

China Studies Centre

Strategic and Operational Plan, 2025-2030

MISSION

To produce research that leads to the understanding of China, its society, its development, and interactions with the world.

VISION

The China Studies Centre [CSC] enhances the University of Sydney's long tradition of excellence in China research by bringing together researchers on China and on China-related matters from across faculties, disciplines and centres, enabling academic collaboration with researchers from Australia, China and other countries, and being a research-informed voice in Australia's public China discourse.

SCOPE

The CSC is a Level 3 University Centre in the DVC Research Portfolio that reports to the PVC Global Research and Engagement. It is a multi-disciplinary research centre designed to produce high quality research output, increase the university's research impact related to China and attract external research funding. As part of the Office of Global Research and Engagement [OGRE] the CSC assists the University's engagement with China; and makes its expertise available to government, business, and the local community.

The China Studies Centre has members who are active researchers on China in every faculty and school at the University of Sydney. The China Studies Centre also has members from other institutions in Australia and the world who collaborate in its research projects.

BACKGROUND

The CSC had been established as an MDI in 2010. In 2021 it was re-established as a Level 2 Centre in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. After a review, in the middle of 2023 it was recommended that it should be extended until the end of August 2025 as a Level 3 University Centre in the DVC Research Portfolio with a further review scheduled for 2025,

and ‘with a view to a potential incorporation into a Level 4 centre focused on regional area studies across time.’ It was also recommended that the CSC should report directly to the PVC Global and Research Engagement.

OBJECTIVE

By 2029 the China Studies Centre should demonstrate that it has an international reputation for research on China, is financially sustainable, and has a continued upward performance trajectory.

AIMS

1. Increase the output, impact and profile of high-quality China-related research by academic staff at the University of Sydney, in particular resulting from cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration.
2. Recognition of the University of Sydney as a major international centre for research on China, in particular for research on local change through the Local China Project; and for research on climate, health and sustainability in China through the China Sustainability and Wellbeing Project;
3. Provide information and advice about China to business, government and the general community;
4. Ensure funding to meet the costs of operation and research and leverage growth opportunities for China Studies at the University of Sydney;
5. Assist in the development and implementation of the University’s China Strategy;
6. Support the PVC OGRE in hosting Chinese visitors at the University; and
7. Contribute to the development of research and engagement at the University of Sydney focused on the Asia Pacific Region.

STRATEGIES

Responding to the University's strategic challenges for 2032 the CSC has three strategic goals:

- Research excellence
 - entailing national and international impact
 - including research dissemination;
- Supporting Australia’s engagement with China; and
- Assisting the university in its interactions with China.

RESEARCH

The main focus of the CSC is increasing high-quality research output and its resultant research impact. This is achieved in the first place through team-based multi-disciplinary collaborative projects which include researchers where appropriate from across the University, Australia, China and the rest of the world; are output and impact oriented; and

have the potential to attract external funding and improve the Centre's and the University's profile.

The CSC has two flagship projects and eight research groups. The CSC's two flagship projects – on Local China, and China Sustainability and Well-being – together with the eight research groups are the main organisers of and vehicles for research activities. As a supplementary activity CSC provides support to doctoral students undertaking research on China.

1. Research Groups

Every member of CSC belongs to one of its research groups:

Australia-China Relations
Digital Economy
Education and China Literacy
Environmental Sustainability
Health Management
Local Governance
Philosophy and Culture
Social Change

Research groups meet regularly and organise activities. Members of the CSC are encouraged and supported to apply for external research funds, particularly through Australian Category 1 funding sources.

2. The Local China Project

The Local China Project reflects one of the CSC's research strengths. The development of the People's Republic of China [PRC] and its place in the world is shaped as much by localisation as by globalisation. China's size and scale are such that by both policy design and practice domestic social, political, and economic development are highly localised. In a very real sense there are many Chinas and in order to understand the PRC's international interactions as well as its domestic development it is crucial to appreciate the depth of variety of experience in and across localities as well as how those differences interact within the political system.

The Local China Project produces research that both describes and explains social, political, and economic change in the PRC through the dynamics of development at local levels. The identification of 'local' China in this context is to emphasise the variety of experience across China, within city regions, counties, cities, towns and villages, and in everyday life.

The Local China Project supports and is supported by a worldwide community of scholars through its various activities, especially its Annual Local China Workshop (each with a central theme leading to several publications); its quarterly online newsletter; and its *Studies on Local China* published with Routledge UK.

3. The China Sustainability and Wellbeing Project

The *China Sustainability and Wellbeing Project* is an initiative to address the interconnected challenges of environmental sustainability and human health in China. Key research themes include the intersections of health and climate change, decarbonizing development, liveable cities, healthy and sustainable diets, sustainable agriculture and food systems, and post-growth futures. The initiative will promote cross-sectoral policy innovation and foster collaboration with global partners, including Fudan University, Tsinghua University, and international organisations such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

A crucial aspect of the *China Sustainability and Wellbeing Project* is research collaboration with four MDIs at the University of Sydney: the Net Zero Institute, the Sydney Environment Institute, the Charles Perkins Centre, and the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre. A particular focus of this cooperation will be the development of the Asia Pacific region, including Australia. The aim is to create solutions tailored to the socio-economic and cultural contexts of the Asia Pacific. It would aspire to shape evidence-based research and advance policies and actions that harmonise economic, environmental, and health priorities in China, Australia and the region. Its outputs would support global efforts to transform societies towards sustainability and well-being while strengthening the University of Sydney's leadership in addressing critical global challenges through innovative, interdisciplinary, and international research. Ultimately, this project will contribute to building sustainable, equitable, and healthy futures for all.

4. HDR support

HDR students at the University enrol in faculties and schools with their supervisor, and not research centres. Nonetheless, those who work on China Studies-related topics look to CSC for encouragement and support. The CSC provides an HDR support program for postgraduate research students. There is a series of workshops and other activities throughout the academic year, in addition to mentoring arrangements, where appropriate.

CSC provides limited scholarships to HDR students presenting papers at academic conferences.

5. Partnerships

Given the operational dimensions of CSC Flagship Projects and Research Groups, partnerships and collaboration of various kinds with different parts of the University; other universities in China, Australia and around the world, as well as international organisations are an essential part of the China Studies Centre's research activities.

The CSC will participate in China Studies-focussed international consortia, which may or may not be related to specific CSC collaborative research projects.

The CSC will participate in conferences, seminars and workshops organised by universities and other institutions outside the University of Sydney.

RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

6. Workshops, conferences, members

Academic workshops leading to publications are an essential vehicle for the promotion and dissemination of research. In addition to the annual workshops that are part of the CSC flagship projects, one-off workshops are organised as part of other projects.

CSC organises an Annual Conference at which members present their research and consider potential future projects.

There is a CSC Member's Meeting every semester to receive a report from the Management Committee and discuss Centre activities.

Individual researchers, their activities and projects are crucial for the development of the CSC. The CSC supports individual-based activities in a number of ways. These include:

Workshops to assist individual researchers in organising and developing their research and particularly applying for and (hopefully) obtaining external competitive funds/grants. There is an intensive program of activities to support grant applications, including briefings on particular schemes and one to one writing assistance.

A Research Development Program, meeting monthly and providing support to researchers.

An individual mentoring scheme for ECR and mid-career academics.

There is a program of Sydney Distinguished Visiting Fellows to Chinese Studies and CSC (with the School of Languages and Cultures) funded by external donation; and another program of Visiting Fellows to the China Studies Centre.

Depending on the availability of funding, the CSC would like to be able to support at least two postdoctoral research fellowships a year.

7. Research presentation and events

CSC organises events to present and discuss both research and related policy issues. In addition to workshops and the Annual Conference these regularly include:

A monthly *International Research Webinar* with invited presenters from around the world.

A *Bookworm Series* of seminars/webinars where CSC members present on their recently published research.

Collaboration with the Australian Society for Asian Humanities to present monthly seminar 'Talks in Chinese Humanities' (also with Department of Chinese Studies, and Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, UNSW)

Inside China Webinars presenting researchers and views from China.

China Studies Centre Roundtables providing discussion on current events in China.

Sydney China Seminars presentations on campus of research in progress by University of Sydney staff and students.

Advisory Board Briefs on an irregular basis the CSC organizes midday briefing sessions for the Advisory Board and invited guests.

An annual mini-series of themed research webinars.

8. *Publication series*

The CSC has two series of its own publications online:

Understanding China Briefs providing commentary on current events in China;

China Studies Centre Working Papers providing opportunities for researchers to publish their preliminary findings and obtain feedback.

Studies on Local China

The CSC's Local China Project has established *Studies on Local China* with Routledge. This is a short book series (25-50,000 words). Both an Australia-based Editorial Board, and an International Advisory Board support the series. The series publishes four titles a year.

ENGAGEMENT

A crucial part of the CSC vision is to interact with the world outside the University, not only to provide knowledge and understanding derived from China Studies research, but to raise the profile of The University of Sydney and the CSC, and to use such opportunities as may arise to leverage the CSC's position in knowledge production to raise funds to support its activities.

The CSC Advisory Board plays a central role in its engagement activities in addition to providing more general advice on centre activities and direction. The CSC Management Committee works with the CSC Advisory Board to approach potential donors and possible generators of consultancies through government agencies, industry organisations, and individual businesses.

9. Fund raising

The CSC is charged with ensuring funding to meet the costs of operation and research and leverage growth opportunities for China Studies at the University of Sydney. This is particularly important in the long-term to ensure that China Studies positions are maintained in schools and disciplines across the university. CSC has set itself the goal of establishing a \$10 million China Studies Endowment Fund to that purpose. This goal is currently hampered by the geopolitical environment which discourages domestic Australian funding and ensures China-based sources are treated with suspicion.

CSC also would like to raise funds to support three-year postdoctoral research fellowships in China Studies. The continued development of the China Studies Centre's research profile will depend on new appointments as well as the work of continuing academic staff. There is also a need to ensure future generations of China Studies academics.

10. Media work

CSC encourages members to be media-ready, and to bring the expertise at the University to the notice of the media in cooperation with University Marketing and Communications.

11. Public Policy

CSC has played and will continue to play a role in public policy discussions about China, relations between Australia and China, and matters related to Chinese in Australia through the production of public reports, engagement with federal and state government departments, and interactions with politicians both individually and in parliamentary settings.

12. Consultancy work

CSC supports members to provide paid consultancy work to business and governments.

CSC organizes the presentation of Business Workshops for external business partners seeking advice for activities in China.

13. China Literacy Program

CSC has established a *China Literacy Program* designed to increase the intercultural understanding of China and to assist people to better understand and deal with their

cultural, social and economic interactions with China. It is a two-part program that will provide both basic and more specialised information about China to businesses, government agencies, schools, and similar bodies. The first part is a general *China: An Introduction* which includes five sessions overviewing China's history, beliefs, politics, society, and economic development. The second part also contains a number of sessions but tackles one or more specific topics of particular interest or focus for the client. Each second part of the *China Literacy Program* is tailor-made by the China Studies Centre. A further aim of the program is to ensure an alternative income stream to the Centre.

At the request of External Engagement CSC will continue to offer a version of the *China Literacy Program* within the university. In addition to the general introduction to China's history, beliefs, politics, society, and economic development the second part of this program addresses *Working with China Students* targeted at both professional and academic staff.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY AND INVOLVEMENT

As part of the Office of Global Research and Engagement, CSC plays a central role in the University's China activities.

14. China

CSC plays a role in the development of the University's research and engagement involvement with China. It participates in discussions of the PVC GRE's International Research Strategy and its implementation, as well as being involved in assisting with specific instances of the University's interactions with China.

CSC provides members to meet with visiting delegations and individuals from China at university-level, organised through OGRE.

CSC also hosts visiting delegations from China on its own, sometimes these are recommended by OGRE and sometimes by direct approaches from China.

The Centre and its members are an available resource and source of expertise to the university as it expands its interactions with China.

15. The Asia Pacific Region

CSC supports the initiative to develop research and engagement with and in the Asia Pacific. Unlike other university-level research and engagement activities this is less likely to project-based, but to have a geographic and inherently varied and variable focus. While emphases and projects within and across the region may change, such activities present longer-term commitments. In addition, where project-based research may clearly be an example of the university's engagement with the world outside the academy, regional studies activities provide the vehicles for the university's interaction

with and communication about a specific country or region, as the US Studies Centre demonstrates.

The additional possibility of research cooperation within the University of Sydney across the various research centres, countries and cultures of the Asia Pacific on new collaborative research projects examining topics of shared common regional interest might lead to wider projects including topics such as:

- Primary health care
- Agricultural sustainability
- Food production and safety
- Environmental sustainability
- Renewable energy

CSC has collaborated with the Sydney Southeast Asia Studies Centre to present a roundtable on China-Southeast Asia Relations at OCIS 2025 in Sydney, and the two centres are in the process of developing a region-wide Annual China-Southeast Asia Academic Dialogue.

CSC and the Sydney Southeast Asia Studies Centre now share office space on Level 7 of Jane Foss Russell Building.

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Funding and support are provided for specific activities. Projects must be approved as CSC activities before requests for funding or support can be considered. Details of the approval process and procedures for the establishment and management of research projects and other activities are provided in Appendix A.

Funds are not transferred to research projects, or individuals but support will be provided for specific aspects of a project as and when negotiated. There will be a mutually agreed expectation of leveraging support to obtain external funding. Details of application for support and procedures are contained in Appendix B.

ORGANISATION

Leadership

CSC has a Director, 3 Deputy Directors, and a Centre Manager who are staff appointed to the Centre. Its two flagship projects – the *Local China Project* and the *China Sustainability and Wellbeing Project* – each have their own director.

Membership

Members: University of Sydney staff active in research on China may be recognised as members of the China Studies Centre. Staff recognized in this way will be the individuals leading the Centre's drive to reach its aims and objectives, and their participation will provide the basis for the assessment of success. Members are required to present themselves as members of CSC as well as of their home department/school/faculty at the University of Sydney. Academic staff at other universities who collaborate with CSC research projects may become honorary members of staff at the University of Sydney and simultaneously in this way full members of the centre.

Affiliate Members: Those who are employed by the University of Sydney but not active in research on China or China-related matters, or those who are not employed by the University of Sydney and not eligible to be Honorary Members of University of Sydney staff but who wish to be associated with the Centre may be appointed as Affiliate Members.

HDR Student Members: Postgraduate research students working on any aspect of China studies at the University of Sydney may become Student Members of the CSC. Specific activities are organized by CSC to support these students.

Management Committee

The Management Committee is the Centre's executive body and works with the Director, Deputy Directors, and Centre Manager to lead the development of the CSC.

Members of the Management Committee will be appointed on the nomination of the Director and with the approval of the PVC Global Research and Engagement, the DVC Research and the Vice Provost.

Each member of the Management Committee will be assigned responsibility for a specific CSC strategic area:

- Research groups
- Local China Project
- China Sustainability and Well-being Project
- HDR support
- Liaison: MDIs, China partners, and internationally
- Workshops, conferences, members
- Research presentations and events
- Publication series
- Engagement
- Centre Operations

The Terms of Reference for the Management Committee and areas of responsibility for each portfolio under the Management Committee are detailed in Appendix C.

The Management Committee meets every month, except July and January.

Advisory Board

CSC has established an Advisory Board drawn from business and government communities. The Board provides advice on the activities of the Centre.

The Advisory Board is appointed on nomination by the CSC Management Committee to the PVC Global Research and Engagement for a period of two years. Appointment may be renewed.

An outline and Terms of Reference is contained in Appendix D.

EVALUATION

CSC's performance will be reviewed annually, with a major review scheduled for 2030.

Two broad approaches to assessment will be employed:

1. CSC will be assessed against OGRE MDI KPIs.

- #1 Jointly lead 6 strategic initiatives with Faculties/University Schools
- #2 Have a minimum of 5 Faculties or University Schools actively engaged
- #3 Support 2 cross-faculty grants (or applications) in each category (HERDC 1-3)
- #4 Enable major grants with CIs from different Faculties or University Schools
- #5 Enable records of invention and describe explored commercialisation opportunities
- #6 Create societal impact based on national/ international priorities including the SDGs
- #7 Offer development support and team leadership opportunities for staff and research students
- #8 Facilitate 3 new cross-faculty collaborations
- #9 Enable 5 impactful external partnership outcomes

2. CSC Research Output and Impact

CSC will also be assessed in terms of its research outputs and impact, and its capacity building, against its historically-defined performance targets.

Research outcomes and impact.

High quality regular academic output

Increased per capita research output;
Increase in individual citations numbers.

Other outputs (such as NTROs or policy reports) where appropriate

External funding success

Increased per capita applications for ARC grants;

Increased per capita success in ARC awards;
Category 3 funding

The consolidation of external partnerships and research collaborations

Development of international collaborations with China and elsewhere.
Development of non-research-based external collaborations.

Evidence of public engagement and impact

Notably higher public profile for the China Studies Centre and staff working
on China Studies;
Recognition of research and activities beyond citations and impact metrics.

Evidence of excellence

Prizes, awards

Appendix A

Procedures for approval as a CSC activity

Any activity or research project is required to obtain CSC approval to be recognised as a CSC activity.

The Management Committee will consider approval of CSC activity at its monthly meeting.

To apply for approval, an activity must outline:

- Participant(s)
- The aims and objectives of the activity/project
- Research plan/activity detail
- Planned outcomes
- Proposed or actual external (to the CSC) funding
- Duration of the project/activity

Application for approval should be accompanied by evidence of the track record of the applicant(s).

If necessary, the Management Committee may ask to meet with applicant(s) to discuss the proposed project/activity.

CSC research projects are approved for an initial maximum of 3 years and may be re-approved on further application and track record.

Any project/activity approved in this way must advertise itself as a China Studies Centre project/activity, alongside any Departmental/School/Faculty affiliation.

Any project/activity approved by the CSC is required to submit an annual progress report detailing progress, expenditure (where appropriate), and outcomes (as appropriate) including applications for external funding.

At the end of the project/activity approved lifetime, CSC should receive a report on its progress and outcomes, detailing funding conditions, publications, and impact.

Appendix B

Procedures for applying to support from the China Studies Centre

CSC has a limited budget. All support must be accounted for, reported on, and where appropriate publicly recognised. Failure to meet the requirements set out in these procedures will disqualify applicants from further support.

Requests for support

All requests for support will be considered by the Management Committee at its monthly meeting.

To receive support (financial or otherwise) from CSC a project/activity must be already recognised as an approved project/activity of CSC.

CSC does not provide grants to individuals or projects. It will provide support for specific aspects of CSC projects/activities, and provide funding or reimbursement.

A request for funding or support must detail the precise purposes of the activity, the relationship to the approved project/activity, and the proposed outcomes.

It is a condition of support that any funding made available for a project/activity must be used within the calendar year and cannot be carried forward.

Reporting requirements

At the completion of the activity for which funding or support was granted by CSC a report and (where appropriate) financial accounting is required on the purposes for which funding or support was requested. This report should include details of the ways in which CSC support was leveraged to find additional external funding and support.

If the completion of the activity has not occurred within twelve months of the approval of support by the CSC Management Committee, then a report is required by that date.

Recognition

Any project/activity receiving funding or support should acknowledge that support from the China Studies Centre, alongside any department/school/faculty or other University support.

Appendix C

China Studies Centre Management Committee

Terms of Reference

- Develop and implement the Centre's Strategic and Operational Plan each review period;
- Approve applications for membership of the China Studies Centre;
- Develop, implement and oversee the China Studies Centre Budget Income and Expenditure;
- Approve all funding proposals and requests for Centre support;
- Encourage and mobilize members involvement in China-related research;
- Work with other parts of the university to raise funds to support the future of China Studies teaching and research at the University of Sydney;
- Approve and oversee all activities organised undertaken by and in the name of the China Studies Centre;
- Approve and monitor research projects and activities sponsored by the China Studies Centre;
- Approve and make arrangements for academic visitors to the China Studies Centre;
- Approve and monitor outreach activities supported by the China Studies Centre;
- Approve and monitor major initiatives, partnerships, and collaborations with researchers and institutions in Australia, China and around the world;
- Monitor and evaluate final reports of all projects and activities supported by the China Studies Centre;
- Report annually on the Strategic and Operational Plan of the China Studies Centre against agreed KPIs;
- Provide and implement a suitable risk management environment in both Australia and China related to the conduct of China-related research; and
- Regularly review activities and performance of the China Studies Centre.

Specific Responsibilities of Portfolios under the Management Committee

Research groups

Management of Research Groups

Development of narrowly focussed and externally funded research projects.

Local China Project

China Sustainability and Well-being Project

HDR support

HDR support program: Workshops and other support if possible.
HDR program development.

Liaison: MDIs, China partners, and internationally

Workshops, conferences, members

Workshops to assist researchers in organising and developing their research and particularly applying for and (hopefully) obtaining external funds/grants.
A Research Development Program, meeting monthly and providing support to researchers.
An Annual Conference where (research) members present work in progress.
Sydney Distinguished Visiting Fellows to Chinese Studies and CSC (with the School of Languages and Cultures).
Visiting Fellows to CSC.

Research presentation and events

International Research Webinar: invited presenters from around the world.
Bookworm Series of seminars/webinars where CSC members present on their recently published research.
Australian Society for Asian Humanities monthly seminar 'Talks in Chinese Humanities' (with Department of Chinese Studies, and Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, UNSW).
Inside China Webinars presenting researchers and views from China.
China Studies Centre Roundtables providing discussion on current events in China.
Sydney China Seminars presentations on campus of research in progress by University of Sydney staff and students.
Advisory Board Briefs on an irregular basis the CSC organizes midday briefing sessions for the Advisory Board and invited guests.
An annual mini-series of themed research webinars.

Publication series

CSC online publications
Understanding China briefs
China Studies Centre Working Papers

Studies on Local China

Coordination of published output from CSC-supported projects

Engagement

- CSC Media Service
- CSC Advisory Service
- Business Workshops
- Advisory Board
- China Literacy Program

Centre Operations

- Administration
- Finance
- Communications

Advisory Board

The China Studies Centre has been established to produce research that leads to the understanding of China, its development, and interactions with the world. It will operate by bringing together researchers on China at the University of Sydney and beyond, enabling international academic collaboration with researchers from China and other countries, and by being an informed voice in Australia's public China discourse.

The Advisory Board will provide advice to the China Studies Centre on its operations and activities, and assistance in its development of links and contacts beyond the University.

Terms of Reference

1. To provide advice to the China Studies Centre on its academic and business plans;
2. To monitor alignment of Centre objectives and targets;
3. To assist the China Studies Centre in developing relations with the business and government communities;
4. To make suggestions for the strategic direction of the China Studies Centre; and
5. To make recommendations to ensure growth and research excellence.

Members

The Advisory Board of the China Studies Centre will have approximately 6-7 members drawn from the business and government communities in Australia, one of whom will serve as Chair.

Members of the Advisory Board will be nominated by the Management Committee of the China Studies Centre for approval by the PVC Global Research Engagement for a period of two years.

Meetings

The Advisory Board will meet three times a year.

Meetings of the Advisory Board will be attended by the Management Committee of the China Studies Centre.

The Secretariat of the Advisory Board will be provided by the China Studies Centre.