



China's Ministry of Education confirms formal termination of 234 defunct transnational education partnerships; New partnerships continue to gain approval

(Information as at 3 August 2018)

According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE), Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) has developed rapidly in recent years playing an important role in promoting reform, cultivating talent and supporting the country's major education strategies. However, the rapid growth of this partnership model has likely contributed to instances of project level issues with regard to resource allocation by project partners and teacher quality.

On 19 June 2018, the General Office of the MoE released a notice to the provincial education commissions/departments approving the formal termination of some joint institutes and joint programs. (The Notice in Chinese: 教育部办公厅关于批准部分中外合作办学机构和项目终止的通知, 教外厅函〔2018〕39号) and published the lists of 5 joint institutes and 229 joint programs that have ceased their operations as of 19 June 2018 on their website.

The announcement reflects cumulative closures between 2006 and 2018. While the number of 234 represents around 10% of the total number of CFCRS joint ventures, it should be noted that the ceasing is not a unilateral action from the MoE, and that the majority of these had already seen their approval period expire, while others had voluntarily stopped recruiting new students.

A total of 45 joint programs involving Australian partners were confirmed to have ended, which represents almost one third of all Chinese-Australian joint venture at this level. The vast majority of these (42) had expired naturally over the last several years with only three out of the 45 ceasing operations before their expiration date. It was later confirmed that the partnering institutions for those three programs had jointly applied for termination to the MoE, for operational reasons.

The MoE think tank – *Center of Research on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, Xiamen University*¹, concludes that the majority of these projects ended operation due to the following reasons:

1. The joint venture did not enroll any students after receiving approval.
2. The joint venture reached the end of the contract term and the parties did not wish to extend the partnership.
3. The actual enrolment numbers were much lower than the approved capacity and therefore projects were not viable.
4. Since 2009, six reviews have been carried out on the CFCRS arrangements, with 22 projects assessed as ‘unqualified’ under the CFCRS definitions, a further 109 projects voluntarily applied to cease operation during or before the assessment.

While the MoE list is largely a reflection of the cumulative closures of joint ventures over the course of more than 10 years, the decision to publish the list reaffirms the Chinese Government’s move to strengthen government supervision of Chinese-foreign education joint ventures and place greater emphasis on quality instead of quantity.

It is important to note that the approval of new CFCRS partnerships has not stopped. On 19 July 2017 the MoE issued a notice approving 27 new joint ventures. The notice together with the list of approved joint programs are available on the MoE website, http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A20/moe_862/201707/t20170727_310180.html.

The 27 joint programs included 24 undergraduate programs and 3 post-graduate programs. One new Australian project was approved in this batch – a Bachelor of Architecture program between Adelaide University and Nantong University in Jiangsu.

The MoE also approved 11 joint institutes in the first half of 2017 including ‘An De College’ - a partnership between the University of South Australia and Xi’an University of Architecture and Technology in Shaanxi Province, providing both undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Civil Engineering, Engineering Management and Environmental Science and Engineering. This is the first joint institute in the northwest region providing both bachelor and master programs.

On 15 January 2018, the MoE issued a further notice approving new joint ventures, however, neither the notice or list is available online with information on newly approved joint ventures distributed directly to each province. Based on research conducted by the Australian Embassy in Beijing it appears that a further 34 joint programs and 2 joint institutes were approved by the MOE as of 5 July 2018. The 34 new joint programs included 31 undergraduate programs and 3 post-graduate programs.

¹ *The Center of Research on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, Xiamen University* is the MoE’s Research Base and Consulting Platform for CFCRS and was the first institute in China that focuses on research on CFCRS.

Most recently, according to the information on the JSJ website a further two new joint institutes were approved as of 3 August 2018.

There is no list available of new Australian joint ventures in either of these most recent approval batches but it is clear that the MoE remains committed to CFCS as a valuable form of international cooperation and continues to approve new joint projects and institutes.

For further enquiries, please contact the [Education and Research Section](#) of the Australian Embassy in Beijing.