

Chinese students 'more open' when choosing university

THE www.timeshighereducation.com/news/chinese-students-more-open-when-choosing-university

Prospective students in China are no longer looking only at traditionally elite institutions, says director of British Council in the country

March 21, 2016

- By [Ellie Bothwell](#)

Source: Getty

Scrutiny: students' attention to performance measures 'plays to the UK's strengths'

Chinese students have an increasingly "open attitude" when applying to university, with many now focusing on institutions' teaching quality and student satisfaction scores, according to the director of the British Council in China.

Carma Elliot said that there had "traditionally been a strong preference among Chinese students for 'elite' institutions, but there was now a more open attitude to the widest range of options available".

Speaking to *Times Higher Education* during the British Council's UK-China Education Policy Week (14 to 20 March) in Beijing, Ms Elliot said that this trend of Chinese students "further scrutinising" all measures associated with university performance "plays to the UK's strengths".

"Where individual institutions sit in the rankings has always been important. But there has been a bigger move towards the quality of the institution, looking at the statistics around satisfaction and the teaching quality," she said.

"I think that's a really positive move because the UK comes out really well in that respect."

Data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency earlier this year showed that the number of Chinese students starting courses at UK universities was [static between 2013-14 and 2014-15](#), as numbers from

India, Nigeria and Malaysia declined.

In addition, in 2015, more than 70,000 UK study-related visas were granted to applicants from mainland China, an annual rise of 10 per cent, [according to government statistics](#).

"The key thing is that the number of Chinese students going to the UK is maintained," she said, adding that although the country was still the second most popular destination for Chinese students going overseas, it needed to continue to provide "a good offer within a competitive environment".

"In the longer term, I think the market will only become increasingly competitive and that competition will come from China itself," she said.

She added that traditional joint degree programmes between universities in the UK and China are "easing off" in favour of "more strategic, thematic partnerships", such as the SWJTU-Leeds Joint School based in Chengdu – a collaboration between the [University of Leeds](#) and Southwest Jiaotong University – which will offer a UK-Chinese engineering curriculum from September 2016.

"What's interesting in the past year alone is that some of the UK institutions that have had long-term links with China, with universities like Fudan and Shanghai, are now moving their cooperation," she said.

"Increasingly that's the trend we will see."

She added: “There is a review under way of some of the early joint programmes, not just from the UK, but more widely around transnational education and its delivery in China.

“Some of the early movers into China and some of the early joint programmes may or may not continue to be relevant [depending on whether they] fit in with China’s own economic needs or employment needs and so on. The UK within that has a very strong position. We have a quarter of all joint programmes with China and many of them are highly recognised.”

ellie.bothwell@tesglobal.com

POSTSCRIPT:

Print headline: *Chinese ‘more open’ when picking university*