

cant number" of self-sponsored students each year. Bradford says this has continued, but at lower rates than previously. He adds that BAE has "an intensely managed cost base", and having reduced its operations in line with reduced demand, it is now in the process of building again, anticipating airline recovery.

BAE also conducts military pilot training in Australia at different bases, which helps because the military business is not as dramatically cyclical as the civil side.

Meanwhile, Australia could become a yet more attractive location for flight training for overseas students when it fully implements its new national airspace system (NAS) plan. NAS is designed to bring US-style procedures and rules to the Australian airspace system. Implementation is under way and is due to be completed next year.

USA still favoured

Japan's All Nippon Airways (ANA) has not forsaken US training for its ab initio trainees. The airline says: "We still have our training centre in Bakersfield, which is for ANA, ANA Group and EVA Air trainees. The only effect of the US security clearance measures has been to lengthen the application process. We have no reluctance in sending trainees to the USA and are not looking for alternative facilities."

Dubai-based Emirates is the only long-and medium-haul airline in the world that is expanding significantly. Its senior vice-president flight operations Chris Knowles says it will be training 30 ab initio pilots a

"Everything that affects the airlines hits the flight training providers"

HARRY BRADFORD, BAE SYSTEMS FLIGHT TRAINING, AUSTRALIA

year, but over the next 18 months it needs a total of "about 200 pilots", compared with the 850 pilots already with the airline. Knowles forecasts that Emirates will employ 2,000 pilots by 2012.

The ab initio cadets – all from the United Arab Emirates – do a foundation course in aviation sciences and English before going to BAE Systems Flight Training at Adelaide, Australia, to perform about 250h flying in singles and twins, followed by a jet conversion course. Back in Dubai they undertake a multicrew-co-operation course in Emirates' Airbus A310 simulator, although the airline has only Airbus A330s and Boeing 777s in its fleet. The carrier is also putting those trainees "who want to get on" through an MSc in aviation transport at the UK's City University in London. A few of its top management pilots are doing the same course.

Among its present 850 pilots, says Knowles, there are about 50 nationalities,

and he considers multiculturalism a strength. Although Emirates' pay is not the highest in the world, Knowles stresses that the package for expatriate pilots is "attractive", with provision for schools, housing, medical care and no tax. "A lot goes back into the local economy," says Knowles.

Culture is a theme Knowles returns to, whether talking about national cultures, the airline's culture, or training culture. "There are no unions here," he says. "We have a culture that enables us to focus on standards and performance. We are developing new techniques – looking at performance rather than risks." Here he is referring to the use of flight data recorders for flight operational quality assurance. "To talk about risk depersonalises things. Talking about performance puts people at the centre. The object of the approach is continuous improvement rather than the tick-in-the-box approach prevalent in the industry."

Western culture

The airline is engaged on a study into setting up its own ab initio training school, and a part of its rationale is that almost all training provision is built around a Western culture. Although Knowles does not criticise this, he observes that for Middle Eastern students to travel to the USA for training is a major culture shock. The USA "is a really tough culture for them", he says, pointing out that he had decided against sending Emirates students – who used to train at the University of Western Michigan – to US flying training schools "well before 9/11".

Australian culture is gentler and the climate is more what the cadets are used to in the UAE, but it is still fundamentally Western.

Emirates' school, if it goes ahead, will be open to students worldwide, but for any Middle Eastern trainee there would be no problem with cultural transition, and Western students would have the proximity of Dubai, one of the world's great centres of multiculturalism. But the venture would entail a purpose-built airfield and campus, close enough to take advantage of the city of Dubai's facilities but far enough from the international airport to avoid airspace problems. And, points out Knowles, "the whole thing has to be businesslike and make money."

Making money does not seem to be that easy for the training industry right now. ■

Now is a good time to train and sponsorship deals are still available, but airlines can pick and choose who they hire

