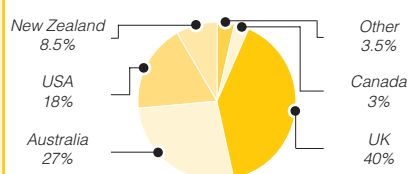


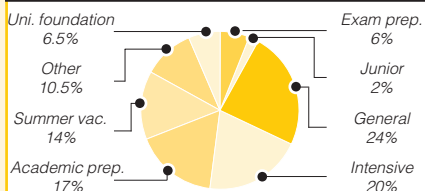
# Thailand's promise

Thailand's language travel market is characterised by students who are academically oriented and who use their language education to help them fulfill their long-term study goals. As the Thai economy strengthens, agencies predict that more students will consider studying overseas.

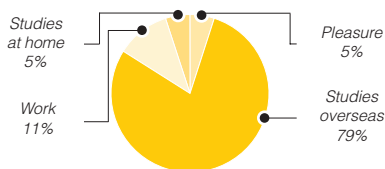
## Top destinations



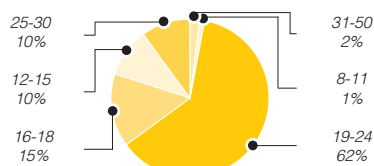
## Most popular courses



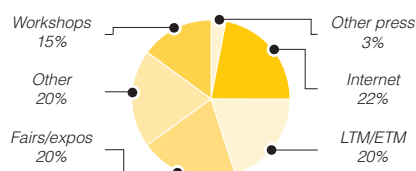
## Reasons for language travel



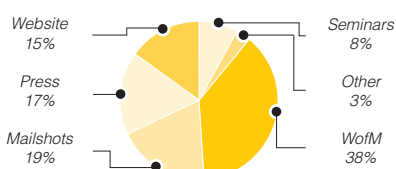
## Age range of clients



## How do agencies find new schools to represent?



## Client recruitment



## Key points

- The total number of students placed by 11 agencies in our survey was 1,965
- Individual agencies placed between 40 and 450 students on language courses per year
- Average growth of combined agency business in 2002 was 14 per cent
- The average spend on tuition and accommodation per week was US\$377
- Almost 30 per cent of clients requested residential accommodation
- A third of agencies surveyed charged a handling fee, which averaged US\$50
- Sixty per cent of agency clients requested an accredited language school
- Average length of stay increased to 16.4 weeks

## Market growth

Last year proved to be a mixed bag for Thai language travel agents, with some agencies reporting improving business because of an upturn in the economy and others reporting that Sars and the war in Iraq had a dampening effect on overall student numbers in 2003. Across the 11 agencies that took part in our survey, business growth averaged out at a healthy 14 per cent, with many confident that business will improve this year (see below).

## Student trends

Many of the trends reported in our previous survey of the Thai language travel market (see *Language Travel Magazine*, December 2002, pages 10-11) are still in evidence, with most agency clients going overseas to study in preparation for a postgraduate education. Seventy-nine per cent of students wanted to study a language for their further studies overseas, and 62 per cent of students were aged between 19 and 24 years old. Agents were unanimous that this age group is showing the most positive growth.

## Course and destination trends

There was a change in

destination options in this year's survey, with the UK overtaking Australia as the number-one destination. While English was the overwhelming first choice in terms of language studied, interestingly, Japanese was the second-most requested language option. Residential accommodation was slightly more popular with students last year, while popular types of language programme included general, intensive, academic preparation and summer vacation.

## Agency business

Compared with other markets, Thai agents do not seem to cater for high volumes of students, with the maximum number of clients processed at the agencies that took part

in our survey reaching 450 last year. The Thai market is largely characterised by individual bookings, which account for 81 per cent of enrolments, and it is not seasonal, with bookings spread out year round. Word-of-mouth recommendation is still the most popular client recruitment method for an agency, while in terms of finding new school partners, the Internet, fairs & expos and *Language Travel Magazine* or *Education Travel Magazine* all proved significant sources.

## Forecast for 2003

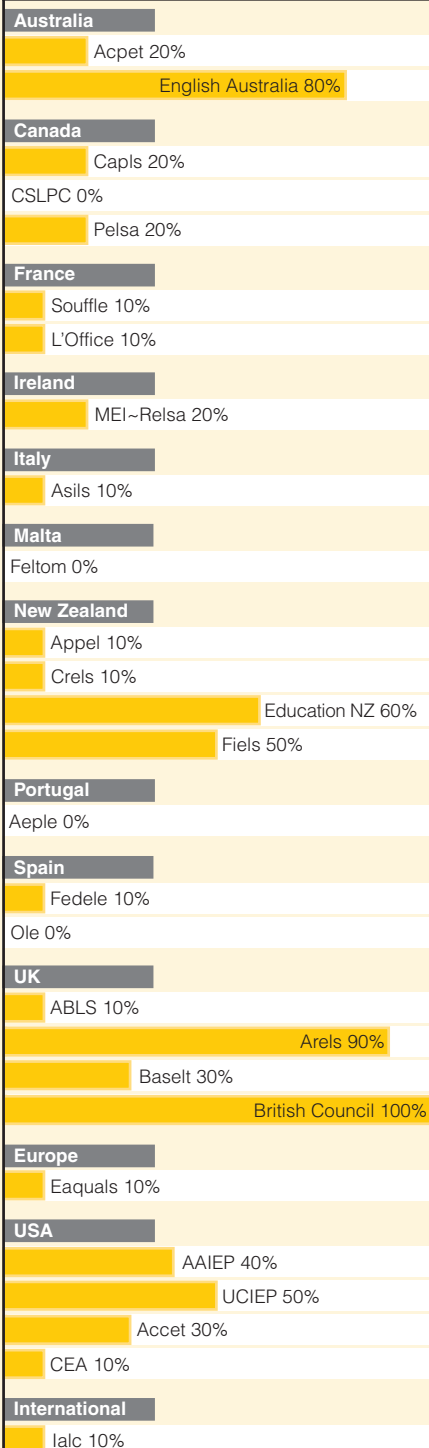
One agent commented that programmes incorporating work experience are becoming more popular, while another said academic programmes offering entry into postgraduate university courses and summer vacation courses would attract more clients, as these types of courses are not widely available in Thailand. However, agents report that undergraduate studies and high school education is still largely studied by their clients at home and not overseas. Most agents point to the improving economy and forecast growth of around five to 30 per cent in 2004.

## Economic overview

- The economy in Thailand is picking up, which caused Thailand's finance ministry to revise its predictions for full year GDP growth last year to 6.4 per cent. Record exports were recorded in October, and domestic consumption and private investment were also reported to be strong.
- Consumer confidence was at its highest level since 1997 in November 2003, according to a poll released by the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. Increased domestic spending is one reason for the government's optimism about the economy, as it accounts for more than half of GDP.
- Inflation is forecast to rise in 2004 but this is not expected to affect economic growth because analysts say the rate, forecast to be up to 2.5 per cent, is still manageable. A rise in inflation is seen as inevitable as economic growth spurs demand for goods and services.

Source: Bloomberg

## Percentage of agents who recognised each of the following organisations



**That agents named a range of language programmes they work with, including, in Australia:** Deakin University, Melbourne; Holmes Colleges, various; Geos International Schools, various; Monash University, Melbourne; Shafston International College, Brisbane; University of Canberra, Canberra; University of New South Wales Language Centre, Sydney; University of Wollongong, Sydney; Victoria University, Melbourne. **In the UK:** Regent Language Training, various; Royal Holloway, University of London, Surrey; Stanton School of English, London; Luton, University of Luton, Luton; University of Plymouth, Plymouth; University of Northumbria, Newcastle. **In the USA:** ALL at San Diego State University, San Diego, CA; California State University, Fullerton, CA; ELS Language Centers, various; Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI; The Language Company, various; UCLA Extension, Los Angeles, CA; Virginia International University, Fairfax, VA. **Worldwide:** Aspect, ILA, Geos, International House, King's School of English, St. Giles.

**Thank you to the following agencies for taking part in our survey:** Euro Education Services; Kings Educational Services; Mentor International; Overseas Education Co.; PASA; Professional Intereducation; SELT Education Link; STA Travel; Study Overseas Centre; Thal International Education; World Splendour Holidays.