

Malaysia Council spreads the word

on the move



Michael Hall was appointed Executive Officer of the new Acpet

Queensland office in October last year. Mr Hall has extensive experience in Australia's education system, having previously held posts in the government, public service and the private education sectors.



Professor Lance Twomey, Vice Chancellor of Curtin

University of Technology, recently became the new President of the Board of IDP Education Australia. "IDP is a most successful initiative which has been a major factor in education becoming such an important export industry," he said.

next issue

In issue 2 2003, *Destination Analysis* looks at trends in Australia

The international promotion of educational opportunities available in Malaysia will soon be given a boost due to government plans to establish a new body called the Malaysia Council, which will have offices at foreign missions worldwide.

The initiative, which is spearheaded by the Private Education Department (PPS) and the Higher Education Department at the Ministry of Education, has been described as "the Malaysian equivalent of the British Council" and is part of a wider plan to enhance the country's international image as a centre for academic excellence.

Datuk Hassan Hashim, Deputy Director General of Education, said that the driving force behind the initiative was the fact that Malaysia's education industry was not well represented overseas. A spokesperson for the ministry said, "Malaysia Council offices will not be set up in countries such as Britain where our country's education sector is already known. It is more for the newer markets such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia."

At the time of going to press, details of the council were still being finalised, although plans had been put forward to send Malaysia Council attachés to Saudi Arabia, China and Indonesia in the near future.

Tran Van Chinh, Director of Cepece agency in Vietnam, welcomed the proposal. "It is [only] now that Vietnamese students [have been] able to get information [about] Malaysian education. What is attractive to them is that they can get an Australian, US or UK degree at a much lower price. Procedures are much simpler too."

The *gempur dan hebah* (attack and publicise) policy, aimed at stamping out widespread abuse of foreign student passes among private colleges in Malaysia, has also been a recent tool in ensuring the country's reputation as a quality education provider. In September last year, all private colleges enrolling foreign students in Malaysia were given six months to re-apply to the Education Ministry for approval based on new recruitment guidelines. The plan was introduced in response to revelations that many colleges were applying for international student passes for more students than were actually studying at the college, thereby enabling immigrants to illegally enter the country.

"Colleges reapplying for approval to take in foreign students must submit the attendance and track records of existing students," said Hashim. "The colleges must then register the approval with the private education department."

The guidelines will also help clamp down on colleges falsely claiming to offer facilities that are not available. Colleges will only have their applications approved if they provide proper accommodation for international students, have a responsible fee policy, credible agents, international student units and submit reports every four months to the Private Education Department, Immigration Department, Home Ministry and the police.

A number of private colleges in Malaysia have already been closed down after the discovery that student passes were being sold to syndicates who were bringing in foreigners for work purposes.

Changes in Sevis funding good news for students

According to interim regulations released by the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS), any colleges not already registered with the Sevis international student tracking system will now be required to pay a certification fee of US\$580 if they want to enrol international students after the January 2003 deadline.

The regulations also require colleges not already signed up to the system to undergo a site visit by the INS to evaluate its compliance with agency rules before being certified. Those who have not paid the fee or had the site visit by 30 January 2003 will lose their ability to enrol international students.

While the regulations put an additional financial burden on institutions, news that the fee charged to international students when

enrolling on courses in the USA may be reduced was received favourably by industry insiders. A report prepared by consultants hired by the INS to evaluate the students' fee suggested that it be reduced to half of the US\$95 originally put forward, with students and exchange visitors such as professors and visiting scholars paying just US\$54.

Sherrie Kelly, from the American Language and Culture Institute at California State University San Marcos, said that for students who could afford to pay their own way to study, the charge "will probably be seen as an additional visa charge and not be a deterrent". However, she warned, "I think a greater impact on enrolment is due to the uncertainty about the process and procedures and what one needs to do. Good communication of correct, up-to-date information is essential."

Australian visa amendments

Changes made to Australia's student visa regulations at the end of last year were greeted with approval by international agents and educational institutions alike, as assessment levels for some nationalities were changed and rules governing financial support were widened to include more family members.

Ingeborg Loon from the University of Queensland in Australia said the changes would make the student visa process easier for students in many countries while "maintaining the integrity of the student visa programme".

Students from India, Iran and Sri Lanka wanting to study in higher education in Australia have been moved from assessment level (AL) 4 to AL3, thereby reducing the length of time that they or their family members need to prove that they have possessed the funds required for total tuition fees and living costs. Also, students from countries in AL3 and AL4 will now be able to receive financial support from their siblings as well as spouses, parents and grandparents.

Ravi Singh, from Global Reach agency in India, said, "The change in India's assessment level from 3 to 4 for both masters, doctorate and higher education is what we agents have been demanding for some time now. This will help our marketing efforts."

Other nationalities affected by the changes include Korea and Venezuela, which both changed from AL3 to AL2 for higher education.

agent speak

Q. How do you ensure that your students have realistic expectations of their study abroad experience before they set off?

"I usually point out other students' experiences. I show them pictures and videos of the institutions [and] I give them websites [to look at]. If they wish, I put them in contact with former students who have attended the school they desire to go to."

Maria Aparacida de Castro Barbo, High Connections Intercambio, Brazil

"We do a rigorous interview about what they want, their objectives, their expectations and their knowledge about the culture and country they want to travel to. We advise them about what is best for them before they take any

decision and we make sure their expectations are according to reality."

Alexandra Galindo, Global Connection, Colombia

"[We give] students correct information about the course, institute, culture and country. We make a point to visit each institute. [Students are] also introduced to other students like themselves who may be leaving for the same country or institute. This gives them an opportunity to make friends even before they set foot outside their own country."

P Saini, DISHA Educational Consultancy Services, India

Best value UK universities

According to a recent report published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), universities in the UK provide students with the highest rate of return for their investment, compared with nine other industrialised nations.

The Education at a Glance 2002 report, which was published at the end of last year, reveals that students going to university in the UK are given a 17 per cent return on their investment, compared to 15 per cent in the USA and over 10 per cent in Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Sweden. The OECD average was 11.8 percent.

Percentage returns were calculated by taking into account factors such as higher average earnings, lower risks of unemployment, the time taken to earn a degree, tuition costs and taxes, and set against the potential rate of return on investing the money by other means.

The report also noted that 1.6 million foreign students were enrolled in tertiary-level institutions outside their country of origin in 2000, with the USA claiming a 28 per cent share of these students, followed by the UK with 14 per cent, Germany with 12 per cent, France with eight per cent and Australia with seven per cent. Of the students studying in the 30 OECD member countries, the Chinese made up the largest group with 7.1 per cent of the total followed by Japan, with 4.6 per cent of the total and Korea with 3.9 per cent.

Korean scholarships

Korean students wanting to study overseas on a four-year advanced degree course in science and engineering will be able to apply for scholarships of up to US\$30,000 from next year, according to the Korean newspaper, *The Chosun Ilbo*.

The Korean Ministry of Planning and Budget announced that US\$30 million would be earmarked for the scholarship programme in its 2003 budget and recipients would be selected from institutions throughout the country in consultation with officials from the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The move comes in response to falling numbers of students studying science and engineering subjects in colleges within Korea and fears that this will lead to a scarcity of people with skills in this field.

Free trade fears in India

A focus group set up by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India is seeking to facilitate the entry of international students into India's higher education sector in an effort to address the potential threat posed by foreign universities when the General Agreement on Trade and Services (Gats) comes into force in April.

The aim of Gats – which was introduced by the World Trade Organisation and has 144 signatories – is to remove any restrictions and internal government regulations in the area of service delivery, including education, that are considered to be barriers to trade. The UGC, therefore, wants to ensure that Indian higher education is able to compete effectively against foreign universities in India, and equally as able to set up campuses in other countries.

Professor Bhusan Patwardhan from the University of Pune, who convened the group, stressed that any policies were currently only in the discussion stage and said that the aim of the group was to "evolve an approach paper and draft policy" to assess the issues.

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New London campus for global university

Warnborough University – a borderless global university with campuses in countries such as Ireland, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines – opened its first London campus last year at the London College of Management and IT.

The campus, which opened in November 2002, offers business English, pre-degree study, undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees in a wide range of programmes, and plans to focus its recruitment strategy on Eastern Europe, South East Asia, the Middle East and South America.

US universities in Middle East gain students

US universities situated in the Middle East have been experiencing a surge in enrolments from Arab students as political instability and more stringent visa requirements discourage them from travelling to study in the USA, according to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in the USA.

A survey of five US universities in the Middle East showed that enrolments had increased by as much as 68 per cent in some institutions. Sofia Halabi, assistant to the Vice President at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the United Arab Emirates, told the *Chronicle*, "Many of our students got brilliant offers for universities in the USA, but they still decided not to travel abroad and instead to come to AUS."

UK universities merge

Two of the largest universities in the UK entered into merger talks at the end of last year in a move that would potentially create the richest research institution in the UK.

A merger between Imperial College and University College London – both part of the University of

- London but separate universities in their own right
- would result in a combined research income of UK£406.7 million (US\$641 million), compared with UK£206.2 million (US\$325 million) and UK£192.4 million (US\$303.2 million) received by Oxford and Cambridge universities respectively.

Growth in Australian education exports

- According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, education was the only major service export industry in Australia to show growth in the last financial year.

- Figures show that in 2001/2002, the value of education as an export industry for Australia grew by 2.9 percent to AUS\$4.154 billion (US\$2.35 billion) on the previous year.

- IDP Chief Executive, Lindy Hyam, said, "While there was a slight decline in the value of Australian education exports at the end of last year and the beginning of 2002, in the last few months [of the year] this has turned around. In the last quarter of 2001/2002, education exports grew by six per cent compared to the same period last year."

Foreign universities to be allowed in Iran

- Foreign universities may soon be allowed to set up branch campuses in Iran for the first time since the Islamic revolution in 1979, after new legislation was approved by the Iranian parliament last year.

- The law must now be reviewed by the Council of Guardians which determines whether any new legislation violates Islamic principles.

- The proposal has a wide range of supporters within Iran who are concerned by the migration of large numbers of young Iranian students to universities overseas.

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Universities UK

Full name: Universities UK
Year established: The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) was formed in 1918. CVCP became Universities UK in 2000.
Organisation's main role: to advance the interests of UK universities and to spread good practice throughout the higher education sector
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How does your organisation help its members compete in the international market?

Universities UK has an international strategy group to develop policy in this important area. It is not, however, directly involved in international student recruitment on behalf of its member institutions.

What was the organisation's most important achievement over the past year?

Our main focus over the past year has been lobbying in support of a bid for additional funding for UK higher education in the government's spending review.

How are your members faring internationally?

The UK receives the largest number of international (non-EU) students after the USA. The British Council reports an 11 per cent increase in international students at higher education institutions in 2001/2002 over 2000/2001. These increases demonstrate the significant investment institutions have committed to their international activities over many years. Since the announcement of the Prime Minister's initiative in 1999, further focus has been given to the development of the Education UK brand, improvements in visa procedures and rights to work while studying.