

## China attracts students

THE CHINESE Ministry of Education is hoping to attract 120,000 foreign students to China by 2007, according to a report in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which also states that 86,000 international students enrolled in Chinese universities in 2004, an increase of 11 per cent on the previous year.

The nationalities most commonly represented in China, according to the Ministry of Education, include South Koreans, who made up 41 per cent of overseas students, Japanese, who made up 19 per cent and Americans, who represented eight per cent of the student body.

The increase in overseas enrolments is largely being attributed to China's rapidly expanding economic links with countries around the world, and particularly with Asia. Chen Yinghui, Director of the International Students Division of the Ministry of Education in China, told Channelnewsasia.com, "The growth of foreign students to China is very much linked to China's opening and reform... Overall, we have seen steady growth in [international] enrolments since the early 1990s and we expect the trend to continue up through 2008."

# Australia's high costs

A study comparing the total costs of higher education for international students in a number of key education destinations, compiled by IDP Education Australia and the Centre for International Economics, revealed the UK to be the most expensive destination for international students, followed by Australia.

The research, which was presented at the 18th IDP Australian International Education Conference in Sydney, Australia, last year surveyed 584 courses in the fields of business, information technology and engineering offered in the five main English-speaking destinations, as well as in the emerging Asian study destinations of Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Malaysia, Thailand and India. Total tuition and living costs were calculated and compared for all countries.

The study, called Comparative Costs of Higher Education for International Students 2004, showed that the main English-speaking destinations were the most expensive places to study and were rated in the following order: the UK (US\$11,152 per annum), Australia (US\$9,519), the USA

(US\$8,989), Canada (US\$8,925) and New Zealand (US\$8,686). Emerging Asian destinations, on the other hand, were shown to be considerably cheaper than their more traditional counterparts and were rated as follows: Hong Kong (US\$7,081), China (US\$5,219), Malaysia (US\$3,785), Thailand (US\$2,918) and India (US\$1,515).

In a previous study on the comparative costs of higher education, conducted by IDP in 2001, the cost of studying in higher education in Australia was concluded to be very competitive when compared with the UK and USA. However, the soaring Australian dollar, coupled with an average annual rise in tuition fees of 12 per cent and a national drought that has caused an increase in food prices, have all generated increasing living costs for international students.

Denis Meares, IDP's General Manager for Global Strategy, said that the high value of the Australian dollar, as well as strong competition from emerging Asian destinations, meant that Australia faced the possibility of having to alter its marketing thrust in the future. "Because Australia has marketed itself in recent years as an affordable study destination,

the key implication from this is that we will need to shift our marketing approach to one in which quality of education, qualifications recognition, employment prospects and affordability are all contemplated as part of the total marketing and promotional mix," he said.

Of particular consideration for Australian educators is the fact that many of the cheaper Asian destinations are traditionally

strong student markets for Australian universities, which could result in a potential decline in student enrolments from these countries. The report points out that new student on-shore university enrolments in 2003/2004 from Hong Kong declined by 10 per cent, numbers from Singapore fell by 13 per cent and enrolments from Malaysia dropped by nine per cent, according to statistics available.

## Students head for Ireland

ACCORDING to figures compiled by Education Ireland, the number of international students studying in Ireland's 36 higher education institutions during the 2003/2004 academic year increased by 19 per cent, compared with the previous year.

The figures show that 18,608 international students were studying in higher education in Ireland last year, 15,000 of whom were from non-EU countries.

The USA was the largest student market for Ireland, with 16 per cent of the student body made up of this nationality, followed by China, which contributed 15 per cent of the total student mix. The number of Chinese students in Ireland has shown particularly strong growth in the last two years, with enrolments increasing by 235 per cent since 2002.

Education Ireland has been focusing on China as a key

student market in recent years and has organised a number of overseas missions to China since 1999. New marketing tools soon to be available for this market include a Chinese translation of the Education Ireland brochure and website.

The research from Education Ireland estimates that international students generated revenue of €275 million (US\$347 million) during the 2003/2004 year.



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### What international student trends have you noticed among your members?

International student numbers continue to rise. Australian private providers have withstood the Asian currency crisis, Sars and terrorism. There is a greater interest in Australia from Southern American and Middle Eastern students.

### How is Acpet helping its members to compete in the

### international marketplace?

We help our members in two major ways. We provide a national tuition assurance scheme that guarantees students' tuition, and ensures that students are automatically placed at another Acpet member school on a comparable course, should the original Acpet member be unable to complete the course of studies. We also promote awareness of private education providers through influential publications such as *Language Travel Magazine*.

### What was your most important achievement over the past year?

The introduction of the two-year associate degree course designed especially for overseas students [at various Acpet member institutions].

### What plans does Acpet have to further raise the international profile of its members?

We plan to continue working closely with the Australian Department of Immigration in order to make the visa regime student friendly.

## Overseas enrolment up by 15 per cent in Australian schools

ACCORDING to statistics from IDP Education Australia, international student numbers at Australian high schools increased by 15 per cent to 26,799 students in 2003, compared with the previous year.

In keeping with many other destinations around the world, Chinese students made up the largest share of the market and, along with Korean students, showed the most growth. Overall, 11,778 Chinese students studied in Australian high schools in 2003, showing a growth rate of 21 per cent on the previous year, while Australian high schools also played host to 3,812 Korean students, up by 34 per cent on the previous year.

Some high schools in Australia said that problems with space often restricted the number of international students they could accept each year. "St Hilda's opened its new boarding house in 2002 and we were actively seeking enrolments until it was full to capacity in 2003," said Jasmine Michelides at St

Hilda's Anglican School for Girls in Mosman Park, WA. "We have had a waiting list for entry in 2003 and 2004 and so have lost possible overseas entrants during this time when we were not in a position to offer places."

At Gippsland Grammar School in Sale, VIC, Jenni Demarte also reported that demand for international places had outstripped supply. "Our numbers have remained much the same for the past few years, largely because we have had very few vacancies in our secondary school for the past three years," she confirmed.

While many schools reported a high number of Chinese students in their international student body, Tracy Mulligan from Redlands in Cremorne, NSW, said that Chinese students had increasingly been affected by visa problems. "As applications from China have increased, so too have the visa requirements," she said. "This has resulted in fewer applicants being approved for student visas."

### Japan recognises foreign campuses

Branch campuses of foreign universities in Japan were formally recognised by the Japanese Education Ministry in November, making it easier for students to transfer credits or move on to advanced degree programmes at other universities in Japan.

While branch campuses have existed in Japan for over 20 years, many have found it difficult to attract enough students due to lack of recognition by the Ministry. Existing campuses in Japan hope that government recognition will eventually lead to them being able to obtain visas for international students.

### US university to reimburse Sevis fee

The University of Texas has announced plans to reimburse all new international students with US\$100 to cover the Sevis fee in an attempt to halt a decline in international enrolments. According to the *Daily Texan* newspaper, all international students enrolling in the spring of 2005 onwards will have their Sevis fee reimbursed.

The move comes in response to a decline in international enrolments over the last two years amid concerns voiced by international students

regarding the rising cost of study in the USA.

### Accountability for private colleges

A new accreditation scheme initiated by Singapore's Economic Development Board will require all private education institutions in Singapore to implement policies to protect the welfare of international students by September 2005.

The scheme will be run by the Consumers Association of Singapore (Case) and will require all private institutions to earn the CaseTrust for Education mark before they are allowed to accept international students.

### Foreign students experience violence

Foreign students studying in St Petersburg, Russia, are demanding increased protection from police after a Vietnamese student was fatally stabbed and an African student was badly beaten within days of each other, in apparently racially motivated attacks.

Groups of students demonstrated outside the police headquarters, at city hall and outside the underground station where one of the attacks occurred, and demanded increased security in and around university campuses and dormitories. Currently there are 15,000 foreign students

enrolled at 46 higher education institutions in St Petersburg.

### European degree courses not recognised by USA

A six-year project to standardise higher education throughout Europe is currently facing difficulties as US graduate schools remain wary of accepting students from three-year undergraduate programmes.

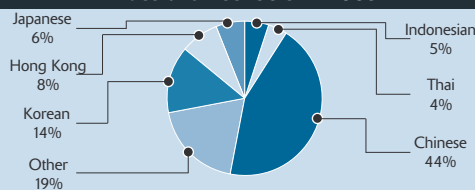
An independent study of admissions officers, conducted by Educational Credential Evaluators and the Institute of International Education at 90 higher education institutions in Canada and the USA, showed that 68 per cent said they would only consider students who had degrees from four-year undergraduate programmes, unless students had gained their degrees from the UK.

### New Zealand eyes central Europe

Education New Zealand organised a fam trip for three agents from central Europe in October in a bid to diversify the country's key student markets for education.

The agents, one from the Czech Republic and two from Hungary, were due to visit a comprehensive range of different education institutions in Auckland, Hamilton, Hawkes Bay, Canterbury and Taranaki.

### Nationality breakdown of international students in Australian schools in 2003



Source: IDP Education Australia