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Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and
Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific**

in conjunction with the

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Country Report

CHINA

**Regular Report on the Implementation of
Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in
Higher Education in Asia and Pacific Region**

**Office of Academic Degree Committee of the State Council
Academic Degree Administration and Graduate Education
Department of the Ministry of Education**

People's Republic of China

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1. Introduction

1.1 Major types of higher education

1.1.1 Higher education in China consists of three types: regular higher education, adult higher education and higher vocational education. In China institutions of higher education refer to universities and various kinds of specialized full-time colleges.

1.1.2 The academic degree administration system in China is run on three different levels: relevant bodies of both central and local governments as well as degree-granting institutions.

1.1.3 Regular institutions of higher learning include comprehensive universities, specialized universities and colleges, junior colleges or advanced vocational schools. Senior high school graduates or students with equivalent qualifications may be

admitted into universities for education in various subjects. The founding of universities shall be approved by the State.

1.1.4 The length of studies varies for education at different levels: university education usually lasts four years while a number of universities and colleges offer courses that last five years or even longer. Junior college and higher vocational education normally lasts two to three years. Postgraduate students consist of Master's degree students and Doctor's degree students. Master's degree students usually study for two to three years while it takes three to four years for Doctor's degree students to complete their studies.

1.1.5 In China most of the universities and colleges divide their academic year into two semesters with the first semester starting in September and the second semester starting in February of the following year. Summer and winter vacations are legal school holidays, so are such national holidays and festivals as New Year's Day, International Labor Day (May the first), International Children's Day (June the first) and National Day (October the first). But some universities and colleges follow the system of shorter semesters.

1.2 Degree and Postgraduate Education

1.2.1 In 1980 the Regulations concerning Academic Degrees in the People's Republic of China was deliberated on and passed at the Thirteenth Session of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress (NPC) of China. In 1981 the State Council approved the Interim Measures for Implementation of the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Academic Degrees, which lays down the academic standards for Bachelor's, Master's and doctor's degrees and stipulates that the State have the authority to deliberate on and approve of granting degrees, thus establishing the academic degree system in new China.

1.2.2 Over the past twenty years, China has independently produced a large number of university graduates with Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees and Doctor's degrees, which is an internationally remarkable achievement in degree and postgraduate education and provides qualified high-caliber personnel for the construction of its modernization.

1.2.3 China has established a degree-granting system which covers almost all academic disciplines and basically guarantees the quality of various academic degrees. Degree-granting institutions confer academic degrees in relevant disciplines in accordance with the Catalogue of Academic Disciplines Which Offer Doctor's and Master's Degrees and Postgraduate Courses.

At the moment there are over 1,105,000 postgraduate students in China, including 208,000 Doctor's degree students. 797 academic institutions throughout the country

are authorized to grant Master's degree (of which 530 are universities and colleges) and 362 institutions are authorized to grant Doctor's degree (of which 291 are universities and colleges). 56 universities have established schools of graduate studies, granting degrees in the twelve academic disciplines of philosophy, economics, law, education, literature, history, science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, military science and management. The sixteen professional degrees on offer are Master of Business Administration, Bachelor and Master of Architecture, Master of Law, Master of Education, Master of Engineering, Doctor and Master of Medicine, Master of Public Administration, Master of Agricultural Extension, Doctor and Master of Veterinary Science, Doctor and Master of Stomatological Medicine, Master of Public Hygiene, Master of Military Science, Master of Professional Accounting, Master of Fine Arts and Master of Sports Science. Those who have the equivalent qualifications may also apply for Master's and Doctor's degrees through proper procedures.

1.2.4 In 1990 the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council passed the Interim Provisions on Granting Master and Doctor's Degrees to Off-Campus Students with Equivalent Postgraduate Qualifications and detailed measures for its implementation. In 1998 the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council also issued Regulations concerning Granting Master and Doctor's Degrees to People with Equivalent Postgraduate Qualifications, which elaborates upon the qualifications of the applicants, procedures for the acceptance of their applications and granting them academic degrees, as well as the evaluation and approval of institutions which are authorized to do so. According to the Regulations, applicants should have at least five years of working experience in the relevant and related field and have recently published academic theses on domestic or international academic journals or academic books which are of great significance to their work. To ensure quality, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council annually administers the national English test and comprehensive professional tests.

1.3 Admissions

1.3.1 The admissions of regular institutions of higher education

1.3.1.1 Basic requirements

Chinese citizens who apply for the National Matriculation Test must abide by the constitution and law of the People's Republic of China. They should be senior high school graduates or those with equivalent educational qualifications and in good health.

1.3.1.2 The National Matriculation Test

In China a strict matriculation test system ensures the quality of students who receive higher education (both regular and adult higher education). Higher education consists

of two-year college education, four-year university education and postgraduate education. Currently reform of the National Matriculation Test is being implemented. Items evaluating the overall quality of applicants have been increasingly added in the designing of the test. Attention is being paid to ensure that the content of the test is relevant to reality and the test is designed to measure the examinee's true ability. In terms of means of enrollment, online enrollment has been adopted.

As for universities and colleges which are located in the ethnic autonomous regions and use ethnic languages, the matriculation test and its test paper are designed and administered separately by the relevant government bodies of these ethnic autonomous regions.

1.3.2 Levels of higher education

1.3.2.1 Non-degree education (normally lasting two to three years)

Students who study on short-term university training courses, in short-cycle vocational colleges, universities of adult education or on two-year education program will be conferred accredited diplomas or certificates of graduation instead of academic degrees after they have completed all the required courses and passed the examinations.

1.3.2.2 Degree education (normally lasting four years)

Bachelor's degrees will be conferred upon university students who have completed all the undergraduate courses required by the teaching plan and are allowed to graduate after passing all the required examinations, with results of their studies and graduation theses indicating that they have a good command of the basic theories in their respective disciplines and have the basic ability to carry out scientific research or technical work.

1.3.2.3 Education leading to Master's and Doctor's degrees

Master's degrees will be conferred on Bachelor's degree holders or any other candidates with equivalent qualifications who have studied in an accredited Master's degree granting institution for two to three years after taking the National Entrance Test for MA/MS Candidates successfully, and have passed tests of all the graduate courses as well as thesis defense with results indicating that they are well grounded in the basic theories and have systematically acquired special knowledge in their own fields, and are capable of carrying out scientific research or professional work independently.

Doctor's degrees will be conferred on Master's degree holders or any other candidates with equivalent qualifications who have studied in an accredited Doctor's degree

granting institution for three to four years after taking the National Entrance Test for PhD Candidates successfully, and have passed examinations of all the PhD courses as well as dissertation defense with results indicating that they are well grounded in the basic theories and have systematically acquired special expertise in their own fields, are capable of carrying out scientific research independently and have made innovative achievements in science or special technology.

1.4 International exchange and cooperation

1.4.1 All-round international exchange and cooperation in education truly embodies the independent foreign policy of peace adopted by the People's Republic of China. It is one of the important ways in which China commits herself to promoting the cooperation and development of the international community. It is also an important part of China's endeavor to learn from the experience of the international community in developing and reforming education so as to facilitate China's own educational development and reform.

China's educational exchange and cooperation with other countries is guaranteed by law. Education Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that "the State encourages foreign exchange and cooperation in education". Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that "the State encourages and supports the international exchange and cooperation in higher education". Interim Provisions for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools enunciates that "the State encourages joint cooperation in education between Chinese educational institutions and foreign educational institutions whose academic standards and quality of teaching are generally recognized. The State also encourages Chinese-foreign cooperation in education in new and urgently needed academic fields as well as in western regions, remote and poor regions of China".

China's international exchange and cooperation in education involves the government, educational institutions and private organizations in multilateral and bilateral forms. The Chinese Government has been actively taking part in the work of UNESCO and has undertaken a number of cooperative programs with UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank. The Chinese Government has signed documents on educational exchange and cooperation with over 170 countries and regions. Chinese educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities have established cooperative relations with their counterparts in many foreign countries. Chinese universities, in particular, have started multilateral cooperation with foreign universities and enterprises. At present private educational exchange organizations in China have been actively carrying out bilateral and multilateral exchange activities. China Education Association for International Exchange has so far established friendly and mutually-beneficial exchange and cooperative relations with over 170 organizations or groups in 53 countries and regions around the world.

At the moment China's international exchange and cooperation in education include teacher exchanges, student exchanges, cooperative research and jointly running schools. China sends teachers to a number of countries and recruits teachers from foreign countries as well. China is the country in the world which sends out the largest number of students for overseas studies. Between 1978 and 2006, China sent 1,067,000 students to study in foreign countries and regions, of which 275,000 have completed their overseas studies and returned home. At the same time China is also one of the countries in the world which take in a large number of foreign students. In 2006 there are over 160,000 foreign students pursuing their studies in China. Almost all kinds of institutions of higher education in China have established various forms of cooperative relations including joint research with foreign institutions of higher education.

1.4.2 Types of foreign students to be admitted and conditions for their admissions

1.4.2.1 Foreign students must abide by Chinese laws and decrees, comply with the rules and regulations of the universities and colleges where they study, and respect the Chinese customs.

1.4.2.2 The undergraduate student: the successful candidate should possess educational qualifications equivalent to those of a Chinese senior high school graduate and be under twenty-five years of age. The length of undergraduate studies is four to six years.

1.4.2.3 The Master's degree student: the successful candidate should possess educational qualifications equivalent to those of a Chinese university graduate (Bachelor's degree) and normally be under thirty-five years of age. The candidate's university graduation diploma and Bachelor's degree need to be evaluated and accredited. If the candidate wants to study for a Master's degree in the same university where he or she has completed his or her undergraduate studies or in another university, he or she has to pass the Entrance Test for MA/MS Candidates. The candidate may be exempt from the Test if he or she is an excellent university graduate and is recommended for and approved of such exemption. The length of MA/MS course is two to three years.

The Doctor's degree student: the successful candidate should possess educational qualifications equivalent to those of a Chinese Master's degree holder and be under forty years of age. He or she should be recommended by two full or associate professors and approved by the university he or she applies to. The length of Doctor's degree course is three to four years.

1.4.2.4 Admissions

Chinese universities and colleges are responsible for examining the qualifications of

foreign applicants, testing or evaluating their ability and decide on their admissions.

1.4.2.5 The language requirement

Those who have to use Chinese in their degree education must learn the Chinese language first and pass the Chinese Language Proficiency Test before carrying out their professional studies.

1.4.2.6 Academic degrees and certificates

Upon completing studies and passing required tests, students will be granted graduation diploma and awarded Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or Doctor's degree respectively in accordance with the Regulations concerning Academic Degrees in the People's Republic of China. Those who fail to pass the tests will be given a certificate of graduate studies.

2. The State policies and measures concerning mutual accreditation of higher education degrees and diplomas

2.1 Accreditation of foreign degrees and diplomas

The Academic Degree Committee of the State Council authorizes the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange to take charge of the accreditation of foreign degrees and diplomas.

2.1.1 Bilateral agreements on mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas

The Chinese Government always believes that mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees and the signing relevant bilateral agreements between two countries are of great realistic significance to promoting personnel exchanges around the world. As a signatory of Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and Pacific Region, China actively develops bilateral cooperation with other countries in its endeavor to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations stipulated by the Convention. In 2006 China signed cooperative agreements and memoranda on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees with Ireland and Kazakhstan as well as Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick of Canada. So by the end of 2006 China had signed agreements on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees with twenty-seven countries and regions. Besides, China is now holding relevant talks with Sweden, Denmark, South Korea, Spain, Mexico, Thailand, Singapore and India, and has done a great deal of groundwork for the signing of agreements on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees. The Chinese Government also encourages and supports domestic universities to carry out exchanges and cooperation with foreign universities.

As to the students who have studied in universities accredited by the above-mentioned countries and regions, the Chinese Government will recognize their studies, diplomas and degrees, provided they are able to submit transcripts of their studies and valid certifications.

2.1.2 Many countries have not yet signed agreements with China on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees. However, the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) has already collected information of some of those countries and therefore can provide relevant service. By the end of 2006 CSCSE had received enquiries about accreditation from hundreds of thousands of people and had appraised and accredited 60,888 foreign diplomas and degrees of returned Chinese students, thus facilitating their effort to find jobs and reorient to life back at home. With more and more enquiries about the accreditation of foreign degrees and diplomas over the recent years, the number of foreign degrees and diplomas accredited has increased substantially. In 2006 CSCSE received requests for appraising 30,114 foreign diplomas and degrees, of which 27,128 were accredited. This represents an increase of 45.4 percent and 41.2 respectively over the same period in 2005. Of those foreign degrees and diplomas accredited, Doctor's degrees, Master's degrees and Bachelor's degrees account for 6.68%, 68.92% and 22.14% respectively. The number of applicants from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as well as from foreign countries also increased over that of last year.

With years of endeavor, CSCSE has established extensive ties with overseas universities and colleges as well as relevant organizations. With the assistance of the Education Section of the Chinese Embassies around the world and of the Education Department of various foreign embassies in China, CSCSE has set up a reference room with comprehensive data about foreign institutions of higher education. In addition, CSCSE started its national online application system for accreditation of foreign diplomas and degrees in 2006. After a year-long test run, the online application system is now well accepted by people from various social circles and returned Chinese students, which to some extent helps to standardize the application procedures, promote efficiency and improve the work of accrediting foreign diplomas and degrees.

2.2 The accreditation agency of Chinese studies, degrees and diplomas

With more and more Chinese students studying and working in foreign countries over the recent years, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China approved in 2004 of establishing China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Development Center (CADGEDC) with a special department in charge of the accreditation of Chinese diplomas and degrees. China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Development Center has established extensive ties with both foreign and domestic universities and colleges, and establishes relations with more foreign

embassies and organizations in China which require accreditation of Chinese diplomas and degrees so as to expand international cooperation. The Center has established cooperative relations with a dozen of foreign countries, twelve foreign embassies (consulates) to China and twelve foreign universities. In addition, it also has steady cooperation with a dozen of overseas accreditation institutions. With emphasis on quality and efficiency, CADGEDC did more and more accreditation work in 2006, completing accreditation of foreign degrees for 13,813 applicants and submitting over 30,000 accreditation reports.

To facilitate application and enquiry process and to improve efficiency so as to ensure the quality of accreditation, China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Development Center has jointly developed an online accreditation application and management system with an Internet company. The system has been officially put into operation this year.

3. Problems existing in the accreditation of studies, diplomas and degrees in higher education

3.1 As countries vary in their educational and degree systems, there are quite different views about education and qualifications. Differences in school systems, degree standards, the division of disciplines, admissions, teaching plan, the designing of courses, the content of teaching and the quality of students all add to the difficulty in mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees.

3.2 Even in the same country there are differences in degrees and levels of education among different types of schools and universities. For example, there are differences between full-time and part-time universities as well as between public and private universities. All these universities confer degrees and certificates of graduation, some of which are not even recognized by their own governments. This greatly reduces the comparability of studies, diplomas and degrees among different countries.

3.3 Information exchanges among countries on educational and degree systems are quite limited. Furthermore, new changes are taking place in the educational and degree systems of many countries, which requires more information exchanges.

4. Suggestions

4.1 All the signatories of the Convention should further expand international cooperation between one another, fully understand the academic degree system and graduate education system of other countries, and learn from the success of other countries in their reform of higher education. On the basis of agreements on mutual recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees, the governments of all the signatories should actively explore effective ways of expanding exchanges and strengthening cooperation in research over degree equivalency, degree accreditation and quality assurance system, and further enhance mutual-trust and expand cooperation.

4.2 In order to adapt to the trend of globalization and to promote educational and economic cooperation, all countries should actively expedite the mutual recognition of diplomas and degrees as well as facilitate personnel exchanges.

4.3. An appraisal and accreditation system should be set up in the Asian and Pacific region and the renowned institutions be entrusted to evaluate the quality of education in this region so as to establish the same criteria.

4.4 All signatories of the Convention should strive to upgrade their information system, provide fast and convenient accreditation enquiry service, continue to improve the standardization and accuracy of accreditation, and promote exchanges and mutual trust between and among one another.

4.5 China is willing to open up to all the countries, especially to the Asian and Pacific countries, and to strengthen cooperation in higher education with mutual recognition of diplomas and degrees. China welcomes all the people concerned in the Asian and Pacific countries to come to China for studies, research and educational cooperation.