

Malaysian student's Belarus experience

In 2012 Belarus State Medical University (BSMU) applied to Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) to be accredited in Malaysia. The application is still under consideration. However this creates no obstacle for Malaysian citizens to study in Belarus.

Since 2011 a student from Malaysia is studying at BSMU in Minsk. In February 2015 he shared his experience with the Embassy of Belarus in Indonesia.



Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malaysia the Hon. Datuk Ronald Kiandee (second left) visits Belarus State Medical University in August 2014
(photo credit: <http://www.bsmu.by/allarticles/rubric2/article839/>)

Enrollment

I enrolled at BSMU early 4 years ago (I'm in my 4th year now). I did an intensive Russian Language course during the summer at BSU to prepare myself for BSMU. I then sat for an entrance exam at BSMU. And that's how I got into BSMU.

I was helped by my dad's friend Dr. Aleksandr who once studied at BSMU many years ago. He helped me with the process of applying and etc. He is a Belarusian who resides in Tokyo. He has been living there for quite some time.

Reasons for choosing BSMU

One of the reasons why I chose BSMU was based on Dr. Aleksandr's recommendation. He told me that it's a very good university and the quality of education is good plus it's reasonable compared to say other parts of the

world. You get quality education for the price. He did tell me beforehand some things might be difficult to get used too like the language and the weather (coming from South East Asia, the weather can be very harsh at times but thankfully I'm used to it already).

Other reasons are such as the price itself. Like I have mentioned above, it's relatively reasonable. Even in comparison to say Russia or Ukraine, it is cheaper in Belarus and the general cost of living is cheaper too. Take for example the difference between the cost of living in Moscow and Minsk. The difference is stark.

Another thing about cost is the example of Russia where most Malaysians study. Recently, the prices have been increasing there. Belarus stands out in this aspect since it's cheaper. I'm sure the government is always finding ways to provide cheaper alternatives and this is where Belarus has an advantage.

I also decided to choose Belarus because it's at the heart of Europe and to experience Europe and all it has to offer. The culture, the languages, etc. This helps me immerse myself in things that I have not exposed myself to.

Another reason is that many Malaysians in general choose Ukraine or Russia because that's where Malaysians usually go for a relatively cheap education especially Medicine. It's relatively cheaper compared to the UK, the US, Australia, India etc. I wanted to do something out of the norm hence why I chose Belarus because most of the foreign graduates are from Russia these days.

Studying Medicine

Studying in Belarus is good. For the Medicine program for example, the syllabus is very thorough and it will make you become a good doctor at the end of the day. Another thing is that during the clinical years (4th to 6th year), we get to visit many hospitals and clinics for exposure and also to broaden our knowledge. As you very well know, Minsk has lots of hospitals that cater for all sorts of illnesses. For example you have the usual hospitals and then you have Research & Clinical Centers (RNPC) and others.

Studying here also enables me to meet people from all around the world and to mix around with them. This is invaluable as it broadens my knowledge.

View on how to attract more Malaysians to study in Belarus

As for getting students from Malaysia to study in Belarus, the first thing that has to be done is to get the university recognized. This is imperative. Without the recognition, not many people would send their child to Belarus due to the fact that they have to sit for an exam upon graduation back home. If it's recognized, he/she will be guaranteed a job hence there won't be any worries about having to sit for an exam. This is applicable to

parents who want to send their child and pay for them on their own.

If it's from the government, for example a scholarship, this too is an important step. This guarantees a job at the end of the day.

Usually the government sends students with scholarships such as JPA, MARA to Ukraine or Russia. More recently it has shifted to Russia more. But as mentioned above, Belarus is a cheaper option compared to Russia and as good in terms of quality if not better than Russia. So I think the cost factor could be used to explain to the Malaysian officials and show them the quality of the education too. If you manage to get the government to send a batch of students first, parents who are willing to pay on their own will soon follow. That's how it works in Malaysia. It's all about the guarantee at the end of the day.

Belarus has to be promoted as the country itself and Belarusian education as an alternative to Russia, etc. This will let the public know of another option to study Medicine. Another thing is to get agents to get students to enroll in Belarus. I'm sure there are other ways to but in general it all boils down to the recognition and Belarus being an alternative choice for education.

On the other hand Malaysia could also be promoted as destination for a holiday for Belarusians and vice versa for Malaysians to visit Belarus. Most Belarusian visit Thailand or Indonesia for a holiday in SEA. Malaysia is not that visited by Belarusians despite no visa being required.

With Belarus diploma in Malaysia

As far as I know of, the SOP for Malaysian students studying Medicine in non-recognized universities around the world is that upon graduation, he/she has to sit for a paper in Malaysia by the MMC to certify that he/she is a qualified doctor. Recently, there have been talks about imposing a compulsory exam for all Malaysian graduates studying overseas regardless of the recognition of the university by the MMC. But for now it has yet to be enforced and it's merely a suggestion.

If I go back to Malaysia after graduating BSMU, I would have to sit for the exam. Upon passing the exam, I can start serving the Malaysian government. Another option that I have for now is to specialize or start working in Europe first. It could be the UK, Ireland etc. But I have not put any thought to do this for now as I still have two years left here.
