

Land of the free hits the highest note on overseas student fees

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By John Morgan

US is the costliest of 10 countries surveyed, with Australia and UK close behind. John Morgan writes



Credit: Reuters

A report on fees charged to overseas students has found that the US is the most expensive of 10 nations surveyed, followed by Australia and the UK, and stressed the need for "competitive positioning" on scholarships.

The study, the first of its kind in the UK, was conducted by consultancy firm i-graduate for the UK HE International and Europe Unit (IEU).

It examined fees for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research courses at universities in 10 key international student destinations, taking a snapshot of four subject areas at four to six institutions in each country.

The US had the highest fees, but perhaps surprisingly, courses cost more at New York University (£24,758 a year for undergraduate history) and at the University of Southern California (£24,945) than at Harvard University (£21,604).

Fees at Australian universities outstripped those in the UK, even at institutions ranked lower than their UK counterparts, says the report, *International Pricing Study: A Snapshot of UK and Key Competitor Country International Student Fees*. Overseas fees for an undergraduate history degree at the University of Sydney were £16,474 a year, while at the University of Oxford, an equivalent course cost £12,700.

Fees were lowest in Germany, starting at £509 a year for undergraduate study at the University of Frankfurt. Germany and the Netherlands were the only nations surveyed that offer public subsidies for overseas students' tuition fees.

The study's authors, i-graduate chief executive Will Archer and project manager Jacqueline Cheng, say that pricing and market intelligence will be increasingly important, and suggest that the "low or non-existent" fees for postgraduate research students in continental Europe, Canada and New Zealand could become key as countries compete for research talent.

But fees are only part of the story, they add, pointing to "significant support for high-quality international students in the form of scholarships (and) fee waivers" offered by some institutions and nations such as the Netherlands and New Zealand.

"More should be done in the UK to attract the most able international students," they say.

The study notes the impending closure of the UK's post-study work scheme for overseas students even as other governments "seize the opportunity to divert great talent from rival destinations".

The estimated costs of living cited by institutions are highest in the US (£18,531 a year at Harvard), followed by Australia and the Netherlands. And recent currency fluctuations have benefited the UK most, making it 10 per cent cheaper for Indian students to study here than it was three years ago, and 24.5 per cent cheaper for Chinese students.

Joanna Newman, IEU director, said the report would enable UK universities to make "quick and easy comparisons, striking the right balance between attracting students and ensuring high-quality programme delivery", and makes clear that the UK is "not the most expensive place to study".