

From: [O'Connor,D](#)
To: [Withers,IF](#)
Cc: [Metcalf,E](#)
Subject: Note for SMC on Tsai thesis
Date: 19 July 2019 11:12:00
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

Hi,

Laura Ross has asked for a brief note on the Tsai PhD issue to inform SMC.

I've provided a two pager...but probably better this than too little.

Are you ok for me to send?

Thanks,

Danny

[CONFIDENTIAL]

Issues relating to President Tsai LSE PhD thesis

Background

At the time of her election in 2016, LSE received enquiries about the 1984 PhD in Law awarded to President Tsai Ing-wen. Upon review, it was established that neither the LSE library nor the University of London had a copy of the thesis. It appeared the University of London had lost the copy which LSE would have sent to them as standard.

Former Academic Registrar, Simeon Underwood, reviewed her student file at the time and found it to be in order. There was no reason to question the awarding of the thesis. He also indicated that the School should not share detailed information about the thesis, given data protection restrictions.

In 2019, the issue re-emerged as the Taiwan Presidential elections approach. Some activists and opponents of President Tsai, both pro-Beijing and also within her Democratic Party, are questioning the validity of the PhD, given that it cannot be found.

Further enquiries from the LSE Library in 2019 confirmed that the University of London had a record of cataloguing her thesis and sending it to Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, though they also were unable to find a copy.

The current availability of the thesis

Following a number of enquiries and some public discussion in Taiwan, the LSE Library was contacted by President Tsai's office who offered to send a copy of her PhD to the Library, to be available to view upon request.

Following discussion between representatives from the media relations office, PhD Academy, Library and Registry it was agreed the thesis could be catalogued as a 'facsimile copy provided by Tsai Ing-wen'. (Although there was no reason to believe the thesis would be different to the

original 1984 submission we cannot for absolute certain it is the same, as we do not have an original copy to compare).

The thesis has been received and has, as of the week commencing 15 July, been catalogued and made available to view in the library, on request.

Media and public enquiries

The LSE Library and others have received a number of enquiries, primarily from members of the public but also from a few Taiwanese journalists.

Initial responses in June 2019 indicated that both the University of London and LSE can confirm the PhD was correctly awarded but that the University of London unfortunately no longer has a copy. A photocopy of the relevant LSE Calendar entry confirming her PhD graduation was attached as further evidence.

Following receipt of the thesis and more information becoming available, the media statement and information for public text has now been updated, as below.

LSE Statement:

“The records of the University of London and London School of Economics and Political Science confirm Tsai Ing-Wen was correctly awarded a PhD in Law in 1984.

“All PhDs from that period were awarded via the University of London and would have been sent first to their Senate House Library. It is clear from Senate House Library records that a copy was received. Senate House have confirmed they sent their copy of the thesis to the Institute for Advanced Legal Studies (IALS).

“We have corresponded with the University of London about the thesis and extensive checks have been made. Neither Senate House nor IALS are able to locate a copy of the original thesis.

“Dr Tsai Ing-wen recently provided the LSE Library with a facsimile copy of the thesis, ‘Unfair trade practices and safeguard actions’. This is now available to view in the library’s reading room.”

/END

To note, the library has confirmed LSE would catalogue facsimile copies of any missing thesis where there was substantial interest or numerous requests to view. This is not special treatment because she is President of Taiwan.

Certificate issue

Additional questions have been asked regarding the physical certificate President Tsai has [been displaying in public meetings](#). Many critics pointed out that it bears the signature of the *current* Vice Chancellor rather than the VC from 1984 when it would have been awarded.

After consulting the LSE media relations office, The University of London have drafted a statement, to indicate that it is a legitimate certificate (it was re-issued to Tsai Ing-wen in 2015). Their re-issue policy is if that if the individual graduated under 20 years ago the signature of the VC at the time would be on the certificate. If over 20 years ago it would contain the signature of the VC at the time of re-issue.

Their statement is to be signed off imminently. Once this has been confirmed LSE will add it

alongside own statement, where relevant, with the following text:

“Questions regarding the PhD certificate itself are a matter for the University of London. They have provided the following statement on this matter:

Draft statement by University of London (TBC):

“The University of London can confirm that the diploma certificate re-issued to Dr Tsai Ing-wen is genuine and is signed by the Vice-Chancellor in post at the time of the diploma certificate being reissued.

“Any replacement diploma for an academic award that was originally made 20 or more years ago, will carry the signature of the University of London’s Vice-Chancellor, who is in post at the time of the certificate being re-issued.”

Next steps and ongoing coverage.

This issue is primarily being led by political opponents of President Tsai and anti-Tsai online activists. It is relatively limited to anti-Tsai media in Taiwan. Given LSE and University of London’s firm stance that the PhD was legitimate- and additional evidence, such as the availability of the thesis copy – it is unlikely to break into any mainstream media.

It is likely there will be ongoing enquiries from resolute opponents, who may find any explanation hard to accept. Our recommendation is we stick to agreed statement including, where relevant, an offer for the individual to view the thesis and the statement by the University of London regarding the certificate itself.

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