

Hong Kong country partnership meeting

Friday 28 September 2007

10.00 a.m. – 2.30 p.m.

British Council, Spring Gardens, London

Chair, John Quirk, International Recruitment and Relations Office of University of Liverpool

AGENDA

- 10.00 Registration and welcome
- 10.15 Market trends and issues: presentation by Katherine Forestier, and discussion.
- 11.15. Break
- 11.30 Hong Kong students: their opinion of UK education, by Simon [Bush](#) of i-Graduate
- 12.15 Our service and marketing activities and plans. Presentation by Katherine Forestier, and discussion
- 13.15 Lunch
- 14.30 Partnership meeting ends
- 14.40 Focus group meeting on EUKP menu of services, hosted by market research company Accelerator
- 16.00 Focus group meeting ends.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION POINTS

[A] Market trends and issues

HK-UK exam equivalences

Katherine Forestier revealed that she has taken up the issue of the equivalences between HK and GCE public exam with NARIC (the UK's National Recognition Information Centre). NARIC looked at the grading distribution and has concluded that an HK paper of comparable academic standard is as much as two grades higher than a GCSE and A-level.

The NARIC findings will be useful for partner institutions to recruit suitable students. Katherine confirmed that EUKP Hong Kong will do more research on this, comparing grades of students who sit both sets of exams, as happens at A-level, and tracking performance between HKCEE and UK A-levels.

After discussion on the floor, John suggested it would be best to get the updates / clarifications uploaded on the market intelligence page before 15 January 2008 i.e. UCAS application deadline.

Katherine is now liaising with UCAS and Naric on the final wording of revisions to the qualifications equivalencies for both the UCAS guide to international qualifications and for the country partner website. We hope this can be completed and members informed of the final outcome by end of October 2007.

University foundation programmes

Katherine raised the issue of the increasing trend for institutions to admit students graduating from Form Five (HKCEEs) onto one-year foundation programmes. Practice on this varies, with one member whose institution does giving assurance that HK students are proving academically capable of this route. Others prefer higher entry points, in particular a minimum of graduation from Form Six. Flexibility is likely to continue. This is an issue that EUKP will remain alert to in terms of the study experience of HK students.

Education reform – alternative entry test for UK universities and wider implications for admissions

Katherine outlined how she sees the opportunities and challenges presented by HK's education reforms to stimulate thinking of the partner institutions. After the reform, all students can finish secondary school (it is expected more than 30,000 students will qualify) and take the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) instead of the HKCEE and HKALE. However, there will still be around 14,500 publicly funded university places in Hong Kong for them to compete. Alternatives are available for students who do not have sufficient grades for university including associate degrees and foundation programmes.

There will be implications that need addressing for admission to UK universities once admission tutors can no longer use post-16 public exams (HKCEE) as a predictor for the final matriculation grades. Katherine suggested that UK admission tests being developed for home students, such as the Cambridge Critical Thinking Test, could be used. The US's SAT, which many HK students sit, was put forward as an alternative. Universities are already admitting students from the Singaporean system based on one final matriculation exam. Katherine would like to learn more about this in order to develop our response to the new HK system. **She will follow up with the relevant international officer and report back to members next year in an e-newsletter.**

Katherine was asked why, after the reforms, HK students completing the HKDSE should not be expected to complete a one-year foundation programme prior to university entry. Katherine reiterated the message from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority that the new HKDSE would be equivalent to UK A-levels at its upper levels and that the HKEAA was working with Cambridge Assessment to ensure this. It is also consulting universities in the UK and elsewhere on standards and is determined Hong Kong will keep its lead in terms of achievement in maths and sciences in particular. HK students who would otherwise complete A-levels will be getting one less year of formal schooling than at present. But in terms of age they will be the same age as the English counterparts (18). Currently they are one year older. Under the new system, there will be 12 years of free formal education, starting at age six, rather than 13 (starting at 5) in England. But pre-school education in HK is academically more intensive than the UK equivalent, particularly in maths, which will ensure that HK students will not have had less education than those in the UK. The Education Bureau also argues that only a few weeks of teaching and learning time will be lost under the new system, because of the time currently spent on two sets of examinations. Improvements in teaching at all levels are expected to ensure improved learning outcomes on the current system.

Student exchange - Scholarship for Excellence DVD

Hong Kong universities are now redesigning their curricula for the four-year degree. They aim to strengthen their collaborative links with university in the west and mainland to achieve HK's internationalisation agenda. Universities want more international students on campus including UK

students (although availability of accommodation has since been raised as a limiting factor. Universities are calling on the government to address this.) We have been commissioned by the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to operate the Scholarships for Excellence programme to encourage UK students to study on exchange in Hong Kong, with 9 new scholarships awarded for 2007-08 following the 17 awarded for 2006-07

In March 2007 there were a total of 125 UK students studying at Hong Kong universities.

We have recently created a DVD showcasing the UK exchange students' study and social life in Hong Kong. Please contact us by email at educationuk.partnership@britishcouncil.org.hk if you would like a copy.

International staff exchange

Katherine stated that Hong Kong universities want to learn from UK universities international work and have suggested exchange of staff involved in this area. This could be a real benefit for both parties by setting up a work shadowing/exchange scheme in this area, enabling the UK staff to better understand the HK market and developments in education. Please contact us at educationuk.partnership@britishcouncil.org.hk if you are interested in this initiative.

We will gather information from HK institutions, such as aims of exchange, preferred timing, etc and present this to members by the **end of November**.

International study experience for HK university students

All HK universities are now planning how to give their students an international study experience after 2012, with provision already being increased. We plan to organise an institutional visit to universities for you to discuss potential collaborations. This could include summer schools, exchanges and internship opportunities, for example. If you are interested please e-mail educationuk.partnership@britishcouncil.org.hk

To ensure these visits are productive, HK institutions may select institutions from those applying which they would like to meet.

[B] EUKP services and marketing activities and plans

Ideas on research/market intelligence

Delegates suggested building up research and market intelligence on two fronts – summer programme and employability. Further feedback is welcome.

Ideas for EUKP services

School visits The issue of organising group school visits was discussed. Partner institutions would welcome British Council to coordinate a group school visit programme in Hong Kong. This was discussed with Arlene Griffiths after the meeting. We agree that we will provide logistical support to group visits by country partners as a free service, as long as the visits are aimed at promoting UK education in general and depending on availability of staff. The visit organised by Edinburgh in October will be a pilot for this. After the visit we will seek feedback on how to develop this as a more systematic country service for next year.

Pre-departure meetings A number of delegates suggested EUKP invite partner institutions to participate in British Council organised pre-departure briefing sessions for the next recruitment year. We will

evaluate the feasibility of this, including a funding format.

Further response is welcome from partners who were not able to attend the meeting.

60th anniversary of British Council Hong Kong with 60 alumni

We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of British Council Hong Kong with 60 alumni. The 60 nominated alumni will be involved in most of our events for the year, profiled in an exhibition at the Council as well as our 60th anniversary website.

All of the nominated alumni were informed by the 60th anniversary project team individually by the end of September.

Partner institutions asked to know whether their alumni had been selected prior to the launch in January, for their own marketing purposes. We will recommend this to the manager of Celebration 60.

Presentation by Simon Bush, Consultant of i-Graduate on HK ISB 2007

Simon Bush presentation was very enlightening on the decision making and satisfaction of HK students studying in the UK. It was based on 833 responses, from students in 36 universities. The presentation cannot be uploaded because the full results are available to i-Graduate customers only.

But several findings and issues in general can be summarised:

1. It confirmed that a higher proportion of HK students are recruited directly from the UK than the ISB average.
2. That the key influencers are a. parents; b. teachers/tutors; c. league tables. League tables featured particularly prominently for HK students, confirming HKBC's understanding that this is the case. More needs to be done to educate potential students and parents on the uses and limitations of league tables.
3. Overall they are less happy with the use of agents than the average.
4. What is the most important in HK students' decision to choose university (in descending order): parents; teachers/ tutor in their schools; league tables
5. On arrival and orientation, HK ratings are lower than average.
6. On learning experience, HK students are more difficult to please than the average
7. What's important to HK students: internet access (they are tech savvy); safety; good teachers; accommodation value; living cost; transport links; course content; library; expert lecturers.
8. What they are most satisfied with: expert lecturers; academic's English; worship facilities; international office; flexibility.
9. What they are most dissatisfied with: financial support, catering.

The overall message was that HK students are relatively hard to please. We thank Simon very much for sharing these findings with us.

Feedback

Feedback to the meeting has been positive and thank you for your comments of encouragement and how we can further improve.

Finally, we thank you all for attending!

Katherine Forestier
October 11, 2007