



School of Modern Languages
Newcastle University

Chinese @ NEWCASTLE

EDITED BY Fang Su & Linlin Fang



2026 Edition

Studying Chinese as part of your degree at Newcastle University

In the School of Modern Languages, we operate a dual entry system. You can start your East Asian language studies with us from scratch, or with a GCSE/A Level qualification.

We offer a range of undergraduate degree programmes that allow you to study East Asian languages and culture. You can study our specialised degree for Chinese or Japanese Studies, or include East Asian languages alongside other subjects on our other programmes.

Our classes are small to ensure that you are supported by our dedicated teaching team.

There is so much more to studying languages at university than just learning to speak a language. We offer a range of East Asian culture modules covering history, politics, business, film, literature and popular culture.

See below the degree programmes offered in the School of Modern Languages, where you can study Chinese as part of your degree. UCAS codes for each programme is also included in the brackets.

- BA (Hons) Chinese Studies or Japanese Studies (TT12)
- BA (Hons) Modern Languages, Translation & Interpreting (R9Q9)
- BA (Hons) Modern Languages (T901)
- BA (Hons) Modern Languages and Business Studies (TN92)
- BA (Hons) Modern Languages and Linguistics (QT19)
- BA (Hons) Modern Languages and International Relations (TL12)



You can combine Chinese studies with one or two other subjects through our **Combined Honours program (UCAS code: Y001)**. Available subjects include Business, Education, English Literature, Law, Politics, Music, Linguistics, and more. This popular program allows you to create unique combinations that reflect your interests and career goals.

Year Abroad: One of the attractions of studying Chinese at university is the opportunity to spend a year abroad. Immerse yourself in East Asian culture, while developing your language fluency. We are especially proud of the flexibility and variety we offer during the year abroad in East Asia. We offer 5 destinations in China, ranging from cosmopolitan cities to exciting rural destinations.

Teaching quality: We are a great place to study East Asian studies. Our position in global rankings demonstrates our commitment to academic excellence, teaching quality and student experience.

According to the 2024 Complete University Guide, we ranked 3rd in the UK for Asian studies with a high student satisfaction rating (78%). This means we are one of the best universities for East Asian studies in the UK. Please visit [our website](#) for more details of each degree programme offered in the School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University.

If you have queries about studying Chinese with us, you can get in touch with our Chinese Language Co-ordinator,
Ms Linlin Fang: linlin.fang@newcastle.ac.uk.



From Newcastle to Chengdu: A life shaped by Chinese

By Toby Symonds, Chinese Studies Graduate in 2010

2008 was an extraordinary year for China. In May came the devastating earthquake in Wenchuan, which shook not only buildings but the spirit of the nation. Just three months later, the country presented itself to the world through the spectacular Beijing Olympics, a moment of pride that demonstrated how far China had come. That October, I arrived at Sichuan University to begin my year abroad.

The first two events were of global importance. The third was not, at least not for China. But for me, it was life-changing. My arrival was not entirely smooth. A typhoon in Hong Kong delayed my journey, and I briefly wondered what I had signed up for. Yet what began inauspiciously soon became one of the most formative years of my life — filled with new friendships, new perspectives, long evenings of conversation, steady progress in mastering a once impossibly complex language, and no shortage of baijiu.

When I graduated from Newcastle, I returned to China not simply out of nostalgia but with intention. My student visa allowed me back, and I re-enrolled at Sichuan University to continue improving my Chinese. What followed was not a straight line into a single career but a series of roles across different industries, all linked by one common thread: language.

Over the years I have worked in positions that, on paper, seem unrelated. I attempted to sell set-top boxes internationally (with limited success, except in Laos), taught English to children and adults, and later worked as a commercial real estate agent in Chengdu, helping multinational companies secure office space — back when most people still went to the office five days a week.

Each role relied heavily on the skills I began developing at Newcastle. Even when teaching English, understanding my students' native language allowed me to explain complex points more clearly. When negotiating sales in Laos, I relied on a mix of English and Chinese, as many contacts there had studied in China. In real estate, while representing multinational firms, I often found that the decision-makers on the Chinese side spoke little English. Being able to operate confidently in Chinese meant negotiations could move smoothly and trust could be built quickly.

In every case, I was acting as a bridge between China and the English-speaking world. Yet I soon realised that speaking English alone was not enough. Even speaking both languages was not enough. What truly mattered was understanding the cultural context in which they operated.

Language opens the door. Cultural fluency allows you to walk through it.

There were challenges along the way. Careers rarely unfold without setbacks, and mine was no exception. At one point I moved to Shanghai, convinced that greater opportunities must exist there. And opportunities did appear, including a job offer from Spring Airlines.

Yet something did not feel right. Shanghai was dynamic and exciting, but it did not feel like home. Chengdu did.

It was during this period that a concept we had studied in Newcastle crystallised for me: guanxi. Often translated simply as “connections,” the term misses its nuance. Guanxi refers to networks of reciprocal relationships built on trust, shared experience, and genuine friendship. Without that foundation, transactional gestures achieve little.

Over time in Chengdu — through study, work, shared meals, small favours, and mutual support — I built those relationships. That network became the invisible infrastructure supporting my professional life. And it was only possible because I had taken the first step years earlier and committed to learning the language.

Almost twenty years later, I am still here. I can still walk to Sichuan University in fifteen minutes. What began as a year abroad has become a life.

The decision to study Chinese — originally chosen as part of a combined studies degree while sitting in a flat above a shop in North London — has shaped every major aspect of my adulthood. My family is now half Chinese. My career, whether defined as employment, business, or something in between, is permanently tied to China. Chengdu is no longer simply a place I once studied; it is home. Looking back, studying Chinese at Newcastle did more than introduce me to a new language. It connected me to two places that have profoundly influenced me: Newcastle and Northumberland — both well worth exploring — and Sichuan province, with its warmth, energy, and possibilities.



(Continued from last page)

We now live in an uncertain and rapidly changing world. The internet and artificial intelligence offer remarkable tools. They can translate text in seconds and summarise documents instantly. But they cannot replicate lived experience — reading the atmosphere in a negotiation room, sensing hesitation in a voice, or building trust over years of shared conversation.

Learning a language does more than add a line to a CV. It fundamentally alters how you see the world and how the world sees you. It differentiates you — not only from your peers, but from automation. It expands the range of environments in which you can operate. Instead of limiting yourself to one country or one professional ecosystem, you effectively double your potential landscape.

In the case of China — now the world's second-largest economy — that landscape is vast. Opportunities extend far beyond traditional corporate paths, reaching into education, technology, trade, media, consulting, and entrepreneurship. The exact direction your career may take is impossible to predict. What is certain, however, is that linguistic and cultural fluency multiplies your options.

Studying Chinese was my decision to step into a world I did not yet fully understand. I could not have known where it would lead. But without that first year abroad, without those early language classes in Newcastle, my life would have unfolded very differently.

For that reason alone, it was — and remains — one of the best decisions I have ever made.



Showcasing Chinese Cinema: The Chinese Independent Film Archive Series

At the School of Modern Languages, we are committed to exploring the diverse narratives of the Chinese-speaking world through **the Chinese Independent Film Archive (CIFA)**. As a globally recognized repository at Newcastle University, CIFA preserves rare independent films that offer unfiltered insights into China's social and cultural landscapes—perspectives often absent from mainstream media.

On 25th March 2026, CIFA and the Chinese department will host an immersive screening event for secondary and sixth-form students from across the North East. Featuring three short documentaries centered on childhood, the program encourages students to reflect on universal issues such as education, inequality, and cultural heritage. This event highlights our department's role in fostering global citizenship and critical inquiry through visual media.

The curated films provide a powerful cross-section of contemporary Chinese society:

Face to Face (2020): Utilizing a striking split-screen technique, filmmaker Ye Yun contrasts the daily routines of children from opposite social classes, offering a visual commentary on the wealth gap in a rapidly modernizing nation.

Speaking Up 2 (2008): Tammy Cheung captures candid interviews with primary school students in Jiangsu. Their reflections on family, gender, and society reveal the "changing face" of China through the eyes of its youth.

A Peking Opera Master in New York (2016): This moving portrait by Guo Haitao depicts an exiled master's struggle to stage a final performance, exploring how traditional arts survive displacement and historical upheaval.

By hosting these screenings, the School of Modern Languages continues to showcase the vibrant research and community outreach defining our department, ensuring that local students engage with the rich, complex, and often untold stories of our global society.



Chinese Documentary Film Screening for Schools, Newcastle University

25th March, 2026



Organizer:
School of Modern
Languages,
Newcastle University
Visit us:
www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/

Studying Chinese at NTNU: My Experience in Taiwan

Isobel (Year 3 student doing Year Abroad)

When I first decided to study Chinese at National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU/師大), I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. As the first student from Newcastle University to go on exchange there, the experience felt both exciting and terrifying. However, after arriving in Taipei and starting my studies at NTNU, I quickly realised that studying Chinese in Taiwan is not only academically rewarding but also an incredible cultural experience.

NTNU is well known for its Mandarin language programs, and the Mandarin Training Center (MTC) attracts students from all over the world. One of the things that impressed me most when I arrived was the international atmosphere. In my classes there are students from many different countries including Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, The Netherlands and France, which makes the learning environment both diverse and motivating. Everyone has a shared goal—to improve their Chinese—so it is easy to connect with people and support each other.

The courses at NTNU are intensive but very effective. Exchange students take courses in the department of Chinese as a second language but can also take 6 hours of free classes a week at MTC. Classes are, for the most part, relatively small with around 10-15 students, which means that teachers can give a lot of individual attention to everyone. Through taking a variety of classes, we practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing every day. The teachers are very encouraging and encourage you to only speak Chinese in class, which really helps build confidence and fluency rapidly.

Another aspect that many students are curious about is the use of traditional Chinese characters in Taiwan. Before arriving, I was worried that traditional characters might be difficult to pick up after studying simplified ones for so long. However, I found that they are not as challenging as I expected. In fact, traditional characters often make the structure of the character clearer, which can help me to remember them. At first, it takes some time to adjust, but most people say that after about 3-5 weeks, you start to recognise them naturally, which was true for me. Being immersed in an environment where traditional characters are used everywhere—from street signs to menus—helps speed up the learning process a lot.



Living in Taipei has also been a fantastic experience. NTNU is located in a lively part of the city, with many cafés, restaurants, and shops nearby. Another highlight is the famous Shida and Gongguan Night Markets, which are only a short walk from campus. Night markets are a big part of Taiwanese culture, and they are great places to try local foods such as bubble tea, fried chicken cutlet, scallion pancakes and various other Taiwanese snacks.

In terms of accommodation, there are several options available for students. The grand majority of students stay in NTNU dormitories, but some still choose to rent apartments or share accommodation with friends. The dormitory for exchange students is dormitory number two, which is separated by gender. It was built in 2023, so it is very modern. There are either 2 or 4 people per room for girls and 2, 4 or 6 people per room for boys. This dormitory is on a different campus to most of my classes, but there are free shuttle buses multiple times a day. Taipei also has an excellent public transport system, especially the MRT (metro), and YouBikes which make travelling around the city very easy.

My first impression of NTNU was how welcoming and friendly the environment is. Occasionally, responses to emails can be slow and information can be confusing but both the staff and students will help guide your way. Ultimately at NTNU you can create a tailored experience for yourself, choosing classes and joining clubs independently which means you can have a very flexible schedule that suits you!

Beyond the classroom, Taiwan itself is a fascinating place to explore. The country has beautiful natural scenery, from some of the tallest mountains in Asia to beaches great for surfing and travelling around the island is very convenient thanks to the high-speed rail system. Additionally, Taipei is directly surrounded by these mountains so they are easily accessible even by public transport so no need to worry at all about a lack of green space! Unlike travelling to mainland China, you can see the majority of the island within your year abroad which to me is a real advantage! During my time in Taiwan, I have had the opportunity to climb a 3,300 metre mountain, learn to surf, learn some Taiyu (the local language of Taiwan), learn to dance and climb down the side of a waterfall. Truly, anything is possible in Taiwan!

Taiwanese culture is also very rich, combining traditional Chinese heritage, Japanese culture due to Taiwan's colonial past, and its own unique local characteristics. One thing that stands out immediately is the friendliness of the people. Locals are often very willing to help, even if there is a language barrier, they would literally do anything for you!

Overall, studying Chinese at NTNU has been an incredibly valuable experience for me. Not only have I improved my language skills significantly, but I have also had the chance to experience Taiwanese culture firsthand and meet people from all over the world. For anyone considering studying Chinese abroad, Taiwan is a fantastic place to do it.

Our Chinese teacher Linlin is proud to share a reflective essay, written in Chinese, by one of our final year Chinese Studies students. This piece captures the bittersweet nature of international study, contrasting the student's initial anxieties in Manchester with her emotional departure from Hainan one year later.

从不安到舍不得

Evie Walker (Final year student, Further Advanced Chinese)

当我留学一年结束的时候，在海南的机场大厅里，我拖着沉重的行李箱慢慢地往前走。到了安检口前，我和中国朋友紧紧地拥抱互相道别。我转身的时候，忍着不回头看，因为只要看到她，我就会流泪。这种离别前的沉重，让我感到很熟悉。

差不多一年前，我在曼彻斯特机场里，准备登机去中国留学。那天是我爸爸送我去机场的。安检口前，他拍了拍我的肩膀，努力表现得很轻松，但我能感觉到他很舍不得。

那时我满心不安，对未来充满惶恐，而更难受的是需要离开一直身边支持我的爸爸。登机广播响起时，我几乎想转身回家，但同时也忍不住回头看。他站在大厅里对我挥手，我就去登上飞机开始留学的一年。

刚到中国的时候，我还是特别紧张，也遇到了很多的困难。但幸运的是，有一位中国同学帮我渐渐地适应了这个全新的环境。她的热情帮助让我改变了对留学生活的印象。

从那以后，我在海南度过了许多难忘的时光。几乎每个周末和假期都陆续去探索海南省各种各样的地方。海南的生活慢慢融入了我的生活，我也从最初的害怕变成开始享受这种新的生活方式。

直到今天，我才真正明白，当初在曼彻斯特机场的不安的心里，其实是我走向成长的开始。一年前我原本害怕来到中国，而现在，我却舍不得离开中国。

English Translation:

A Year Between Two Departures: From Fear to Fondness

As my year of studying abroad came to an end, I walked slowly through the terminal of the Hainan airport, trailing my heavy suitcase behind me. Reaching the security checkpoint, I shared a tight embrace with my Chinese friend as we said our goodbyes. As I turned away, I forced myself not to look back, knowing that the moment I saw her, the tears would fall. This heavy feeling of departure felt deeply familiar.

Almost a year ago, I was at Manchester Airport, preparing to board my flight to begin my studies in China. My father was the one who saw me off that day. At the security gate, he patted me on the shoulder, trying his best to appear relaxed, though I could feel how much he hated to see me go.

At that time, my heart was full of unease and dread for the future; what was even harder was having to leave my father, who had always been by my side supporting me. When the boarding announcement rang out, I almost wanted to turn around and go home, but at the same time, I couldn't help but look back at him. He stood in the hall waving to me, and so I boarded the plane to begin my year abroad.

When I first arrived in China, I was still incredibly nervous and encountered many difficulties. Fortunately, a Chinese classmate helped me gradually adapt to this brand-new environment. Her warm assistance changed my entire impression of life abroad.

From then on, I spent many unforgettable moments in Hainan. Almost every weekend and holiday, I set out to explore various parts of the province. Life in Hainan slowly integrated into my own; I transformed from that initially fearful person into someone who truly enjoyed this new way of life.

It is only today that I truly understand that the uneasy heart I carried in Manchester airport was, in fact, the beginning of my journey toward maturity. A year ago, I was afraid to come to China; now, I find myself reluctant to leave.

Contact us

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Visit our website at www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/



Tom Morton (Year 1, Beginning Chinese)

In February, Newcastle University Chinese students participated in the Chinese New Year celebrations in the city centre. The day featured a parade, traditional dress, a communal meal, and volunteering. I helped at the block printing station, printing "good luck" wishes for the Year of the Horse. It was rewarding to apply my classroom knowledge in such a practical, festive way.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the Chinese Level A course. While learning a language so different from my own is challenging, the lecturers perfectly balance fundamentals with cultural and linguistic depth. I highly recommend this course to anyone considering languages at Newcastle! Now, I am looking forward to my third year abroad in China, where I can finally experience the culture first-hand in a fully immersive environment.



Ruby Robertson (Year 1, Intermediate Chinese)

My interest in Chinese began in Year 7, and it has remained my favourite subject. I have always been intrigued by Chinese history and culture, and the more I study the language, the more rewarding it becomes. My A-level studies provided a strong foundation for Level B, making the transition into university exciting. This course has developed my speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills; in particular, role-play activities are a favourite, as they help me build confidence applying new vocabulary in practical scenarios. The balance between my existing familiarity and new challenges has significantly elevated my proficiency. I am looking forward to my Stage 3 year abroad, which will allow me to further refine my skills and gain a deeper understanding of life in China.

Chinese Culture Taster Session



Ross Smart (Year 1, Beginning Chinese)

The lesson helped me gain a deeper appreciation of the character "Fu" and the meaning behind it. The structure in particular reflecting the idea of blessing was something I really liked as well as understanding how calligraphy connects with cultural values.

Tomos Lewis (Final Year, Advanced Chinese)

Today's "Fu" activity left a lasting impression. I gained a deeper understanding of the calligraphy of "Fu" and discovered how one character can embody meanings like happiness, good fortune, and blessings. This special experience made me appreciate the depth of Chinese culture even more.

Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed the Chinese course this year. The lessons are interactive, engaging, and applicable to current social trends. These well-structured classes have enabled my peers and me to broaden our language skills and cultural understanding.

Ailish Beat (Final Year, Advanced Chinese)

During our Year of the Horse celebrations, our class learned the meaning behind the character 福 (fú). It is often displayed upside down on doors to invite good luck, as the words for "upside-down" and "arrive" sound similar.

The left side of the character is a radical symbolizing God, while the right side combines "one," "mouth," and "field." Together, these elements symbolize wishes for wealth, family, and a bountiful harvest.

Theo Bates (Year 1, Beginning Chinese)

The Chinese New Year festival was an amazing experience, offering a chance to engage with Chinese culture right here in the city. I was impressed by the variety of activities and learned so much about the Lunar New Year's significance. Wearing traditional Hanfu was a personal highlight. I thoroughly recommend participating next year and hope to attend again. From learning traditional greetings and practicing Tai Chi to making lacquer fans and tasting dishes like Hongshao Rou, the day was unforgettable.

I am currently studying Level A Chinese at Newcastle University and find the course rewarding and mentally stimulating. Despite the language's difficulty, I am thoroughly enjoying the challenge and look forward to progressing to Level B, with hopes of spending a year abroad in China.



Purdie Clifton (Stage 2 student, Advanced Chinese)



I have been learning Chinese since my GCSEs, finding it a fascinating gateway into a vastly different culture. Though initially challenging, the process is rewarding as I see my proficiency improve. After my A-levels, I progressed to Level B at Newcastle University, applying my skills in practical, real-life situations. This communicative approach has been invaluable for speaking naturally in everyday contexts.

Currently, in Level C, I have bolstered both my linguistic ability and cultural understanding. We explore Chinese society through contemporary lenses—examining issues like housing, education, and the '4-2-1' family structure. Each lesson focuses on specific skills, and I feel my fluency has improved enormously. Feedback from my November oral exam boosted my confidence, making me feel prepared for my year abroad. Furthermore, learning from peers who have returned from China motivates me to sharpen my skills. While the language remains challenging, the sense of achievement makes it entirely worthwhile. I am eager to continue my studies at Sichuan University next year and look forward to returning to Newcastle with newfound confidence.



Isabelle Walker (Stage 2 student, Intermediate Chinese)

I started learning Chinese with absolutely no prior knowledge, and I certainly found it difficult at the beginning. However, through weekly speaking, listening, writing, reading, and translation exercises, I have made great progress. I now find learning Chinese incredibly exciting and motivating.

I have found the classes to be truly engaging. I love that we cover not only the material in the textbook but also additional cultural knowledge, which helps us better understand the heart of Chinese society. This has helped me feel much more prepared for my upcoming year abroad. Every week in our listening sessions, we explore different aspects of Chinese culture. I have found it fascinating to discover the nuances between Chinese culture and my own, learning about differences I had never even considered before.

The lecturers are incredibly supportive and passionate about their teaching. Furthermore, the smaller class sizes create a comfortable and friendly learning environment. I would definitely recommend this course to anyone considering studying Chinese, and my main piece of advice would be: keep going! Even if it feels challenging at first, have trust that your hard work will pay off.

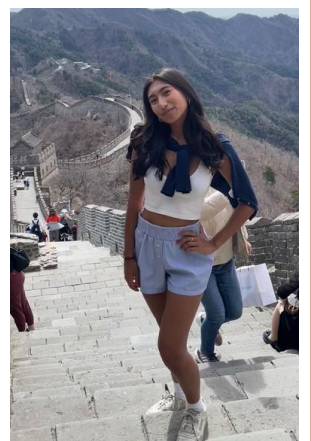
After nearly four years of studying Chinese, I have gained immense knowledge. From "hard skills" like mastering a new writing system to "soft skills" such as adapting to a new cultural environment, Newcastle University has provided excellent guidance to ensure I excel. Learning a new language from scratch at 18 naturally brought challenges. However, despite entering Level A with no knowledge, I felt supported and made significant progress—building vocabulary, developing muscle memory for characters, and growing in speaking confidence.

Aaliyah Maharjan (Stage 4 student, Advanced Chinese)

This served as a foundation that was expanded upon during Level B in my second year. We followed a structured approach to further develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills through relevant themes that broadened our cultural horizons. We explored traditions and history, such as the Eight Great Cuisines of China, the legacy of dynastic rule, and Confucian ideology rooted in Chinese philosophy.

This provided excellent preparation for my year abroad, where I spent ten months studying at Sichuan University in Chengdu. This level of immersion accelerated my skills rapidly, allowing me to put into practice what Newcastle had taught me while experiencing things that can only be learnt by living there. I enjoyed writing the three tutor posts for the University throughout the year; they allowed me to reflect on how far I had come since the start of my Chinese journey and set exciting goals for myself. My final post was especially emotional, as I wrote about my excitement to return to Newcastle, where my life could continue seamlessly.

I have now returned for my final year. In Level C, I have focused on perfecting my translation skills, delivering presentations, and continuing to test my comprehension and production. This entire experience has been both challenging and rewarding, and I will continue to make use of the incredible support, guidance, and mentorship that Newcastle University offers.



Sophia Fornacon – Wood
(Stage 4 student,
Further Advanced Chinese)



Arriving alone at Beijing Capital International Airport, I felt on the brink of a life-changing shift. Never had I imagined being halfway across the world, far from home. The thought scared me: "Am I ready for this?"

I had packed everything into one suitcase, prepared for an exciting year. The taxi ride to my dormitory remains vivid. Watching Beijing's bustle through jet-lagged eyes, I struggled to string broken Chinese into sentences for the talkative driver. Yet, a dream was unfolding—a vision of my future. The driver's friendliness reflected the warm welcome I had received, a common courtesy of Beijing culture.

Unfortunately, I had underestimated the hardships of moving away. The first week was not the "honeymoon phase" my classmates experienced; being on my own was a key factor. I was hit with immense homesickness and loneliness. Consequently, calls to family became a habit. I was practically living back home vicariously, even searching for flights, convinced that a year abroad was not for me...

I had become so caught up in homesickness that I forgot why I came to China: to experience and learn. I realized that to enjoy this year, I had to dive headfirst into the culture. My mindset was crucial; it was only as "impossible" as I believed. Once I believed in myself, the anticipation returned. I had to accept the anxiety, deciding I was capable. As Mandy Hale said, "Being scared means you're about to do something brave."

Change can be slow, but after difficult weeks, I gradually made friends. Everything that followed made this one of the best years of my life. The breathtaking sights, traditional dishes I cooked, and common phrases no textbook could have taught me were a testament to the enlightenment found in another culture—not to mention how quickly my Chinese improved. By observing locals, I expanded my understanding of life in Beijing: drinking hot water, sharing meals, cycling everywhere, and getting outdoors—from climbing mountains to dancing with "aunties." Experiencing Beijing helped enrich my daily routines.

I understand now why everyone said this would be amazing. Challenges were only made harder by my resistance to change, but that's part of the adventure. My advice: life's no fun if it's predictable. Embrace change, let go of expectations, and be willing to try new things. It would be boring if everything went exactly as planned.

Last June, I was grateful to represent Newcastle University in the 2025 Chinese Bridge competition. As a British representative, traveling to China with students from 133 countries was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to connect globally. In Beijing, we visited the Great Wall, Olympic Park, and Summer Palace, before flying to Fujian to explore the unique culture of Wuyishan, Fuzhou, and Quanzhou.

The trip was constant activity, balancing travel with competition preparation. Staying energized in the humid summer heat was tough, but we supported one another. Our volunteers from Fujian University were incredible—they even threw a surprise birthday celebration for me, gathering friends from around the world. The experience was fun, tiring, and completely unforgettable. I was even interviewed for national Chinese TV!

On our final night, we cruised the Fuzhou river. Watching a video of our journey, we shared emotional goodbyes with friends from Togo, the USA, Serbia, Russia, Thailand, Egypt, Mozambique, and beyond. Although the competition ended, I remain part of the Chinese Bridge network. As all global competitors receive a scholarship to study in China, I hope to see those friends again. After finishing my degree at Newcastle, I moved to China to study for a Master's in Tourism Management at Sun Yat-sen University, which I am enjoying so far.

- Third Place in the 24th 'Chinese Bridge' Chinese Proficiency Competition UK Regional Final (5 June 2025).
- Represent the UK in the World Final in China in August.
- The Outstanding Writing Award.
- In the first round of the Online Global Popularity vote
- second place in Europe and fourth place globally.

Charlie Rutnam
(studied Advanced Chinese
and Graduated in 202)



Newcastle University Confucius Institute: A Spectacular Lunar New Year Celebration



On 22nd February 2026, the Newcastle University Confucius Institute (NUCI) took centre stage at the Chinese New Year celebrations in Newcastle's Chinatown. Through four dynamic pillars—a traditional parade, stage hosting, cultural performances, and interactive workshops—NUCI brought the vibrant essence of Chinese heritage to the local community.



The festivities began with a stunning Hanfu parade led by Acting Director Andrew Law. Dressed in exquisite traditional silk robes, students and volunteers marched from Grey's Monument, showcasing the elegance of ancient Chinese aesthetics to thousands of cheering spectators.

On the main stage, NUCI Director Professor Yu Xiao Su and student Jack Pringle co-hosted the event. Jack's fluent Mandarin impressed the audience as they shared the cultural significance of the Year of the Horse and the 20th anniversary of the city's support for Chinatown. The performances that followed were equally captivating: a 30-person Ba Duan Jin Tai Chi demonstration, high-energy Kung Fu fan displays, and a melodic ensemble of ancient instruments like the Guqin and Guzheng.

Beyond the stage, over 500 citizens engaged in hands-on cultural workshops. Using a "stamp collection" format, visitors experienced movable-type printing, crafted traditional lacquer fans, and tried their hand at Touhu (pitch-pot) and table tennis. The event was graced by dignitaries, including the Education Counsellor from the Chinese Consulate in Manchester and the Mayors of Newcastle and Gateshead. By blending tradition with interactive fun, NUCI successfully fostered cross-cultural understanding and strengthened the bond between the university and the local community. (Written by CI teacher Miao Wang. Pictures provided by Yuanyuan Chen.)



Third Place in the 5th Chinese Competition of Charitable Projects & Business Innovations for UK University Students. (5th June, 2025)

Daisy Trillo (studied Advanced Chinese and Graduated in 2025)

Last summer, I participated in the Chinese Bridge Business & Innovation Competition. I hadn't really thought about entering before, but my module leader encouraged me, and I'm so glad I did! The competition involved preparing a short business pitch—we had totally free rein—so I came up with an eco-friendly app designed to encourage people to buy and sell clothes second-hand. Inspired by similar platforms in the UK, I decided to pitch it to Chinese consumers, as shopping vintage is a small but growing market in China. The preparation process pushed me to think creatively as I developed the branding for the app and visualized how it would function. The staff from the Chinese department were incredibly supportive, going above and beyond to help me fine-tune my pitch, my Chinese language skills, and my presentation style.

I was quite nervous about the competition itself, as we had traveled to SOAS in London to speak in front of a large audience in a big auditorium. On stage, I had to present my pitch and then answer three questions on the spot from the judging panel. My pitch went really well, and I took third place! However, the highlight of the experience for me was chatting with audience members afterward. Through these connections, I met someone who helped me secure a job after graduating just a couple of months later, something I never expected to come from a five-minute PowerPoint presentation!

I am now working at a Chinese PR firm that helps Chinese brands expand globally. The role involves staying up to speed with China-related news so we can effectively pitch our clients' products to journalists. I also edit videos for social media and write articles and posts on Substack. Having studied Chinese and Film at Newcastle, I'm grateful to be doing work that relates directly to my degree. I'm especially thankful to the staff from the Chinese department for encouraging me to enter the competition and for their unwavering support throughout the process.

