

£150k of recruitment trips abroad bring back less than 60 students

Recruitment services accused of 'excessive' spending on trips to UAE, Thailand and Chile

By [Neil Johnston](#), News Editor (2012/13)

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University recruitment and admissions are facing questions over "excessive spending" on trips abroad, *Nouse* can exclusively reveal.

Staff have spent £150k on trips abroad to countries including Thailand, India and the United Arab Emirates, all marked down as recruitment drives. However, statistics show that the majority of these trips failed to recruit significant numbers of extra students the following year, with £95k of this spending not accounting for travel and accommodation. The remaining money was spent on flights and hotels.

The University have defended the spending, arguing that students from overseas bring in more income in fees than is spent on recruitment.

However Kallum Taylor, YUSU President, has criticised the spending saying they should "consider reassessing their approach" and that "real caution" was necessary.

Last year staff undertook 48 trips abroad for the purposes of finding students.



A beach in Thailand

Two thirds of the countries visited saw nearly no extra students joining the University this year, while four saw a decline, and three of the countries visited sent less than five students to York altogether. The exact number cannot be extracted due to data protection laws.

Overall there has been a minor increase in students from countries visited but this is largely due to an increasing number of undergraduates from China.

This comes on top of the [£1million a year spent by the University on foreign recruitment agencies](#), many of whom go to the same destinations.

Despite two trips to Thailand, running up a bill of over £10,000 between three members of staff, nearly no extra students joined the University from the country. £7,000 of this trip was spent on costs other than hotels and flights.

Other expenses included a £6,388 stopover in Oman, Dubai, and Kuwait; £5,000 of which is not on

accommodation or travel.

Taylor commented: "Increasing the University's reputation across all parts of the globe is obviously necessary – most people here agree with that. What most people would question though, given the current climate, is the excessive and unaccounted spending.

"It would be smart for the University to speak to our ISA, and international students generally, to see how they can make their worldwide tours more efficient and appealing to future international students and their families.

"Every pound wasted overseas could have gone towards bursaries and hardship funds here.

"We completely support their efforts to further internationalise our University but they may want to consider reassessing their approach. Our students would love to help them do this constructively."

The University have defended their spending, saying: "There are seven staff in the international recruitment team who regularly travel overseas on behalf of the University to undertake recruitment and market development activity. In addition, staff in academic departments will sometimes join these visits which typically include undertaking specific recruitment activities, discussions with agents, partnership development, government sponsor liaison and other profile-raising activities."

They argued fee income more than paid for these trips, and blamed costs such as "freighting and attendance."

"In the recruitment season of 2012/13, we undertook a total of 36 visits to 31 markets. The average cost of each of these trips was £4,194. Total fee income from non-EU students in this financial year is £40.5 million. The £150k of international visits expenditure constitutes just 0.4 per cent of that figure," a spokesperson said.

They added: "These costs include fees for participation in recruitment fairs, freighting, publicity materials and, in some cases, local advertising. For instance, on a trip to Malaysia in March 2013, the total cost of freighting and attendance at a recruitment fair was £4,344. Similarly, a trip to Canada in September 2012 included the costs of exhibition attendance, freighting and car hire (to undertake visits to schools) amounting to £3,800.

"International market development is often a medium to long-term activity. Return on investment in market development can take a number of years. However any successful business is continuously seeking to develop new markets and maintain profile. It would expose the University to risk to rely on a small number of markets which can be subject to fluctuations beyond our control."

"There is little time for leisure activities in the course of recruitment visits to other countries, even in the evenings or at weekends. Further, our international recruitment staff work closely with our alumni relations team and often have evening meetings or host receptions for alumni who are willing to assist in profile raising for the University and in supporting specific recruitment activities. We do not have a policy of confining staff to their bedrooms when they are off duty."

Despite the assertion that development is a long-term process, the number of students from some countries has not increased by more than five in three years.



3 comments

SHA

21 Jan '14 at 1:00 pm

Best campus media investigation in recent terms (genuinely). Staff getting exotic holidays and the

university getting no additional students, shameful. Don't suppose there are any jobs going in the recruitment team that I can apply for? Sounds cushy.

[▲ Report](#)

Insider

21 Jan '14 at 2:32 pm

This definitely isn't true. Clearly just an attempt to match Vision's Brian Cantor story! The Student Recruitment and Admissions Dept is great, don't diss

[▲ Report](#)

@Insider

22 Jan '14 at 9:22 pm

Which bit "definitely isn't true"? The University appear to have confirmed the expenditure and not given any information that contradicts the assertions about outcomes of the trips.

0.4% expenditure really doesn't sound excessive though!

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