

Press release

Young and Global: First ever UK-China Student Forum to take place in Beijing

The inaugural UK-China Student Forum on International Education will take place on 7th May 2013 at Beijing's prestigious Peking University. Organised by the British Council in partnership with China Youth Daily, two teams of students from across the UK and China will get together to discuss the big issues directly affecting their education and their futures.

Providing a platform for young leaders from both countries to examine themes like employability, technology in education as well as barriers to international education and global mobility, the forum is designed to encourage students from China and the UK to share ideas and experience, and explore opportunities for stronger connections now and in the future.

Eight UK students were selected from over 300 applications by a panel of judges representing education and business. The students will travel to Beijing to join their Chinese counterparts for a packed programme of team-building activities, including the chance to meet and pose questions to Chinese policy adviser Zhang Xiaojing, Director of Macroeconomics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Chief Specialist of China's National social science projects. The students will also meet with entrepreneurial Britons in China, to learn more about where an international education and outlook can lead, and they will participate in a class at a Chinese university and pay a visit to Chinese multinational electronics company Lenovo.

At the close of the week's activities, the students will present as a group their experiences and observations. As well as being an experience of a lifetime, the opinions of these student ambassadors has the potential to help shape a more sustainable and workable approach to the UK-China educational relationship, and set out the foundations for future dialogue and cooperation. At the same time, by drawing attention to student opinion, it is hoped the forum will raise awareness amongst the wider public of the value of a global outlook and international experience, and further enhance mutually beneficial relationships between the UK and China.

The forum comes at a time when student movement between the UK and China has never been more important. The UK is the world's second largest market for international education; there are over 100,000 Chinese students currently studying in the UK. China sends out the most students into the world with 14 per cent of the world's study abroad students according to figures from 2012 by Center for China and Globalization (CCG) and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Additionally, in recent years China has become a major host country for international students.

Although over half a million Britons now visit China annually, the number of UK students studying in China remains low, at just 3,500 in 2011. With the continued growth in education quality in China, the forum will also look at the widening opportunities for UK students in the country, the value of academic exchange or study programmes, and the need for UK students to develop a wider understanding of an important player in today's world, and become more globally competitive in the process.

Underlining the British Council's ongoing commitment to promoting international opportunities to students in the UK, the forum is part of a wider 3-year campaign set to launch in June 2013 by the British Council China, called Generation UK. This project, sponsored by BIS as well as other corporate partners, will aim to encourage global perspectives and a competitive advantage in skills development for UK students, and to help shape students into international citizens and ambassadors for the UK.

Jazreel Goh, Director of Education Marketing at British Council China, set out her hopes for the forum: “Academic exchanges between the UK and China should be happening at all levels. The issues surrounding international education affects students from the UK and China in equal measure and above all it is their voices that will determine the future educational relationship between the UK and China. Through cross-cultural understanding and international experience, both sets of students will be able to develop the skills to compete on the world stage.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS**About Generation UK**

'Generation UK', a new campaign launched by the British Council in China, is part of a three year outward student mobility project aimed at encouraging more students in the UK to undertake study and/or internship placements in emerging economies such as China. Through interning or studying abroad, UK students can acquire global mindsets and competitive skills, thereby positioning themselves more advantageously in the international labour market.

View the Generation UK video here: <http://vimeo.com/57503226>

We are grateful to the Department for Business, Skills and Innovation (BIS) for supporting and sponsoring the Generation UK programme.

To be a sponsor of Generation UK please contact: Ms Jazreel Goh at jazreel.goh@britishcouncil.org.cn

About the British Council

The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are a Royal Charter charity, established as the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. Our 7000 staff in over 100 countries work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes. Our first office in China opened in 1943 and we work in four cities in mainland China. In Beijing we operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy. In Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing we operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the British Consulates-General. For more information, please visit www.britishcouncil.org.cn

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