

Studying in Scandinavia

Opportunities for university study in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland are relatively unknown among international students and agents but the region offers many advantages, according to course providers. **BETHAN NORRIS** finds out more.

Universities in Scandinavia are usually sidelined in the global education market with many international students having little idea of what the area has to offer or what life is like there. Sofi Dougherty, International Relations Officer at Högskolan Dalarna in Sweden says, "We hear from students studying with us that they are convinced that if only potential students knew what it was like to study in Sweden, many more students would choose to come here."

Lack of information about study opportunities within Scandinavia is commonly cited as a reason for few international enrolments at universities in the region, with Sirpa Holmström from HAAGA-University of Applied Sciences in Finland, pointing out, "[T]here is a lack of student awareness. Scandinavia is considered distant and cold." However, there are signs that, as the global education market matures, international students are increasingly looking away from the traditional study destinations of the USA and UK to those that have certain price or lifestyle advantages.

One of the major benefits for international students of studying in Scandinavia is the fact that, for now at least, tuition is free for all students. Many undergraduate and graduate courses are taught in English and higher education in this region has a high reputation worldwide. It can be difficult to see why international students would choose to go anywhere else. Maija Salminen, International Coordinator at Tampere Polytechnic – University of Applied Sciences in Finland, says, "Degree students come to Finland because of the high standard of education and the diversity of English degree programmes offered." She adds, "Most degree students in our institution have had previous contacts in Finland."

While international students can study on an academic programme in English, fitting in with the local lifestyle and interacting with local people is also relatively easy for foreigners, according to international student coordinators. Dougherty asserts that most people in Scandinavia can speak or try to speak English and adds, "Scandinavia offers proximity to nature and a low population density. Our countries are often clean, neat, well-organised and safe."

As well as a high standard of living, safety is a key issue for many international students who may be travelling away from home for the first time. Anne-Mari Alikoski from the University of Kuopio in Finland emphasises that "Finland is a very safe country". For example, she adds, "It is safe for women to walk alone outside even after dark."

One of Scandinavia's key selling points, its lack of tuition fees for international students, looks set to change soon as discussions are currently ongoing regarding the introduction of fees for non-European Union (EU) students. In Denmark, non-EU students have had to pay tuition fees from September 2006 and universities in Finland, Sweden and Norway

look set to follow suit in the next few years. Michael Cooper, Director of International Relations at Karlstads University in Denmark, says this is bound to have an effect on whether universities think it is worth their while to actively recruit students from overseas. "It will be up to the individual universities to decide whether they wish to go down the international student recruitment pathway," he says. "There are those that are keen on this and others that are very doubtful."

Trine Sand from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, where inbound exchange students have increased by around 20-to-30 per cent each year over the past three years, says that the introduction of tuition fees is likely to adversely affect enrolments from non-exchange students, although she also cites "lack of awareness, the perception that living costs are high [in Denmark] and the perception that students have to be able to speak Danish to study and live in Denmark", as other factors that are likely to continue to keep international enrolments down in the immediate future.

While Scandinavia could become a less cheap option, tuition fees and living costs are likely to remain competitive when compared with other destinations such as the UK, however, where one year of an undergraduate degree course can cost up to £15,000 (US\$28,642). At the University of Aarhus in Denmark, for example, tuition fees for the 2006 year ranged from €9,100 (US\$11,600) to €15,300 (US\$19,500).

There is evidence that Scandinavian universities are increasingly focusing on international marketing strategies as they recognise the



advantages they have for international students, and this will continue with the added financial incentive that tuition fees would bring. Alikoski in Finland asserts that international recruitment strategies have so been confined to "mainly advertising on the Internet and some fairs" but adds, "recruitment has been quite minimal, but is increasing rapidly".

Existing student markets for Scandinavian universities are spread across the world with many universities so far relying on word-of-mouth to recruit international students. Alikoski says that Russian, Estonian, German and Chinese have been the university's largest student

nationalities over the last five years and remain stable. Meanwhile, Dougherty in Sweden reports that strong student markets for them include Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, China and Nigeria. She notes, "An argument we hear

is that it is considered easier to get admission to a university within Scandinavia compared with a university in the UK/USA. This may be due to the relatively high number of universities in a small population."

Most universities agree, however, that increased promotional activities are needed if Scandinavia is to really take advantage of its export education market in the future. The area's location and slight air of mystery is both an attraction and a disadvantage, says Dougherty. ■

"One of the major benefits for international students of studying in Scandinavia is the fact that, for now at least, tuition is free for all students. Many undergraduate and graduate courses are taught in English"

box			
Country	Cost of living per month (US\$)	Work permit required?	No. of hours able to work term time (non-EU)
Sweden	€600 (US\$765)	no	unlimited
Finland	€700 (US\$893)	no	20
Norway	8,000 NOK (US\$1,226)	yes	20
Denmark	€645-800 (US\$823-1,020)	yes	15

MANCHESTER
1824
The University of Manchester

English Language Courses
Oddfellows Hall, PO Box 88
Manchester M60 1QD
T: +44 (0)161 306 3397
F: +44 (0)161 306 3396
englang@manchester.ac.uk



University Language Centre
www.langcent.manchester.ac.uk

 **UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING**

Centre for English Language Teaching

Language Courses: General English, IELTS Preparation, English plus Sports Training (Football and Golf), UK Foundation Year Programme, BA in EFL, Summer School in August and Pre-session courses.

Courses for Teachers: Short In-Service Training Courses for Overseas Teachers of English, BA in ELT, MSc TESOL

Contact CELT, University of Stirling,
Stirling FK9 4LA, tel: +44(0)1786 467934,
e-mail:celt@stir.ac.uk

www.celt.stir.ac.uk



ALPHE
Discover the Difference - Experience Alphe




Alphe Workshops around the world

ALPHE ASIA
in Bangkok
20-22 November 2006

ALPHE UK
1st in London
31st Aug - 2nd Sept
2007

ALPHE RUSSIA
in St Petersburg
26-28 October 2007

ALPHE LATIN AMERICA
in Sao Paulo
14-16 March 2007

ALPHE JAPAN
in Tokyo
28-30 November 2007

ALPHE KOREA
in Seoul
3-5 December 2007



www.hothousemedia.com/alphe +44 20 7440 4020

subject focus

Academic preparation in the UK

Preparing for university study in the UK can be a daunting experience for international students and a range of courses exist to smooth the transition process.

Some universities in the UK have been offering university preparation courses for a number of years. The university language centre at the University of Manchester has provided new international students with an option to take an academic preparation course before starting their degree programmes for the last 30 years, says Justine Hinton-Lever at the university.

"It is important to ensure that students have reached the required level of English for their degree courses, acquired the study skills and academic English needed and are familiar with the university facilities and resources, and living in Manchester," she says.

The range of academic preparation courses on offer in the UK varies from pre-session summer courses, which last for a few weeks and are for students about to start on a mainstream degree programme, to year-long foundation programmes – for those applying to study on a degree programme but who don't have the necessary English skills – and finally diploma programmes, which provide entry into the second year of an undergraduate degree programme.

While for many students, improving English language skills is the main priority for undertaking an academic preparation course, increasingly, course providers are noting demand for more academic-based courses as a way of gentle introduction into a degree subject. The University of Manchester encourages all international students to undertake their pre-session courses, even if language requirements have already been fulfilled, while Jane Magee from the English Language Teaching Centre at the University of St Andrews asserts, "Foundation programmes are a vital bridge for students [from] another country."

Magee adds, "Above all, a foundation programme is an opportunity to get a good academic grounding in the subjects which students hope to major in, not all of which are studied at school, and this gives international students the knowledge and confidence to get their studies off to a flying start."

A recent development in academic preparation provision in the UK is the launch of Into University Partnerships, which plans to set up partnerships with universities throughout the UK to offer academic preparation courses (see *Education Travel Magazine*, July 2006, page 50). Janet Oag from the Into University of East Anglia, which is located in a new £35 million (US\$67.9 million) facility, says that their preparation courses on offer are made up of 70 per cent academic content, and this has increased since the establishment of the Into Centre at the university. "We offer three streams of foundation so that the subject areas covered are relevant to [various] degree studies," she says. "Students who benefit most are those who have completed 12 rather than 13 years of schooling and need some kind of academic bridge between where they are and what is required for academic success."

David Morrison from AbleEnglish School in Glasgow points out that these types of programme are attractive to students from certain countries in particular. "Both the Chinese and Polish groups share a very strong desire to succeed in endeavours they decide to pursue," he says. "Academic preparation courses are a means of [students] assuring themselves that their time at university or in professional studies is not wasted by failing in, for example, reading or listening comprehension."

Location	Name of school	Range of academic prep. courses	Min. age of students	Min. lang. proficiency required	Uni admission?
Boston	Boston College	yr	17	i	✓
Brighton	University of Sussex	sh, yr	18	e	
Cardiff	Cardiff University	yr	17	i	✓
Edinburgh	Heriot-Watt University	pre, s, sh, yr	17	i	✓
Edinburgh	Telford College	yr	16	e	
Glasgow	AbleEnglish	s, sh, yr	17	e	✓
London	Barnet College	pre, yr	–	i	✓
London	City of London College	s, yr	18	i	
London	Kingsway College	s, sh, yr	18	i	✓
Manchester	University of Manchester	s, sh, yr	18	e	✓
Northampton	University of Northampton	s, sh, yr	17	i	✓
Nottingham	New College Nottingham	sh, yr	16	i	
Norwich	Into University of East Anglia	pre, s, sh, yr	17	i	✓
Oxford	Oxford Brookes University	pre, s, sh, yr	18	i	✓
St Andrews	University of St Andrews	s, sh, yr	17	i	✓

e elementary i intermediate s summer sh short pre pre-session yr year round
– information not supplied

The Kaplan London Centre Now fully renovated!

- English Language and Test Preparation courses
- Two new multimedia labs equipped with the latest technology
- Spacious new internet café and student lounge
- Newly decorated, bright classrooms
- Excellent location in the heart of London between Trafalgar and Leicester Squares
- All residences and apartment options in Zone 1



Kaplan English Programs in the UK is accredited by the British Council.



Kaplan is a member of FIYTO and ALTO.



BERKELEY • BOSTON • CHICAGO • HIGHLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE • IRVINE VALLEY COLLEGE • LONDON • LOS ANGELES
MERRIMACK COLLEGE • MIAMI • NEWYORK • SACRAMENTO • SAN FRANCISCO • SEATTLE • VANCOUVER • WASHINGTON DC

agents@kaplan.com | kaplanenglish.com

Please contact your local Kaplan International Sales Manager for more information

KAPLAN ENGLISH PROGRAMS

Our University Preparation promise to your students



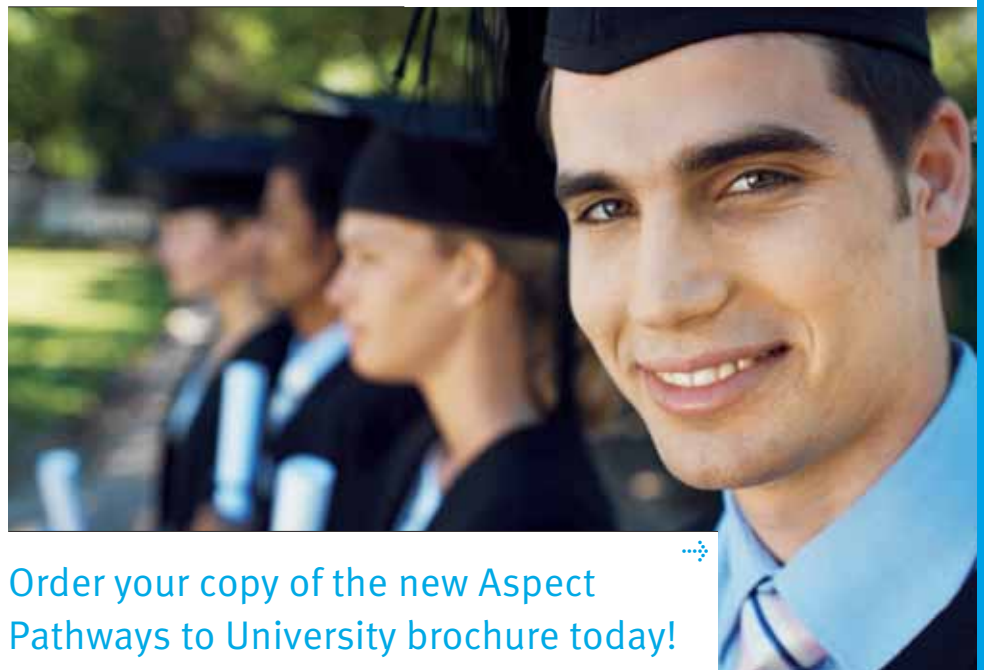
Quality

- › Excellent undergraduate and postgraduate preparation programmes
- › A wide choice of subjects taught by specialist teachers
- › Guaranteed university entry on successful completion
- › Over 80 partner universities and colleges in the UK and Ireland
- › Continuous support, guidance and counselling for your students
- › 10 years of experience in preparing students for higher education

Choice

Care

Value



Order your copy of the new Aspect Pathways to University brochure today!

Aspect contact details:

Tel: +44 20 8727 3500

E-mail: info@aspectworld.com



The Aspect University Foundation Certificate programmes in the UK and Ireland and the Aspect Certificate of Higher Education programme in the UK are validated and awarded by the Federal University of Wales, UK.



Aspect Pre-Master/Pre-MBA programmes are in partnership with the Chartered Management Institute.