**New Developments, New Horizons for the Learners of Mandarin Chinese in Schools**

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This talk will examine two new developments in the teaching and learning of Chinese in schools. Both developments set new horizons for learners in terms of expectation of outcome; they will have an impact on the level of Chinese of many of those who apply to study Chinese in UK universities. The first development is the Department for Education’s Mandarin Excellence Programme, which is being led by UCL Institute of Education in partnership with the British Council. The second development is the new Chinese GCSE and A-level specifications, which will be taught in schools from September 2017 with the first examination in September 2019.

The purpose of the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) is to deliver a minimum of 5,000 speakers of Mandarin Chinese on their way to a high level of fluency by 2020. Pupils in participating schools on the MEP study Chinese for 8 hours per week, starting from Year 7 (4 classroom-taught hours and 4 hours of self-study). Participating schools are at the forefront of delivery. Conference delegates will be given detailed information about progress in this first year of the programme.

With the demise of controlled assessments and the introduction of unseen examinations for speaking and writing, the new Chinese GCSE specifications will present a significant change for those teaching and learning Chinese in schools. For the A-level, the literature component of the specification presents a new challenge. Delegates will have the opportunity to discuss the new specifications, look at some sample assessment material and to consider the effect of the re-introduction of prose and translation as an integral part of the GCSE and A-level too.

What more can be done to ensure schools and universities work together to ensure a smooth transition from school to university for learners and to ensure that those teaching in both sectors understand each other’s work? This will be a question addressed during the plenary and subsequent discussion.