

## International graduates in demand in UK

A REPORT BY the Council for Industry and Higher Education in the UK has found that many leading UK businesses look favourably on international graduates of UK universities when recruiting new staff.

The report was compiled from interviews with the CEOs of a range of businesses, including Shell, BP, Nissan and HSBC. Business leaders believed that "the UK develops some of the best graduates and research in the world", and the report acknowledged that international graduates "have often already displayed the qualities of drive, determination, ambition and command of languages that make them a self-identifying cadre of potential leaders".

A number of recommendations were also included, such as the provision of a two-year automatic visa and work permit extension to international students graduating or receiving doctorates or equivalent, as well as the removal of a requirement for overseas graduates to apply for visas from their home country if they wish to continue studying in the UK.

# Work rights in the US a possibility

US student visa reforms, which would allow international students to work off-campus during their studies and overseas graduate students studying science or engineering in the USA to stay and work in the country after completing their course, moved one step closer to becoming reality earlier this year after the US Senate approved the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act in May.

The act was passed after months of debate and incorporates legislation likely to have a significant effect on international students in the USA. Important visa reforms include a provision enabling international undergraduates of good academic standing to work off-campus for up to 20 hours a week during term time and 40 hours a week during the holidays, as well as the creation of an F4 visa specifically for students enrolling on graduate courses in areas such as mathematics, science, engineering and

technology, which are in high demand by US employers.

Unlike those students applying for existing student visas, applicants of the new visa category would not have to prove to visa officers that they will return home after completing their course and would also be able to apply for a change in status from a student visa to a green card – at a cost of US\$2,000 – once their studies were finished.

Nafsa: Association of International Educators, welcomed the original legislative proposal and highlighted its attempts to remove the provision that all student visa applicants must prove that they have no intent to remain in the USA after graduating. A statement on their website said, "Nafsa has been advocating for this type of change for years now, saying that it is an arcane law that has outlived any usefulness it may have had when enacted. Any change in the immigrant intent requirement is a positive step toward recognising the reality of a global workforce and improving

our competitive edge in the global market."

Other changes would see the cap on H1-B visas increase from 65,000 to 115,000 a year, with an automatic annual increase of 20 per cent, raise the employment-based (EB) visa cap and exempt certain workers with

advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering or maths from visa caps. The immigration legislation differs significantly from that passed in the House of Representatives in December, however, and both acts must now be debated for the reforms to take effect.

## Study Group expands university partnerships

GLOBAL EDUCATION company, Study Group, has increased its partnerships with universities in the UK in line with the ambitions of the Prime Minister's Initiative II (see *Language Travel Magazine*, June 2006, page 6).


The company will now operate International Study Centres (ISCs) for the University of Surrey in Guildford, the University of Northumbria in Newcastle and Lancaster University, in addition to its

current agreement with the University of Sussex in Brighton. Nick Rhodes, Head of Strategic Development, explained that Study Group had been invited to offer a range of specialist degree preparation courses for overseas students at each university. The new centres will offer pathways in business & management, engineering & computing and law & social studies.

The universities and Study Group will continue to market

internationally, on a collaborative basis. Rhodes pointed out that it was Study Group's marketing reach – with offices in 26 countries – its track record in academic preparation and its reputation for student welfare that encouraged universities to partner with them.

"These collaborative partnerships are more relevant than ever in today's increasingly competitive global marketplace," commented Rhodes.



**How many members do you have and what marketing activities are you involved in?**  
We have 23 members, including universities, English language secondary schools, English language schools and an independent boarding school. Activities range from international student recruitment – trade shows, alumni receptions, information sessions, agent and counsellor tours – to project-related activities including development bank training, international project identification, identification of local and international partners, project writing etc.

**How did Edunova come to be established?**  
Nova Scotia has a large number of public and private education and training organisations. An initial pilot project with our 11 universities and 13 campus community colleges revealed that international markets could be developed more quickly through collaboration. Edunova was established to coordinate international marketing efforts to ensure maximum cooperation and to avoid members competing against each other.

**What criteria do you have for new members?**  
Members must be based in Nova Scotia and operational for at least one year. We look for professional accreditation if they are a private partner.

**Do you work with international education agents?**  
Most of our members work with agents. Edunova introduces agents to members and vice versa and organises agent training sessions either in-country or here in Nova Scotia.

## A-levels on the way out

Details of the new pre-university exam, called the Cambridge Pre-U, were unveiled at a conference earlier this year. The exam has been developed by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), who last year announced plans to launch a post-16 qualification that would rival A-levels (see *Education Travel Magazine*, March 2006, page 54).

Students taking the new qualification, which is due to be offered from September 2008, will be required to study three subjects over two years and sit final exams as well as write an extended essay. CIE is developing syllabuses for 19 different courses and plans to make them available to schools in October for comment. Many schools and universities have welcomed the development of a new exam, which is expected to be more challenging than A-levels and a better way of distinguishing the most able students.

Cath Baldwin from the London School of Economics in London, commented, "The LSE would accept the Cambridge Pre-U qualification as suitable for admission to its undergraduate courses. In particular, LSE would welcome the academic rigour of the new qualification's linear approach and the retention of subject specialism."

The traditional A-level exam, which is taken by the majority of UK and international school age students in preparation for entry into a UK university, has been increasingly criticised in recent years and many top independent

schools have abandoned it completely in favour of the International Baccalaureate (IB). Research by Durham University, which tested 200,000 A-level students on their ability over a number of years, found that candidates who would have got an F in A-level mathematics in 1988 would have got a C in 2005.

The Cambridge Pre-U differs from the IB in that it will not require students to sit certain subjects. Students of the IB currently have to select options from six required subject groups – English, languages, humanities, sciences, maths and the arts. The number of schools in the UK offering the IB increased from 34 in 2000 to 85 and this figure is expected to increase to 100 over the next year.

### NZ-Omani education deal

The New Zealand Tertiary Education Consortium (NZTC) and the Omani Minister of Higher Education signed a contract in May for a five-year deal that will have New Zealand education institutions providing course content to Omani institutions.

NZTC members will provide content for several business and IT degrees as well as English language courses. New Zealand Tertiary Education Minister, Michael Cullen, said, "Individual institutions have previously had off-shore contracts, but this is the first time a New Zealand consortium has been formed. This project would have been too big for any one of our institutions."

### Students choose China

China is becoming an increasingly attractive proposition for international students, according to a report in the *Shanghai Daily* newspaper. The article claims that 141,087 overseas students were studying in China last year, an increase of 27 per cent on last year.

Of these international students, 75 per cent were from Asia, with many studying in higher education while the smaller numbers of Europeans and Americans were mainly studying on Chinese language courses.

### 'Discriminatory' exam practices challenged

A policy that allows international students at the Australian La Trobe University an extra two hours to sit exams has led to a formal complaint being lodged with the Equal Opportunity Commission. Local Australian students claim that the policy for overseas students enrolled on a Master of Laws degree at the university discriminates against native English language speakers.

Professor Walker from the university said that international students had to apply for the special consideration, which was awarded on a case-by-case basis, and was in place to make the exam fairer for students from countries with a different legal system.

### Welsh marketing group

An increasing number of international students are studying at Welsh universities, according to the Wales International Consortium, which has seen international enrolments to the country increase by 22 per cent since the group's inception in 2003. Overall, 6,200 international students studied at the 12 higher education institutions in Wales this year, generating significant revenue in tuition fees and further investment in the local economy.

The consortium has been concentrating on a number of recruitment initiatives designed to increase the number of North American and Canadian students studying in Wales, such as representing members with a stand at the Nafsa conference in Montreal this year.

### Travel and study package

Indian travel agency, Parry Travels, has developed a special "Travel 2 Campus" package for students, which will provide students with an air ticket, student travel insurance and foreign exchange that can be paid back over 12 or 36 months.

The package was introduced in order to enable more Indian students to travel overseas for study purposes, according to Kaushik Banerjee, Head of Parry Travels.

### Libyans study in the USA

Seven Libyan students were welcomed to Oklahoma State University earlier this year and became the first Libyans to study at a US university after the removal of sanctions introduced 26 years ago. The students are currently enrolled on English language programmes at the English Language Institute in the Wes Watkins Center and will continue on to undergraduate and graduate programmes at the university. President of the university, David Schmidly said, "We had for many decades a very close relationship between our university and the country of Libya and we are absolutely delighted."

### English tests for pilots

The International Civil Aviation Authority Organisation (ICAO) has introduced a minimum level of English that will be required by all flight crew and pilots by 2008. All flight crew and pilots will have to undergo English language testing and only those reaching level four out of six levels of proficiency will be allowed to operate.

Those reaching level four English ability will be required to undergo testing every three years while those with level five skills will have to take the test every six years and those who achieve level six first time will not have to take the test again.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM



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