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*Table-tennis in China: from young to old, from national to international*



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## Inside HOPE

### School Link Forum see importance of partnership for both overseas and Chinese schools

Jointly organized by HOPE International Education and Suzhou Association for Non-Government Education, The School Link Forum Suzhou 2025 was held at Suzhou Teacher's Academy on 17th Oct. Bosworth Independent School, Cardiff Six Form College, Cheshire College South and West, Royal Hospital School, and Management and Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) participated in this forum.



About 20 local private/international schools were invited to the forum.

Linking with Chinese school for recruitment purpose is becoming a key strategy to promotion, recruitment and profile raising for overseas schools in China. As Chinese schools and education go international, more and more Chinese primary and secondary schools are exploring links with overseas schools for students and staff exchange via summer and winter camps or short immersion programmes. This campaign is very much supported by the local education authority.

Overseas schools can take the opportunity to promote their schools, schools' short-term and long-term programmes, as well as to seek other opportunities such as teacher training, 2+1 joint programme with partner schools etc. **Partnership , schools in China can also be an endorsement for profile raising as well as for recruitment.**



As advised by one of the keynote speakers at the forum, Daniel Zheng, Managing Director of Hope International, international partnership can assist and enhance the school development at different horizon but at the same time, communication, respect, trust and understanding different culture are key to a successful partnership.

Another keynote speaker, Jon Fei, Principal of Dulwich International High School Suzhou also introduced how his school has been engaged in partnership with UK schools from curriculum, staff communication and development, and students exchange.

There were two panel discussions over the forum with panelists from all the overseas institutions and two local international schools: Panel discussion 1: How do we train ‘top’ students? Panel discussion 2: How can international collaboration assist school development?



After panel discussions, the participating local schools who have interests in establishing sister school relationships or carrying out cooperation programmes came to overseas institutions' stands for an individual appointment to discuss cooperation possibilities in details.



In the afternoon, organized and led by HOPE team, overseas school representatives were separated into two groups to visit two local international schools in Suzhou to consolidate the initial contacts established early.

Hope organizes such event once a year and has already help over 30 Chinese schools pairing with schools from the UK, US, Australia and Singapore in the past.

## ✧ Daniel Zheng at ICEF China: Top study destinations - Evolving preferences for Chinese students

What is the trend of the study abroad market in China? Which countries are becoming popular destinations for Chinese students? What are the reasons of this market change and how overseas institutions and agents shall react this change and challenge?

At the invitation of ICEF (International Consultant for Education and Fair), Daniel Zheng, Managing Director of Hope International, briefed the participating overseas institutions on China market at ICEF Shanghai on 15<sup>th</sup> October. The following are some key extracted slides of Daniel's PPT responding to the above questions:



## top destination countries for Chinese students - - More diversified destination countries



*The Development of Chinese Students Study Abroad 23-24- CCG (Centre for China & Globalization)*

### Top 10 Destination Countries/Regions Considered by Prospective Students of Undergraduate Programs and below(%)

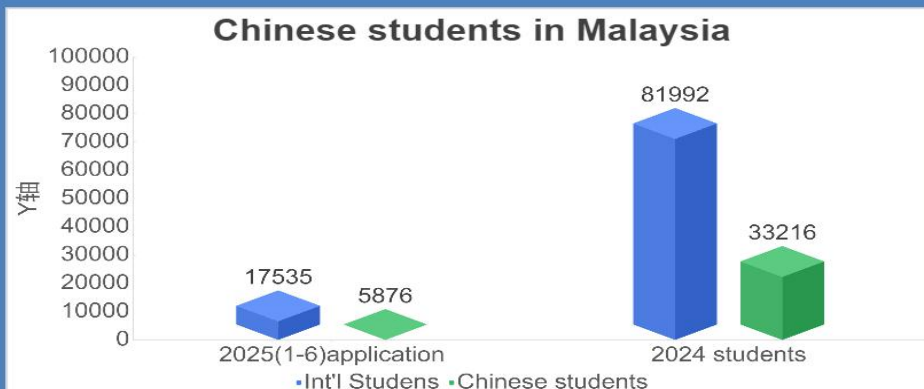


Destinations considered by high-school and undergraduate Chinese students, 2019-2023.  
Source: New Oriental



Destinations considered by graduate/postgraduate-level Chinese students, 2019-2023. Source: New Oriental

From 8876 in 2020 to 33216 in 2024



EMGS 2025

### What are the main factors contributing to this change?

- ✓ Safety and International politics
- ✓ Economic downward vs Tuition fee increase
- ✓ Difficulty on job market - value for money
- ✓ Some Asian countries/regions thrives to meet the market demand: Malaysia, Singapore, HK, Japan and domestic joint programme (4+0, 3+1, 2+2)
- ✓ Government policy

### Is this a temporary or more permanent shift?



#### Key influencers:

Complexity of international politics

Government policy

lower birth rate means a shrinking market

## What institutions need to do? Willingness to change!

Good time to think, recall, change and set up long term and sustainable strategy:

- 1). more partnership,
- 2). healthy and long term relationship with key agents,
- 3). re-build image/branding,
- 4). improve service
- 5). more scholarship (proper use of it),
- 6). working with industry to provide more career service
- 7). develop new products: 50+.

China market is no longer a simple cash cow if you do not invest.



## Agents also need an overhaul

- 1) frequently changing market demand; frequently changing policy; changing and more demanding requirement from institutions;
- 2) Agent business need to be diversified, much more than just an agent! skills needed: quick response to mkt; product development, innovation, knowledge of different nations
- 3) A healthy and sustainable agent-institution relation highly required, each agents has its own strength;
- 4) innovative marketing and promotion events.



## HOPE Parents Gathering Empowers Families for the Future

From 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October, HOPE Parents excursion was held at Dishui Lake, Shanghai. This event not only provided parents with a platform for relaxation and meaningful exchange but also centred on families' pressing needs regarding education and future planning. Through a series of lectures and interactions, it effectively empowered parents to confidently navigate the multiple challenges of their student's growth and family development.



Group photo marked enjoyable moments

Designed to closely address the practical needs of parents and students, the Parents Classroom reflected HOPE's foresight and pragmatism. In the afternoon of the 25th, five thematic lectures were presented by experts from property development company, local law firm and bank, international school, focusing respectively on family asset allocation and wealth management, utilization of cross-border financial instruments, tax compliance strategies under the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) framework, global family strategic planning with Hong Kong as a pivot, and a UK immersion program tailored for individuals aged 50 and above. These topics precisely addressed the multifaceted challenges—financial, identity-related, and educational—faced by high-net-worth families in a globalized context. The venue was fully occupied, with active questioning during interactive sessions creating a highly enthusiastic atmosphere.





### **Different lectures arouse parents interests**

HOPE also set up a touching moment during dinner time, thus bringing the warmth of the event to a climax. Through videos or live video calls with students studying overseas in the UK, Ireland and Australia., students expressed their gratitude and shared their personal growth experiences. Seeing their children become independent and confident in a foreign land moved many parents to tears, transforming long-held concern into relief and pride. This thoughtfully designed segment not only alleviated the sense of separation between parents and children but also allowed parents to witness firsthand the outcomes of international education and their children's growth.



### **Warmth moments-----student's connection with parents**

On 26th, the event transitioned from ‘quiet’ to ‘active’ as parents canoeing on Dishui Lake under the guidance of professional coaches. Amidst the shimmering autumn light, everyone paddled through the waves with laughter and joy, releasing stress through collaboration and challenge, strengthening bonds, and creating vivid and beautiful memories of time spending together.



The gathering concluded on a warm and heartfelt note. HOPE would like to use this event to reaffirmed its commitment of ‘helping every family achieve their dreams of global development’ by providing more professional and customized services. HOPE Parents gathering was not merely a single event but a series of an ongoing journey of growth alongside families. HOPE looks forward to reuniting with more families in future activities to jointly draw clearer and more composed blueprints for student and family growth.

## **HOPE Explores Malaysian Education Market: Opening New Pathways for Cost-Effective Study Abroad**

At the invitation of British Council Malaysia, HOPE Marketing Manager Liz Zhou attended a tour to several well-known British institutions in Malaysia from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October. This visit focused on Malaysia's emergence as a new study destination, highlighting its cost-effective secondary and higher education alongside its rapidly developing international branch campus system, thereby offering Chinese families more diverse educational choices.



**Group photo in front of Malborough College, Malaysia**

### **Highlight 1: Schools and colleges: A Cost-Effective Choice to study A Levels and IB**

Malaysia's appeal for study as a younger age for students lies in its two main advantages: 'high cost-effectiveness' and 'close to China.' The annual tuition and living expenses at many schools are only about half to one-third of those in Western countries, and direct flights from cities like Beijing and Shanghai to Kuala Lumpur facilitate family visits. The delegates visited two distinctive UK styles schools Kolej Tuanku Ja'afar (KTJ) School and Marlborough College Malaysia.



**Liz with admission manager of Malborough College, Malaysia**

## **Highlight 2: Malaysia as a new education hub for International Branch Campuses with Flexible Programs**

A distinctive feature of the Malaysian university system is its cluster of international branch campuses. The tour focused on several branches of renowned UK universities, each with unique strengths, such as KL University of Science and technology, University of Nottingham Malaysia, Heriot-Watt University Malaysia, University of Southampton Malaysia, University of Reading Malaysia and Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia.



**Officers in UK university Malaysia campus**

## **Summary: HOPE's Market Strategy: Precise Positioning in new areas and Enhanced Service Chain**

With recent trend, HOPE has clearly identified Malaysia as a key market for future students. Moving forward, HOPE will not only provide application services but also focus on

building a comprehensive service chain. This includes assistance of local settlement support, and facilitating communication between parents and schools.

HOPE believes that Malaysia, with its unique advantages of geographical proximity, cost-effective education, and growing concentration of world-class universities, is rapidly becoming an ideal destination for some China's middle-class families. Securing a first-mover advantage in the Malaysian education market represents a crucial step in HOPE's global strategic layout.

## No boundaries and limits to lifelong learning: HOPE promote 50+ programme

From 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October, Shanghai Senior Learning Curriculum Expo 2025, which is the first educational event in China focused specifically for 50+ opened at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre. Hosted by the Shanghai Open University and co-organized by the Shanghai Education and Shanghai Education Television as well as Shanghai Senior University, this event aims to build an open, diverse, and high-quality learning and exchange platform for senior citizens.



Across nearly 10,000 square meters of expansive exhibition space, enterprises and institutions from various sectors have gathered, preparing and presenting to create a rich, colorful, and innovative learning feast for elders. From traditional culture to smart technology, health and wellness to artistic creation, the wide array of course options and immersive interactive experiences will fully embody the modern philosophy that 'learning



### Heated discussion and inquiries on HOPE booth

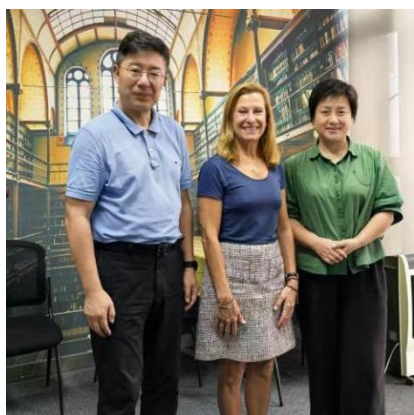
Among the many exhibitors, HOPE presented its 50+ Overseas Study immersion tour which attracted attention of many participants. Over just a few days, hundreds of senior visitors stopped to engage in discussions, eagerly exploring practical questions such as: "What can I study? Which UK school is suitable? Is an English language level required? What will I gain? Are the costs reasonable?" In-depth and lively exchanges with HOPE's experienced counsellor left many participants inspired, with several noting that such programs not only expand the horizons of learning but also rekindle their courage and excitement to go out and explore the world.



### **The venue was packed with audiences**

This expo is more than a display of courses—it is a celebration of an empowering belief: age is never the endpoint of learning, but the starting point of new journeys. No matter how time passes, the thirst for knowledge and the desire to explore the world can always shine brightly.

## INSIDE HOPE - Photo news of October



Over the past 25 years since its establishment, HOPE has signed partnerships with more than 400 overseas universities, vocational colleges and schools. They visited us constantly each year. October is a peak month for visits, and this month's visiting institutions include Blundell's School, Gordonstoun School, University of Southampton, Sotheby College and Rossall School.



On 11th of October, Daniel Zheng, MD of HOPE International Education, Alex Wen, General Manager of the Shanghai Office, and Alice Zhang, Manager of International Partnerships, received a visit from table tennis players of the University of Iceland Arctic Light Confucius Institute. They visited the International Table Tennis Federation Museum and held a friendly competition at the court in the headquarters of the famous Double Happiness Company.



On 25th of October, Daniel Zheng, Managing Director of HOPE, attended the leadership forum and dinner hosted by the world top 100 University of Southampton. He engaged in dialogues with the university's senior leadership and held in-depth discussions with the Vice-Chancellor, the Director of International Office, and heads of various faculties. The conversations focused on how research-intensive universities can drive innovation and enhance student services while maintaining their strong emphasis on scientific research. It is essential for universities to guide the institution in continuous innovation and development within a changing market, rather than resisting to change. During the event, HOPE was awarded as outstanding recruitment partner award by vice chancellor of the university.

# News from local media

## **Hong Kong universities to admit more non-local students from 2026**

Xinhua | Updated: 2025-09-17 14:57

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202509/17/WS68ca5bf0a3108622abca1488.html>

HONG KONG -- Hong Kong universities will be allowed to admit self-financing non-local students up to 50 percent of local student places starting from the 2026/27 school year, John Lee, chief executive of China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), said while delivering his policy address on Wednesday.

"Universities in Hong Kong are highly popular, with a double-digit year-on-year increase in the number of self-financing non-local applicants," Lee said.

The current cap of non-local student intake stands at 40 percent of local places. Meanwhile, the over-enrolment ceiling for self-financing places in funded research postgraduate programs will be increased from 100 percent to 120 percent, he said.

To attract more international teaching and research talents and students, the Education Bureau of the HKSAR government will establish the Task Force on Study in Hong Kong. Relevant measures include rolling out the "Hong Kong: Your World-class Campus" large-scale publicity campaign to promote Hong Kong's quality resources in areas such as academic studies, scientific research and international cooperation.

## **Educational exchanges sow seeds of understanding**

By ZHOU JIN and YANG RAN in Hangzhou | China Daily | Updated: 2025-10-30 09:46

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202510/30/WS6902c395a310f735438b7bcc.html>



A conductor leads a choir of teenagers from China and the United States during the closing performance of the Bond with Kuliang: 2025 China-US Youth Choir Festival on July 16 at the China National Opera House in Beijing. LU YE/XINHUA

For James Long, co-chair of the Durham Sister Cities Kunshan Committee, his connection with China began in the classroom.

"I minored in Chinese studies as an undergraduate," Long recalled. "I learned at the Confucius Institute and still have many trinkets from my time there. I remember it fondly."

That experience led him to a studyabroad program, in which he immersed himself in Chinese language studies at Nanjing Normal University in Nanjing, the capital of East China's Jiangsu province. Having been educated in both the United States and China, Long believes that such exchanges are the cornerstone of strong bilateral ties.

"Our countries are economically married, but also from a philosophical standpoint, we have to learn from each other," he said. Seeing the country firsthand will allow people in the US, who might have little understanding of China, to understand the speed of China's development and its rising standard of living, he added.

Long is now channeling that conviction into action by working to establish student exchange programs between his home state of North Carolina — where Durham, a city of around 280,000 residents, is located — and China. He acknowledged that the language barrier can be intimidating, as both Chinese and English can be difficult to learn, but he sees technology as a powerful bridge.

"I think the internet is helping change that. People are becoming very interested in China because they can see videos (of Chinese cities). It's mind-blowing to see how advanced these cities are."

He said that digital platforms have sparked curiosity among young people in the US. "A lot of Americans are now starting to learn Chinese just on their phones. There are short videos on TikTok teaching people Chinese, and it's popular."

Long expressed the belief that educational exchange, as an important aspect of people-to-people exchanges, plays a vital role in promoting mutual understanding.

That view was echoed by several representatives from the US education, political and academic sectors, who gathered for a recent panel discussion on bilateral educational exchange in Hangzhou, the capital of East China's Zhejiang province.

They agreed that such cooperation is not merely about transferring knowledge, but also about fostering dialogue and nurturing friendship.

Susan Thornton, vice-chair of the US Heartland China Association, said that the future of US-China relations depends not only on governments and businesses, but also on everyday citizens.

In recent decades, millions of Chinese students have studied in the US. However, participants in the discussion noted that far fewer US students are now studying in China, and Chinese students studying in the US also face increasing obstacles.

"If we are to sustain the foundation of trust and cooperation between our people, that has to change," Thornton said.

Earlier this year, the US Heartland China Association brought a group of 20 young agricultural professionals and students from the US heartland to Beijing and Central China's Henan province.

They visited farms, universities and agri-tech companies, met with Chinese peers and business leaders and saw firsthand how Chinese farmers are confronting many of the same challenges that they face at home.

Thornton added that many members of the group, who had never left the US before, returned home with broadened perspectives and a renewed sense of common purpose.

She called for more efforts and support from universities, foundations, nongovernmental organizations and corporations to make studying in China more accessible for US students from all backgrounds.

"If we can inspire more American students to study in China and continue to welcome Chinese students in the US, then the future of US-China relations will rest on a stronger and more resilient foundation," she said.

Natalie Mihalek, a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, shared similar views. Educational exchanges, she said, "remind us that while our cultures and systems may differ, our aspirations for knowledge, opportunity and peace are remarkably the same".

"When students and teachers from different countries share classrooms, ideas and experiences, they are not just studying math or science. They are learning empathy, communication and understanding. They are building bridges of trust that politics cannot," Mihalek said.

She added that she looks forward to strengthening the ties between the educational systems of the two countries, including expanding student exchange opportunities, increasing teacher-to-teacher collaboration and investing in joint research initiatives.

Chen Ye and Qi Xiao in Hangzhou contributed to this story.

# Shanghai shortens departure tax refund processing time to 10 minutes

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202510/24/WS68ff1a81a310f735438b72bc.html>



**Tourists claim an instant tax refund in Shanghai. [Photo/Shanghai Observer]**

Shanghai has streamlined its departure tax refund process, aiming to reduce the time to issue a refund to just 10 minutes per applicant through digital upgrades.

The city has seen a surge in inbound tourism spending, with refund applications rising 180 percent year-on-year to 119,000 forms in the first three quarters of 2025.

Shanghai Takashimaya, a high-end retailer, offers sealed packaging for eligible goods priced between 200 yuan (\$28.1) to 20,000 yuan, allowing instant verification of the tax-refunded goods at ports via QR scanning.

Other retailers, including Xiaomi, have introduced QR code systems for travelers to input personal details digitally, reducing manual errors and accelerating invoice categorization.

The reforms align with Shanghai's goal to become China's preferred first stop for inbound tourism. Sales of refundable goods reached 2.42 billion yuan from January to September.

Business managers and industry observers expressed a shared expectation for a smarter and more digitalized tax refund system to minimize manual input and enhance accuracy.

They also suggested enabling homegrown brands, including emerging consumption sectors, to collaborate to provide centralized tax refund services, further enhancing Shanghai's appeal to international tourists.

Source: Shanghai Observer