

NZ works closely with key agents

Next issue

In our January issue, **Special Report** examines recent changes in visa regulations in the world's major language study destinations, while **Market Report** finds out about market trends in Spain last year. **Direction** looks at the demand for activity-lead language programmes and **Feedback** finds out what students studying in Italy think about their experience. **City Focus** visits Dublin in Ireland, while **Destination** reports from Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

New Zealand is maintaining its drive to diversify its international student market with a series of 'intimate' fam trips for selected agents from key markets. This year, groups of agents from 11 countries have visited the country and 14 similar fam trips are planned for next year. Countries targeted this year included Germany, Japan, Vietnam and Indonesia.

Stuart Boag, Strategic Promotions Manager at Education New Zealand (EdNZ), explained that a maximum of four agents are usually selected from a student market and invited to tour around New Zealand. 'We usually use a four-agent model because we find this is a manageable size both for organisation and for the institutions,' he said.

The invited agents get to visit a range of institutions across the country and also enjoy some of New Zealand's recreational offer-



PHOTOGRAPH: EDUCATION NEW ZEALAND

Vietnamese agents and industry hosts on Auckland's north shore

ings. 'Agents are usually here for a weekend, so we try to take them to some nice part of the country and treat them to a bit of what NZ has to offer,' said Boag.

He explained that agents are usually selected to attend based on recommendations from overseas offices of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise - formerly

known as Trade New Zealand. The trip is free for agents, although they may be required to pay all, or most, of their international air travel costs. 'This is both to ensure commitment and also to help control the costs for institutions,' he said. 'This does tend to weed out the players from the stayers!'

Industry issues - agents speak out

January February March April May June July August September October November December

Q Are your clients turning away from the USA as a study destination because of new visa interview requirements? If so, which countries are benefiting as a result?



'The USA has traditionally been the favourite destination for Colombian students wanting to study abroad. Unfortunately during the last year, the student visa regulation has affected numbers dramatically. Now that it is more difficult to obtain a student visa, other countries have benefited from this situation, mainly the UK, followed by Australia, Canada and New Zealand.'

Luis F. Gutierrez, International Student Services Org. - ISSO, Colombia

'I would say that the USA is still one of the most popular destinations to study in, but our students from Uzbekistan are likely to prefer the UK or Malta to the USA, only because of the visa process. Most of our students are interested in language training courses in the USA, but there are a lot of visa rejections on such programmes.



The process of getting a visa is becoming stricter and stricter day after day, moreover, because of the poor economic situation in Uzbekistan, our clients very often cannot prove their own funds and personal income, though they have one. That is the most frequent reason for visa refusals. As far as I know, attendance and taking an interview with the American consul was always a must; having heard the new regulations, we were not unhappy, as it was usual for Central Asian regions'

Olga Grjendko, Business Education Exchange (BEE), Uzbekistan

'In all my years of international student work, this past year was the most frustrating for me, my colleagues and the parents and students. The whole [visa] process for secondary students was unnecessarily time consuming and expensive. The Sevis process of



recertification was simply US bureaucracy gone mad. The software application programme was not well thought out. Many schools just gave up as it took more time than it was worth, as well as the expense involved [to become Sevis-certified]. Many of my clients were shut out as a result. On top of that was the revelation of the political fraud created by our administration of the Iraqi conflict. That, combined with the added expenses of increased tuition, turned parents away in droves. They either gave up and stayed home or went to Canada, Great Britain, Ireland and New Zealand. Our student exchange programmes are in real trouble.'

Peter Adams, Iway, Germany

'We have very few people interested in courses in the USA, particularly because of the visa issue. Teenagers do not have problems, with some exceptions, but 90 per cent of adults receive visa refusals; their papers are

okay as we manage them, but the motivation or the way our clients explain their reasons [in an interview] are essential for a positive visa answer. This is the reason why we do not [usually] accept enrolments [for the USA]. The new system is quite a big problem. Until now, we were able to predict the time needed for enrolment (papers and visa answer took two months). Now it is only a matter of luck because our clients pay for the visa only when all the papers from the school have arrived in [their] original format. Then, they wait to see about the date for the interview. If it is after the start date [at the school], then we need new papers and to change the fees, etc. If these papers do not come in due time, a new cycle begins.'

Cristina Vladau, Fides Travel, Romania

Some preference is given to agents who are new to the New Zealand market, according to Boag, who said agents see and learn a lot about the country during their stay. Agents are accompanied by an EdNZ representative at all times, enabling good relationships to form.

In-country seminars are another aspect of the marketing strategy that EdNZ has adopted. After the Taiwan agent visit to New Zealand in September, for example, a follow-up seminar was held in Taiwan in October for agents there.

'This style of linked activities gives the greatest possible chance for NZ institutions to form robust business partnerships with Taiwanese agents,' commented Boag. Other marketing models, such as larger fam trips or trips for more diverse agent groups, are also being considered for implementation in the future. □

Gwea launches its own show

THE GLOBAL Work Experience Association (Gwea) is organising its own Work Experience Travel Market next year in Cannes, France. Meritxell Morera at Gwea said the association, established in 2002, aimed to increase trade opportunities for members by organising the two-day event.

'The Work Experience Travel Market will be a great benefit for Gwea members, who have special rates,' she said. Non-members can also participate, and all participants will specialise in work experience, au pair or internship provision. Around 150 attendees are expected.

Cannes has been chosen as the venue so the workshop can tie in with the annual conference of the International Au pair Association (Iapa), which is, like Gwea, a sub-group of Fiyto. □

Dear *Language Travel Magazine*

ALAIN ARROUAS of Centre Anglia in France, a not-for-profit organisation offering information about studying in the UK, offers his view of the French market.

'Recruiting French students is a difficult, rather costly task, and the [reasons for this] are [manifold]. French parents won't send their children abroad and let them miss [part of] a school year. [However] they are quite happy if the local school organises a visit to London or Rome in two, three or four days.

Most universities urge students to stay in the UK for a while if they want to succeed. They promote the popular idea of internships, but 90 per cent of students can't face the bills and they [receive] no salary, of course. There is a huge demand for brochures and an extremely limited number of applicants.

This year, after severe floods, France faced an exceptional heatwave, which meant a serious recession in national economic growth - no crops, no harvests, no incomes, no investments, no projects. It has been hard to induce French students to spend a holiday in the UK or register with a school while the family's income is low.

The French government has also decided to [organise] new structures for all French services - the police, army, education, pensions etc - and those decisions have [caused] strikes, as no one [wants] to lose their privileges even if the country is badly affected. Exams were postponed or cancelled. We were unable to recruit university students as they were [also] anxious about [their] university exams.' □

Correction

In our Market Report on Malta in the October 2003 issue of *Language Travel Magazine*, we incorrectly referred to International House Malta - Gozo as Academy Business Language Connection. We apologise for any confusion caused.

On the move



John Eckersley retired as Principal of Eckersley School of English in Oxford, UK, in September. Mr Eckersley founded the school (originally called St Giles School of English) in 1955 and has been running it, in partnership with his wife Angela, ever since. He will continue to have an active role in the school, initially as Vice-Principal. The new Principal will be Richard Side (below), who has been Academic Manager at the school since 1994.



Andrew Tam, a former Executive Director of Hong Kong Student Travel and Managing Director of STA Travel in Hong Kong, has set up a new agency business in China, called Andrew & Associate. The company will represent international language schools and education institutions that want to recruit students from Hong Kong and China.



Richard Young, Marketing and Admissions Director at UAB Barcelona in Spain, has

decided to move on after over two years at UAB to start his own business. Mr Young has set up a Barcelona-based consultancy business in the industry he has been involved in for the last 15 years. 'I really get a buzz from my contact with agents around the world,' he said.



Dayna Hill has recently taken on the role as Marketing Manager for Hilton International College in Brisbane, Australia. She has returned from the UK where she was working in a similar capacity with Eurocentres and prior to that with Australian Language Institute, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast English College, Noosa.

Chris Taylor has moved to Mackintosh International College, Gold Coast, Australia after 14 years with Tafe Queensland. He will continue to be working in a Director of Studies role as well as promoting Mackintosh College products. Mr Taylor said, 'I am delighted to be working in such a professional, progressive organisation in a fabulous location.'



Chris Taylor has moved to Mackintosh International College, Gold Coast, Australia

after 14 years with Tafe Queensland. He will continue to be working in a Director of Studies role as well as promoting Mackintosh College products. Mr Taylor said, 'I am delighted to be working in such a professional, progressive organisation in a fabulous location.'



Chris Taylor has moved to Mackintosh International College, Gold Coast, Australia

after 14 years with Tafe Queensland. He will continue to be working in a Director of Studies role as well as promoting Mackintosh College products. Mr Taylor said, 'I am delighted to be working in such a professional, progressive organisation in a fabulous location.'



Face to face

Each month, we profile the people from language schools who deal directly with agents, in order to give you the chance to get to know some of the people you work with.

Who are you?

Manya Bredell, Director and Co-owner.

Where do you work?

The Cape Town School of English, Cape Town, South Africa.

Why and how did you start in the industry?

I started in this industry quite accidentally. I enrolled to do a Tefl course, got involved in teaching English at the school and from there started to assist with the organisation of the school. That was 12 years ago!

Why should agents choose to represent your school?

We are the longest-running Tefl/EFL school in South Africa and a large part of our enrolments come as a direct result of other students recommending our school. We have a strong and long-standing relationship with our existing language travel agents. We like to remain open-minded and discuss changes or problems openly with our agents to ensure the best service to our (and their) clients.

How does your school promote itself to agents?

Via the Internet, international language fairs and advertising.

What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

About 50 per cent.

How do you believe your institution will develop in the future?

One needs to take the changing requirements of students and language travellers into consideration and adapt accordingly. Language will always be the main component of what we offer here, together with further development in the tourism/travel arena.