

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

Scottish universities sign online deal

Five Scottish universities have signed a £2 million (U.S. \$ 3.8 million) deal to sell their degrees to Chinese students through Scotland's Interactive University (IU). The project between IU and the Foundation College of the China Scholarship Council, a department of the Chinese Ministry of Education will allow students of five Chinese universities to get online degrees from Heriot-Watt, Robert Gordon, Dundee, Stirling and Napier University.

Professor Roy Leitch, Chief Executive of IU told *The Scotsman* that "the venture would attract at least 5,000 students over a five-year period. They will pay an average of £4,000 (U.S. \$ 7,616) to take a degree, earning at least £2 million for Scotland's universities and the IU." Degrees in business and finance, management, science and engineering are predicted as popular student choices for the online degrees.

With the global market for e-learning pegged at £12.5 billion (U.S. \$ 23.8 billion), a number of Chinese and Scottish universities are expected to join the project in future. The Interactive University, which provides on-line education for over 90,000 students world-wide, was established in 2002 as a joint initiative between Heriot-Watt University and Scottish Enterprise, the national economic development agency.

Source:

[Scottish universities in online degrees deal.](#)
[The Scotsman, April 24, 2005](#)

OVER THE COUNTER

GCSE papers to be graded in India

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), one of the largest examination boards in the United Kingdom is sending its General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exam papers to India for marking, taking advantage of cheap labour costs. Examiners' salaries in India are a fifth of what they are in the U.K.

The board has signed a £2 million (U.S. \$ 3.8 million) contract for History, French, German and Italian papers to be assessed in India. Some half a million examination papers are to be graded in India.

Source:

[GCSE exam papers will be sent to India for marking.](#)
[The Telegraph, April 25, 2005](#)

THE PLAYING FIELD

Canada changes immigration policy for overseas students

In a bid to stay ahead in the competition for international students, Canada has introduced some major changes in its immigration policy. The new policy allows international students to work off-campus while studying and, transfer academic programs and institutions without having to change the status of their visas. Previously, international students were allowed to work for a year after completing their studies. The new rules allow these students to work for two years after graduation. However, jobs in the urban hubs of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver are off limits for them.

Yet by subsequent accounts from various sources, the details and timing of the actual implementation of this pronouncement have been far from well-thought-out. Amongst the uncertainties include: What will be the impact on the announcement details if the Federal Government falls in the near term? How long might it take provinces to negotiate the terms of the implementation within those provinces yet to have any such agreement? Will institutions have to pay a portion of administrative costs? In sum, from the perspective of prospective, existing and graduating international students, the announcement amounts to something grander than good intentions but well short of providing enough substance to make meaningful plans and decisions.

The announcement has also attracted attention, particularly in the United Kingdom and Australia, two countries that have long made recruitment of international students key planks in their respective international trade policies. See for example, the article published in *The Guardian*, link given below.

Source:

[Citizenship and Immigration Canada press release](#)

[Canada invites its overseas graduates to stay longer.](#)
[The Guardian, April 20, 2005](#)

GLOBE TIPPING

Quicker immigration clearance at Indian airports

A notification issued by the Government of India will make immigration clearance for passengers arriving on international flights an efficient and trouble-free process. According to the new mandate, all airline and shipping companies have to provide immigration authorities with passenger details within minutes of their departure from abroad. This will speed up the immigration paperwork and make checkouts faster for international travellers.