

???(9?19?)??

A mother who sent her daughter off from Beijing said she was "very grateful" for the charter flight.

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She said: "We were worried when my child got the student visa because the pandemic makes international travel difficult and risky. Then we heard the news that QUB will arrange a charter flight. We were so happy. And the ticket price is fair enough."

[illegible]

According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, last year the number of students from China studying in UK higher education surpassed 120,000 for the first time, accounting for more than one in every three non-European Union students. The total number of Chinese students studying in the UK is now more than 220,000, Chinese government figures show.

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These students contribute 4 billion pounds to the UK's economy per year in tuition fees and other spending such as accommodation, a BBC report said.

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The report also said since the pandemic began, UK universities have been worried about major financial losses if Chinese students withdraw from their courses in the new academic year in the fall, amid concern over high COVID-19 infection rates and a high death toll in the UK.

[illegible]

According to a forecast by the University of Manchester, cancellations can range from 12 percent to 61 percent, and "anxiety" over whether it is safe to travel to the UK outweighs other concerns.

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"To alleviate anxiety and stress about traveling for the new academic year, Queen's was one of the first universities in the UK to put together a direct charter flight to bring our students directly to Belfast," vice-chancellor Greer said in his welcome message.

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A one-way ticket for the QUB charter flight was 616 pounds.

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A cat relaxes next to a student at the Old Bodleian Library buildings, Oxford University, ahead of the new academic year, amidst the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in Oxford, Britain, Sept 17, 2020. [Photo/Agencies]

Students were required to take COVID-19 tests 48 hours before departure and needed to provide negative results to board the plane. After landing, they were transported directly from the airport to their campus and provided with quarantine accommodation.

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More than 20 universities in the United Kingdom have joined together to charter flights for Chinese students to Britain. The UK had earlier declared it would treat Chinese students the same as those from the European Union for visa purposes. The flights through Hainan Airlines will ferry students from Chongqing to Manchester in time for the start of semester at the end of September.

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Discussions are believed to be ongoing for more British universities to charter flights from China, India and Africa to

encourage international students to return in this academic year, several media outlets have reported.

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Canada's Sheridan College is offering students a refund if they are unhappy with their online tuition during the coronavirus pandemic in a bid to keep them on the books.

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International students from China wear graduation gowns as they take pictures around the University of Sydney's campus, where they studied for their masters degree, after their in-person graduation ceremony was cancelled during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Sydney, Australia, July 4, 2020. [Photo/Agencies]

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Universities overseas are chartering flights for thousands of Chinese international students to return to their studies, leaving Australia racing to keep up with its top competitors, Britain, the US and Canada, in its third biggest export industry.

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As Australian universities endured a horror-week of staff layoffs as border closures continued to cripple their budgets, China's Ministry of Education has also begun plans to recognise degrees partially completed at overseas universities in its own institutions, eliminating the need for some international students to return to Australia.

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The Ministry on Thursday told Chinese state media it would allow universities to accept students studying abroad to study in domestic universities "on the premise of ensuring education equity".

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Phil Honeywood, chief executive of International Education Association of Australia, said there was a "real danger" Australia would lose substantial numbers of international students for semester one next year.

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In the year to June, applications to study in Australia declined by 46 percent from India, 60 percent from Nepal and 20 percent from China compared to the previous year, data published by the Department of Home Affairs shows.

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The Australian National University in Canberra announced last week that 215 jobs would be cut, in addition to 250 voluntary redundancies. The University of NSW also confirmed it would move to axe 256 full-time positions, or 3.8 percent of the university's workforce, in a bid to find \$39 million in savings.

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RMIT University confirmed on Thursday it had accepted 355 voluntary redundancies, but said it could be forced to shed 250 more jobs before the year is out.

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Meanwhile, the University of Sydney announced plans for voluntary redundancies as it forecast a \$550 million hit to overall student revenue over the next four years.

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The National Tertiary Education Union estimates more than 11,000 jobs have been cut to date by universities in response to the COVID-19 crisis, while Universities Australia has forecast as many as 21,000 full-time positions could go by early next year.

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