

INTERNATIONAL CURRICULUM



Students attend a Halloween party at Rainbow Bridge International School in Shanghai. ZHANG MING / XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

Changes in wind for high schools

Policy revision puts some programs at risk, but private schools expect a boom in demand

By LUO WANGSHU
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Quick facts

- Last year, 459,800 Chinese went abroad to study
- 274,439 Chinese studied in the United States in the 2013-14 academic year, accounting for 31 percent of international students in the US
- 110,550 Chinese studied as undergraduates in the US in the 2013-14 academic year
- In 2009, there were nine international classes in Beijing's public high schools; in 2013, there were 22
- In 2009, there were 440 students in the international divisions of public high schools in Beijing; in 2013, 1,355 students enrolled in the international divisions
- Annual tuition fees for international divisions in Beijing range from 80,000 to 100,000 yuan (\$12,900 to \$16,100)
- Regular annual tuition fees for public high schools: 800 yuan

Sources: Ministry of Education, 2014 Open Doors Report, eol.cn

The change in policy toward the international divisions at public high schools, announced in April last year, has sent a shock wave through the high school education sector.

With the international divisions at public high schools facing the risk of being shut down, private schools providing international curricula expect a boom, said Gui Chun, founder and chief executive officer of DK Education, a Beijing-based education consulting company that provides an international education service to public high schools.

"Our business has experienced severe shrinkage since the policy was announced. Many schools have stopped developing international divisions, sitting still and waiting for further policy instructions, while other schools have already cut their international programs," Gui said.

However, as a former SAT teacher, Gui does not mourn the decline of part of his business. He is excited to see an opportunity for private schools. "It will be the market's call now," he said. "Fair competition is about to begin."

Andi O'Hearn, director of University Counseling and Enrollment Management of Beijing City International School, one of the city's international schools that is allowed to enroll Chinese students, said: "The government decision will be closely watched with interest by all schools."

Effects uncertain

Since the policy remains unclear, O'Hearn found it difficult to estimate how the changes might affect international schools.

"If the government decides to close international divisions at public high schools and allow more international schools to enroll Chinese students, it will create a lot of competition for Chinese students, and have a large number looking for international education. It will completely

change the landscape for international schools," she said.

In the policy released last year, the Beijing Education Commission stopped issuing new international divisions at public high schools in the capital. Other cities, including Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan and Shenzhen, have also tightened their policies on international divisions at public high schools and reduced recruitment.

Sheng Jianxue, then-deputy director of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges at the Ministry of Education, said in 2013 that the ministry would implement strict policies on the international divisions at public high schools.

During the annual two sessions in March, deputies of

the National People's Congress and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference called for a change for the international divisions at public high schools.

For domestic students

Compared with international schools in China, which are usually designed to serve children of expatriates with a proficiency in English, the international divisions at public high schools are designed for, and driven by, domestic students who wish to study at overseas universities, according to an April report by Wang Ming, a researcher at the National Center for Education Development Research at the Ministry of Education.

Figures from the Ministry of Education show that 459,800 Chinese students went abroad for education last year.

In order to study at a foreign university, students need to prepare in high school.

The emergence of the international divisions at public high schools has catered to a growing need in the past decade among Chinese students pursuing undergraduate education overseas.

According to a survey last year by eol.cn, China's largest education portal, 22 international classes were run by 17 public high schools in Beijing by the end of 2013. In 2009, there were only nine international classes in Beijing's public high schools. Student enrollment also increased from 440 in 2009 to 1,355 in 2013.

Exploration

However, Wang Hongjun, deputy head of Beijing No 35 High School, said she does not see the international programs in public high schools as a cash cow but rather an educational exploration to better assist education reform.

"People against international programs have an inaccurate understanding of them," Wang said. "The Beijing Education Commission is very careful with the overseas curricula, aiming to bring high-quality international curricula to China's education reform."

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Testing agency cracks down on cheating

By ZHAO XINYING
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Educational Testing Service has been taking action to prevent cheating on its tests, according to David Payne, vice-president and chief operating officer of the higher education division at ETS.

ETS is a nonprofit organization based in the United States that administers international tests including GRE, TOEFL and TOEIC.

Cheating on ETS exams has been reported in many countries in recent years, with a widely known TOEIC fraud case in Britain that was disclosed by the BBC last year.

Payne said cheating on exams is not limited to a specific region or exam, but is happening every-



David Payne, vice-president of ETS

where, since the scores determine what students are able to do in their academic career.

"At ETS, we take test security very seriously, and for all our large programs, like GRE and TOEFL, we have multiple measures in place to prevent cheating," Payne said.

Payne said one of the ways that students tried to get better scores on the GRE was accessing

questions ahead of time to study. After ETS launched the revised GRE and strengthened its security in 2011, it became more difficult to cheat.

"We have very large pools of questions," Payne said. "Now, if students get access to questions ahead of time, there's no way for them to predict which questions will occur when they actually take the test."

"So it's really an inefficient approach to try to memorize lots of questions because you can't predict which questions will show up on your specific test."

Payne said they are also aware that it's common in China for students to share questions and study in groups, and that questions posted on the Internet are available to any student from around the

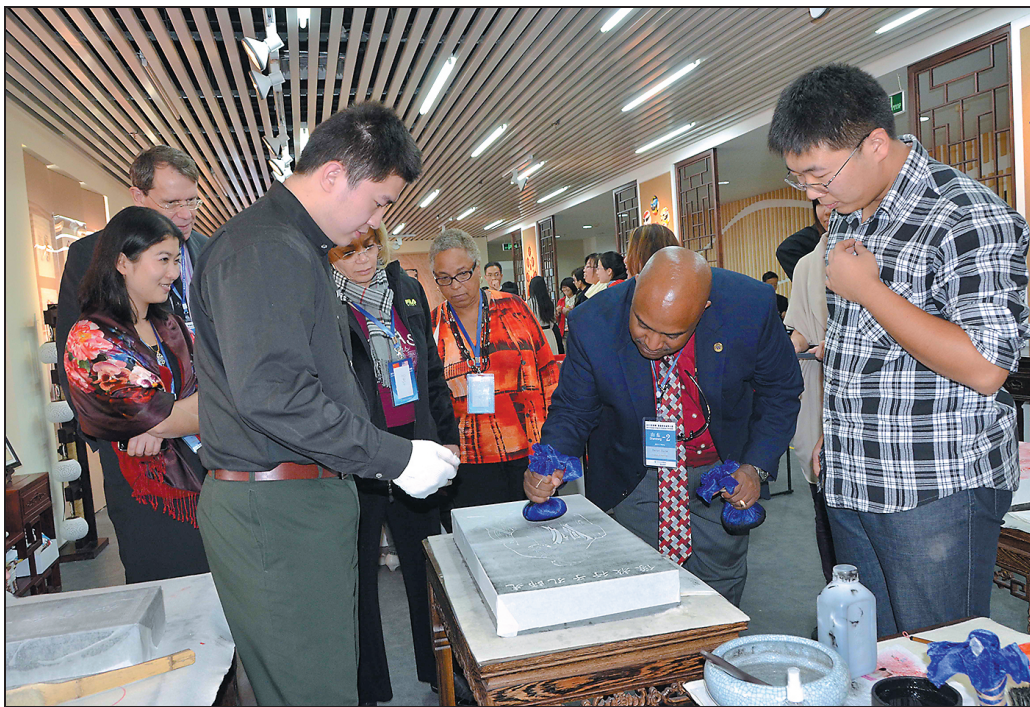
world who is trying to be as prepared as possible.

"We don't expect that to change. Our responsibility is to design a test so that practice doesn't give students some unfair advantage that would help them relative to other students," Payne said, stressing the importance of having a large pool of items.

While he doesn't foresee any significant changes to the GRE or TOEFL tests in the near future, Payne said ETS will continue to explore the possibility of making what he called "tweaks" to the tests, such as creating new items or question types.

But it is introducing items slowly to ensure that new question types are known and appropriate to students, he said.

COOPERATION



US visitors try to make tablet rubbings under the guidance of volunteers from Shandong University. The university is working with some top foreign universities, aiming to become an international-class institution. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shandong University is going global

By ZHAO RUIXUE
and JU CHUANJIANG
in Jinan

Shandong University is working with some of the world's leading universities and research centers to set up new courses as it aims to become a top international-class institution.

"Our cooperation with overseas research organizations has gone beyond just using their teaching materials or inviting their professionals to give classes," said Zhang Rong, SDU's president and also a physicist.

"We are jointly setting up new courses and developing these courses together."

An institute developed jointly by the university and the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres is under construction at Qingdao.

"We plan to invite all of the association's 18 scientific-technical and biological-medical research centers," Zhang said.

"We want to update our management model by cooperating with the world's top



Zhang Rong, president of Shandong University

universities and organizations like the Helmholtz Association. We are going global."

A Sino-US technological innovation park sponsored by SDU has attracted dozens of universities, including the University of Chicago, Rice University and the Johns Hopkins University.

"In addition to conducting research and development, we will turn the fruit of that work into products," Zhang said. "The park provides a platform for students in the international arena."

SDU heads a reproductive medicine lab at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and has jointly built eight Confucius Institutes with universities in seven countries.

"Our Confucius Institutes are

not simply classrooms to teach the Chinese language, but a broad platform and a bridge for people of all countries to conduct cultural exchanges and boost friendship between the Chinese people and other peoples of the world," said Zhang.

A Confucius Institute built by SDU and the National University of Mongolia has been integrated into the NUM's educational system and is responsible for more than 30 China-related courses.

Zhang said dozens of world-class universities, including Harvard, Oxford, the University of Tokyo, St Petersburg State University and the University of Vienna have expressed an interest in working with SDU on promoting Chinese culture.

SDU's international outlook dates back to its beginnings in the 19th century when Calvin W. Mateer, a Presbyterian missionary from the United States, founded the earliest institution of what became the university.

"The story of SDU teaches us the value of history and cultural exchanges between our university and those

overseas," said Zhang.

Every year, more than 2,000 overseas students take courses at SDU in subjects that include traditional Chinese culture and archaeology.

In a further expression of SDU's global approach, it will host the 22nd International Conference of Historical Science from Aug 23 to 29. This will be the first time the event, held every five years since 1900 and dubbed the 'Olympics of historians', is held in an Asian country.

The conference's organizing committee said a total of 1,638 experts and scholars had registered for the conference by April 17, including 724 from outside China. They include representatives of 66 countries and regions including the US, Australia, France, Germany and South Korea.

"The event is a precious opportunity to show the world the vitality of the Chinese civilization and promote cultural communication," Zhang said.

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CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Headmaster has tips for parents who want their child to study in the UK

By ZHAO XINYING
in Shenzhen, Guangdong

With an increasing number of students from China going to study overseas at a younger age, Kieran McLaughlin, headmaster of a boarding school in the United Kingdom, has two suggestions to offer: Learn English, and apply to schools that have a history of accepting Chinese students.

McLaughlin had been teach-

ing in and heading several schools before being appointed as the headmaster of Durham School last year, a private school in Durham, northeast England, that dates back 600 years.

"If you know a school that has a history of taking Chinese pupils, look at it because it will be prepared and have experience, while other schools don't have a track record," he said.

McLaughlin said his school now has 18 students from Chi-

na, which is about 3 percent of the student body.

"It's relatively lower than many boarding schools in Britain, which have 30 or 40 percent of Chinese students. We are happy to have Chinese pupils at Durham School, but won't have lots more.

"Part of the reason pupils come to Durham School is not only to be with the British pupils but also to mix with the international pupils. If we had



Kieran McLaughlin, headmaster of Durham School

a lot of pupils from China, then they may tend to stay together and not integrate

with the rest of the school, which is not what we want at Durham," he said, adding that his students come from 25 countries around the world.

McLaughlin emphasized the need to be well-prepared in the English language.

"Pupils should make sure that their English is good enough, because it will be difficult if they find they can't communicate with people while away from home," McLaughlin

said, adding that the basic language requirement of their school, for example, is 5 or 5.5 points in IELTS.

McLaughlin has visited schools in Beijing, which impressed him with "fantastic and amazing facilities".

Most recently, McLaughlin visited China in mid-April, to "make some links with schools in China".

Durham School has had a student exchange program with

a middle school in Chengdu, Sichuan province, since before McLaughlin became its head.

He said: "I think exposing our children to the opportunity of coming to see China is important for them. We are also happy to have Chinese pupils coming to see us. The cultural benefits are great.

"We don't have any education projects (with schools in China), but we are always looking for opportunities."