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UK study shows dissatisfaction

A report by the Higher Education Policy Institute in the UK has revealed that almost 30 per cent of international students studying in higher education in the UK do not think they are getting value for money.

Bahram Bekhradnia, Director of the Institute, said that the report, *The Academic Experience of Students in English Universities*, showed that "when it comes to value for money, the level of dissatisfaction among international students runs at worrying levels".

Professor Graham Gibbs from Oxford University in the UK, who commented on the report's findings, said that perceptions of value for money were directly related to the number of class contact hours. The study also showed that universities with fewer class contact hours achieved higher levels of student satisfaction if students were expected to spend more time studying outside the classroom. When compared with Europe, students in the UK put in significantly fewer study hours than their European counterparts.

Tuition fees and living costs for studying in the UK are higher than many other English language study destinations, yet the country's universities often promote the country's reputation for high quality education. The British Council guide for international students studying in the UK for the 2007/2008 academic year estimates that yearly tuition fees for undergraduate degree courses can be between £8,000 (US\$16,638) and £10,400 (US\$21,630), while living costs for international students are likely to be between £5,500 (US\$11,439) and £7,500 (US\$15,599) a year. ■

NZ relaxes rules for graduates

International students graduating from New Zealand's universities and colleges can now stay in the country looking for work for up to one year, after the Ministry of Immigration announced a rule change last November. Previously, graduates were allowed to stay in New Zealand on a job search permit for up to six months.

Students studying architecture and accounting, who need three years practical work experience to achieve professional registration, are able to stay in New Zealand for three years after graduating.

"It is important that we facilitate residence for qualified international graduates who have experience of living here," said Immigration Minister, David Cunliffe. "In many cases, they are

precisely the type of skilled workers we need in New Zealand."

Cunliffe said the changes had been made after consultation with the industry. Robert Stevens, Chief Executive of Education New Zealand, said the new policies would improve New Zealand's attractiveness to high quality international students. "We are pleased that the Ministerial decisions have taken into account the industry's views and submissions, including via the industry consultative process that was coordinated through Education New Zealand," he added.

Wayne Angus, Manager of International Marketing and Liaison at the University of Otago in Dunedin, said that the new rules put New Zealand on an equal footing with other study destinations. "I would hope it would

be particularly well received in markets like South Korea, China and India, all of which are very responsive to changes in visa/work requirements," he said.

At the same time as the new visa policies were announced, a research report was released showing that 27 per cent of all international students who began study in New Zealand between 1999 and 2001 gained residence or stayed in New Zealand to work. The report, *International Students: Studying and staying on in New Zealand*, looked at the academic pathways of 94,537 students and found that one-third studied in more than one educational sector and 52 per cent studied English language at some point during their stay, making this the most common study sector. ■

Private degrees now on offer in the UK

BPP College, part of BPP Professional Education, has become the first private, for-profit college to be allowed to award higher education degrees in the UK. Degree-awarding powers have to be awarded to education providers in the UK by the Privy Council and have been confined so far to publicly funded higher education institutions and organisations such as the University of Buckingham, which is an educational charity.

BPP College offers business and law courses to students and will offer the legal practice bar course and bar vocational course

as masters degrees, as well as the graduate diploma in law as an honours degree, in its first year as a degree-granting institution. The college plans to expand its range of business programmes in the future.

College Chairman and Principal, Carl Lygo, said that the college had undergone an 18-month review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). "The decision [to let the college award degrees] recognises the vital contribution the private sector can make to education and training as well as the confidence the public can have in BPP," he said.

It is likely that other commercial education providers will soon follow BPP into the UK. US education companies, Bridgepoint Education and Kaplan, have both expressed interest in offering postgraduate degrees in the UK in the next few years. Charles Hall, London-based President of Kaplan Higher Education International, told the *Financial Times* newspaper that they could provide postgraduate education for between £6,000 (US\$12,479) and £11,000 (US\$22,879) a year, compared with the average annual fee of £15,000 (US\$31,198) charged by UK universities. ■

Indian student magazine

An Indian journalist has launched a magazine for Indian students studying in Australia. The magazine, which was launched in October last year, deals with education, searching for jobs, accommodation and migration issues. Thiruvallam Bhasi, the Editor of *Indian Student*, said, "Of late, thousands of Indian students come to Australia every year for admissions in universities here. Our magazine provides in-depth details of the new courses, universities and campuses." Bhasi is now hoping to launch the magazine in New Zealand and Britain in January this year.

Canadian group calls for work policy changes

The Canadian Bureau for International Education has recommended that the Canadian government allow international graduates to remain in the country for up to 18 months after finishing their course, up from 90 days currently. The recommendation comes after the CBIE released the findings of a survey of 900 international students and graduates in Canada, showing that two-thirds of students will return home after their studies or turn to other countries such as the USA to find work.

Microchip visas in Malaysia

Students, foreign workers and long-term visitors in Malaysia will soon have their personal information stored on microchips attached to their visas. The Immigration Director General, Wahid Mohammed Don, said last year that the system was being tested on foreign workers and would help reduce forgery as visitors' thumbprints and personal details would be stored on a central database and matched to their visa.

NEWS IN BRIEF NEWS IN BRIEF NEWS IN BRIEF



Full Name: Independent Schools Queensland
Year Established: 1968
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What activities has Independent Schools Queensland been involved in to further the international interests of members?

In 2003, Independent Schools Queensland and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission jointly established the Queensland Non-Government Schools International Education Co-operative (QNGSIEC). The website www.qics.qld.edu.au is an initiative of the co-operative. The QNGSIEC has focused on fostering a whole of school approach to internationalisation, and on providing greater access for individual schools to marketing

opportunities through collaborative projects. For example, the QNGSIEC has this year represented Queensland Independent and Catholic Schools at AEI Study in Australia exhibitions in Latin America, and is assisting Queensland Independent and Catholic Schools to attend events aimed at profiling schooling in Queensland in Vietnam.

How have international enrolments fared over the last 12 months?

In 2006, the non-government schools in Queensland accounted for almost 70 per cent of international student enrolments in

Queensland schools. This was an increase of 4.6 per cent from 2005, which compares favourably with a national downturn of 1.7 per cent over the period 2005-2006. Growth in enrolments in 2007 has been in the vicinity of five per cent. Many schools are expanding their international programmes, and an increasing number of independent schools [are] enrolling overseas students. There is growing confidence and vitality in the sector with regards to international programmes generally, and this is in turn reflected in international student enrolments. Additionally, in Queensland, a government and

cross-sector approach to promotion of international education opportunities enhances the state's appeal as an education destination too.

What plans do you have for the future?

In 2008, the QNGSIEC will again look at collaborative projects in marketing and international programme opportunities for non-government schools, and will consider ways of promoting sector engagement in Europe, and of raising awareness of the range of study opportunities offered by schools in regional parts of Queensland.