

UWE Bristol International Talent Scheme

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Overview

With a population of over 625 million people, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) boasts the world's third largest consumer market and the world's seventh largest economy. Forecasts published by the Asian Development Bank predict that by 2018 this will rise to fifth and by 2030 it will be the world's fourth largest economy, averring this region as an emerging global market.

Data from the Gapminder Foundation further illustrates the flourishing ASEAN picture. As well as being one of the world's fastest growing economies, ASEAN's society is rapidly changing with 30% of the population under the age of thirty. This presents prospects for a significant geographic dividend compared with ageing countries such as China, Japan, and the USA. The rise of ASEAN's burgeoning middle class and a shift to a consumption-oriented growth model offers a myriad of opportunities for foreign companies across many sectors. The ASEAN market presents itself as an accessible one, with Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand ranking second, twenty-third and forty-sixth in the World Bank's report on 'Ease of Doing Business 2017'. This undoubtedly presents an economically attractive opportunity for UK-ASEAN trading activity, and with this market now trending at the forefront of UK export agendas, SMEs can be creative in the way that they access cost-effective support to enter this open and thriving market.

As universities in the UK have become increasingly internationalised institutions, the potential and scope for cross-cultural collaboration with UK businesses can be harnessed. Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand continue to feature in the top ten non-EU countries sending students to UK higher education institutions. Data published by the UK Council for International Student Affairs affirms that the UK and ASEAN countries continue to forge strong ties in the education field.

About UWE Bristol

In 2016 The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) welcomed its largest number of international students from the ASEAN region to date, and recognises the opportunity and obligation to play its part in enabling such collaborations. As an example, the university has set up the UWE Bristol International Talent Scheme. The programme aims to provide international students with work experience and access to UK businesses whilst completing their academic studies. Students provide an international business asset to organisations by supporting with project work and export activity.

Dr Nick Wilton, Academic Director for External Engagement in the Faculty of Business and Law at UWE Bristol, asserts that the insights provided by such students are enhanced by curriculum design at UWE that hones the development of critical graduate attributes,

including global citizenship and cross-cultural awareness. The International Talent Scheme is supported by the university's internationalisation and employability strategies which aim to promote the value and contribution that international students can make to UK businesses.

About the International Talent Scheme

The UWE Bristol International Talent Scheme enables employers to access a wide portfolio of services relating to export activity such as translation and interpreting, researching and identifying new markets, liaising with key suppliers, customers, and clients in specific markets, and providing cultural insight. The scheme is mutually beneficial; students hone their UK business acumen and employers are able to capitalise on students' cultural and linguistic assets.

The AEC boasts one of the world's largest and fastest-growing digital consumer markets. ASEAN has the second largest Facebook population and the third largest population of mobile phone users, presenting a golden digital era. Businesses relish and express great interest in engaging with the UWE Bristol International Talent programme as a cost-effective way of accessing support to launch e-commerce and digital strategies to target and sell to ASEAN consumers more effectively. As an example, much of the recent interest in the UWE Bristol programme has been around accessing support to launch marketing and social media campaigns and its potential to reach ASEAN consumers.

Feedback from 'Phineas Products Ltd' a business that has engaged with the UWE Bristol programme, highlights the invaluable contribution that an international student was able to make to their export journey: 'With the aid of an OMIS market report from the Department for International Trade, the intern was quickly able to identify the key players in our target market and start communication with the decision makers. Her native language was invaluable in building relationships and understanding the market in depth'.

The rise in UK-ASEAN educational partnerships and ASEAN's rapidly developing economy provides both British businesses and higher education institutions with growing opportunities for collaboration and expansion. Today's ASEAN students can be considered as the 'consumers of tomorrow' with the potential to support knowledge transfer, international cooperation and business expertise.

To learn more about the UWE Bristol International Talent Scheme, please contact the author Jessica Tomico: internationaltalent@uwe.ac.uk.

Some of the statistical information around trading and exporting to the ASEAN region was provided by Shozey Jafferi, Market Specialist – South East Asia, Department for International Trade.