What is the China Connectivity Pilot?

UCL is taking part in a technology pilot with other leading UK universities which aims to provide direct bandwidth from China to UK universities.

Around 14 UK universities – including fellow Russell Group universities - have joined the pilot which is being managed by Jisc, an HE sector membership organisation which provides digital solutions for UK education and research, and Alibaba Cloud, a Chinese cloud computing company.

Visit the Jisc pilot webpage to find out more.

Why is UCL taking part?

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, local restrictions on travel across the world may make it difficult, or impossible, for some of our students to travel to London for the start of next term.

We have responded by redesigning our core teaching to take place online, so that even if the arrival of some of our students on UCL campus is delayed by travel restrictions, they can still join our academic community and start their education with us, connecting with their tutors and fellow students inside and outside the classroom. This project is one way in which we can ensure that all our students have access to the same teaching and educational materials wherever they are in the world.

Internet connections and bandwidth to China can be slow and it can be challenging to provide reliable access to our systems. By taking part in this pilot, UCL hopes to provide our students in China with reliable, high quality connectivity so they can continue to have access to all of our teaching and educational materials.

Will students in China be able access the full range of UCL's teaching and learning material?

UCL is fully committed to free speech and academic freedom. As part of the pilot, UCL is committed to ensuring our students in China will be able to access exactly the same course work and materials as our students elsewhere in the world. We will monitor this closely.

What does the pilot entail?

A number of UCL students located in China have agreed to test the pilot service for us. They will have access to a new service which enables them to connect with a local point of presence in China and then a fast network back to UCL systems in the UK on to the public Internet. The link in China is being provided by Alibaba Cloud which is intended to provide students in China with reliable, high quality connectivity. The students will monitor the performance of a number of UCL systems and will provide feedback on their experience

When will this new service be available?

The pilot will take place in UCL's 'pre-sessional' phase from now until the start of term. Providing this is successful and we are confident that it will improve the user experience for our students in China, we will look to introduce the new connectivity service for the start of the 2020-21 academic year.

Which UCL systems will this improve access for?

We are focused on ensuring improved access for our core teaching and learning applications and platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate and Lecturecast. UCL has also secured an institutional license for Zoom as many of our students in China have reported that they are unable to access Blackboard Collaborate.