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China UK Collaborative Partnerships in Employability and Entrepreneurship Final Report

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A meeting of minds

China UK

China UK Collaborative Partnerships in Employability and Entrepreneurship Final Report

- All project managers are to complete sections 1 and 2 of this report
- All sections of the report must be e-mailed to us **within 4 weeks of your project end date**, the hard copy of section 2 should be sent within a week of electronic submission.
- This report should be e-mailed back to pmi2.connect@britishcouncil.org
- The hard copy of section 2 should be sent with accompanying financial evidence to the PMI2 Connect team:
 - PMI2 Connect
 - British Council
 - 6th Floor, Bridgewater House
 - 58 Whitworth Street
 - Manchester
 - M1 6BB
- Your report will be reviewed by the PMI2 Connect team & an external consultant. Any unspent money will need to be repaid to the British Council.
- You may be required to complete a short questionnaire at a later date to allow the British Council to evaluate the PMI2 China-UK strand as a whole



Section 1: ACTIVITY REPORT

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Institution

University of Huddersfield (U of H) (UK)

Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University (GPNU) (Guangzhou, China)

British Council Reference

CHUK _427_____

Please provide your most likely future long-term contact information:

Dr Ann Harris,
School of Education and Professional Development,
University of Huddersfield,
Queensgate,
Huddersfield HD1 3DH.
Email: a.harris@hud.ac.uk

B. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN AND OUTPUTS ACHIEVED

Experience from the first round of the PMI2 China-UK initiative is particularly valuable for the support of future initiatives.

(i) Please summarise outcomes from your partnership, for example:

- Innovative forms of employer engagement
- Enhanced systems to support students in self-presentation and accessing vacancies
- Employability agenda developed
- Networks developed for future dissemination of experience and outcomes
- Creating and Piloting of new forms of innovative models of employability or entrepreneurship in the curriculum
- Work experience and work-related learning

Innovative employer involvement and establishment of networks for dissemination

Research was undertaken with employers in both the UK and China (via questionnaire) to identify the skills/competencies expected of new graduate recruits. A common questionnaire designed to be sensitive to cultural context was piloted and then distributed in order to collect primary data from employers in China and www.britishcouncil.org/pmi2-connect



UK who were local to the partner institutions. The results informed the design and production of the interactive web-based employability skills' development package, targeted at Chinese graduates in China and the UK. It is this employability package that forms the substantive product of this PMI2 project. A total of 278 employers responded - 217 Chinese (Guangdong) and 61 UK (Yorkshire), with large, medium and small business employers in both countries participating. The initiative built upon existing networks by providing some new employer links, particularly in China, and by establishing an enhanced employer network and database that will be used to facilitate future employability/curriculum consultations. Employers involved in the research will also be invited to dissemination events in May/June 2012 (UK and China respectively) as well as students, alumni and other HEIs. Events will include a presentation and discussion of the research findings and launch of the employability skills' package based on the research findings.

Enhanced systems to support students in self-presentation and accessing vacancies

A questionnaire was also conducted with alumni in order to establish a research perspective on their assessment of needs. The majority of graduate respondents were in China. The interactive online package produced in response to all the research data includes ten targeted and culturally sensitive, student-centred sessions for the development of employability skills. The package will be attached to the main website of GPNU and allow students to work independently through the sessions, or with tutorial guidance as part of an employability training programme. It will also be attached to the U o H Careers Service website for those Chinese students studying here in the UK who wish to develop their employability skills for post-study work or in anticipation of their return to China. Key topics for the sessions include: *What are Employability Skills?, Self-Assessment, Employability Resources, Careers Matching, What do graduates do?, What do Employers want?, Effective Applications, Effective Interviews, Employability Action Planning and Developing Careers.* Sessions include a mixture of powerpoints (PPTs), student-centred activities, information, links to Chinese and UK electronic resources and graduate information available in each country. The package guides students' progression through a logical series of sessions which can be adapted if necessary. It encourages graduates to be proactive by developing their preparedness for interviews, writing their CVs/résumés, providing practice in applying for jobs and enabling them to self-assess their suitability for a range of jobs. This encouragement of autonomy and initiative is fundamental to the project which is designed throughout to enhance students' self-presentation and readiness for employment seeking processes.

Employability Agenda and employability curriculum developed

The study tours by each project team led to a significant raising of awareness about alternative HE responses to international employability challenges. Some development of employability skills is addressed within the curriculum at GPNU, and as part of the extra curriculum at U of H. As the project teams included the Head of the Careers and Employability Service at the U of H, and two members of the Student Affairs Office who are responsible for delivering employability training at GPNU, the project facilitated a valuable opportunity for dialogue and for discussion of the employability agenda as well as a curriculum review. A critical evaluation of the two approaches and a comparison of different aspects have given staff with relevant responsibility alternative ideas for employability training and for future development. The web package will be part of a new innovative approach to the employability challenge at GPNU, and the formalisation of employability skills development in Huddersfield is also under review. The U of H Careers and Employability Service is also now more informed about employability issues for Chinese graduates returning home after UK study. It has therefore taken the decision to promote its services to support, where appropriate, specific resources and a designated workshop programme for Chinese and other international students studying in Huddersfield.

- (ii) Please summarise visits (with locations, dates and organisations involved) and activities undertaken for each visit, such as workshops and training events. Please link any activities undertaken to the specific outputs described in your proposal.

Specific outputs in proposal: Staff Development via Study Tours, reporting and dissemination of good practice in careers and employability services, audit of graduate employability skills, Consultative Employer Forums, Innovative Careers Resource Package, Dissemination via articles and conference papers.



February 2011: Online SKYPE meeting to facilitate team introductions and discussion of project aims and timetable for year, including outcomes and plans for audit of graduate employability skills.

Study tours by PMI team members from GPNU/University of Huddersfield:

The agenda and itinerary of each study tour were designed to identify good practice and review employability services, facilities and resources available to graduates in both countries and thus to inform the eventual design of the web-based employability skills' package.

April 5th – 15th 2011: Six PMI2 project members from GPNU visited University of Huddersfield. Visitors included: Director and Deputy of Student Affairs and Employability Service, Director of Teaching Affairs Office, Deputy Director International Office and 2 translators/team members from the International Office, GPNU.

Central to the programme was a detailed review of facilities and operations of the Employability and Careers Service at the U of H. The timetable also included presentations on its industrial placement scheme and the University of Huddersfield's entrepreneurship incubation centre (Business Mine), participation in the University's Employer Partnership Board Meeting, which involved interaction with local and regional employers, plus attendance at careers' workshops and a recruitment fair. A visit to the Careers Centre at Leeds University offered the Chinese team a wider perspective on services within UK universities. The project teams also attended the ESCALATE Student Conference: Employability and Enterprise in Education in Liverpool. Joint team meetings were held to draft the employer and graduate audit questionnaires and to plan the piloting and timetable for subsequent stages of the research.

June 5th – 12th 2011: Three PMI2 team members from U of H visited Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University. Visitors included: Head of Careers & Employability Service, PMI2 Team Leader and an academic tutor and PMI2 project team member from School of Education and Professional Development who has worked collaboratively with GPNU since 2003/04.

Again central to the programme was a detailed review of facilities and services for developing employability skills as operated by the Student Affairs Office at GPNU. The timetable for the visit included presentations on employability and careers development structures, activities and resources, with a particular focus on web-based employment information available for students. Visits were organised to associated vocational colleges to meet tutors and discuss their employability needs and initiatives (both within and outside the formal curriculum). A visit to the Careers Centre at Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou offered the UK team a wider perspective on Chinese university employability services. Joint team meetings were held to agree plans for distributing, collating and analysing the employer and graduate audit questionnaires.


Consultative meetings with local employers

These were held at U o H, amongst other things, to inform the results of the questionnaires and offered an opportunity to raise awareness around international co-operation and the enhancement employability skills appropriate to global as well as local and regional markets. Dates of the Employer Partnership Board Meetings:

8th February 2011; 13th April 2011; 15th June 2011; 4th October 2011; 19th January 2012

- (iii) Please give details of any further changes to your original proposal, for example in the location of visits, design of activities and outcomes, and clear reasons for this.

The original proposal was not amended significantly.



Following a full analysis of findings from the employability skills' audit relatively minor extensions to the timetable were made to accommodate the design and production of the employability skills' resource package. Dissemination events were re-scheduled to enhance opportunities to share findings and outcomes and to demonstrate the output at separately scheduled events such as the International Vocational Educational Forum at GPNU in May 2012 (see below). The original timetable for dissemination events within the partner institutions was revised in order to maximise impact and effectiveness.

- (iv) It is particularly useful to other projects to learn of any barriers to success? How were these overcome?

There were no significant barriers to the successful completion of the project although some issues, probably inevitable in a transnational project, emerged around the necessity to modify the schedule and make some minor amendments to accommodate changing circumstances and to ensure more efficient management and organisation, including around financial accounting.

- (v) Please give details of how findings have been disseminated and future dissemination/network plans

9/10/11th May 2012: GPNU is hosting the biennial International Vocational Education Forum (IVEF). Representatives from vocational education in China and from other countries will present papers and discuss key issues in VET. This year the U of H is co-hosting the conference. The findings from this PMI2 project will be jointly presented by GPNU and U of H project team members. GPNU's academic journal publishes papers from the conference which will therefore include an article on the project. This will facilitate dissemination of the project to a wider international academic and professional audience.

May 2012: Dissemination event at U of H including employers, colleagues, graduates and students. The event will include presentations on research findings, discussions regarding the implications for the development of employability skills and a presentation of the employability skills' package produced as a result of this project for Chinese students and graduates at GPNU and U of H.

W/B 25th June 2012: University of Huddersfield PMI2 team travels to China for dissemination events. A key dissemination event for employers, colleagues and graduates will be organised by GPNU on June 27th. This event will enable the sharing of research findings, and discussion of their implications for encouraging the development of employability skills within the formal and informal curriculum at GPNU. A key feature will be the launch of the innovative employability skills' package. A further dissemination event will be held on June 29th at the School of Education and Professional Development's other partner college in Beijing.

September 2012 University of Huddersfield Annual Teaching and Learning Conference: How learning happens - developing vocational pathways.

Articles will be written by the University of Huddersfield's Head of Careers & Employability Service for colleagues in AGCAS (the Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services). These will be directed towards the quarterly professional journal *Phoenix* and the monthly newsletter to all AGCAS members, *Arena*.

- (vi) Would you do anything differently if you were starting the project now?

Not significantly, although the project since it included not just collaborative endeavour; international co-operation; empirical research in two countries with a wide range of respondents; discussion between team

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members/colleagues/employers/students/graduates; analysis of findings; and then the design and delivery of an appropriate, culturally relevant, student friendly, innovative employability product as well as dissemination events was an ambitious one within the time frame allocated.

C. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is one of the key aims of the PMI2 HE partnership funding and the PMI2 Connect team will be looking at how this has been achieved.

<p>Will your project continue beyond the PMI2 funding and in what form?</p>	<p>The project legacy will continue to be monitored and supported by GPNU and the U of H. The employability skills' online package is a tangible output of the project which either of the partners could further develop and extend in their respective countries. Flexibility in the design of the package will enable the partners independently to customise and develop its contents in response to student needs, and the changing employment context. Thus the project has produced a sustainable and developmental output. Additional outcomes of the project will be the enhanced ICT skills developed by students and graduates when they engage with the package and which they will take with them into their new employment situations, and the enhanced awareness of HEI staff with respect to the employability agenda.</p> <p>Graduate employability is a Chinese government priority so wider sharing of this initiative within China is also anticipated. It is probable that the web-based package will be disseminated to other universities in China and that more of its contents will be translated into Chinese. The basic home page information is written in Chinese and English to emphasise the collaborative nature of the endeavour, but, currently, the detailed documents are in English. Although care has been taken in the design of the package to make the English accessible to L2 users and its text alert to cultural context, the Chinese content could be extended and enhanced in the future. However, as English is a requirement for students and graduates at GPNU, it is not anticipated that language will be a barrier to its usability and to the development of employability skills in the short term.</p>
<p>What other partnership activities may happen beyond PMI2 funding?</p>	<p>The School of Education and Professional Development at the University of Huddersfield, and the International Office at GPNU, have been in partnership since 2003/04. This project has extended that collaboration and built clear links between the respective universities' Employability Services. Future activities for the latter will include a review of student feedback on the package by the universities and an ongoing dialogue about the global context of employability skills. Each institution is also more sensitive to issues pertaining to international employability and to students' presentation of their achievements and skills to different audiences.</p>



	<p>The research agenda of both institutions has also been invigorated by this international initiative. Joint conference papers are planned (see above) to be followed by joint journal articles. A very positive professional and academic partnership has now been enhanced by high profile collaborative research and development activity.</p>
<p>How have your institutions supported this project and will they continue to do this?</p>	<p>The project has had senior management support within GPNU and U of H, both in terms of prioritising graduate employability skills and also in relation to deepening general institutional co-operation and promoting research and development.</p> <p>Both universities supported the study tours through: welcoming guests, facilitating and accommodating meetings, providing appropriate personnel and institutional facilities and enabling meetings with employability stakeholders.</p> <p>Outside the study tours, the project has been sustained by each institution in terms of: releasing team members for the conduct of the project, providing additional staff to support the empirical research process, enabling technical communications and generally facilitating the day-to-day administration of the project.</p>
<p>Please describe links you have established or developed with relevant UK agencies through this PMI2 project.</p>	<p>Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Mid-Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce and Industry Yorkshire and Humber International Careers Advisers forum. Graduates Yorkshire HEI Careers services</p>

D.MEASURING SUCCESS AND IMPACT

This sub-section (section D) of the report form will inform the British Council in our efforts to document the impact of all our projects and communicate the results to the wider sector in the UK and China. Please forward any relevant documents, reports, digital or scanned images which illustrate achievements and also attach any sample feedback from students, staff and participants involved in the partnership to show how activities have enhanced knowledge and skills. Please note that submitted images and feedback may be used for publicity purposes.

- (vi) Please provide additional detail, not already mentioned, regarding any success stories/highlights from throughout the project. (See appendices)

<p>Enhancement of Knowledge - key research findings</p> <p>The banner headline for the package is 'The Employability Challenge 就业能力挑战, Skills for Life 终身技能' (see appendix 1 for screenshot in development) which is intended to emphasise that, however challenging securing initial employment might be, the learning associated with it will provide a lifelong skills' investment. While data from the project will be used for wider research publications, key</p>

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findings from it are also included for graduates in the session *What do Employers Want?* (see appendix 2 for screenshot in development of exemplar session). The employer questionnaires focused on three key categories of employability skills: *Personal Skills*, *Professional Capabilities* and *Subject Specific Knowledge*, and how these might be identified and illustrated.

In terms of *Personal Skills*, our research found that the greatest differences between Chinese and UK employers were in the areas of *enthusiasm*, *adaptability* and *decisiveness*. Chinese employers put less stress on these compared to UK employers, but they placed more importance on *social responsibility*, *ethical values* and *tolerance to stress*. With regard to *Professional Capabilities*, the research revealed that Chinese employers rated *teamwork*, *negotiation/persuasion skills* as being more important than those in the UK when recruiting graduates. In contrast, UK employers said that *self-motivation and communication skills* were very important when recruiting graduates. However, employers in both countries indicated the value of *problem solving* and ongoing *professional development* which has curricular and pedagogical implications for staff in both institutions. In the third key area of *Subject Specific Knowledge*, however, the average scores indicated that employers in both countries attributed less significance to this aspect than to the other categories. Overall employers did not perceive it as important as the other softer skills. While clearly the relevance of this might vary according to subject area and employment, this finding is particularly revealing given the emphasis placed, almost exclusively on examination results in China. As a result, it may inform future planning and developments at GPNU and preparation for UK Chinese graduates by encouraging them to develop their wider employability skills at the same as achieve highly.

This issue was further supported by the data analysis completed by GPNU comparing the questionnaire responses from employers and graduates. It also revealed that while their curriculum was consistent in meeting the expectations of employers in many regards, employers in China were seeking employees with a breadth of knowledge and a range of skills as opposed to expertise merely in a narrow subject major. This finding was in contrast to graduates themselves who responded that they thought certification and subject expertise were the most significant in facilitating their prospects of employment. This supports the need to review provision and enhance wider employability skills' development, within the curriculum and as part of extra-curricular activities in both Chinese and UK HEIs.

Given that employers in the skills' audit rated the application of IT relatively highly as an employability *Subject Specific Knowledge* requirement, the research findings endorsed the original view of the teams that a web-based package would need to be innovative, sustainable and relevant both to the specific interests of the graduates and to the needs of employers, and in the context of technological market needs and associated skills. Not just the contents but also the use of the package will be productive, and it is an anticipated outcome of the project that engagement with the package will enhance and reinforce ICT skills.

Challenging for both Universities and the wider community was the response from employers that only 5% in the UK and China found it very easy to recruit new graduates with the requisite employability skills. Such data highlights the need to continue to address this issue through further research and development in order to inform future employability debates internationally and institutionally within both the University of Huddersfield and Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University.

Impact of the project and communication to the wider sector in UK/China

The impact of the employability resource package for developing graduate employability skills will be monitored and evaluated during the coming period when it is operational. However, some of the outcomes of the project have already been communicated to the wider institutional communities within both Universities and in the next months will be further disseminated and promoted elsewhere.

The project and visits to the UK by the Chinese PMI team were reported on the University of Huddersfield's International Student Newsletter (see appendix 3). It was also reported in the University's website (for text, see appendix 4). With regard to the PMI visit to China in June, the Head of the University of Huddersfield's Careers and Employability Service, Mr. Stephen Boyd, said 'The programme was fantastic and (the) warm hospitality certainly made it a trip to remember.'



- (vii) What do you anticipate will be the long-term impact of the project on institutions involved? Please be as specific as you can in describing the main areas of change/development, and indicating where possible the level of impact achieved (raising awareness, achieving understanding, change of practice)

The key impact long term will be the raised awareness of the following for the development of graduate employability skills: the importance of incorporating the application of practical skills within the curriculum; the importance of developing softer skills; recognition of the significance of internships/work experience; knowledge that employers want graduates who have a profile incorporating: reliability, responsibility, team work and problem solving skills, adaptability, enthusiasm, logical thinking and that prioritise lifelong learning. Colleagues across both universities have benefitted from the project and acquired increased understanding of the international employability agenda. Thus both institutions are better equipped to support students and develop a curriculum (formal and informal) within their establishments which develops graduates (international and home) with the relevant skills to meet the needs of the changing and global labour market in future years. Both institutions are also attuned to the advantages of collaborative research, and how it can inform internationalisation and understanding of transnational initiatives.

Implementation of the employability skills' package will in the short term lead to a change in employability skills' development at GPNU; and, in the longer term, through monitoring its use and student evaluations more widely, it will provide further evidence and understanding to support developments in policy and practice with respect to education for employability skills for Chinese and other graduates within both universities and the wider community of HEIs.

- (viii) What recommendations would you make to funding bodies and policy makers in order to maximise the effect of:
- financial support
 - supporting activities in UK and in-country
 - supporting new projects

Projects where financial accountability is in one country, but which also affect the accounting procedures of two institutions in different countries with alternative practices and procedures, and where money is to be spent to support the project in two (or even more) countries, are bound to be complicated. Some flexibility in the accountability procedures would facilitate a more collegiate approach to financial management since international projects need time to embed and to show due respect for each other's cultural context, policies and procedures. Where a project has a tangible output like the employability skills' package here, some flexibility around time scales, particularly dissemination events which invariably take place after the completion of the project, would be and is appreciated.

E. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please note down any further thoughts or comments you may have regarding the process that you feel may be of interest to us and any future projects.



Both partners and each team would like to reiterate the value, impact and significance of such international collaborative endeavour not just in terms of the product output, the student and staff outcomes but also in relation to the opportunities provided for research and development and for enhanced respect and cultural and contextual awareness.

Signed by UK Partner on behalf of all partners.


... *Ann Harris*

Dr Ann Harris

PLEASE RETURN THIS PROFORMA BY E-MAIL TO: pmi2.connect@britishcouncil.org

Appendices

Appendix 1




The Employability Challenge 就业能力挑战
Skills for Life 终身技能

Home About Us Sessions Contact Us



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 **Start Sessions** >

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Appendix 2



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- Sessions
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Career Management

What are career Management Skills?



Overview

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Whats in this section?

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- Previous
- Sessions
- Next

Powerpoint Session (Attached Files)

- [cmsonlinemanagement.ppt](#) (915 KB)
- [cmsonlinemanagement.ppt](#) (915 KB)

Exercise One - Lifeline Exercise (Attached Files)

- [Exerciseone.ppt](#) (915 KB)
- [Exerciseone-prf2](#) (915 KB)
- [Exerciseone-prf3](#) (915 KB)





Appendix 3

Report of a visit by GPNU PMI2 Team to University of Huddersfield. Reported in International Student Newsletter April/May 2011.



Chinese scientist wins Researcher of the Year

Chemistry researcher Pengju Ji caps his work at the University of Huddersfield with a top award.....



Zimbabwean graduate nominated at prestigious awards

University of Huddersfield Barnsley Campus graduate, Rodreck Chipezeze has been recognised for his outstanding work in the field of journalism with a nomination for the Zimbabwean Achievement Awards (ZAA) 2011.....



Global eyes on Huddersfield's Careers and Employability Service

In tough times the University of Huddersfield's Careers and Employability Service is performing well at getting graduates into jobs.....



Archbishop of York visits University's Faith Centre

The University of Huddersfield welcomed the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu onto campus, as he concluded a two day tour of the region.....

Acknowledgements : John Ramsdin, William Marshall, Gemma Robinson
Editor : [Alan Tobi](#)

Appendix 4

SEPD/Careers and Employability Services at University of Huddersfield

Successful PMI2 bid – 2011

One of only 5 projects across UK HE institutions funded by PMI2 in year 4 of the programme

The project is funded by the British Council under PMI2 and entitled *China-UK Collaborative Partnerships in Employability and Entrepreneurship*. The aim of the programme is to build partnerships between UK and Chinese HE institutions that are mutually beneficial and complementary. The successful SEPD/Careers and Employability Service project builds on an established and successful partnership with Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, Guangzhou, China. During 2011 teams from both Universities are conducting an audit of graduate and employability skills and sharing best practice regarding careers' development and employability services.

The project is multifaceted and is designed to achieve the following:

- Collaboration over the development of employability skills and of career planning
- Identification and auditing of graduate level employability skills
- Identification of employer perspective of employability skills
- Creation of an interactive careers resource for use by students/graduates from both institutions.

In April 2011 the University was delighted to welcome a contingent from Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University to the Huddersfield campus. The party of 6 headed up by Mr Xing Xiaotao (Director of Students Affairs Office/Service of Student Admissions and Employability) were keen to meet with the various departments and



services to start discussing and understanding the effective practice being delivered to University students. This included:

- Business Mine
- Employer Partnerships
- Student Workplace Placements
- Huddersfield Border Break Internet Radio
- Careers Centre

External events were also organised including a trip to Leeds to learn about the successful partnership between the Royal Armouries and the University of Huddersfield and attendance at the ESCALATE Employability Conference in Liverpool. Social events included a trip to the Yorkshire Dales and to watch football at Manchester United.

Following the above visit, in June 2011 a party of 3 from the University of Huddersfield made a return visit to GPNU to research and find out about employability work conducted at their university. The party included Mr. Stephen Boyd (Head of the Careers and Employability Service), Dr. Ann Harris and Ms. Lyn Hall (from SEPD). The group visited several vocational colleges in the Province and were fully briefed on the employability services of their university by a wide range of specialist colleagues. The planning for the data collection was progressed and the data collection instruments were finalised. Social events also included a wonderful evening cruise on the Pearl River which is at the heart of Guangzhou and to Kaiping a fascinating World Heritage listed village in Guangdong Province.

The teams are looking forward to the next stage of the research and to developing resources that will assist Chinese graduates in both institutions.

After the June visit of Huddersfield to GPNU Mr. Stephen Boyd (Head of Careers and Employability) said 'The programme was fantastic and (the) warm hospitality certainly made it a trip to remember.'

SECTION 2: FINANCE REPORT (sent separately)