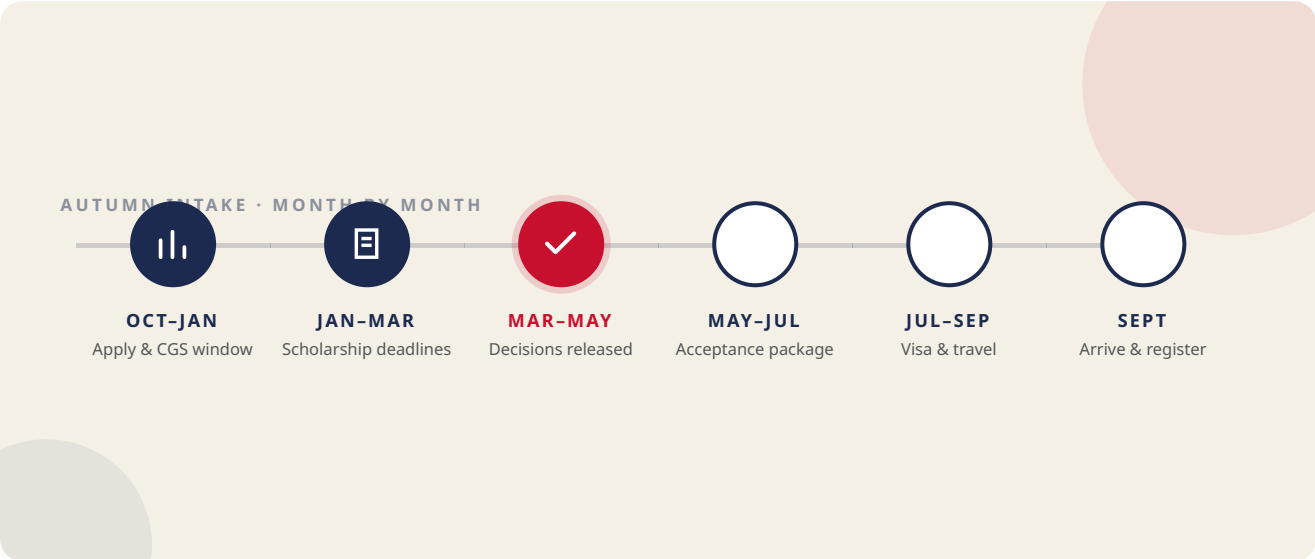
THE CHINA HELPER

FREE STUDENT RESOURCE



China University Application Timeline

Every deadline from twelve months out to your first day on campus — six phases, plus the documents you must have ready before the window even opens.

PHASES
From applications opening in October to registration in September

DOCUMENTS
What to notarise, and why it is the most common reason people miss out

FUNDING
Scholarship deadlines that differ from admission deadlines

AFTERWARDS
What arrives in the acceptance package, and what follows from it

THE CORE TIMELINE

A typical autumn intake

Oct – Jan — **Applications open**

Most international programmes open their intake now, and the Chinese Government Scholarship window usually falls in this period. Shortlist universities and open accounts on each university's own online portal.

Jan – Mar — **Scholarship and funded deadlines**

University scholarship and self-funded deadlines cluster here. Submit your notarised documents inside this window — and note that the funding deadline is often not the same date as the admission deadline.

Mar – May — **Decisions and scholarship results**

Admission decisions and scholarship outcomes are released. Most portals show a status; if yours stays silent for more than about six weeks, a polite email to the international office is entirely reasonable.

May – Jul — **The acceptance package arrives**

Your Admission Notice and the JW201 or JW202 form — the two documents your entire visa depends on. Check every detail immediately: a misspelled name here follows you through the visa and the residence permit, and correcting it after dispatch can take weeks.

Jul – Sep — **Visa and travel**

Pay your deposit or tuition as instructed, apply for the student visa, book accommodation and plan your arrival.

September — **Registration on campus**

Register with your university, then start the residence permit process within 30 days of entry.

Spring intake runs in parallel, roughly six months earlier — February or March start, applications around June to September. Always confirm dates on the specific university's own page: this timeline is a general pattern, not a promise.

WORKING BACKWARDS

What to do before the window even opens

10–12 months — **Decide, then start the language if you need it**

Settle your degree level, language route and budget. If you are aiming for a Chinese-taught programme, HSK preparation is a year-long job, not a month-long one.

6–9 months — **Begin the slow paperwork**

Start notarising your degree certificate and transcripts, ask your referees while you still have time, and draft your study plan around the actual programme page.

3–6 months — **Shortlist and sit any test**

Narrow three to five universities, mixing ambitious and safe options. Open a portal account at each. Sit IELTS, TOEFL or HSK far enough ahead to retake it if necessary.

0–3 months — **Submit, then track**

Submit well before the deadline and keep the fee receipt. Check each portal for a status, and do not assume silence means rejection.

TWELVE MONTHS OUT

Three decisions before you apply

Degree level and subject

- [ ] China is strongest in engineering, medicine, business, computer science and Chinese language
- [ ] English-taught postgraduate degrees are widespread; undergraduate options are more limited
- [ ] Many undergraduates begin with a foundation or language year

Language of instruction

- [ ] English-taught admits you without Chinese, but daily life still runs in Chinese
- [ ] Chinese-taught generally requires HSK 4 or 5
- [ ] Some universities waive IELTS or TOEFL if your previous degree was taught in English

City and budget belong in this list too. Tuition and living costs differ sharply between Beijing, Shanghai and mid-tier cities — decide your budget first and let it narrow the list, rather than falling for a city you cannot sustain for four years.

WHERE TO LOOK

Finding programmes and funding

SOURCE	WHAT IT IS BEST FOR
University websites	Programme lists, supervisor contacts and current fees — the most reliable starting point if you already have a target
China Scholarship Council portal	The Chinese Government Scholarship route: tuition, accommodation, monthly stipend and medical insurance
Provincial and university pages	Less visible awards that are sometimes less competitive than the national scheme

Be careful with agency sites. Some are legitimate; others charge for information universities publish for free. Anything asking for a large fee to guarantee admission is a red flag.

DEADLINES

Two dates, not one

- [ ] **Admission deadline** — the university's cut-off for the programme itself
- [ ] **Scholarship deadline** — the funding cut-off, which often falls much earlier
- [ ] Write both down when you shortlist each university
- [ ] Submit well before either date — portals slow down on the final day

DOCUMENTS

The standard set

DOCUMENT	NOTES
Highest degree certificate	Usually needs notarising; some universities also require embassy legalisation
Academic transcripts	Full record, not just the final year; notarised copies are the norm
Valid passport copy	Valid for at least six months beyond your intended start date
Personal statement or study plan	Genuinely read — name the programme and the research group
Two recommendation letters	Ask early, and give your referees your CV and statement
Language certificate	IELTS or TOEFL for English programmes, HSK for Chinese-taught ones
Physical Examination Form	On the university's own form, completed by a recognised clinic
CV, and a research proposal for research degrees	Standard for most master's and PhD applications
Application fee	Typically a few hundred RMB, and usually non-refundable

Start the notarisation early. Depending on your country it can take several weeks, and it is the most common cause of missed deadlines.

SUBMITTING

The seven steps, in order

1. Shortlist three to five universities, mixing ambitious and safe options
2. Check each one actually offers your subject in your chosen language
3. Contact a supervisor if it is a research degree — the strongest signal in your file
4. Open an account on each university's international portal and save the logins
5. Complete the form so names, dates and programme codes match your documents
6. Pay the application fee and keep the receipt
7. Submit before the deadline, then track the status and follow up politely

Upload scans that are legible and the right way up. A late submission is usually rejected outright.

MASTER CHECKLIST

Every phase, at a glance

- [ ] Degree level and subject decided
- [ ] Language of instruction and any HSK target set
- [ ] Budget settled, city list narrowed
- [ ] Three to five universities shortlisted
- [ ] Both deadlines recorded for each university
- [ ] Degree certificate and transcripts notarised
- [ ] Referees asked, with CV and statement sent
- [ ] Study plan written for the specific programme
- [ ] Language certificate booked or held
- [ ] Portals opened, logins saved somewhere safe
- [ ] Application fee paid, receipt kept
- [ ] Application submitted before the deadline
- [ ] Acceptance package checked line by line
- [ ] Deposit paid, visa applied for, travel booked

Continue your China journey

Scan for the full library of free China downloads — timelines, visa checklists, budget templates and study tools.

How to Apply to Chinese Universities — *the full step-by-step guide*

Chinese Scholarships Guide — *every funding route and its deadline*

China Student Visa Guide — *what happens after acceptance*

Cost of Living in China — *realistic monthly figures by city*

NOTES — UNIVERSITY NAMES, PORTAL LOGINS, BOTH DEADLINES, REFEREE CONTACTS

AVOID THESE

Six ways applications fail

- [ ] Leaving notarisation to the last week — it is slow, and it is not optional
- [ ] A generic personal statement that could name any university
- [ ] Applying to only one university when duplicates cost almost nothing
- [ ] Missing the HSK or English requirement entirely
- [ ] Paying an agency for information the university publishes for free
- [ ] Assuming the scholarship deadline is the same as the admission deadline

Official sources: confirm every date and requirement with your target university's international admissions office, the Study in China portal, and the Chinese embassy in your country for legalisation.
Disclaimer: this timeline is general guidance. Deadlines, funding rules and requirements change from year to year and differ by programme, province and institution.
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