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Recommendations for academic cooperation with China

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Recommendations for academic cooperation with China

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Abstract

China, with its huge economy, has a profound influence on world economies. At the same time, academic cooperation with China is more important than ever. Over the past five years, China is the only country to have increased its position in RDI, in the number of researchers, in the volume and quality of publications as well as in IP5-patents. It is beneficial for the Finnish academic institutions and the society in general to cooperate with China despite differences in systems and values. Academic mobility as well as conveying the results of research-based knowledge are essential; openness and sharing of knowledge are the best contributors to high academic quality and the best way to solve global challenges.

China, which is strengthening its position as a great power, and which has an academic environment with value sets that are perceived differently can make international cooperation more complex. Understanding the broader context of the academic environment including the relevant laws and policies governing collaboration in China has become imperative for international partners.

The recommendations seek to ensure that Finnish HEIs and research institutions can forge cooperation with Chinese partners based consistently on their own principles and values. Academic freedom and the integrity of scientific peer reviewing are of fundamental importance for the Finnish academic community. Additionally, considerations related to good scientific practices, security and competitiveness are relevant.

The Recommendations for academic cooperation with China were prepared in cooperation with Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) and research institutes as well as their key stakeholders.

Keywords	Higher Education, Research, International Cooperation, China		
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Toimintatapasuosituksia akateemiseen yhteistyöhön Kiinan kanssa

Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja 2022:11		Teema	Koulutus Tiede
Julkaisija	Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö		
Yhteisötekijä	Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö		
Kieli	englanti	Sivumäärä	15

Tiivistelmä

Akateeminen yhteistyö Kiinan kanssa on tärkeää. Kiinan globaali merkitys vahvistuneen jatkossakin ja sen taloudellisen painoarvon lisääntyessä myös akateemisen yhteistyön merkitys kasvaa. Viimeisen viiden vuoden aikana Kiina on ainoana maana parantanut asemaansa TKI-työssä, tutkijoiden määrässä, julkaisujen määrässä ja laadussa sekä IP5-patenteissa. Suomalaisen korkeakoulu- ja tutkimusyhteisön ja laajemmin koko yhteiskunnan etujen mukaista on tehdä Kiinan kanssa riskitietoista yhteistyötä korkeakoulutuksessa ja tutkimuksessa, vaikka järjestelmät ja arvot ovat erilaiset. Akateeminen liikkuvuus ja tutkitun tiedon tulosten välittäminen ovat välttämättömyksiä: avoimuus ja osaamisen jakaminen ovat korkean akateemisen laadun ja suurten globaalien ongelmien ratkaisemisen parhaita edistäjiä.

Suurvaltakilpailu ja Kiinan arvolähtökohdiltaan erilainen akateeminen toimintakulttuuri monimutkaistavat kansainvälistä yhteistyötä. Kansainväliseltä kumppanilta edellytetään hyvää ymmärrystä Kiinan toimintaympäristöstä sekä yhteistyötä ohjaavista tai rajoittavista laeista ja käytänteistä.

Näiden toimintatapasuositusten tavoitteena on, että suomalaiset korkeakoulut ja tutkimuslaitokset voivat jatkossakin perustaa yhteistyönsä kiinalaisten kumppanien kanssa johdonmukaisesti omiin lähtökohtiinsa ja etuihinsa. Päämääränä on suomalaiselle korkeakoulutukselle ja tieteelle tärkeiden periaatteiden ylläpitäminen, erityisesti akateemisen vapauden ja tieteellisen vertaisarvioinnin integriteetin kunnioittaminen ja hyvän tieteellisen käytännön noudattaminen sekä turvallisuuden huomioiminen ja kilpailukyvyyn ylläpitäminen.

Toimintatapasuosituksia akateemiseen yhteistyöhön Kiinan kanssa on valmisteltu yhteistyössä suomalaisten korkeakoulujen ja tutkimuslaitosten sekä niiden keskeisten sidosryhmien kanssa.

Asiasanat korkea-asteen koulutus, tutkimus, kansainvälinen yhteistyö, Kiina

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Rekommendationer om tillvägagångssätt för akademiskt samarbete med Kina

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Referat

Det akademiska samarbetet med Kina är viktigt. Kinas globala betydelse kommer sannolikt att stärkas ytterligare, och i takt med att Kinas ekonomiska betydelse ökar blir också det akademiska samarbetet allt viktigare. Under de senaste fem åren har Kina som enda land förbättrat sin position i fråga om FUJ-arbetet, antalet forskare, antalet publikationer och deras kvalitet samt antalet IP5-patentansökningar. Det ligger i det finländska högskole- och forskarsamfundets och hela samhällets intresse att samarbeta riskmedvetet med Kina inom högskoleutbildning och forskning, även om systemen och värderingarna är olika. Det är nödvändigt med akademisk rörlighet och att sprida forskningsresultat: öppenhet och delande av kunnsande är de bästa metoderna för att främja hög akademisk kvalitet och lösningar på stora globala problem.

Det internationella samarbetet kompliceras av stormaktskampen och av att den akademiska verksamhetskulturen i Kina har en annorlunda värdegrund. Internationella partner förutsätts ha god förståelse för Kinas omvärld och för den lagstiftning och praxis som styr eller begränsar samarbetet.

Syftet med dessa rekommendationer är att finländska högstskolor och forskningsinstitut också i fortsättningen konsekvent ska kunna grunda sitt samarbete med kinesiska partner på sina egna utgångspunkter och intressen. Målet är att upprätthålla de principer som är viktiga för den finländska högskoleutbildningen och forskningen, särskilt när det gäller att respektera den akademiska friheten och referentgranskningens integritet, iaktta god vetenskaplig praxis, beakta säkerheten och upprätthålla konkurrenskraften.

Rekommendationerna om tillvägagångssätt för akademiskt samarbete med Kina har beretts i samarbete med finländska högstskolor och forskningsinstitut samt deras viktigaste referensgrupper.

Nyckelord högskoleutbildning, forskning, internationellt samarbete, Kina

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Contents

1	Cooperation with China	7
2	Challenges	9
2.1	Value conflicts.....	10
2.2	Security/geopolitical dimension	11
2.3	Competitiveness	11
3	Responsibility and recommendations	13
	Sources	15

1 Cooperation with China

International cooperation is an integral part of Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) and research institutes. Internationality has many positive effects, such as widening the knowledge base of institutions, sharing knowledge and innovation, strengthening academic quality, increasing global understanding and the potential impact on the economy. Finnish HEIs and research institutes have a long and active history of academic partnerships with China. Globally, China is one of the most popular countries for academic cooperation among Finns.

Academic cooperation with China is important. China's global impact is likely to strengthen and, as its economic weight increases, so will the significance of academic collaboration. Over the past five years, China has been the only country to improve its position in RDI work, the number of researchers, the number and quality of scientific publications and IP5 patents. All of this indicates that it is in the interests of the Finnish academic community and society at large to cooperate with China on a risk-informed basis, despite the differences in our political systems and value bases. Academic mobility and the transfer of the research results are essential: openness and knowledge sharing are the best contributors to high academic quality and to solving major global problems.

China's determined emergence as a political, economic, technological, scientific and military super power is complicating academic cooperation in an unprecedented way. The European Union (EU) has identified China as a partner of cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival. The same multifaceted approach is also valid in the academic sector.

China is challenging the practices of academia largely based on Western values. Challenges arise from different perceptions of academic freedom and interpretations of cooperation rules, human rights, IPR practices, the use of research results and information management issues. While HEIs and research institutes promote their international collaboration they must comply with the law and also consider possible ethical challenges and reputational risks.

Recommendations for academic cooperation with China is an initiative by Finnish academic institutions. It is compiled in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture and the institutions themselves in support of international activities and

identification of key challenges. The recommendations focus in particular on the challenges emerging from China's state-centered approach, political ambitions and global influence as well as the great power competition between the United States and China.

The Finnish HEIs and research institutes enjoy extensive academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In China, these principles have partly different connotations. Finnish institutions have difficulties understanding China's emphasis on political education, control of access to information and compromises to freedom of speech and freedom of scientific research.

The intensifying super power rivalry is also a competition for knowledge, science and technology. The rivalry may restrict the freedom of choice in research partnerships where both countries are suspicious and/or competitive towards each other's ambitions, particularly in the field of sensitive technologies. In the most extreme case, rivaling countries may place sanctions that restrict abilities to engage in international collaboration in general.

The recommendations aim to assist Finnish HEIs and research institutes to work consistently with their Chinese partners based on their own principles and interests. The goal is that HEIs are better informed and more aware of the potential challenges, and are able to promote the principles important to Finnish higher education and science, in particular:

1. respect for the integrity of academic freedom and scientific peer review and adherence to good scientific practices (challenges include breaches of ethical standards, political influence, soft power, dual use of results or other uses that violate applicable laws or agreed rules, reciprocity where transparency, equality and compliance with agreements are essential);
2. consideration of security and safety (attention must be paid to aspects of national security, personal safety and, for example, dual-use of technology);
3. maintain competitiveness (challenges include government impact on academic cooperation, possible breaches of export controls, transfer of research data, cyber-attacks and espionage).

2 Challenges

In recent years, China has converged in many ways on Western academic culture, including by developing and modernising the review methods of academic publications, investing in the quality of teaching and research, and developing the concept of academic integrity in terms of ethical research, the falsification of research results and plagiarism.

However, challenges are posed by understanding of the concepts of academic freedom and academic integrity, definitions of which are not unambiguous or well-established. Instead of freedom itself, we often speak of threats or restrictions to freedom. Also, certain values are often referred to in the international debate such as objectivity, honesty, responsibility, fairness and trust. The Finnish HEIs highly value these themes. Guiding documents include the charters and framework programmes of the United Nations (UN) or the European Union (EU), national laws and regulations, and the guidelines of other international organisations or their equivalents.

The European Research Area (ERA) is also an important reference framework for Finnish HEIs and research institutes. The purpose of the ERA is to create a common market for research, innovation and technology in the EU. The free movement of research and information plays a key role in this. The Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research (2020), signed by the EU research ministers, is a statement in favour of freedom of science and research and a declaration on Europe's role in defending freedom, equality and justice. Finland has also expressed strong support for the Communication from the Commission on the Global Approach to Research and Innovation (05/2021), which emphasises the need to clarify common rules in a complex geopolitical context. Finland considers it important for the EU's international research and innovation cooperation to aim to commit partners to certain principles.¹

Similarly, the Magna Charta Universitatum (1988) and its more recent version, the Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum (MCU 2020), the 'Universities Charter', which has gained increasing popularity in recent years, seeks the cohesion of European HEIs,

1 See also Marseille declaration (March 8th, 2022) <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2022-03/-en-marseille-declaration-17075.pdf>

emphasises the importance of tradition and, in particular, defines the foundations of the university institution: academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

For a long while already, international academic cooperation agreements are accustomed to agreeing on intellectual property rights, and some academic disciplines are obliged to pay attention to risks to national security. It is becoming increasingly important for Finnish actors to pay attention to the fundamental ideas of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in their international cooperation. These have implications not only for academic culture but also for other key values, security and competitiveness.

2.1 Value conflicts

According to the Magna Charta Universitatum, “[t]he university is an autonomous institution; ... its research and teaching must be intellectually and morally independent of all political authority and economic power,” and “[f]reedom in research and training is a fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement.”

In China, academic freedom is not perceived in the similar way than in Finland. Chinese HEIs serve the citizens, the Communist Party, socialist social development and reform. The role of the Communist Party in Chinese HEIs as well as ideological education in curricula has become more visible in the recent years. This has implications for cooperation especially in social sciences.

Differences in value base complicate international cooperation. It is important for the international partner to have a good understanding of the operating environment in China (for example restrictions to public debate, the use internet, certain international publications as well as censorship), also in the interests of their Chinese colleagues. In addition, the growing influence of Party leaders in the administration of HEIs has politicised academic cooperation.

China needs foreign expertise to bridge the gap between quality and quantity in higher education and academic research. China’s quest for greater international academic openness while increasing social control further complicates the situation.

2.2 Security/geopolitical dimension

The needs of the defence industry extend to international research cooperation. Partnerships between like-minded parties that approve the open research agenda are well-established and well-regulated.

China aspires to be a global scientific and technological super power and a military authority. The integration or dual use of Chinese civil and military technology poses a challenge to safe and secure research cooperation. Dual use jeopardises the principles of trust, transparency, reciprocity and shared values, which Finns are accustomed to regarding as the cornerstones of both international cooperation in science and technology and fair business.

China develops key technological know-how through investments, recruitment programmes, directing academic and research cooperation also into the military industry, technology transfer and intelligence gathering. China's dual-use strategy also directs civilian actors to engage in classified research and development and weapons production. Moreover, the country's intelligence legislation obliges organisations, companies and individuals to assist authorities or other state actors where necessary. This also applies to the results of international research cooperation.

2.3 Competitiveness

China wants to be a great power in technology and to dominate the market, and in many sectors, it is already a global leader. While China has very open access to European research ecosystems, China restricts access to its market and prevents the transfer of data.

The Made in China 2025 (MIC25) strategy published in 2015 accelerates China's transition to a globally competitive, more self-sufficient industrial superpower within ten years. The fields it specifies as key industries include next-generation information technology, numerically controlled machines and robots, aerospace equipment, ocean engineering, advanced railway equipment, new-energy means of transport, power equipment, agricultural machinery, new materials, biomedicine and high-performance medical equipment. In the new five-year plan published in 2021, science and innovation are key terms.

It may be impossible to transfer the results of research cooperation with China to Finland or Europe, even if the work is based on cooperation and joint funding. China's export control list is therefore an important reference for cooperation with Chinese partners. China, for its part, restricts international cooperation in research and innovation and can

do so vigorously if it so wishes. EU export controls extend to research cooperation mainly in cases where controlled dual-use items are exported from the EU customs territory. This may include products used in research, for example, but the export of research results themselves may also be subject to control if they meet any of the EU's control list definitions. Scientific research is, in principle, outside the scope of control, but its definition is not always straightforward.

With its economic growth, China is also increasing its global influence. Launched in 2013, the Belt and Road initiative is a global development strategy for infrastructure construction, trade and soft power, where China builds trade and transport routes around the world. It is supported by strategic research cooperation led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), under the framework of which China has, among other things, opened nine research and education centres outside the country in Asia, Africa and South America. In the case of developing countries, China offers not only money and resources, but also an alternative perspective on scientific development and paradigm shift. Indeed, China advertises itself as a win-win partner: the investments benefit not only the target countries, but also China.

3 Responsibility and recommendations

The starting point for all safe and effective international academic cooperation is the general responsibility of autonomous HEIs and research institutes. The international activities stem from jointly agreed international practices and a strategic approach.

Goals:

1. Safe cooperation and partnerships based on institutions' own principles and positions

- Good governance and due diligence are integrated into the international practices of HEIs and research institutes.
- The risk management mechanism extends to international partnerships, including risk analysis prior to cooperation, partnership evaluation mechanisms and exit criteria. Awareness of the risk may be a sufficient prerequisite for continued cooperation.
- There are internal intervention and communication strategies for problem and crisis situations.

2. Ethical and value-based choices

- International cooperation meets the criteria for academic integrity and is in line with the principles of academic freedom.
- The principles and values of academic freedom and autonomy are part of internal and external communication and reflected in international cooperation and agreements.
- The ethical challenges of international cooperation must be understood both in research and in fieldwork (including the use and ethics of technological applications).
- The terminology of agreements takes into account cultural and/or political content and ideological connotations.

3. Awareness of risks

- Political and economic factors limiting options:
 - an understanding of the applicability of research to weapons of mass destruction, military use or use contrary to human rights;
 - responsibility for compliance with export control regulations and for applying for the required export licences;
 - responsibility for compliance with binding UN and EU sanctions.
- Relationship between academic objectives and security risk:
 - understanding of possible challenges in cooperation (such as harassment and other attempts at exercising undue influence, copying, misuse of research results);
 - political sensitivities and the resulting security risks for the researcher or partner;
 - problems of collaborative research and sharing of research results;
 - data protection requirements and potential risks of data management and dissemination;
 - understanding the background to and liabilities of foreign financing;
 - reputational risks and economic impacts (including commercial benefits and/or economic dependence) in all cooperation (including dual degree programmes and the like);
 - practices related to the use of computers, social media and other devices abroad and, if necessary, also in Finland.

SOURCES

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In addition, numerous other guidelines, recommendations and other documents from different countries have been used as background material.



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