

# **Internationalization of Graduate Education Under the “Double First-class” Initiative: A Survey and Analysis**

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Xuemei Yuan, Guoxin Sun, Huanyu Wang, Qian Zhong  
and Fengjun Zhang

## **ABSTRACT**

The internationalization of graduate education has expanded over the last decades. Numbers of students, teaching staff and researchers that engage in cross-border mobility are increasing and institutional activities for internationalization have become more elaborate. Graduate education internationalization is the foundation and both the path and one of the goals of China’s “Double-First Class” initiative. We did a survey in 38 universities and institutions in Shandong province from 2014-2016 in order to get the picture of internationalization of graduate education and draw up a plan for further development. The result suggests that the internationalization degree of graduate education is still at a low level. A systematic framework is provided to improve the international talent cultivation of graduate students.

## **INTRODUCTION**

China’s “Double-First Class” initiative is a plan conceived from 2015, aims to ultimately build a number of world class universities and disciplines by the end of 2050, in an effort to make China an international higher education power. “Double First-Class” refers to the terms “first-class university” and “first-class discipline”, which were approved by China’s national deepening reform lead group in 2016 as a new impetus for the development of China’s higher education sector. “Double First-Class” construction manifests the top designing by means of which the government promotes university development in the new era. This marks a change of the university development mode from government selectivity to university competition. Internationalization is becoming one of the main priorities of universities in China; most universities include internationalization as a part of their strategies.

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Xuemei Yuan, Guoxin Sun, Qian Zhong, Fengjun Zhang, Graduate School,, University of Jinan, No. 336, West Road of Nan Xinzhuang, Jinan, Shandong, China  
Huanyu Wang, Degree Management and Graduate Education Office, Shandong Provincial Education Department, No.29,West Road of Culture, Jinan, Shandong, China

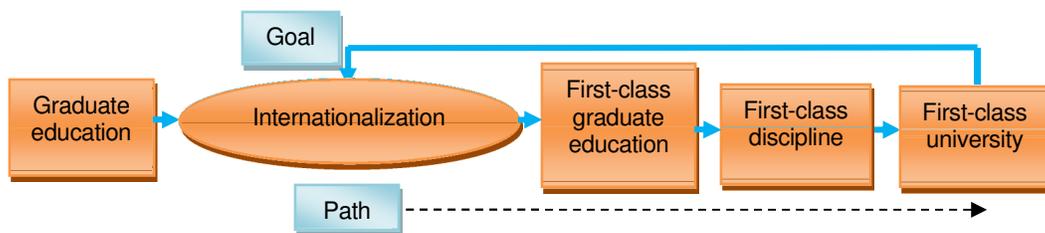


Figure 1. The Relationship between graduate education internationalization and "Double First-Class" construction.

As in Figure 1, internationalization is the basic characteristic of first-class universities, it is closely related to first-class universities and first-class disciplines; and they are promoting quality development of the university. In practice, graduate education internationalization is the foundation and both the path and one of the goals of "Double First-Class" strategy.

## TWO DIRECTIONS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

According to Knight, De Wit (1999), internationalization is “the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution” and further defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003,2011). This definition understands internationalization (1) as a process, (2) as a response to globalization, and (3) as including both international and local elements. Graduate students must be educated to define and solve societal problems both at home and abroad, thus there are two directions of graduate education internationalization, the first direction is internationalization at home, campus-based strategies are most often referred to as this situation. The second one is off campus initiatives which are called cross-border education, in other words, “going out”. Both directions have significant implications to each other.

## THE SURVEY

The government recognizes the importance of internationalizing graduate education, and puts much effort to support major initiatives and to improve the quality of talent cultivation and entrust us with the investigation.

## Method

We designed a questionnaire and did a survey on internationalization of graduate education in Shandong province in 2017. Employing 38 universities and institutions in Shandong province as samples to survey the current situation, the data is

from 2014-2016. The questionnaire includes the following key components:

- Institution construction;
- Academic mobility, such as graduate student and faculty exchange, international students et.al.
- Curriculum internationalization, such as teaching in English or bilingually, foreign expert lectures et.al.;
- International partnerships and cooperation;
- Internationalization of research;
- Joint training bases abroad;
- Typical cases.

## Result

Most universities and institutions have put forward the internationalization strategy and established some rules and regulations to promote the process of graduate education internationalization. Figure 2 partly illustrates the development of internationalization of graduate education in sample universities and institutions. The data shows that the number of supervisors and students who have international experience for at least 6 months has continued to grow by more than 10 percent a year, the number of foreign experts lectures and international conferences hosting domestically increase sharply from 2015 to 2016. But the overall result is not desired, the degree of internationalization is still at a low level, especially compared with other provinces such as Zhejiang and Jiangsu province.

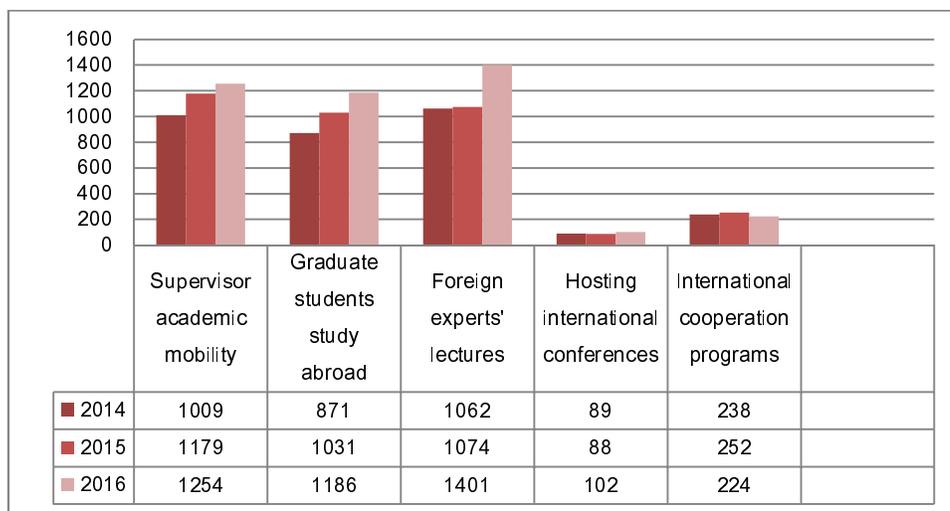


Figure 2. Development of graduate education internationalization of sample universities and institutions.

In addition, the structural imbalance of foreign students needs to be optimized. Figure 3 shows the structure of international students at Ph.D. and master degree level.

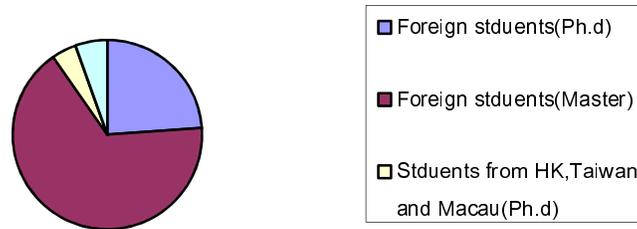


Figure 3. Structure of international graduate students.

## A SYSTEMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING THE DEGREE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

The improvement of graduate education internationalization is a systematic engineering (*see figure 4*). Students must be educated to define and solve societal problems both at home and abroad collectively, in trans-multi-, interdisciplinary and international groups. First of all, institutional innovation including incentive and restraint mechanism, quality evaluation and assurance, financial support and cost sharing mechanism is imperative. The internationalization of supervisors, curriculum modification and courses reformation are also needed. Students' learning, research and practice internationally are also quite necessary.

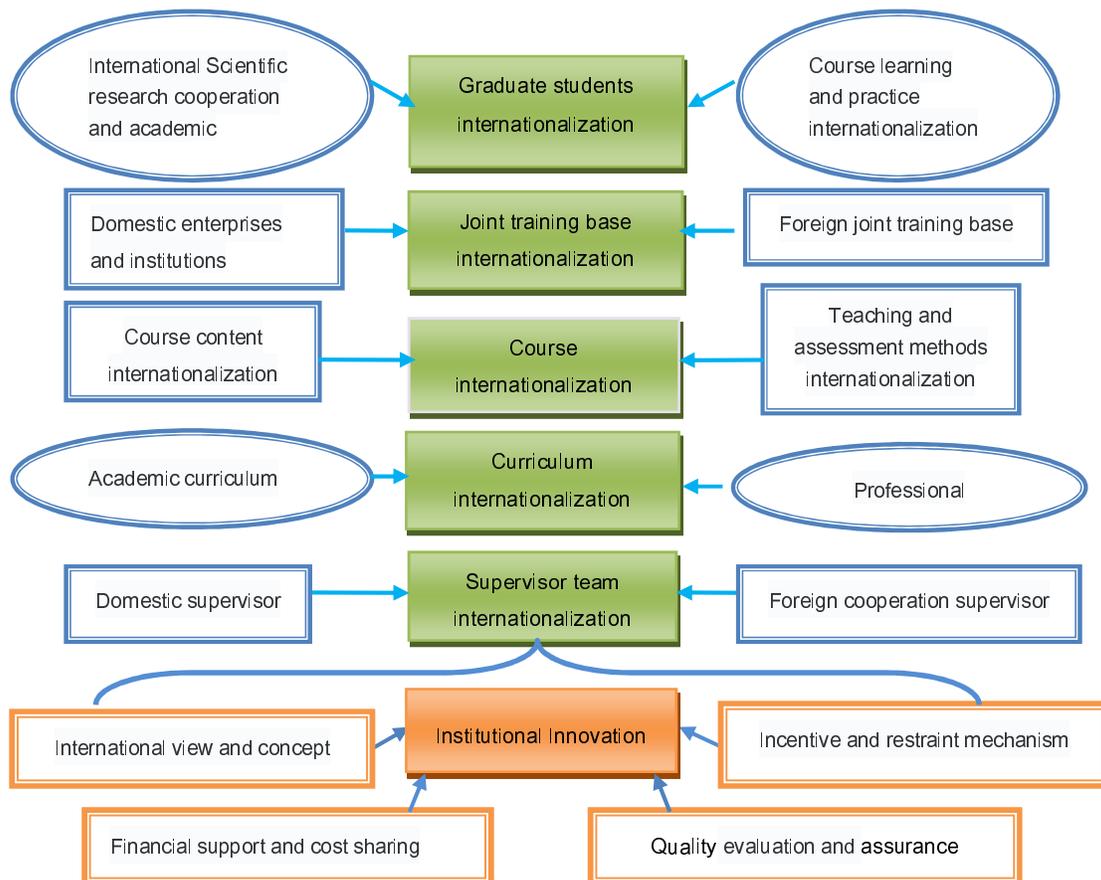


Figure 4. Systematic framework of graduate education internationalization.

Theoretical research and the survey conducted by this paper indicate that both government and universities should establish their clear internationalization strategy and policy to meet the demand for further development and “Double First-Class” construction.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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