



Australia-China Education & Research Partnership Opportunities

Chinese Government priorities

In July 2010 the Chinese Government released its *National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development for 2010-2020*. The plan identifies broad reforms to improve teacher quality, increase the research capacity of selected universities and provide professional development opportunities for senior higher and vocational education leaders.

Under the national plan China also aims to become the largest study destination for international students in Asia, aiming to attract 500,000 international students by 2020.

The Chinese government has also put in place policies to strengthen vocational education and training in China, with a target to train 10 million people by 2020 in key areas of economic demand.

China is seeking to drive its economic growth through innovation and has set ambitious targets of spending the equivalent of 2.5 per cent of its GDP on research and development by 2020 and overall discipline ranking and publication citations in the world top five.

With respect to Sino-foreign joint ventures, the Chinese Ministry of Education has recently renewed its focus on quality, with the establishment of a commission to assist in ensuring and enhancing the quality of joint programs and promoting better collaboration between Chinese and foreign institutions.

Emerging trends

As the quality of China's education, training and research systems continues to rise over the next five years, Australia must ensure that it has forward looking engagement strategies in place that recognise China not simply in terms of demand for education services but as an emerging leader in education and research investment and outcomes.

Other high-performing knowledge economies, such as the United Kingdom, the United States (US) and Canada have seen the benefits of working with China and are moving to take advantage of China's advancement. For example, in the US's 2013-14 academic year, Chinese students made up 31% of the country's total international student intake and the number of Chinese students had grown by 17% on the previous year.

In spite of China's growing capacity to deliver high-quality education, demand for internationally recognised, quality education from China's rising middle class is expected to increase and continue to exceed China's own supply capacities for several years to come.

Chinese expenditure on research and development rose to 2.08 per cent of GDP in 2013, higher than the European Union both in Purchasing Power Parity terms and as a percentage of GDP. Some 30 central government agencies disbursed RMB 273 billion (AUD 56 billion) in research funding in 2013 which has led to directives highlighting the need for stronger financial governance arrangements.

China's central government has announced plans for major reform to national funding systems, to be phased in over three years to 2017. While much of the detail is still to be announced, early indications suggest a major consolidation of existing funding mechanisms, including large and longstanding efforts such as the 863 (strategic R&D) and 973 (basic research) programmes, and that government ministries will step back from the day-to-day management of research funding in favour of specialist agencies like the Natural Science Foundation of China.

Opportunities for Australia

In November 2014, Australia and China signed an *Australia-China Memorandum of Understanding on Student, Researcher and Academic Mobility* to support the implementation of the New Colombo Plan in China from 2015 and facilitate greater two-way mobility of students, researchers and academics.

The establishment of a standalone mobility agreement signals Australia's commitment to genuine two-way exchange. In addition to providing the government-to-government imprimatur for the NCP in China, it will also support refreshed efforts to strengthen two-way post-graduate and postdoctoral mobility, including through scholarship programmes such as Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships

Skills development is a significant priority for Australia and China, with both countries recognising the role that vocational education and training (VET) plays in meeting the changing skills needs of industry, boosting economic growth and facilitating employment and up-skilling of existing workers. The context of VET reform in China and Australia provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of each other's VET systems and strengthen skills collaboration.

Our key goals

- Diversifying and strengthening engagement with government policy makers and quality assurance agencies, institutions and business
- Supporting offshore delivery of Australian education in China across all education sectors
- Expanding two-way mobility of students and researchers

Forward schedule of key activities and events

Department of Education and Training

2 nd half 2015	Australia China VET Forum (China TBC)
Late 2015	China Australia University Leaders Forum (with Universities Australia)
End 2015	6th Joint Working Group on Education, Training and Research (Canberra)
2015 and 2016	Australian Academy of Science Symposia Series (Australia 2015 - China 2016) (in partnership with the Australian Academy of Science and the Department of Industry)

Department of Industry and Science

The next round of Joint Research Centres for the Australia-China Science and Research Fund is anticipated to open in the latter part of 2015. Timing will be determined in part by progress with China's research reforms. Priority areas for this round are yet to be agreed with China.