

New study centre to attract more international students to Wales

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- First public private partnership of its kind in the UK.
- Initiative to build profile of Wales as a world class destination for international students.
- Low cost of living and safe environment key to attracting students to Wales.

Study Group International, a global leader in international education, today announces the opening of their Wales International Study Centre (WISC) in partnership with the University of Wales, Newport.

This International Study Centre is unique in kind. It offers international students an exciting opportunity to prepare for degree studies at one of 11 universities and higher education institutions across Wales. Based on the campus of The University of Wales, Newport, students benefit from access to all on-campus facilities within a supportive environment, whilst studying their University of Wales validated Foundation course.

This initiative is a collaboration between Study Group and The University of Wales, Newport, with the support of the Welsh International Consortium, International Business Wales, and the British Council Wales.

Chief Executive Officer of Study Group, Heith Mackay-Cruise said: "The opening of this new facility will herald a new phase in the development of international student education in Wales. Through this public-private partnership, Study Group will be actively supporting Welsh institutions in achieving their international student objectives. It will also be supporting the promotion of Wales as a quality international study destination in its own right".

Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM, the First Minister for Wales, strongly supports the initiative: "The Wales International Study Centre is unique: it offers international students a pathway to some of the finest degree programmes in the world, alongside the opportunity to study in a country with a unique cultural heritage and a landscape of outstanding natural beauty. I'm delighted that both Study Group and the University of Wales, Newport, working together, have created this exclusive opportunity. Another first for Wales! "

With significantly lower living costs than other UK student destinations, Wales is fast becoming a real contender for international student attention. According to the London School of Economics, the annual living costs for international students in the capital, exclusive of tuition fees, can exceed £12,000. In contrast, 2007 figures released by the Wales International Consortium highlight an average annual living cost of just £6,500 in Wales.

In addition to the financial benefits, Wales offers students an enriching on-campus experience. Recently, the Wales Student Barometer, published by i-graduate, revealed that international students in Wales are happier than their peers in the whole of the UK in almost every aspect of their university education. The University of Wales, Newport, where the WISC is located, also recently achieved acclaim by being voted the most satisfying campus in Wales in a poll of international students.

Peter Noyes, Vice Chancellor of the University of Wales, Newport, said: "It is a great honour for Newport to host the Welsh International Study Centre and we look forward to this exciting new chapter in the development of the international sector in Wales, and the range of international perspectives these students will bring."

Virginia West, Director of the Wales International Consortium, commented: "With international student numbers at Welsh institutions up by 36 per cent in the last five years, there has never been a better time for a partnership of this scale."

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Notes to Editors:

Study Group International

Spanning five continents, Study Group is a global leader in international education, providing the highest quality educational opportunities for students from over 120 countries. Beginning in 1994 with 7000 students per year, Study Group now has an enrolment base of 40,000 around the world.

Through Study Group's leading set of partnerships with top universities, it is able to provide on and off-campus preparation courses for international students that ensure academic success and entry into some of the most prestigious educational institutions in the world. The quality of its teaching is confirmed by independent accreditation bodies worldwide including: English UK, Ofsted, British Council, NEAS, Accet, English Australia and New Zealand Qualification Authority.

Through the Bellerbys and International Study Centre (ISC) brands in the UK, Study Group provides academic preparation for international students wanting to study at English-speaking universities. Courses include GCSEs, A-Levels, specifically designed Foundation courses to gain entry into universities, a degree course and pre-masters qualifications.

Study Group is in partnership with 9 internationally active universities in the UK, operating International Study Centres on their campuses.

Study Group offers English language courses for international students in 18 locations in all of the main Anglophone destinations through its Embassy CES brand. Courses include short-term general English, one-year academic programmes and specialist English preparation for public English language qualifications, or for degree programmes at English-speaking universities. Study Group also runs youth summer vacation courses in the UK, Ireland and the USA, combining English language training with both academic and extra-curricular activities.

The biggest intake of international students into Study Group's UK programmes is from countries with emerging economies such as China, and South East Asian economies, and in particular from oil rich nations like Russia and the Middle East.

The University of Wales, Newport

The University of Wales, Newport has a long established international reputation underpinned by activities which range from its innovative MBA programme delivered in China to an extensive international recruitment network across 15 countries. Central to Newport's international plans is ensuring an outstanding international student experience and in autumn 2007 international students voted Newport first in Wales in the International Student Barometer survey. Areas of the international student experience in which Newport excels include library and IT provision, the overall living experience and the quality of university accommodation.

In addition to Newport's growing reputation amongst international students, the University is rapidly opening up new student recruitment markets. With a growing international student population the University is now welcoming students from a wide range of new markets such as Nigeria, Jordan, the Gulf States and Pakistan.