

Overseas unis in Singapore

Singapore is aiming to triple its number of international students from 50,000 to 150,000 in the next 10 to 15 years by encouraging a range of private, specialist and foreign educational institutions to establish themselves in the country.

While Singapore is already home to a number of foreign institution campuses offering graduate studies, the Economic Development Board (EDB) is hoping to encourage universities from the UK, USA or Australia to open a campus that will offer undergraduate courses, in competition with the three local universities. A Singapore-based university campus would charge the same tuition fees as in its home country and 70 per cent of students are

expected to come from overseas. The board is also hoping to attract a range of foreign specialist schools in areas such as hospitality, fashion and culinary art.

Teo Ming Kian, Chairman of EDB, said, "Having more quality foreign and local private education players will bring out creation of new knowledge and a variety of offerings via competition. This will bring us a step closer towards being an attractive education hub."

Last August, the Singapore Tourist Board announced the launch of "Singapore Education", an umbrella brand that is the spearhead for Singapore's image as a premier education hub overseas. The board plans to develop a full range of publicity materials to market and promote

Singapore's education services in key student markets such as China, India and Indonesia. A website containing information for students will also be developed.

Singapore's Trade and Industry Minister, George Yeo, explained that 45 per cent of the 1.8 million students worldwide studying in foreign countries came from Asia. "As more Asians strive to follow in the footsteps of those who have succeeded in developed countries, they create a huge demand for educational services, most of which will be met in Asia itself," he explained.

The EDB has calculated that foreign students spend between approximately US\$3,000 and US\$8,000 annually on top of tuition fees.

Japan reviews international education policy

Japan's Education, Science and Technology Ministry has announced plans to establish a two-to-three year programme that will provide scholarships for Japanese students to obtain masters and doctorate degrees at overseas universities. The scholarships would cover travel expenses and up to US\$10,000 in annual tuition fees, as well as a monthly living allowance.

Meanwhile, international students studying in Japan could have their scholarships taken away from them if their academic performance is deemed unsatisfactory. Currently, the Ministry inspects attendance lists monthly and ends payments for students who are no longer listed, but this move marks a new concern over academic integrity.

The plans are part of a revision of the country's foreign student policy. Universities will also be asked to hire lecturers with foreign language skills and obtain information on educational organisations that offer advice to students, with a view to increasing overseas enrolments.

Saudi Arabia wants foreign unis

Foreign universities are to be allowed to set up campuses in Saudi Arabia for the first time as an increasing population and shortage of university places is placing greater demands on the higher education sector.

Currently, Saudi Arabia has only nine universities for a population of 23 million people and a special council convened by the Ministry of Higher Education last year proposed increasing the capacity of existing universities as well as the creation of additional trade and professional schools. "We hope that foreign universities will help us meet the demands of higher education for Saudi students," said Saad al-Haqqaan, Director of Public Relations at the Ministry.

While the new ruling applies to all foreign universities, al-Haqqaan stressed that American or American-style universities would be preferred, due to the familiarity of many Saudis with this style of education.

Crackdown on test fraud

The New Oriental School in China was ordered to pay the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC) US\$1.21 million in compensation at the end of last year for stealing test questions, according to a report in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

The two companies, which between them own and administer the Toefl and Gmat tests, sued the school in 2001 for selling pirated copies of copyrighted tests to students and hiring test-takers to sit the examinations solely to memorise test questions. The Toefl and Gmat tests are used by many universities and management education institutions in English

speaking destinations as admissions criteria.

New Oriental School, which claimed a nine-month waiting list in China, denied stealing tests and said the verdict was unfair. It is appealing against the ruling.

Detecting test cheats has long been a problem for test authorities as well as university admissions officers, and the Chinese market in particular has presented significant challenges. In 2001 and 2002, ETS warned institutions in the USA that scores on the GRE and Toefl tests earned by students in China may have been inflated by cheating.

Kurt Landgraf, Chief Executive Officer of ETS, said in a

statement, "The court's rulings... help to ensure that Chinese students will receive fair and accurate test scores that will enable them to obtain educational opportunities based on their merit."

Staying one step ahead of cheats is a priority for all test coordinators. In March last year, administrators of the Ielts test started printing candidate photographs on all test report forms in an effort to crack down on cheating, after reports emerged that test takers were paying other people to sit the test on their behalf (see *Language Travel Magazine*, August, page 5). And the test material for each of the 48 annual dates is now used once only.

US visa process is helping UK

The number of international students applying to study in British universities rose by 11 per cent in the 2002/2003 academic year, according to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas). And the rise in student numbers is thought to be due, in part, to the difficult visa application process which students have to go through before attending a college or university in the USA.

Anecdotal evidence from UK university admission staff, as reported in the *International Herald Tribune*, credits the USA with improving the UK's allure. Peter Dunn at the University of Warwick commented that this was a factor, particularly for Malaysian students. "Those people who are having trouble getting into the United States do seem to be turning to the UK to some degree," he said.

Benefits of studying abroad

Studying abroad increases self confidence, generates a wider circle of friends and increases the chances of working abroad, according to the results of a survey released by the Institute for the International Education of Students – a non-profit study abroad organisation.

Over 3,000 students responded to the survey in which over a third said that the language skills gained during their study programme overseas continued to serve them today.

US Sevis charges

US-bound students could be charged a fee of US\$100 to cover the costs of running Sevis, according to draft regulations issued by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) at the end of last year. International students have been required to register on the Sevis tracking system since the beginning of 2003, although original plans to charge the students a fee were put on hold. A spokesman from the DHS said that the government hopes to have the final regulations in place by the spring of 2004.

Many institutions in the USA fear that the fee – the statutory maximum that was allowed to be charged – will be too high for many students from poorer countries, especially when added to the US\$100 visa issuing fee already charged by the Department of State. Louis Bregger from Clemson University said, "[This] will definitely discourage some students from applying [to univer-

sities in the USA]. Sevis should be funded by the government if this is truly a cornerstone in our homeland security programme."

Industry insiders are further angered by the fact that figures recommended by a consultancy firm, hired to evaluate a suitable fee to cover the costs of Sevis, were almost doubled. KPMG Consulting recommended charging foreign students a fee of US\$54. Victor Johnson, Associate Executive Director of Nafsa: Association of International Educators in the USA, asked, "Why do these fee studies if you're going to throw them in the wastebasket?"

The money raised will provide funding for system maintenance and pay for 61 Sevis officers to work with US colleges. It will also pay for 182 officers in the US Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement who would be in charge of ensuring international students meet the conditions of their visa requirements.

Centralised applications

The South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association has voiced its support for a centralised information and applications service for South African universities, as long as individual universities retain the right to select individual applicants themselves.

The plan for a centralised service was first proposed by the South African government as part of its National Plan for Higher

Education in 2001. It calls for information on the academic programmes of universities and technikons in South Africa, as well as a one-stop-shop application service enabling students to make more than one application.

A proposal that would have enabled the applications service to also make admissions decisions was rejected by the vice chancellors' association.

Visa changes won't affect numbers, say schools

A change in Australian student visa regulations which will require international students from level four countries to submit an English test score when applying to study in an Australian high school will not have a negative effect on international enrolments, according to the schools themselves.

The changes, which are part of a raft of changes to Australia's student visa system, were due to start from 1 November last year but have been delayed until this year. Craig Wannan from SCEGGS Redlands in NSW said that the extra requirement would ensure that students had a high enough level of English to be able to cope with high school studies. "We will not enrol students into years 10, 11 or 12 if they do not have a sufficient level of English. We determine this by working through reputable agents or by interviewing applicants in China in person," he said.

The Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (Dimia) also announced a proposition for IELTS to develop a school-age English test that would come into effect in November 2005. Currently, high school students would have to submit an IELTS score with their visa application from the test more commonly used for admission into university.

German-Egypt links

The first German university based outside the Republic of Germany opened in Cairo, Egypt in October last year, with an inauguration ceremony attended by the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, and the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarek.

The German University Cairo is privately financed by investors in Cairo but is based on the German higher education model and supported by DAAD, the German academic exchange service. Qualifications obtained in Cairo will be recognised in Germany and the university will be an official exchange destination for German students.

US-Chinese business school

Sixty-five Chinese government officials and state executives have been receiving training from a US business school since last September, in the first partnership between the Chinese government and a US business school.

The project was developed jointly with China's Ministry of Finance to train the country's economic leaders to be able to compete in the global business world. The finance-focused courses are being administered in China by Arizona State University's W.P. Carey School of Business.

Student jobs in Japan

A Tokyo not-for-profit organisation has launched a scheme whereby local companies that employ foreign students in Japan can earn points that pay for 20 hours of student labour. The company, Tokyo Alien Eyes (TAE), will fund the scheme in the hope that it will lead to students being hired on a more permanent basis.

If an employer wants to keep the student longer than the 20 hours paid for by TAE, a standard part-time contract will be drawn up. International students are only allowed to work up to 28 hours a week in Japan by law. So far, 20 companies and restaurants around Tokyo have signed up for the new scheme.

US aid for Iraq

The US Agency for International Development has awarded US\$11.7 million in grants to three consortia of American and other universities to help Iraqi universities rebuild and strengthen their education system.

The money will be used to develop and modernise curricula, improve research infrastructure and promote academic reform. Subject areas that will be first on the list to receive financial attention include archaeological and environmental research, legal education reform and agriculture.