

Master's Scholarships to the Yenching Academy

Peking University, Beijing, China

2026 Intake

The Yenching Academy offers a 2 - year Masters of China Studies program (in English) designed to prepare an elite class of future leaders to meet the challenges of the 21st century global landscape.

Curriculum

Academy courses will be available in both English and Chinese. It will be possible for international students to complete their degrees with courses taught in English. Chinese language study will be required for all the international students;

Approaching the study of China from multiple perspectives and disciplines, the programme will help equip Yenching Scholars with a nuanced understanding of China's rich civilization and its complexities today. The curriculum will range horizontally across various fields of study in the humanities and social sciences, and vertically through Chinese history. Some courses will address a theme, such as China's Population, that will necessitate a team teaching approach by faculty from the departments of Sociology, History, Geography, Anthropology, and Government, for example. Overall, the courses will fall into the following six broad categories:

- Literature and Culture;
- History and Archaeology;
- Philosophy and Religion;
- Public Policy and International Relations;
- Economics and Management; and
- Law and Society.

Although these six broad areas are indicated, it will not be necessary to choose one of them as an area of concentration. For example, a Yenching Scholar may be an engineering graduate who knows little about China but wants international experience to add to his/her resume and would take all courses at the Academy in English.

The Academy wants students to explore as many aspects of Chinese history, culture and contemporary affairs as possible. There will, however, be a requirement for the thesis, which will provide an opportunity for in-depth study of a particular subject under the guidance of the faculty adviser.

Should a student wish to eventually pursue further advanced research, they may wish to apply to a Ph.D. in a particular Peking University department after completing their degree at the Academy – something the Academy will be glad to help facilitate.

Accommodation arrangements prior to Covid-19

The Yenching Academy classrooms and offices will be located in the Jing Yuan Courtyard, a former Imperial Garden, in the heart of Peking University campus. Yenching Scholars and visiting faculty will reside nearby in dormitory facilities that will feature common lounges, a library, and cafeteria.

Yenching Scholars will live, learn, collaborate, and engage in a “community of scholars” that is at the same time very much a part of Peking University life.

Yenching Academy's planning for the fall semester 2026

During the past five years, Yenching Academy has been operating our curriculum simultaneously online and offline for our Scholars from different parts of the world. We expect to move our classes fully offline.

Updated application requirements

(The requirement of a Statement of Research Interest has been in place since 2020 so I’m not sure if you still wish to advertise it as a new requirement?)

After reflecting on our first admissions cycle with a required research proposal, we’ve decided to implement some slight changes. We are now requiring what we call a Statement of Research Interest instead of a research proposal and have increased the length of this portion of the application to a maximum of 1500 words. We also want to give applicants more flexibility in how they approach this requirement. If they have a fully-formed research project, we are happy to read a formal research proposal; on the other hand, it’s also acceptable to be honest about what potential research topic(s) they’re interested in exploring at YCA, even if they don’t know exactly which topic they plan on pursuing. The Statement of Research Interest, however, should be a formal, academic essay, preferably describing the significance of the topic(s), contextualized by referencing relevant scholarly literature, and suggesting ways in which they intend to conduct the research.

Peking University policy prohibiting dual enrolments

We’d like to clarify one aspect of Peking University policy for you. The university does not allow students to enrol at PKU if they are also enrolled as students in any other degree-granting programs during their course of study in China.

Yenching Academy of Peking University 2026 Recruitment Info Session/Staff Q&A Session:

We are currently accepting international applicants for the 2026 cohort and are about to start hosting information sessions over the next couple of months. While we would very much like to visit your university in the fall, it unfortunately seems unlikely. Therefore, we are planning a series of online info sessions for our prospective applicants. Apart from exclusive sessions for our partner/cooperating universities, we will also be hosting six open info sessions, each focused on one research area at YCA (Economics and Management, Politics and International Relations, Law and Society, Literature and Culture, History and Archaeology and Philosophy and Religion). These info sessions will be open to anyone and will offer more content on specific research areas including elective courses, PKU faculty with similar specializations, related thesis topics from previous Yenching scholars, and presentations from alumni. Potential applicants from UCT are also welcome to attend! Detailed information about these open info sessions will be available soon on our website.

Value and tenure

Three fully-funded one-year scholarships will be available for selected UCT students.

Conditions of award

- UCT students from South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world are eligible to apply. The Yenching Academy is aiming for a student body with broad geographic representation.
- Students must demonstrate academic excellence. Students who have an exceptionally good Honours or who already hold a Master's degree may apply.
- Students may not be older than 25 years of age by August 31, 2026 (for countries where military service is mandatory, the age preference is 27 years old or younger)
- The subjects that can be studied at the Academy will range across the humanities and social sciences as they pertain to China.
- The program begins in September 2026.

Application procedure

Interested candidates should provide the following to the Office for Postgraduate Studies and the application must be sent to pgstudies@uct.ac.za :

- Minimum of a Bachelor's degree in any field, or currently enrolled on a degree program awarded no later than August 31 of the year in which they wish to enrol;
- An outstanding academic record;
- Strong interest in interdisciplinary study of China;
- A record of extracurricular achievement, community engagement, social responsibility, and leadership potential;
- English proficiency.

Note that Peking University does not have a strict age cut-off for applicants, but to date, no person over the age of 28 has been admitted to the program. The average age of students entering the program is 23.

Application Components

1. A completed application form, attached
2. Personal statement (750 words or less);
3. **Statement of Research Interest (maximum 1500 words, excluding citations):** Should include key research question(s), background to study and/or summary of literature, and study design that could reflect the applicant's academic training. Please note that applicants are not committed to making this proposed project their Master's thesis topic. The Admissions Committee wants to judge how they formulate and write about academic topics.
4. A Curriculum Vitae which includes details of academic achievements, leadership roles and community engagements (maximum 2 pages);
5. Official copies of full academic transcripts of current studies and previous degrees, and
6. **Two academic letters of recommendation (English or Chinese): Peking University will only accept recommendation letters written by full professors or associate professors (or equivalent titles),** form attached. Please ask them to send to pgstudies@uct.ac.za on or before internal closing date.

Note that all the above must be submitted to UCT, not emailed to Yenching, since the selection process of applicants for Yenching will be handled by UCT. Once selected students are endorsed by UCT the applications process will continue with Yenching on-line directly.

Selection:

The University of Cape Town, a select partner to Peking University, will be the point of contact for applicants, will screen applicants, and will recommend a few of the best students to be interviewed further by the Yenching Academy Admissions Committee (normally via Skype).

Internal closing date for applications is November 21, 2025 at 12noon.

Additional information is available on the Yenching Academy website:

<http://yenchingacademy.pku.edu.cn/>