

New Zealand funding boost

NEW ZEALAND Education Minister, Trevor Mallard, has announced plans to increase spending on international education to NZ\$21 million (US\$14.9 million) over the next four years in an effort to ensure New Zealand remains competitive as a study destination to a wider range of students worldwide.

The new funding will lower the cost of a PhD to domestic fee levels and will also allow children of international PhD students to attend school without paying international student fees. Three new off-shore education counsellors will also be established in countries yet to be decided.

"This progressive expansion of government investment in international education underpins our commitment to increasing and strengthening education as a key part of New Zealand's strategic relationships with the rest of the world," said Mallard.

An announcement from the New Zealand Ministry of Immigration also revealed plans to increase the number of hours international students are allowed to work during term-time from this month, as well as provide six month open work permits for international graduates of some courses at New Zealand universities (see *Language Travel Magazine*, page 6).

International student increases in the UK

The number of international students studying in higher education in the UK during the 2003/2004 academic year increased by nine per cent on the previous year, according to recent statistics released by the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

The annual publication, *Students in Higher Education Institutions 2003/2004*, revealed that China remained the top student provider for UK universities, with student numbers from this country increasing by 35.8 per cent on the previous year to 47,740. Other nationalities that performed well included India, which showed an increase in student numbers of 18 per cent, and the USA, up 12 per cent. China and India are also the most important source countries in the USA (see *Education Travel Magazine*, March 2005, page 49). Overall, 300,055 international students were studying in higher education in the UK during 2003/2004.

Mark Bickerton from London Metropolitan University put the increase down to a global "awareness of the benefits of UK study", and added, "We hope that

our marketing efforts have led to increases in both the quantity and quality of our international students, it would certainly seem so in many Asian countries over the last few years."

Official figures for international enrolments in the 2004/2005 academic year will not be available until next year but some universities are already predicting less buoyant figures than last year (see *Education Travel Magazine*, May 2005, page 46). Recent UCAS statistics indicating student applications for full-time undergraduate courses to March showed a decrease in non-European Union (EU) students of 5.7 per cent compared with 2003/2004 levels. This situation may also be exacerbated by recent government plans to increase student visa costs for students from outside of the EU. Under the new scheme, a student visa will cost UK£85 (US\$158) compared with the previous cost of UK£36 (US\$67).

The UK government justified the charge by saying it was necessary due to the growing demand for student visas and increased administration

expenses. However, industry insiders fear that visa fee increases, coming on top of recent visa renewal fee hikes (see *Education Travel Magazine*, May 2005, page 46), will have a detrimental effect on international enrolments. "The timing could not be more unhelpful at this crucial

point in international student recruitment," said Baroness Warwick, Chief Executive of Universities UK. "The move will reinforce already negative publicity about the UK visa system, coming immediately after the introduction of increased fees for leave to remain."

Scottish universities reach out to China

A CONSORTIUM of five Scottish universities will be having their undergraduate degree programmes delivered in China from September 2006 thanks to a deal signed between the Interactive University and a department of the Chinese Ministry of Education.

Five Chinese universities are involved in the scheme that is

expected to attract 5,000 students over five years, although the Ministry of Education has agreed to introduce five new Chinese universities to the scheme each year for the next three years. Students completing the courses will have the option of continuing their studies in China or Scotland.

Professor Roy Leitch, Chief Executive of the Interactive

University, said, "We are delighted to join the Chinese Ministry of Education in the global roll out of quality Scottish education. While we recognise that Scottish qualifications are amongst the best in the world, it is the localised context and content, added by our academic partners around the world, which helps to create employable, articulate graduates."



Full name: International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA)
Year established: 1997
Organisation's main role: To advocate, promote and support the internationalisation of higher education in South Africa by providing a professional forum for institutions and individuals to address challenges and develop opportunities in international education.
Full contact details: IEASA, PO Box 65099, Reservoir Hills, Durban, 4041, South Africa
Tel: +27 312603077
Fax: +27 312602136
Email: aieasa@ukzn.ac.za
Web: www.ukzn.ac.za/ieasa

Who are your members?
All the tertiary education institutions in South Africa and a few from the Southern African region. Individuals can apply in their own capacity.

What has been your biggest achievement in the last few years?
We have published *Study South Africa: The Guide to South African Tertiary Education*. This is the only comprehensive

up-to-date guide to South Africa's education system. The publication and its website, www.studysa.co.za, provide accurate information on each public tertiary institution. We have also developed a code of ethical practice for the provision of education and services to international students and formed a comprehensive marketing plan and agreement guidelines for engaging agents to recruit students in different parts of the world.

What plans do you have for the future?
To develop a national policy for internationalisation, network with international organisations promoting internationalisation and expand marketing initiatives to promote the South African education system.

How does your association work with agents?
This is an issue currently being addressed with key role players, with a structured plan of action to be developed at the IEASA Conference in 2005. The topic for discussion is "Quality Assurance for English as an International Language".

New work rights for students in Canada

The Canadian government is to invest CAN\$10 million (US\$7.9 million) in a scheme that will allow international students at post-secondary institutions to work off-campus during their studies. Under the same scheme international students outside Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto will also be able to work for two years after completing their studies, an increase on the one-year currently allowed.

The off-campus work scheme is an extension of a pilot programme that has been running in the provinces of Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick for the last one or two years (see *Education Travel Magazine*, July 2004, page 39). "International students who choose to stay in Canada after they graduate greatly contribute to our labour market," said Joe Volpe, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). "They will also spread the word about the quality of education Canada has to offer."

The off-campus work initiative, which will allow students to work for up to 20 hours a week during term time and full time during the holidays, will be implemented in each province and territory in Canada following agreements with CIC, while international students meeting the eligibility criteria for a second year of post-graduation employment

have been able to apply for an extended work permit from May this year.

Post-secondary institutions in Canada have welcomed the initiative. Rose Aquino from the University of Western Ontario in London, ONT, said, "The new regulations will provide international students with a better chance to find employment and the opportunity to explore the wider community. Likewise the community will benefit from cross-cultural interactions and exposure to globalisation."

Education agents too believe the move will encourage more students to consider Canada as a study destination. "We think the opportunity for international students to work part-time is excellent in terms of increasing the flow of prospective students who may need additional income to complete undergraduate or graduate degrees," said Masako Saito from Canadian Education Alliance in Canada.

In further changes to Canada's visa permit programme, since January this year overseas students studying on post-secondary courses have also been able to transfer between programmes of study and institutions without having to change their study permit. Secondary-level international students can also obtain longer high school study permits.

Students protest at travel restrictions

Students at Harvard University in the USA have set up a petition in a bid to overturn a college policy of refusing to credit or fund study abroad courses in any of the 29 countries featured in the US State Department's "Travel Warning" list, according to a report in *The Harvard Crimson* newspaper.

According to the protestors, the policy does not reflect the potential risk to students wanting to study in these countries as the State Department's list focuses on the potential for political violence, which, students say, does not reflect overall rates of crime in a given country.

International school for Tasmania

An international school in Tasmania with capacity for 1,000 students received Commonwealth registration to teach international students earlier this year in a development that could bring AUS\$10 million (US\$7.6 million) to the local economy.

The college will provide vocational courses to students on two campuses and hopes to have 500 international students enrolled by the end of the first year of operation. The college has also formed a partnership with the Tainjin Training and Commodities School in China to recruit students from this country.

International students get raw deal in UK

A survey by the National Union of Students (NUS) in the UK has revealed that many international students are denied the same standard bank account facilities as British students.

The survey was completed by 1,700 students from 134 countries and showed that 48 per cent were not given a cheque book, 27 per cent were refused a debit card and 53 per cent had no overdraft facility. Benson Osawe, NUS international students officer, said that a rise in course costs meant that international students had to keep a careful eye on their money, and added, "Without access to the same banking facilities that home students can enjoy, this is increasingly difficult."

Florida bill affects international student funding

A bill that would forbid international students on F-1 or M-1 visas in Florida, USA, from receiving state funding has been introduced to the Florida House of Representatives, in a move that could have a significant effect on international students studying in the state.

The bill's stated goal is to provide more financial assistance to Florida residents and is calculated to involve roughly US\$8 million a year, according to Ed Homan

who co-sponsored the bill. If passed, the bill would eliminate scholarships directed solely at international students and also make overseas students ineligible for merit-based scholarships offered by universities.

Poles and Estonians get easier access to Australia

Applying for a student visa to study in Australia became easier for students from Estonia and Poland in April after a change in visa assessment led to them both being assessed as low risk by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

Estonian and Polish students can now apply for a student visa online and also have lower financial and English language requirements. The Department hopes the change will encourage more students from these countries to apply to study in Australia.

Italy/China cooperation

A programme to better facilitate academic cooperation between Italy and China was unveiled at the China International Education Tour this year by the Conference of Italian Rectors.

Targeting undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students, the Marco Polo programme will also support Chinese students wanting to do internships in Italy after completing language training.