

Visa crunch in the USA

Currency

		1xUS\$ =currency*
Argentinean	Pesos	2.846
Australian	Dollar	1.448
Brazilian	Real	2.845
British	Pound	0.602
Bulgarian	Leva	1.648
Canadian	Dollar	1.333
Chilean	Pesos	642.17
Chinese (PR)	Yuan	8.236
Czech	Koruny	27.13
Danish	Kroner	6.293
Egyptian	Pound	6.155
EU	Euro	0.847
Hong Kong	Dollar	7.733
Hungarian	Forint	215.01
Icelandic	Kronur	76.074
Indonesian	Rupiah	8,355.0
Israeli	New Shekels	4.426
Japanese	Yen	109.52
Maltese	Lira	0.408
Mexican	Peso	11.257
New Zealand	Dollar	1.672
Norwegian	Kroner	6.974
Polish	Zloty	3.826
Russian	Rubles	30.160
Singaporean	Dollar	1.723
Slovakian	Koruny	35.015
South African	Rand	6.869
South Korean	Won	1,149.7
Swedish	Krona	7.598
Swiss	Franc	1.312
Taiwanese	NT Dollar	33.522
Thai	Baht	39.210
Turkish	Lira	1,371,625.5
Venezuelan	Bolivar	1,598.0

*Rates are subject to change and should be used as indications only. 08/10/03

Australia speeds up visa queue for Chinese

VISA PROCESSING time in China for Australian student visas is improving, with the average length of wait since February less than 12 weeks, or 16 weeks for the high school sector, the Affiliation of International Education Peak Bodies (AIEPB) reported earlier this year. Previous waiting time was around 20 weeks.

Representatives of the AIEPB meet regularly with government officials to discuss issues relating to the country's education export industry. The group also reported that the Immigration Department - which introduced new processes to cut down visa waiting time - aims to introduce email-based visa applications as a standard procedure next year. □

International student enrolment on language courses and degree programmes in the USA is suffering, as schools feel the effects of a tightening up of the immigration system. Since August 1, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (Sevis) has been in effect - requiring all students to be entered into a computer-based tracking system - and all visa candidates have had to attend an in-person interview at their local consulate or embassy.

Perceived difficulties and the added expense of getting a visa are putting off students from choosing the USA, say agents and schools. Peter Adams, a consultant based in Germany, told *Language Travel Magazine*, 'The stories I heard from my clients' parents about standing in line in the hot sun for hours at a time were unbelievable.' He said many of his clients were turning to Canada, the UK, Ireland and New Zealand instead.

Kelly Franklin, President of the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP), acknowledged that the extra expense involved in travelling to an embassy or consulate to attend a visa interview had impacted on the market. He added that the Sevis system will also soon require a fee from students to fund its operation. The cost is yet to be decided, but estimates are in the region of US\$100.

The waiting time to find out if a visa has been awarded - reports indicate a wait of two months is common - is also a stumbling block to enrolments.

However, in Uzbekistan, agent Olga Grjendko of Business Education Exchange, said that most of her clients were used to attending a visa interview in person anyway. 'This was usual for central Asian regions,' she said, although she acknowledged that a high rate of visa refusal from the US Embassy in Tashkent meant that, in many cases, her clients chose other study destinations.

Statistics from the State Department testify that there were 57,000 fewer student visa applications from October 1, 2002 to



Fewer students are braving the US visa process, statistics reveal

August 1, 2003, compared with the same period two years earlier, and 65,000 fewer visas actually issued. A total of 270,405 applications were received and almost 175,000 student visas were issued in this period, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

At the English Language Center at the University of Denver in the USA, Jill Pommrehn, Operations Manager, reported that student numbers had declined, although she said it was too soon to tell if new visa requirements were the reason for this. 'English language programme enrolment in general has declined since the fall of the Asian market several years ago,' she said. 'However, we had 66 students in the spring and only 53 [in September].'

She explained that of the 14 students expected to enrol who did not arrive, three were waiting to hear about their visas. 'They have been waiting more than 60 days,' she said. 'All three are from the Middle East.' This may also be due to added security checks undertaken by the USA on nationals of certain countries.

Nafsa, Association of International Educators, issued a set of recommendations earlier in the year that aimed to balance immigration security with practicality, given concerns over visa delays. It suggested a 30-day standard waiting time, with a hotline to help resolve cases that require more than 30 days to process. It also recommended abolishing the visa interview rule.

Academic groups have also signed a petition - Academic Visa Reform - organised by graduate international students at Yale University, who are campaigning to establish longer term re-entry and multiple entry visas into the USA as well as a supportive environment for overseas academics keen to work in the country. □

English to be key in UK citizenship

A WORKING group charged with researching best practice for integrating migrants in the UK has recommended English language tests as part of a range of measures. UK Home Secretary, David Blunkett, commented, 'I welcome the emphasis on English - acquiring English is a pre-requisite to social integration, to further education and employment and to the well-being of succeeding generations.'

The group's findings back up the view of the government, which announced last year its plans to overhaul citizenship requirements (see *Language Travel Magazine*, April 2002, page 4).

Recommendations, likely to be enacted next year, include free English language lessons and a requirement for prospective citizens to prove progression from one Esol (English for Speakers of Other Languages) level to another. Applicants must have lived in the country for five years, or three years, if they are married to a British citizen. □

Students on the up in Australia

THE NUMBER of student visa holders in Australia increased by 12 per cent in the year ending July 2003, according to Australia's Minister for Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Philip Ruddock. He claimed the student number increase was testament to the success of Australia's transparent visa system, introduced in July 2001, and he promised further changes to improve the visa issuing process.

Key student markets for Australia across all sectors were noted as China, the USA, Malaysia, Korea, Hong Kong and Japan. Total student visa grants numbered 106,610 in the year. 'The student visa reforms of 1 July 2001 have allowed for continued strong growth in the number of bona fide students coming to Australia, while at the same time, sustaining quality and integrity of

Australia's education export industry,' commented Ruddock.

Sue Blundell at English Australia (EA) welcomed the findings, but said EA figures indicated declines in the English language sector from Latin America and Europe, 'which we believe are directly associated with the student visa programme'.

Further changes to the visa system, expected this year, will include a relaxing of rules regarding financial requirements for students from high-class visa categories. Ruddock explained, 'The range of acceptable financial criteria will be extended. The financial requirements will also be made more consistent across education sectors, increasing the transparency of the visa process.'

Amendments to the English language proficiency requirements are also expected. □

Germany emphasises its cool

AN ADVERTISING campaign in Europe to promote Germany's cultural and youthful appeal is being planned, following market research in the UK by the Goethe Institut that revealed Germany suffers from a dull stereotype, particularly in the UK.

The advertising campaign will feature German celebrities such as Claudia Schiffer, Boris Becker and Michael Schumacher, as well as images of Berlin's famous techno-music event, the Love Parade. The campaign will run under the slogan 'Made in Germany'. Similar campaigns targeted at young people in Eastern Europe are being planned for next year.

'We decided to emphasise current aspects of German life that are ignored - the hedonism for example,' said Ulrich Sacker, a spokesperson at the Goethe Institut, which has branches throughout Europe. He pointed out that currently, 'We have the short working days and take the longest holidays in Europe.' □

Student access to health care in NZ denied

A CHANGE in law in New Zealand means that foreign students previously entitled to free and subsidised health care are no longer eligible. The changes came into effect on October 30, with requirements dictating that all students enrolling from January 1 must also have adequate medical and travel insurance.

Previously, foreign students had been able to receive subsidised health care and free hospital care if they had a study permit for 12 months or more and expected to be in the country for at least two years. Colin Feek, of the Health Ministry, estimated that 20,000 foreign fee-paying students were eligible last year. 'I don't consider the government has an obligation to provide this group... public-funded health services, as they generally don't intend to remain here [permanently],' he said.

The new ruling is expected to save the New Zealand taxpayer millions and is backed by Education New Zealand Chief Executive, Robert Stevens. □

Calendar

The Americas Workshop

Date: 15-16 December
Venue: Miami, USA
Contact: Karl Badde, ICEF
Am Hofgarten 9
Bonn, 53113, Germany
Tel: +49 228 201 190
Fax: +49 228 201 1944
Email: icefbonn@icef.com

Expo Universidad 2003

Date: 19-21 December
Venue: Lima, Peru
Contact: Justo Zaragoza
Expo Universidad
c/o Focus Media
Argentina
Tel: +51 122 608 85
Fax: +51 122 608 85
Email: jjalife@focusmedia.com.ar

Fitur 2004

Date: 28 January - 1 February
Venue: Madrid, Spain
Contact: Feria Internacional de Turismo, Apdo. de Correos 67.067, Madrid, 28080, Spain
Fax: +34 913 560 032
Email: rain1@rainbow.es

Expolangues

Date: 28-31 January
Venue: Paris, France
Contact: Camille Rabehanta
L'Etudiant
27 Rue du Chemin Vert
Paris, 75011, France
Tel: +33 148 074372
Fax: +33 148 070292
Email: camille.rabehanta@letudiant.fr

17th International Fair "Education and Career"

Date: 3-5 March
Venue: Moscow, Russia
Contact: Irina Shipilova
RTV Media
Shukhova str. 14 of, 301
Moscow, 113162, Russia
Tel: +7 095 237 7226
Fax: +7 095 2370355
Email: rtv-media@mtu-net.ru

The Pacific-Rim Workshop

Date: 11-12 March
Venue: Seoul, Korea
Contact: ICEF (as above)

Salao do Estudante

Date: 13-14 March
Venue: Sao Paulo, Brazil
Date: 16 March
Venue: Curitiba, Brazil
Date: 18-19 March
Venue: Belo Horizonte, Brazil
Date: 21-22 March
Venue: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Date: 24 March 24
Venue: Salvador, Brazil
Contact: Rupert Merrick
C&S Associadas
Alameda Santos, 1470
Sao Paulo, 1470, Brazil
Tel: +55 11 289 6599
Fax: +55 11 251 0251
Email: rupertmerrick@csassociadas.com.br

Int. Education Fair

Date: 13-14 March
Venue: Seoul, Korea
Contact: Yong-Nae Kim, Kosa
902 Chunma B/D
65-1 Gyeonji-dong,
Jongro-Gu, Seoul, Korea
Tel: +82 2 738 8188
Fax: +82 2 738 8187
Email: info@kosaworld.org

The Alphe Korea Workshop

Date: 15-17 March
Venue: Seoul, Korea
Contact: Matthew Northover
Hothouse Media Ltd
11-15 Emerald Street
London, WC1N 3QL, UK
Tel: +44 20 7440 4027

Fax: +44 20 7440 4033
Email: matthew@hothousemedia.com

Work Experience Travel Market

Date: 18-19 March
Venue: Cannes, France
Contact: Merixell Morera, Gwea
Bredgade 25H
Copenhagen, 1260, Denmark
Tel: +45 3333 9600
Fax: +45 3393 9676
Email: mailbox@gwea.org

International Education Fair

Date: 20-21 March
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
Contact: Saijai Sriyanta, Tieca
503/30 KSL Tower 18th Floor
Sri-Ayudthaya Road,
Phayathai, Rajthavee,
Bangkok, 10400, Thailand
Tel: +662 642 6114
Fax: +662 642 6115
Email: admin@tieca.com

Saló de l'Ensenyament

Date: 25-28 March
Venue: Barcelona, Spain
Contact: Roser Soley
Fira de Barcelona
Avda. Reina Maria Cristina s/n
Barcelona, 08004, Spain
Tel: +34 932 332 324
Fax: +34 932 332 648
Email: ensenyament@firabcn.es

Italian in Italy Workshop

Date: 25-28 March
Venue: Rome, Italy
Contact: Giuseppina Foti
Italian in Italy, via Tibullo 10,
Roma, 00193, Italy
Tel: +39 066 8307796
Fax: +39 066 69758
Email: info@italianinitaly.it

Expolingua Madrid

Date: 26-28 March
Venue: Madrid, Spain
Contact: Gerardo Ortiz/Maya Royeck
Expolingua Madrid
Guzmán el Bueno, 99-1º izda
Madrid, 28015, Spain
Tel: +34 915 431702
Fax: +34 915 432519
Email: info@expolingua.es

Vieca International Education Fair

Date: 26-27 March
Venue: Hanoi, Vietnam
Date: 28-29 March
Venue: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Contact: Vieca, 30 Ta Quang Bui
Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel: +84 48223675
Fax: +84 48223699
Email: vieca@fpt.vn

Asian Student Fair

Date: 27-28 March
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
Contact: M S Mirza
International Educational
Services, PO Box 10503
Karachi, 74400, Pakistan
Tel: +92 303 732 6602
Fax: +92 21 567 1540
Email: bangkokexpo@yahoo.com

The Moscow Workshop

Date: 29-30 March
Venue: Moscow, Russia
Contact: ICEF (as above)

International Education Fair

Date: 2-4 April
Venue: Taipei, Taiwan
Contact: Albert Lee, Tosa, Room 1122
No.15 Fuhsing Rd
Taipei, ROC 105, Taiwan
Tel: +886 277 39330
Fax: +886 277 39481
Email: info@tosa.org.tw