



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 26, 2023

Chinese Students Pledge Loyalty to CCP Before Heading Overseas to Study

SINGAPORE — Thousands of Chinese students heading abroad to study on government-backed scholarships have to sign a document promising loyalty to the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as well as indicating guarantors to repay their funding should they violate the agreement, according to a Swedish media report.

On Jan. 13, Sweden's *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper reported that 30 incoming doctoral students had signed agreements pledging loyalty to their government while abroad, promising to serve CCP interests during their stint.



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Radio Free Asia scrutinized publicly accessible documents and discovered that such practices have been going on for over ten years, with various versions of the contract and related regulations widely accessible online.

“During your time studying abroad, you must hone your sense of responsibility and your ability to follow orders, and not engage in any activities that could harm your country’s interests or national security,” the contract reads. “You must consciously protect the honor of the motherland and of your school, and abide by both the laws of China and the country where you are studying.”

Students must supply the names of two guarantors, usually close relatives, who countersign the document and will be responsible should a student fail to report to the local Chinese embassy or violate the terms of the agreement, the documents divulged. If a student attempts to withdraw from the scholarship without approval, “behaves extremely badly,” or merely vanishes or moves to another country or school without authorization, the guarantors will have to repay around one third of the funding, the documents revealed.

China had announced that it would deploy 27,000 students to study overseas on public money for all of 2021, and that their scholarships were entirely dependent on their party loyalty, encompassing a promise to “come back and serve their country” after finishing their studies, according to another publicly available document.

Anyone who has obtained funding from any overseas institution or holds permanent residency in another country would not be eligible, based on 2021 scholarship selection guidelines published on the website of the Chinese Embassy in the United Kingdom.

Applicants must be able to display that they “support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party ... and have a sense of duty to serve their country, with a correct world view and values,” the document said. “Selecting organizations shall strictly check applicants’ political ideology, their teachers’ morality, conduct and learning approach,” it added, stating that there will also be a “contractual management method” for beneficiaries of state funding that includes “compensation for breach of contract.”



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A version of the rules issued on the website of the China Scholarship Council confirmed that two guarantors who “have the ability to pay off [debts] on behalf of others” are needed for every application. “The scope of guarantee includes compensation and damages to be paid to the China Scholarship Council in the event of a violation of the agreement by the overseas student,” the rules stipulated, elaborating that guarantors will be asked to repay a maximum of 30 percent of the funds already provided by the council. Guarantors must have personal assets or a stable income for them to qualify to repay should the need arise.

U.S.-based dissident Jie Lijian revealed that not just family members would pay a price if a student violates the contract. “Your university lecturers, the people who recommended you, and your university will all bear joint responsibility ... which is tantamount to a joint punishment mechanism,” Jie said.

Jie also shared that overseas Chinese associations, student alumni associations, and hometown associations in each school keep tabs on each other’s words, deeds, and political activities.

For instance, if Chinese officials or delegations visit the area, funding would be directed to provide clothing, food, housing, transportation, banners, and posters to welcome them, Jie said, with rehearsals of slogan-shouting and close scrutiny of each individual’s behavior at the event.

Sweden-based writer Wan Zhi said that although many were shocked at the newspaper’s revelations, similar practices can be traced back to the 1990s in China.

“This has always been the Communist Party’s trick,” Wan said. “The West is actually pretty ignorant of China’s culture, society and political system and they still don’t understand the relationship between individuals and the state in China.”

“If you take public money in China, you are one of them, and you are theirs, the party’s,” he said. “One positive thing to come out of these media reports is that the West has finally opened its eyes a little bit, so the public can see things they never saw before.”

Wan added that even privately funded students may face stark ramifications if they get involved in political activism while abroad. “You will still be punished ... if you take part in political activities and it will affect your family,” he said.

Jie agreed, using as an illustration the behavior of overseas students amid Peng Lifa’s “Bridge Man” protest in Beijing on the eve of the 20th Party Congress in October last year, which some Chinese students backed with poster campaigns on U.S. campuses.

“They tore up posters at USC and Irvine, and then reported back immediately to the group chat showing off that they had done so,” he said. “They also reported which part of China the [poster makers] were from and accused them of endangering national security. They have a sense of pride in being able to report these rebels to the Chinese police on Weibo, so they can arrest them on their return to China.”

Independent director and current affairs commentator Wang Longmeng said that it behooves analysts to comprehend the practical implication of phrases like “serving your country” and “loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party,” even if the practice has been going on for years.

“The Western media have reported many cases of Chinese students and scholars stealing high-tech military technologies, and besieging protesters who supported Hong Kong’s anti-extradition protests,” Wang said. “A lot of people who have been awarded Chinese government scholarships to study abroad have basically been recruited by the state, and these agreements are the best proof of that.”



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He compared the contracts with “selling one’s soul to the devil.”

“Their families are destined to become hostages,” he said. “Universities in democratic countries should refuse to cooperate with institutions like the China Scholarship Council, otherwise they will become accomplices in that hostage-taking.”

The *Dagens Nyheter* revelations have already met with outrage in Sweden, with Uppsala and Lund Universities stating that they will cease working with the China Scholarship Council, and the Royal Institute of Technology saying they were “in discussions” with the council on the issue.

At the same time, faculty at the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Chicago have demanded the release of alumna Qin Ziyi, who was among dozens of young people detained following the November 2022 “white paper” movement.

“We are aware that people, including a former student of the University of Chicago, have recently been detained in China due to their participation in peaceful protests where people held blank sheets of paper to express dissent to the government’s Zero Covid policy,” the department announced in a statement on its website. “We express our deep concern for the well-being of Qin Ziyi and all those who have been detained and hope they will speedily be released.”



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