

Protests over Sevis fee

International students at campuses throughout the USA have been protesting over the introduction of a new international student fee by many US universities, which was brought in to cover the costs of implementing and maintaining the Sevis student-tracking database.

While the final rule implementing the Sevis fee for international students was still being finalised by the Office of Management and Budget at the time of going to press, many universities in the USA have already started levying an extra charge on their international students.

At the University of Massachusetts, 200 international students were refusing to pay the new US\$65-a-semester fee, which was introduced to pay for the Sevis system and also help compensate for cuts to the budget of the university's international programmes office, according to a report by CNN.

In a further news story in *The Journal Times*, the University of Wisconsin-Madison dropped plans to charge international students a US\$125-a-year fee to cover Sevis costs after protests from local and international students and a resolution from Madison City Council. The university will use money generated by private gifts and other revenue to finance the student tracking system in the long-term.

The Chancellor of the university, John Wiley, told the paper that they had experienced a 32 per cent decline in foreign students applications for the current school year, which was thought in part to stem from the tougher immigration rules imposed on international students as well as the increased costs imposed since September 2001.

It is expected that the Sevis fee rule will require international students to pay a one-off fee of US\$100 each when it is published.

UK looks to future

Global demand for international student places in the five major English speaking destinations is set to increase from one million in 2003 to 2.6 million in 2020, with the UK potentially welcoming 33 per cent of the market share, according to a joint report published by the British Council, IDP Education Australia and Universities UK in April this year.

The study, entitled *Vision 2020: Forecasting International Student Mobility – A UK Perspective*, also predicts that the total number of students seeking international education in any destination will increase to 5.8 million in 2020.

"The UK is a global leader in quality transnational education, including distance learning and

other forms of overseas delivered programmes," said David Green, Director General of the British Council at the report's launch. "All indications [suggest] this sector will grow very fast over the next few years and the UK must fully exploit its current position."

The report identified six primary "attractiveness" factors and assessed the importance of each for the five major English-speaking destinations – the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The factors identified as being the most important for the UK were quality of education and employment prospects.

The report goes on to portray five different scenarios based on changes in variable influences affecting international

enrolments in the future, with the base level scenario – where the primary attractiveness factors remain constant over the forecast period – predicting that international students in higher education would rise to 511,000 by 2020. A pessimistic scenario, in which all the main factors worsen for the UK, has the country's market share of students decrease from 24 per cent of the total in 2003 to 13 per cent in 2110 and just under 10 per cent in 2020.

Countries in Asia, particularly China and India, are expected to become the leading global source region of international students by 2010, representing 76 per cent of the global demand for the five major English speaking education destinations.

In a separate report, called *Global Value of UK Education and Training Exports*, which was released at the same time, the UK's education and training export industry was calculated to be worth UK£10.3 billion (US\$18.3 billion) directly, with a further UK£12 billion (US\$21.3 billion) generated annually from educational related products.

Professor Ivor Crewe, President of Universities UK, welcomed the findings and said, "It provides further evidence of the many ways in which the UK education sector contributes to the UK economy. In particular, it shows that public investment in higher education is significantly outweighed by the financial return to the economy."

Wider work rights

Full-time international students studying at post-secondary institutions in the Canadian province of New Brunswick can now work off-campus for up to 20 hours a week, due to a two-year pilot scheme sponsored by the Federal Government that started in May this year. Currently, international students in Canada are only allowed to work on the campus of the institution at which they are registered, apart from in Manitoba where a similar scheme was launched last year (see *Education Travel Magazine*, March 2004, page 49).

Under the pilot scheme, full-time international students will be able to apply for an open work permit if they have completed one year of study at a participating public college or university in the province. The work permits will be issued to students for a period of one year at a time.

Peter Mesheu, Minister of Business New Brunswick, said, "New Brunswick post-secondary institutions will be made even more attractive to international students if they have the opportunity to make money while in school and gain some experience in the Canadian labour market."

Education institutions in New Brunswick have welcomed the move. "The reaction from our current students has been very positive," said Ryan Sullivan from St Thomas University in Fredericton, NB. "They understand that they will have a greater chance to become more involved with the Fredericton community and learn more about the workplace environment."

According to the latest statistics from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2,748 international students were studying in New Brunswick in 2002.

China - Oz links

A memorandum of understanding was agreed between the Chinese Ministry of Education and IDP Education Australia earlier this year that will implement a series of collaborative education programmes between institutions in the two countries.

The programmes will include offering university preparation courses approved by all the 38 Australian universities to students in China and setting up joint courses that will help Chinese students transfer to Australian universities for further study.

Cao Guoxing, Director of the International Department of the Ministry of Education, said that international cooperation was being sought for local educational organisations because China's education system still could not satisfy the tremendous needs of the Chinese people. He added that training for government officials

and company management staff would also be a major part of the cooperative programme.

According to statistics from IDP, the number of Chinese students studying at universities in Australia more than doubled between 2002 and 2003 and the country is increasingly relying on China to buffer international student decreases experienced in other markets. International applications experienced a decrease of up to eight per cent across the whole international education sector for the first three months of this year, with Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong showing the greatest decline.

However, IDP's Chief Executive, Lindy Hyam, attributed the decrease to the strong Australian dollar at the beginning of the year and remained confident of a further increase in enrolments by the end of the year.

London on top

A promotional brochure that aims to attract more overseas students to study in London in the UK was launched in April this year as part of a wider promotional campaign introduced by the city's mayor, Ken Livingstone.

The brochure, called *London – A World of Opportunity*, was published in collaboration with London Higher, an umbrella organisation for universities and higher education colleges in London, and Visit London, the city's official tourist board. It will be distributed to students overseas through British Council offices and will also be available through VisitLondon and London's universities and colleges.

"London attracts over 65,000 international students to

higher education in the capital each year – more than any other city, including New York and Sydney," said Livingstone at the campaign's launch. "I have no doubt that should overseas students decide to come to London to study, they will have the opportunity to benefit from a high-class education in a world-class city."

The brochure, which highlights London's wide range of higher education opportunities, along with references to the city's rich cultural diversity and wealth of social and leisure attractions, coincides with the launch of a website created by London Higher. The website, www.studyinlondon.ac.uk, provides overseas students with details of all of London's 42 universities.

Australian uni in Singapore

The University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Australia will become the first foreign university in Singapore when it opens its doors to students in 2007.

The AUS\$120 million (US\$83 million) private teaching and research university will have a capacity for 15,000 students and aims to tap into the booming demand for higher education opportunities in Asia.

"The university's exceptionally strong regional reputation is a key factor that influenced the [Singapore] government's decision to invite UNSW, ahead of a range of other world-class universities, to

establish a campus on its shores," said John Ingleson, Deputy Vice Chancellor at UNSW.

UNSW Singapore will offer undergraduate, postgraduate and research studies to an initial 3,500 students and expects to make up 30 per cent of its student body with Singaporean students. The remainder will come from China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

"It's anticipated that demand for Australian higher education by 2025 will be half a million students in Australia and another half million off-shore. Australia can only satisfy half that demand," commented Ingleson.

Agriculture colleges in Australia team up

Four leading agricultural colleges based in Queensland, Australia, have joined forces to launch a coordinated marketing campaign to attract international students. The colleges in Longreach, Emerald, Dalby and Burdekin plan to promote their facilities in key student markets, including Asia Pacific and the UK.

"Australian universities and institutions have been [gaining a] great profile in recent times from overseas markets and the four agricultural colleges are working to attract their slice of that [business]," said Andrew Sinclair, a global marketing specialist appointed by the four colleges.

Malaysia inspects university links

Private higher education colleges in Malaysia planning to offer a new franchised degree course with a foreign university are now required to prove that their partner university is of a high enough quality, according to Malaysia's National Accreditation Board (LAN).

LAN is currently working on a list of acceptable Australian and New Zealand universities, although Mohamed Suleiman at LAN explained that the list would be used as a guide only, with local institutions

- carrying the responsibility of proving that their partner's programme was of a high enough quality.

The move came in response to fears over the quality of some university courses being offered in collaboration with unknown foreign universities.

New ministry in Malaysia

The creation of a new Malaysian Higher Education Ministry that will focus entirely on higher education matters was greeted with enthusiasm by foreign governments earlier this year.

The former Education Ministry was split in two in April and the UK, Australian and Indian governments were quick to welcome the move, which, it is believed, will have a wide-ranging impact on link-up options.

UK marketing group

A consortium of further and higher education institutions in the east of England launched their own marketing group earlier this year in order to increase awareness of the region as an international student destination.

Education East of England, which currently has 11 members, has launched a website for international students providing links to member institutions and regional agencies. It aims to work with regional offices of the British Council to publi-

- cise itself overseas. The consortium also has plans to research international student numbers within the region.

Online degree programme scaled down

UKeU, the UK's online learning scheme set up in 2000 to give overseas students the chance to earn online UK university degrees, is to be scaled down after attracting just 900 students in its first year instead of its goal of 5,600.

Two initiatives – eChina and the eLearning Research Centre – that were part of the programme, are to be managed by established higher education institutions in the UK. The scheme was set up with UK£62 million (US\$110 million) by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Sars blamed for decline in international students

According to Chinese officials, the number of international students studying in China's 353 universities declined to 77,715 in 2003, a drop of 9 per cent on the previous year.

Zhang Xinsheng, the Vice-Minister of Education in China, blamed the decrease on the Sars outbreak. The majority of international students in China are from the Republic of Korea, the USA and Japan.