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*National Vs international. Campus of an international school in Suzhou introducing traditional Suzhou garden into school campus*

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## Inside HOPE

### **HOPE assist Chinese Universities going global: from institutional links to students' recruitment**

In May, HOPE organized and accompanied the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) to conduct 4 academic demo classes and recruitment presentations at 4 international schools in Shanghai, Zhejiang and Guangdong Province, promoting its summer school and degree programs. The events were met with great enthusiasm, as students actively engaged with UNNC lecturers, inquiring about curriculum, resources and admission. As a flagship UK university Chinese campus, UNNC attracts families with its English-taught programs, globally recognized degrees, and cost-effective study pathways.



**UNNC English literature Lecturer Dougle gave out a demo lecture to students in international schools in Shanghai**



**Darren, UNNC Business Development Manager introduced summer school to students**

Notably, despite the global economic downturn in 2024 leading to a decline in traditional overseas study market, summer schools at Chinese universities, such as Westlake University and UNNC, have seen growth. For instance, UNNC's summer school has attracted not only students from China but also international students from Indonesia and Malaysia. This phenomenon reflects two key trends:

- ✧ The rising global recognition of Chinese higher education.
- ✧ The increasing appeal of Sino-foreign universities among affluent families, as they



offer both reduced financial risks and access to high-quality education.

Meanwhile, Chinese universities have partly shifted their internationalization strategy to ‘bringing overseas students in’ and ‘going global’, although the policy of encouraging students to study overseas remains unchanged. In recent years, Sino-foreign collaborative universities like UNNC and NYU Shanghai, as well as top domestic institutions such as Tsinghua and Peking University, have expanded their outreach to Southeast Asia and beyond, hosting admissions seminars and even establishing overseas campuses. UNNC has partnered with multiple agents globally for admissions promotions, while Westlake University’s research-focused summer and degree programs have attracted young STEM talents from UK, USA and Southeast Asian countries.

HOPE has also adapted its focus by evolving from solely individual students’ recruitment for overseas institutions to a two-way service for both Chinese and overseas institutions at all levels, which includes sino-foreign institutional links for joint programme and recruiting overseas students for top Chinese universities. HOPE has already successfully enrolled a number of foreign students in summer schools at UNNC and Westlake University, and it will continue to work more closely with UNNC and other Chinese top universities to recruit more overseas students in the future.



**UNNC International Admission Director visited HOPE; Daniel Zheng, MD of HOPE, attended UNNC’s partner day in April.**



**HOPE helped West Lake University hold recruitment presentation in UK college**

While economic fluctuations may temporarily affect study-abroad interest, the internationalization of Chinese education continues unabated by manifesting in more diverse forms. From summer schools with globally diverse cohorts to universities' overseas expansions, China is transitioning from an 'importer' to an 'exporter' of education. With HOPE and similar organizations building connections, the mutual pursuit between Chinese institutions and international students will redefine the future of global education market.

## **Sister-school relationship between UK and Chinese schools materialized**

On 26<sup>th</sup> May, Stelios Yalarakis, International Recruitment Manager, Cheshire College South & West, UK visited the College's sister school in Shanghai accompanied by HOPE, conducting an interactive pre-departure culture briefing to about 30 students, teachers and parents representatives whose kids is to visit Cheshire College next month under the MoU between the two schools.

Last October, HOPE organized a school link forum in Shanghai to facilitate the in-depth understanding and collaboration between Chinese and overseas schools. At that event, with the help of HOPE, Shanghai Nanhui No. 2 Middle School and Cheshire College South & West signed a MoU to formalize the sister schools' relationship witnessed by all audience. The exchange activities between the two schools have been carried out as planned since then, Stelios visited the partner school last year after the event and he was welcomed by the students with a series of performance of Chinese culture including Chinese martial arts and calligraphy. "My wife started to follow a weekly martial arts class in the UK after I showed her the video I took in Nanhui No.2 School!" Stelios released this immediate impact of Chinese culture on people in the UK.



**Give a brief pre-departure training to students and parents for summer camp**

This time, Stelios introduced his college and British culture in return to the 20 students and 4 group leader teachers who are going to visit Cheshire College next month. Each student also introduced themselves and expressed strong interest and curiosity towards the college and British culture.

This is one of the many cases that how HOPE help overseas schools to promote in China and how the sister-school relationship materializes. For overseas schools, this is a very typical strategy of raising profile in China and recruiting students. Short term summer courses can provide students with a preliminary adaptation and understanding of studying abroad, while also deepen their impression on the partner school overseas. HOPE will organize similar forums this autumn and provide a platform for exchanges leading to enrollment.

## HOPE pre-departure briefings held in Shanghai

Students from HOPE are on the verge of embarking on a new journey in their lives with their dream to study abroad. Every student has received offers from their dreaming schools with the help of HOPE counsellors. In order to help students better adapt to overseas learning and life more quickly, HOPE maintains its tradition of holding pre-departure briefings this year in Shanghai on 10<sup>th</sup> of May. Students and their parents are offered some detailed and practical information from this event.

In general, students' and parents' main concerns before departure for overseas include immigration policy and visa procedure, safety, how to adapt to local culture and study, internship and employment opportunities while study and after graduation. HOPE's event covered all those aspects to put students' and parent's mind in peace. On the day of the event, HOPE also invited two student representatives who have already studied abroad to give sharing speeches, which were welcomed by students and parents.



Group photo between students, parents and HOPE employees





**The information shared by HOPE counsellors**

For overseas colleges and universities, organizing pre-departure briefing can be a good tool to convert and recruit students. In addition to promoting the hardware strength, the software services for international students are also essential, particularly orientation weeks, English language and academic support, career service, and even psychological advice.

## INSIDE HOPE -- Photo news of May



This May, HOPE visited multiple international schools in Shanghai (up right), Suzhou (up left and down left) and Macao. Daniel, MD of HOPE, introduced HOPE's institutional services and discussed with principals on potential cooperation.



HOPE's Alumni Association has a classic name: 'Old Friends'! Every year, HOPE organizes various events for these overseas returned students with aspirations for the future. On 17<sup>th</sup> of May, HOPE Hangzhou office organized a barbecue event inviting HOPE students to celebrate their friendship and establish connections.

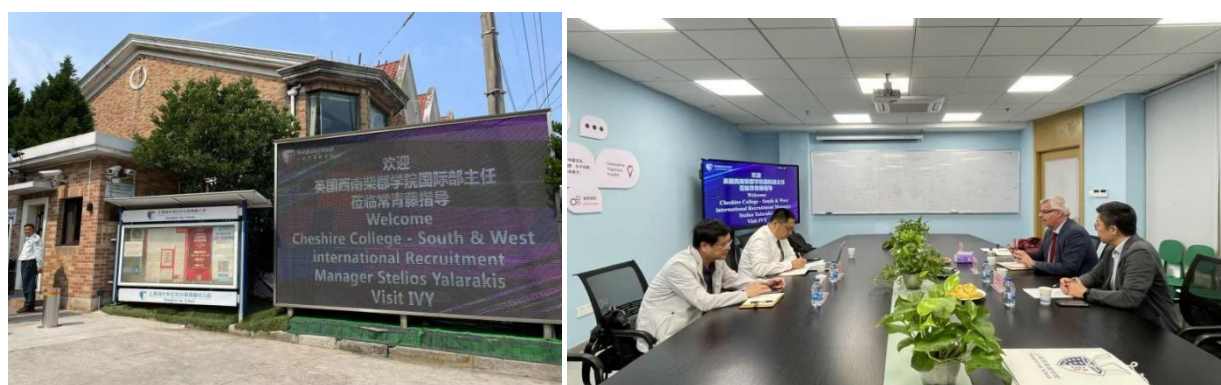




On 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, HOPE Shanghai team was invited to attend an international education fair organized by Bank of China Shanghai Branch. During the fair, the majority of interest from parents and students was about the summer school programs and the cost-effective study abroad pathway, such as universities in Singapore, Malaysia and HK which echo the recent trend in study abroad market.



On 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, Alex Wen, General Manager of HOPE Shanghai, and Sherry Zhang, HOPE's Director of Marketing and Media, were once again invited as guest speakers to the Changchun and Jilin branches of Industrial Bank in North China. They delivered key note speeches on the latest trends in international education to dozens of private banking clients. The session particularly highlighted the advantages of overseas summer school and future education planning. They provided clear data and illustrated case studies to parents.



On 26<sup>th</sup> of May, HOPE arranged the visiting Cheshire College-South & West to discuss potential collaboration on A level and BTEC joint delivery as well as teachers and students exchange with a private school in Shanghai.

# News from local media

## Overseas student drought hits UK finances

By Julian Shea in London | chinadaily.com.cn | Updated: 2025-05-12 06:02

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202505/12/WS68211e64a310a04af22bea52.html>

A decline in the number of overseas students at universities in England has been highlighted as a major contributory factor after the sector's annual financial health check, published by higher education regulatory body the Office for Students, or OfS, showed a fall in income for the third year running.

Income from overseas students has become an increasingly vital financial lifeline in recent years, as domestic student fees have not kept up with inflation, but ever-tighter rules regarding visas and immigration have contributed to a tailing-off of numbers.

The downward financial trend has seen some institutions resort to closing courses or reducing the number of employees. Some have also spent less on infrastructure and sold off land and assets.

Philippa Pickford, director of regulation at the OfS, said the situation remained "stark" with increasing numbers of institutions expecting to be in deficit in the year ahead.

"The position is largely driven by a failure to recruit the anticipated levels of non-United Kingdom students," she said. "Recruitment levels for these students for 2024-25 are now projected to be about 21 percent lower than projected last year."

Umbrella group Universities UK called the report "deeply sobering" and Jo Grady, general secretary of the University and College Union, warned that drawing education into the political battleground around immigration policy could have devastating consequences.

"The Home Office must now think again and pull any further attacks on international students from its immigration white paper," she said. "If (the governing Labour Party) instead chooses to act like (right-wing anti-immigration party) Reform-lite and erect more barriers to those wanting to study here, there is a danger universities could go under."

The latest figures relate specifically to universities in England, rather than the whole of the UK, but data published by the House of Commons in September 2024 highlighted the changing face of international study across the UK.

In 2022-23, it said, there were 758,855 overseas students studying at UK universities, with more than 95,000 of them from the European Union. In total, overseas students made up 26 percent of the UK's student population.

In the five years from 2017 to 2022, the number of overseas entrants had almost doubled, with a radical change in applicant profile during that period, with the number from India multiplying 10-fold to make it the largest overseas cohort.

After a decade of being the biggest bloc, in the year 2020-21 entrants from China fell, with only a modest revival since then.

Figures published by the Home Office in March and quoted by the BBC show there was a 31 percent decline in UK sponsored study visas between 2023 and 2024, which was having an impact beyond the walls of academia.

Reduced numbers of overseas students have hit the economy in many towns and cities, with some landlords facing difficulties getting permission to convert empty purpose-built student accommodation for residential use.

## **China, Central Asia further strengthen educational cooperation**

By Zhao Yimeng in Beijing and Mao Weihua in Urumqi | chinadaily.com.cn | Updated: 2025-05-13 14:49  
<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202505/13/WS6822eb6da310a04af22bf041.html>

The China–Central Asia Education Ministers' Meeting was held on Monday in Urumqi, capital of Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, further strengthening educational cooperation between China and the five Central Asian nations.

Xinjiang Party Secretary Ma Xingrui said while delivering a welcome address that education is the cornerstone of long-term stability and prosperity in Xinjiang. The region will build a stronger education system and deepen partnerships with countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, especially the Central Asian nations, Ma said.

Higher education institutes in Xinjiang are supported to promote educational and cultural exchanges with the five countries through efforts such as co-establishing Confucius Institutes and encouraging overseas studies, he added.

Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng said both sides share a vital mission in national development and cultural exchange and have achieved notable progress in recent years through mutual learning and innovation.

To further deepen cooperation, Huai proposed building a collaborative higher education system and establishing an advanced research institute in Xinjiang to serve regional development. He also called for expanding vocational education tailored to local needs and developing shared digital education resources.



Education ministers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan also delivered remarks at the meeting.

Multiple achievements were announced during the meeting, including the launch of China–Central Asia industry-education integration alliance and the Central Asia institute of the global teacher development college.

Other major agreements were the signing of the China-Kazakhstan elite engineers institute, and the inauguration of joint international research centers such as an international medical center in Astana and a crop breeding lab among countries involved in the Silk Road Economic Belt, according to the ministry.

## Universities lengthen, cut short duration of academic programs

Evolving labor market needs call for flexible formats in higher education

By Zou Shuo | China Daily | Updated: 2025-05-13 09:13

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202505/13/WS68229cbda310a04af22bee66.html>

China's higher education system is undergoing notable adjustments in the duration of academic programs, as universities strive to balance academic rigor with evolving labor market demands.

On the one hand, institutions such as Changchun University have extended programs such as English major and veterinary medicine to five years, citing the need for deeper interdisciplinary training and compliance with national education standards. On the other hand, universities including Tianjin University and Zhejiang University are shortening their architecture-related majors from five to four years, responding to a cooling real estate sector and students' increasing urgency to join the workforce.

These divergent moves reflect how universities are recalibrating academic timelines to align with shifting industry needs and educational goals. While extended programs aim to deepen specialization and improve research quality, shortened ones prioritize agility and quicker employment opportunities in a fast-changing economy.

According to the 2024 undergraduate program filing and approval results recently released by the Ministry of Education, Changchun University has extended its English major from four to five years. It is among roughly 40 universities that have lengthened the duration of seven undergraduate majors over the past five years, including English major and veterinary

medicine, according to Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, which evaluates institutions based on academic and research performance metrics.

The rationale behind longer undergraduate programs is multifaceted. In interdisciplinary or composite majors such as Changchun University's English (English-Spanish) program, students must master two languages and their related cultural contexts, significantly expanding curriculum requirements.

Similarly, the extension of veterinary medicine programs to five years is aligned with national policy. Standards introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2018 mandated the longer duration due to the major's extensive demands — to graduate, students must have more than 200 credits and significant hands-on experience, including six weeks of clinical internship.

This "educational overtime" trend is also visible at the graduate level. Professional master's programs, traditionally completed in two years, are increasingly shifting to a three-year format. Guangxi Normal University and Inner Mongolia Normal University, for example, will begin offering three-year professional master's programs in 2025.

Doctoral programs are lengthening as well. The Shanghai University of Sport and Wuhan University have extended some of their doctoral programs from three to four years, citing increased academic rigor and the complexity of research requirements.

High deferral rates further support longer graduate program durations. In 2021, 49.4 percent of doctoral students in China delayed graduation, often to improve the quality of their research, according to Shanghai Ranking Consultancy.

A 2023 study by Peking University found that more than 40 percent of deferred doctoral theses outperformed those submitted on time. Among top-tier universities, "high-quality deferrals" were twice as common as in ordinary institutions.

Meanwhile, the 2024 Ministry of Education filing and approval results also showed that 49 universities, including Tianjin University, Northeastern University and Zhejiang University, have shortened certain five-year undergraduate programs to four years.

These changes primarily affect architecture-related majors, including urban planning, landscape architecture and historic building conservation engineering. The move is seen as a response to weakening job prospects for architecture graduates amid a sluggish real estate sector.

Separately, Wang Shuguo, president of Fuyao University of Science and Technology in Fujian province, is advocating for an integrated "eight-year bachelor-master-doctorate" model aimed at helping students enter the workforce with a complete education earlier.

As more universities experiment with credit-based systems and flexible durations, experts suggest the future of higher education may resemble an "educational supermarket", offering diverse pathways to suit various talents and aspirations.

## Harvard's stand to protect academic freedom

By ZHANG GUOQING | CHINA DAILY | Updated: 2025-05-17 07:41

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202505/17/WS6827cd36a310a04af22bfef7.html>



Visitors photograph a statue of John Harvard on the campus of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.  
[Photo/Agencies]

Harvard amended its lawsuit, which was filed last month in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, against the US administration on Tuesday to account for the most recent round of cuts to research funding, bringing people's attention back to the dispute between the oldest university in the country and the administration. The university accuses the administration of violating the First Amendment and attempting to "gain control of academic decision-making at Harvard" by threatening to cut billions of dollars in research funding to the university.

Harvard's move has escalated the ongoing row between the US' higher education sector and the government, intensifying Harvard's fight, as the representative of US universities and education traditions, against the incumbent administration.

The row began when it proposed reforms to higher education that Harvard and some other universities vehemently opposed. Unlike Columbia and other universities that complied with the policies, Harvard challenged the administration's interference in its academic freedom, prompting the administration to freeze \$2.2 billion in funding for Harvard, and threaten to block more funding to the university and revoke its tax-exempt status.



The White House also ordered multiple investigations into Harvard's operations and threatened to change the enrollment process for foreign students, challenging Harvard's core interests and drawing strong criticism from Harvard alumni, the academic community as a whole as well as the general public.

The administration's accusation that some US universities promote anti-Semitism is merely a cover for broader, more systemic attacks on universities' autonomy. The six "demands", including those for academic reviews and ideological reforms, exceed the scope of anti-Semitism, striking at the heart of the values — independent thought and academic excellence — on which institutions like Harvard are based. As Harvard President Alan Garber said, "It makes clear that the intention is not to work with us to address anti-Semitism in a cooperative and constructive manner ... the majority represent direct governmental regulation of the 'intellectual conditions' at Harvard."

Harvard's fight against the government has deeper significance. If the university succumbs to its coercion, it would not only damage its centuries-old reputation but also signal a dangerous return of "McCarthyism" and "de-liberalization" in US universities. As former US president Barack Obama said, "Harvard has set an example for other higher-ed institutions — rejecting an unlawful and ham-handed attempt to stifle academic freedom."

Harvard's academic prestige and extensive networks have provided it with the economic and political leverage to challenge the government's unjust moves. As of 2024, Harvard had an endowment fund of \$53.2 billion. After the administration froze its funding, most of Harvard's alumni supported it by increasing donations to the university.

Besides, Harvard's vast network of alumni, influential in politics, business and law, has rallied behind the university. The day after the lawsuit was filed, a number of US colleges and universities, including Cornell and Princeton, jointly published an open letter condemning the White House's "political interference" in higher education and the "coercive use of public research funding". Harvard has galvanized mainstream US universities into opposing the administration's arbitrary moves, and its lawsuit, irrespective of its outcome, will have far-reaching consequences for the US government's relations with universities.

The incident is a microcosm of the deeper political and cultural divisions in the US. The incumbent administration represents certain conservative factions, while universities such as Harvard are seen as strongholds of liberal thought, with the row between the US government and Harvard highlighting the deep rifts between US political factions and interest groups.

Despite US Secretary of Education Linda McMahon's attempts to justify the administration's move by claiming the funds were frozen due to civil rights issues, it is clear that this is ultimately a battle for power, not least because Harvard and other universities advocate for diversity and inclusivity, ideals that are at odds with the White House's policies.

Moreover, higher education institutions and academic elites are often seen as supporting the Democratic Party, and the government seeks to weaken their influence by targeting universities, shifting the educational discourse in its favor, and using academic platforms to promote its policies.

For universities such as Harvard, politicizing academic institutions is a dangerous trend. Education should remain free from bureaucratic control, and campuses should not become overly politicized. When US Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Kristi Noem demanded that Harvard share information on "illegal and violent activities" of foreign student visa holders and threatened to revoke Harvard's right to enroll foreign students if it didn't comply, Garber responded saying, "No government — regardless of which party is in power — should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue."

The situation for foreign students in the US mirrors Harvard's plight. In the weeks leading to April 19, the US administration had revoked hundreds of international students' visas, with many of those being Chinese students. More than 100 affected students, inspired by Harvard, have now filed lawsuits against the administration to protect their rights.

According to US official data, foreign students contributed about \$50 billion to the US economy in 2023, with Chinese students making up the largest share. The amount doesn't even include the academic, social and political contributions made by students from China, India and other countries. Yet these students have been subjected to unjust treatment. Foreign students in the US are facing an early "winter", which could be long and harsh. The author is an associate researcher at the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

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

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