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ESS - European School Service, International

IALCA - Italian Association of Language Consultants & Agents

KOSA - Korean Overseas Study Association

JAOS - Japan Association of Overseas Studies

TEAG - Turkish Educational Agency Group

TIECA - Thai International Education Consultants Association

TOSA - Taiwan Overseas Study Association

UNOSEL - Union Nationale des Organisations de Séjours Educatifs, Linguistiques et des Écoles de Langues, France

VIECA - Vietnam International Education Consultants Association

EDUCATORS: MAKE SURE TO ASK YOUR AGENTS IF THEIR ASSOCIATION IS A MEMBER OF FELCA

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US state steps up security

UNIVERSITIES in the US state of Georgia will have to report international students who miss seven consecutive days of classes or have an expired visa if a new bill to the authorities, currently being debated in the state House, gets approved.

The Georgia Homeland Security in Education Act of 2007 seeks to implement stronger measures than those required under federal law, which already requires universities to inform the authorities if an international student fails to enrol on a course or changes their address. Schools that failed to comply with the new act would be refused state funding or state-administered federal funding.

The bill's co-sponsor, Jay Neal, commented, "The most important things on the minds of Americans these days is homeland security and protection from terrorism. A great threat to us is when we have people here [in the USA] on student visas and not in the schools that they are supposed to be attending."

New vetting rules for UK

The UK government is planning to introduce vetting procedures for all PhD students from outside the European Union studying subjects such as chemistry, physics or biochemistry.

The new system, termed the Academic Technology Approval System, will be introduced in order to prevent potential terrorists from gaining knowledge that could be used to make nuclear arms, and is similar to a system introduced in the USA in 2002 (see *Education Travel Magazine*, July 2002, page 2). At present, universities in the UK voluntarily alert the Foreign Office if they receive applications from students from a list of 10 countries to study various science-based courses.

A spokesperson from the Foreign Office said that the new procedures are likely to be formally announced in the spring. "All international students

[applying for such courses] will be required to fill in an online form on a website managed by the Foreign Office," said the spokesperson. "Checks will be made regarding the identity and previous studies of a student and a clearance certificate issued if they pass the checks. This certificate will then have to be included in the student's application for a student visa."

Exact details regarding the time frame of the vetting procedure have yet to be finalised although the Foreign Office said that a few designated people would be carrying out the security checks on students.

The new system is being given a cautious welcome in the international education industry, mainly as it will introduce a level playing field for all universities recruiting international students. Previously, universities who didn't inform the Foreign Office about their students were perceived to

have a competitive advantage when it came to international student recruitment.

A spokesperson for Universities UK told *Education Travel Magazine*, "Universities UK is aware of the proposals likely to emerge from the review of the current Voluntary Vetting Scheme. In general the principles outlined for the new scheme seem appropriate but we look forward to receiving further details when the outcome of the review is published."

However, there are fears that increased vetting may delay students applying to study in the UK and cause them to go elsewhere. Victor Johnson, speaking on Public Policy for Nafsa: Association of International Educators in the USA, told the magazine of the Royal Society of Chemistry, "Don't do it the way we did it over here. Suddenly, vetting jumped from 1,000 cases a year to 20,000. The whole thing just broke down."

Chinese migrants increase

A report by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in China has revealed that the number of Chinese migrants living and working overseas has reached 35 million. Chinese people now live in 151 countries, with Australia, Europe and North America the most popular destinations.

New university for London

The first foreign non-US university opened its doors in the UK in March, welcoming 300 international students. The London branch of the Malaysian-based Limkokwing University of Creative Technology will offer foundation and degree courses in the fields of architecture, business, communication, IT and multimedia, as well as English as a foreign language programmes.

UK scholarships for Romanian students

The University of Kent has become the first university in the UK to offer scholarships to students from Romania. The university is working with the Ratiu Foundation to provide tuition fees and a scholarship for places on a Masters MSc in information security and biometrics and an MSc in biomedical imaging.

Malaspina U-College in Canada links with China

Malaspina University-College in Canada has recently signed three agreements with post-secondary institutions in China that will result in 100 new students from China coming to study at the university from 2009. Edwin Deas, Vice President of the college, said, "We're talking about a sizeable economic injection."

One-third of students in Australia lack adequate English

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS at universities in Australia have been brought into question after a report showed that one third of international students who received permanent residency in 2005-2006 after graduating from an Australian university did not have the English standards required for undergraduate admission.

The report, compiled by Bob Birrell at Monash University, revealed that 34 per cent of international graduates, who

had received approval for an on-shore permanent residence visa, only achieved an IELTS score of five upon application. Admissions requirements for international students applying to study on an undergraduate course at an Australian university currently demand an IELTS score of six. However, students who arrive in the country to study on other courses requiring a lower level of English can be issued a higher education visa without an IELTS score as long as they have

completed a required English language or foundation course. Birrell's report questioned the ability of international students with such low English language ability to keep up with academic courses. "There is a mountain of anecdotal material that many overseas students struggle to meet their course requirements," he said. "To my knowledge, very few universities confront the English language problem by requiring a formal English test and mandating

supplementary English courses for students who are deficient." The report looked at the IELTS scores of all successful applicants of the 880 permanent residence visa, which has a minimum IELTS requirement of five and allows graduates of Australian universities to gain permanent residency without having to leave the country. The discrepancy in English standards was particularly apparent in students from China and South Korea.

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