

THE PLAYING FIELD

Scramble for university places in UK

There is a mad rush for university places in the UK this year with students trying to avoid the £ 3000 (US \$ 5, 518) top-up fees that will be introduced from 2006 onwards. According to media reports, around 25,000 more British students have applied for a university place this year than last year. The Government, however, has provided funds for only 11,000 extra full-time places, of which more than half are for foundation degrees or access courses. The figure also includes additional postgraduate places.

Given these figures, there is bound to be a shortage of seats at British varsities. According to the British admission system, students with good grades are able to get confirmed seats at universities while those with average grades have to resort to the clearing system offered by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) where unplaced students are matched with vacant places at universities. With the increase in the number of applicants, universities will have fewer vacancies left for clearing. At Birmingham University for instance, where applications are up 10 per cent, they are likely to be available in the less popular disciplines, such as engineering and languages.

Source: ["Threat of top-up fees causes scramble for university places."](#)
August 13, 2005, *The Telegraph*

GLOBE TIPPING

Indian Airlines' ticket scheme

Indian Airlines has introduced a new promotion scheme "IA Net Utsav" providing incentives to the passengers. An airlines release stated that the incentives would be provided to passengers who booked tickets online through the Airlines' website and travelling against "Netickets" in Bangalore/Mumbai/Bangalore, Delhi/Bangalore/Delhi and Delhi/Mumbai/Delhi sectors.

"A passenger who performs eight one-way travels and obtains eight boarding cards on any of the above six sectors, travelling against the tickets between August 30 and October 25, 2005 is entitled to one free return ticket (two coupons) on any sector of the Indian Airlines network from India to the Middle East or Far East," the release said. A bonus of 8,000 frequent flyer promotion mileage points would be offered at the end of the scheme period, in addition to normal mileage points on the above sectors. The award ticket can be availed of by the passenger or it can serve as a gift to any person nominated by the passenger. The travel against inst the award ticket has to be completed on or before March 31, 2006, the release added.

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

French universities charging high fees

French universities have been facing flak with the release of a report by the France's national student union body, the *Union Nationale des étudiants de France* (UNEF). The report claims that French university students are increasingly being asked to pay fees that exceed official limits. The report examines the fee structures of 76 universities in France, pointing out that 61 per cent of institutes required students to pay fees ranging from less than 500 Euro (US \$ 622) to 3,500 Euro (US \$ 4,354).

While most universities follow the fee limit, two universities have been charging prices that compete with or even surpass British fees. The Pierre Mendes University in Grenoble charges over 1,200 Euro (US \$ 1,493) in additional fees, and the University of Aix-Marseille charges some students as much as 3,500 Euro (US \$ 4,354). With France being reputed for its tradition of "free university access for all," this development reflects the mounting financial pressures faced by French varsities leading them to augment their income through high tuition fees.

Source: ["Costly admissions."](#)
August 5, 2005, *The Guardian*

OVER THE COUNTER

US private varsity degrees invalid, says Kenyan government

The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) has announced that Newport International University (NIU) has no authority to award degrees in Kenya. Over two hundred degrees awarded in Kenya by the American private varsity have been declared invalid by the Commission.

According to media reports, CHE has indicated that NIU failed to secure accreditation from the CHE or an American accreditation body, and had been previously warned to suspend its operations until it got accreditation. The government will not recognise programmes from Newport, and graduates will not be able to use their qualifications to apply for further studies.

Source: ["Private Varsity Degrees Bogus, Declares State."](#)
August 19, 2005, *AllAfrica*