

Business in Asia

Asia is becoming an important education destination for international students, and business courses, taught in the English language, are proving to be the top choice. Gillian Evans reports.

Business undergraduate and graduate courses are among the most popular for students seeking study opportunities overseas. More and more of these students, particularly those from other Asian countries, are now favouring Asia as a study destination, as there has been a proliferation of private institutions that teach in the English language and provide top-quality courses at attractively low prices. Studying in Asia also means that students can bypass the often lengthy and disheartening visa issuance process that is a prerequisite of studying in many Western destinations.

While some institutions in Asia are offshore branches of universities from countries like the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand, others are independent ventures, many of which have partnerships with overseas universities. Most claim to offer a British, Australian or US-style education at a fraction of the cost.

INTI International Group of Colleges has a string of institutions throughout Asia, although its five main campuses are in Malaysia. The top two nationalities on its business courses there are Chinese and Indonesian. 'There is still great demand for business graduates in these two countries,' asserts Alex Lee, Director of International Marketing at INTI. 'Students from China and Indonesia find it very cost effective to pursue business degree programmes [at] INTI as they can complete a British degree entirely in Malaysia. They can also choose to study one year of the business degree programme in the UK, USA, Australia or New Zealand,' he adds.

Nicky Hewett, Director of Admissions at Webster University in Thailand, which is a fully accredited US university, agrees that being able to work towards a US business degree in Thailand is a major draw to students, not only because of the obvious cost advantage - Hewett estimates that the tuition and living expenses in Thailand are almost 50 per cent cheaper than in the USA - but also because of the institution's geographical position. 'Thailand, in particular, has witnessed ups and downs in economic activity and has suffered through the Asian financial crisis most so it is the best place to view the Asian business perspective through the American education system,' he says. Another advantage of study in Thailand, particularly for other Asian students, is that it is easier and cheaper to travel there and return home.

Some institutions offer business courses with an Asian angle, making them even more relevant for those students



PHOTOGRAPH: NUS BUSINESS SCHOOL

Selection of institutions in Asia providing business courses in the English language

Name	Location	Pay agency commission	No. of students	% Int. students
Bangkok University Int. College	Thailand		1,200	10
INTI Int. Group of Colleges	Malaysia	✓	14,000	20
NUS Business School	Singapore		1,602	22
Temple University	Japan		1,700	30
University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus	Malaysia	✓	500	20
Webster University	Thailand	✓	300	91
Yonsei University	Korea		46,188	0.04

wanting eventually to do business in the region. Among its business courses, the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School offers an international MBA (IMBA), which was designed in collaboration with Peking University in China. Students take the first year of study in China and the second in Singapore, giving them the chance to experience different business cultures. 'Business graduates who are effectively bilingual will undoubtedly be a great asset to companies,' comments Esther Lee, Public Relations Manager at the NUS Business School.

Asia is steadily being recognised as a top-quality education provider - the NUS Business School has, according to Lee, been ranked by the Economist Intelligence Unit and the Financial Times among the world's top 100 business schools. All business course providers work hard to ensure their courses are constantly updated to meet the requirements of the ever changing business world. Antti Nyrhinen, at Bangkok University International College in Thailand, says, 'We have updated our Bachelor of Business Administration (Marketing) in the past year to better respond to the needs of the 21st-century marketplace. The core remains the same, but we now offer courses such as cyber marketing as major electives to our students.'

Consultants at the top

Many institutions, in the USA and the UK in particular, are unable to enter into business partnerships with education consultants as they cannot pay them a commission for enrolments. At institutions in Asia, the situation is different. The University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus, is not unusual in deriving 40 per cent of its international students from education consultants.

Many institutions, such as INTI International Group of Colleges, have a wide spread of international recruiters. 'INTI currently has recruitment agents in more than 25 countries,' states Alex Lee at the colleges, which has campuses in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Vietnam and Hong Kong. 'International recruitment agents are very important and most effective in recruiting students,' he adds. To help its education consultants stay in touch with developments, INTI holds an international agents conference at least once a year.

Similarly, the Webster University in Thailand also hosts an annual meeting for its education consultants at its Thai campus. Around 50 per cent of Webster's international students come through agents, but Nicky Hewett at the university underlines other advantages of having a strong consultant network, such as helping to reach target markets and, 'keeping in touch with families and students throughout their studies and beyond'.