



# China ends COVID-19 temporary measure on evaluation of online study

## (Information as at 3 February 2023)

On 28 January 2023, the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) published the **“Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period”** (hereafter referred to as “the announcement”)<sup>1</sup>. This ends the flexible approach to verifying overseas qualifications obtained through cross-border remote learning – a temporary measure introduced in April 2020<sup>2</sup> as a response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The temporary measure meant that Chinese international students who were forced to complete parts or all of their courses online due to the impact of COVID-19, could have their qualification evaluated by the CSCSE in the same way as if they had been able to complete all of their studies in their destination country.

The announcement states that overseas credentials involving remote learning (both in the case of new enrolments and continuing studies) during and after Spring/Autumn semester 2023 (ie: first semester, 2023) will no longer be evaluated by the CSCSE. This means students will need to return to campus for the upcoming semester.

The announcement was followed by two Q&A documents<sup>3 4</sup> published on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of January, which addressed key questions raised by students and stakeholders, including the potential challenges in changing study modes (from online to face-to-face) and issues with logistics in returning to campus. Students who want to continue to study online in semester 1, 2023 and have their qualification evaluated by the CSCSE, will need to present documentation/evidence of the special circumstance together with their application for the evaluation service after receiving their foreign qualification. The CSCSE will consider such applications on a case-by-case basis.

This latest move by the CSCSE has been anticipated by stakeholders as countries around the world gradually return to pre-COVID operations. As stated in the announcement, overseas credentials, degree certificates and higher education diplomas obtained through cross-border distance learning were not within the evaluation scope by the CSCSE before the pandemic. The decision to end the temporary measure can be seen as part of a broader approach by China to return to pre-COVID operating conditions, with changes occurring quite rapidly.

The Australian Government has welcomed the CSCSE announcement, which will encourage Chinese students to travel to Australia for first semester of 2023.

See below for the Australian Embassy Beijing unofficial translations of the announcement and the two Q&A documents published by the CSCSE.

More information about the CSCSE 2020 decision to provide flexibility for students studying online due to COVID-19, and subsequent related announcements, can be found on the CSCSE's announcement [page](#).

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

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<sup>1</sup> The People's Republic of China, Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange, “关于调整疫情期间对跨境远程文凭证书特殊认证规则的公告(Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period)”, 28 Jan 2023. <https://www.cscse.edu.cn/cscse/sy/tzgg/2023012917420185452/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Education and Research Section at the Australian Embassy in China has previously produced two policy documents on the temporary measure - [Formal advice on degree verification for Chinese international students - online learning due to COVID-19 \(April 2020\)](#) and [Updated advice from CSCSE -Qualifications obtained partially and wholly online during COVID-19 to be verified \(March 2021\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> The People's Republic of China, Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange, “《关于调整疫情期间对跨境远程文凭证书特殊认证规则的公告》解读问答 (Q&A on “Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period” (I))”, 28 Jan 2023. <https://www.cscse.edu.cn/cscse/sy/tzgg/2023012917385990106/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> The People's Republic of China, Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange, “《关于调整疫情期间对跨境远程文凭证书特殊认证规则的公告》相关问题解答(Q&A on “Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period” (II))”, 29 Jan 2023. <https://www.cscse.edu.cn/cscse/sy/tzgg/2023012917442942281/index.html>

## Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period

28 January 2023

(Title in Chinese: [关于调整疫情期间对跨境远程文凭证书特殊认证规则的公告](#))

According to the relevant national policies, overseas credentials, degree certificates and higher education diplomas obtained through cross-border distance learning are not within the evaluation scope by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE). Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSCSE has prioritised the health and safety of Chinese international students. For Chinese international students who are forced to complete parts or all of their courses online due to the impact of COVID-19, their degree qualification can be evaluated under normal proceedings as long as it meets the degree-granting conditions set by overseas higher education institutions.

The borders of major study destinations have now been opened and face-to-face learning has resumed in all overseas institutions. China's National Health Commission has announced that as of 8 Jan 2023, COVID-19 is classified as "Class B" Infection and will be managed with measures against "Class B" infectious diseases, which means China has entered into a new phase of COVID response. In order to protect the interests of Chinese international students and uphold equity in education, the CSCSE has decided to cancel the special provisions on the overseas credentials' evaluation service implemented during the pandemic period.

The Centre will no longer provide evaluation services for overseas credentials obtained with studies continued to be completed through remote learning (both in the case of new enrolments and continuing studies) during and after Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere). The CSCSE will process cases involving special situations on a case-by-case basis, provided compliance with relevant regulations.

Notice is hereby given.

Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange

## Q&A on “Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period” (I)

28 January 2023

(Title in Chinese: [《关于调整疫情期间对跨境远程文凭证书特殊认证规则的公告》解读问答](#))

- 1. Q: Is there a specific timing requirement for the Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere) outlined in the “Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period” (hereafter referred to as “the Announcement”)?**

A: Given that the semester setting differs by country, Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere) in this case broadly refers to the first semester in the first half of 2023 for institutions in different countries. Students should return to their institution as soon as possible, regardless of whether the institution or destination country has already started or has not yet started the semester.

- 2. Q: If the overseas institution continues to allow the qualifications to be completed with online learning, do students have to travel abroad for their qualifications to be evaluated?**

A: According to the “Provisions on the Overseas Credentials Evaluation Service”<sup>i</sup>, overseas credentials, degree certificates and higher education diplomas obtained through cross-border distance learning are not within the evaluation scope by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE). After the release of “the Announcement”, overseas credentials obtained with studies continued to be completed through remote learning (both in the case of new enrolments and continuing studies) during and after Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere) will not be evaluated.

- 3. Q: What if there is a special circumstance in which the student cannot return to campus on time?**

A: For students with special circumstances and objective reasons that prevents them from returning to campus by Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere), the student should keep the relevant documentation and evidence and submit them together with application for the qualification evaluation service after they have been awarded their qualification. The CSCSE will conduct case-by-case assessment of the evaluation of the overseas credential, taking account of the circumstances.

- 4. Q: If a student has completed all of the courses set out in the program before “the Announcement” was issued, does the student still need to travel overseas to complete their dissertation in order for the qualification to be evaluated?**

A: Students completing coursework-based degrees (program by coursework) can continue to complete their studies in accordance with the relevant requirements of their degree awarding institutions for their qualification to be evaluated. For those completing research-based degrees (program by research and dissertation), students should complete their studies and research in the country of their institution from Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere).

<sup>i</sup> This [revised document](#) was published by the CSCSE on 28 January 2023, succeeding the 2018 version of “Measures of Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange on the Certification of Foreign (Overseas) Academic Qualifications”.

## Q&A on “Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period” (II)

29 January 2023

(Title in Chinese: 《关于调整疫情期间对跨境远程文凭证书特殊认证规则的公告》相关问题解答)

Following the release of “Announcement on the adjustment of special provisions on the evaluation service of overseas credentials obtained through cross-border remote learning during the pandemic period” (hereafter referred to as “the Announcement”), some Chinese international students have expressed concerns about the issue and therefore the CSCSE has sorted out some key questions and answered them. If you still have questions, please contact: [renzheng@cscse.edu.cn](mailto:renzheng@cscse.edu.cn).

**1. Q: Some media have reported that the CSCSE will no longer provide evaluation service for qualifications obtained through cross-border distance learning, is this true?**

A: Based on relevant national policies, overseas credentials, degree certificates and higher education diplomas obtained through cross-border distance learning are not within the evaluation scope by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE). Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CSCSE has prioritised the health and safety of Chinese international students. For Chinese international students who are forced to complete parts or all of their courses online due to the impact of COVID-19, their degree qualification can be evaluated under normal proceedings as long as it meets the degree-granting conditions set by overseas higher education institutions. The latest announcement has simply cancelled this special measure and restored the original rule.

**2. Q: My school provides the option of learning online or face-to-face for Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere) and I have already chosen to study online and am not able to change my selection, what should I do?**

A: If you are unable to change the mode of study for Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere) based on the institution’s rules and regulation, you should keep relevant documentation and evidence of this and submit them together with the qualification evaluation application in order for the evaluation to be successful. If this is not the last semester of your program, please make sure to return to campus on time for the next semester.

**3. Q: What if my institution does not offer face-to-face learning for Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere)?**

A: If the institution only offers online learning and not face-to-face learning, it is generally considered a “cross-border distance learning” program, and such program has not been in the scope of evaluation with the CSCSE. If your institution does not offer face-to-face learning in Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere), please contact the institution and confirm whether you are able to complete the rest of your program in face-to-face mode. If you are able to make the adjustment, please make sure to return to campus for the next semester; if you are not able to make the adjustment or this is your last semester for the program, please keep relevant documentation and submit them with your qualification evaluation application and the CSCSE will review it on a case-by-case basis.

**4. Q: My current semester has already started or is about to start but I am short on time for applying visa, booking air ticket or accommodation, what should I do?**

A: Please do not worry, you are able to continue with online studies while you are in the process of sorting out these documents. If your visa has not been issued, your flight has been canceled or you are unable to book your dormitory, please keep relevant document and evidence such as: appointment for visa application, evidence of flight cancellation, and response by the accommodation servicing agency, and submit them with the application for qualification evaluation in order for your evaluation service to be passed.

**5. Q: Spring semester 2023 (Autumn semester in the Southern Hemisphere) is my last semester, do I still need to return to campus?**

A: If all of your studies and research is about to be completed in the current semester, we advise that you confirm the arrangement of your studies with the institution and follow their advice in completing your degree. If the study is unable to be completed in face-to-face learning, we advise that you keep relevant documentations and evidence and submit them with the application for qualification evaluation.

**6. Q: The quota for face-to-face learning for my current semester is full, will my qualification be evaluated?**

A: If the quota for face-to-face learning of your institution is full for the current semester and you are unable to switch to face-to-face learning, please submit relevant documentation and evidence with your qualification evaluation application. If this is not your last semester, please make sure to return to campus for the next semester.

**7. Q: I am studying at an institution based in Ukraine/Russia, and is affected by the war, can I continue to study online if returning to campus would be dangerous for me?**

A: The inability of students enrolled at Ukrainian institutions to return to campus for the Spring semester of 2023 will not affect the evaluation of their qualifications. Some students enrolled in Russian institutions who are unable to return to class for the Spring semester 2023 due to the war along the Russian-Ukrainian border will not influence the evaluation of their qualifications.