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REPORT 03P

Pricing Survey and Analysis of Online Degree and MBA Courses (in Thailand and UAE)

Steve K Ngo

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Edited by Paul Bacsich

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THAILAND



INTRODUCTION

Thailand is a very open-minded country when it comes to education reform policies. Widely known as the “Land of Smiles”, the country is very quick to embrace foreign elements including education. The present population of Thailand is 62.8 million people with a very high percentage of literacy (92% female and 96% male). Thailand's GDP per capita is US\$2,010.

BUSINESS STUDIES – UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE

The language of instruction in universities is the Thai language (with the exception of Assumption University, a private university). However as part of the Thai government's aim to internationalise its education system, the government has introduced a system called “International Programs”. These are courses in public and private universities, delivered in English. In addition to promoting the English language and creating opportunity for the locals to

improve their command of English, this move is also seen as part of the government's effort to attract foreign students to Thailand.

The system and concept of “International Programs” is very bold and revolutionary; in fact it is the first ever in this region for a country where English is not the first language. They include collaboration with other foreign universities, mostly from the UK, USA and Australia.

ONLINE EDUCATION AND E-LEARNING IN THAILAND

Some key facts and statistics:

Internet users:

1.2 million (2000)

Telephone lines per 100 pop:

9.4 (2001)

Computers per 100 pop:

2.7

*Table 1 – Universities offering
“International Programs”*

Online education and e-learning is new in Thailand, therefore there is plenty of room for growth. In addition to the government's openness to new policies, education reform and foreign collaboration should be construed as an opportunity to develop and pioneer online education in Thailand.

At present there are only two online cum open learning universities in Thailand and both account for the nearly 60% of the total higher education enrollment in public universities.¹

This could possibly due to the extremely low tuition fees charged by both open/online universities.

Thailand's domestic online-open higher education is consistently developing in line with telecommunication infrastructure development and improvement. The progress and popularity of any western online education effort is not pronounced in Thailand, possibly overshadowed by progress in China instead of Indo China. Skeptics had felt that the retardant to any online education in Thailand would be the financial position and conservativeness of the Thais. This is not entirely true because there are 1.2 million Internet users (mostly educated people) in Thailand and already there have been numerous collaborations between British universities with local universities for many years now. Putting both facts together, one will see the sense behind promoting successful online education projects in Thailand.

PRICING SURVEY

UKeU programme:

- Foundation & BA (Business Studies)
- MSc and MBA (Business).

Sampling for the purpose of pricing analysis will be based on the following methodology:

| Institution | Programmes |
|---|---------------------------|
| Burapha University | BBA. |
| Chulalongkorn University | BBA, MMgt, MBA (Sasin) |
| Maejo University | BBA, MBA |
| Mahidol University | BBA, MA |
| Thammasat University | BBA |
| Kasetsart University | MBA |
| National Institute of Development Administration | MBA |
| Ramkhamhaeng University | MBA |
| Asian University of Science and Technology | BBA, MBA |
| Assumption University | BBA, MBA, MSIB |
| Bangkok University | BBA, MBA |
| Eastern Asia University | BBA |
| Kasem Bundit University | BBA |
| Krirk University | BA |
| University of The Thai Chamber of Commerce | BBA, MBA |
| Schindler -Stamford International University | BBA |
| Saint John's University | BBA |
| Webster University (Thailand) | BBA, MBA |
| Yonok College | BBA, MBA |
| Siam University | BBA |
| Rangsit University | BBA |
| Sripatum University | BA |
| Payap University | MBA |

- (a) Outlining competing programmes: Public universities and private colleges offering similar programmes
- (b) Comparative study of the programmes, whether non online, mixed mode or online learning in order to gauge the market pricing and demand
- (c) Summary of analysis
- (d) Recommendations and highlight of any pertinent issues.

PRICING OF NON ONLINE PROGRAMMES

As Thailand is the only South East Asian country offering dual-language higher education programmes, this report will take into consideration selected good programmes conducted in the English language ("International Programs") instead of analysis of all programmes. In general, the degrees offered in the Thai language are rather similar in price to the "International Programs" or consistently between 15–25% lower.

Table 2 – Non Online Programmes

| Name of Institution | Status | Title of awards | Mode | Pricing |
|--|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| Chulalongkorn University | Leading Public University | (i)BBA (4 years) (ii) MBA (Sasin Graduate School of Business – Kellogg & Wharton) | Full Time | (i) THB 684,000 (£10,000) (ii) THB 730,000 (£10,673) |
| Burapha University | Public University | BBA | Part Time & Full Time | THB 13,000 (£189) FT THB 39,200 (£573) PT |
| Kasetsart University | Public University | MBA | Full Time | THB 395,000 (£5,775) |
| Asian University of Science & Technology | Leading Private University | (i) BBA (ii) MBA | Part Time & Full Time | (i) THB 1,200,000 (£17,544) (ii) THB 333,333 (£4,873) – Full Time. PT (£5,847) |
| Assumption University | Private University | (i) BBA (ii) MBA (iii)MSc International Business – South Bank University UK | Full Time | (i) THB 337,375 (£4,932) (ii) THB 196,600 (£2,874) (iii) THB 768,925 (£11,241) |
| University of Thai Chamber of Commerce | Private University | BBA | Full Time | THB 232,800 (£3,404) |

PRICING OF ONLINE PROGRAMMES

| Name of Institution and Awarding body | Status | Title of awards | Mode | Pricing |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Ramkhamhaeng University | Public University | (i) BBA (142 credits) (ii) MBA (36 credits) | Blended/mixed media (distance learning, online, CD-ROM, broadcast) | THB 25 per credit (£0.37) excluding other fees. Estimated: (i) THB 8,000 (£117) (ii) THB 5,000 (£73.1) |
| Sukothai Thammathirat Open University | Public University | (i) BBA (144 credits) (ii) MBA | Blended/mixed media (distance learning, online, CD-ROM, broadcast) | THB 500 per block of 6 credits (£7.31) excluding other fees. Estimated: (i) THB 16,000 (£234) (ii) THB 15,000 (£219) (unconfirmed) |
| University Liverpool with K.I.T. eLearning | British public university | MBA | Online | “Unique” fee structure: (a) Full payment: US\$18,382 (£11,974) (b) 3 instalments: US\$19,301 (£12,572) (c) Per Module: US\$22,508 (£14,686) |
| Cardean University | Consortium | MBA | Online | US\$24,575 (£15,418) |
| Henley Mgt Col | Private | MBA | Online | £11,651 |
| PurpleTrain | Private | MBA | Online | £6,274 |
| Universitas 21 Global | Consortium | MBA | Online | US\$10,000 (£6,274) – “country differentiation” fee applies. It seems that this is the highly probable fee for Thailand |
| Global University Alliance (GUA) | Consortium, On franchise basis | (i) Diploma (ii) Adv Diploma (iii) BBA (iv) MBA | Online with classroom support | (i) US\$1,000 (£636) (ii) US\$1,000 (£636) (iii) US\$2,250 (£1,432) (iv) US 2,700 (£1,718) Important: The above pricing is “cost” price to private franchisee. The franchisee would mark up between 50–100% as market selling price. |

GRAPHS AND SUMMARY**Non Online Programmes**

Figure 1

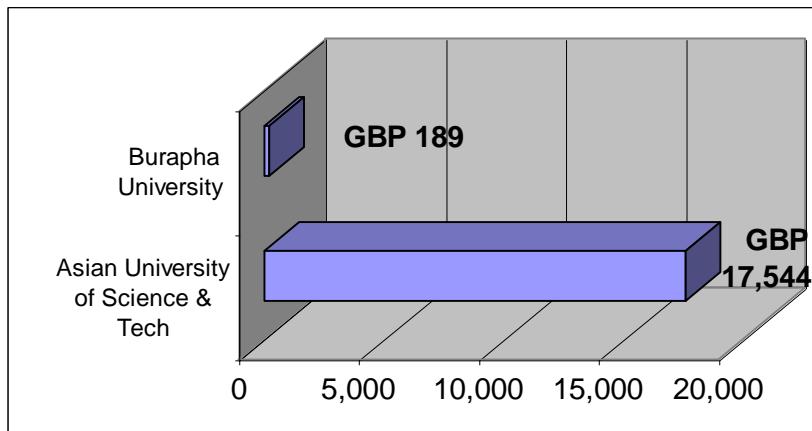
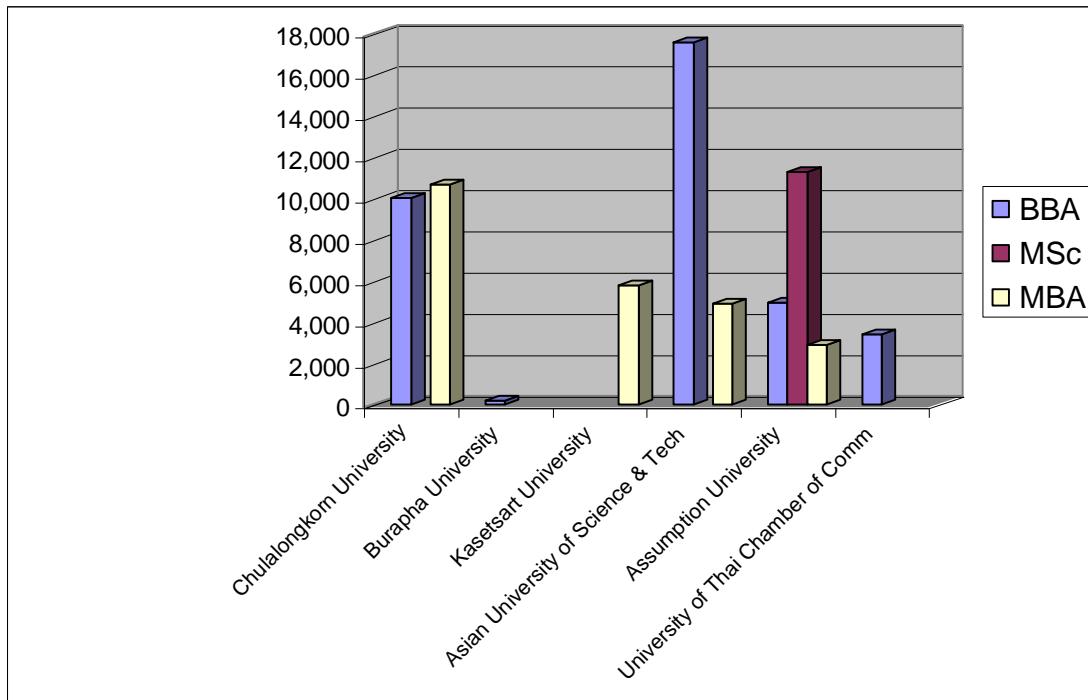


Figure 2

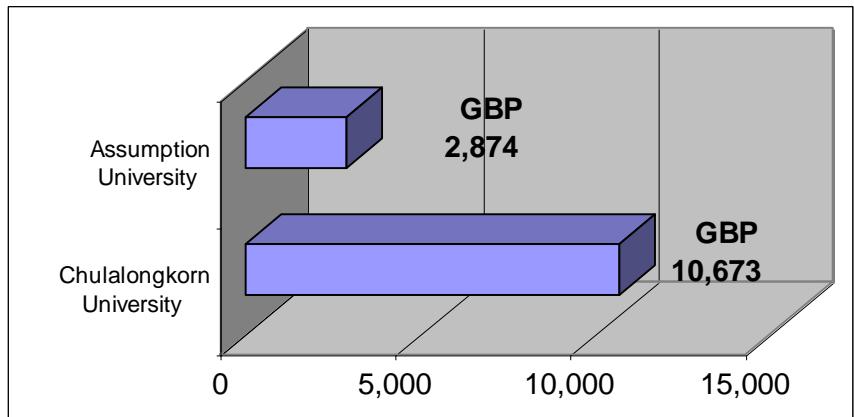
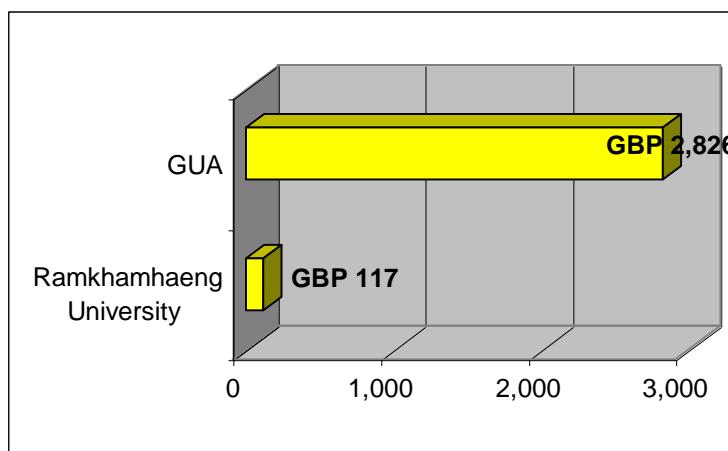
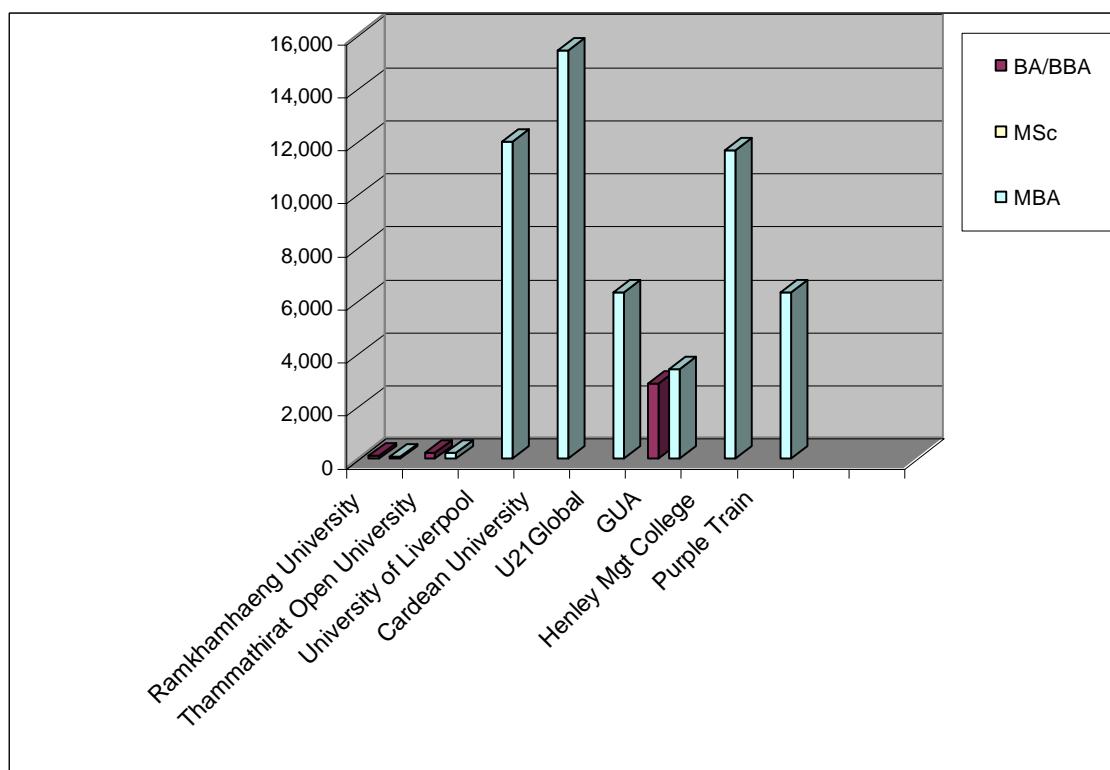
Comparison of MBA programme (highest and lowest)

Figure 3

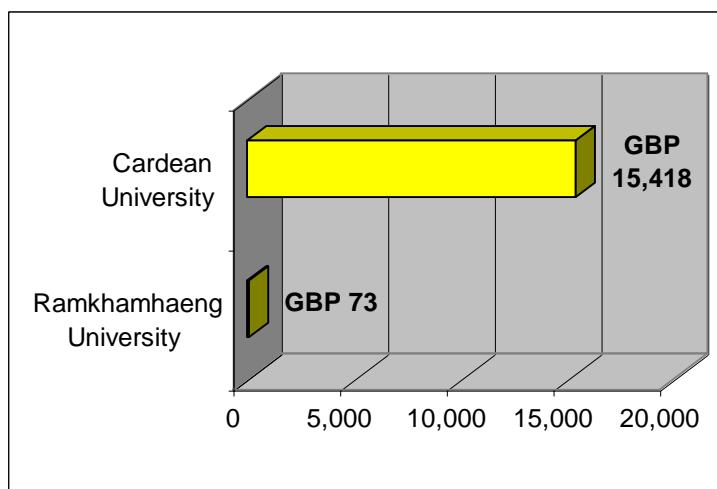
Figure 4

Business courses offered as online programmes



Comparison of
BA/BBA programme
(highest and lowest)

Figure 5



Comparison of
MBA programme
(highest and lowest)

Figure 6

ANALYSIS

The analysis will be divided into the following parts:

- Competitiveness and programme Comparison
- Pricing and positioning strategy
- Summary and recommendations.

In addition, it was requested that the analysis take into consideration the University of Durham and University of Warwick MBA programmes. Both Durham Business School and Warwick Business School have no online/e-learning platform. They offer Distance Learning MBA programmes but via conventional methods.

COMPETITIVENESS AND PROGRAM COMPARISON

DIRECT COMPETITION FROM GOOD RANKING BRITISH MBA

Warwick Business School (WBS) has no MBA offered in Thailand, but does in other Asia regions, through the local British Council. Fees for the distance learning MBA in Singapore, Hong Kong and UAE start at £13,350; also for other Asian countries.

On the other hand, we uncovered no market information that Durham Business School (DBS) plans to offer its MBA in Asia. In any case, DBS has no online learning platform.

However, attention should be given to the University of Liverpool which has an online MBA programme offered in conjunction with their technology partner, KIT eLearning (please refer to Table 5). Stating the obvious, Liverpool is a Division 1 university in the UK and its MBA is AMBA (Association of MBA) accredited. There is no doubt that "lifestyle" and leisure factors do have considerable positive impact on the popularity of Liverpool's MBA – for example "The Beatles" and soccer.

Regardless of the somewhat strong point stated above, in theory the course fee is high

and financial structure, unusual. With a starting fee at US\$18,382 (£11,974), the fee becomes incremental if students choose to pay in split payments. In most cases, universities are most happy to offer a split payment scheme, not to encourage dropout but because of financial constraint. The fee level is simply too exorbitant for the Thais.

Henley Management College (HMC) is a possible competitor. Although they do not have "presence" in Thailand as such, the enrolment in 2002 was 25 students.

COMPETITION WITH LOCAL COURSES

The level of local online/open learning courses in Thailand is extremely low, making it impossible to analyse it against UKeU's programs. Clearly, the Thais enrol for online/open learning courses due to low tuition fees; both open universities in Thailand account for 60% of total annual enrolment of higher education in Thailand.

If compared literally, it is impossible to match UKeU's pricing to the local online degrees. However it is important to note that only Ramkhamhaeng University's BBA and MBA are offered in English (International Programs) whereas STOU's programmes are solely in Thai.

On the other hand, Ramkhamhaeng University is an open learning/virtual university. The value of an open degree may not be as prestigious compared to a degree obtained from a physical university regardless of mode of study. There is no doubt too, that a qualification obtained from a distance teaching university cannot be priced at premium level in the case of STOU and Ramkhamhaeng.

UKeU's programmes are from actual physical and leading universities. UKeU's is also a branding plus: it will not be perceived by the local as an alternative form of education, rather as an alternative to a prestigious qualification not available unless by full time study in the UK. It is definitely worthwhile paying a premium price for a

qualification from a prestigious school *delivered* via the UKeU online platform.

FOUNDATION AND UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

Global University Alliance (GUA)

GUA offer rather attractive pricing for Australia diploma, advanced diploma and undergraduate degree courses. As indicated, the diploma and advanced diploma fees are US\$1,000 (£636) whereas undergraduate degree at US\$2,250 (£1,432). However the fees indicated are "cost price" given to their franchisee college. Most of the time, the selling prices are marked up by 50–100%, possibly higher at times.

In view of the above, UKeU's pricing strategy may need to consider such aspects.

GUA has a representative office in Thailand and is in the process of setting up its GUA Learning Centre.

POSTGRADUATE

Elaborated under an earlier heading, GUA's MBA is the closest competitor to UKeU's programme; however the primary concern ought to be the University of Liverpool's Online MBA.

The online MBA from Cardean University is simply too costly, as is that from U21Global. Both are virtual and non-physical universities; therefore UKeU would have greater market value.

PRICING & POSITIONING STRATEGY

Although it may appear that Thailand's market seems weak for premium courses, however the data collected shows that there is demand for good foreign programmes.

It is evident, from numerous collaborations between UK, US and Australia universities and public/private universities, that the demand for western qualifications is on the rise.

It is not possible to compare UKeU with the local online universities entirely because UKeU's degrees are identical to on campus study *and* awarded by "physical" universities. Therefore the pricing cannot possibly be as low as the local virtual university's. Furthermore, the concept of online education in Thailand is as alternative education and the locals are well aware that the awards from "virtual" universities are not quite the same as degrees obtained from an actual school.

The best pricing strategy should be determined "on site" however the pricing recommendation given at the end of this report is considered as the expected range for Thailand's market.

POSITIONING

In relation to the positioning strategy, here are some factors for consideration:

- **Introducing a new concept of quality online education:** As mentioned earlier, Thais are more accustomed to online education as alternative education, always necessarily cheaper and coming from a virtual university (non physical university).
- **Delivery of courses:** Effective and reliable platform, rich with foreign contents.
- **Recognition:** With prestigious qualifications and programmes currently not available in Thailand.

SUMMARY

To sum up, the key recommendations are:

- **Thai Universities and Government partnership** – as mentioned earlier, the Thai government is very open to international cooperation and collaborations.

- **Effective Partnership** – partnership with effective local partners that could position UKeU as revolutionary online education in Thailand.
- **Language factor** – generally the Thais are not very proficient with the English language but the popularity of the international language is beginning to take centre stage in view of the government's nationwide drive to promote the language and introduction of "International Programs" – universities' courses offered in English.

Recommended pricing:

- Foundation course – starting fee at £1,500
- BA/BBA – starting fee/ market entry fee at £2,800
- MSc – starting fee/ market entry fee at £3,000
- MBA – starting fee/ market entry fee at low £5,500 or high £6,200. (We would be in the position to refine this if the awarding university is revealed.)

INDICATOR

Postgraduate course – High potential.

Undergraduate programmes – High potential. Thailand is the most ideal country in which to introduce British education on a wide scale. Harrow International School² has opened in Thailand and this is testimony to the demand for high quality and premium education as well as for English education.

RECOMMENDATION

Issues considered to arrive at the recommendation were:

- It is impossible to adjust the pricing near to any of Thailand's local online programs. *But:*
- There is an immediate market for premium courses in view of the pricing of some local programmes.
- UKeU's model is the first ever such in Thailand. This is a strong point.



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



INTRODUCTION

The United Arab Emirates is a very systematic and modern Arab state. It should be noted that UAE is widely known for its openness to the western world when it comes to education; for instance the university courses are conducted in English and based on an international syllabus. The present population of UAE is about 2.5 million people with a high percentage of literacy (79.8% female and 78.9% male). UAE's GDP per capita is US\$21,100 (2001).

BUSINESS STUDIES – UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE

The language of instruction in universities is English. Higher education in UAE is considered efficient and modern in the absence of any direct collaboration between local and western universities. Most of the business schools of local leading universities are AACSB accredited.³

UAE's standard of education is second to none in this region, although it is a relatively small country. UAE is a wealthy nation and its people are conscious about the importance of higher education.

An impressive and efficient regulatory system also ensures that the standard of higher education is not compromised.

Multi-tier education opportunities also exist to ensure that higher education is available to everyone, from academic to vocational and technical to world-class business studies.

ONLINE EDUCATION AND E-LEARNING IN UAE

Some key facts and statistics:

Internet users:

775,000 (2002)

Telephone lines per 100 pop:

36 (2001)

Computers per 100 pop:

N.A.

There are no online education initiatives in UAE at this present moment. Ajman University of Science and Technology is planning to launch its "Cyber University" soon but details are not available as to whether this is vocationally oriented or academically based.⁴

In the course of preparation of this report, we spoke to the Dean of a Business School at a leading university in UAE. He advised us that so far there is no online programme being offered and he did not foresee this happening in the near future.⁵

PRICING SURVEY

UKeU programme:

- Foundation & BA (Business Studies)
- MSc and MBA (Business)

Sampling for the purpose of pricing analysis will be based on the following methodology:

- (a) Outlining competing programmes: Public universities and private colleges offering similar programmes
- (b) Comparative study of the programmes, whether non online, mixed mode or online learning in order to gauge the market pricing & demand
- (c) Summary of analysis
- (d) Recommendations and highlight of any pertinent issues.

PRICING OF NON ONLINE PROGRAMMES

UAE is probably the first, if not the only, Arab country that offers business studies in the English language, throughout all local universities.

Nearly all of the business schools throughout UAE offer business programmes based on the American AACSB model. In fact, most of the faculty members are recruited from the US.

In general, education fees and tuition in UAE are the highest among all countries surveyed in this Report. In fact, university fees, especially undergraduate degrees, are often described as "exorbitant".

Probably this is due to the American AACSB model adopted for nearly all business courses; this requires external academic expert participation. Or it could be simply because UAE is predominantly an oil-rich country and imposes rather low personal tax; therefore the cost of education is high.

In contrast, UAE University (the leading university in United Arab Emirates) does not charge the local nationals any tuition fees at all for undergraduate business programmes. This is a stark contrast compared to some other local universities, where they charge up to nearly £29,000 for a four-year undergraduate degree programme.

Please refer to Table 1 for a list of programme pricing.

Table 1 – Non Online Programmes

| Name of Institution | Title of awards | Mode | Pricing |
|---|--|-----------------------|--|
| Ajman University of Science and Technology | (i) Diploma (Foundation) (ii) BBA | Full Time | (i) About AED 55,000 (£9,338) (ii) About AED 66,000 (£11,205) |
| American University of Sharjah | (i) BSc BA (ii) MBA (iii) EMBA | Part Time & Full Time | (i) AED 174,240 (£29,582) (ii) AED 86,400 (£14,669) (iii) AED 73,500 (£12,478) |
| American University in Dubai | (i) Associate Arts (Foundation) (ii) BBA (iii) MBA | Part Time & Full Time | (i) AED 108,000 (£18,336) (ii) AED 171,000 (£29,032) (iii) AED 62,400 (£10,594) |
| University of Sharjah | (i) BSc BA (ii) EMBA | Full Time | (i) AED 115,000 (£19,525) (ii) AED 105,000 (£17,827) |
| UAE University | (i) Bachelor of BUSA (Bus. Admin) (ii) MBA | Full Time | (i) Free for nationals (ii) AED 130,350 (£22,131) |
| Zayed University | EMBA | Full Time | AED 128,000 (£21,732) |
| Dubai University College | BBA | Full Time | AED 88,200 (£14,975) |
| University of Wollongong (Australia) in UAE | (i) BBA (ii) MBA (iii) Master International Business | Part Time & Full Time | (i) AED 84,960 (£14,425) (ii) AED 57,400 (£9,745) (iii) AED 32,800 (£5,569) |

PRICING OF ONLINE PROGRAMMES

Table 2 – Online Programmes

| Name of Institution and Awarding body | Status | Title of awards | Mode | Pricing |
|--|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| University Liverpool with K.I.T. eLearning | British public university | MBA | Online | “Unique” fee structure: (a) Full payment: US\$18,382 (£11,974) (b) 3 instalments: US\$19,301 (£12,572) (c) Per Module: US\$22,508 (£14,686) |
| Cardean University | Consortium | MBA | Online | US\$24,575 (£15,418) |
| Henley Mgt Col | Private | MBA | Online | £11,651 |
| Universitas 21 Global | Consortium | MBA | Online | US\$10,000 (£6,274) – “country differentiation” fee apply. It seems that this is the highly probable fee for UAE. |
| Global University Alliance (GUA) | Consortium, on franchise basis | (i) Diploma (ii) Adv Diploma (iii) BBA (iv) MBA | Online with classroom support | (i) US\$1,000 (£636) (ii) US\$1,000 (£636) (iii) US\$2,250 (£1,432) (iv) US\$2,700 (£1,718) Important: The above pricing is “cost” price to private franchisee. The franchisee would mark up between 50–100% as market selling price. |

GRAPHS AND SUMMARY**Non Online Programmes**

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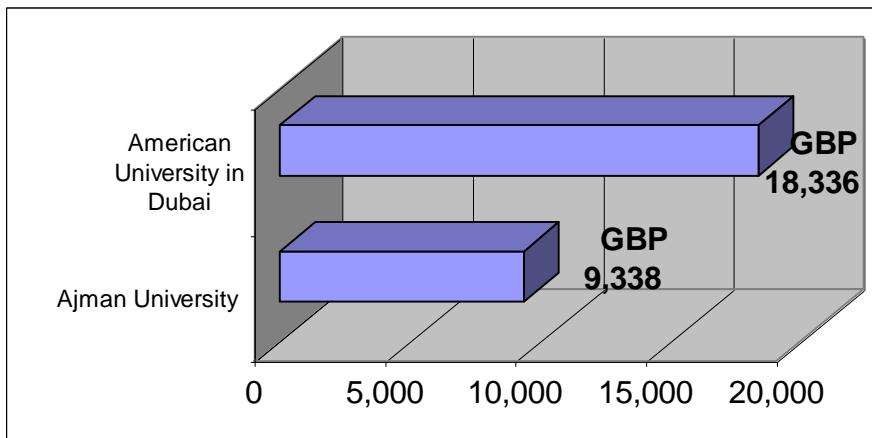
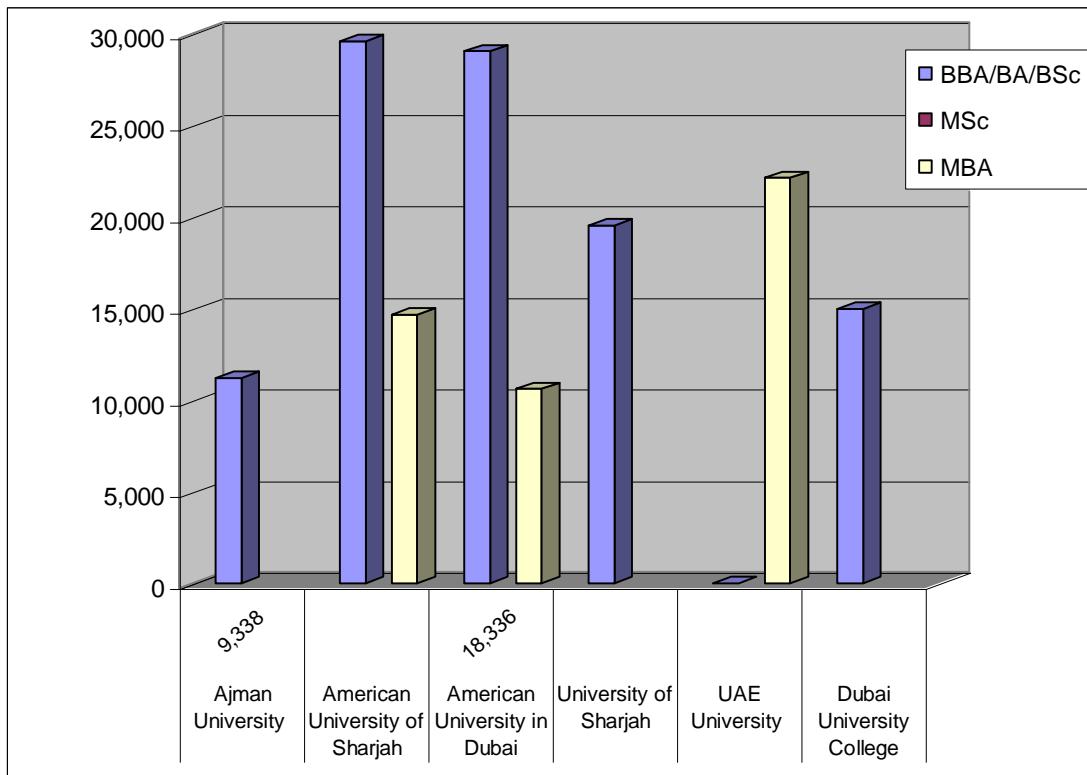
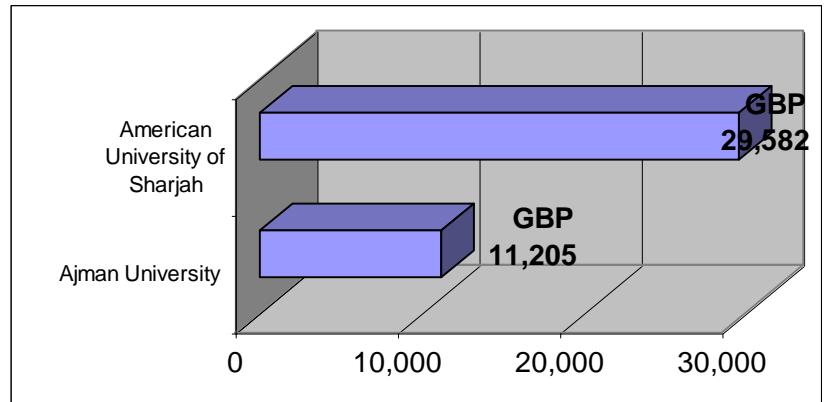
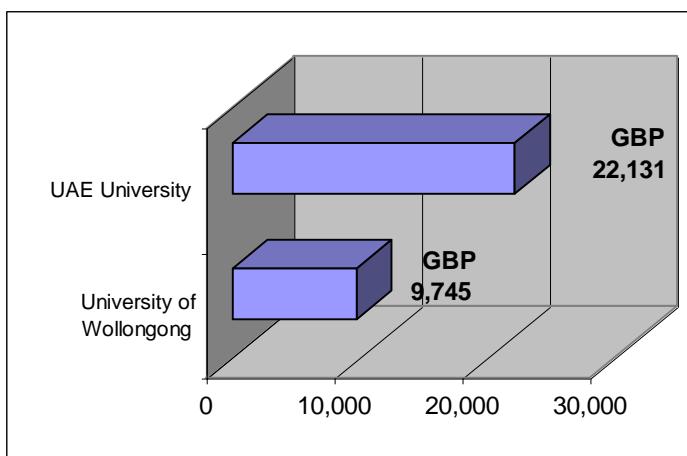


Figure 2

Comparison of BBA/BSc programme (highest and lowest)

Figure 3



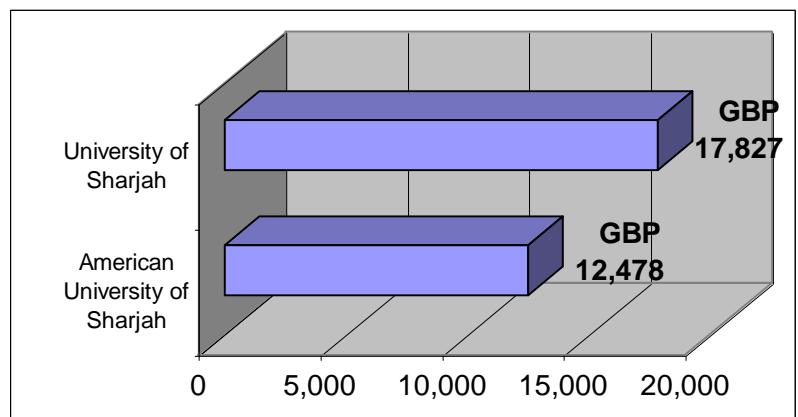


**Comparison of
MBA programme
(highest and lowest)**

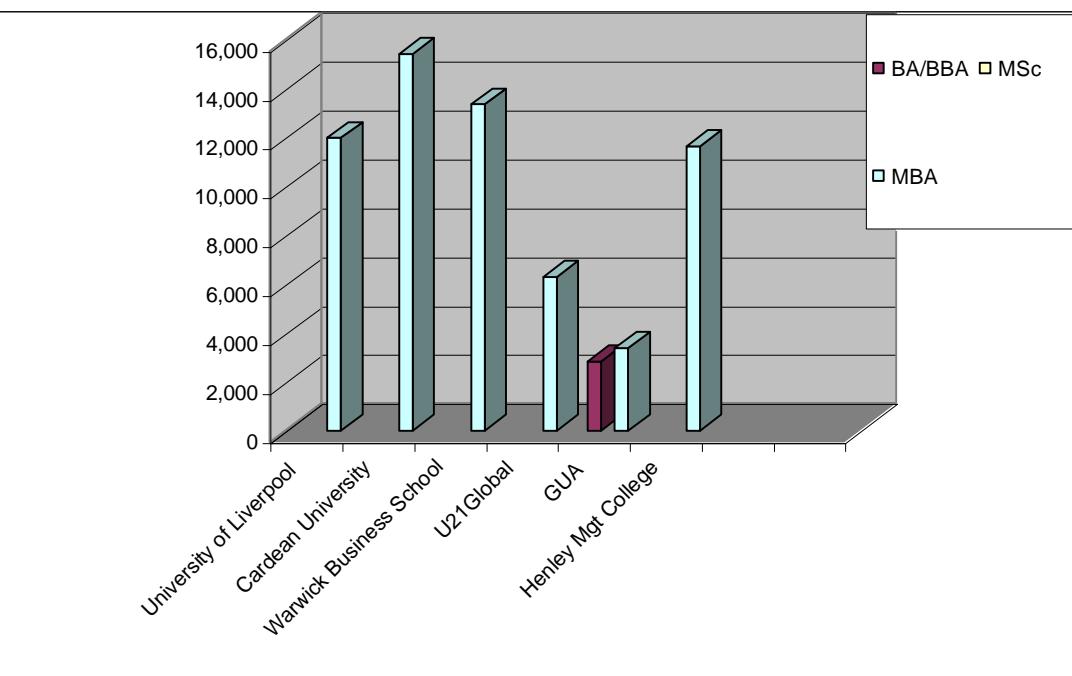
Figure 4

**Comparison of
EMBA programme
(highest and lowest)**

Figure 5



**Business courses offered online and
via distance learning**



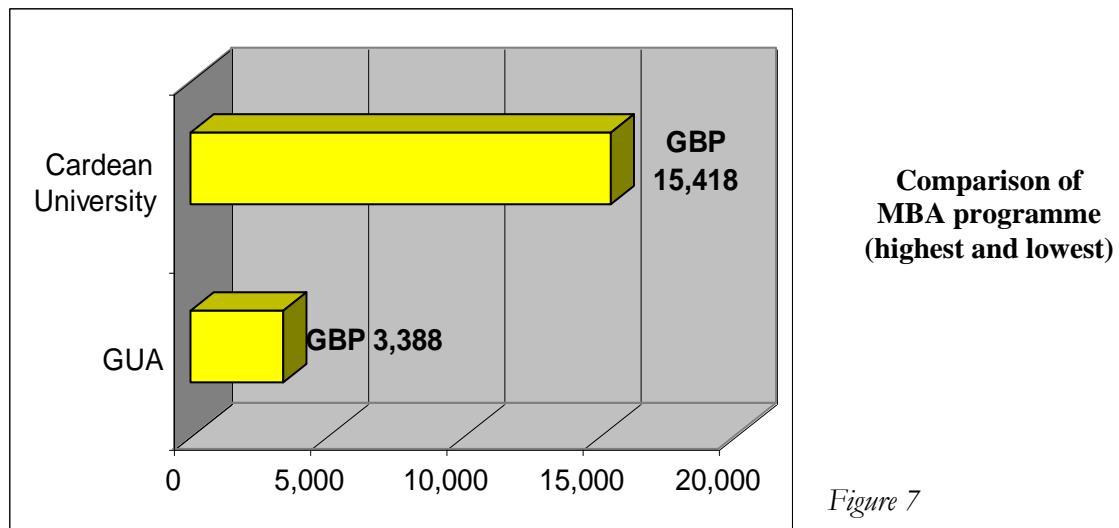


Figure 7

ANALYSIS

The analysis will be divided into the following parts:

- Competitiveness and programme comparison
- Pricing and positioning strategy
- Summary and recommendations.

In addition, it was requested that the analysis take into consideration the University of Durham and University of Warwick MBA programmes. Both Durham Business School and Warwick Business School have no online/e-learning platform. They do operate Distance Learning programmes for the MBA but using conventional methods.

COMPETITIVENESS AND PROGRAM COMPARISON

DIRECT COMPETITION FROM GOOD RANKING BRITISH MBA

Warwick Business School (WBS) offers its MBA in UAE through the local British Council office. Fees for the distance learning MBA in UAE starts at £13,350.

On the other hand, we uncovered no market information that Durham Business School (DBS) plans to offer its MBA in UAE. In any case, DBS have no online learning platform.

However, attention should be given to the University of Liverpool which have an online MBA programme offered in conjunction with their technology partner, KIT eLearning. It is to be noted that Liverpool's MBA fee is lower than Warwick's.

Henley Management College (HMC) is a possible competitor. In 2002, this had an enrolment of 36 students in UAE. In view that there is a market for premium-priced programmes, there is an opportunity for HMC to expand its UAE market.

COMPETITION WITH LOCAL COURSES

There are no local online/open learning courses in UAE although Ajman University of Science & Technology is planning to launch its "Cyber University". No information is available on this.⁶

Obviously, there will be some competition between UKeU and the local universities. We expect that the local universities will find that UKeU is a threat to them as its fees would be generally lower than those offered for non online programmes.

In terms of public perception, there should be no issue, since the Emirates are very accustomed to the British education system and standard.

Pricing recommendation is provided in this Report.

FOUNDATION AND UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

Global University Alliance (GUA)

GUA offer rather attractive pricing for Australia diploma, advanced diploma and undergraduate degree courses. As indicated, the diploma and advanced diploma fees are US\$1,000 (£636) whereas undergraduate fees are US\$2,250 (£1,432). However the fees indicated are "cost price" given to their franchisee college. Most of the time, the selling prices are marked up by 50–100%, possibly higher at times.

However, it is considered that GUA's programs are not prestigious or "premium" enough for a demanding market like UAE. Whilst there is no indication so far as to whether GUA would set up their centres in UAE, the Emirates are predominantly people who could afford, and would go for, premium courses in preference.

POSTGRADUATE

Elaborated under earlier headings, GUA's MBA is the closest competitor to UKeU's programme; however the primary concern ought to be the University of Liverpool's Online MBA. U21Global could also take off in UAE, relying on the reputation of their individual member universities.

The online MBA from Cardean University is simply unheard of but could be a threat – however it faces one crucial problem, and the same goes for U21Global. Both are virtual and non-physical universities. The perception of awards coming from virtual universities is known to be unfavourable in UAE as it is not identical to any on-campus programmes.

PRICING & POSITIONING STRATEGY

UAE is a financially strong market. The Emirates can afford and would go for premium programmes even at premium pricing.

POSITIONING

In relation to the positioning strategy, here are some factors for consideration:

- **Introducing a new concept of quality online education:** As mentioned earlier, the Emirates are not accustomed to online education.
- **Delivery of courses:** Effective and reliable platform, rich with foreign contents.
- **High quality and prestigious courses from good universities.**

SUMMARY

To sum up, the key recommendations are:

- **Government partnership and endorsement**
- **Effective Partnership** – effective local partnership with private providers/recruiters.

INDICATOR

Postgraduate course – High potential.
Undergraduate programs – High potential. Contrary to other Asian countries reviewed in this report, in UAE UKeU's programmes would instead become an alternative education to the Emirates, as they generally have to pay exorbitant fees for local courses. In addition, the foreign contents and premium status of the awarding universities would be attractive.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommended pricing:

- Foundation course – starting fee at £5,000
- BA/BBA – starting fee/market entry fee at £8,500
- MSc – starting fee/market entry fee at £8,000
- MBA – starting fee/market entry fee at low £8,500 or high £12,500. (We would be in the position to refine this if the awarding university is revealed.)

THIS IS THE END OF THE [AUTHOR'S] REPORT

Editor's Postscript¹

[Due to the complex formatting of the author's document, the Editor prudently decided to put his remarks here at the end of the author's document.]

Overview

The effort that has gone into the full version of this report, surveying prices across seven countries or regions, is truly amazing. (In this public version we have reproduced just two chapters, those for Thailand and for the United Arab Emirates. It is planned to release the remaining chapters – on China, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and South Korea – in around six months' time.)

Of course, in the passing of two years some prices may have changed, while some players will certainly have entered and a few will have no doubt withdrawn. There is no substitute for doing – or commissioning – one's own investigations; but it is time-consuming work for which persistence and local contacts are required. Readers must form their own judgement and seek their own advice, but the advice from our reviewers is that the pricing still seems relevant, with the exception of Hong Kong where prices have dropped (as an aspect of the economic situation).

The brief to the Report's author from UKeU was to survey prices across a range of countries in the context of UKeU proposing to offer a fully online MBA from a good (but not top rank) UK business school without much existing international exposure (the last clause is not meant to be judgemental – it is relevant because it was felt to provide strong business logic for a partnership with UKeU). As the study was getting under way, UKeU requested specific scrutiny of two competitors to this MBA concept – this was an interesting early example of competitor analysis. Because there was a specific course proposal in mind, the author was asked to provide quite a narrow target range for pricing.

At the time of writing this report the author was not on the staff of UKeU and had no access to any information provided by partner HEIs of UKeU – in fact, the whole idea was to get a fully “external reality check”. All information was acquired by diligence and no internal confidences were broken.

In the interests of maintaining harmony with UK HEIs, a number of specific judgements about courses have been removed from this version. The prices speak for themselves – but one should not listen just to price information, of course, even if students too often do.

Some updating and clarifying notes (by the editor) are to be found at the end of this section. These do not give URLs for all the e-learning institutions of interest – for a wider range the reader is referred to the e-University Compendium's Gazetteer at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/learningandteaching/eUniCompendium_gazetteer.doc or the UNESCO IIEP list at <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/virtualuniversity/links.php>.

¹ By Paul Bacsich.

Choice of Countries

The choice of countries should not surprise readers, especially if they have looked at other relevant UKeU Reports. But it may help to remind readers of the marketing strategy of UKeU. The August 2002 briefing to staff by the UKeU CEO pointed out:

Marketing will be the crucial activity to UKeU's success. The [two senior] appointments allow UKeU now to drive the development of detailed marketing plans internally. Two basic market segments have been defined, 'retail' and 'corporate' (covering both private and public sector organisations), and the organisation has been structured around customer acquisition in these two areas with their different requirements.

For the individual 'retail' customers, the immediate geographical focus is Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Middle East and China, with business managers already in post in Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Dubai. Additional markets to potentially address in the short-term include Philippines, Taiwan, Brazil, India, Japan and South Korea. Market entry strategies based on UKeU staff visits and secondary analyses have been developed for Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Brazil. External advice has been sought to help with the market entry strategies for China and Japan.²

Note on Provenance

This report was found in PDF format in the Sales and Marketing area of the UKeU electronic archive. A Word version was supplied by the author.

Production Notes

After a review of the document and its internal structure, the editors decided that the structure and formatting of the original document was a work of art, deserving to be viewed by readers in its glory, thus to be preserved, not forced into "UKeU Report" house layout. Thus apart from running headers and footers to indicate its place in the Reports series – and to identify which section readers were in – no other formatting changes were made. To avoid disturbing the complex and fragile formatting of the document, endnotes rather than footnotes were used for updates and clarifications. There are also changes to hyphenation and similar subtle parameters.

With care, the usual editing changes were made to spelling, grammar, etc.

All maps and flags reproduced here are drawn from the CIA's *World Factbook 2005* – see <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>. They have been reproduced, with thanks to CIA, under the guidelines for public reproduction of such material, found at http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/docs/contributor_copyright.html.

Further Information from UKeU

It is hoped at some point to publish the "market entry" strategy documents referred to above for Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Brazil (and some more that came later, such as South Africa) – they would be relevant to many other organisations than UKeU. However, these documents are incomplete, are in multiple versions from different dates, and contain many matters of commercial sensitivity to organisations

² See Report 05.

still in existence; thus care and some lapse of time will be necessary before versions could be made public.

There are also marketing plans for every single course that UKeU offered but in the editors' view they would require a deep level of aggregation and anonymisation before being released in a way acceptable to the HE sector.

Other Reports in this UKeU Reports series cover China and Japan, but there is no overview of the situation in Malaysia, Thailand, or Korea – these would seem to be a priority for the next round. It is most unlikely that for each such country there is a single overview document lurking in the UKeU archives but there would be a number of draft reports and presentations on a range of topics from which reports might be synthesised.

Further Reading on Pricing of Online Courses

We recommend perusal of some recent reports from the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education on pricing and regulatory issues for transnational education; in particular "Pricing Online Learning: practice, rationale & transparency", by Richard Garrett & Dugald MacLean (OBHE Briefing Note no. 16, March 2004, <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/briefings/pdfs/PricingOnlineLearning.pdf>).

UK HEIs should of course also consult their usual sources of advice, not least the British Council, on the latest situation in countries of interest.

¹ These are the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU), with an English Web site at <http://www.stou.ac.th/Eng/>; and Ramkhamhaeng University with an English Web site at <http://www.ru.ac.th/english/>.

² Harrow International School has its Web site at <http://harrowschool.ac.th>.

³ AACSB, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, is a US-based accrediting agency for bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes in business administration and accounting. See <http://www.aacsb.edu>.

⁴ Ajman University of Science and Technology has a Web site at <http://www.ajman.ac.ae> but there is no recent news on any Cyber University. Searches for similar terms including e-learning did not yield hits.

⁵ He seems to have been correct. However, a number of e-learning conferences have been held in UAE and low-level activity at several universities is growing. See for example the material on the aptly-titled "Emerging E-Learning" Conference at <http://www.admc.hct.ac.ae/admcinternet/emel2004/>.

⁶ See earlier endnote on Ajman.