

OVERSEAS OVERWHELMED

LET'S GO CANADA

Successful Promotion Of Education

Why has Australia had immense success in promoting its education overseas? Tony Crooks, Executive Director of the Australian Education Office in Washington, D.C., points to the various aspects that are appealing to international students. First, ensuring high standards of quality and support services for students is a priority. Second, as one of the most multicultural countries in the world, international students can easily fit into Australian society, while other students and providers are already sensitive to the international student dynamic. Third, students from Asia are attracted by the high standard of living, as well as lower tuition costs, compared to other countries.

In the past decade, Australia has already overtaken the US and the UK to become the number one choice for students from several Asian countries (Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, to name a few).

ABROAD PERSPECTIVE

Changes In The Middle East

Whether you call it "liberalisation," "modernisation," or just "improvement," countries in the Middle East and Gulf Region are experiencing various degrees of change in their respective education systems. In late December 2003, the Kuwaiti Minister of Education suggested that academic texts should contain Islamic teachings, but should restrain from encouraging "aggressive initiatives," as part of an effort to reduce Islamic militancy.

Syria also announced in December that it was withdrawing its military presence from higher education institutions, where students had previously undergone mandatory military training. The country opened its university system earlier in 2003 by allowing private universities to be established (as reported in [Overseas, Overwhelmed 3.27](#)).

Source: "Kuwait to liberalise school texts," *BBC News*, 29 December 2003; "Syria Will Withdraw Soldiers, and Military Training, From University Campuses," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5 December 2003.

OVER THE COUNTER

A-Levels Vs. IB

The British Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) recently released a study that examined the International Baccalaureate and the A-level qualifications. By focusing on exam material from four subjects (math, chemistry, English literature and history), the report found that "A level and IB examinations were comparable in the demands they placed on the candidate at the level of the individual subject" (at page 9). Those who participated in the study agreed that the grades A and E awarded in the A-levels were comparable to 7 and 4 awarded in the IB.

One of the limitations that the QCA faced was in the different ways in which each system is structured. The IB Diploma is awarded to students, usually between 16 and 18, who complete a set of compulsory components. The A-levels, on the other hand, are "single-subject qualifications awarded for demonstrating sufficient attainment against defined objectives" (at p. 12) and are more commonly taken by students of wider age range.

The full report is available online at <http://www.qca.org.uk/news/6369.html>.

Source: "Report on Comparability between GCE and International Baccalaureate Examinations," Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, December 2003.

GLOBE TIPPING

International Airport Tips - Shanghai

Our Grace Huang is on hand to give these useful tips when arriving at Shanghai Pudong International Airport. As the airport is some distance from the city center, she recommends that travelers looking for quick access to the city to use the new Maglev (magnetic levitation) train. For 75 yuan, the trip takes 8 minutes, arriving at the Longyang subway station. The train leaves the airport every 20 minutes, from 9:43am to 5:43pm. The airport bus, while much cheaper (around 15 yuan) can take up to 40 minutes, while the taxi is the most expensive option, costing about 150 yuan. If in transit in Pudong, there are numerous restaurants, shops and business centres, including wireless Internet access at the Starbucks café.