



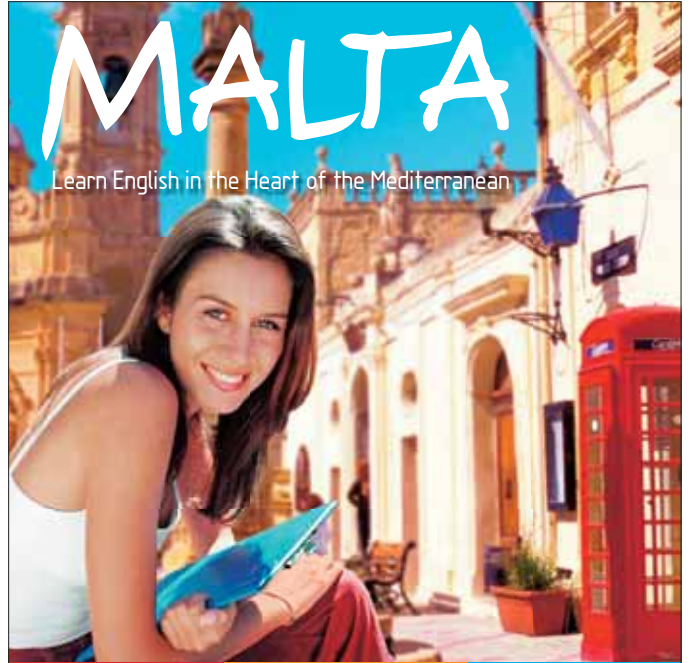
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New work rights for graduates in Canada and US

International students graduating from a post-secondary institution in Canada can now stay in the country and work for up to three years after changes were introduced to the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWP) in April. Previously some international students were allowed to stay in Canada and work in a field directly related to their area of study for up to two years.

Jim Fox, President of the Canadian Bureau for International Education, said

UK to scale down Chevening scholarship scheme

The UK government has announced it is to cut funding for two scholarship schemes for overseas students.

UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, announced that government funding for the Chevening scholarship scheme would be reduced from £27.3 million (US\$53.5 million) to £18.86 million (US\$37 million) this year while funding for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship plan would cease altogether by 2009/10. Together, the two scholarship programmes enable more than 1,500 international students to study in the UK each year.

Miliband said, "We propose a smaller, better organised programme, focused on the leaders of tomorrow, from a wide range of backgrounds." He said savings gained would be channelled into a different area of focus – climate change initiatives.

Universities UK Chief Executive, Diana Warwick, said that the government's decision was sending "mixed messages to universities and prospective students". She added, "Part of the justification for cutting one of the programmes relates to a catalogue of failings committed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the direction and administration of the scheme."

that the changes to the programme were "exactly what we asked for". Students can now apply for an open work permit and without a firm job offer, which was required previously. Fox said, "[Previously] students were offered the opportunity to work but within such strict boundaries that it was impossible for many to participate. Employers balked at offering jobs to foreign graduates when they found out that it would take two months following the offer of work for their new hire to obtain a [work] permit."

Canadian universities with strong international departments hope that the changes will encourage more overseas students to consider Canada as a first-choice destination. At the University of British Columbia, Michelle Suderman, Associate Director of International Student Development, claimed the move put Canada "ahead of every other country in the world".

Meanwhile, across the border, the US government has also introduced changes that will allow some international graduates of US universities to be able to stay and work in the country for a longer period of time. The Department for Homeland Security has announced an extension to the Optical Practical Training programme that will allow foreign students who have studied science, technology, engineering or mathematics to stay and work in the USA for up to 29 months (up from 12 months) if they are working for employers that participate in the E-verify programme.

The E-verify programme allows the government to examine social security data for newly-hired employees to ensure that they are legal immigrants. Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Homeland Security, commented, "This rule will enable us to attract and retain highly skilled foreign workers."

NZ high schools suffer loss of students

High schools in New Zealand have seen the number of fee-paying international students decrease by 25 per cent over the past five years, according to statistics from Education New Zealand (ENZ). Among those markets affected, the Chinese student market has noticeably dipped. Judy Lang from Chilton St James School in Wellington said that there were a number of reasons for the decline in Chinese, including visa changes in Australia, the growth in educational opportunities in China and negative publicity over the closure of two language schools in 2005.

"Over the years I have marketed extensively in China and have attended education fairs," said Lang. "I have seen a vast increase in the number of countries offering places in educational institutions. This has also contributed to the downturn in numbers in New Zealand."

Rachel Stirling from Avondale College in Auckland said that they have noticed international student numbers drop by 25 per cent from 2003 to the present day. "The markets have changed a lot," she said. "It is true the students are coming in smaller numbers from China due to Sars and also Canada opening its doors to the Chinese. However, we are now starting to see student increases from South America, Europe – especially Italy and Spain – and also Turkey."

Stuart Boag from Education New Zealand pointed out that the number of overseas students enrolled at high schools actually increased last year. He added, "International students are a small part of [secondary school] business. So when times are tougher, they may choose to retreat from the market, lessen their effort or reorientate."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Growth ambitions in Ireland

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) in Ireland has announced that it intends to increase the number of full-time third level international students from 12,000 to 24,000. Tom Bolan, Chief Executive of the HEA, urged universities and colleges to fully integrate their international students on campuses and adopt a more international focus to help this goal. "Ireland has an excellent reputation as a global centre for research and learning and we have benefited enormously through the ideas and contribution of foreign students," he said.

Interactive guide to Welsh education

The Wales International Consortium has launched a new online guide to higher education in Wales, in collaboration with i-student advisor. The interactive guide provides information on the 12 higher education institutions in Wales as well as international student profiles, guides to different regions in Wales and a course matrix to search for any subject offered by the institutions. The guide can be found on www.i-studentadvisor.com/walesinternationalconsortium.

UK university opens Singapore campus

Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, Scotland, has recently opened a new campus in Singapore and will deliver courses in partnership with East Asia Institute of Management (EASB). The US\$38 million venture is the first UK university offshore campus to be set up in Singapore and has capacity for 6,000 students. It will offer a range of bilingual tertiary level programmes in English and Chinese and concentrate on subject areas such as Hospitality and Tourism, Events Management, and Business and Health related disciplines. Professor Anthony Cohen, Principal of Queen Margaret University, said: "This is an enormously exciting and innovative project for Queen Margaret University and for the EASB."

Q&A



Full name: Australian Council for Private Education and Training

Year established:

Organisation's main role: assisting an international audience to recognize and understand the contribution of private providers to Australia's vibrant education market.

Contact details:

Acpet,
Box Q1076, QVB PO,
Sydney, NSW, 1230, Australia
Ph: +61 292644490
Fax: +61 292644550
E-mail: acpet@acpet.edu.au
Website: www.acpet.edu.au

What promotional activities has Acpet been involved in?

Acpet's activities focus on profiling the sector through participation in offshore delegations, engagement with inbound international delegations, a strong presence at international exhibitions and conferences and general marketing activities. A key feature of our focus on international education has been the development of a professional learning programme that supports providers to establish or enhance the effectiveness of their own marketing activities. In addition to this, Acpet manages an Overseas Students Tuition Assurance Scheme, the largest of these schemes in Australia. The Tuition Assurance Scheme provides consumer protection for fee-paying students studying with private providers.

How have international enrolments fared over the last 12 months among your members?

Australia's education and training system continues to enjoy a strong reputation among international students and Acpet members have enjoyed continued growth in enrolments. The key challenge for Australian providers is to ensure that they continue to provide high quality education that is recognised internationally.

How is Acpet involved in legislative issues?

Acpet continues to advocate for a robust regulatory system that recognises performance and allows quality providers to develop their businesses with a minimum of undue regulatory interference and administrative compliance costs. We enjoy a positive relationship with the Australian government and appreciate the opportunity to engage with them.

What are your plans for the future?

Acpet is committed to ensuring that private education and training providers continue to meet the needs of their students and play a key role in helping Australia to meet the significant challenges presented by a skills shortage in many occupations and an overall labour shortage. Over the coming three years we will be focused on creating a better business and operating environment for members, maintaining our status as a recognised expert in education and the development of services that are of benefit to Acpet members. Acpet has a strong record of achievement in leading and influencing the development policy across the education and training portfolio.