

Long-term effect of Sars unknown

on the move



Carolyn Solomon became Principal of the Senior School

and the School of Foundation Studies at Auckland International College (AIC) in New Zealand at the beginning of this year. 'AIC offers pathways and access not only to New Zealand universities with its foundation studies programme, but also to top universities in the world with its planned International Baccalaureate programme,' said Ms Solomon.



The Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne in Switzerland has appointed

Chris Norton, previously Head of Recruitment, as its new Director of Marketing and Communication. Mr Norton said, 'Our aim is to respond to the hospitality industry's needs by educating students in a world-class learning environment and I'm very much looking forward to this challenge.'



Peter MacKinnon, President and Vice-Chancellor of the

University of Saskatchewan in Canada, has been elected Chairperson of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). Mr MacKinnon succeeds Robert Lacroix. 'I look forward to this opportunity to support the work of this very important organisation,' he said.

next issue

In issue 4 2003, *Consultants' Report* looks at trends in Taiwan

Students are continuing to travel overseas despite worldwide fears over the war in Iraq and the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars), according to industry insiders, although predictions for the future remain cautious. Increased visa difficulties for some nationalities, as well as uncertainty regarding the spread of Sars, is having an effect in some student markets but, largely, universities report that the situation at the moment is very much business-as-usual.

'We are not aware of any impact on [international] interest in our programmes as a result of Sars or the war in Iraq,' confirms Claire Williams from TAFE NSW - Hunter Institute in Australia.

Susan Bloch-Nevitte, from the University of Toronto in Canada, reported a similar story, despite the fact that Toronto is one of the areas that has been affected by Sars and the largest international student nationality at the university is Chinese. 'At this time we have seen no evidence of Sars-related effects on international interest in the University of Toronto, although it is premature to be definitive because offers of admission have just gone out,' she said.

While student interest in studying overseas appears to be largely unaffected, some universities have had to cancel education programmes in affected areas. The University of Toronto has cancelled its summer student exchange programme in China and postponed an alumni travel

programme to China. Bloch-Nevitte also reported that some Canadian students who had been studying in affected areas had returned home early, although this was 'no more than five or six out of the approximately 50 studying in Sars-affected countries'.

Some colleges and universities have imposed a quarantine period on international students arriving from affected countries. Students arriving from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Hanoi and Toronto to study at Murdoch College in Western Australia are being requested to remain in isolation for 10 days, in line with a directive issued by the Minister for Education in Western Australia.

Riborg Anderson from IAE Study in Australia agency, based in Australia, said that none of her clients had left early or cancelled their study trips due to Sars, despite 'expressing concern' about the virus. She added, 'The war in Iraq has had a greater effect [on students], as some Australian embassies in the Middle East refused to even process student visa applications for the period leading up to the war and after'.

The long-term effects of reduced international marketing will take time to filter through to enrolments. A number of universities have had to cancel recruitment trips to Sars-affected countries and international education fairs, such as the Nexus fairs due to be held in Hong Kong and Singapore in May and June, have been postponed.

New Argentinean association for consultants

The inaugural meeting of the Argentinean Association of Educational Agents and Consultants (AAEAC) was held in February this year attended by three of the five founding members and another six Argentinean agents. The association was founded in December last year during the CEC Network agent's fair in Ottawa, Canada. It aims to become an organisation similar to agents' associations in other countries, such as Belta in Brazil, Kosa in Korea and Aseproce in Spain.

Jorge Taboada, a member of the AAEAC's Executive Committee, said that the meeting provided members with the opportunity to draw up a set of common goals for the association. These include strengthening the bonds between existing language and education consultant associations, creating fair and successful business relations between agents and schools, observing ethical standards and fair business practices, and promoting the image and credibility of consultants with the Argentinean government through meetings and lobbying.

'[The association] is a not-for-profit organisation that will promote, organise and market all services related to study abroad programmes,' said Taboada. 'Agents will no longer be competitors if they achieve changes that will benefit the whole industry.'

The association hopes to increase its membership to 30 within the first year and places a clear emphasis on members working together towards a common goal. Taboada said that during the meeting, 'both consultants and agents exchanged different points of view about the advantages of optionally and voluntarily sharing programmes and projects to increase benefits among [members]'. The association will also promote itself both nationally and internationally in order to 'act as a local and international referencer'.

The Executive Committee consists of two representatives from Buenos Aires and three others from different provinces within Argentina. The association expects to represent the whole country in the future.



Full name: Education New Zealand
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Organisation's main role: to work as an industry advocate for New Zealand education providers to inform policy makers of the direction of the industry and the impacts of changes.
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What has been the most important achievement over the past year?

International education had its best ever year in New Zealand last year, with record growth and the highest industry earnings ever. Across all sectors, market growth was approximately 46 per cent. Another important development was the increasing recognition by [our] government of the importance of international education to New Zealand. Enhanced industry standards, the adoption of the compulsory Code of Practice and the requirement for all institutions to be registered are all government initiatives that have strengthened the industry. The continued

development and recognition of the Mynzed generic brand has also been very pleasing. Education New Zealand has been involved in all of these achievements and many more.

What plans do you have for any future international marketing developments?

As the importance of international education grows, our marketing will become stronger. Our research shows us that our biggest market impediment is getting New Zealand recognised as an education choice by prospective students. We will continue to develop our brand and aim for both deeper and wider market penetration. We will also be supporting capability and

capacity development at home. High on our list of priorities is more extensive market research and analysis.

What do you think is New Zealand's main challenge in the future?

The biggest challenge is probably the current global uncertainty. We have no way of knowing how factors such as the world economy, the current Middle East situation and the war on terrorism may impact on international student flows as the year unfolds. Fortunately, New Zealand has the good fortune to have a sound economy and we are a long way away from many of the world's flashpoints.

Student increases in Malaysia

International student numbers in Malaysia increased by 70 per cent in the last year with 36,466 foreign students now studying in private and public institutions in the country.

The Deputy Director General of Private Education, Datuk Hassan Hashim, said that the increase was due to renewed confidence in the private education sector following the government's recent *Gempur dan Hebah* crackdown on substandard operators (see *Education Travel Magazine*, January 2003, page 2). Seven private colleges and two schools have already been closed down as a result of the new policy and 10 colleges have been told to stop running unapproved courses.

'Our target is to have 50,000 foreign students - in both public and private institutions of higher learning - by 2005 as it would translate to RM1.5 billion (US\$390 million) in income for our country,' said Hashim.

The largest international student nationality in Malaysia last year was Chinese, followed by Indonesian, Indian, Thai and Singaporean, but the greatest increase was in students from the Middle East, whose numbers increased by 142 per cent on the previous year.

Immigration changes

New Australian immigration laws announced by the Ministry of Immigration in April this year will give students who study for more than two years in low growth cities such as Adelaide, Hobart and Darwin, five bonus points towards any application for full-time residency.

The new laws come into effect in July this year and are part of a wider plan to 'help regional Australia obtain greater benefits from migration', according to Philip Ruddock, Immigration Minister.

The news was greeted with enthusiasm by universities, private colleges and Tafe's in some areas in Australia, who said that the new laws would enhance their own international marketing strategies. Sally Walker, Vice Chancellor at Deakin University which has campuses in Warrnambool and Geelong in Victoria, told *The Australian* newspaper, 'At an undergraduate level, there is a tendency among international students to pick the city they want to live in first and then to select the university. So we have to break down that barrier to begin with.'

Japan loans for students

The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) has signed a loan agreement for 486 million yen (US\$4 million) with the United Nations University (UNU) for a financial assistance programme to help students from developing countries. The programme will provide loans to a maximum of 1,500 students from developing countries over a three-year period.

The trust fund was set up by the UNU's Financial Assistance Programme for Students from Developing Countries Studying in Japan and will provide loans to eligible students entering universities and graduate schools through cooperating private universities.

The programme aims to increase the number of foreign students graduating from Japanese universities who will hopefully gain a broader knowledge of Japan and a favourable regard for the country. Previous programmes have supported students from developing countries sent to study in Japan by their governments but this is the first financial assistance scheme to help privately funded students.

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Limit on numbers

Canterbury University in New Zealand is considering limiting the size of its overseas student population after international student numbers increased by 16.7 per cent last year, making up 12.5 per cent of the total student population.

Les Brighton, International Manager at Canterbury University, said that they were working on a policy to set foreign student numbers at a fixed proportion of overall students, in order to maintain the English-speaking character and quality of the university.

'It's a matter of putting in procedures so the increase doesn't continue in an uncontrolled way,' he said.

Change of rules

A new government regulation in China will make it easier for foreign universities to offer joint degree programmes with Chinese universities, according to the country's Ministry of Education.

The new rule, which comes into force in September, will make China's bureaucratic education system more transparent and also enable foreign universities to issue diplomas and certificates bearing their name only.

The new law encourages programmes at all levels of higher education but bars foreign universities from teaching subjects involving the military, police and politics. Foreign universities will still only be able to set up programmes if they are sponsored by a Chinese university.

Germany in Iran

The University of Kassel in Germany opened a new office in Iran earlier this year, which will function as an advice and advisory board for Iranian students.

The office is the university's first international

- venture of this kind and Dr Bernd Armbruster, Director for the Department for Information and International Relations at the university, said that such an approach was worthwhile in countries such as Iran that are interested in developing closer working ties with universities in Germany.

Cross-border university

- A cross-channel university project between universities in the south of England and the north of France is due to open in September and is expected to initially offer postgraduate and research programmes delivered in both English and French.

- The Transmanche University will be jointly funded by education departments in France and the UK and will link the University of Kent with three universities in Lille and the University of Littoral based in Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk. The project will involve shared research and exchange programmes between university staff and students. John Reilly at the University of Kent said, 'The university's title emphasises that this is a region which has a shared history and culture, shared economic concerns and a huge amount of interchange.'

Work rights for students in South Africa

- A new immigration act introduced in South Africa in April this year will enable student visa holders to work part-time during their studies and full-time in the holidays. Previously, students who wanted to work in South Africa had to apply for a separate work permit.

- The Department of Home Affairs in South Africa will continue to receive applications lodged under the old Aliens Control Act until all overseas offices have been adequately notified of and geared up for the change in regulations.

agent speak

Q. How do you think the increasing use of the Internet to facilitate direct bookings will affect your mainstream education placements in the future?

'I think the Internet had less of an impact than I had expected as, in Brazil, people use it more like a tool to get the information only. They still feel much more comfortable having face-to-face contact when choosing a destination, and, as one of my clients once said, only a fool would book by the Internet as most of the questions and doubts a student has cannot be solved by the school directly.'

Tiziano Borgonovo, Expand Language Services, Brazil

'We don't think the use of the Internet will affect our mainstream education placements in the future.'

Those institutions we work with have always put our contact address on their website and have always recommended students to approach us for assistance. It will affect our plans for advertising budgets as we will consider [placing] Internet adverts rather than traditional newspaper adverts.'

Carol Hung, Academic Asia, Taiwan

'The increasing use of the Internet will kill the agent immediately. If students can enrol directly, why [would] they pay a handling fee through the agent?'

John Lin, Welcome Tours, Taiwan