

Visiting Scholar Summary Report 2023

This report concerns the placement of three colleagues from Open University China as visiting scholars at the Centre for Online and Distance Education (CODE), University of London, between February and June 2023.

NAME	INSTITUTION	PROJECT TITLE	CODE supervisory team
LIU Chang	Guangzhou Open University, China	The Impact of Heutagogy (self-determined learning) on Encouraging Learner Agency of Adult Learners	Prof Philip Powel + Prof Anita Walsh
LIU Ning	The Open University of China	Teacher Professional Learning Influenced by the Intelligent Technology from the perspective of the Complex Dynamic System Theory (CDST):An Empirical Study Focused on the Learning Needs and Approaches	Dr Jonathan San Diego + Dr Maylyn Tan
MA Tengfei	School of Education, the Open University of China	An empirical study on professional identity of teachers engaged in distance education	Prof Norbert Pachler and Dr Michele Milner

Throughout their time with us, our three visiting scholars were engaged, made insightful contributions, and supported enhanced engagement with the agendas under discussion, thereby successfully taking their place as Fellows of the Centre. Our Open University China visiting scholars were a welcome and valued addition to the Centre and we wish them the very best in the future.

About the University of London (UoL)

The University of London was the first university in the UK (United Kingdom) to open higher education to all, regardless of religion; and the first to admit women in 1849. Nearly 200 years later, we remain committed to promoting education opportunities globally and making the transformative power of education accessible to hundreds of thousands of individuals in more than 180 countries. UoL is a federation of 17 Federation Members, with world-renowned universities among their number that include University College London, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and King's College London among others. The University is one of the world's oldest providers of transnational education and has been educating students at a distance since the mid-nineteenth century. It collaborates with its member institutions to offer at scale, affordable, accessible, high-quality education to learners all over the globe. The University has approximately 120,000 students on campus in London, and a further 45,000 undertaking their studies through

online and distance learning. Staffing, systems, and processes are all established expressly for supporting students at a distance and online.

University of London Centre for Online and Distance Education

The Centre for Online and Distance Education is a University of London initiative to support research and innovation in flexible distance teaching, learning and assessment. Our aim is to enhance the student experience and improve student achievement through the deployment of open and distance education. Further information about the work of the Centre can be founds here:

<https://www.london.ac.uk/centre-online-distance-education>

CODE at UoL, has a demonstrable commitment to, and track-record in, supporting high quality learning and teaching in open, distance, digital and flexible contexts. We work with colleagues across the globe to support programme design, curriculum innovation, policy development, staff development and capacity building and collectively work with hundreds of faculty to support their developing practice, research and scholarship.

CODE supports a community of practice, promotes collaboration and knowledge-sharing, and provides a focus for the development of high-quality teaching and research. We work locally, nationally, and internationally to support innovation, development, capacity building, research, and evaluation.

Collaboration with the Open University China

Since 2018, CODE has been working with the Open University China (OUC) in three areas:

- Visiting Scholar placements at CODE – an annual programme of placements for colleagues from OUC, funded by the Sino-British Fellowship Trust.
- Staff development and capacity building – CODE co-delivered training to 350 OUC teaching staff between 2021 and 2023.
- Scholarly collaboration – for example CODE Fellow Alan Tait contributed a chapter to the OUC publication *'Beyond Distance Education, cutting edge perspectives on the future of open universities'*

(Further details can be found here: <https://www.london.ac.uk/centre-online-distance-education/what-we-do/our-projects#the-open-university-of-china-32220>)

Visiting scholar placement

From arrival, our visiting scholars become part of the Centre for Online and Distance Education and joined the Centre's activities. Additionally an extensive programme of activities was designed to ensure the visiting scholars gained a deep insight into the operation of online and distance education at the University of London and within the Federation Members.

Activities undertaken by the visiting scholars who joined the Centre between February and June 2023 included:

- Joining CODE Fellows meetings.
- Meetings with colleagues from across the University of London including the University's Vice Chancellor Prof Wendy Thomson CBE.
- Meetings and practical activities within the University of London that included our video suite and our learning designers.



- Meetings with professional service staff at the University to explore how we support the University's online and distance education student population including careers, student wellbeing, staff development, student voice.
- Visiting University of London Federation Member Institutions - Kings College London, UCL.
- Individual meetings with CODE Fellows and other leading practitioners in online and distance education.
- Digital Education Reading club.
- Regular meetings with Linda Amrane-Cooper and the supervisory team.

Research and scholarly activity

Our visiting scholars met with their supervisors regular and actively engaged in developing their projects, refining their aims and objectives. The scholars all engaged deeply with relevant literature reviews, methodological developments, and analysis activities. The three visiting scholars presented their research projects on two formal occasions, and their work was praised by those present.

Midpoint presentation, 27 April 2023 – Our visiting scholars presented their project plans to date, in a University of London event, which included Pro Vice Chancellor Prof Mary Stiasny OBE, the combined supervisory teams, CODE Fellows and CODE Director, Linda Amrane-Cooper.

Final presentation, Friday 26 June 2023 – University of London hosted an event for all OUC visiting scholars in the UK (nine in total), the supervisors for each scholar and the Sino British Foundation trust representatives. The visiting scholars from Open University UK, University and Leicester and those at CODE presented their project and provided an oversight of their experience in the UK.

Engaging with CODE

Collectively, our visiting scholars, Chang LIU, Tengfei MA and Ning LIU made a significant contribution to the Centre for Online and Distance Education. The scholars took part in many CODE activities including:

- Navigating the Future CODE project workshop, 8 March 2023
- Assessment integrity training for colleagues at University of London Recognised Teaching Centres 10 March 2023
- Developing strategy, policies, and quality assurance structures for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) centres – this workshop was delivered for the Nigerian National University commission and included senior representatives from Universities across Nigeria, 21 – 24 March 2023
- 17th International Research in Distance Education conference 28, 29 March 2023
- Visit by Dr Li Kam Cheong, from Hong Kong Met University 12 May 2023
- CODE Fellows meeting workshop on publications, 16 May 2023
- Joining our regular Experience in Digital learning webinars 20 April, 1 June 2023

Fellows within the Centre valued engagement with our visiting scholars and provided expertise, support, and encouragement in relation to the scholars' projects.

Exit Interviews

Our visiting scholars were invited to attend an exit interview with CODE Fellow Prof Sam Smidt to provide feedback on the experience and to identify ways in which the placement can be further developed. Visiting scholars identified the following strengths:



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DISTANCE EDUCATION

- Enhanced understanding of online education including assessment, student engagement, learning design and research approaches
- Value of immersion into wider working culture and wider community and different ways of thinking

And suggested the following improvements:

- Opportunity to join online modules in advance as a student (to get the student perspective)
- Connection with supervisors in advance of coming to the UK
- Longer time in the UK (four months too short)

We are now adapting the provision to provide greater induction in advance of arriving in the UK for our visiting scholars.

Closing comments

The Centre for Online and Distance Education is grateful to the Sino-British Trust Foundation for supporting their visiting scholar placements in 2023.

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