

In Pursuit of Higher Learning

The uncompromising standard of the British education system makes it popular among locals, despite the exorbitant cost.

BEFORE one even considers pursuing an education abroad, several important items have to be seriously considered: field of training, reputation of the institution, programme recognition by the local government, and expenses, to name a few.

Cost is, by far, the most crucial consideration for anyone planning to obtain a tertiary education in Britain. Much has been written and said about the costs of studying overseas. This is justifiable as overseas education is such a huge investment. Tuition fees, living expenses and travel to and from the country will make up the bulk of the cost involved.

Working part-time as an option to offset costs should not be depended upon because students admitted to Britain are not allowed to take up paid employment unless they obtain prior permission from the Department of Employment. Therefore, when calculating how much is needed to cover living expenses in Britain, don't include any income from employment.

What about scholarships, study awards and loans? A survey of the situation sheds little light. There are relatively few awards and scholarships available to apply for, and competition is keen for those which exist (some awards are available for undergraduate, A-Level study and professional studies). However most scholarship scheme are intended for postgraduate study.

Several awards are made each year by the Malaysian government for postgraduate studies in Britain. These, however, are restricted to government officers and employees, and employees of semi-governmental organisations. Federal scholarships are available for undergraduate and professional studies in Britain but eligibility is restricted to holders of diplomas from local institutions of higher learning and polytechnics.

Currently, there are some Malaysian companies that offer generous scholarships for studies in Britain. Many local banks are also offering study loans to students wishing to further their education abroad.

Although the flow of Malaysian students to Britain for higher education has been reduced quite substantially over the years as a result of the high sterling/ringggit exchange rate and spiralling tuition fees, Britain is still a popular higher education centre with Malaysians.

According to Christine Loh, assistant education counsellor at the British Council, the reasons are many. But one stands out quite clearly – uncompromising standards. The distinctive and unifying feature of the British education system is its insistence on high

standards to ensure that the resulting qualifications are recognised both in Britain and abroad.

At present, there are 46 universities, 30 polytechnics, 16 Scottish central institutions and many institutes and colleges of further and higher education offering matriculation, diploma and degree courses in Britain. The choice for courses available are so varied; Britain actually has an institute offering massage courses (The Northern Institute of Massage) which offers theoretical studies in massage in addition to practical work in approved centres.

These institutions vary in sizes too – some have a student population of over 10,000 while the smaller ones have fewer than 1,000 students. While some have only been built and developed within the last 20 years, others have histories that span several hundred years.

Students with interest and the financial backing to pursue their higher education in Britain should refer to the Compendium of University Entry Requirements available at the British Council. Apart from fulfilling the necessary academic and financial requirements, Loh says that students must apply a year in advance to ensure ample time for the various institutions to process their applications.

COSTLY COURSES	
(Yearly) FEES	POUNDS STERLING
Universities	
Arts courses (inclusive of business, accounting and law)	4,300
Science courses	5,700
Clinical years of medicine, dentistry, and veterinary courses	10,500
Polytechnics and colleges of higher education	
All courses	3,870-5,130
Non-Advanced ('A' Levels, Business and Technician Education Council)	2,360