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## Reconstructing One-Stop Student Communities for Study-Abroad Preparation in Chinese Higher Education: A Qualitative Case Study

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**ABSTRACT:** *As the internationalization of higher education continues to accelerate, universities are becoming increasingly challenged by the need to provide integrated support systems for students preparing for overseas study. Existing studies on one-stop student communities have focused mainly on domestic undergraduate management and have rarely examined how such communities support study-abroad preparation, intercultural adaptation, and long-term student development. Drawing on the three-all education framework, intercultural learning theory, and transformative learning theory, the study collected multisource qualitative data through semistructured interviews with 32 participants, document analysis, and eight weeks of onsite observation, which were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal three major dilemmas in the current one-stop student community model: insufficient multistakeholder collaboration, fragmented support across different stages of study-abroad preparation, and superficial implementation of all-around educational functions. The participants particularly emphasized the lack of psychological preparation, personalized intercultural guidance, and sustained overseas support. Based on these findings, the study reconstructs an integrated educational mechanism that involves collaborative governance, full-cycle developmental support, and multidimensional educational engagement.*

**Keywords:** Three-All Education; International Education; One-Stop Student Community; Mechanism Reconstruction; Pathway Innovation

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapid economic globalization and frequent cross-border academic exchanges, student mobility has become among the most prominent features of contemporary global higher education (Bista et al., 2026). For China, international education—especially the systematic training of outbound study abroad students—undertakes the dual mission of developing high-end compound talent with a global vision, cross-cultural communication competence (Deardorff, 2006), and professional literacy while enhancing the international influence and cultural confidence of Chinese higher education (Liu & Zhang, 2010). As an innovative model that breaks the barriers of traditional student management, the one-stop student community integrates learning, living, consulting, management, and practical services into a unified physical and digital space. It has gradually become a key carrier for promoting the coordinated development of ideological guidance, academic support, intercultural adaptation, and career development for students in international education programs.

However, existing research and practice reveal clear limitations. Most studies focus on one-stop communities in general undergraduate education, while targeted and systematic exploration in international education settings dominated by study-abroad students remains insufficient (Li, 2022; Wang, 2022). Many universities still adopt a management-oriented rather than a development-oriented model and lack empirical research centered on students' real experiences, psychological adaptation, cross-cultural adjustment, and long-term developmental outcomes (Sheng et al., 2025).

Mature Western student community models, such as the residential college system in the United States and the collegiate system in the United Kingdom, emphasize student autonomy, peer learning, and holistic education (Kadriu et al., 2026). Nevertheless, these models are rooted in fundamentally different educational systems, cultural traditions, and university governance structures, making direct transplantation unfeasible in Chinese universities. Moreover, students preparing to study abroad exhibit distinctive characteristics: clear overseas development goals, urgent demands for language improvement and application planning, high cross-cultural adaptation pressure, heavy academic burdens, and relatively strong independent consciousness (Mahmood et al., 2026). They also face significant risks, including insufficient psychological preparation, a vague cultural identity, and difficulties with overseas academic integration (Rogler et al., 2026). Traditional fragmented management and single-function services can hardly meet their full-cycle and personalized developmental needs.

Despite the growing attention given to one-stop student communities in Chinese higher education, existing studies focus mainly on administrative efficiency, ideological education, or domestic undergraduate management. Limited research has examined how one-stop communities support students preparing for overseas study, particularly regarding intercultural adaptation, psychological transition, and long-term developmental support. Furthermore, most existing studies remain conceptual or policy oriented and lack empirical qualitative evidence based on students' lived experiences.

In addition, the current international literature on student mobility and intercultural learning largely focuses on students' experiences after they have arrived overseas, while insufficient attention has been given to predeparture preparation and integrated community-based support systems within home universities. Therefore, there remains a significant need for empirical qualitative research exploring how one-stop student communities can support study abroad preparation in non-Western higher education contexts.

This study seeks to address these gaps by conducting a qualitative case study of the International Education College at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.

Three-All Education is an educational philosophy that emphasizes whole-person, whole-process, and all-staff engagement in Chinese higher education. This framework has been widely adopted in contemporary Chinese higher education reform to promote integrated and holistic student development. Under the guidelines of three-year education, universities are expected to achieve organic integration of all-staff participation, whole-process coverage, and all-round infiltration in education and teaching. In practice, however, the construction of one-stop communities for international education still faces multiple dilemmas: insufficient interdepartmental collaboration, low engagement among professional teachers, incomplete service chains across the predeparture, overseas, and reentry stages, imperfect spatial functions, shallow cultural education, and a lack of personalized and precise services. These problems severely restrict improvements in educational effectiveness and the achievement of talent development goals.

To fill these research gaps and respond to practical needs, this study adopts a qualitative case study design that focuses on the SUFE IEC. Using multisource empirical data, it conducts an in-depth investigation into the dilemmas, mechanism reconstruction, and pathway innovation of the one-stop student community. This study uses the three-all education framework as its institutional analytical foundation and intercultural sensitivity theory and transformative learning theory as student-oriented theoretical support (Horie et al., 2026; Rogler et al., 2026). It aims to reveal the operational logic and practical bottlenecks of the one-stop community in supporting study-abroad talent development, explore its perceived strengths and limitations, and construct a systematic and operable optimization model. The findings not only provide direct guidance for the case university but also offer contextually relevant insights for similar institutions while contributing contextually grounded insights to international discussions on student mobility and educational support systems.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **One-Stop Student Communities in Higher Education**

Existing studies on one-stop student communities mainly emphasize integrated student management, campus governance efficiency, and ideological education functions within Chinese universities (Li, 2022; Wang, 2022). These communities aim to combine living, learning, counseling, and administrative services into unified student-centered spaces. Previous studies suggest that one-

stop communities may improve service accessibility, student engagement, and campus belonging.

However, most existing research remains descriptive and policy oriented, with limited empirical investigation into students' actual experiences and developmental outcomes. Furthermore, research specifically focusing on international education settings and study-abroad preparatory students remains scarce.

### **International Student Mobility and Intercultural Adaptation**

International student mobility research has increasingly emphasized intercultural adaptation, psychological well-being, and identity development (Rogler et al., 2026; Mahmood et al., 2026; Andrade, 2006). Studies indicate that students preparing for overseas study often experience academic pressure, uncertainty, cultural anxiety, and challenges in adapting before departing.

Western universities have developed residential college systems, peer mentoring programs, and intercultural engagement initiatives to support student integration and holistic development (Kadriu et al., 2026). Nevertheless, these models are shaped by distinct institutional structures and cultural traditions and may not be directly transferable to Chinese higher education contexts.

Although previous studies have explored student support systems and intercultural learning separately, limited research has integrated these perspectives into the study of one-stop student communities for study-abroad preparation. Few studies adopt qualitative methods to examine students' lived experiences, developmental needs, and perceptions of integrated support systems within Chinese universities.

To address these gaps, this study adopts the three-all education framework from an institutional perspective and incorporates intercultural learning theory and transformative learning theory to explore how one-stop student communities can support the development of study-abroad talent.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to explore how one-stop student communities support study-abroad preparation in Chinese higher education. Qualitative case study research is appropriate for investigating complex educational phenomena within real-life institutional contexts and for understanding participants' lived experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The International Education College (IEC) at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SUFU) was selected as the research site because it represents a relatively mature and information-rich case of one-stop community construction for international education.

Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants closely involved in the operation and use of the one-stop student community. A total of 32 participants, consisting of 22 students and 10 faculty members and administrators, were included in the study. This study followed institutional ethical principles for

educational research. All the participants voluntarily participated and provided informed consent prior to data collection. (Table 1.)

**Table 1. Participant Profile**

Participant Category	Number	Role
Undergraduate students	14	Study-abroad preparation
Master's students	8	Overseas application stage
Faculty members	6	Academic and intercultural support
Administrators	4	Student affairs and international programs
Total	32	—

### **Data collection**

Three sources of qualitative data were collected between 2024 and 2026.

First, semistructured interviews were conducted with all 32 participants. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and focused on participants' experiences, perceived challenges, developmental needs, and suggestions regarding the one-stop student community. Sample interview questions included the following:

What difficulties have you encountered during study-abroad preparation?

What forms of support are currently insufficient?

How does the one-stop community influence your academic and intercultural development?

What improvements would you suggest for the current support system?

Second, a documentary analysis was conducted using institutional policies, activity records, management reports, and community planning documents.

Third, the researchers conducted eight weeks of nonparticipant observation to document space usage, student participation, teacher–student interaction, and service implementation.

### **Data Analysis**

All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

During open coding, the researchers identified preliminary concepts and recurring expressions from the interview transcripts and field notes. During axial coding, related concepts were grouped into broader themes such as collaborative governance, intercultural support, psychological preparation, and personalized services. Finally, selective coding was used to construct core thematic categories explaining the operational dilemmas and developmental pathways of the one-stop student community. (Table 2.)

**Table 2. Coding Framework and Thematic Categories**

Initial Codes	Axial Themes	Core Themes
fragmented communication	governance barriers	collaborative dilemma
lack of emotional support	psychological support gaps	incomplete developmental support
superficial cultural activities	weak intercultural engagement	shallow all-round education
unclear service coordination	fragmented services	institutional inefficiency
lack of personalized guidance	individualized support needs	student-centered development

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The one-stop student community at the SUFE IEC has initially formed a comprehensive space that integrates accommodation, independent study, counseling services, and cultural exchanges. It is equipped with multifunctional study rooms, international education guidance centers, and cultural exchange areas. A management team led by college administrators and composed of counsellors, teachers, administrators, and student leaders has been established, and a regular activity system covering ideological guidance, academic support, study-abroad planning, and cultural care has been implemented. Despite these initial achievements, empirical data show that current community construction still presents deep-seated dilemmas that restrict improvements in educational quality and student experience.

**Insufficient Multistakeholder Collaborative Governance**

“We often need to contact several departments repeatedly during overseas preparation” (Student Participant S7). “Professional teachers are not systematically involved in community activities” (Faculty Participant F3). The most significant structural dilemma is the absence of a stable and normalized collaboration mechanism. Communication between the college and functional departments, such as academic affairs, student affairs, logistics, and international exchange, remains intermittent, resulting in fragmented resources in terms of curriculum alignment, language training, overseas program coordination, and logistics support. Professional teachers with overseas study and work experience remain seriously underinvolved in community education, and their advantages in international curriculum guidance, academic improvement, and study-abroad consultation are not fully utilized. In addition, the linkages between families, schools, overseas partner universities, and global alumni are extremely weak. Home-school collaboration in study-abroad planning, risk prevention, and mental health support is insufficient, and continuous services such as overseas academic tracking, life support, and re-entry employment guidance are missing. As a result,

educational forces remain scattered, and a closed-loop, full-chain support system is difficult to form (Bista et al., 2026; Mahmood et al., 2026).

### **Incomplete Whole-Process Developmental Support**

“Most support ends after students receive admission offers” (Student Participant S11). “There is little psychological preparation before students go abroad” (Student Participant S14). The existing service system is heavily concentrated in the predeparture preparation stage and lacks systematic coverage of the full student development cycle. During the study-abroad preparation stage, language training, school selection, and application planning lack focus and personalization. Many students experience unclear goals, blind applications, and insufficient psychological preparation and are prone to anxiety and fear about life abroad. During the on-campus learning stage, academic guidance is not closely aligned with international curriculum requirements, and differentiated tutoring for different target countries and majors cannot be provided. The integration of cross-cultural education remains superficial, and the development of students’ international rule awareness and global competence is weak. During overseas study and postreturn development, almost no continuous academic tracking, living assistance, psychological counseling, or targeted employment guidance is available. The graduate tracking and feedback mechanism is absent, making targeted optimization of talent training programs impossible (Rogler et al., 2026; Mahmood et al., 2026).

### **Superficial Multidimensional All-Round Education Infiltration**

“Many intercultural activities are still very superficial” (Student Participant S18). The overall educational function of the community has not been fully realized (Table 3). In terms of spatial construction, the physical layout is imperfect and lacks specialized facilities such as psychological counseling rooms and finance-featured activity zones. Digital construction lags seriously behind, and an integrated online one-stop service platform has not been built to provide convenient services such as remote guidance, information inquiry, material review, and cross-cultural interaction. In cultural education, activities are relatively simple and are mostly limited to overseas culture introduction and experience sharing and lack in-depth value guidance and cultural confidence education. The integration of excellent traditional Chinese culture and international communication education is insufficient, leading to problems of vague cultural identity among some students. With respect to service provision, community services remain dominated by basic transactional management and consultation and lack personalized services such as psychological adjustment, overseas safety education, targeted assistance, and career planning. The convenience and systematization of one-stop services require substantial improvement (Kadriu et al., 2026).

**Table 3. Major Findings and Participant Perceptions**

Core Dimension	Participant Perceptions	Supporting Evidence
Collaborative governance	Weak interdepartmental coordination	Frequently mentioned in interviews
Psychological support	Anxiety before overseas transition	Student reflections and observations
Intercultural learning	Activities lacked reflective depth	Observation findings
Personalized services	Demand for differentiated guidance	Multiple participant comments
Whole-process support	Insufficient long-term support	Faculty and student interviews

**Evaluation of Strengths and Limitations of the Current Model**

The current one-stop community model demonstrates several practical strengths while revealing critical limitations that impede educational effectiveness. In terms of strengths, the model initially integrates daily management and study abroad services into a unified platform, greatly improving the convenience and efficiency of students’ academic life and overseas preparation. It has also established a regular activity system that enhances students’ collective belonging and fosters basic awareness of intercultural communication. In addition, the model incorporates the financial characteristics of the university and initiates career-related activities that support students’ professional cognition and early career orientation. Nevertheless, major limitations remain prominent. The model remains institution-centered rather than student-centered and often overlooks students’ real experiences, psychological needs, and individual developmental demands. The education chain is seriously fragmented and fails to cover the full cycle, which spans predeparture preparation, on-campus learning, overseas study, and re-entry development. Cultural education and the cultivation of intercultural competence remain superficial and insufficient to foster a stable cultural identity and global awareness among students. Digital empowerment and precision support capabilities are inadequate, making it difficult to deliver personalized services that respond to diverse student needs. As a result, the model’s long-term development experiences, including overseas adaptation, employment competitiveness, and sustainable development, remain limited.

Based on the three-all education framework and intercultural learning theories, this study reconstructs a three-dimensional integrated education mechanism to address these dilemmas. The collaborative education mechanism takes institutional leadership and coordinated governance as its core and establishes an interdepartmental collaborative committee to clarify responsibilities among academic affairs, student affairs, international exchange, and logistics support. It fully implements a dual-tutor system composed of academic tutors and study-abroad tutors to strengthen the participation of

professional teachers while expanding partnerships with families, overseas partner universities, and global alumni to form a full-chain multistakeholder collaborative structure. The whole-process education mechanism builds a full-cycle closed-loop support system covering three key stages: differentiated language training, personalized study-abroad planning, cross-cultural adaptation camps, and systematic psychological counseling in the predeparture stage; integrated curriculum design combining academic learning, ideological guidance, and intercultural training supported by academic early warning and one-to-one tutoring in the on-campus stage; and overseas support stations, re-entry employment empowerment, and a sound graduate tracking and feedback mechanism in the overseas and re-entry stage. The all-round education mechanism optimizes the spatial layout to develop functional zones, including psychological counseling, career services, cultural exchange, and financial practice. It constructed a multilevel cultural education system that integrates traditional Chinese culture, host-country culture, and international financial culture while strengthening digital empowerment to develop an integrated online-offline one-stop service platform for accurate and efficient support.

Based on mechanism reconstruction, this study proposes three interrelated and practically feasible pathways for sustainable development. The multi-agent collaborative pathway focuses on building a professional education team with a clear division of labor; establishing training and incentive mechanisms to enhance teachers' initiative; and opening up online-offline, on-campus-off-campus, and domestic-overseas platforms to achieve integrated and efficient resource allocation. The full-cycle precision service pathway formulates personalized support plans based on students' differences in language foundation, major orientation, target country, and psychological characteristics; conducts dynamic tracking and real-time adjustments; strengthens overseas support and re-entry employment services; and establishes a complete closed educational loop. The multidimensional infiltration pathway aims to create a smart, humanistic, and internationalized community space; carry out high-quality cultural education activities to strengthen cultural confidence and intercultural sensitivity; and optimize the one-stop service hall to deliver comprehensive care and targeted assistance for vulnerable student groups.

Following the thematic analysis, participants generally perceived that the reconstructed mechanisms could provide more integrated and student-centered support for study-abroad preparation. The interview and observation data suggested greater awareness of interdepartmental collaboration, stronger intercultural engagement, and improved access to personalized support services. Participants particularly emphasized the importance of psychological preparation, continuous developmental guidance, and reflective intercultural learning across the various stages of overseas study.

Rather than claiming measurable causal effectiveness, the findings indicate that the proposed framework may contribute to a more holistic and sustainable international education support system within Chinese universities. The findings indicate that one-stop student communities in international education settings remain largely administration-oriented rather than development-oriented.

Existing support systems focus mainly on application procedures and basic management functions, while students' emotional preparation, intercultural reflection, and long-term developmental needs often receive insufficient attention.

This study extends the existing research on intercultural learning and student mobility by emphasizing that intercultural adaptation begins during predeparture preparation rather than after overseas arrival. Participants repeatedly described anxiety, uncertainty, and identity-related concerns throughout the preparation process, suggesting that study-abroad support should be understood as a longitudinal developmental process (Marginson, 2014).

The findings also demonstrate the importance of localized adaptation when international student support models are applied within Chinese higher education contexts. Rather than directly transplanting Western residential college models, universities should develop context-sensitive support systems aligned with institutional structures and student characteristics.

## CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

This qualitative case study explored the practical dilemmas and developmental needs of one-stop student communities for study-abroad preparation within Chinese higher education. Drawing on the three-all education framework, intercultural learning theory, and transformative learning theory, this study identified several key challenges, including fragmented governance structures, insufficient psychological and intercultural support, and a lack of continuous development services.

The findings suggest that current one-stop student communities should move beyond administration-oriented management toward more integrated and student-centered developmental support systems. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of psychological readiness, personalized guidance, reflective intercultural learning, and sustained support across the various stages of overseas study. Based on these findings, this study proposed an exploratory, contextually grounded framework centered on collaborative governance, whole-process developmental support, and multidimensional intercultural engagement. Rather than claiming universal applicability, the study provides an exploratory and contextually grounded framework for universities seeking to improve international education support systems within localized institutional contexts. (Table 4).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by extending research on one-stop student communities into the field of international education and by emphasizing the importance of pre-departure intercultural preparation in student mobility research. In practice, the findings highlight the need for stronger interdepartmental collaboration, continuous developmental services, and more reflective forms of intercultural education in the internationalization of higher education.

**Table 4. Reconstructed Support Framework for One-stop Student Communities**

Core Mechanism	Main Components	Intended Functions
Collaborative governance	Interdepartmental coordination and dual-mentor system	Resource integration and communication efficiency
Whole-process developmental support	Predeparture, overseas, and postreturn services	Continuous student development
Intercultural engagement	Reflective intercultural activities and mentoring	Cultural identity and intercultural competence
Personalized services	Individualized advising and psychological support	Student-centered developmental guidance

This study has several limitations. First, the research adopted a qualitative single-case design, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study relied primarily on interviews and observations rather than longitudinal quantitative assessments. Future studies may conduct comparative multicase research and combine qualitative and quantitative methods to further examine long-term developmental outcomes across different institutional contexts.

**AI Use Statement**

The authors used generative AI tools to assist with language refinement during manuscript preparation. All academic interpretations, analyses, and final revisions were independently completed and verified by the authors.

**Reference Integrity Statement**

All in-text citations match the reference list, and all references are accurate, verifiable, and checked for valid DOIs or URLs.

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