



**Confucius Institute in Auckland
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
Zoom Meeting
6 April 2020, 13:00**

Present: Prof. Jenny Dixon (Chair), Prof. Helen Nicholson, Prof. Paul Clark,
Danny Chan, Pat English, Peter Chin,
Prof. Zhimin Chen, Prof. Zhongwei Wu, Prof Lian Lu,

In attendance: Nora Yao, Bing Zhou, Janine Chin, Lin Li, Chriss Hamilton

Apologies: Li Yanguang

COVID-19 update:

- Prof. Dixon noted that Auckland University is working on preparations to drop from Covid 19 Level 4 to Level 3 but the University will remain closed until further notice. It is also likely that the New Zealand government will keep the border closed due to concerns that the virus can be transmitted by new arrivals.
- Prof. Chen mentioned that Fudan University has cancelled all of the Summer Programmes and is expecting that the new semester will resume as normal. However, there is still great uncertainty regarding this.

1. Welcome

- Chairperson Prof. Dixon welcomed the Board members to the Zoom meeting.

2. Minutes from previous meeting, 12 November 2019

Corrections: No Corrections

Approval of minutes: Moved Prof. Dixon, seconded by Pat English.

Matters Arising

Prof. Dixon noted that originally the meeting was to be held in Otago but due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and in consultation with Otago, it was agreed to cancel arrangements. Right decision made with lockdown imposed by government.

3. Financial Reports – presented by Janine Chin

Period: 01/01/019 – 31/12/ 2019

1357 Hanban Fund:

- Revenue description rephrased to “reimbursement revenue in line with budgeted project spend” to better reflect funding received.
- People costs increased due to contractor for website upgrade work and CI director’s reallocation of time from SCLL (School Culture, Languages and Linguistics) to CI.
- Operating expenses increased due to extra costs relating to the National MLA workshop but were reimbursed by Hanban as an additional project for the year.
- MLA actual spend noted is much higher than the approved funding due to inclusion of MLA accommodation subsidy costs. CI received half of the reimbursement for MLA’s accommodation in July and expect to receive the remaining (USD135K) by mid-2020.
- Some Confucius Classroom costs were not submitted end of 2019 so carried over to 2020.
- Approximately USD18K was unspent from the National MLA workshop which will be carried over to the next MLA national workshop.

1358 UOA Fund:

- Large increase in Occupancy due to the office re-allocation from OGGB to Pembridge House.

Others:

- There has been no confirmation from the Ministry of Education regarding renewal of 2020 MLA contract. Possibility that no funding will be provided due to the cancellation of the 2020 MLA programme (which has been affected by COVID-19). Further follow ups will be made with MOE.
- CI is still waiting to hear from University’s Property Finance with an update on Pembridge House costs. Interest, however, is still accumulating in the Pembridge House account.

Period: 01/01/2020 – 29/02/2020

1357 Hanban Fund:

- Significant decrease in operational expenses due to the cancellation of 2020 MLA programme caused by COVID-19.
- Increase in Confucius Classroom expenses due mainly to 2019 reimbursements carried and paid in 2020.

1358 UOA Fund:

- Occupancy has decreased as CI is now paying only for the spaces occupied on the upper level of the building as opposed to paying for the whole building.

Others:

- 2020 budget was submitted to Hanban and now waiting for approval. No funding

has been received for this time period yet. However, there are still sufficient funds in the Foundation account to support CI operations.

Discussions:

➤ **Funding concern:**

Prof. Clark asked whether Hanban will offer less funding towards the projects due to COVID-19.

Prof. Chen explained that Hanban is currently in a transition period and the budget for CIs should already be tentatively allocated. There might be a small reduction due to the likelihood of fewer activities for the year and consideration of the government's overall economic situation. It was recommended that CI liaise with Hanban directly to clarify any details.

➤ **Innovation of learning:**

Prof. Chen noted that Mr. Ma Jianfei (Hanban's director) suggested in August 2019 the idea of promoting online (distance) learning of Chinese Language in the upcoming future. Hanban supports the idea and is looking at ways to push forward in this direction.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools to commence online teaching which could be an opportunity for CI to collate teaching experiences, methods and modules in order to reach out to more students.

Acceptance of financial report: Moved Prof. Dixon, seconded Danny Chan.

4. **Confucius Institute Report** - presented by Nora Yao

Review of activities from November 2019 – March 2020

Programme highlights:

- Staff: CI will work with HR to recruit a replacement for the Office Coordinator role.
- MLA Programme: Temporarily cancelled until further notice depending on COVID-19 updates. A zoom meeting was held with all 2020 MLAs. All are safe and well in China. The MLAs will remain in CI's selection pool. Otago's TA returned to China and unable to return to New Zealand due to border controls but is currently running online classes for her students.
- Chinese in schools: CI has communicated frequently with schools regarding the MLA programme, including its postponement. Schools have been very supportive and understanding. A number have continued with their programmes whereas others have 'stopped' due to a lack of resources/capability. Currently CI is planning to work more closely with the NZCLTA (NZ Chinese Language Teachers Assn), to provide teachers with more support including online teaching.
- Exams: With no MLAs this year, CI has worked on recruiting and training members of the local community to be exam supervisors. This will help provide a viable alternative for the supervisor shortage. The April and May exams have been

cancelled due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

- Language courses: CI recruited two former MLAs to run the Chinese courses, which commenced in February. The NZ Police course will re-commence when able post COVID-19 lockdown and at a time convenient to them.
- CI Annual Conference in Changsha, December 2019: CI Deputy Director Prof. Zhou Bing was awarded the “2019 Performance Excellence”; AKL CI was awarded the “No.1 Test Centre in the Oceania region”; and Fudan University was awarded the “Best Partner Institution”. Prof Dixon and the Board congratulated all for their awards and acknowledged all the hard work and effort everyone has contributed.

5. **Otago Office Report** - presented by Chriss Hamilton Review of activities planned for 2020

Highlighted Activities:

Due to COVID-19, all workshops and large-scale culture activities planned for staff and students for the first Semester has been cancelled. Otago is expecting that these activities can be run in some way in the second Semester on a fortnightly instead of a monthly basis. Discussions will be held with community groups and partners to ensure the safe running of future workshops.

- Workshops: focused workshops included and to be worked on with community partners to support them and provide information they need.
 - Otago Business School -what’s it like doing business in China?
 - School of Performing Arts - Chinese Music and Opera;
 - Global Citizenship Group (student-led focus on UN sustainable development goals) – China’s place in the world and links with research in these areas.
- Tai Chi: would like to continue in the Clocktower lawn in the second Semester.
- Calligraphy: workshop that can be extended to staff and students.
- Summer School: A Lion Dance was held around Chinese New Year which was well received.
- 2020 Budget has been revised and will stay within the \$10k budget.
- The 2019 trial workshops were run successfully and had attracted strong interest and excitement from the audience last year. However, due to current pandemic, it will take some time to recover and rebuild audience interest again.

6. **Sub-board meetings in Auckland – presented by Ms. Yao**

The purpose of the meeting: explained by Prof. Dixon

The New Zealand - China Free Trade Agreement upgrade has increased the annual number of MLAs from 150 to 300.

Some considerations required:

- How will increase in numbers be managed and
- What additional staffing and financial support required?

CI has been informed by Hanban that accommodation subsidies are not likely available for additional MLAs and current MLA subsidies are likely to be slowly reduced.

The Board acknowledged the substantial support from Hanban since the start of the MLA programme and agreed that it would be desirable to increase the NZ contribution.

Tentative budget proposal (based on assumptions) for increasing numbers of MLAs in future years:

Nora presented some modelling of the costs of additional MLAs (over and above funded numbers in 2019) and how costs could be shared across schools.

Spreadsheet outlining:

- fixed accommodation supplement received from Hanban each year;
- forecast including a gradual increase of MLAs each year versus the costs required to cover their accommodation/administration from CI
- increased contributions from schools to cover the cost differences.

Comments from the Board:

- The school contribution for each MLA is quite small and affordable.
- CI would gradually increase the school's contributions towards MLA's accommodation supplement as more MLAs to arrive each year. This allows CI to obtain funding to help cover the related administrative expenses.
- CI would notify the schools as early as possible regarding the additional funding required to contribute to the MLA programme so that schools can include this in their annual budgets.
- Some schools may be in a better position to contribute to the MLA programme than others which means that CI can consider a flexible tailor-based contribution plan with the respective schools (based on their individual circumstances).
- The proposal could help reduce MLA stress levels with smaller school clusters and potentially improve overall outcomes.

Follow up:

Prof. Dixon had a preliminary chat with Victoria Confucius Institute's Tony Browne and Adele Bryant and all are thinking along the same lines. In the middle of the year, CIs will raise this suggestion to Hanban and seek their view.

7. Any other business

- CI has submitted the 2020 budget to Hanban and is waiting for further

feedback/approval.

- Mr. Chan would like to introduce some people who are interested in supporting Chinese language week. Mr. Chan will discuss this further with Prof. Clark and Ms. Yao.
- Prof. Chen noted that Hanban is going through a transition period and is moving to become a non-governmental agency funded by a Foundation. CI should note this for their information.

8. Next MEETING

- Proposed Board meeting in August/September by zoom - date to be confirmed and documents will be circulated by email.

The meeting concluded at 14:25pm.

Minutes submitted by: Nina Zhang

Approved by:



Chair: Professor Jenny Dixon