

## Student boom in Korea

THE KOREAN Education Ministry has announced ambitious plans to increase the number of international students coming to Korea to 50,000 by 2010, after overseas enrolments grew by 300 per cent between the years 2000 and 2004.

The Ministry plans to set up education fairs to coincide with overseas events promoting "Hallyu" or "Korean wave" – a Korean pop culture boom occurring in many Asian countries – in an attempt to capitalise on the current Asian interest in the country and its culture.

Nho Sang-keun, Foreign Exchange Director at Sunmoon University, told *The Korea Herald*, "Korea was not on the list of wanna-study countries just a few years ago. But thanks to the Korean wave, it has emerged as a preferred country to study in."

As well as holding education fairs to encourage more international students to go to Korea, the Ministry also plans to increase the number of government-funded scholarships available, with a focus on attracting Asian students in particular. Currently 14,600 Asian students are studying in Korea, making up 87 per cent of the international student population.

# German universities allowed to charge fees

Universities in Germany will be able to start charging students tuition fees, following a ruling made by the Federal Constitutional Court in January this year. Previously, a ban on tuition fees made by the Federal Government in 2002 meant that both German and overseas students could study at a university free of charge for an unlimited period of time.

Reaction to the ruling has been mixed with interested parties variously claiming that international students will be put off coming to study in Germany, or, alternatively, that the extra money will fuel an increase in academic standards. Karl-Heinz Wieland from F+U Heidelberg believes that the ruling is positive. "Moderate fees at universities – which will be even lower than language course fees – wouldn't be a real barrier [for international students] enrolling at German universities in the future," he said. "On the contrary, the resulting better quality of tuition and research might even be more attractive for future candidates."

The court ruling was made after six of Germany's regional states sued the Federal Government to overturn the ban on tuition fees, on the grounds that it violated the country's postwar constitution – which put education under the control of Germany's 16 states. The ban was introduced in 2002 to prevent certain states charging long-term students tuition fees. The state of Baden-Württemberg first started charging undergraduates who had been pursuing their degree for more than six years US\$550 a semester in 1998, and had to stop this practice after the ban was imposed in 2002.

Arguments in favour of charging students tuition fees include the fact that academic standards have declined at German universities over the last few decades due to poor funding. A recent ranking of the world's top universities in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* revealed that only one German institution, the University of Heidelberg, was placed in the top 50. According to the German

newspaper *Deutsche Welle*, a recent study by the German higher education organisation, HIS, showed that only a quarter of all foreign students manage to graduate after taking, on average, eight years to finish their degree.

So far, plans to introduce tuition fees are largely confined

to the states of Bavaria, Hamburg, Baden-Württemberg, Saarland, Lower Saxony and Hesse, although discussions regarding the amount of the actual fee to be imposed continue. A white paper issued by the states showed that fees were likely to be around €500 (US\$668) per semester.

## More US visa changes as grad students decline

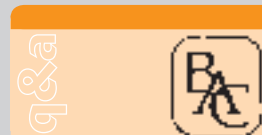
INTERNATIONAL students studying in the USA in sensitive fields will no longer have to renew their security clearance every year, after the US Department of Homeland Security relaxed certain visa requirements.

The Visa Mantis programme, which requires that international students applying to study in the fields of nuclear, biomedical and computer technology undergo additional security enquiries, was first established in 1998.

The programme has caused considerable delays for students, particularly since September 2001 when the conditions were enforced more rigorously. However, the changes mean that security clearance for students will be valid for the length of their studies, up to four years, and will no longer require annual renewal.

The US student visa process has been under scrutiny as a factor contributing to a decline in international student enrolments,

as illustrated in last year's "Open Doors" survey (see *Education Travel Magazine*, March 2005, page 49). A recent survey by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) revealed a drop of five per cent in international graduate enrolments for the 2004/2005 academic year, following on from a drop of 28 per cent in the previous year. CGS President, Debra Stewart, blamed an upturn in interest for graduate courses elsewhere for the decline.



**Full name:** The British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education

**Year established:** 1984

**Organisation's main role:** to improve the standards of independent further and higher educational institutions by providing a system of voluntary accreditation. Accredited institutions fall into three categories: tutorial/sixth form colleges, independent HE colleges and colleges offering vocational, business and professional training.

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### Requirement that UK institutions enrolling international students be registered?

We see this as a valuable first step towards establishing high standards of education across the whole of the UK education sector. The BAC is actively working with other accreditation bodies to encourage the Home Office and the DFES to require full accreditation for all education providers. It is essential that students from outside the UK can be confident about the quality of education they receive whether at a state-funded university or private college.

### What plans do you have for the future?

We are seeking new ways to help colleges identify and promote best practice. We believe that many overseas students benefit from the intensive tuition and smaller class sizes that private colleges can offer, particularly if they then go on to further study in a UK university. One interesting development is that a number of accredited colleges now operate in formal partnership with UK universities, to provide additional routes on to degree programmes.

### How many colleges are currently BAC accredited?

BAC has seen very strong growth in demand for its accreditation services, with the number of colleges accredited more than doubling in the last two years. The BAC now accredits around 200 colleges in the UK, with total enrolments in the UK of some 30,000 students.

### What are your views on the recent Home Office re-

## UK charges go up as enrolments go down

A SURVEY of 70 UK universities conducted by Universities UK has revealed that more than 50 per cent of respondents missed their enrolment targets for international students in September 2004.

A further 30 per cent of respondents reported a decline in international enrolments, with visa problems being blamed as the most common reason.

Universities experienced losses from a range of different student markets with China, Malaysia, India and Taiwan being the hardest hit.

The findings of the Universities UK survey were unveiled at its spring conference in March this year, weeks after a government announcement that international students wanting to renew their student visas will have to pay £250 (US\$480) from April, up from £155 (US\$298) previously. Students wanting to renew their visas using the premium in-person service will have to pay £500 (US\$962). The government also announced plans to abolish the right to appeal for international students refused a student visa.

UK Immigration Minister, Des Browne, said that government analysis had shown that the visa renewal fee increases "were unlikely to have a significant impact on the UK's ability to attract and retain international students", and he

noted that the increased charges were less than for other visa categories in the UK.

However, Universities UK had been lobbying against the fee increases in the weeks leading up to the announcement. "In our view, the reduction in international student numbers we've seen this year is a wake up call," said a spokesperson for the group. "On visa charges...our negotiations did at least secure a lower rate of charging for international students than for other types of applicant. We were also pleased that we have persuaded the government to establish a working party to look at ways of improving the visa service our students receive." The group is calling for a full review of the impact of the increased charges on international students by the end of the year.

The spring conference also provided an opportunity for Universities UK to unveil its new goal of increasing support for universities' international strategies. Key policies include: support and development of a national UK marketing strategy; promoting good practice in the recruitment of international students; supporting universities in their work with developing countries; promoting the exchange of staff and students and promoting international academic collaborations.

### Joined up thinking in Dundee, UK

Educational institutions in the city of Dundee in the UK have come together with local business leaders to launch a new brochure aimed at attracting more international students to the city.

The brochure, a result of collaboration between the University of Dundee, the University of Abertay and Dundee College, highlights the educational opportunities available in the city.

Sir Alan Langlands, Principal of the University of Dundee, said, "The growing numbers of international students choosing to study here confirms Dundee's rising reputation. The combination of a quality academic experience with an enviable cost of living is a potent one."

### Rise in MBA applications

Worldwide interest in MBA programmes in destinations around the world is showing signs of recovery after organisers of the World MBA Tour reported that 48,000 candidates attended its fairs last year, an increase of nine per cent on the total figure for the previous year.

The GMAC, which runs that Graduate Admissions Test (Gmat), reported that numbers of test takers had increased by five per cent in each country since August last year. Previously, business schools had reported a drop

in admissions of 30 per cent in the 18 months until August 2004.

### Fewer Chinese students

The Chinese Ministry of Public Security has released figures that show that the number of Chinese students leaving the country to study overseas in 2004 declined by 11.2 per cent compared with the previous year. A total of 107,000 Chinese students studied overseas in 2004.

However, the number of Chinese citizens going overseas for personal reasons continues to increase with 4,560,500 Chinese people applying for a visa to travel overseas in 2004.

### Canada gets new uni

The University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops, BC, Canada was given full university status this year and has been renamed Thompson Rivers University. The change in status will result in an investment of more than CAN\$20 million (US\$16.6 million) in new facilities, with international developments a key part of the agenda.

The university hopes to increase its total enrolment to 10,000 – 11,000 full-time students by 2009-2010 with 1,500 international students.

### Australian universities gain US accreditation

Deakin University, Monash University, the University

of New England and the University of Southern Queensland became the first Australian universities to receive accreditation in the US through the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) earlier this year.

Jacqui Elson-Green, General Manager for IDP's global education services, said, "Earning DETC accreditation is a sign of advanced academic quality, demonstrated accountability and excellence in distance education practices."

### Scholarships in Shanghai

The Shanghai Education Commission in China has announced plans to offer government scholarships to international postgraduate students studying in the city this year, with a view to including undergraduates in the scheme next year.

Selection for the scholarships will be based on academic achievements as well as records of students' behaviour. The city has set up an annual development fund with a budget of 20 million yuan (US\$2.4 million) to improve the living conditions of foreign students.

Zhang Minxuan, Vice Director at the Commission said, "The government scholarships are a good way to promote local education, and will encourage more foreigners to consider studying in Shanghai."