



China issues first Overall Plan on Education Evaluation

(Information as at 22 January 2021)

On 13 October 2020, the CPC Central Committee and State Council made public the *Overall Plan for Deepening Educational Evaluation Reform in the New Era*¹, unofficial translation of 深化新时代教育评价改革总体方案, (the Evaluation Reform Plan). It is understood to be the first of its kind. A full, unofficial translation commissioned by the Education and Research Section at the Australian Embassy in China is provided [here](#) and will be of interest to foreign education providers operating in China and/or with Chinese education partners.

The Evaluation Reform Plan seeks to improve educational governance and quality, support China's [Education Modernisation 2035 Plan](#), and develop China into an education power. The Plan consolidates into one document the evaluation strategy for the entirety of China's education system. It covers all levels of formal education in China including kindergarten (for 3-6 year old children), primary and secondary schooling, vocational education and training, and higher education. It covers all personnel engaged in the education sector.

The Evaluation Reform Plan contains five **key tasks for education evaluation** from now until 2035, including reforming evaluation of:

1. **Party committees and governments**, to improve the Party's overall leadership of education and performance of duties
2. **Institutions**, to focus education on cultivating people with virtue/good moral character
3. **Teachers**, focusing on teachers' ethics as the primary criterion, and highlighting educational and teaching achievements

¹ People's Republic of China, Ministry of Education, '中共中央 国务院印发《深化新时代教育评价改革总体方案》' (Unofficial Translation: 'The CPC Central Committee and State Council issues 'Overall Plan for Deepening Educational Evaluation Reform in the New Era'), September 2020, http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xgk/moe_1777/moe_1778/202010/t20201013_494381.html

4. **Students**, to promote their morality, ability and all-round development, and
5. **Talent recruitment**, to create a good environment for education development.

Overall reduced focus on grades and admission rates

The Evaluation Reform Plan seeks to reduce the focus on grades or admission rates. For example, it asks governments at all levels not to link 'admission rates' in entrance exams for secondary school or college to the evaluation of party committees and governments, education departments, institutions, and teachers; not to use 'admission rates' for the allocation of school projects, funding and awards; and not to reward students and teachers for results in Zhongkao² and Gaokao³, or publicise good performance on these tests.

Institutional evaluation focused on quality

In accordance with the Plan, the 'cultivation of people with virtue' will be the fundamental criterion on which institutions will be assessed. This seeks, among other things, an improvement to the quality assurance system for institutions to ensure against emphasis being placed on intellectual education above moral education, and scores over quality.

The Evaluation Reform Plan mandates improvement to the evaluation of kindergartens focusing on scientific care, education, standardised operation, safety and sanitation. It prohibits 'advanced learning' for students, such as kindergarten students studying course materials from primary school level. Guidelines will be developed for the quality assessment of care and education in kindergartens.

For primary and secondary schools, the Plan seeks a greater focus on students' all-round development, and improvements to achieve a 'harmonious education environment' and a 'modern school system with fewer academic burdens and greater social satisfaction'. The government is to formulate standards for evaluating the quality of schools providing compulsory education and regular senior secondary education.

At vocational level, some of the new policies introduced in the [National Vocational Education Reform Plan](#) are re-stated in the Evaluation Reform Plan to ensure their inclusion in future evaluation. For example, the policies of: 'double-qualified teachers'⁴; '1+X'⁵; and 'industry-institution integration'. Enterprises are encouraged to be involved in educational evaluation.

Evaluation of higher education institutions (colleges and universities) will be performed based on the type of institution (eg. a research-oriented university will be evaluated differently to a teacher training college). The evaluation of undergraduate education will take into consideration factors such as the ideological and political education provided, teacher-student ratio, number of courses

² Senior Highschool Entrance Exam

³ National College Entrance Exam

⁴ The term 'Double-qualified Teachers' refers to teachers with both knowledge and applied skills. In October 2019, the Ministry of Education and three other ministries/agencies published an implementation plan on the development of Double-qualified Teachers. The document sets the target of Double-qualified Teachers making up more than 50% of the vocational education teacher workforce for coursework by 2022.

⁵ The "1+X" mechanism, proposed in the Vocational Education Reform Plan, allows vocational institutions and universities to offer an educational qualification plus a number of skills certificates. The model has been tested at select institutions since March 2019.

per student, guidance for dissertations, student management and services, student participation, and graduate outcomes (eg. graduate development and employer satisfaction). Quantitative indicators such as the number of papers published, cited and awarded, or a teacher's study abroad experience, will be considered *less* in the evaluation process of undergraduate education.

The Plan also mandates the formulation of measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the [Double First-Class Initiative](#)⁶.

The evaluation of a higher education institution's international collaboration will be improved by lifting the quality (rather than quantity) of exchange/collaboration, joint ventures and by bringing in talent from abroad.

Seeking students with good moral character and well-roundedness

The Evaluation Reform Plan highlights the importance of reforming student evaluation to ensure the education system is producing 'well-rounded individuals'. A well-rounded individual, according to the Plan, is someone with good morals, intellectual and physical capabilities, artistic appreciation abilities, as well as a healthy work ethic and competence in work skills.

The Plan seeks to improve the evaluation of moral education. 'Moral education' is a compulsory course for primary and junior high school students in China.⁷ The course covers six aspects: personal development; family; school; society; country; and international community. In 2017, the textbook for the moral education course was renewed to add materials on China's traditional culture (festivals, songs, national spirit and achievements), as well as patriotic stories and content on how to be law abiding citizens.

In accordance with the Plan, students will be guided to develop, among a list of things, 'good ideological and moral quality, psychological quality and behavioral habits...'. Using IT, ways for students, parents, teachers and communities to participate in the evaluation, and 'record students' daily and outstanding performance, especially the 'practice of socialist core values', will be explored.

The Evaluation Reform Plan seeks improvement in the proportion of sports, arts and labour assessment in student testing, including in the Zhongkao. In the days after the Plan was released, a set of guidelines was issued by the CPC Central Committee and State Council on strengthening and improving physical and aesthetic education in schools in the new era.⁸ According to the guidelines, schools must ensure students undertake one hour of physical education at school, and one hour

⁶ The Double First Class Initiative is China's long term plan initiated in 2015 to elevate its higher education system. The detailed list includes 42 universities and 465 disciplines from 140 universities. The full list in English can be found in one of our policy updates - <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/international-network/china/PolicyUpdates-China/Pages/Double-First-Class-university-and-discipline-list-policy-update.aspx>

⁷ The course is called "Moral and rule of law", which was unified in 2016 from the previous "Moral and life" and "Moral ideology". People's Republic of China, Ministry of Education, '关于2016年中小学教学用书有关事项的通知' (unofficial translation: 'Notice on matters related to textbooks for primary and secondary schools in 2016'), 28 April 2016, http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A26/moe_714/201604/t20160428_241261.html

⁸ People's Republic of China, Ministry of Education, '《中共中央办公厅 国务院办公厅关于全面加强和改进新时代学校体育工作的意见》的通知' (unofficial translation: 'Opinions of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Sports Work in the New Era'), 15 October 2020. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xgk/moe_1777/moe_1778/202010/t20201015_494794.html

outside of school, every day and include physical education assessment into grading for junior and senior high school.

Examination processes will be steadily reformed under the Plan to facilitate the all-round development of students. 'Relatively rigid test forms' will be changed, and more open-ended questioning used rather than that which requires rote memorization, in Zhongkao and Gaokao. In addition, a database will be established for high school students to record their 'comprehensive capability', and eventually the current admissions model (which takes into consideration exam results only) will be converted into a model that looks at the comprehensive ability of a student.

International cooperation on education evaluation

Under the Plan, relevant entities in China will actively conduct international cooperation in education evaluation, including by participating in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the education objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Evaluation Reform Plan is expected to play an integral role in China's long-term education development. It offers a glimpse of what may be included in the Education 14th Five Year Plan, which should be released in early 2022.⁹

The Education and Research Section is aware of local level governments already responding to calls in the Plan by adding more physical education and art courses into school curricula, and emphasizing 'moral' education and assessment using different means. Yunnan Province, for example, has increased the weighting of the physical examination to match the weighting given to mathematics, Chinese and English in its Zhongkao. Jiangxi Province¹⁰, Tianjin Municipality¹¹ and Guangzhou City¹² have also all announced an increase to the proportion of physical/health testing in its Zhongkao.

It is expected that more detailed planning documents will be released over coming months from both national and provincial governments to guide implementation of the Evaluation Reform Plan.

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

⁹ The Education 13th FYP was released in Jan 2017, one year after the Overall 13th FYP was released in March 2016.

¹⁰ People's Republic of China, Education Department of Jiangxi Province, '关于做好 2020 年初中毕业生升学体育考试工作的通知' (Unofficial translation: 'Notice on conducting physical education examination for junior high school graduation examination in 2020'), January 2020, http://jyt.jiangxi.gov.cn/art/2020/1/9/art_25661_1714198.html

¹¹ People's Republic of China, Tianjin Municipal Education Commission, '市教委发布《天津市推进高中阶段学校考试招生制度改革的实施意见》' (Unofficial translation: 'The Municipal Education Commission issues the Implementation plan of Tianjin to promote the reform of the Senior High School Entrance Examinations system'), February 2019, http://jy.tj.gov.cn/JYXW/TJJY/202007/t20200710_2789103.html

¹² People's Republic of China, Guangzhou Education Bureau, '广州市教育局关于印发广州市初中学业水平考试体育与健康考试实施意见的通知' (unofficial translation: 'Notice of the Guangzhou Education Bureau on issuing the opinions on the implementation of physical and health examination of the city's junior high school graduation examination'), August 2019, http://jyj.gz.gov.cn/gkmlpt/content/5/5492/post_5492468.html#243