

## Chinese – US visa agreement

FROM JUNE this year, Chinese students wanting to study in the USA for more than six months have been able to apply for a student, exchange or vocational training visa that is valid for 12 months with multiple entries. Previously, F, J and M visas for Chinese students were only valid for six months with two entries.

The changes were announced by the US embassy in Beijing earlier this year and will hopefully encourage more Chinese students to apply for visas to study in the USA. A statement released by the embassy that the agreement "is a sign of the United States' continuing interest in attracting talented students from China and elsewhere to American campuses".

According to figures released by the embassy, the number of student visas issued to Chinese students in Beijing in May 2004 compared with May 2005 increased by 50 per cent to 2,314. The number of exchange visitor passes issued in the same month also nearly doubled compared with the same period in the previous year.

US Consul, General John Morris, said during a press conference at the embassy, "We are sending out a welcoming message to all qualified Chinese students who apply for schools in the USA and we are pleased that the volume of student applications and visas issued in 2005 has so far shown a marked increase compared with 2004."

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also agreed a reciprocal arrangement that will allow US students going to study in China to apply for visas that will be valid for 12 months and for multiple entries into the country during the year.

# Student numbers down in Canada

International enrolments in Canada suffered the third annual decrease in a row in 2004, according to the latest statistics from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), meaning another disappointing year for international education providers in the country. One problem highlighted was stories of bogus visa applications from key markets, notably, India.

Overall, 56,529 student visas – needed for study periods of six months or over in Canada – were issued in 2004, down from 60,212 in 2003.

All study sectors suffered a decline in international student numbers. Secondary schools posted a two per cent decrease in international student numbers while universities reported declines of four per cent and other post-secondary institutions experienced declines in student numbers of eight per cent.

The most alarming decline was seen in the number of Chinese students studying in Canada, with numbers from this country down by 27 per cent

on 2003 levels. Other important student markets for Canada also suffered decreases in enrolments levels, including Korea, Japan and India, which saw student numbers fall by five per cent, eight per cent and 18 per cent respectively. Reasons for the declines were largely blamed on tighter visa restrictions for certain nationalities.

In their publication, *Network News*, the CEC Network reported that the visa rejection rate for Indian students had increased dramatically "reflecting CIC's crackdown on fraudulent documents, particularly financial documents". The news report added, "2004 was the year of the 'Jalahdar Kit', a fraudulent ready-made visa application complete with letter of acceptance, which could be purchased off the shelf."

On a more positive note, students from France, Germany, Taiwan and the UK increased by five per cent, nine per cent, 15 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. And predictions for the future remain positive, with many institutions hoping the recent increase in work rights for long-

term students in Canada will encourage future growth (see *Education Travel Magazine*, July 2005, page 38).

"We plan to double the number of international students from five per cent of the student population to 10 per cent within the next five years," said Ryan Sullivan from St Thomas

University in Fredericton, NB, who plans to diversify the student mix. "The off-campus work permits have been in place in New Brunswick for the past year and have been very successful. We have had a number of students working off campus, which helps with finances and learning more about the local community."

## Survey shows students face discrimination in Australia

A STUDY conducted by the Institute for the Study of Global Movements at Monash University in Australia has shown that over 50 per cent of the international students questioned in a survey said that they had suffered from discrimination or bad treatment during their studies in Australia.

The survey interviewed over 200 university students of 34 different nationalities and revealed that one in 10 had felt unsafe while studying in Australia. Professor Simon Marginson, one of the study's

principal researchers, told *ABC Online*, "[Bad experiences] did seem to be happening more often to students who didn't look European. Students mostly from East and South East Asia, but also to some extent, students from India seem to be targets in a way that European and American students are not."

Almost two-thirds of the students questioned reported feeling isolation and loneliness during their studies. Tim Smith, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (Acpet), said that the findings were a cause for concern but "should not be overestimated". He added, "There are 322,000 international students in university, vocational education, school and English language courses in Australia [and] only 200 students were surveyed. Any person taken out of their comfort zone could, at some time, feel a lack of security, a sense of isolation, loneliness and, possibly, even discrimination. What is important is that institutions provide pastoral care and support to all their students."

## Taiwan hoping for more international students

IN AN EFFORT to encourage more international students to study in Taiwan, the Ministry of Education has launched an English language website with links to colleges and universities in Taiwan, as well as resources for studying in the country.

The move came after the Education Minister, Tu Cheng-sheng, asked the ministry to research and look at ways to

attract more international students into the country.

"This is the first time the Ministry of Education has made such an effort in the hope of providing more useful information to international students about our education system and school information," said Wu Shao-feng, Secretary of the Ministry of Education's International Cultural and Education Department.

The Study in Taiwan website provides information on the 19 undergraduate, 73 master and 31 doctoral degree programmes currently taught in English in Taiwan. The ministry is also hoping to attract international students for degree programmes taught in Chinese and the website has information on Chinese language programmes offered at local universities.

## More visa price hikes for UK

STUDENTS applying for a visa to study in the UK have had to pay increased application fees since July this year after the UK government increased the cost of a student visa by 136 per cent. Previously students paid £36 (US\$63) for a visa but since July this has risen to £85 (US\$150).

Industry insiders have reacted angrily to this new charge, coming as it does hot on the heels of increased student visa renewal fees in February this year (see *Education Travel Magazine*, May 2005, page 46) and proposals to abolish the appeals procedure for students who have had their visa application turned down.

Robert Boucher, Chair of Universities UK's International Strategy Group, speaking after the latest plans were unveiled, said, "Some of the activities of the Home Office and UK visas over the last 18 months, with the introduction and subsequent vast increase in visa extension fees and recently, the proposed increase in initial visa fees and abolition of appeals, have outraged international students, caused enormous problems for institutions and have been highlighted in media around the world as indicators of the UK's unwelcoming attitude to international students."

The proposal to abolish visa appeals procedures was

announced in February and, if adopted, could have a negative impact on international student numbers in the UK. Universities UK states that a high proportion of students who are initially refused visas successfully overturn the decision on appeal. The Immigration Advisory service, which provides legal advice in such circumstances, estimates that between 60 and 75 per cent of international student visa appeals are successful.

By increasing the financial and logistical barriers faced by overseas students wanting to study in the country, the UK government has been accused of working against its own policy of encouraging the internationalisation of its universities. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) announced an initiative at the end of last year to increase the number of international students coming to study in the UK, in preparation for the demise of the five-year plan known as the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI), which came to an end in April.

The DfES paper, "Putting the World into World-Class Education", includes plans to build on the success of the PMI and increase international student enrolments by promoting the role of universities as international hubs for learning and research.

### Foreign university in Australia

US based Carnegie Mellon University is set to become the first foreign university to set up a campus in Australia after a bill was introduced by the South Australian State government earlier this year to provide funding and space for a branch of the university's John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management.

If the bill is accepted, the school will offer Master of Science degrees in Information Technology and Public Policy and Management from a site in Adelaide, SA. South Australian premier, Mike Rann, said that the move came after negotiations between the university and state government. "[The venture] supports an important target in seeing Adelaide become a global university city that attracts more students," he said.

### Taiwan's two-in-one card

International students in Taipei will soon be able to buy a travel card combined with an International Student Identity (Isic) card, according to an announcement by the Vice Minister of Education, Fan Sun-lu. The new card – a combination of the Isic card and an EasyCard – will allow users to pay in advance for travel on the whole of Taipei's public transport system, while also providing students with

discounted travel in up to 106 countries.

### Biometric passport deadline for USA postponed

The USA has delayed its demands that visitors from Europe be required to present a biometric passport when travelling to the USA from October this year. The extension of the deadline until October 2006 will apply to 27 countries included in the visa waiver programme, including most European Union (EU) countries as well as Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Japan.

The EU had been active in calling for an extension to the deadline saying that member countries needed more time to introduce the high tech documentation.

### Australian university cuts overseas programmes

Charles Sturt University in NSW, Australia, has cut back some of its overseas operations in a bid to improve its finances, according to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The university has over 8,000 offshore students, mainly in Malaysia, and aims to rationalise some of its offshore programmes that have proved to be uneconomic.

The multi-campus university currently has partnerships with educational institutions in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada and the UK.

### CEC website translated into new languages

Canada website has been translated into Russian and Japanese in order to tap more effectively into the Russian and Japanese markets. The sites will provide information about educational opportunities within Canada, health insurance, study permits and other study abroad information. CEC Network is also due to launch its first CEC centre in Russia in the autumn this year.

### Scottish online learning

An e-learning initiative has been developed by a number of Scottish universities, the Interactive University and the Scottish Qualifications Authority to provide online interactive courses in the life sciences.

The project, known as Collaborative e-Learning in the Life Sciences (CeLLS), will enable Scottish universities to deliver life science degrees and diplomas through the Interactive University's international network of local partners. After two years the learning materials developed will be made available to all universities in Scotland.

Martyn Ward, CeLLS Project Director, said an anticipated outcome of the project was the development of a core curriculum that can be used in both the FE and HE sectors.