

Market Insight: China

July 2020

Summary

It's time to rethink, re-evaluate and reshape strategies and activities. Successful vision planning now will enable Victorian education providers to differentiate themselves in the China market and lay a solid foundation for recovery. With so much ongoing uncertainty, it is important to create academic programs which combine the best of in-person and online learning.

Growth in the number of Chinese students studying abroad has plateaued, in line with the slowing economic growth in China. Due to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, China decided not to set a GDP growth target for 2020, for the first time since 1990.

Schools and universities in China have quickly shifted to online delivery during coronavirus, demonstrating the relatively strong digital capabilities of the school education system in China. In addition, online after school tutoring is also booming.

The bilateral relationship between China and Australia is expected to impact parents' and students' decisions around studying in Australia, as well as education institutions' attitudes towards developing Australian partnerships.

Green Channels, which involve arranging flights to return foreign employees of international companies to China, have been established for countries like Singapore, Japan, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland. UK has reopened all visa processing centres in China and some UK universities are arranging chartered flights to fly Chinese students back to campuses. Germany just opened its student visa application centres as well.

2019/20 year in review

In 2019, China remained Victoria's number one source market for international students. But growth is flattening, likely as a result of China's economic slowdown, increasing capabilities of the domestic education system and an aging population. Acknowledging these changes, the Victorian Government Trade and Investment Office (VGTI) and Education Services Managers (ESMS) in China have delivered programs and activities to elevate the education partnership between Victoria and China, including:

- promoting Study Melbourne at the 2019 China Education Expo in Beijing and Guangzhou; and the China Annual Conference for International Education in October 2019, which attracting over 7,000 visitors and 200 consultations
- organising alumni employability development workshops to support students' experience across the full student life cycle
- facilitating the Study Melbourne Language Learning and Internship Program in Beijing and Chengdu

- sponsoring the Foundation for Australian Studies in China's seventh conference in Suzhou
- delivering activities to celebration and build on the 40th anniversary of Victoria-Jiangsu sister state relationship
- facilitating institutional partnerships between Victoria and China, including research partnerships in 3D printing, developing potential articulation programs in universities in Southwest China.

China's Current Market Status and Coronavirus Response

Similar to many other countries across the globe, China is focusing on revitalising the economy while containing the coronavirus pandemic. It has demonstrated this in handling the recent second outbreak in Beijing.

The Chinese Ministry of Education released its Guidance on Further Opening up the Education Sector in June and there is still demand from Chinese students for high quality international education programs.

The VGTI in China continues to provide dedicated support to Victorian education providers to help responded to coronavirus circumstance, and the ESMs in China are conducting digital activities including two Victorian Alumni Employability Online Workshops, and a webinar on Teaching TNE Programs in the vocational education sector. The ESMs are also facilitating discussions on developing online pathway and foundation programs with partners in China and Victoria, and promoting online teacher training programs.

Economic Impact

The services industry, trade and the jobs market in China have been hit hard by coronavirus, and the Chinese Government is determined to stabilise the economy and society as their priority. People are more cautious about daily consumption, and the saving rate of families is increasingly high.

The Education Sector

Education has proved be a recession-proof industry in China, and investing in education opportunities remains a priority for many Chinese people. The Chinese Ministry of Education is pushing for reform in the vocational education sector and is promoting the Double First-Class Initiative to develop innovation and the skilled workforce in China. Parents are looking to enrich their child's education with products and services which allow them to continue to excel while learning from home.

Opportunities

- The ongoing strength of the value proposition of study abroad, which continues to provide prospective Chinese students with high quality education opportunities and

broad experiences, is driving a rebound in post-graduate level student flow and short exchange programs.

- Offshore delivery and branch campuses will become an increasingly important element of student recruitment and retention.
- In the vocational education sector, capacity building programs for teachers are still in great demand.
- Vocational colleges in China need preparation training for their students to compete in World Skills 2021.
- There is a potential to attract investment from major Chinese edtech companies to Victoria.

Online and in-country delivery

As part of internationalisation at many universities and colleges in China, online short teacher training programs bearing certificates or qualifications could meet universities' and colleges' demand to have more international recognised teachers. Professionals and life-long learners in China, are seeking micro-credentials which are well recognized by industry or which carry a prestigious university brand to boost their career development and future prospects. Chinese schools and institutions are keen to work with overseas partners on online or blended delivery of foundation and pathway programs to build the student pipeline.

Contacts and further information

Please contact Qian Li, Education Services Manager in VGTI Beijing and Terry Wang, Education Services Manager in VGTI Chengdu, if you have questions or would like to follow up on the information in this update.

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