Think Education • Think Intelligent

(Every week, education expert Sanjeev Verma will answer your queries on studying abroad. E-mail queries to features@gulf-times.com)

How should I go about arranging funds for tertiary education?

— Peter

University education is undoubtedly an important factor for anyone desirous of good employment prospects and upward career mobility. In recent times, we have seen a number of surveys which validate the belief that individuals backed by a university degree have a substantially higher earning potential and also stand a better chance when it comes to getting better job offers.

Investing in quality education generally takes a sizeable chunk out of a family's savings and monthly income for student's loan to pay off.

A few ways to be better prepared to fund university education include estimating tuition and living costs, being focused on savings and insurance schemes, setting spending goals and budgets for university students, trying to avail the advantages of scholarships and financial aid as well as considering a sponsorship option if applicable. Qatar has a number of sponsoring bodies or companies like Qatar Petroleum, The Higher Education Institute, Barwa, Qatar Foundation, Qatari Diar, Civil Aviation Authority, Rasgas, etc, to name a few.

These companies are sponsoring Qatari students for various higher education programmes locally as well as abroad. This is very unique to this market and might not be available with many countries.

Financial institutions offer specialised products for education financing from an early stage that can enable parents to set up loans, savings and insurance schemes for their children's university education. However, such loans will also be available to students while heading to university given certain qualifying criterion.

Yet from an international student's viewpoint, something that is not given a lot of focus remains scholarships and financial aid. In the US, Canada and in a few cases in the UK, there are numerous programmes and schools with good funding and flexible repayment structures and tenures.

In most circumstances, academic excellence would be a determining factor, and therefore all the more reason to ensure excellent scores are maintained by students while in school.

Funding university education requires extensive planning. It is essential to start the planning process sooner than later. A good educational counsellor based in Doha would be able to point you in the right direction.

(Sanjeev Verma began with Ernst & Young and progressed to set up the Gulf operations of IDP Education Pty. He now leads Intelligent Partners, developing a wide range of solutions in areas of international education.)