

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

British University In Dubai Opens

The British University in Dubai (BUiD) is the newest education provider entering the Knowledge Village in the United Arab Emirates. As an overseas university, BUiD differs in its approach from the seven off-shore campuses currently operating in the Village, each affiliated with their respective home institutions. According to its website, BUiD wants to “make a distinctive British contribution to the higher educational system in the United Arab Emirates through the creation of a high quality research-led university.”

This “distinctive British contribution” is to only grant research-oriented Master’s degrees, making it the only institution in the Village to offer such programs. Kamal Lakhiani, Higher-Edge’s Dubai Manager says one of the advantages BUiD has over its Knowledge Village neighbors is “the flexibility to create joint programs with different universities;” BUiD currently has agreements with three British institutions. Lakhiani notes that as a new university, BUiD lacks “its own brand name.” Students who earn degrees from branch campuses are guaranteed the name recognition of the parent campus, something BUiD will have to overcome as a newcomer to the higher education field. The University received accreditation eligibility status in late August 2004.

Source: [“The UAE Ministry of Higher Education grants Accreditation Eligibility Status to programmes at The British University in Dubai,” AMEInfo.com, 26 August 2004.](#)

OVER THE COUNTER

Degrees Over Dollars?

“Sign your cheque and receive your degree” seems like a slogan for an online diploma mill, but perhaps the same could be said about some authentic universities. In China, government officials who “donated” to Tianjin University received legitimate degrees; they only had to sit a special class or write a special exam. In England, *The Observer* reports that the head of Bournemouth University’s design, engineering and computing department used the amount of income a student generated to justify passing those who were failing. The same article also writes, “university staff are being put under increasing pressure to pass foreign students studying for masters’ degrees because the income is keeping many universities afloat.”

Source: [“Diploma selling rampant in some Chinese universities,” Sohu.com, 7 September 2004](#) (in Chinese); [“Degrees for sale’ at UK universities,” *The Observer*, 1 August 2004.](#)

THE PLAYING FIELD

International Graduate Student Survey

Over the past year, various studies have been released that analyze what is being recognized as a trend: the declining number of international graduate students at American schools. The most recent report comes from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), which states that there are “large declines in offers of admissions to international graduate students across most countries-of-origin and fields-of study.” This survey is the second of a three-part study that hopes to examine the effects of changes in US visa policies on international graduate students. The surveys measured both applications and admissions from international students, and both found that the top three countries experienced declines in both areas.

China led the way with a 45 percent decline in applications and a 34 percent in admissions. India was second, with application and admissions numbers declining by 30 and 19 percent respectively, while South Korea had 14 and 12 percent drops. Much has been written about the declining interest in the US as a destination for international graduate students; the most often cited reasons include the student visa process, the perception students have of the US and more aggressive competition from other study abroad destinations. In a press release, the President of CGS, Debra Stewart says, “we have no reason to believe that these three factors will abate in the short run. In fact, global competition will surely accelerate in the future.”

Source: [“Council of Graduate Schools’ Report Finds U.S. Graduate Schools Adjusting Policies and Procedures to Address Declines in International Graduate Applications and Admits,” *Council of Graduate Schools Press Release, 7 September 2004.*](#) (PDF file)

GLOBE TIPPING

Travel Within West Africa

For those flying into West Africa, consider staying airborne if traveling within the region. Given the proximity and average size of the countries (Nigeria being the exception), traveling via land may seem a logical option. In reality, the number of obstacles to overcome can make the journey an arduous experience. For instance, a trip from Lomé, Togo to Accra, Ghana (a distance of about 100 miles) can take a full day, punctuated by tedious border checks, harassment and solicitation for kickbacks by border guards. Customs officials and police at roadblocks may make you unload and unpack every little package in order to delay you for hours. Unless one is up for an adventure, flying between West African countries is the safe and most reliable option.