



# TradeServices

## SAUDI ARABIA FACT SHEET: 6

### Education

Spending \$32.6 billion (26%) of the national budget on training and education, Saudi Arabia has more than 30,000 schools and more than 400,000 teachers. Spending will focus on; education, training, three new universities, including the largest women-only university in the world, 85 new colleges and the set up of over 4000 new schools.

The Saudi population is estimated at 26 million, which includes about 8 million expatriates. Approximately 60 per cent are under 30 years old, which highlights the pressing need to increase the number of educational institutions Kingdom-wide. In the past four years, the government has established 12 new public universities.

#### Best Prospects/Services

Student exchange offers excellent opportunities for partner institutions. Currently, there are approximately 53,000 Saudis completing their higher education studies abroad, 8000 in Australia. Most of these students are recipients of the government scholarship program often referred to as the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP).

KASP students generally receive a scholarship for five years or more, to cover at least one year of English language study and four years for a bachelor's degree or whatever is necessary for advanced degrees. This scholarship enables Saudis to comfortably study abroad, thus creates the potential for partner institutions to develop mutually beneficial exchange agreements. In fact in some cases families are also financially supported to accompany the student abroad.

Saudi females in particular consider Australia a more desirable study destination as opposed to other western countries. Although acquiring a visa often takes up to 40 days; Australia's multicultural society is increasingly receiving positive feedback in Saudi Arabia. This is likely to encourage greater numbers of Saudi students to consider study abroad in the coming future.

In 2009 The Ministry of Education will carry out seven training programs for more than 400,000 teachers, focusing on their specialisation, school management, educational supervision, computer science, self-development and improvement of skills to provide modern technological facilities such as interactive boards, displaying devices, communication network and internet services.

Saudi universities will need around 100,000 university staff by 2030 but only have 40,000 currently, so training future staff is a priority. Whilst estimates are not available on the importation of educational or training materials into Saudi Arabia, it is suggested English learning materials will be in high demand.

Courses in English as a Foreign Language (EFL, also known as ESL) are used extensively by private and government organisations. Opportunities in the Saudi market include short and long term programs in high school pilot and aviation; technician training courses; medical related training such as nursing, x-ray technicians, emergency aviation; medicine, pharmacy and medical science (undergraduate, postgraduate levels).

Distance learning is also becoming a popular option in Saudi Arabia. Students are now increasingly interested in taking distance courses with reputable educational



institutions. In addition, existing Saudi colleges see it as an opportunity to form a connection with Australian institutions which can result in an accredited Saudi/Australian qualification.

## Opportunities

- Student exchange
- Qualified teachers
- Educational supervisors
- Librarian
- Student advisor
- School principal
- School deputy
- English learning materials
- Online university courses to be completed via correspondence
- Vocational and technical training
- Graduate courses
- Postgraduate courses

## Barriers:

The Saudi Arabian market is very sensitive about the course material used. Courses from overseas, particularly of a non-technical nature such as EFL, often run into difficulties and prove unacceptable. In accordance with Saudi and Muslim culture, all forms of education/training are strictly segregated.

It is very important to note that there are no current opportunities for Australian students to study abroad in the Kingdom. Saudi Arabian universities offer degrees which are seen less in quality than those offered by Australian universities.

Note: Schools and universities are separated based on gender.

\* All prices are quoted in Australian Dollars \$AUD