

# **Queen's-Blyth International Studies Program**

## **Background**

Queen's University and Blyth Education have now entered into an agreement to operate jointly the Queen's-Blyth International Studies Program, for an initial pilot period of three years. An agreement between the parties was signed on 19 January 2011.

The program will result in the delivery of a range of Queen's undergraduate courses during Spring and Summer terms in a number of overseas venues, with Queen's responsible for all academic aspects of the program and Blyth responsible for all operational logistics.

Blyth Education is a long-established Toronto private company that for more than thirty years has been successfully coordinating the delivery of fully accredited Ontario high-school courses (grades 11 and 12) overseas. The program is widely respected and currently provides courses during the summer months for approximately 1,200 Canadian high-school students at twenty-four different international venues in more than twenty different countries.

The Program will operate along lines very similar to the Summer Term programming that has been successfully operating at the Bader International Study Centre (BISC) for several years.

There are strong indications that the Program will have the potential for significant revenue generation, for expanding Queen's enrolment through off-campus delivery of courses, and for enhancing Queen's international profile in general.

## **The Program**

The three-year pilot project will see the first offerings of Queen's courses in Spring (May-June) and Summer (June-July) 2012 in six different international venues, three in Europe (most likely in France, Spain, and Italy) and three outside of Europe (most likely in Australia, Egypt, and Costa Rica). All of the proposed venues have been previously used with success by Blyth for their high-school programs and will have experienced non-academic support staff on site.

Each course will be a 3-credit course (0.5) of four weeks' duration and will include a rich field-studies component appropriate to the particular venue, a model that has been successfully employed at the BISC for several years.

The primary target market will be academically qualified upper-year students from universities across Canada and the north-eastern United States, who will register for a specific course on the basis of a Letter of Permission from their home institution. Qualified Queen's students will also be eligible to apply for admission to individual courses.

The program will be widely advertised and promoted by Blyth, including to some 4,000 recent alumni of their various high-school programs, a high percentage of whom have indicated interest in a university-level program of this kind.

### **Organization**

The proposed program will be coordinated through the International Programs Office (IPO) of the Faculty of Arts and Science and organized along lines very similar to those that have been successfully employed in selecting both courses and instructors at the BISC over the past sixteen years.

The process for the selection of courses will involve Heads of Department being contacted early in 2011 with a suggested preliminary slate of courses to be delivered in Spring and Summer 2012, predominantly but not exclusively in the arts and humanities, for each of the six proposed venues. Heads will be invited to comment on the suitability of the proposed courses and to suggest alternatives if necessary.

Course offerings will initially be limited to 3-credit (0.5) courses already listed in the Arts and Science calendar, but it is anticipated that INTS-type courses designed to take maximum advantage of individual venues will gradually be introduced (through the usual Curriculum Committee process), as has once again been the case at the BISC. The number of overseas venues is likely to be increased to eight in 2013 and to ten in 2014.

The process for the selection of instructors will first involve a call for applications being issued by the IPO, which will then forward the applications received to the Head of the relevant department for assessment, as is currently done for BISC appointments. The resulting slate of instructors, assembled by the Associate Dean (International), will be subject to final approval by the Dean.

### **Revenues**

Students enrolled in this program will normally take just one 3-credit course in either Spring (May-June) or Summer (June-July) and will pay tuition fees to Queen's (roughly \$500 per course) and a program fee to Blyth. Queen's will also receive upper-year BIU funding (roughly \$580) for each course enrolment.

Queen's will pay instructor stipends at the standard BISC rate of \$5000 per 3-credit course, while Blyth will be responsible for instructors' return airfare and local travel expenses as well as their board and lodging. Blyth will provide a budget for relevant field-study activities at each venue and will also provide a trained and experienced non-academic support-staff team at each venue.

In each year of the three-year pilot project, Blyth will provide Queen's with a subsidy of \$100 for each course enrolment, but amounting to not less than \$30,000 in total, to defray associated administrative costs.

Based on their own ongoing market research and current programming numbers, Blyth estimates that an eventual steady state of 2,000 course enrolments would not be unrealistic. Such a figure could of course take some time to achieve, but indications are that an enrolment of 500 students could provide a net revenue to the university of about \$330,000; an enrolment of 1000 students could provide in the region of \$700,000; and an enrolment of 2000 could provide approximately \$1.45 million.

During the pilot phase of the program, Blyth will also subsidize low-enrolment courses; will provide funding for financial awards to approximately 10% of the participating students; and will formally undertake to hold Queen's harmless from any liability arising from participation in the program.

Blyth has undertaken not to enter into an agreement with any other Canadian university to offer a university-level international program during the term of the three-year agreement or its extensions. Queen's retains the right to continue to offer existing credit courses in overseas locations to its students outside of this agreement with Blyth.

## **Conclusion**

The potential for revenue generation does indeed seem significant, and the Dean's Office will of course be arguing for retaining as much of this revenue as possible within the Faculty of Arts and Science, thereby contributing to the relief of at least some of the continuing financial pressures on departments.

Within the next few weeks, as mentioned above, Heads of Department will receive a suggested slate of courses for possible delivery in Spring and Summer 2012 at each of the six proposed venues.

Heads will be invited to comment on the suitability of the proposed courses and to suggest alternatives if necessary. Any other comments Heads may have on the Program, whether in general terms or on points of detail, will of course be welcome as we make our way forward on this exciting initiative.