

Sector Overview

China is the world's largest source of overseas students and the third most popular destination to study in the world. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, [a record 544,500 Chinese students studied overseas in 2016](#). This figure is supplemented by the fact that [80% \(or 432,500\) Chinese students returned to China in 2016](#). China has also become a popular destination for foreign students choosing to study abroad, with 440,000 international students studying in China in 2016. Since 2012, China's outbound students have grown by 36% and inbound students have increased by 35%.

Market Outlook

It is within this context that Australia has become a major education destination for Chinese students. Consistently high university rankings, destination safety, relative costs of education compared to that of the UK and the US, and visa durations have been [cited as key factors drawing Chinese students to Australia](#). According to the Department of Education and Training, [137,173 Chinese students are currently studying](#) in Australian universities, Vocational Education and Training (VET), schools, English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and non-award sectors. While China is undoubtedly Australia's greatest source of international students, Australia is only China's 21st source country for international students – in 2015, [4,411 Australian students](#) studied in China.

Current Issues

- With [80% of all Chinese students returning home after graduation](#), Chinese returnees from Australian universities are facing an increasingly competitive marketplace for employment. Whereas [65% of all Chinese returnees were able to secure jobs within three months in 2013, only 37% were able to do so in 2016](#). [Australian universities have already acknowledged](#) the need to better develop English-language support services, internship opportunities, China-market orientated coursework and soft skills for Chinese students in order to improve their employability.
- [There is currently no 'internship visa'](#) that provides a clear and legal pathway for Australian students to pursue an internship in China. Australians with existing student visas are only qualified to intern in China if they are [studying at a Chinese university and if the internship is related to their field of study](#).
- Australian universities face key obstacles to delivering and furthering online education in China. A number of Australian universities are currently delivering online non-award individual subjects in China. The Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) has, however, cited limited resources and commitment from Australian higher education institutions; high costs of course design and delivery capacity; and most importantly, no recognition from the Chinese Ministry of Education in online degrees by foreign education providers, as key barriers to Australian online education in China.

Key News

- AustCham Shanghai and Austrade will jointly host the [Australia China Careers Fair Roadshow in Shanghai and Beijing](#) from June 30 – July 2, 2017. The Careers Fair aims to help fill the employability gap facing Chinese returnees from Australia by introducing them to Chinese and Australian employers.
- The University of Sydney recently launched its China Centre in Suzhou – [its first major facility outside of Australia](#). The facility will enable work placements, internships and other learning experiences for Australian students in China. [Monash University similarly opened a postgraduate university in collaboration with Southeast University](#) in Suzhou in 2012.
- The New Colombo Plan (NCP) is an Australian Government initiative that has supported Australian students studying or interning abroad in Asia since 2013. [Over 1,400 Australian students studying in China](#) in 2015 and 2016 were predominately supported by the NCP.
- In 2012, the Department of Education and Training of Australia and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) recognising the importance of vocational education and training (VET) in national development. The MoU provides the framework and general principles to support strengthened cooperation on VET on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit.

For more Australia-China business news head to the AustCham Shanghai [Media Centre](#).

Market Entry

[AustCham Shanghai](#) is the largest Australian Chamber of Commerce in Greater China, with a network of over 400 Australian and Chinese members, including Australian education providers such as the University of Sydney, University of Melbourne, University of Technology Sydney and Curtin University. [Reach out](#) to see how your business can benefit most from the unparalleled student mobility in and out of China.