



*Warm welcome from HOPE team for your visit to us soon!*

## News and editorial from HOPE

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## HOPE annual team-building gathering see high morale

Anji, the city of bamboo near Hangzhou, welcomed HOPE staff for their annual team-building gathering on 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> February.

The two-day event, including a staff awarding ceremony, a gala dinner, lucky draws, darts team round-robin, curling playoffs, and a tour to the Zhejiang Provincial Museum of Natural Science, a tourist's must in the city.



*Champion of the Curling play-offs.*

This annual event is always popular among the staff, and it is a good opportunity for colleagues from different offices to meet, exchange ideas, and compete with each other on some team-building sports event, such as darts, badminton, table-tennis, basketball and this year, curling. Rewarding, relaxing, exciting, this year's gathering also see high morale of the team just before another round of busy season.





*HOPE's traditional event, darts, team HZ won*



*Daniel's debut show, curling.*



*Lucky draw winners*



*Cheers for the spring*



*Happy faces*



*Tour to the Zhejiang Provincial Museum of Natural Science*



## HOPE and Loughborough on STV programme

At the invitation of HOPE and STV, Scarlett Du, Project Manager of Loughborough University, Yitong Liu, a Loughborough alumnus, joined Chanel Zhang, Director of Counselling of HOPE as guest speakers at STV's famous international education dialogue programme, "All about Study Abroad" on 13<sup>th</sup> February.

After Chinese New Year, the enquires on studying overseas has been increasing. "How to choose a university, is subject or overall ranking more important?", "How important is a student's experience at a UK university compared with ranking?", "How to find internship and employment opportunities in the UK and back in China?". These popular concerns raised attention of this STV's weekly programme. The three guest speakers had an in-depth discussion with the famous host of the programme in front of the cameras live to explain their thoughts based on their own experience.



*Yitong, Scarlett and Chanel (from left to right) on STV live talk show programme*

Yitong Liu, who is currently a university lecturer in Shanghai graduated from Loughborough specializing in sports Business and media on the PG 1+1+1 programme with Shanghai Sport University. His studying and internship experience at Chelsea Football Club was particularly enlightening to the audience. Scarlett also introduced university's strength not only in sports related subjects but also in engineering, industrial design, digital media and business, and students' satisfaction. Chanel on the other hand, offered her practical suggestion on how to balance overall

ranking and subject ranking as well as how to prepare application documents particularly the recent change of requirement on personal statement on UCAS application.

Apart from the 90-minute live broadcasting to the audience on mobile devices, the programme will also be edited into a 45-minute TV programme broadcasted on STV in early March. This is a good opportunity to promote our partner universities, and we will certainly invite more partner institutions to join this programme in the future.

## Partner UK schools support HOPE to welcome market recovery

The post-pandemic time has been witnessing the recovery of the overseas school market in China. In the past a few months, enquires on studying in the UK schools has been soaring.

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**主持人 Ms. Alex Wen**  
• 科博国际教育  
• 上海办公室总经理

**特邀嘉宾 Mr. Leon Riley**  
• John Leggott College 约翰雷格学院  
• 学校校长

**特邀嘉宾 Mr. Chris Sutton**  
• Berkhamsted School 伯克姆斯特德学校  
• 国际招生主任

Poster for the event

In order to better promote our partner schools in the UK, HOPE organized an online seminar on 8<sup>th</sup> February for our recruitment partners to introduce the strength and difference of UK state sixth form college and boarding school. Leon Riley, Principal of John Leggott College, and Christ Sutton, International Recruitment Manager of Berkhamsted School were invited to give a presentation at the seminar hosted by Alex wen, General Manager of HOPE Shanghai.

About 40 HOPE's partners across China attended this seminar and we hope the event can provide more knowledge and confidence to them to promote our partner schools in the UK.

## HOPE Marketing events line up for a busy spring

With the lifting of the travel restrictions and recovery of the studying abroad market, HOPE has been planning a series of marketing events for this academic year. This spring from February to May will be particularly busy for us with over many events lining up ahead apart from the visits from our partner institutions.



*HOPE alumni's freesbee gathering in Hangzhou.*

**February** will start with three appreciation receptions in Shanghai, Hangzhou and Nanjing on 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> respectively. 30-40 local partners, students and parents representatives each city will be invited to join this long-time-no-see gathering after three years' pandemic restriction. On 23<sup>rd</sup>, and online briefing on our summer school/study tour products will be held for our recruitment partners.

**March** will be the busiest month of spring. From 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> HOPE will host an international education conference in Chongzuo South China's Guangxi Province with about 30 partner organizations are invited, most of which are principals of international schools, officials from provincial education bureau and foreign affairs office, directors of education associations, general managers of our partner agencies and training centres.

On 14<sup>th</sup> March, we are organizing international school students to visit the famous financial consulting company PWC in Shanghai. This is to give students a feel of world top company as well as to build up a close relationship with the local international schools.



From 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> we are organizing our students spring excursion which will include a company visit hosted by a HOPE alumnus plus team building sports in a resort hotel in Anji City near Hangzhou.

UK university fair in international schools will be held from 20<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>. About 10 UK universities are invited to tour 5 international schools in Ningbo and Shanghai during the week plus online interviews with students in other cities.

HOPE will also attend University Application Counsellors Summit organized by Top-school in Hangzhou from 25<sup>th</sup> -26<sup>th</sup> HOPE will have an exhibition stand and will chair a workshop during the summit.

2<sup>nd</sup> **April** is the World Autism Awareness Day. On 1<sup>st</sup> April, HOPE is to organize a charity walking tour in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing jointly with the local autistic children's rehabilitation centres. This will be the second time HOPE is to organize this fund-raising event for autistic children in the three cities.

8<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> will see a series study overseas saloons jointly organized by HOPE and Industrial Bank. HOPE will tour northwest China's Xi'an, Taiyuan and Lanzhou to provide professional counselling to the bank's VIP clients.

**May** is also not a relaxing month for us. HOPE Parents Club will be organizing its member parents to have an excursion to Jingdezhen, China's capital of ceramics from 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>. Mothers of students who are currently studying overseas will receive a special gift from their kids on the eve of Mother's Day via an online event.

27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> May and 3<sup>rd</sup> June will be our annual pre-departure briefings in Shanghai, Hangzhou and Nanjing for students who are going to study overseas this autumn.

HOPE has been trying to organize more creative but practical and effective promotion and marketing events. We are also open to any valuable suggestions and advice from our partner institutions. If you are interested in working with us for any events like above, please feel free to get in touch.

# Overseas courses taken online to lose accreditation

By ZOU SHUO | China Daily | Updated: 2023-01-31



*Chinese students attend the graduation ceremony at the Columbia University in New York. [Photo/Xinhua]*

China will stop accrediting foreign diplomas and degrees obtained via online courses starting from the spring semester this year as major overseas study destinations have opened their borders, according to the Ministry of Education's Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange.

Since 2020, the center has accredited the qualifications earned by Chinese students who were supposed to study in-person but were forced to study partly or fully online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The accreditation is important for the students to find jobs in China.

However, as the pandemic situation in major overseas study destinations and China changes, the center will stop the temporary measures from the new spring semester (fall semester in the Southern Hemisphere), the center said in a notice on Saturday.

The center stressed that it has never recognized purely online teaching programs.

It encourages students to return to their universities as soon as possible given the differences in teaching schedules of universities in different countries.

Students still unable to return to their universities in the new semester due to force majeure need to have written proof and submit it to the center when they want to get their qualifications accredited, it said.

Students who have chosen to study online for the new semester and are not allowed to change it by the universities can still have their diplomas recognized, the center said in a further notice issued on Sunday.

If the universities only offer online courses in the new semester, the students should contact them and return to their campus for study in the next semester, the notice said.

Students having difficulties getting visas and booking flights can take online courses temporarily while the procedures are finished, the notice said.

Those who are in their final semester of study need to confirm with their universities whether they can return to their campus, and if not, the students need to prepare written evidentiary documentation to have their qualifications recognized by the center.

Students who are studying in Ukraine and cannot return to the country in the new semester can attend courses online, and students who study in Russia and are also impacted by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and cannot return to their universities can also have their qualifications recognized, the notice added.

Xiong Bingqi, director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute, said while allowing students who cannot travel to overseas universities to have their qualifications recognized shows concern and care for the students, stopping the temporary measure safeguards educational equality.

"To seek profit, some foreign institutions have offered distance learning programs with low quality, and recognizing this kind of diploma only hurts students who studied hard overseas to get their diploma," he said.

While the barriers posed by COVID-19 for Chinese students studying overseas have been removed, there is no reason for them to continue studying online, he said.

With the number of Chinese students studying overseas increasing over the years, the appeal of overseas degrees in the domestic job market is declining, so a strict accreditation system is required to weed out students who just obtained a foreign diploma but learned little, he added.



# Nation sends record number of students to UK

By WANG MINGJIE in London | China Daily Global | Updated: 2023-02-10



A booth promoting study in the United Kingdom at the China Annual Conference for International Education and Expo in Beijing on Oct 23, 2021. GUO HAIPENG/CHINA NEWS SERVICE

China sent a record number of 151,690 students to the United Kingdom in 2021-22, more than any other country or alliance, including the European Union, according to the latest data from UK-based Higher Education Statistics Agency, or HESA.

Experts say the prestige of the British university system and a relatively safe environment are among the key reasons for Chinese students being keen to study in the UK. The geopolitical tensions between China and the United States and Australia further work in the UK's favor.

The HESA data revealed that the number of Chinese students in the UK has jumped by 44,475, or 41 percent, between 2017-18 and 2021-22, and 27 percent of all non-EU students were from China in the last enrollment year.

William Vanbergen, founder of BE Education, an international education services provider in China, said, "UK universities have been and are traditionally held in high regard by Chinese families. US geopolitical tensions have shifted a number of potential applicants to the UK."

"The UK is attractive in terms of price and time (three years for undergraduate studies and one year for masters) compared to most other countries. The UK is

perceived as safe, especially in light of the number of gun crimes in the US reported in the media," he added.

Julian Fisher, a senior partner at the consultancy Venture Education, said what has also contributed to the growing number of Chinese students studying in the UK is that the past 20 years saw a boom in English teaching in China, aligned with the growth of internationally oriented schools, summer camps and after-school activities.

He said that these factors, combined with the growth of the middle-income group in China, the competitiveness of Chinese university entry, geopolitical tensions with the US and Australia, the relative stability and quality of UK education had all contributed to the increased numbers.

HESA's record for 2021-22 showed for the first time that the number of Chinese students enrolled overtook the total number from the EU(120,140), a significant drop of 21 percent compared with the year before.

The first-year EU domiciled enrollments dropped even further, by 53 percent from 2020-21 to 2021-22. Such a decrease aligns with the UK's exit from the EU and a change in the international fee policy on Aug 1, 2021.

Susan Fang, founder of educational consultancy OxBridge Holdings, said, "It is a simple matter of economics. EU student numbers will continue to drop until supply and demand reach equilibrium. That's when the remaining interested students are willing to pay the higher fees charged."

"With many European universities, such as those in the Netherlands and Ireland, offering degrees taught in English at a fraction of a UK degree's price, and with well-resourced US universities offering generous scholarship packages to the most competitive students, it will be tough for the UK to attract European students," Fang explained.

While EU enrollment numbers saw a decrease in 2021-22, non-EU first-year enrollments rose by 32 percent.

Apart from China, India has also seen a sharp rise of students studying in British universities, with a notable increase of 106,200 over the five-year period. In 2021-22,126,535 Indian students enrolled in the UK, representing 23 percent of all non-EU enrollments.

The large number of Chinese students in UK universities has also raised concerns about an overreliance on this market for income.

"Ideally, no one should put all their eggs in one basket. For the sake of students and

faculty experience, it is always good to have a healthy diversity. But, we don't live in an ideal world," Fang said.

"If China continues to be the world's largest source of self-funding international students, I would argue that efforts are better invested in how best to retain UK universities' appeal to Chinese students," she said.

"Then again, the way India has risen dramatically in these past three years, soon — if not already-UK higher education stakeholders will start worrying about being overreliant on Indian students," Fang added.

While the UK's two-year, post-study work visa partially explains the increase in the number of students attending higher education in the UK, recent reports suggest Britain's Home Secretary Suella Braverman has drawn up a plan to reform the graduate visa route.

Under Braverman's proposal, international students must either obtain a work visa by getting a skilled job or will have to leave the UK within six months of completing their studies.

Fisher said the potential impact on the Chinese won't be as great as that on Indians or Nigerians. "The post-study work visa work route is far more popular with some countries, such as India, than China. Per capita Chinese engagement is actually relatively low. Chinese students primarily attend university to get a degree and are often well-funded by their families," he said.

He added that while the Chinese student numbers have increased in the UK for decades, the same will plateau sometime soon and then likely see a long-term, gradual decline.



# Schools prepare to fully resume after China's COVID management downgrade

By Zou Shuo | chinadaily.com.cn | Updated: 2023-02-07



*Students read books in a classroom at Jinan Experimental Junior Middle School in East China's Shandong province on Feb 7, 2023. [Photo/IC]*

Schools will fully resume in-person classroom teaching and are making full preparations for the new semester as around 300 million students and teachers are about to return to school after the country downgraded the management of COVID-19 epidemic, Vice-Premier Sun Chunlan said on Monday.

While inspecting a high school and three universities in Beijing for their preparations for the new semester on Monday, Sun said schools of all levels should optimize their management measures according to the new COVID-19 control measures and fully resume normal teaching and schooling.

Schools need to conduct thorough research on how many students and teachers have been infected before the new semester, she said.

Also, schools should make full use of school clinics, hospitals and medical centers, prepare medical resources, and strengthen the health monitoring of students and teachers, she said.

Primary and secondary schools and kindergartens need to conduct daily health checks and report infectious diseases, and keep record of any absences, Sun said.

Schools are asked to continue to promote psychological education and counseling for students and teachers who have developed anxiety due to the epidemic.

Based on the situation for students, schools are required to properly arrange the teaching schedule and strictly implement the national teaching syllabus and standard to ensure teaching quality, she said.

Education authorities should help schools and teachers to solve difficulties, promote more equitable and higher quality education, and improve people's satisfaction rate of education, she added.

# Top students in Henan to study in Russia

By Zhou Huiying | chinadaily.com.cn | Updated: 2023-02-02

Outstanding third-grade senior high school students who are learning Russian language in ordinary senior high schools in Henan province will be selected to study in Russia through the Russian government scholarship channel and receive subsidies from the China Scholarship Council, according to a statement released by the provincial education department on its official WeChat account on Wednesday.

To promote cultural exchanges between China and Russia, encourage more high school students to learn the Russian language and train various professionals for China-Russia cooperation, the council will launch a support program, the statement said.

The selected students will continue their undergraduate studies in Russia for 60 to 72 months, based on admission criteria in Russia.

Students studying abroad will enjoy government scholarships provided by Russia and the China Scholarship Council. They will provide scholarships, subsidies and round trip fees.

Candidates shall be senior students from domestic ordinary senior high schools at the age of over 18, according to the statement.

They should have excellent academic performance, especially in Russian language studies. Psychological quality, independent living ability and good communication skills are also needed.

Students in this program can apply for a higher level degree in Russia after completing their undergraduate studies, or they can choose to return to China for employment.



# Ministry warns about illegal student competitions

By ZOU SHUO | China Daily | Updated: 2023-01-31

The Ministry of Education has called on parents and students to boycott illegal competition activities during the ongoing winter break and view the competitions in a rational manner.

The ministry reiterated that any results from the competitions cannot be used for student admission to primary and secondary schools or for getting extra points in high school and college entrance exams.

Certain people have organized competitions during winter breaks and spread information about them through WeChat groups, the ministry said in a release on Sunday.

The ministry has worked with other departments to hold them accountable and the competitions are no longer being held, the release said.

The ministry in September released a list of 44 national competitions for primary and secondary school students from 2022 to 2025, aiming to develop students' talents in sciences, humanities, art and sports. Each competition is only allowed to be held once a year.

In the release, the ministry said any competition not included in the list is illegitimate and any companies or individuals touting that participating in competitions can help students get into better schools are spreading rumors.

Their behaviors exacerbate anxiety, increase the academic burden and harm students' health and are suspected of committing fraud. The ministry will work with other departments to crack down on illegal competitions to reduce students' academic burdens during winter breaks, the release added.

# Education reform can help fix English problem

By Yao Yuxin | China Daily | Updated: 2023-01-28



*Editor's note: To ease the academic burden of students, the Ministry of Education will prevent the return of after-school tutoring institutions during the winter vacation even though they are still in high demand and can create more jobs. Besides, the easing of burden on students is in part the cause of the free fall of Chinese students in global English proficiency rankings. Two experts share their views with China Daily's Yao Yuxin on how to strike a balance between easing students' burden and maintaining their high global rankings. Excerpts follow:*

## **Need to understand importance of English**

After the "double reduction" policy introduced in 2021, the number of cram schools has significantly reduced. However, the falling numbers don't necessarily mean lesser burden on students. As long as the senior high school entrance examination, or zhongkao, and college entrance exam, or gaokao, are still based on scores, the desperation to get high scores won't end.

Therefore, it is more important to reduce the importance of high scores in the zhongkao and gaokao than making efforts to curb people's craze for off-campus tutoring to ensure their children get high marks. This will require the government to increase spending on education and give schools more freedom to work out their own syllabuses and curriculums, which in turn can improve the quality of schooling and meet the demand for "customized" education programs.

The aim of regulations for cram schools should not only be to reduce their numbers, because a crackdown could prompt such institutions to go underground thanks to the high demand, making it more difficult for the government to supervise them.

Also, through education reforms, parents can be made to see reason and raise their kids based on their individual personality and interests. Of course, this will not be possible without the help of schools and society.

In recent years, disputes over English learning have been growing in China. Some argue that English should be "degraded" from a mandatory to an elective subject during the compulsory education period, while others suggest its score be reduced in the zhongkao and gaokao. Some have even suggested that English be excluded from the exams.

The root cause of the controversy is that the zhongkao and gaokao have been using the same criteria for students' selection for years. Many people have difficulty in learning English but not everyone is good at it or will have to use it later.

To solve the problem, it's necessary to establish different evaluation criteria and allow schools to make their own admission policies. Only then can students decide how much time they should spend on learning English according to their requirement. Also, schools can change the requirements for English proficiency for different majors.

*Xiong Bingqi, director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute*

### **English is more than just a language in today's world**

The Ministry of Education's announcement that it won't allow the revival of after-school tutoring institutions during the winter vacation is a continuation of the "double reduction" policy aimed at easing the heavy academic burden on students.

However, since the exam-oriented education system has not changed, many students continue to flock to cram schools to improve their scores in exams and increase their chances of entering a good college.

No people in the world are as crazy about off-campus tutoring as the Chinese, which can be attributed to China's education system. The fact that a high score is king urges millions of students to cram almost every subject, with the wide teaching quality gap among schools making the academic competition fiercer.

Cracking down on after-school tutoring will not solve the main problem; it can be solved only in a systematic way.

The society must improve its understanding of the importance of education. Using a



one-size-fits-all approach won't help solve the problem, not least because it's necessary to diversify evaluation criteria for talent selection and improve the quality of education.

The reduction in the number of English classes has drawn some criticism. There has always been a big gap between Chinese students and students from some other countries when it comes to learning English. Now, if the number of English classes is reduced, it may give rise to more problems.

The question is not whether or not to learn English, but how to learn it. In any case, the value of English is beyond question. And since China is marching toward modernization, learning English is especially important. English is not just a language and it is much more than that in today's world.

*Chu Zhaohui, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Education Sciences*

*The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily*