World Future Skills Index

China Spotlight

Transforming higher education for the skills economy

Skills Fit | Academic Readiness | Future of Work | Economic Transformation

Higher education's role in future workforce readiness

Welcome to the China Spotlight on the QS World Future Skills Index, where we explore higher education's critical role in shaping the workforce of tomorrow. This tailored resource empowers you to analyse China's future skills supply and demand, benchmark key industry jobs and skills gaps against over 80 countries, and align your higher education system with the skills training required for economic transformation.

By 2030, an estimated 375 million workers will need to switch occupational categories, requiring tailored reskilling initiatives and modular, lifelong learning opportunities.

Source: Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained report from McKinsey

The QS World Future Skills Index in numbers

190+
countries analysed

4
indicators, informed by 13 sub-indicators

280m+
job postings assessed

5m+
employer skill demands reviewed

5,000+
universities measured

17.5m+
research papers examined

How to use the QS World Future Skills Index

Analyse

Assess your future skills supply and demand imbalance

Benchmark

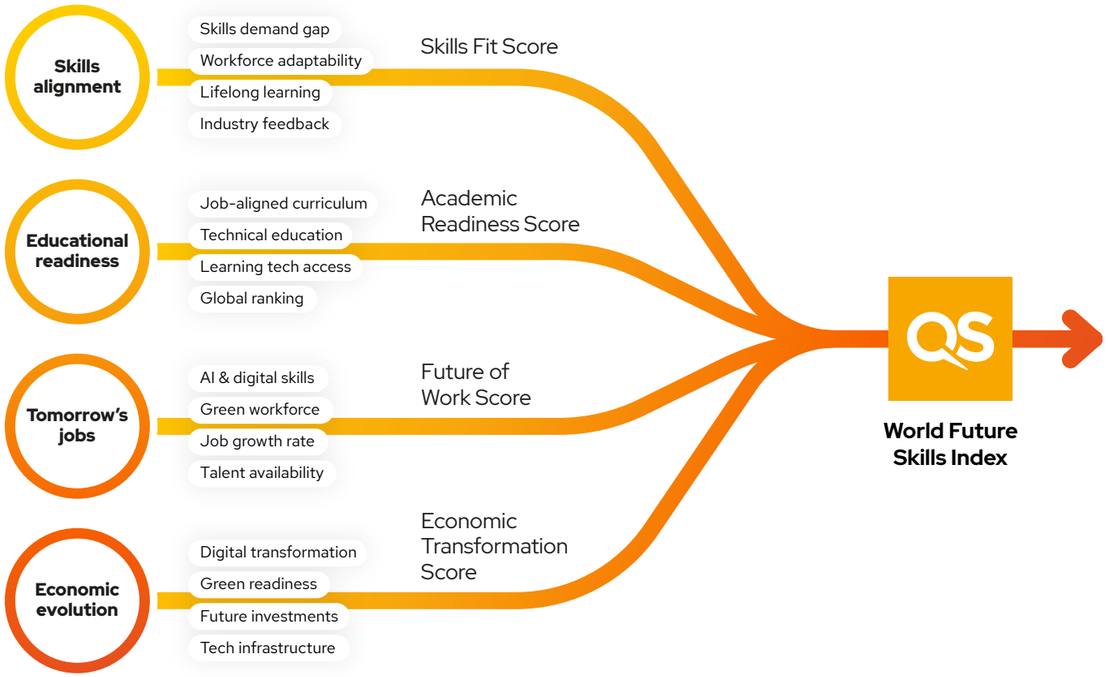
Identify and close key industry jobs and skills gaps in comparison to other countries/regions

Align

Align your curricula to nurture the necessary future skills and reduce the risk of workforce displacement

The QS World Future Skills Index is designed to assess how prepared countries are to tackle the shifting demands of the global workforce, particularly in the context of digital transformation, AI, sustainability, and the broader economic changes impacting jobs.

Skills like AI proficiency, digital literacy, and environmental sustainability will form the bedrock of the industries of tomorrow. Countries that fail to adapt risk losing their competitive edge and missing opportunities for economic growth.



The QS World Future Skills Index uses data from over 280 million job postings via QS 1Mentor, the QS Global Employer Survey, and economic and demographic statistics from the World Bank Group. The Index assesses countries across four key indicators: Skills Fit, Academic Readiness, Future of Work, and Economic Transformation. Each indicator plays a vital role in providing a comprehensive view of a country's preparedness to thrive in an increasingly skills-driven global economy.

QS World Future Skills Index indicators

Skills Fit

The Skills Fit indicator measures how well countries are equipping graduates with the skills that employers desire. This is assessed by determining the gap between what employers find important and their level of satisfaction with the skills provided by graduates.

This is done using data from the QS Global Employer Survey, the largest of its kind, and data from the World Bank Group. Since 2021, over 100,000 employers have rated the importance of certain skills and their satisfaction in their graduate hires.

Future of Work

The Future of Work indicator evaluates a country's readiness to recruit for the skills needed in the jobs of tomorrow. Specifically, it measures how well the job market is prepared to meet the growing demand for digital, AI, and green skills, all of which are becoming critical as economies transition towards technology-driven and sustainable industries.

Academic Readiness

This dimension measures how well a country is prepared for the future of work. We look at the number of universities assessed for the QS World University Rankings by Subject, and how they perform.

We then measure this in tandem with population size – if a country has a large population but few well-ranked institutions, for example, the country will be penalised.

Economic Transformation

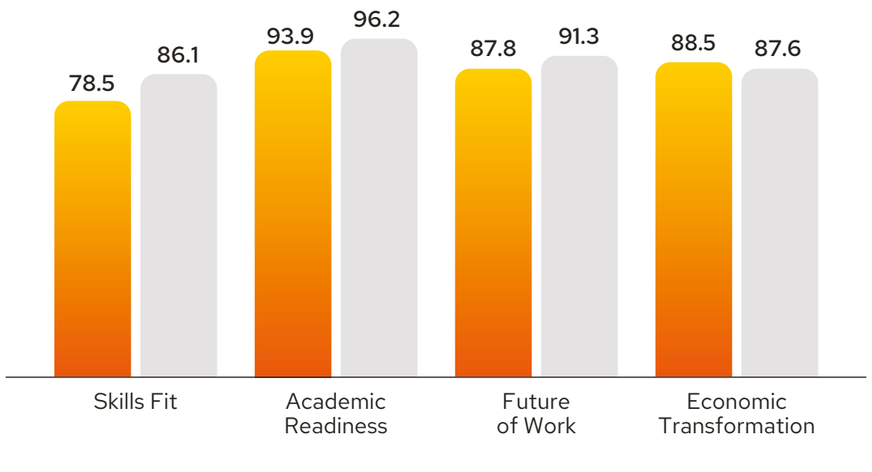
Economic Transformation uses a weighted formula to assess a country's readiness to support the growth and future of work and skills by examining various key indicators. The Index highlights whether a country has the infrastructure, investment power, and talent available to transition to industries driven by AI, digital transformation, green technologies, and high-skilled work, using data from the World Bank Group, UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Education Policy Institute.

China | Performance overview

China's higher education system plays a central role in powering economic growth, with world-leading performance in Academic Readiness (93.9), Future of Work (87.8), and Economic Transformation (88.5). However, a notable gap remains in employer demand for digital expertise—China's Future of Work Digital sub-indicator score is 61.5, indicating that businesses are not yet prioritising digital talent to the same extent as AI (90.2) or Green (81.5) skills. At the same time, Skills Fit (78.5)—China's lowest-performing indicator—suggests that graduates are not consistently equipped with the applied, workplace-ready skills employers need. This dual challenge reflects a growing disconnect between what is taught and what is valued by the labour market. Unless universities align more closely with industry priorities, particularly in digital transformation and entrepreneurial application, China risks underutilising its talent pipeline and missing opportunities for long-term innovation-led growth.

Overall score: **87.2/100**

QS World Future Skills Index
China performance vs G7 average



Skills Fit
78.5/100

Skills Fit measures the alignment between workforce skills and employer needs. It highlights how effectively education systems prepare graduates for key industries, especially in emerging fields like AI, green technology, and digital innovation. Addressing gaps here boosts employability, drives economic transformation, and ensures the workforce remains competitive internationally.

Academic Readiness
93.9/100

Academic Readiness reflects the capacity of a country's higher education system to equip students with relevant skills for future jobs. A robust system fosters innovation, aligns curricula with industry demands. This ensures graduates are not only employable but also capable of adapting to a rapidly changing global economy

Future of Work
87.8/100

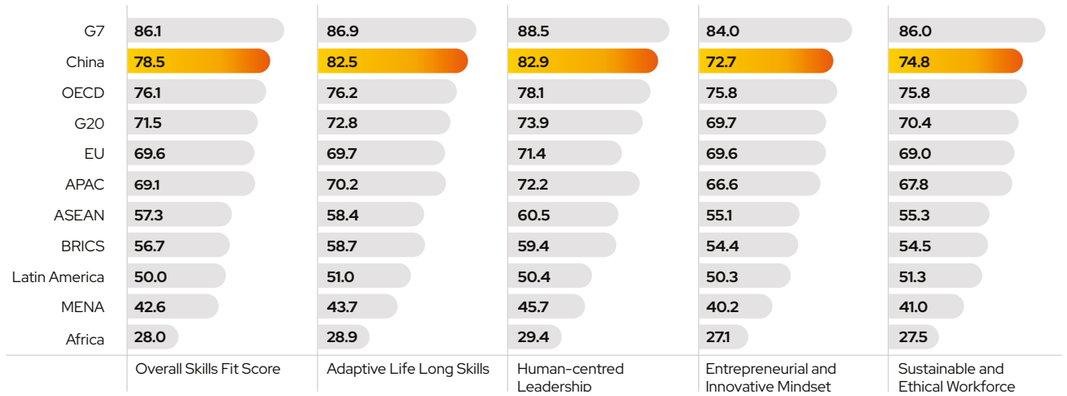
Future of Work assesses a country's preparedness for jobs of the future, focusing on adaptability to technological and industrial changes. It reflects innovation, R&D investments, and sustainable practices in education. Higher education plays a vital role in fostering a future-ready workforce equipped with the skills required for evolving global industries.

Economic Transformation
88.5/100

Economic Transformation examines the interplay between education, workforce skills, and industrial growth. Higher education underpins this by driving productivity, innovation, and sustainability. Universities that align their programmes with industry needs not only strengthen national competitiveness but also ensure a balance between economic momentum and workforce adaptability.

China | Detailed performance

Skills Fit

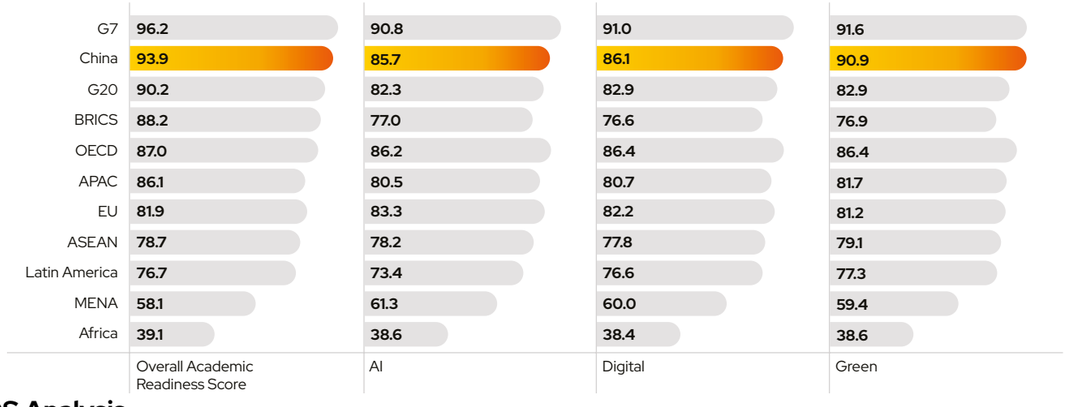


QS Analysis

China's Skills Fit score (78.5) highlights a workforce with good adaptability and leadership capabilities—evident in some sub-indicators. However, the comparatively lower Entrepreneurial & Innovative Mindset (72.7) reveals limitations in embedding innovation into workplace culture. Cultivating entrepreneurial thinking, risk-taking, and creativity will be essential to drive business transformation. While Chinese graduates are technically skilled, the country's future competitiveness will depend on enhancing soft and innovation-related skills across all sectors. Industry-linked problem-solving projects, real-world simulations, and hands-on entrepreneurial programmes will be vital in closing this mindset gap.

Note: The Skills Fit score is derived from over 5 million skills nominations, reflecting insights from more than 100,000 employer responses to the QS Global Employer Survey over the past four years. Employers identified key skills they value and their satisfaction levels. By analysing this data at the country level, and integrating it with the World Bank's Human Capital Index, the QS Insights and Consulting team developed the final scores. Skills nominated by employers have been grouped based on the findings.

Academic Readiness

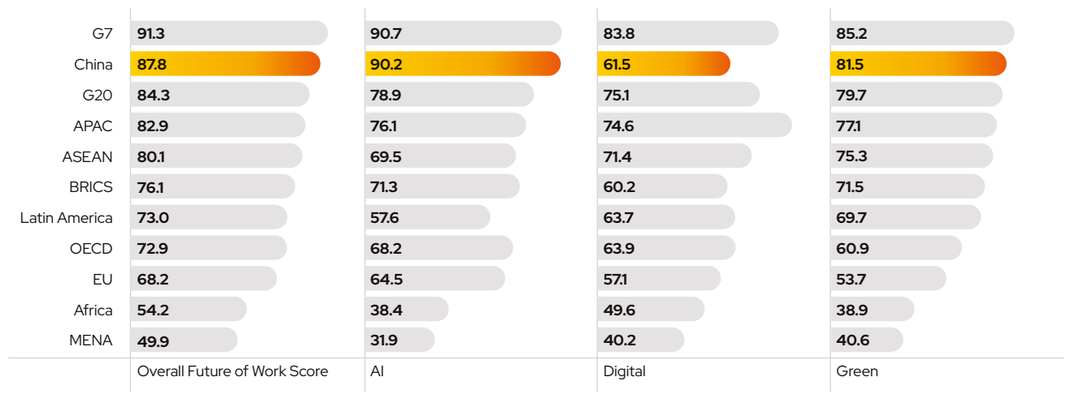


QS Analysis

China's universities demonstrate global leadership in future-focused education. Strengths in Digital (86.1) and Green (90.9) education reflect deep investments in emerging disciplines. However, AI (85.7)—while still high—ranks lowest, pointing to a strategic opportunity. As AI becomes increasingly central to the economy, universities must expand interdisciplinary AI training and strengthen AI-related research capacity. In particular, embedding real-world applications, work-based learning and problem-solving will ensure students are technically proficient and industry ready. Enhancing the academic foundation in AI will help position China's graduates at the forefront of future skills leadership.

Note: This chart draws on data from the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024, analysing over 5,000 universities globally. The Academic Readiness score is calculated using the median subject rankings score for each country, adjusted for performance in key areas such as AI, digital, and green-related disciplines. Population size and the number of universities ranked are used as weighting factors to ensure a balanced assessment of scale and quality. This provides a comprehensive view of how effectively higher education systems are preparing for future workforce demands.

Future of Work

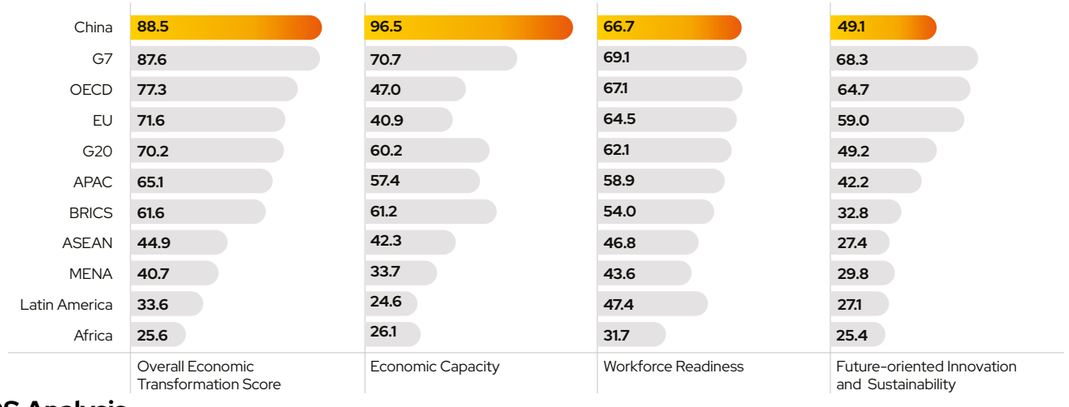


QS Analysis

China's Future of Work score (87.8) signals strong demand for future skills, yet Digital (61.5) lags behind AI (90.2) and Green (81.5), suggesting businesses and education systems are not fully aligned in digital transformation. This mirrors a common pattern where education pipelines are not keeping pace with rapid digital evolution. Furthermore, the Skills Fit score (78.5) highlights a disconnect between employer needs and the workplace-readiness of graduates. To close this gap, universities must recalibrate curricula with a stronger focus on cross-disciplinary digital fluency, expand experiential learning, and ensure digital knowledge is embedded not only in tech programmes, but across business, science, and engineering fields.

Note: The Future of Work Score measures the extent to which future-focused skills—such as digital, AI, and green competencies—have permeated global job advertisements compared to traditional skillsets. This score is derived from an analysis of over 280 million job postings worldwide, leveraging the QS proprietary skills taxonomy. Over 9,500 emerging skills were identified and benchmarked against conventional skills, providing a clear indicator of how deeply future-oriented capabilities are being prioritised by employers in the global labour market.

Economic Transformation

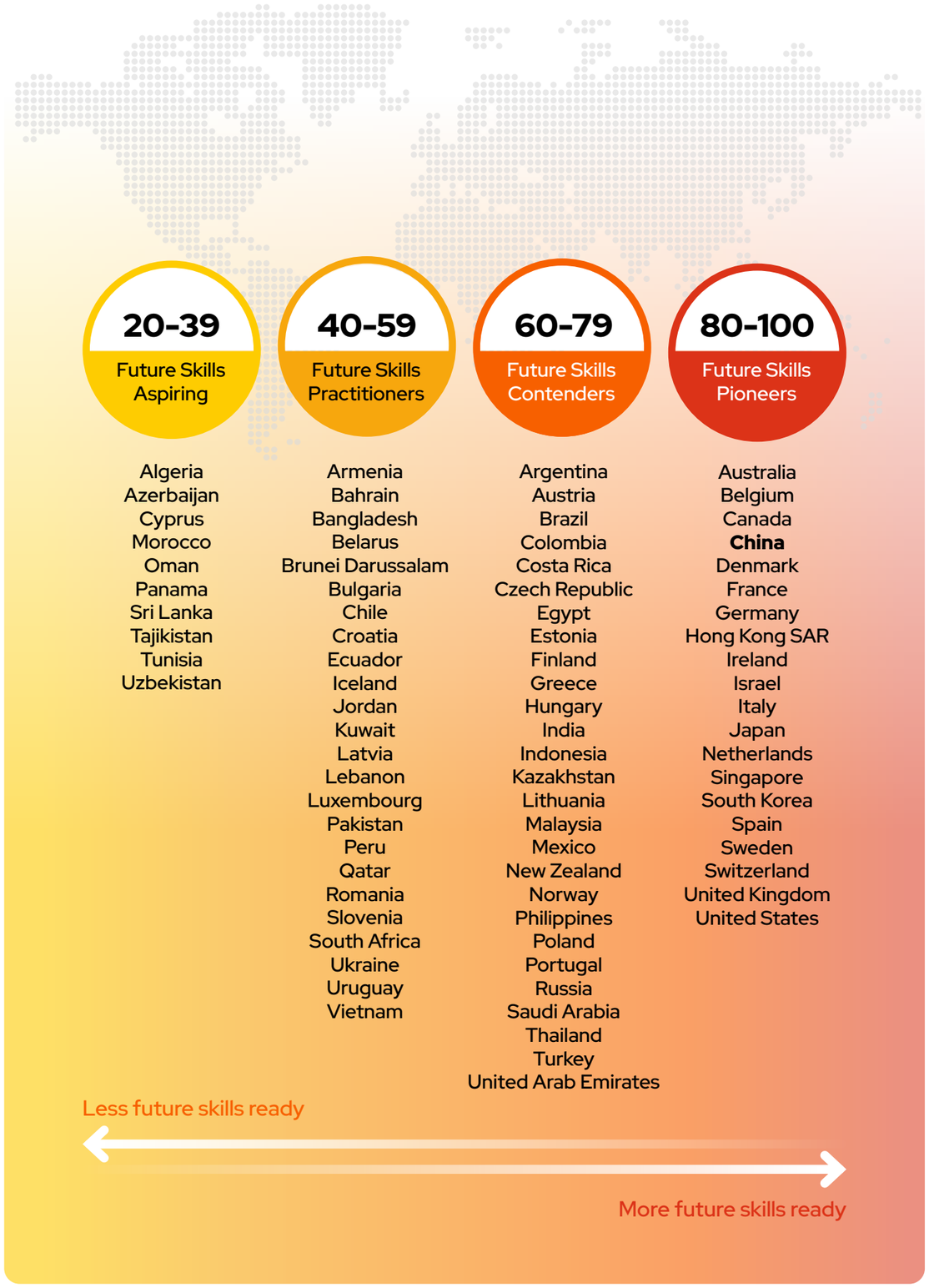


QS Analysis

China's Economic Transformation score (88.5) reflects a high-performing economy with strong GDP growth, labour productivity, and investment. However, Future-Oriented Innovation & Sustainability (49.1) reveals that green innovation is not yet a core driver of transformation. This suggests universities could play a larger role in enabling the shift toward a sustainable economy. Compared to global competitors, China has the scale but now must ensure quality—particularly in turning research breakthroughs into solutions. Universities should enhance cross-sector innovation partnerships, prioritise green entrepreneurship, and increase the integration of environmental technology across academic disciplines to support long-term resilience.

Note: The Economic Transformation indicator is built on three core dimensions: Economic Capacity, Workforce Readiness, and Future-Oriented Innovation and Sustainability. It combines data on GDP growth, labour productivity, employment rates, R&D investment, and infrastructure development. These indicators are weighted and benchmarked globally to assess a country's ability to adapt to skills-driven industrial change, with a focus on AI, digital, and green industries. The methodology ensures a comprehensive view of how effectively economic fundamentals and future-focused investments align with evolving workforce demands.

China | Full results summary



Note: The scores reflect the final results of the QS World Future Skills Index.
Categories are organised alphabetically by economy for clarity and ease of comparison.

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
United States	94.4	98.2	100.0	97.9	**97.6**
United Kingdom	100.0	100.0	95.6	92.7	**97.1**
Germany	89.2	99.6	94.7	94.7	**94.6**
Australia	87.2	98.9	96.5	90.6	**93.3**
Canada	90.9	97.8	97.4	78.1	**91.0**
Netherlands	88.6	99.3	90.4	81.2	**89.9**
Switzerland	80.7	97.1	82.6	96.8	**89.3**
France	84.8	92.6	91.3	84.3	**88.2**
Singapore	83.2	91.7	92.2	85.4	**88.1**
South Korea	84.4	88.4	76.5	100.0	**87.3**
China	78.5	93.9	87.8	88.5	**87.2**
Spain	76.4	96.3	93.0	70.8	**84.1**
Israel	70.6	93.0	73.0	98.9	**83.9**
Sweden	80.4	95.1	72.2	86.4	**83.5**
Japan	73.4	87.9	74.7	95.8	**83.0**
Belgium	72.4	95.9	71.3	91.6	**82.8**
Ireland	81.8	95.5	86.1	67.7	**82.8**
Denmark	73.0	96.7	66.1	93.7	**82.4**
Hong Kong SAR	77.0	98.6	69.5	80.2	**81.3**
Italy	70.3	97.4	85.2	69.7	**80.7**
Finland	76.1	93.4	62.6	87.5	**79.9**
New Zealand	75.6	94.7	80.0	63.5	**78.5**
Norway		94.3	56.5	83.3	**78.0**
Poland	68.5	85.3	86.9	68.7	**77.3**
India	59.1	89.9	99.1	58.3	**76.6**
Portugal	71.0	92.1	66.9	76.0	**76.5**
Czech Republic	72.4	77.5	82.6	71.8	**76.1**
Austria	66.5	90.8	64.3	82.2	**75.9**
United Arab Emirates	71.6	90.3	77.4	60.4	**74.9**

China | Full results summary

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Greece	62.3	85.9	65.2	72.9	71.6
Brazil	44.1	83.1	78.2	77.0	70.6
Malaysia	64.0	91.2	88.6	35.4	69.8
Thailand	58.1	81.4	80.8	52.0	68.1
Mexico	54.8	80.8	98.2	37.5	67.8
Lithuania	61.4	87.4	52.2	66.6	66.9
Hungary	59.3	84.2	68.6	54.1	66.6
Russia	73.4	84.8	33.8	73.9	66.5
Saudi Arabia	56.9	82.5	73.8	51.0	66.1
Türkiye	62.1	73.3	60.0	64.5	65.0
Colombia	58.3	82.0	89.5	27.0	64.2
Costa Rica		67.5	79.1	45.8	64.1
Argentina	57.8	83.7	84.3	23.9	62.4
Philippines	47.6	66.6	93.8	40.6	62.2
Estonia		70.1	53.0	61.4	61.5
Kazakhstan	67.8	75.5	40.8	59.3	60.9
Egypt	45.4	76.9	75.6	44.7	60.6
Indonesia	60.0	74.0	67.8	39.5	60.3
Lebanon	45.9	86.4	46.9		59.7
Chile	63.1	88.9	70.4	13.5	59.0
Qatar	45.5	79.5	59.1	47.9	58.0
Romania	43.0	72.5	58.2	48.9	55.7
Vietnam	58.1	74.7	57.4	31.2	55.4
Jordan	49.2	78.2	49.5	41.6	54.6
Slovenia		49.1	35.6	79.1	54.6
Bulgaria	37.6	56.0	61.7	57.2	53.1
Peru	51.0	80.1	54.7	26.0	53.0
Latvia	56.4	60.7	46.1	46.8	52.5
South Africa	28.3	89.4	81.7	10.4	52.4

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Bahrain	47.2	62.7	33.0	55.2	49.6
Ukraine	57.9	71.8	51.3	15.6	49.1
Bangladesh	39.1	65.7	42.6		49.1
Luxembourg		54.8	47.8	43.7	48.7
Kuwait	36.3	69.3	40.0		48.5
Belarus	57.6	40.4	29.5	65.6	48.3
Iceland		31.6	20.0	89.5	47.0
Pakistan	35.7	78.9	63.4	4.1	45.5
Croatia		36.4	35.6	62.5	44.8
Uruguay	40.6	59.5	60.8	17.7	44.7
Brunei Darussalam	29.8	70.9		30.2	43.6
Ecuador	30.6	64.8	41.7	34.3	42.8
Armenia	25.3		45.2	50.0	40.2
Uzbekistan	48.1	57.2	29.5	16.6	37.9
Cyprus	45.2	44.2	37.4	18.7	36.4
Azerbaijan	31.8	50.6	27.8	29.1	34.8
Oman	32.5	42.5	29.5	33.3	34.4
Panama	24.2		50.4	28.1	34.2
Sri Lanka	43.5		42.6	6.2	30.8
Morocco	17.0		53.8	20.8	30.5
Tunisia		29.0	37.4	19.7	28.7
Algeria	21.3		22.6	32.2	25.4
Tajikistan	16.7		26.9	21.8	21.8

*Where a country lacks an indicator score, this reflects insufficient data available to evaluate overall performance

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China | Conclusion

China's education system ranks among the world's strongest, with high scores in Academic Readiness (93.9), Future of Work (87.8), and Economic Transformation (88.5). However, Skills Fit (78.5) suggests that despite the talent being available, employers are not fully capitalising on it—especially in Digital, where Future of Work (61.5) reflects relatively low employer demand for digital skills. This mismatch indicates a need to better align industry priorities with the capabilities of graduates. To sustain innovation-led growth, universities must deepen industry collaboration, broaden applied digital education, and encourage greater employer recognition of the strategic value of digital and interdisciplinary skills.

Our analysis and recommendations:

1

Address graduate-employer alignment gaps

China's strong Future of Work (87.8) and Economic Transformation (88.5) scores indicate robust employer demand and economic momentum. Yet the lower Skills Fit (78.5) score reveals a mismatch between graduate capabilities and evolving workforce needs. Universities must sharpen their focus on job-ready skills by embedding applied learning, employer-led training, and entrepreneurial thinking into programmes.

2

Strengthen digital workforce readiness

Despite strengths in AI (90.2) and Green (81.5), China's Future of Work score for Digital (61.5) suggests relatively weak employer demand for advanced digital skills. Universities can play a catalytic role by strengthening digital curricula and fostering cross-disciplinary digital fluency that responds to emerging industry expectations and shifts in the global tech economy.

3

Unlock research value for economic growth

While Academic Readiness is among the highest globally (93.9), ensuring that excellence in AI, Digital, and Green education translates into innovation impact remains essential. By prioritising research commercialisation, industry-aligned R&D, and problem-solving education, China can ensure that its talent pipeline drives sustainable growth, future competitiveness, and global leadership in advanced technologies.

China | Future skills ecosystem

Your future workforce and skills partner

Connecting higher education, government policy, employer demands and student needs

Speak to your QS partnership director to gain access to more insight and advice.

Assess economic risk

We can help you analyse skills supply and demand by industry or region to identify skills shortages

Access data on the industries, occupations and skills driving growth to set your labour market strategy

Address skills gaps

Benchmark your skills shortages against peer nations to assess your relative risk

Identify the countries providing the most skills-aligned talent for your high-growth industries to set a talent attraction strategy

Align higher education with future skills

Assess the top performing universities within your country or region to deliver future skills ready graduates

Evaluate performance at the subject level to develop an internal benchmark and skills performance improvement strategy

Establish a future skills strategy for higher education institutions within your country or region, and enhance curricula and learning modes to deliver the skills of tomorrow

1

Assess economic risks: Analyse supply and demand imbalances to identify skill shortages and develop strategies to safeguard your economy against workforce misalignment.

2

Address skills gaps: Benchmark job and skill requirements globally to ensure graduates are equipped to meet industry needs and strengthen economic resilience.

3

Align higher education with future skills: Transform higher education to embed future skills, ensuring graduates contribute to innovation, economic growth, and reduced workforce displacement.

Read the full QS World Future Skills Index briefing paper

QS can help you transform insights into policy and policy into action.

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