



In 2026,
fill your cup with



Inside Hope

- ✧ *Hope's Year-end Appreciation Gala Blends gratitude with social responsibility*
- ✧ *Hope organize Partners to explore institutions in Malaysia*
- ✧ *Hope coordinate teachers' training programme for over 50 Government Schools*
- ✧ *Photo News from December*

Highlights from local media

- ✧ *China ascends global higher education ranking*
- ✧ *China unveils new mechanism to align higher education with national priorities*
- ✧ *Nation seeks to elevate its higher education system*
- ✧ *China travel, here we come, and there you go*

Inside Hope

Hope's Year-End Appreciation Gala Blends Gratitude with Social Responsibility

On 27th December 2025, Hope International Education Shanghai Office held an appreciation gala that was both warm and meaningful. Attended by 50 representatives from Hope students, parents, partner Chinese universities, international schools and other key stakeholders. The gathering not only reviewed and looked ahead to the study abroad industry but also, through a series of thoughtfully designed segments, vividly demonstrated Hope's long-standing commitment to its services for students, partner institutions and other stakeholders as well as to its social responsibilities.



Hope's annual appreciation gathering

The event featured a rich and substantial agenda: returning students and parents of overseas graduates shared their experiences and insights; a lecture provided an in-depth analysis of the crucial role cross-cultural communication skills play in studying abroad and career development; the newly launched '50+' project and expert commentary highlighted the vast possibilities of lifelong learning; and an analysis of hot topics in overseas real estate investment offered practical global perspectives.



The lectures centred in three parts: cross-cultural communication, real estate investment and 50+ immersion program



Parents and students sharing their experiences with Hope

However, the most touching and heartfelt part of the entire event was undoubtedly the public welfare initiative "Caring for Children with Autism," presented by Hope in collaboration with Shanghai Xuhui District Clover Children Autism Centre. Hope specially invited a group of children with autism to the event, where they took to the chance to perform musical instrument such as flute and Saxophone, and sold specially designed merchandise made from their own paintings. These works, brimming with genuine imagination, deeply moved all attendees. Hope always believes in encouraging these children to earn respect and realize their value through their own abilities and talents, which enable them to live better lives and integrate into society. This is the most meaningful long-term support for them. This segment resonated strongly with the guests and became the climax of the event.



Special concert marks the beginning of the gathering, generating resonances among audiences

The significance of international education extends beyond commercial success, lying also in taking on social responsibility. This has been Hope's firm pursuit throughout 25th years of establishment. Integrating social responsibilities of a company deeply into this appreciation event is a reflection of this value. The atmosphere was filled with warmth.

Hope sincerely thanks all the parents of overseas graduates, students, as well as the headmasters and teachers from our partner institutions and universities for their generous support and encouragement. It is this shared goodwill and sense of responsibility that made this winter afternoon exceptionally warm.

Hope Organize Partners to Explore Institutions in Malaysia

Along with the economic downturn, studying in Malaysia has become a new rising trend for Chinese students, mainly because of the study cost is comparatively much lower than the traditional study abroad destination countries. Upon the demand from our partners, Hope organized a delegation of 35 people including recruitment partners and internationalized school principals and counsellors to visit some of Hope's partner universities and schools in Malaysia in Dec 2025, to discover the advantages of studying in Malaysia.

During the 3 days trip in Malaysia, the delegation visited University of Southampton Malaysia, University of Reading Malaysia, University of Nottingham Malaysia, Epsom College Malaysia, Heriot-Watt University Malaysia, and Kuala Lumpur University of Science and Technology, mainly UK institutions' Malaysia campus.

Thanks to all the institutions that received the delegation warmly, the delegation was shown around the campus, given institution introduction, offered a Q&A session about admissions, and even treated a meal on campus. Almost all the delegates had a pleasant impression with the institutions, especially the cost advantages, teaching quality, education notion and pastoral care offered to students. After the trip, some partners already started to recommend students who are cost sensitive to overseas study.



Group photo at University of Southampton Malaysia; Professor Ehsan Mesbahi, Academic Provost and Associate Vice President (International) Malaysia exchanged gifts with Alex Wen, the delegation leader, General Manager of Hope International Education Shanghai Office.



Delegation at University of Reading Malaysia



Delegation at Epsom College Malaysia



Visit University of Nottingham Malaysia



Visit Heriot-Watt University Malaysia



Visit Kuala Lumpur University of Science and Technology

Hope Coordinate Teachers' Training for Over 50 Government Schools

From October to the end of December 2025, Hope International Education, in collaboration with the Pudong Education Development & Research Institute of Shanghai, successfully organized and implemented another round of training sessions on international cooperation

and exchange for 50 schools in Pudong New Area.

Hope has been deeply involved in the field of international education for a long time and maintains a close strategic partnership with institutions and government organizations in education sector. Thanks to this strong network and understanding of trends in international educational cooperation, Hope was invited by Pudong education authority to assist with the teachers training two years ago, and this was the 2nd year Hope coordinates and arranges the training for headmasters and teachers from primary schools and high schools from Pudong.

This series of training programme focuses on “Enhancing capabilities in foreign affairs work and deepening international educational cooperation” , covering two modules: Policy Interpretation and Practical Guidance, with a total of six sessions altogether.



For the past 25 years, Hope has been dedicated to building bridges for educational exchanges between China and foreign countries, helped over 50 Chinese universities, middle schools, vocational colleges to establish partnership with overseas counterparts in the areas of joint programme, institutional links, teacher training and exchange, students group summer/winter camp and immersion programme overseas. Hope even plays a key role and provides a one-stop service for both institutions at home and abroad after the partnership is established.



Inside Hope – Photo news of December



Hope Shanghai office welcomed a visit from Holmes Grammar School, an Australian secondary institution. During their time at the office, Principal David Mustafa conducted interviews with prospective students and their parents.



Alex Wen, General Manager of the Hope Shanghai Office, was invited to participate in the 2025 "Translation Circle Alumni Gathering" forum, sponsored by Newcastle University and hosted by Yiwei Translation Agency on 20th of December. Starting from the trends in studying abroad, Alex pointed out that the value of overseas education is returning to rationality, with "pragmatism" gradually replacing "blindly seeking prestige." Compared to studying in science and engineering fields, the core competitiveness of studying humanities lies in the irreplaceability of soft skills, the depth of cross-cultural understanding, and the ability to interpret and address complex societal issues. The insights resonated with the guests and students from various humanities and English majors present at the event.



On 27th December, Hope Hangzhou Office gathered Hope students from overseas to organize a pickle ball event. This event aroused students' spirits by gathering students from different backgrounds to communicate and exchange.

News from local media

China ascends global higher education ranking

By Zou Shuo | China Daily | Updated: 2025-12-26 08:07

A newly released global study quality index reveals that while the United States continues to lead globally in higher education, China is rapidly narrowing the gap, especially beyond the top tier of elite institutions.

The index, which was released on Thursday by Renmin University of China, provides a comprehensive analysis of academic strengths across nations and regions. It is based on a three-tier framework analyzing disciplines, universities and overseas study destinations.

It evaluates 42 key academic fields — 13 in humanities and social sciences and 29 in science, engineering, agriculture and medicine. Institutions are graded on a scale from A+ to C based on percentile rankings, focusing on academic innovation (50 percent), talent cultivation (30 percent), and international reputation (20 percent).

Findings confirm the United States' sustained dominance, with US universities accounting for 35 percent of the top 100 institutions in the comprehensive ranking. In discipline-specific ratings, the US holds a strong lead in both the humanities and the science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, fields.

However, Chinese universities are demonstrating remarkable progress and greater breadth of quality. The competitive distance between the two nations shrinks as the ranking scope widens. While Chinese institutions constitute 14 percent of the top 100 — with 11 from the Chinese mainland — this share grows to 15 percent of the top 300 and 17 percent of the top 500. The Chinese mainland accounts for the vast majority of the ranked Chinese institutions.

A detailed look at disciplines shows that China's STEM sector exhibits "broad quality but fewer pinnacles", with strong international competitiveness in areas such as materials science, electronic engineering, chemistry and computer science. In humanities and social sciences, apart from economics, a performance gap with the US remains. Researchers noted that this is partly due to structural factors such as global disciplinary discourse patterns and the prevailing English-language academic publication system.

Based on the aggregation of top-tier academic resources, the index generates a list of recommended study destinations. The top 10 countries and regions are the US, China, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan and Spain.

"The index identifies a global top 500, but we are deliberately not publishing a specific 1-to-500 ordinal ranking," said Zhou Guangli, executive director of the Evaluation Research Center at Renmin University of China. The intention is to highlight that all institutions

making this list represent quality choices for prospective international students, moving beyond a simplistic and often stressful ranking mentality, he said.

With China being the world's largest source of international students, having a scientific and credible benchmark for overseas education quality is crucial. This matters in terms of national interests, the development of education services, and, most important, the welfare of students and their families, he said.

"Existing global university rankings often have a strong bias toward research output and overall reputation, which naturally favor STEM-focused institutions," Zhou added. There has been a significant lack of an evaluation system that adequately accounts for disciplinary differences on a global scale, he said. "The index, building on our previous work, seeks to fill this gap."

Qu Zhenyuan, former president of the China Association of Higher Education, highlighted the importance of comparing universities based on their academic disciplines. He noted that different universities have distinct disciplinary focuses and strengths. For example, Renmin University of China and Tsinghua University differ significantly in their academic characteristics. This discipline-oriented comparison approach was recognized as methodologically meaningful for the objective evaluation of universities, he said.

Wang Zhanjun, director of the center for graduate education at the Beijing Institute of Technology, proposed adding an "international education environment" dimension, considering factors such as international relations and unexpected events influencing students' study destination choices.

Chen Zhiwen, editor-in-chief of online education portal EOL, said that there has been a continuous decline in the number of Chinese students studying in Western developed nations over the past five years.

Meanwhile, studying in countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative has gained popularity, driven by practical factors such as industrial relocation. For example, some families now choose study destinations like Thailand or Malaysia to align with their business layout, he said, adding that such dynamic, context-specific factors should be considered in the index in order to better reflect the evolving landscape of international education.

China unveils new mechanism to align higher education with national priorities

By Zou Shuo | chinadaily.com.cn | Updated: 2025-12-25 20:19

In a significant reform to align higher education with pressing national priorities, China has launched a new mechanism for the rapid establishment of doctoral and master's degree programs in critical strategic fields, according to a release from the Ministry of Education on Thursday.

The academic degrees committee of the State Council, China's Cabinet, has introduced an "ultra-fast layout" approval process designed to respond in real-time to the country's soaring demand for high-level talent in science, technology, and emerging industries.

This reform is a direct response to the intensified new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation. With innovation activity booming, there is a rapidly growing need for top-tier professionals to support national strategies and key economic and social development sectors, the release said.

The new mechanism allows for the immediate initiation and expedited approval of degree-granting programs tailored to specific needs. For example, a pilot program demonstrating this new approach was launched in June. To implement the central government's plan on promoting high-quality development of the low-altitude economy, authorities swiftly authorized 24 universities with independent degree-audit qualifications to establish relevant degree programs.

The committee has outlined a comprehensive framework to institutionalize this "ultra-fast" process. The mechanism will feature close inter-departmental coordination to target strategic emerging industries, future industries, and modern services.

Furthermore, to enhance the compatibility between talent supply and demand, expert panels will be tasked with proposing new discipline names and application criteria outside the standard graduate education discipline catalog.

Parallel to this, the government is progressively expanding the roster of universities granted "autonomous review" status, a key policy since 2017 to expand institutional autonomy. Currently, 38 universities hold this status, which has already led to the approval of 441 new doctoral programs and 454 master's programs. These institutions have played a pioneering role in programs related to integrated circuits, artificial intelligence, biopharmaceuticals, the digital economy, and low-altitude technology.

Going forward, the expansion will be implemented in a classified manner. This tiered approach aims to guide universities toward developing distinctive strengths and optimizing their discipline structures, preventing low-quality homogenization.

Nation seeks to elevate its higher education system

By Zou Shuo | China Daily | Updated: 2025-12-25 07:40

The State Council, China's Cabinet, has proposed moderately expanding the scope of the "double first-class" initiative to increase the supply of high-quality higher education resources, according to a report submitted on Monday to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for deliberation.

Officially launched by the Chinese government in 2015 as a major national strategy to enhance the global competitiveness of its higher education system, the "double first-class" initiative aims to cultivate a group of world-class universities and first-class academic disciplines by the mid-21st century. Under a dynamic selection process, the current second phase, running from 2022 to 2027, designates 147 universities for development.

Institutions included in the initiative have expanded undergraduate enrollment and now train more than 50 percent of the nation's master's students and nearly 80 percent of doctoral students, the report said.

They have also achieved a series of original breakthroughs across multiple fields, increasingly serving as a major force in basic research and a key source of major scientific and technological innovation.

The central government has prioritized the development of these universities. From 2021 to 2025, it allocated 181 billion yuan (\$25.7 billion) from general public budgets, leveraging more than 110 billion yuan in local fiscal inputs to support universities in accelerating their pursuit of world-class status, the report said.

At the same time, regional governments have focused on supporting more than 400 local high-level universities and over 1,300 distinctive academic disciplines.

Looking ahead, the report emphasized the need to strengthen standards while moderately expanding the "double first-class" initiative. It also called for increasing the supply of high-quality higher education resources, orderly expanding enrollment in high-quality undergraduate programs, scaling up postgraduate training, and steadily raising the proportion of doctoral students.

The report outlined plans to accelerate the establishment of a higher education fiscal investment mechanism that adapts to demographic trends.

This includes continuously monitoring changes in the college-age population and conducting forward-looking research to optimize resource allocation, with the aim of supporting universities in expanding enrollment and navigating population peaks smoothly.

Moreover, the report said reforms will be pushed to guide universities toward developing distinctive strengths in different areas to better meet the need for cultivating diversified talent.

From 2021 to 2024, a total of 3.78 trillion yuan in government spending was arranged for the development of higher education, the report said.

With strong financial support, China has built the world's largest higher education system and entered a stage widely recognized as popularized higher education. The gross enrollment ratio in higher education reached 60.8 percent in 2024, up 6.4 percentage points from 2020. The population with a university-level education now exceeds 240 million

China travel, here we come, and there you go

By Zheng Yin | chinadaily.com.cn | Updated: 2025-12-29 15:01



Foreign vloggers pose for photos at the Pingyao Ancient City in Jinzhong, Shanxi province. The visit was part of the Discovering Shanxi's Ancient Chinese Architecture — Overseas Media and Students Tour, organized by China Daily and Shanxi Daily. [Photo by Zhu Xingxin/chinadaily.com.cn]

For friends who've never set foot in China, if your idea of the country still stops at postcard scenes of the Great Wall or the Forbidden City, or perhaps the neon-lit skyline of Shanghai, it's time for an update. These images once defined China's major tourism attractions, but as the country opens wider to the world and as social media and user-generated content reshape how stories are shared, China travel delivers more, and is delivered by more.

Scroll through TikTok or YouTube, and a new China travel image emerges: hundreds of drones choreographing shimmering stories across the night sky, travelers eagerly unboxing Pop Mart blind boxes to discover their next collectible surprise, or food lovers queuing for soup dumplings that disappear in one bite. It's a place not only to be seen but also to be photographed, gamified, and tasted.

Big-name travel vloggers have fueled this rediscovery. IShowSpeed's China trip went viral as he tested drone-delivered takeout in Shenzhen and tried to dance and flip with smart robots, calling the experience "like living in the future." Meanwhile, the Hutchinsons, a British couple exploring Xinjiang, documented heartwarming moments with Uyghur hosts, camel rides through desert dunes, and spontaneous dancing in night markets — turning

stereotypes into smiles. Their personality-driven adventures make a distant country feel suddenly familiar.

The experiences they rave about are just a prelude to China travel, and this country has much more to offer. Zhangjiajie in Hunan province, which inspired the film Avatar, features the world's tallest outdoor sightseeing elevator rising through misty quartz-sandstone peaks. Xi'an in Shaanxi, home to the Terracotta Army and the starting point of the ancient Silk Road, connects travelers with millennia of history. Chengdu, the laid-back capital of Sichuan province, invites visitors to see giant pandas, sip tea in traditional teahouses, and try their hand at mahjong. In Puning, Guangdong province, the spectacular Yingge Dance, a centuries-old folk martial dance, now draws crowds not only locally but also on stages in London and Paris, where the performance has gone viral as a vibrant symbol of Chinese culture.

The message is clear: China today is convenient and irresistibly dynamic. High-speed trains, lightning-fast mobile payments, and deep-rooted traditions coexist in harmony. After watching just ten minutes of these vlogs, most viewers feel two instincts: book a ticket, and pack loose pants.

The rebound of inbound tourism and facilitation measures

China's inbound tourism is back in full swing as the government introduced a comprehensive package of facilitation measures designed to enhance travel accessibility. Central to this revival is the expansion of visa-free entry, including unilateral visa exemptions for 47 countries and a 240-hour visa-free transit policy for 55 countries, including the United Kingdom.

According to the National Immigration Administration of China, 20.12 million foreign travelers entered China on visa-free terms in 2024, marking a year-on-year rise of 112.3 percent. Statistics show that in the third quarter of 2025 alone, over seven million foreigners entered China visa-free, accounting for 72.2 percent of foreign travelers and representing a 48.3 percent year-on-year increase.

Beyond easier entry, China has rolled out new conveniences to make travel smoother than ever:

Mobile payments via Alipay and WeChat now support foreign bank cards, streamlining everyday spending.

Simplified tax refunds at airports and shopping districts cut down paperwork and waiting times.

High-speed rail expansion continues to shrink distances between major cities.

Multilingual services and signage are growing across popular destinations.

Together, these updates make exploring China as seamless as it is stimulating.

China at WTM London 2025: A modern vision of tourism

China's participation in the World Travel Market (WTM) London 2025, held from November 4 to 6 at ExCeL London, highlights a forward-looking national tourism industry. Under the event's overarching theme, "Empowering the World through Travel: How Will You Use Your Power?", this year's China Pavilion focuses on innovation, integration, and sustainable growth—values that define the modern vision of Chinese tourism.

With its largest-ever exhibition area, the China Pavilion brings together 13 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions including Beijing, Shanghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Hainan, Xinjiang etc. The participation of travel agencies, hotels, airlines, cruise companies, and educational tourism organizations reflects a comprehensive view of China's tourism value chain, from transportation and accommodation to cultural content creation and service innovation.

Designed with eco-friendly bamboo and an open, flowing layout, it symbolizes rivers of regional culture converging into one vibrant current. Panda motifs and calligraphic art blend familiarity with fresh imagination, while spaces for exhibitions, performances, and tea ceremonies immerse visitors in both culture and commerce.

Whether through the innovative displays at China's WTM pavilion or the vivid moments captured by travel bloggers, the world is seeing China anew. The renowned British writer Samuel Johnson once wrote, "The purpose of travel is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are." The process of coming and going offers the perfect opportunity to go beyond expectations, experiencing contemporary China firsthand where culture, innovation, and everyday life converge in ways that surprise, delight, and inspire.

The author is an international affairs observer.

The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.