

SPECIAL
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Study in Australia



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OFFBEAT OPTIONS:
 (from far left) Study film at the Sydney Film School, gaming at the Edith Cowan University or hospitality at the International College of Hotel Management.

Lights, camera, action!

Alvin Lai finds out why niche programmes in film, gaming and hospitality in Australian schools are fast gaining ground among foreign students

BUSINESS management, engineering, even medicine — these are courses you expect most Australia-bound students to enrol in.

But increasingly, students are opting for niche programmes like hotel management, games design and even film studies at universities Down Under.

This is hardly surprising, as the country is becoming another Hollywood, with blockbusters like the Matrix and Star Wars movies, as well as Bryan Singer's highly anticipated Superman Returns, being filmed there.

Graduates of the Sydney

Film School (SFS) have worked in various roles on these films, said John Buckmaster, education manager at the school. "Many students who have studied here now work in the film industry. Others have also successfully gained government funding for their own projects."

An outgrowth of the University of Sydney, SFS accepts about 80 students per semester. About a third of this select group hail from China, Thailand, Korea, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and even the United States. There are cur-

rently no Singapore students, Mr Buckmaster said, but there is interest.

The relatively high proportion of foreign students may surprise some, but the faculty and alumni boast of film veterans such as Jenny Day, producer of Australian films *Radiance* and *Not Fourteen Again*, the latter directed by Gillian Armstrong (*Little Women*, *Charlotte Gray*).

Others include Brian Hannant, writer of *Mad Max 2*, and SFS director Ben Ferris, the top prize winner at the Inaugural Kurosawa Memorial Film Fes-

tival in 2005 for his short, *The Kitchen*, which was filmed in a single take.

SFS' core programme is the Diploma of Screen, a one-year full-time course that teaches students 16mm film and digital video production.

Students learn how to write and direct, and get to specialise in one of several disciplines, including cinematography and production design. Weekly film viewing and discussions are mandatory.

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