

Baselt welcomes agents from Mexico

Next issue

In our March issue, **Special Report** examines the evolution of popular summer programmes in the marketplace, while **Market Report** finds out about market trends in New Zealand last year. **Direction** looks at distance learning programmes for language students and **Feedback** finds out what students studying in Australia think about their study abroad experience. **City Focus** visits London while **Destination** reports from the US inland states.

Agents from a range of countries continue to benefit from tailored fam trips around the UK, courtesy of the British Association of State English Language Teaching (Baselt). The association organised a number of fam trips last year, with Mexican agents being invited in October for a tour of various Baselt member institutions.

“The Mexican mission proved to be a favourite with participating members, and some have already received referrals because of it,” reported Julie Hutchinson at Baselt. “The format of the week consisted of three showcases presented by the University of Salford, Newcastle College and Dundee College with two workshops hosted by Huddersfield College and the University of Edinburgh.”

In total, the Mexican agents met 17 Baselt member schools during the trip at various events,



PHOTOGRAPH: EVENING TELEGRAPH

Mexican agents enjoyed meeting staff at Dundee College, Scotland

from both the further and higher education sectors. Hutchinson reported that agents appreciated the mix of showcases and workshops in different regions of the UK. “They found the showcases beneficial, especially when they were able to talk to students,” she said. “Workshops also proved useful for gathering a lot of information in a short time.”

Maaïke Volkerts de del Viller, from Maaïke e Hijas Educacion Internacional in Mexico, praised the trip. “[I enjoyed] actually visiting and touring the colleges and seeing everything they have to offer students – courses, sports, arts, music and the actual locations,” she said. “[The staff] were all extremely friendly, outgoing and professional.” □

Industry issues - agents speak out

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Q Do students often approach your agency with unrealistic expectations about what they can gain from their study abroad experience? How do you advise them for the best?



“As a country where English language proficiency is a prerequisite to applying for a student visa, we know sometimes that students don't need an English course, or if so, we can refer them to the most suitable institution. When students come to us for [placement] we advise them about the courses that are most suitable for them. Sometimes students' expectations are too high because [their] information is not based on facts. Yes, we convince [students] that if they apply through us, they will enrol in an appropriate institution with good results.”

Mansoor Hassan Hashmi, Hashmi Education Consultants, Pakistan

“Due to the Internet, these days many students are quite knowledgeable about the different types of programmes offered.



However, they need assistance in deciding on the appropriate school. Many students want to know

about the school's environment and setting. In some ways, the facilities and activities outside the classroom are more important than the [course]. For example, the location of the school (urban versus rural), type of residency or the number of Korean students are factors that my students should consider. This type of information is difficult to decipher from the Internet. To answer students' questions, my staff and I usually communicate directly with the schools. In addition, my agency usually hires staff who have studied in a specific country. Through their personal experience, they can give a well-rounded explanation on the type of environment or setting [students will encounter] in a particular country or school.”

Mansuk Bae, KAMC, Korea



“Many times, I know better [than a student] what they need and what will make them happiest, through

experience and sixth sense. I always try to be honest and tell the student about the pros and cons of each programme and let them decide. Probably by then, I have convinced them what would be best and they think it was their idea not mine. Most of the time, students' expectations are too high, especially if they are between 16 and 23 years old. To get to know more about them, I ask a few questions about their school or work, expectations, willingness to sit and learn and the importance of fluency in another language.”

Karin McQuade, DW Brazil, Brazil

“I often help students devise tailor-made overseas study plans based on their educational background, proficiency in English and expectations. Because we have so



many good and successful cases of dealing with different types of students, we can always find the

most suitable programme. Usually we talk with students many times. From the conversation, we can easily work out what students want. Some students pin high expectations on their language course. They hope they can go to college/university after a short-term English course. So we often have to suggest studying English for longer. Even if they could provide certain IELTS or Toefl scores, we tell them what levels are sufficient to study in an academic programme. Usually we give students some examples when they are not convinced about our advice. That is to say, we make students trust us based on facts and different cases.”

Maggie Ren, Beijing Han Yin Consultant Co., China

Agent in Japan writes book about study abroad

A LANGUAGE travel agent based in Japan, Robert McMillan of Super World Club, has written a book about the realities of studying abroad for Japanese students.

The book, entitled *Ryugaku Sen Koto* – which roughly translates as *Studying Abroad: Don't Do It* – will be distributed for sale throughout Japan. McMillan said that 50 major bookstores will stock the book from February.

“Although the book title sounds negative, the message is positive: many wonderful experiences await the international student who is aware of the pitfalls and prepared to deal with them,” said McMillan. He explained that one of the reasons for writing the book, which draws on 10 years of his and his partner's experiences of sending Japanese students to Canada, was “the

overly rosy image in Japan of studying abroad”.

“Machiko and I created a study abroad programme to support students from our English school in Japan,” he explained. “We found a good school, met hosts, brought the students over, provided scholastic, emotional and parental support for children we had taught since elementary school – and yet some still had great difficulty.”

McMillan said that the book relates both positive and negative student experiences, and “allows the reader to draw their own conclusions”. He continued, “A number of events motivated us. One [point] is that international students without a good agent enjoy little protection. Another was the local school board [in Canada] which was highly critical of attempts to inform Japanese parents of such realities.” □

Silc develops online English

INTERNATIONAL agency chain, Silc, has launched an online English language course as an addition to its product range. The agency, which has been in operation since 1965, introduced silc-online.com last November.

Géraldine Cohen at Silc, which is based in France, explained that the course content is targeted towards a student's areas of interest, such as football or museums, and aligned to their language level and progress rate, to guarantee motivation.

The venture is expected to appeal to a wide client base, such as those preparing to study abroad or keen to maintain progress after an overseas trip. “Certain companies are also looking for an in-house solution for their employees, who may then study overseas,” said Cohen. She added that younger or older clients can use the site to improve their language level and develop their interests for a modest price.

Some aspects of the course can be delivered by telephone, lessons can be followed at any time and a tutor is available to respond to all questions by email. “This [venture] is about learning English in your own time,” explained Cohen, “where, and more importantly, when you want.” □

On the move



Kurt Schmidli has taken over the role of European Marketing Manager at New Horizon College

of English in Napier, New Zealand, where he is a part owner and director. Prior to moving to New Zealand, he was involved in Sales and Marketing with a multinational organisation based in Switzerland. “Being part of global diversity, and the challenges associated with it, is most stimulating and satisfying,” says Mr Schmidli.



Masaru Yamada, Founder of ICS agency in Japan, is leaving the company to start up three new

business ventures. The first company, Ryugaku-Soken (IEI), will act as a consultancy division for colleges and universities who want to tap into the international education sector. A second company will offer English test services in Japan, which will be recognised by universities overseas. “Admission agreements have already been signed with 100 universities,” said Mr Yamada. Finally, a third business venture will offer education placement services for students.



Chris Magill left Magill English Language College in Gosford, Australia, last

year, after almost 15 years, to develop a new company, MBM International Study Tour and Work Experience Specialists. Ms Magill explained that the company is focusing on English study and technical tours with homestay or farmstay and work experience in new regional areas of New South Wales. “MBM is well on the way to welcoming our first groups in April 2004,” said Ms Magill, adding, “I plan to go Australia-wide with [the venture] and team up with English language colleges in other [Australian] states.”



Sterling College in Perth, Australia, is pleased to announce the appointment of

Janelle Dawson as Principal. In a distinguished 20-year career in the university and private sectors of education in Australia, Ms Dawson has established a reputation for providing the personal attention and supportive learning environment that allows students to reach their full potential. She previously had a senior administrative job as Head of School at Edith Cowan University.

Agency of the month



Cactus, UK

In a new series to appear in *Language Travel Magazine*, we will be asking a different language teaching institution each month to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and to explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.

This month, Regent Language Training, based in the UK, nominates our first agency of the month.



Jonny Peters, Sales and Marketing Director for Regent, explains why they have nominated Cactus in the UK:

“Cactus are a relatively new agency based in the UK and their dedication to quality and customer service is among the best in the industry. Their ability to consistently meet clients' needs and represent Regent in a fast and accurate way has ensured an extremely successful partnership.

Established in 1998, Cactus have a global [customer] marketplace focusing on language programmes in the UK and abroad, teacher training and executive products. As most of their business depends on word of mouth and viral marketing, Cactus depends on consistent delivery of quality, customer service and a close relationship with their partner schools in order to be able to grow their business.

By providing this service as a team, we have been able to develop a partnership which has gone from strength to strength.”

Correction – December 2003 issue Course Guide

In our Course Guide to Toefl and Ielts courses in the December 2003 issue (see page 29), the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign supplied incorrect information about the minimum age of students on their programmes. They would like to point out that this is in fact 17 and not 20.