



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Manatū Aorere

China removes COVID- era recognition for distance learning



MARKET REPORT

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Report

On 28 January 2023 China's qualification recognition government agency, China Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE), issued an Announcement on Adjusting the Special Recognition Rules for Cross-Border Distance Learning Qualifications during the Covid-19 Pandemic (the Announcement).

CSCSE will no longer recognise foreign qualifications obtained via distance learning as a COVID-era special arrangement. The Announcement takes effect from the 2023 Autumn semester for the Southern Hemisphere (and 2023 Spring semester in the Northern Hemisphere). Special reasons would be considered if student weren't able to meet the requirements.

This is a reversion to a pre-pandemic status quo, as China had previously not recognised distance learning qualifications from foreign education providers. The Announcement removes the special measure first declared on 3 April 2020, which recognised that visa and border restrictions had impacted teaching by foreign institutions and some students were forced to switch to online study because they could not return to their destination country. In response to this situation, CSCSE created an exception, allowing qualifications with an online/distance learning component obtained by students impacted by pandemic-related restrictions to be recognised.

Since these "Special Recognition Rules" came into force, CSCSE had noted with foreign government agencies and education providers that the rules were linked to COVID-19 restrictions and would be removed once conditions returned to normal. The Announcement's reference to China's new stage of the pandemic management reflects that this step is part of China's broader shedding of its zero-COVID strategy.

Encouraging Chinese international students to return to offshore campuses is also consistent with messaging from the Chinese Government.

The Announcement's noting of special considerations for students not able to return to in-person study was further clarified through a follow-up announcement on 29 January. In essence, if a student continues to undertake distance learning, a valid reason and supporting evidence is required to apply for recognition of their qualification. Valid reasons listed included:

- Provider/institution rules or regulations prohibiting a change to in-person study for the upcoming semester;
- If in-person study is not offered for the upcoming semester (assessed on a case-by-case basis);
- Insufficient time to arrange visa, travel, or accommodation (can continue online study during the time required to go through these processes);

- Final semester of studies and it is not possible to switch to in-person study;
- Places for in-person study at the enrolled provider is full for the upcoming semester.
- Students enrolled in providers in Ukraine or Russia affected by the war (not applicable to New Zealand providers).

The applications relying on special circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. CSCSE may follow up with further updates clarifying the implementation of the Announcement.

This report was prepared by Education New Zealand

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