

More US visa changes

on the move



Lester Taylor (above) stepped down from his post as Chief Executive of Education New Zealand in June this year



after four years. His replacement, Robert Stevens (below), was previously Director of the International Group within the Australian Federal Department of Education, Science and Training and one of the Directors of Australian Education International. Prior to working in Australia, Mr Stevens worked for five years as International Manager of the New Zealand Ministry of Education, which included working closely with Education New Zealand.

next issue

From January 2004, *Education Travel Magazine* will be incorporated into our sister publication, *Language Travel Magazine*. A special four-page education travel section will be devoted to providing you with up-to-date news and features on key education travel markets. In the January 2004 issue, a Destination Analysis feature will focus on international student trends in New Zealand over the past year, while the news pages will provide an update on important education travel issues.

The US government has introduced new changes to the visa application process which industry insiders fear could cause huge delays and result in talented international students choosing to study elsewhere.

The most significant change for students is the requirement that from August 1 this year, all visa applicants, whatever their nationality, undergo an in-person interview with consulate officials. Education professionals fear that this new requirement will lengthen the time taken to process student visa applications, thereby not enabling students to turn up to their courses on time.

In a letter to Colin Powell at the US Department of State, the presidents of four education associations in the USA – including the Association of American Universities and the American Council on Education – expressed fears that the new interview requirement would result in “even more delays than there have already been for international students, scholars and researchers who seek to study in the USA”.

Arlene Spencer, from Fulton Montgomery Community College in Johnstown, NY, said that delays in visa processing could have a negative affect on some students and added, “It really depends on how badly the student wants to study in the USA and if they are willing to go through more obstacles and time delays.”

Sanjiv Kumar Aggarwal, from Akashdeep International in India, agreed that continued visa delays would discourage students from applying to universities in the USA and pointed out that his clients are already “finding other destinations to study abroad, like the UK and Europe and Australia”.

The interview requirement is part of wider changes to the US visa system which will eventually result in biometric data, such as fingerprints and photographs, being collected from all overseas visa visitors at their port of entry to the USA. The new entry-exit system, known as US Visit, is currently being enforced for visitors from a range of countries deemed to come from a country that sponsors terrorism (see *Education Travel Magazine*, April 2003, page 2) but will eventually be extended to include all foreign nationals travelling on visas.

Educational institutions in the USA will be notified of the arrival of any of their international students at their point of entry through the Sevis database so that any student not registering with their school within 30 days can be reported.

In another change, from November this year, visitors originating from countries that are part of the visa waiver programme will be required to present machine readable passports on entry to the USA and if they are unable to do so will have to apply for a visa.

UK tightens security measures at universities

In a move reminiscent of the USA's strategy, UK government ministers have asked universities to tighten up a controversial vetting scheme for overseas research students to prevent terrorists from obtaining biological, chemical or nuclear materials and know-how.

The voluntary scheme requires that details of international post-graduate applicants on various courses, including biotechnology and nuclear physics, be passed automatically to the Foreign Office. While the scheme dates from 1994, many universities have not been complying with the regulations and the government has threatened that a statutory scheme could be introduced if they do not comply voluntarily.

Critics of the scheme are worried that academic freedom could be compromised. Bill Stephenson, from University College London, told the *Guardian* newspaper, “Most people would say with academic freedom you should bend over backwards [to achieve it] and it is not something you want to compromise on.”

According to the newspaper, a number of Saddam Hussein's senior members of government trained in the UK, including Rihab Taba who studied plant diseases in the 1980s at the University of East Anglia.

The UK government has also introduced a new requirement that anyone visiting from a non-visa national country who intends to stay for more than six months will be required to apply for a UK residence permit, in line with all European Union member states. The move is intended to cut down on illegal immigration and will be phased in gradually, with visitors from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea and the USA being the first visitors to require a temporary residence permit from 13 November.

Sarah Barton, Assistant Director of Education and Training at the British Council, said at a press conference that the new permit would have increased security features making it easier to detect fraud.



education
ireland

Full name: International Education Board Ireland

Year established: 1993

Organisation's main role: to facilitate and support the promotion of international education in Ireland

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What has been your most important achievement over the past year?

The area of greatest expansion in international education in Ireland over the past year has been in the higher education sector, where we recorded a growth in international student numbers of over 20 per cent, as against a targeted increase of 15 per cent. A recent survey of our colleges shows an anticipated increase in numbers of the order of 20 per cent over the next two years. Within Ireland, 2002/2003 has seen the start of an in-depth review by government of the impact of the rapid expansion of international education in Ireland with a view to

developing comprehensive national policies, strategies and structures [for the industry].

What are your future plans?

We are planning to further develop our presence in a number of key target countries, such as India and China, where we will have offices and education advisors. We have recently undertaken market research in a number of other countries, including South Korea and Japan, and plan to organise our first education fairs there later in the year. We will also be exploring the widening of our recruitment in countries with which we have had traditional links in niche areas – such as medicine and study abroad. These would include the

USA, Canada, Norway and the Middle East.

Do you use international education agents?

Ireland is a small country and would not have the resources to open many offices overseas so we rely on local agents as a main source of students. In so far as we have resources, our strategy is to appoint education advisors, whose primary role is to facilitate the links between our colleges and the local agents. Our view is that working with good local agents is more efficient, effective and gives better market penetration than one-stop-shop student counselling offices.

Europe woos its PhD students

The European Commission has issued a report proposing measures to halt the exodus of European PhD students to the USA. The report, entitled *Researchers in the European Research Area: one profession, multiple careers*, calls for European guidelines to improve career opportunities for researchers and also make it easier for them to move to another country on the continent without losing job seniority or pension rights.

The Commission is concerned that the number of European students who receive a PhD in the USA and continue to stay and work there has been increasing in recent years – 73 per cent of Europeans this year compared to 49 per cent in 1990 – according to a study.

"It is essential that we encourage more young people to embark on scientific careers and ensure that we keep hold of our existing talent," said Philippe Busquin from the European Commission.

Students choose Australia

The number of international students choosing to study in Australia has increased in all the country's major markets over the last 12 months, according to an IDP report that was released earlier this year. Student numbers from India, Malaysia, the USA and China saw the most growth, with a number of key markets showing a strong recovery from factors such as visa changes and the effects of September 11, 2001, which have recently hampered growth.

Lindy Hyam, Chief Executive of IDP, said, "One of the more interesting trends has been the strong growth from

Europe. The number [of students] from Germany, Britain and France increased by between 46 and 63 per cent in the last 12 months."

Education consultants worldwide have noticed increasing interest among their students for study in Australia, especially since September 11, 2001, which marred the USA's reputation as a safe study destination. Mandeep Singh from Time Educational Consultants in India said, "Students don't prefer the USA and wish to study in other countries like Australia, New Zealand and Ireland."

Associate degrees in Oz

Private colleges in Australia can now offer associate degrees to students after an extensive national campaign by the Australian Council of Private Education providers (Acpet) to have the qualification listed on the Australian Qualification Framework. Previously, the qualification – equivalent to the first two years of university undergraduate degree study – could only be offered by universities in Australia, although it is commonly available in colleges around the world.

Tim Smith, National Executive Officer of Acpet, welcomed the news and said, "What this does is make sure we have a level playing field in the provision of post-compulsory education and training in Australia and makes us competitive in international education. For the first time, Australian private providers can offer two-year degrees alongside our US, Canadian, Hong Kong and UK competitors."

Private colleges seeking to offer associate degrees will have to apply for accreditation through their respective state or territory accreditation agency.

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Dutch grants for international study

From the 2003/2004 academic year, Dutch students will be able to enrol in full-time or part-time programmes at colleges or universities anywhere in the European Union while still being able to claim a student grant from the government. Previously Dutch students studying at a foreign university had to be simultaneously enrolled at a Dutch institution in order to be eligible for a grant.

The Dutch government is hoping to extend this proposal in the future so that students will be able to study outside the European Union with a Dutch study grant.

Mexican universities closed down

The Mexican government has shut down 88 private universities in the past two years as part of a crackdown against falling standards in private education institutions. The crackdown comes in response to growing numbers of private education institutions in the country. These institutions meet demand for education that is not met by the number of public universities.

Raul Valadez Garcia, Vice President of the Mexican Federation of Private Institutions of Higher Education, welcomed the government action and called for more rigorous standards in approving new private universities and regulating existing ones.

Australia and Turkey ties

A memorandum of understanding was signed between Australia and Turkey earlier this year that will encourage cooperation between government agencies and educational institutions. It is hoped the understanding will encourage more Turkish students to study in Australia as well as the exchange of academic staff, joint

- organisation of exhibitions and seminars and the development of collaborative training and research.

International increase in Malaysia

- The number of international students in Malaysia has increased by 70 per cent from 22,824 at the end of last year to 36,466 this year, according to a report in *The Star* newspaper. Tan Sri Musa Mohamad, Malaysia's Education Minister, was quoted as saying that of the 36,466 students who came from 150 countries, 28,827 were in private universities and colleges while 5,668 were in private schools.

- Chinese students were the largest student nationality studying in Malaysia making up over 30 per cent of the total, while Indonesians were second with 21 per cent of the total.

Harvard links with UAE

- Harvard University Medical School is to establish a series of research and training programme in the United Arab Emirates in conjunction with the Emirate Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

- The first programme is due to open in 2005 out of new hospitals currently under construction and the scheme hopes to improve the quality of medical education in the Middle East.

China attracts overseas students

- Xinxiang Medical College in the Henan province of China has become one of the first Chinese medical schools to offer places to Indian students. Between 40 and 60 places have been made available to Indian students, who are attracted by the lower living and tuition costs in China.

- Accommodation, food and tuition costs in China can be less than half the costs incurred at a private college in India.

agent speak

Q. What are your views on agent associations? Do you belong to one and what benefits do you think they provide the education travel industry?

"I think national or international agent associations are very helpful. Our agency is a member of Vieca, and Vieca is a member of Felca. Vieca and other national or international associations provide the newest, most accurate and objective information about overseas studies at their exhibitions and forums."

Dr Le Nam Hung, CESTD, Vietnam

"CP-4 [has been] part of the Brazilian Education Language and Travel Association (Belta) since 1993 when we were only a few agents. We try to not only exchange information among ourselves, but also

to develop the market with fairs and different events, interact with organisations and schools' associations and promote members."

Bea Faulhaber, CP-4 Cultural Projects, Brazil

"We have recently become a member of Alto/Fiyto. It is definitely beneficial to be accepted by a world recognised association. Firstly, it gives us additional strength and confidence to feel professional. Secondly, it helps us to get in contact and cooperate with various people involved in the travel and education industry."

Inessa Yugay, Intellect, Russia