted for by payments to the Administrator of the China Centre, who invoices CCDT for her time. Small additional sums are accounted for by the costs of additional administrative support for some events; travel and accommodation expenses for some seminar speakers (this was more common before the onset of the pandemic made it difficult to host in-person events); printing and website design costs; and the costs of refreshments and occasional dinners. Based on the experience of the last two years, the annual running costs of the China Centre are in the region of £28,000-£40,000 including the cost of the office space, and in the region of £15,000-£27,000 excluding the cost of the office space.

Apart from the funding received from the CCDT, the costs of four conferences arranged by the China Centre were paid directly to the College's conference account by various sponsoring institutions; these institutions are listed on p. 16 of the China Centre Report of March 2021. The College also received a single donation of £11,000 from an alumnus to

support the visit of the artist Liu Dahong and to cover the associated costs of a lecture and dinner in February 2019. We are not aware of any other significant funding that was received by the China Centre since 2017. Despite some suggestions to the contrary, the China Centre has received no funding from Huawei.⁴

While the running costs itemized above are funded by the CCDT, Jesus College also supports the China Centre in numerous ways – for example, by providing meeting rooms, providing a platform for online events, hosting and maintaining the website, providing IT support, providing communications support and providing a range of other institutional facilities. All of these forms of support involve significant costs that are met by the College.

From the viewpoint of the College, the key question is whether it is comfortable to be receiving support from the CCDT to cover the running costs of the China Centre. There are arguments for and against this arrangement. There are two arguments in favour. First, thanks to this arrangement, the College does not bear the direct administrative costs of running the China Centre and organizing the events: the running costs are covered by the CCDT. Moreover, the College receives £13,000 per year for the rent paid for two offices, which is a general benefit to the College. Second, the CCDT is a UK registered charity that supports education and research. It receives its funds from annual donations, normally £35,000 from each firm each year, by 18 major global companies, all of which are named in its Annual Report and Financial Statements.⁵ Nearly all of these companies are Western-based global corporations and financial institutions; they include HSBC, Boeing, WPP, KPMG, Prudential and Standard Life. Only one donor is based in China: Sun Hung Kai – Kwoks' Foundation, an educational foundation that was set up in 2002 by the Hong Kong-based property company Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd. None of CCDT's funds come, directly or indirectly, from the Chinese government or the Chinese state. The activities of the CCDT are overseen by a board of 17 Trustees chaired by Professor Alec Broers, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. Before the funding arrangements for the China Centre were agreed in 2017, the College carried out due diligence and found no reason to be concerned about receiving funds from the CCDT.

On the other hand, there are three reasons to think that these funding arrangements are less than ideal. First, since the funds disbursed by the CCDT come from 18 different companies, it is hard for the College to be sure that the funds received by the College carry zero reputational risk for the College and are fully in line with the College's principles and policies; without doing a thorough investigation of all 18 donors, the College cannot rule out the possibility that there could be some reputational risk here, and/or that one or more donors might not fully align with its principles and policies.⁶ If the funding came from a single source (or a small number of sources), it would be easier to establish that the funding arrangements were risk-free and fully aligned with the College's ethos.

⁴ It was a separate organization, the UK-China Global Issues Dialogue Centre, now GIDC, that received £155,000 from Huawei in August 2019 for a two-year research project.

⁵ Cambridge China Development Trust, Annual Report and Financial Statements, Year ended 31 July 2020, p. 12. Donations from most firms were temporarily suspended in 2019-2020 because of the pandemic.

⁶ For example, one of companies that provides funds to the CCDT is British-American Tobacco, and the College might wish to consider whether receiving funds from a trust that is itself partly funded by British-American Tobacco is fully consistent with its principles and policies.

A second reason why the current funding arrangements are less than ideal is that, as is clear from its Annual Report, the principal activity of the CCDT is to support the running of the China Executive Leadership Programme (CELP), which is co-organized and co-sponsored by the CCDT and the China Development Research Foundation (CDRF), a foundation established by the Development Research Center of the State Council of China.⁷ Launched in 2005, CELP was designed to meet the management needs of China's large state-owned enterprises in the context of economic globalization; participants are selected by the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee and, as part of the training, they typically spend three weeks in Cambridge, where they attend lectures and seminars given by academics and business leaders on a wide range of topics. While CELP is a worthwhile project in its own right, it is completely different from the aims and purposes of the China Centre. Whereas CELP is closely tied to the interests of the Chinese state and Chinese SOEs, the China Centre is, and must be, completely independent of the Chinese state and the Chinese government, and must be free to organize seminars that could be critical of the policies and practices of the Chinese state and the Chinese government. Of course, receiving funding from the same organization that funds CELP does not imply that the China Centre is linked to or aligned with the interests of CELP. But it could give the appearance that the academic freedom of the China Centre might be compromised by the fact that it receives financial support from an organization whose primary purpose is to fund CELP.

The third reason why the funding arrangements are less than ideal is that one individual, Professor Nolan, is a senior officer in all three of these organizations: he is the Director of CELP, a Director and Trustee of the CCDT, and the Director of the China Centre. Since the CCDT is involved in funding both CELP and the China Centre, this overlapping of roles and entanglement of organizations creates the risk of conflicts of interest, and it could give rise to concerns that the linkages and interdependencies could compromise the independence and academic integrity of the China Centre. It is reasonable to argue that, as a general principle of good governance, when an academic organization is funded by an external trust or foundation, there should be a clear separation between the trust that provides the funds, on the one hand, and the organization that is funded by it, on the other, and no trustee of or donor to the trust that provides the funding should be involved, directly or indirectly, in the day-to-day running of the organization funded by it or in its governance; adhering to this general principle helps to ensure that the academic freedom of the organization is not compromised in any way by the views of trustees and funders. With the current funding arrangements for the China Centre, this clear separation is lacking. If the China Centre were funded differently, it would help to remove doubt about whether the academic independence of the China Centre was being compromised by the interests and concerns of the funding body or by its proximity, via its common funding source, to another organization (CELP) that is linked to the interests of the Chinese state.

For these three reasons, a good case could be made for the view that it would be preferable for the College to fund the China Centre in some way other than by relying on funding from the CCDT. It would enable the College to explain more easily and clearly how the China Centre is funded, it would remove reputational risks that might stem from some of the companies that provide funds to the CCDT and it would remove any suspicion that the

⁷ <https://cdrf-en.cdrf.org.cn/qgb/index.htm> In 2020, CELP was temporarily suspended because of the pandemic.

independence and academic integrity of the China Centre might be compromised by its funding arrangements.

While a good case could be made for discontinuing the funding from the CCDT, we recognize that there are arguments on both sides. It will be for College Council, with input from the Bursar and the Bursarial Committee, to decide how best to proceed, weighing up the arguments for and against, and balancing the reputational risks associated with maintaining the current funding arrangements, on the one hand, with the financial costs of discontinuing these arrangements, on the other.

If Council were to decide to discontinue funding from the CCDT, what alternative sources of funding might there be? The costs of running the China Centre in its current form are relatively modest, probably around £30,000 a year excluding the cost of the office space, and even if the cost of the office space were included, it might be less than £40,000 a year, as it is not clear that the China Centre in its current form would need two offices. It might be possible for the College to secure alternative sources of funding to cover these running costs for a fixed time period while consideration is being given to a longer-term solution (see recommendation 7).

In the absence of alternative sources of funding, the College could consider funding the China Centre for a specified time period. This would not be an easy time for the College to take on an extra financial commitment of this kind, given the additional financial pressures created by the pandemic, and c£30,000 a year is not an insignificant sum, even if the time period were limited. But it could be a small price to pay if it were to help safeguard the academic integrity of the China Centre, reduce the reputational risks for the College and lessen the burden placed on the College's senior officers.

Whatever position College Council decides to take on the funding arrangements, it is important to ensure, in our view, that the China Centre is clearly separated from CELP, which is an altogether different programme that is not connected either to the China Centre or to Jesus College. If the same offices in West Court are used both for the administration of the China Centre and for the administration of CELP, there is a risk that this could continue to fuel confusion in the public domain about the exact nature of Jesus College's China-related activities.

5 Governance and management

The governance arrangements for the China Centre, whereby the Centre reports to the CCAC which is chaired by the Master and includes seven Fellows plus several others *ex officio*, and the CCAC reports to College Council to which it submits the minutes of its meetings and an annual report, is satisfactory and in line with the governance arrangements for other bodies within the College and the University. We recommend, as noted above, that Council should appoint to the CCAC up to three persons who are recognized experts on China but not members of Jesus College. We also recommend that, in future, appointments to the key management positions in the China Centre, i.e. the Director and the Deputy Director, should be for a fixed time period – we would recommend that any future Director or Deputy Director is appointed for 5 years (though if a new Deputy Director is appointed now, the tenure should be linked to the time period that Council stipulates in relation to recommendation 1). As a matter of principle, it is desirable, in our view, that there should be regular turnover in key

management positions of this kind, both to ensure that the institution remains dynamic and to prevent it from becoming too closely identified with the interests and priorities of particular individuals.

While the formal governance structure of the China Centre is fine, we think that it would be sensible, especially in the current climate, for the planning and execution of the seminar programme to be handled by a small management team that would comprise the Director, the Deputy Director and at least one other Fellow. This small management team would not displace or compromise the governance role of the CCAC, which is the College committee that has formal responsibility for overseeing the activities of the China Centre and reporting to Council. Members of the CCAC are actively encouraged to make suggestions for possible seminars, and the minutes of the CCAC now formally record these suggestions in an annotated list which is used to monitor progress in the seminar programme – this is a sensible and welcome innovation (though the mechanisms for soliciting ideas and suggestions should be broadened to include a wider range of Fellows and students, as recommended in point 2 above). But the CCAC is not responsible for the day-to-day running of the China Centre, and it cannot get involved in the practical details of organizing seminars, inviting speakers, etc. – these practical activities have to be delegated to others. Given the sensitivities associated with running a series of seminars on China today, there are risks involved in placing all responsibility for organizing the seminar series in the hands of one individual. By establishing a small management team of the Director, the Deputy Director and at least one other Fellow, the CCAC would be assigning responsibility for the seminar programme to a small team. This would have several advantages: it would broaden the management range and make the seminar programme less dependent on the interests and contacts of one individual; it would spread the workload across several people, helping to reduce the burden on the Director and to ensure that the China Centre is able to respond quickly and effectively to the suggestions of Fellows and students; and it would lessen the focus on the Director, who can, in the current structure, all-too-easily become the target of criticism.

6 Transparency

The Review Panel is firmly of the view that the College should be fully transparent about the activities of the China Centre and the ways that it is funded and governed. The China Centre has a homepage on the College website where its aims are briefly described (<https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/research/global/china-centre>) and there is a link to another page which lists the seminars and other events that have been organized by the Centre, but there is nothing on the website that describes the funding arrangements for the China Centre and explains how the Centre is organized and governed. This lack of transparency fuels the suspicion that there could be surreptitious sources of funding behind the China Centre that are skewing the seminar programme and compromising academic freedom.

The best way to counter this kind of suspicion is to be completely open about the funding arrangements and governance structure of the China Centre: if the College has nothing to hide, then it has nothing to fear from complete transparency on these issues. The funding arrangements, organization and governance structure of the China Centre should be fully explained on the China Centre's web pages.

A good model for the kind of transparency we are recommending here can be found on the website for the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication:

<https://wintoncentre.maths.cam.ac.uk/> The ‘About Us’ drop-down menu has sections on Aims, People and Funding, and the Funding tab describes the sources of funding in detail. The Review Panel recommends that the China Centre creates a similar ‘About Us’ area on its website with sections on Aims, People, Governance and Funding. We also recommend that the Annual Report be made publicly available on the website.

7 Developing a clear plan for the future

The Review Panel has recommended that the China Centre be given a remit by College Council to continue operating for a specified time period: this will give it time to continue developing the seminar programme and to strengthen its links both to the College and to the University. It will also give the College time to develop a clear plan for the future of the China Centre, and indeed to decide whether it wishes the China Centre to remain a part of the College, and if so in what form. The Review Panel recommends that, in due course, College Council establishes a small working party to consider these questions, with a view to reporting to Council during the year before the specified time period comes to an end. Among other things, the working party should be asked to consider the following issues:

1. The China Centre in its current form has emerged through a series of separate initiatives undertaken at different times by different College officers and Fellows. There is an element of serendipity here and that is not necessarily a bad thing – sometimes serendipity works. But the rationale for developing the China Centre at Jesus College further into the future has to be based on something stronger than serendipity. This only makes sense if (a) there is a plurality of Fellows in the College who believe it is important and want it to continue, (b) it has an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary mix that works well in a College setting but would make it hard to develop in a University faculty or department, (c) it is not a serious drain on the College’s resources and (d) the value of having the Centre outweighs the risks and/or losses.
2. The funding for the China Centre would need to be put on a more secure long-term basis that was fully in line with the College’s principles. We have explained above why the current funding arrangements are less than ideal, and we also recognize that an organization like the China Centre should not be a long-term drain on the College’s resources. Extending the China Centre’s remit for a specified time period provides a window of opportunity to see whether alternative arrangements can be made for the stable long-term funding of the China Centre.
3. There would need to be a clear succession plan for the Directorship of the China Centre. Professor Nolan has been Director for just over 4 years, having been appointed in October 2017. In the current organization of the Centre, this is a non-stipendiary role, and the College is very fortunate that it has in its Fellowship a very distinguished scholar of China who is able and willing to invest, without remuneration, a great deal of time and effort in running the China Centre and putting together an ambitious programme of seminars – this is an exceptionally generous contribution from which the College has benefited greatly. But at some point there would need to be a transition to a new Director, and the College would need to consider who, from among its Fellowship, would be able and willing to take on this role, or whether it would need to appoint a new Fellow who would become the Director, or indeed whether the Director might come from outside the College’s Fellowship. It would also need to consider whether the role should remain non-stipendiary or whether – as is common with some other College offices – there

should be some remuneration attached to this post. If the College were to attach some remuneration to the role of Director, then the running costs of the China Centre would increase, making it all the more important to ensure that the funding of the China Centre was put on a secure long-term basis.

4. Further consideration should be given to the relationship between the China Centre at Jesus College, on the one hand, and the University, on the other, and to how exactly the China Centre at Jesus College relates to, and is integrated with, the University's broader strategy and approach to research and teaching on, and collaboration with, China. While we have indicated some ways in which the relation between the China Centre and the University could be strengthened in the short term, there are other aspects of the University's strategy and approach to China that would need to be addressed in any plan for the long-term future of the China Centre.

In recommending that the China Centre be given a remit to continue operating for a specified time period, the Review Panel does not want to suggest that the fundamental questions about the long-term future of the China Centre at Jesus College have been resolved. On the contrary, we are well aware that these questions remain open, and we strongly recommend that, in due course, a working party is set up by Council to address these questions and, if deemed appropriate, to develop a clear plan for the future of the China Centre, taking account of the issues outlined above.