

Cross-Party Group on Taiwan

22nd November 2023, 6:00pm

Minutes

Present

MSPs

- Rhoda Grant MSP
- Jamie Greene MSP
- Jeremy Balfour MSP

Invited guests

- Professor Hsiao-Wei Yuan
- Professor Yi-De Liu
- Professor Aaron Moore
- Professor Brad Mackay

Non-MSP Group Members

- Director General Chia-Cheng Chang
- Penny Ho
- Minford Yu
- Stuart Grant
- Will Johnson
- Danielle Thomson
- Professor Konstantinos Kontis
- Dr. Frank Siedlok
- Hsiao-Chen Shen
- Dr. Thomas Tan
- Philip Chan
- Hsien-Lin Ro
- Dr Chih-Jen Lin

Apologies

- Martin Bell
- Dr Paul Behrens
- Sabina Ku

Agenda item 1: Welcome Remarks

Rhoda Grant MSP chaired the meeting, extending a warm welcome to the members and friends of the CPG on Taiwan.

The Director General, **Chia-Cheng Chang**, also welcomed guests to the meeting. The meeting topics and speakers were introduced: Educational exchanges and cooperation between Taiwan and Scotland, delivered by Professor Hsiao-Wei Yuan, Vice President of International Affairs at National Taiwan University (NTU), holding a PhD in Natural Resources from Cornell University, and Professor Yi-De Liu, Vice President for International Affairs at National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), holding a PhD in European Studies from Portsmouth University.

The recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was highlighted and acknowledged by the Director General as a positive step to the expansion of educational cooperation between Taiwan and Scotland. The Director General emphasised his priority to advancing bilateral collaborations in education and exchanges between Taiwan and Scotland.

Agenda item 2: Guest Presentation

Professor Hsiao-Wei Yuan: Scotland x National Taiwan University

- National Taiwan University (NTU) is the largest, most comprehensive, and oldest university in Taiwan with 36,000 students and 3,000 faculty members, occupying 1% of Taiwan's land.
- **Connections with Scotland:**
 - The University of Edinburgh and NTU: An existing MOU along with opportunities for student exchanges.
 - The University of St Andrews and NTU: Agreements encompassing a MOU, student exchange opportunities, and the Huayu Best Program for Mandarin Learning and Teaching Collaborations. This program, sponsored by the Ministry of Education, facilitates deeper Chinese language proficiency and cultural understanding for exchange students. Notably, The University of St Andrews currently hosts a visiting Mandarin Language Instructor from NTU as part of this program.
- **Research Collaborations:**
 - NTU engages in various international collaborations, including Seed Funding initiative set up by the Office of International Affairs. This fund aims to support interdisciplinary collaboration focusing on UN Sustainable

Development Goals (UN SDGs) through matching funds from participating universities, fostering bilateral collaborations and projects.

- **Tips for Successful Collaborations:**
 - Emphasis on exchanging visits and maintaining regular communication.
 - Implementation of a top-down strategy involving dedicated decisions and resource allocation for collaborations.
 - Encouragement of a bottom-up network, urging professors from participating universities to find common interests to initiate collaborations and projects.
- **Opportunities for Students:**
 - **International Student Study & Practical Training Program:** A collaboration between the university, government, and industry partners, focusing on STEM, semiconductor, and finance domains. Successful applicants benefit from a jointly crafted curriculum aligning with industry needs, sponsored with tuition waivers, monthly stipends, and internship opportunities.
 - **Plus Academy:** A short-term program at NTU catering to international students across various fields, providing insights into Taiwan's environmental, historical, and sociocultural aspects through topic-based programs like Art, Chinese Studies, Engineering, Natural Science, Social Science, Research, and Internship.

Professor Yi-De Liu: Collaborative Endeavours - NTNU's Engagement with UK Institutions

- **Three Pillars in Taiwan's National Education Policy:**
 - Promotion of Huayu education to facilitate exchange student visits, fostering collaboration between nations.
 - Taiwan's 2030 Bilingual Policy aims to become an English-Mandarin bilingual nation by 2030.
 - Emphasis on collaboration between industries and academia.
- **Signing of MOU**
 - Focus areas include green energy, sustainable technology, and English education.
- **General Engagements:**
 - NTNU Forum on Internationalisation of Higher Education featured guest speakers Ralph Rogers, Director Taiwan British Council, and Konstantinos Kontis, Dean of Global Engagement at the University of Glasgow.
 - In 2022, approximately 800 UK students studied in Taiwan, with 564 learning Chinese as a language.
 - NTNU has established partnerships with 17 institutions in the UK, resulting in 1,817 Taiwan-UK co-authored publications in 2022.
- **Educational Engagements:**

- NTNU is one of seven government-designated bilingual benchmark universities and serves as Taiwan's first and primary International Baccalaureate Educator Certification provider.
- **Cultural Engagement:**
 - In 2023, the Graduate Institute of Performing Arts participated in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival as part of an overseas internship program in Edinburgh.
- **Technological Engagement in Sustainability:**
 - Academic programs such as the Graduate Institute of Green Energy and Sustainable Technology, Graduate Institute of Sustainability Management and Environmental Education, and the Undergraduate Program of Vehicle and Energy Engineering.
 - Administrative offices including the Sustainable Development Centre and University Social Responsibility Office, focused on sustainability.
- **Huayu Engagement:**
 - The Huayu BEST Programme, a language exchange program, currently engages six partner universities in the UK, including The University of St Andrews and The University of Edinburgh.

Agenda item 3: Discussion

Comments and Feedback on Taiwan-UK Educational Collaborations.

- **Brad Mackay**, Deputy Principal at The University of St Andrews, highlights the expanding collaboration with NTU, originating from a small Chinese study program. He also acknowledges the heightened impact of international collaboration and research, emphasising positive student exchanges and experiences. He expresses optimism for the collaboration's future and seeks continued support from both universities.

Strategies to Support Scottish Teachers in Enhancing the Educational Experience for International Students

- **Appreciation of cultural differences:** Cultural competence and awareness is key to fostering a respectful environment. An understanding and respect for diverse perspectives and traditions may help to mitigate misunderstandings.
- **Well-being support system:** Implementing a robust support network focused on mental health and social well-being. Examples include initiatives such as arranging host families, assigning students mentors or advisors with similar backgrounds, and organising frequent social events to create a sense of community and belonging.

- **Teaching exchanges for educators:** Providing opportunities for teachers to engage in teaching exchanges. This allows them to learn and adopt various methodologies in effectively engaging students from diverse backgrounds, thereby expanding their pedagogical approach.

Barriers and Proposed Solutions for International (Taiwanese) Students Studying in Scotland:

- **Advertisement and Outreach – Promoting Scotland as an Educational Destination:** Enhancing awareness about Scotland as a study destination by showcasing its universities, unique opportunities, and culture.
 - Glasgow University's initiative of hosting online dissemination events serves to inform students, dispel doubts, and nurture interest in studying in Glasgow and Scotland.
 - Implementing physical visits (face-exchange) by professors from prospective partner universities as ambassadors to attract students was highlighted as an impactful and cost-effective method of promotion.
- **Travelling Incentive:** Highlighting nearby tourist attractions and neighbouring countries as travel incentives for students studying in Scotland to encourage exploration and cultural immersion.
- **Scholarships and Financial Aid:** Providing scholarships and financial support programs specifically tailored for international students choosing to study in Scotland.
- **Diversity Impact on Course Enrolment:** Concerns that a higher concentration of Asian students in specific courses may dissuade prospective students from enrolling due to apprehensions about limited opportunities to integrate and broaden their experiences with local and other international students.

Post-Pandemic Trends in Taiwanese Exchange Programs:

- Post-pandemic, Taiwan witnessed an influx of exchange students studying Chinese, this may be explained in part by the relocation of several Chinese learning programs from other countries. Additionally, rising awareness of Taiwan's reputation as a liberal and supportive environment for a variety of communities, such as the LGBTQ community and individuals with disabilities, may also be a contributing factor to the increasing number of exchange students choosing Taiwan as their study destination.

Comments for the Future in Educational Exchanges and Collaboration between Taiwan and Scotland:

- **Resource Allocation for Facilitating Physical Visits:** Allocating resources to support faculty staff's physical visits plays a pivotal role in promoting universities and

maintaining robust relationships and effective communication channels between Taiwan and Scotland.

- **Sponsorship for Cultural Immersion and Ambassadorship:** Sponsoring individuals to travel to prospective countries allows for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the respective universities, countries, and cultures. These individuals may later serve as effective ambassadors, fostering stronger ties between Taiwan and Scotland.
- **Collaboration in Executive Education and Industry Exchanges:** Exploring executive education opportunities and industry exchanges between Taiwan and Scotland, particularly in areas of mutual interest like Whiskey or golf, presents a promising avenue for collaboration and educational exchanges.
- **Seeking Government Support for Collaborative Initiatives:** As a function of the Cross Party Group on Taiwan, a proposal letter may be written and agreed upon as a group to prospective education or overseas development ministers to bring attention to the subject of support and funding. The CPG on Taiwan welcomes input from members should they have any comments to add to potential proposal letters.

Next meeting date to be confirmed.