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**NAFSA Annual Conference: Shaping the Future of International Higher Education**  
Washington D.C.

**Note to readers:**  
**Bold text within articles are hyperlinks**

The next issue of International Focus will be published on Wednesday 09 April 2008

**Debating the obstacles to engaging with India**

The desire of UK universities to collaborate in teaching and research with the Indian HE sector is increasingly reciprocated. There is a recognition in India that doing business with counterparts abroad is a necessity. The level of transnational education (TNE) activity inside India, however, is tiny in relation to the size of the sector. Indians agree that they have far to travel in HE reform and that regulatory and quality issues must be resolved before collaborative work can take off.

Two conferences in India last week highlighted the vibrancy of that country's public debate on how to raise its game in international higher education. But there is profound disagreement at the political level as to how much foreign activity is appropriate – or even consistent with the basic need to increase domestic enrolments (the GER is only 11%, though higher in the south). Hence, there is a striking juxtaposition of clarity of diagnosis and lack of expectation that problems will soon be resolved.

The **EDGE 2008 conference** in Delhi was organised by **Manipal Education** and other Indian public and private HE institutions, the **Institute of International Education** in New York, **Commonwealth Business Council Academy** and **U21Global**.

Issues discussed at this event were the need for thousands more skilled faculty, the tension between inclusivity and the need for exclusivity and excellence, the unemployability (in the eyes of Indian industry and the AICTE) of 70-75% of university graduates, the lack of financial autonomy for public HEIs and consequent constraints on innovation, the inability of public HEIs to recruit and retain staff because of rigid pay constraints (a Senior Research Fellowship pays Rs9,000 per month – not enough, even in India, for one night in a top hotel), the need to attract international students, the lack of transparency from overlapping regulatory bodies and their inability to cope with the explosion in private provision, and the need to understand that market forces and political control in HE were not mutually exclusive futures: both have a place.

The Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister (responsible for HE and not a champion of internationalisation) released the **EDGE Vision document**. This set of statements, by Indian and international stakeholders, encapsulates the above concerns and lays down the gauntlet to the **HRD Ministry**.

Mechanisms for effective quality assurance (QA) in TNE constituted the more-focused theme of a subsequent **UKIERI-organised event** in Chennai. Presentations by QA practitioners from India, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and the US are on the **website**. Arising from the discussions (which included passionate anecdotal evidence from Indian academics) were some consistent outputs.

These included financial autonomy and higher fees for public institutions. But the fundamental need was for a 'national qualifications framework' by which collaborative international engagement can be both solicited and regulated. It had been noted that India's 27 regulatory bodies for HE, which were created on a responsive and *ad hoc* basis to meet needs as they became evident at both federal and state levels, have resulted in confusion for prospective foreign partners. Indeed, during the discussions it remained unclear whether foreign universities operating without formal approval of QA bodies such as the **AICTE** were doing so legally. Participants from all countries agreed that QA regimes need to focus on nurturing institutions rather than punitive actions.

For its part, the AICTE insisted that there are no constraints whatsoever on international collaborations with Indian public-funded institutions. It noted that an insufficient number of 'desirable' universities were operating in India and that it had modified its regulations for technical education twice in recent years in response to foreign 'fly-by-nighters' which had no interest in raising the standards of the Indian HE sector.

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## Recruitment

**Interactive guide to Welsh universities launched**

The **Wales International Consortium (WIC)** launched a new online **Guide to Higher Education in Wales** at 'The International University: A View from Wales' conference on 28 February.

The 'eBook' offers information to prospective students on all 12 higher education institutions in Wales. Featuring picture galleries, the Guide provides a virtual tour of each institution, including profiles of current international students and alumni views on their courses, universities and Wales more generally.



A key feature is an interactive course matrix enabling users to search for their preferred academic subjects anywhere in Wales. It also features a geographical guide to Wales which highlights the regions in which the universities are located.

The Guide was designed by WIC and the technology developed by **i-student advisor** which has created guides for **Canada, Australia** and the **US**.

Virginia West, Director of WIC, said, 'It offers an exciting opportunity to replace postal distribution of guides and prospectuses with a version that can be accessed over the internet in a matter of seconds, offering cost savings to WIC and instant access for the user.'

**Welcome to Canada – land of the BlackBerry**

Pub-quiz aficionados aside, few people are aware that the ubiquitous BlackBerry is a Canadian invention, and it is a knowledge gap the federal government is keen to remedy. The handheld device – a highly visible example of the country's technological prowess – is to play a role in the Canadian government's attempt to boost international student recruitment. The government has announced a new 'fun' publicity campaign to win back its share of the international student market after the country slipped from 5th to 14th place as a destination.

Canada has the most highly decentralised education system in the developed world. Without a federal education ministry, it lacks a co-ordinated approach to international promotion. Federal policy-makers believe this puts Canada at a disadvantage on the international stage. In a **united publicity effort**, prospective students are invited to 'Come to Canada, [and] invent the next BlackBerry.' The new campaign will work in tandem with Vanier Scholarships aimed at attracting the top foreign and domestic doctoral students. The federal government has pledged \$25 million over two years to fund annual scholarships of up to \$50,000, that it hopes will rival the prestigious **Rhodes** and **Fulbright** scholarships offering study in the UK and the US.

Meanwhile, **new census numbers** released last week by Statistics Canada, show that 32% of the population born outside Canada hold a university degree. That figure jumps to 51% for those who came to Canada between 2001 and 2006. At doctoral-level, 49% of all Canadians who hold a PhD are immigrants. 40% of those educated to masters-level are immigrants.

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of Canadians who graduated from university surged 24% to almost four million, rating sixth among industrialised countries. 23% of Canadian adults aged 25-64 have a university degree. Once college figures are added to this total, Canada's post-secondary attainment is 48%, outperforming all other countries in the OECD.

**Nottingham increases academic capacity at China campus**

**The University of Nottingham Ningbo, China**

An increasingly apparent dynamic in HE internationalisation is the challenge posed by transnational education to traditional overseas recruitment.

One example comes from **The University of Nottingham Ningbo, China**, which plans to appoint 35 new academic posts in response to a growing demand from students seeking a British university degree in mainland China.

Academic posts are being advertised in the fields of business, finance, accounting, economics, marketing, engineering, computer science, sustainable development, international communications, international studies, cultural studies and languages.

The University of Nottingham campus in Ningbo, south of Shanghai, already has some 2,800 full-time students, and numbers are set to increase by 30% at the start of the new academic year to around 3,700. Completed in 2005, it was the first campus established by a foreign university inside China and is a full and integral part of The University of Nottingham.

The university is also helping to foster research and industry links between China and the UK. This year sees the opening of the **Centre for Sustainable Energy Technology** on the campus, which will specialise in research to help meet the building and energy challenges of the 21st century. Last year saw the opening of the **Centre for Global Finance** which is undertaking research in areas of importance to the development and reform of China's financial sector.

## Markets & Intelligence

### Bridging the gap from York to Bahrain

Highly qualified research academics in **Bahrain** are learning how to become better teachers and pass on their knowledge through a programme to develop quality teaching practice facilitated by **York St John University**. The first cohort of participants has now received its official certification.



York St John's Vice-Chancellor Professor Dianne Willcocks presents PCAP course participant Dr Hessa Al-Junaid with certification.

York St John's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dianne Willcocks, has just returned from a trip to the **University of Bahrain** where she awarded the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP) to that cohort. The University of Bahrain is the only public university in Bahrain and is one of the longest standing in the Gulf, with over 20,000 students.

The PCAP programme, accredited by the **Higher Education Academy** (HEA) enables staff at the University of Bahrain to bring their teaching skills up to date and become proficient in current teaching practices.

The programme comprises three visits to Bahrain a year by York St John staff to deliver a week of sessions, alongside ongoing support for participants by distance-learning using the virtual learning environment, WebCT and email. Participants are also allocated a locally-based mentor to support their studies throughout the course.

### Australian VC calls for mergers to boost rankings

**University of Canberra** Vice-Chancellor, Professor Stephen Parker, **has called for** leading research universities to be merged in order to achieve cost savings across the higher education sector and to lift Australian universities to the top of the world rankings.

Professor Parker argued that combining, for example, the **University of Melbourne** with **Monash University** would propel an Australian institution into the top flight of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University World Rankings. Currently, the country's highest ranked university is the **Australian National University** (ANU) at 57th.

He also suggested that merging older, more established universities would stop funding being deflected away from younger universities where it is needed most. The funding shortages are currently being felt in Western Australia despite the region's economic boom. As is the case everywhere, universities are unable to compete with rising private sector salaries and are struggling to recruit highly skilled academics.

Professor Parker's comments challenge a recent speech by ANU Vice-Chancellor, Ian Chubb, who called for funding to reflect an individual university's performance both domestically and internationally.

Professor Chubb said, 'The best performers shouldn't continue to be held back in the hope that others will catch up if resources were deflected to them, or spread thinly, for long enough. Holding back is a recipe for levelling down.'

### Applications call for Women in Science Fellowships

Applications are invited for the 2008 L'Oreal UK and Ireland Fellowships for Women in Science. The Fellowships promote and encourage the role and achievements of women pursuing their research careers in the UK or Ireland in the life or physical sciences.

Four Fellowships of £15,000 are available to any UK or Irish university or research institute to support a 12-month period of research.

Further information, including eligibility criteria and application details, can be found **HERE**.

### Pre-university programmes offer Sri Lankan students UK degree options

Students in **Sri Lanka** can now access undergraduate programmes in the UK thanks to a new collaborative venture.



The **Northern Consortium UK** (NCUK), a university pathway programme provider for international students, has signed up with **ANC**, a private-sector higher education provider in Sri Lanka. Part of the Ceylinco Educational Group, ANC already provides degree transfer programmes with universities in both the USA and Australia. The agreement with NCUK is the company's first venture in the UK.

NCUK is owned by 11 UK universities including Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool and has twenty years of experience in delivering pathway programmes on behalf of its owner universities.

The NCUK programmes will be on offer at a Colombo campus and will include the NCUK International Foundation Year which prepares and qualifies students for entry to appropriate first-year undergraduate programmes. In addition, NCUK International Diploma courses, which are equivalent to the first year of a UK undergraduate degree, will prepare students for direct entry to year two. Subject areas on offer include business, engineering and computer sciences. Successful students will have a choice of more than 200 degrees at the partner universities in the UK.

The first Sri Lankan students are expected to begin NCUK courses at Colombo this September with transfer onto UK degree programmes in September 2009.

## Markets & Intelligence

### Saudi Higher Education: home and away

Saudi Arabia's long-standing dream of developing a 'world class' research university took a massive step forward last week with the announcement that three prestigious American universities had signed agreements to develop the new **King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)**, due to open in autumn 2008.

Under the **agreements**, the mechanical engineering department at **Berkeley**, the computer-science department and Institute for Computational and Mathematical Engineering at **Stanford**, and the Institute for Computational Engineering and Sciences at the **University of Texas** will identify and train faculty, and develop KAUST's science curriculum. It is believed each university will receive around \$25 million over the next five years. The **University of Texas** said it would receive \$10 million for research collaborations at Austin, \$5 million for research collaborations at the KAUST campus, \$10 million for fellowships for students and faculty participating in the project and about \$2 million for operations.

Although many in the US have welcomed the agreements, pointing to long-term strategic benefits between the American and Saudi HE sectors, others are less comfortable. Critics point to concerns about academic freedom and discrimination. For example, Israelis are not welcome in the Kingdom, a potentially tricky situation given that all three universities have Israeli faculty.

The universities themselves argue they have addressed issues of academic and personal freedom, although **when interviewed by the New York Times**, a spokesman from Stanford appeared to side-step the issue. "We have several Israeli faculty involved with this, but to be honest, there's very little of what Stanford will be doing that will involve travel to Saudi Arabia," said Peter Glynn, Director of the Stanford institute.

Others argue the universities risk damage to their reputations at home by cheapening the brand overseas. One unnamed engineering professor at Berkeley **told the San Francisco Chronicle**: 'It is like we are selling our name for the new university to be able to say, "We have Berkeley-class faculty".'

KAUST has already announced partnerships with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, the Institut Français du Pétrole, the National University of Singapore, the American University of Cairo, the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and others. On Monday, Imperial

College London signed a new partnership agreement with KAUST (**see page 7**).

Elsewhere in the Kingdom, the Saudi Arabian national research and development organisation and IBM Research announced an agreement in February to establish the Nanotechnology Centre of Excellence at the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology in the capital, Riyadh. The announcement is part of a wider programme of investment in nanotechnology institutes at universities across the Kingdom.

**According to science magazine, SciDevNet**, the King Abdullah Institute for Nanotechnology will open by mid-2008 at the King Saud University in Riyadh. Prof Theodor Hänsch of the Max Planck Institute in Munich — winner of the 2005 Nobel Prize in physics — will be a visiting professor, as part of the university's 'Nobel laureates Programme.' Two other nanotechnology institutes are also planned, for King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah and the King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals in Riyadh.



Construction progresses on the KAUST campus, March 01, 2008

While the Saudi HE system appears to be gaining strength at home, there are concerns abroad. The Kingdom had **recently announced a number of initiatives** to boost the numbers of Saudis studying overseas, but last month the Saudi embassy in Australia announced it was taking the unprecedented step to limit numbers in an attempt to curb the 'radicalisation' of Saudi students in the country.

In future, Saudi students will not be allowed to make up more than 1% of the total student population at any Australian campus. The Saudi embassy's move followed

**revelations in The Australian** newspaper that Saudis studying at **La Trobe University** and other institutions wanted lectures to be rescheduled to fit in with prayer timetables and to separate male and female eating and recreational areas on campuses.

**In an interview with The Australian**, Ameer Ali, an advisor to the previous Australian government, welcomed the move. 'Radicalisation is already taking place in this country,' Mr Ali said, 'so I think it's a good measure by the cultural mission not to allow them to congregate in one place because they are coming from a very orthodox, conservative Islamic background. It's better to scatter them, so that they can acclimatise to the general environment of this country and mix with others.' Dr Ali also said Australian universities should not fall into the trap of selling their values to accommodate international students in the name of revenue: 'The problem is that universities, in their search for money, are prepared to concede to the demands of the customer.'

# In Focus: Points-based immigration



## Do points mean prizes?

On 29 February the first part of the UK's new points-based immigration system came into operation. This new system is part of a wider and ambitious programme of reform of the much-criticised UK immigration and asylum system. The UK's points system borrows heavily from the Australian system but with some UK-specific twists.

The new system has major implications for UK universities as recruiters of international students, employers of international staff and hosts of visiting international staff. This breadth and depth of activity means that universities will be the largest volume users of the new system, although small in absolute numbers compared to an estimated 60,000 organisations that are likely to wish to bring in migrants to the UK.

The new system has five tiers:

- Tier 1 – highly skilled (replacing Highly Skilled Migrants Programme)
- Tier 2 – skilled workers with a job offer (replacing Work Permits)
- Tier 3 – limited numbers of low skilled workers
- Tier 4 – students
- Tier 5 – youth mobility and temporary workers

For each tier, applicants will need sufficient points to obtain a visa and points will be awarded according to criteria around issues such as funds, qualifications, compliance and in some cases English language ability. Migrants will also need to provide a 'certificate of sponsorship' from an organisation on a new sponsor register. The migrant will use that number to obtain their visa.

Tier 1 (highly-skilled migrants) came into operation on 29 February and over the next year the rest of the system will begin operation with Tiers 2 and 5 expected in October 2008 and Tier 4 (students) as the final phase in February 2009.

Many aspects of the new system are to be welcomed:

- Student visas linked to a specific education institution
- Recognition through the sponsorship arrangements that universities are in the best position to judge academic suitability
- Better information on the progress of people through the immigration system
- Greater use of online processes
- The new 'Post Study Work' category within the highly-skilled Tier that will allow international graduates to apply to stay in the UK for up to two years after graduation

A number of concerns remain however, and Universities UK is pressing the Home Office for further discussions to resolve these concerns. We are concerned about the following aspects:

- There has been no opportunity for the higher education sector, the largest users of the new system, to provide input into the development of the new IT system. We must be able to ensure that our student records systems can 'talk' to the new Home Office system. Otherwise we will be forced down the inefficient and insecure route of duplicating data entry.
- All universities agree with the principles of reporting on their international students and staff in terms of compliance with the immigration rules. However, we must aim to ensure that data returns required by the Home Office align to those required by other parts of Government. Otherwise the better regulation agenda is ignored and universities are forced to operate a series of processes on different timescales rather than a single timescale.
- Consultation recently closed on changes to the visitor route including academic visitors but we still do not have full information on the proposals for Tier 5, the tier that might offer a route for some visiting

international staff. The draft proposals for Tier 5 are inappropriate and could create needless bureaucracy for universities by insisting all visiting staff have to seek sponsorship from a third party organisation and not from their universities. This seems very strange when universities are willing to sponsor these people and will be sponsoring thousands of students and permanent staff. It will be less secure as the third party organisation would have to monitor these people but would not be physically located near them unlike the universities.

- We still await information on the communication activities to support the implementation of the new system. In particular, it is vital that communications are put in place overseas, involving embassies, high commissions and the British Council to ensure prospective students and staff and their sponsors are not deterred by the new system.

Even if adjustments are made to the proposals it is still likely to be a bumpy ride over the next few years as all parties involved – prospective migrants, organisations and the immigration service – learn to navigate the new system.

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# In Focus: Cardiff University and China



## Cardiff's Chinese engagement

Cardiff University's association with China goes back several decades, to a time when few other western institutions had such links. As the City of Cardiff established its own twinning links with the city of Xiamen in the early 1980s, the university set up a Chinese Studies Centre to promote interest in the country.

As China opened its doors over the next two decades, Cardiff's links grew stronger. The country now plays a key role in the university's campus life and international activity. Chinese nationals are employed as academics at the university's many specialist research centres. These include the Chinese Accounting Finance and Business Research Unit at Cardiff Business School, and the Urban China Research Centre at the School of City and Regional Planning. The university has more than 600 Chinese students — its largest overseas contingent.

Many of Cardiff's former Chinese students have returned to successful careers in China. Professor Zhong Binglin, a Cardiff Engineering PhD is now President of **Beijing Normal University** and a former Director General of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education (MoE), during which time he reformed teaching in the nation's universities. He has recently been appointed as the Cardiff University's first-ever International Vice-President.

Cardiff has remained at the forefront of the Chinese Government's efforts to reform higher education, providing input for the Chinese MoE on the development of a group of universities of global renown. The university was selected, along with other partners, to deliver a training course for Vice-Presidents from leading Chinese institutions.

In addition to this, the School of City and Regional Planning has been training Masters students under an arrangement with the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design for more than 20

years. The School advised the Academy on the drawing up the China National Spatial Plan to regulate the country's phenomenal rate of growth.

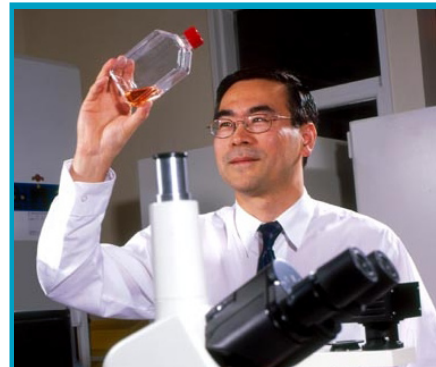
The International Symposium on Chinese Accounting Finance and Management was hosted by the Business School in Cardiff in June 2006. Delegates from the UK, China and the US discussed new methods of financial control developing in the transition from a state-owned economy to one of the largest capital markets in the world. The Cardiff Advanced Chinese Engineering Centre, under Professor Fred Williams, has made research agreements with several Chinese universities.

The Chinese connection has been strengthened in recent years by a number of official visits led by the Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff University, Dr David Grant. The most recent saw collaborative agreements signed with two leading Chinese medical schools. Both built on previous joint work, on lung cancer with Peking University and on breast cancer with Capital Medical University.

Both agreements involve Professor Wen Jiang of the School of Medicine at Cardiff. Formerly a promising young surgeon at China's top university hospital, Professor Jiang came to Cardiff for one year's study – and has stayed ever since. Now Professor of Surgery and Tumour Biology at the School of Medicine, and head of the Metastasis and Angiogenesis Research Group, he leads a team of scientists and clinicians looking at how and why cancer spreads and how to stop it. He has maintained his links with China over the years and is particularly keen to help colleagues there to tackle lung cancer, which has developed into the nation's biggest killer.

The 25th anniversary of the Cardiff-Xiamen link was marked with the establishment of two scholarships, funded by the university and Cardiff City Council, to allow Xiamen students to study Master's programmes in Cardiff. The School of City and Regional Planning is now helping **Xiamen University** to establish a similar department. Xiamen's President Zhu Chongsi has

agreed to become an honorary fellow at Cardiff and will be welcomed to the university this July.



*Professor Wen Jiang of the School of Medicine at Cardiff University, has been key in building research links with China.*

Most notably, the two universities have established the Cardiff Confucius Institute for the teaching of language and culture. Just opened at Cardiff's Centre for Lifelong Learning, and endorsed by the Chinese Language Council International, the Institute will offer courses and help to individuals and organisations across Wales looking to build strong Chinese links of their own. Professor Siyi Fu, Deputy Dean of the College of Foreign Languages and Cultures at Xiamen University, has come to Cardiff to act as the Institute's Academic Director.

The establishment of the Institute is a natural consequence of more than two decades of strong links. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr Grant, said, 'Cardiff University has one of the longest track records of any British university for successful co-operation with China. We continue to build on existing links and promote new collaboration to provide scholarship and research of benefit to both countries.'

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## Research & Collaboration

### Imperial and KAUST agree Academic Excellence Partnership

Imperial College London and the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) have announced an 'Academic Excellence Alliance', to establish joint research, collaborate in the design of the academic curriculum, and identify and nominate the founding faculty in chemical engineering and materials science and engineering for the new University.

The partnership will push forward research in a range of areas including carbon capture, hydrogen-rich fuels, membranes, materials for high-stress environments, structural ceramics including fuel cell materials, energy engineering, process systems engineering, materials for clean power generation, fluid mechanics, and biomaterials.

KAUST will work with Imperial College to:

- Jointly organise the graduate course curriculum and monitor performance
- Create and conduct joint research projects at Imperial College and at KAUST
- Collaborate in setting the requirements for the M.E., M.S.E., and Ph.D. degrees at KAUST
- Assist in the nomination of the initial group of KAUST faculty
- Collaborate in joint thesis advisory committees for Ph.D. candidates at KAUST
- Promote joint programs to host visiting fellows, conduct seminars, and participate in technical symposia
- Cooperate on the design and acquisition of research equipment and facilities

Sir Richard Sykes, Rector of Imperial and member of KAUST's International Advisory Council, welcomed the agreement, 'High-quality scientific research and teaching knows no borders – it is a global aspiration and has the potential to improve quality of life worldwide. Because of that, we are delighted to partner KAUST in this exciting new venture.'

### Teesside teams up with Sweden

The University of Teesside has begun a joint research project with the University of Malmo, Sweden looking at urban regeneration on either side of the North Sea.



The collaboration between students working on the MA History module, 'North European Cities: Space, Place and Identity' will see groups from both universities undertaking field trips to Middlesbrough and Malmo. Teesside played host to a party of Malmo students recently and Teesside students will be travelling to Malmo this month.

The course is being taught collaboratively by staff at both universities and has been made possible through an established Socrates agreement between the two institutions. Teesside hopes to secure **European Union funding** in the long term for curriculum development of the programme.

### From front page...

Policy recommendations from the conference will be passed by UKIERI to the **University Grants Commission** and HRD Ministry. This represents a real contribution to the HE partnership goals set out in the recent Joint Declaration by the UK and Indian PMs (see IF10). The International Unit, British Council and DIUS are working to realise this agenda.