



How TNE programs are evaluated, verified and accredited in China

(Information as at 1 February 2026)

China-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS)

China-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) is China's formal model for transnational education (TNE) partnerships, enabling Chinese and overseas institutions to deliver joint programs or establish joint institutes across all education levels in China.

Approval for a CFCRS arrangement is obtained through the Chinese partner institution, with authorisation granted by local, provincial, or national education authorities depending on the program level. Further detail can be found in the *Approval Processes for Chinese–Foreign Joint Institutes and Joint Programs* policy update on the Department of Education's [China Resources](#) webpage.

Australia is one of the most active foreign CFCRS partners, with 22 joint institutes and around 150 joint programs currently in operation at higher education level (including higher vocational and university level) alone.

As CFCRS has expanded, China's Central Government has introduced several assessment and quality assurance mechanisms to regulate program operation, confirm academic outcomes, and uphold standards.

These mechanisms differ in purpose and are administered by separate affiliate agencies under the Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE):

- **China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC)** evaluation addresses institutional compliance.
- **Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE)** verification confirms the authenticity of individual qualifications.
- **China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE)** accreditation supports voluntary quality enhancement.

Understanding the distinctions between these processes helps ensure that regulatory requirements are applied appropriately and that qualifications are recognised through the correct channels.

Overview of the three mechanisms

Comparison of Functions and Features of CFCRS Oversight Processes

Dimension	CDGDC Evaluation	CSCSE Verification	CEAIE Accreditation
Nature	Government-mandated institutional evaluation.	Service for verifying an individual’s qualifications delivered by an overseas provider, including qualifications obtained through a CFCRS joint institute or program	Voluntary, industry-led quality accreditation
Scope	Institutional	Individual	Institutional
Legal Basis	<i>Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools</i> (issued 2003) <i>Implementation Measures for the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools</i> (issued 2024)	Measures for Verification of Overseas Academic Qualifications	Industry norms and international quality assurance standards
Core Objective	To ensure partners’ compliance with CFCRS regulations and implementation measures and to safeguard quality	To confirm the authenticity and equivalent standard of an individual’s foreign qualifications	Promote quality improvement, benchmark performance, enhance recognition
Main Target Group	Joint Institutes and Joint Programs approved under the CFCRS initiative	Individuals with overseas qualifications	Joint Institutes and Joint Programs approved under the CFCRS initiative seeking an external quality review
Process	Self-assessment, expert on-site review, outcome publicly released.	Online submission, document review, certification. Outcome not publicly released	Self-assessment, site visit, certification, monitoring. Outcome may be published.
Result Effect	Determines a Joint Institute or Joint Program’s ongoing approval status (generally after a period of 5 years of operation); a finding of non-compliance may trigger penalties	Not mandatory but may be required to facilitate employment in China or access to some social services	Advisory recognition with no administrative force

Evaluation by CDGDC

The CDGDC conducts mandatory evaluations of all MoE–approved CFCRS joint institutes and joint programs at the undergraduate level and above.

This process functions as an official government mechanism designed to ensure that institutions operate in accordance with approved agreements and meet the required standards for program implementation, curriculum delivery, and faculty development.

The evaluation is generally conducted on a **five-year cycle**, which allows authorities to assess compliance over time and determine whether programs continue to meet regulatory expectations.

Evaluation results are publicly released and categorised as ‘qualified’, ‘conditionally qualified’ and ‘unqualified’.

Evaluation category	Finding
Qualified	CFCRS arrangement is fully compliant
Conditionally Qualified	CFCRS arrangement may require some corrective actions to become fully compliant.
Unqualified	CFCRS arrangement at risk of administrative penalties, including the potential loss of approval to continue operating.

These outcomes have direct implications for institutional operations. CDGDC evaluation therefore represents the most formal and consequential quality assurance mechanism within the CFCRS system.

Overseas Academic Qualification Verification by CSCSE

The CSCSE provides a **voluntary verification** service for individuals seeking to authenticate their overseas academic credentials.

The verification process focuses on confirming the legitimacy, legality, and comparability of foreign qualifications, including those earned through CFCRS joint institutes and programs. Unlike the CDGDC evaluation, which assesses institutional compliance, **CSCSE verification concerns the academic validity of the individual learner’s credential rather than the performance of the joint program itself.**

CSCSE verification is widely used for purposes such as **employment, further study**, participation in professional examinations, and other forms of official recognition within China.

It offers authoritative confirmation of a qualification’s authenticity but does not evaluate the broader quality or regulatory status of the CFCRS programs through which the qualification may have been obtained. As such, it serves as a key service for graduates and employers seeking clarity on academic equivalence.

For additional information see the policy updates on *Verification overseas academic qualifications in China* and *CSCSE verified institutions, 2025* available on the Department of Education’s [China Resources](#) webpage.

Quality Accreditation by CEAI

The CEAI administers a **voluntary accreditation** scheme for CFCRS joint institutes and programs, drawing on international quality assurance frameworks and sector-led standards.

This accreditation is available to institutions that have completed at least one full cohort and are operating in accordance with national regulations. The accreditation process includes **self-assessment, expert on-site review, formal certification, and periodic monitoring** to support continuous improvement.

CEAI accreditation aims to promote high-quality practice, enhance institutional transparency, and strengthen both domestic and international recognition of accredited programs.

Although it does not carry administrative consequences and is not required for regulatory compliance, accreditation acts as an important indicator of exemplary performance within the sector. It provides institutions with an avenue to demonstrate commitment to quality enhancement beyond minimum regulatory requirements.

How the Three Mechanisms Work Together

Taken together, CDGDC evaluation, CSCSE verification, and CEAIE accreditation operate as a quality assurance and governance system for the CFCRS initiative.

Each mechanism focuses on a different stage of oversight, yet they interact in ways that reinforce one another: outcomes from CDGDC evaluations inform CSCSE's decisions when qualifications awarded through CFCRS programs, and indicators generated through CEAIE's accreditation process may serve as reference points for CDGDC reviews, supporting a more comprehensive understanding of institutional performance.



Conclusion

This policy update aims to provide further detail of the CFCRS regulatory framework and support informed engagement and decision-making on the part of Australian providers and other key parties when engaging with the CFCRS initiative.

The Chinese Central Government's approach to maintaining the quality of CFCRS arrangements is supported by CDGDC Evaluation, CSCSE Verification and CEAIE Accreditation, which each address a different aspect of quality assurance and delivery.

Enquiries

Public Policy Updates published by Education and Research Section are available at [China Resources - Department of Education, Australian Government](#).

For enquiries or additional detail, please contact the [Education and Research Section](#) (education.research@dfat.gov.au) of the Australian Embassy in Beijing.

Key terms

English translation	Chinese term
China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC)	教育部学位与研究生教育发展中心
Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE)	教育部（中国）留学服务中心
China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE)	中国教育国际交流协会
CFCRS Evaluation (by CDGDC)	中外合作办学评估
Overseas Academic Qualification Verification (by CSCSE)	国（境）外学历学位认证
CFCRS Quality Accreditation (by CEAIE)	中外合作办学质量认证