

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

The Common Admission Test

Readers of *Not-So-Foreign* will remember the controversy that surrounded the Indian Common Admission Test (CAT) that exploded last year, when it was discovered that copies of the examination were leaked a day before the test date (see issue [2.34](#)). While this year's test saw 150,000 students competing for admission to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), there have been no indications so far that cheating has occurred. The tighter security and greater precaution at exam centers have been well-received; the IIMs in particular do not wish to see a repeat of last year's fiasco.

The desire to succeed in the CAT may drive some students to cheat, but other candidates prepare themselves by using coaching institutes, which often consists of a several month intensive program. Students believe that enrolling in such programs will prepare them for the 150 questions they face in the CAT. For their part, the institutes coach students on how to answer as many of the questions as possible.

According to one commentator however, the reliance on such institutes is an indication of a failed education system. Writing in the *Hindustan Times*, Aftab Khanna says, "there is something wrong with a system where people in their early twenties have to be taught to understand tenses and apply speed, distance and time formulas."

Source: "Forget the hype, bell the CAT," *Hindustan Times*, 24 November 2004.

OVER THE COUNTER

Universities Paying SEVIS Fee

Harvard University has joined a number of American institutions that have opted to cover the \$100 fee charged to international students, used to finance the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Many in the higher education community see the fee as an additional obstacle that international students have to overcome; one fear is that it simply reinforces the perception that the US is unfriendly to potential students.

It should be noted that in July 2004, the American Council on Education dropped a plan that would allow colleges to collect the fee from students. Other institutions that have indicated they will pay the fee for students include Yale University, University of Texas at Austin and Rice University.

Source: "Harvard foots bill to ease visa clearance," *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 26 November 2004.

THE PLAYING FIELD

UK To Try Retaining Foreign Students

The United Kingdom plans on hosting more foreign students at its universities, as the government looks to develop policies that "attract and retain" students. According to a Reuters report, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Home Office hope to deliver a proposal in the next few months that would focus on "shortage subjects;" international students with degrees in these subjects would be encouraged to remain and work in the UK.

This latest move indicates a growing awareness by the UK of the value international students offer *after* completing their studies. Likewise, the opportunities afforded to international students upon receiving their degree can play a role in their decision making process. By combining their international education marketing efforts with their labour policies, the UK stands to offer potential students a fuller "package." International students are already very pleased with their UK education experience; according to a survey report recently released by UKCOSA: The Council for International Education, 87 percent of the respondents (international students at the tertiary level) were "satisfied or very satisfied with their course."

Source: "UK needs more foreign workers," *Reuters UK*, 18 November 2004; "Broadening our horizons: international students in UK universities and colleges," *UKCOSA*, 29 November 2004.

GLOBE TIPPING

Upcoming Holiday Dates

As *Not-So-Foreign* as done in the past, the following are a list of some holidays and festivals that are observed overseas (in December and early 2005):

Hanukah: December 8 - 15
Orthodox New Year: January 14
Hajj: January 19 – January 22
Chinese New Year: February 9
Hijra (Islamic New Year): February 10

These observances may conflict with travel plans; businesses in some countries may be shut down completely.