

UK-China Higher Education Workshop

Blended Teaching and Learning

This forum aimed to share best practice in blended teaching and learning from both the UK and China. The panel discussed the challenges of the pandemic and solutions that a blended learning model offered and could continue to offer in the future.

Context setting

Both the Chinese Ministry of Education and the UK's Department for Education provided brief summaries of the situation to date with regard to blended teaching and learning. Both countries praised their Higher Education providers for their swift responses to the pandemic and ability to move to a blended teaching and learning model. Whilst there have been clear benefits to this increased focus on blended learning, both sides acknowledged that there is space for both countries to work together to share best practice and support each other to ensure continuous innovation.

Pandemic inspired innovation

- Online and blended learning models proved to be one of the key innovations during the pandemic period, integral to maintaining teaching and learning when face-to-face teaching was not an option.
- Most universities have adopted online teaching approaches such as video seminars through Zoom or Tencent, as well as synchronous and asynchronous approaches to teaching and learning.
- Institutions have explored innovations such as virtual summer schools and utilising real-time student feedback systems.
- Both UK and Chinese universities have created real solutions during a global crisis, solutions that can deliver value post-pandemic.

Key challenges in blended teaching and learning

- Students and faculty will need to become proficient in using new technologies if a blended model is to be successful.
- Accessibility is also a pressing issue. Access to computing equipment is a prerequisite for blended learning and not all students necessarily have access to computers, networks etc. at home.
- Education providers will need to expand their tech infrastructure if they are to fully utilise blended learning and teaching approaches. This includes ensuring staff are trained in using the technology once it is in place.

Opportunities for the future

- Changes started by necessity have brought benefits that HEIs hope to keep going forwards post-pandemic. Institutions have discovered that a blended learning model offers unexpected new ways of building engagement, both within universities and internationally.

- Industry 4.0 was a discussion point before the pandemic, but Covid-19 has accelerated progress towards it. The education sector will increasingly look to emerging disruptive technologies such as AI and cloud computing for both the management of institutions and evolving the classroom.

Background

The 2021 China Annual Conference for International Education and Expo (CACIE 2021) was held in Beijing on 21 and 22 October 2021. The event was also streamed online for guests outside of China. This report covers one of 30 fora that took place over the two days, with this event focussing on blended teaching and learning.

The forum brought together Speakers from a range of key organisations involved in the UK-China education relationship. Representatives from the Chinese Ministry of Education, the UK Department for Education, the British Council, the Department for International Trade and CEAIE contributed to the event, as well as keynote speakers from a range of UK and Chinese universities.