

## **Draft Report**

Sixth Review Meeting of the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme  
22-23 November 2013  
Chiang Rai, Thailand

### **Introduction**

1. The 6<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting of the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme was held at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand, from 22 to 23 November 2013.
2. The Meeting was attended by 108 participants, including delegates from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia; the Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia; the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand; the Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam; the Commission on Higher Education, the Philippines; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan; representatives from participating universities in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines and Japan; and the Director and staff of SEAMEO RIHED.
3. The list of participants is included in *Annex I*.

### **Opening Ceremony**

4. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vanchai Sirichana, President, Mae Fah Luang University, welcomed all delegates and participants present at the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting. He explained that throughout the 15 year history of the university, Mae Fah Luang has had a strong commitment to encourage international collaboration and promote student exchange within ASEAN and beyond. He expressed his delight to host the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting and commented that the AIMS Programme has contributed greatly towards mobility in the region and to the development of participating universities. He thanked the Meeting for the ongoing effort and contribution made towards AIMS, explaining that Mae Fah Luang is committed to making the Programme a success, and offering his wishes to participants for a fruitful discussion and a pleasant stay in Chiang Rai, Thailand.
5. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Piniti Ratananukul, Deputy Secretary-General, Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand, delivered opening remarks and conveyed to the Meeting the apologies of the Secretary-General of the Office of the Higher Education Commission for being unable to attend. He wished all participants a productive and enjoyable time in Thailand. He noted recent developments in the AIMS Programme, including country expansion, and welcomed the participation of the ASEAN +3 countries. He also informed the Meeting that EU experts had been invited in October 2013 to evaluate implementation of the Programme and found that the consequences of expansion were both beneficial and welcome among participating Thai universities. On behalf of the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand, he expressed gratitude for the valuable inputs that the Meeting will provide and declared the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme open.

### **Overall Programme Update**

6. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sauwakon Ratanwijitrasin, Director, SEAMEO RIHED, thanked Assoc. Prof. Dr. Piniti Ratananukul and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vanchai Sirichana and welcomed all participants to the Meeting. In light of new members, a brief history and overview of the Programme was provided, detailing the launch of the pilot project in 2010 among the governments of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand (M-I-T) to support student mobility and the growth of that project into the current ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme. Now, with growing regional and international interest, AIMS has expanded to include 7 member countries, 7 study fields and 59

participating universities. She added that the Meeting has become both a forum and an opportunity for Ministries and universities to come together and set the policies, direction and development of AIMS. In that regard, it was suggested that more work and flexibility will be required to achieve the goal of expanding the Programme to 10 member countries and 10 study fields by 2015.

7. Current Programme arrangements were then clarified, including the focus on undergraduate studies, the international dimension of studies and the use of English as the medium of instruction in study fields collectively determined by all members. She explained that while government scholarships remain key financial resources for the Programme, financial responsibility has increased along with Programme expansion. As a result, she clarified that the Programme now welcomes alternative sources of funding to support students as well as the development of means to assist prospective member countries such as Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar and Timor-Leste in joining. In regards to further expansion of the Programme, flexibility and relaxed reciprocity were requested and encouraged. The need to better understand, manage and promote the Programme through the development of support mechanisms and an AIMS website will also be promoted to ensure enhanced mobility of students and help achieve long-lasting prosperity and peace for the region.
8. The complete details of the Overall Programme Update appear in *Annex II*.

### **Plenary Session: Country Progress and Development Plans**

#### *Thailand*

9. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Piniti Ratananukul chaired the Plenary Session and presented Thailand's progress and development plan. He provided an overview of Thailand's participation since 2010, explaining that the idea for a pilot project was supported at the Ministerial level, as a way to promote student mobility in the region. The governments of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand took the initiative, agreeing in principle to support student mobility. For the 2014 development plan, Thailand will encourage broader participation with new member countries and increase support for student mobility. He also outlined support for iAward implementation, the AIMS Certificate and the development of an AIMS website to help support and promote the Programme.

#### *Malaysia*

10. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anees Jane Ali, Director of the International Office at Universiti Sains Malaysia, presented on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. He updated the Meeting on selected Malaysian universities participating in the Programme and provided an overview of total inbound and outbound statistics, highlighting that between 2010 and 2013, a total of 358 outbound and 307 inbound students were recorded. Obstacles and challenges facing the Programme were also detailed, including the appropriate selection of study fields based on university competencies and niche areas, the availability of courses offered in English and the qualifications of lecturers at partner universities. Immigration procedures and visa applications were singled out as an ongoing issue of importance for Programme implementation as well as the need to harmonize academic calendars and balance student numbers.

#### *Indonesia*

11. Dr. Eko Hari Purnomo, Head of the International Collaboration Office, Bogor Agricultural University, presented on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia. He provided an overview of selected Indonesian universities by study field and outlined Indonesia's commitment to the Programme in terms of student scholarships. He also explained that the country will strive to

encourage reciprocity and balanced student numbers. Challenges and recommendations for the Programme were then grouped according to level: at the coordinator level, SEAMEO RIHED was requested to distribute the Certificate as well as continue iAward implementation; at the university level, better communication and more complete course information were encouraged; and, at the government level, student visa procedures were highlighted for improvement and continued commitment to providing financial support was requested.

#### *Brunei Darussalam*

12. Dr. Abby Tan, Director of the International and Public Relations Office, University of Brunei Darussalam, presented an update on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam. He presented an overview of the country's selection for the Programme, the University of Brunei Darussalam, which will offer 6 study fields and English language instruction in all courses. Brunei Darussalam will also be prepared to assist incoming AIMS students with visas to cover the duration of their stay. Challenges encountered thus far for Brunei Darussalam included imbalanced mobility, credit transfer, a lack of courses taught in English at other universities and the high cost of living in Brunei Darussalam for prospective students.

#### *Philippines*

13. Ms. Joy Christine Bacwaden-Gitau, Chief of the Commission on Higher Education, the Philippines, detailed the steps taken by the Commission to implement the Programme and prepare for student exchange, including the creation of a technical working group to facilitate the selection process of universities and study fields. She explained that shortlisting was based on identifying university strengths according to study fields and looking for institutions with autonomous and deregulated status, in order to assemble centers of excellence with strong international relations to participate in the Programme. After the shortlisting process, assessment visits were carried out in order to determine readiness for exchange under AIMS. The final selection process resulted in the selection of 12 universities in the Philippines. Current efforts are directed at strengthening International Relations Offices and facilitating the granting of special non-immigrant visas for inbound AIMS students.

#### *Japan*

14. Mr. Kuniaki Sato, Deputy Director of the Higher Education Policy and Planning Division, Higher Education Bureau, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, introduced the selection process for Japanese universities. After putting out an open call, applications were screened by a committee. The outcomes of the selection process, according to study fields, were then presented to the Meeting. He explained that Japan will support a total of 175 students with scholarships; however, as Japan is currently preparing its fiscal budget, more complete details of financial support and any possibility of extra assistance for inbound ASEAN students will tentatively be available by the 7<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting. It was also explained that Japan will perform mid-term evaluations and annual reviews of all participating Japanese universities to follow up on Programme implementation and ensure the quality and accountability of Japanese universities.
15. In response to the presentations, the Meeting recognized that ongoing effort is required from participating countries to alleviate visa problems for students. Steps will also be taken to enhance communication throughout the Programme, including the sharing of contact information at both the university and study field level. The Meeting also discussed possibilities for research and internships through the Programme. The Meeting recognized that while research is welcomed, it can also result in reduced student interaction on campus. In that regard, a balance with regular course work should be promoted for the benefit of AIMS students. The Meeting recognized as well

that internship opportunities can be explored based on agreement between participating home and host universities. The Meeting took note of upcoming changes to the academic calendars of Thailand and the Philippines and sought, in the context of regional expansion, the development of supporting mechanisms for the Programme and measures to clearly define the AIMS Programme in relation to existing bilateral relationships.

16. The Progress and Development Plan presentations are included in *Annex III*.

### **Parallel Sessions: University and Ministry Groups**

17. The parallel sessions provided an opportunity for close consultation among participants to discuss operational issues and Programme development. University and Ministry representatives were divided into two groups, respectively. University representatives were further grouped according to study field and were requested to consult on mechanisms for coordinating student exchange, working processes for matching course syllabi and information deemed necessary for an AIMS website. Ministry representatives discussed issues raised during the Meeting, as well as the development of an AIMS website and iAward implementation. Below is a summary of the proceedings.

#### *Language and Culture*

18. The group representing Language and Culture noted differences among academic calendars and encouraged faculty to be more flexible by considering early examinations and shortened semesters for inbound and outbound students. The group recommended that the student application and selection process be completed at least 6 months prior to the start of the semester. Enhanced communication at both the university and study field level was encouraged. Further difficulties encountered included differences among grading systems at partner universities, which the group will work to overcome. For the AIMS website, clear information for each participating university was suggested, covering academic calendars, application timelines, credit transfer and grading systems, accommodation, tuition and fees and contact details.

#### *Hospitality and Tourism*

19. The group representing Hospitality and Tourism remarked that a majority of universities will soon share similar academic calendars and flexibility was encouraged in the group to overcome present differences among semesters. The group recommended that the application and selection process should be finalized at least 2 months prior to the start of the semester, leaving sufficient time for visa applications. It was also recommended to enhance bilateral coordination for the matching of syllabi and to ensure timely updates are regularly circulated between home and host universities.

#### *Food Science and Technology*

20. The group representing Food Science and Technology also remarked on similarities in academic calendars and detailed plans to facilitate course equivalency between partner universities participating in the Programme. The group also cited ongoing problems with credit and grade transfer. The group recommended that application and selection processes should be concluded at least 2 months prior to the start of the semester. In order to enhance mobility in the Programme, the group also recommended that the AIMS website present clear contact and application information as well as basic information pertinent for each university in the Programme.

### *Economics*

21. The group representing Economics remarked on similarities among academic calendars and suggested that acceptance to the Programme be given to students at least 4 months prior to the start of the semester. The group also recommended ensuring orientation activities are in place upon arrival to acclimatize the student to the host country. More complete information and the regular sharing of course offerings were requested. The group recommended enhancing communication at the study field level by appointing contact persons. Recommendations for an AIMS website included contact information at university and study field level, academic calendars, grading systems, academic highlights, student experiences, an alumni forum and information on upcoming events and activities. Additional suggestions for the Programme included the development of AIMS public relations materials and documentation for all participating universities, staff exchange, and alumni forum and a competition to produce an AIMS logo.

### *Engineering*

22. The group representing Engineering presented a brief overview of their discussion, including the matching of course calendars, credit transfer and course equivalency. The group considered the availability and completeness of information to support student exchange among participating universities and examined ways of improving recognition. The group recommended increased sharing of information, including information on the availability of English language courses at partner universities as well as the need to assign key contact persons at both the university and study field level. The group also examined opportunities for research and internships at partner universities and living costs among participating universities.

### *Agriculture*

23. The group representing Agriculture suggested that preparation for exchange, including the matching of course syllabi, application and selection processes and the issuing of acceptance letters should be completed at least 3 months prior to the start of the semester to avoid visa issues. The group recommended that the process to match course syllabi is enhanced at the bilateral level through sharing and the provision of more complete information. In that regard, it was recommended for an AIMS website to provide links to syllabi and ensure that information is available to support student exchange. The group also recommended improving the quality of collaboration under AIMS for the next Meeting.

### *International Business*

24. The group representing International Business promoted enhanced collaboration among home and host universities and requested more complete information on guidelines, academic calendars and course offerings. This information, in turn, could be made available on each university website and students could be encouraged to work independently to prepare their application with support from academic advisors. The group noted that application deadlines should be set 4 to 5 months in advance to accommodate visa application procedures. The group also agreed that the AIMS website should provide clear and complete information on course offerings, academic calendars and partner universities. For upcoming Meetings, the group presented two proposals for the invitation of keynote speakers as well as measures to improve international awareness of the Programme.

### *Ministry Representatives Group*

25. The Ministry representatives group recognized the need to facilitate communication for the Programme and will seek all parties to provide contact information at the Ministerial level, the university level and at the level of study fields in order to improve the overall flow of information

for the Programme. Universities were also requested to provide clear information on application procedures to ensure queries about the Programme are directed to the right persons. Additionally, the group remarked on the growth of the Programme and the goal to mobilize ASEAN students, affirming continued support for this objective. The group addressed the AIMS Certificate and proposed new design guidelines to clarify the role of Ministries, home and host institutions and addressed the creation of an AIMS logo. The proposal for an AIMS website will be put on hold; alternatively, SEAMEO RIHED will provide links through its website and a social media platform will be created for the promotion of AIMS. For iAward implementation, group representatives will provide feedback on how to proceed and modify the assessment process to reflect the addition of new member countries in the Programme.

26. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sauwakon Ratanawijitrasin thanked all of the groups for participating in the parallel sessions and for providing useful insights, including a suggestion to organize a competition for the design of an AIMS logo.

#### **Next Review Meeting**

27. Ms. Joy Christine Bacwaden-Gitau confirmed that the 7<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting of the AIMS Programme will be held in the Philippines, tentatively towards the end of May 2014. The 8<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting was confirmed by Dr. Abby Tan to be held in Brunei Darussalam towards the end of November 2014.

#### **Closing Remarks**

28. The Sixth Review Meeting was held in the traditional spirit of SEAMEO friendship and solidarity.