

THE PLAYING FIELD

Scotland's scheme to attract overseas students

Scotland's Fresh Talent Initiative has received a new lease on life, with the Scottish Government announcing that it will allow overseas students to live and work in Scotland for two years after completing their course without needing a work permit. According to the new directive, students graduating from Scottish colleges and universities with either a Higher National Diploma, a degree, a master's degree or a doctorate, will be eligible for the offer.

The Fresh Talent Initiative was an attempt to attract international students and immigrants to Scotland to overcome the dwindling population problem. However, early this year, barely a year after its launch, the Initiative suffered a setback from the British Government's immigration policies. Heads of Scottish colleges and varsities felt that the British Government's decision to increase visa fees would lead to a decrease in international students. Also, Scotland's academic fraternity accused the British Council of not promoting the Fresh Talent programme overseas.

However, the new directive is being viewed as a promising development by Scottish institutions. "We believe it will make a big difference to our recruitment, as it encourages students to gain additional experience here in Scotland, and also to earn some money as well, while contributing to the Scottish economy. Many students are keen to stay on after completing their studies, and this scheme now allows them to do so," explains Gordon Craig, Director, International Office, University of Dundee.

There have been reports of Scottish institutions pressurizing Britain's Home Office to reverse the student visa fee hike as it discourages international students from applying to Scottish institutions. Craig, on the other hand, does not anticipate any problems with immigration. "We do not envisage any major problems, although our colleagues in England are concerned that it gives Scottish universities an unfair advantage. Students will choose a Scottish university because of this scheme. While that is true, we have excellent universities in Scotland, and our demographics require such a scheme to encourage more people to come and stay in Scotland."

Source: "[Foreign students wooed to fill work gap.](#)"
[The Scotsman, June 17, 2005](#)

GLOBE TIPPING

Advance booking for Singapore travel required

With Singapore hosting the "Great Singapore Sale" between May 27 and July 24, 2005, it has become increasingly difficult for ordinary travelers to get hotel rooms without paying a premium. It is a good idea to book your tickets and accommodation well in advance with firm itineraries as late check-outs and early check-ins can attract full room rates.

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

Opinion Poll on British universities

Research conducted by British company, Opinionpanel, has revealed factors that give some British universities an edge over their competitors. The research has been conducted using a survey of the perceptions and preferences of 10,000 undergraduates. The sample of 10,000 first-year students have ranked leading British universities on categories such as academic reputation, teaching quality, campus facilities and location. Perception of staff helpfulness was also one of the areas students were asked to rank universities on. While around 80 per cent of the students were attracted by an inviting campus atmosphere, 72 per cent were inclined towards universities' performance in the league tables. The older universities such as Oxford, Cambridge ranked among the top ten institutions in most categories. Among other institutions, Strathclyde University was perceived as an institution with excellent courses, employment prospects and as an "affordable" place to study at. The University of Wales, Bangor, was ranked for its helpful administration, while Warwick University's campus was a big draw with students.

Source: "[Happy campus tops wish list.](#)"
[Times Higher Education Supplement, June 17, 2005](#)

OVER THE COUNTER

Sydney coaching colleges in cheating scandal

The New South Wales (NSW) Government is investigating reports that over 200 Higher School Certificate students have paid their tutors thousands of dollars to write their assignments. A tutoring agency accused of helping students fake schoolwork is currently under the NSW Board of Studies scanner in connection with the cheating scandal.

According to the Australian Tutoring Association, cheating is rampant among many high school students who often try to buy their way into university, and there are many tutoring colleges that help students with their Higher School Certificate course work assessments in return for huge sums of money. According to the NSW Board of Studies, students found guilty of cheating will have their Higher School Certificates revoked.

Source: "[Coaching colleges accused of cheating.](#)"
[Sydney Morning Herald, June 21, 2005](#)