

MINUTES FOR THE 91ST MEETING OF THE ENGLISH UK BOARD OF TRUSTEES (MB91)



Date: Wednesday 19 April 2023
Time: 13:00 - 16:00
Venue: Online via Zoom
Present: Mark Rendell (MR) [chair], Tim Cooke (TC), Catrin Diamantino (CD), Shoko Doherty (SD), Mary Doody (MD), Spencer Fordham (SF), Francesca Giacomini (FG), Neil Harris (NH), Farhan Quraishi (FQ), Stephan Roussounis (SR), Leon Zhang (LZ) and Richard Simpson (RS) [observing]
Attending: Jodie Gray (JG), Huan Japes (HJ), Annie Wright (AW), Nuria Felip Puignou (NFP) and Susan Young [minutes]

CONSTITUTIONAL BUSINESS

1. Apologies for absence

Jago Brown

2. Declarations of interest in any item of business on the agenda

None

3. Draft minutes of the 90th meeting of the English UK Board of Trustees held on Tuesday 7 February 2023

Approved

4. Matters arising and updates

- Action point a (English UK executive to create a process to invite applications for the Accreditation UK board post by October 2023, including a required skillset.) This will be done.
- Action point b: (HJ to update the board after the next SACB meeting and raise the issue of accommodation and lack of financial guarantees). HJ had fed the points back to Mark and Sam but the meeting was cancelled with no new date yet. He had sent out notifications on how to deal with outstanding debt to members and the situation was better than for some time though there were some issues in matching some students with debts. JG said there was an outstanding co-funded market report with the British Council and this was likely to focus on Saudi self-funding students. If all went to plan this would be published before the marketing conference in September.
- Action point c: (Members to be encouraged to flag up Saudi debt issues with English UK staff) – done.

- Action point d: (English UK executive to explore feasibility of a delegation/ PR mission to Turkey) JG said there had been talks with Board members and it was hoped to go ahead to coincide with ALTO on May 20/21. This had been discussed with the DBT, British Council and the British Chamber of Commerce in Turkey. The idea was to organise a stakeholder meeting with an agent round table and an open briefing session to make agents feel heard and try to resolve the situation. Members were telling us that the situation was very challenging.
- Action point e: (HJ to ask members how much Turkish business had been lost and arrange agent training) – this would be happening in early May.
- Action points e: (Engage VAT experts, including from the major firms, find out costs and benefits) and f: (monitor outcome of alternative dispute resolution). HJ said the dispute resolution happened on Monday and the result was likely within 2/3 weeks. They had not dismissed the case, which was a positive sign. English UK was in touch with Manches Cooper about possibly providing a paper on this but needed to see the case outcome first. The finance panel chair was also being helpful. HJ said the case could go either way and might have profound implications for members.
- Action point g: (Check whether Accreditation UK publicity requirements are causing issues) – JG said this was an ongoing action.
- Action point h: (HJ to investigate closer working with BALEAP) – he was talking to them the following day.
- Action point i: (AW to send the draft leaflet on teaching roles in ELT around for comment) – done, to be discussed later.
- Action point j: (English UK to look into getting information on the industry's gender pay gap) – JG and MR had been at a lead 5050 event the previous day and this was interesting but most members were too small to report on this.
- Action points k (English UK to note the number of non-Board members and organisations involved in sub and working groups) and Action point l: (English UK to thank them at the Members' Conference) – JG said this was done for the annual accounts and they would be thanked at the Members' Conference.
- Action point m: (circulate Accreditation UK Executive Board minutes with the next set of board papers) – this had been done – minutes were not yet completed for the most recent February meeting.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/ OR DECISION

5. Annual accounts for 2022

JG said the annual audited accounts had arrived from the auditors. The English UK Finance Panel had been very happy with the audit. There was one small issue, which was that each member of staff should have had a letter about their inflationary-linked pay rise explicitly stating the new salary rather than the percentage increase only. This adjustment had been made already.

The Board wished to express thanks to finance manager Nuria Felip Puignou for all her hard work delivering the accounts and congratulated her on yet another clean audit.

The accounts for English UK Ltd were still in draft because of an issue with the reserves policy: it had been agreed in 2022 that it should amount to three years' operation so £180k but current reserves fell just short at £174,950. The auditors suggested some additional wording and would then issue the final version.

The finance panel was happy for the Board to recommend the accounts for adoption at the AGM, pending the addition of the wording on the reserves policy.

The board voted in favour (with one abstention) of recommending the accounts for adoption at the AGM, conditional on the addition of the wording on the reserves policy.

Moving on to the accounts for English UK Enterprises Ltd accounts, JG reminded the Board these were also clean and the finance panel was happy to recommend adoption. After a discussion about the basis on which this was being done, the Board agreed that the Enterprises accounts be presented at the AGM.

6. Members' Conference and AGM plus Parliamentary Reception

JG said there was no paper – this was an update and for board members to input ideas.

The members' conference and AGM would be on 12 May close to Tower Bridge with a Parliamentary Reception at the House of Commons the day before hosted by Stephen Hammond MP: we were grateful to Wimbledon School of English for helping to broker that. JG asked board members to attend the conference and AGM, and encourage their MPs to come to the reception. The conference programme was similar to last year with some tweaks from feedback including adding a panel session to make the student statistics session more dynamic. A member presentation section would include group discussions, and ideas were welcome. JG invited thoughts on the programme, suggestions for discussion topics and volunteers to lead these. Suggestions included lobbying, climate change, capacity challenges and AI.

Moving on to the Parliamentary Reception, JG confirmed the sponsor of the reception would be PSI (Skills for English), it would launch the new excellent policy position paper and it was important to make a splash with as many MPs and members in the room as possible. HJ said the Earl of Minto, minister from DBT was likely to attend and speak, as was Stephen Hammond MP and chair MR.

7. StudyWorld strategy: 2024 & beyond

A first draft version had been presented to the Enterprises board, said JG, and this paper included feedback from the discussion with them plus more detailed financials.

JG said in 2020 the Board had approved a five-year strategic plan for StudyWorld 2020 – 2024. Later that year and as a result of the lockdown StudyWorld was cancelled and moved online in 2021 and 2022, with the first post-pandemic in-person event happening in March 2023.

English UK was adapting to having a smaller team than pre-pandemic, as well as learning from the pandemic. The idea was to run a sustainable and viable event with available resources, seeking consistent and solid financial results, to be flexible and adaptable for the sector as things change rapidly, and aligned with English UK's current new strategy.

The March event had been a consistent and solid performance to build on, and StudyWorld's strategy would align with English UK's to the end of 2025.

- The smaller size of StudyWorld had been positively received with a great ratio of educators to agents and service providers, a relaxed and friendly atmosphere and good quality meetings: this was reflected in feedback. This set it apart from the mega-workshops. There had been a pre-pandemic drive to be bigger and bigger but English UK was a very different organisation to its competitors. Bigger was not necessarily better, as feedback showed.
- A small minority of non-ELT education providers had attended, given good feedback, been appreciated by agents and helped keep the member price as low as possible. One which had signed up very late was already clamouring to return, and there had been little marketing spend on attracting this group.
- Dates had been extensively discussed by focus groups in researching the 2020 strategy – including September, late January and March but there had been no consensus, even among agents from the same country. Sticking to the same September date was not a deal breaker – StudyWorld could be made to work whenever it was held. January dates looked like a sweet spot in the marketing cycle and the only con was the timing of new year celebrations in some markets. The 2023 StudyWorld had not been held in January because of the perceived risk of a Covid spike this winter, but this looked unlikely to halt a future event.
- This year's event had been successful and research had shown that the timing was not the main reason for people not booking, but a shortage of available staff. Attendees said they enjoyed coming to the workshop not having spent the previous days at another one.

JG went on to discuss future plans:

- The five-year strategy had suggested StudyWorld travel outside London every other year. The current plan was for a four-year cycle, with three years in a London home base and the fourth outside – there were already proposals for Manchester and Brighton. Having a home base for three years made sense as there could be

preferential hotel rates, Hilton Bankside had been very popular, and educators got to know the area. It would become a settled pattern and very positive for the event.

- StudyWorld online would be held yearly: it had a decent operating margin, some centres appreciated a cheaper event and there were good agent numbers.
- Finally, there would be a StudyWorld overseas in a priority market at least once a year in 2024 and 2025. In 2023 the China activity would be under the StudyWorld brand. The reason was that it could be cross-promoted with agents and buyers, so agents could attend a local event before one in the UK. The event could be open to non-members and non-ELT educators, capped to produce diversity for agents and create a useful income stream to lower the member price. The DBT was in favour of this. Additionally, it made sense to run another event through Enterprises now StudyWorld was smaller.
- Eight indicators for measuring success included maintaining diversity of provision, with most providers ELT specialists, delegations from non-ETO backgrounds, a 20% operating margin, schedules over 75% full for educators, sustainability and an NPS score above 30.

A discussion followed. Main points included:

- Trustees liked the idea of moving events outside London and the Southeast, but there were differing opinions on moving once every four years. One member was against this, but SD said the Enterprises Board had been persuaded by the rationale of better rates from staying at one venue for subsequent years. It was pointed out that ICEF's Canadian event moves round and is well attended.
- One trustee was unhappy with the concept of StudyWorld intentionally remaining a smaller scale event.
- This year's StudyWorld had been successful and being deliberately different from competitors such as ICEF Berlin and Alphe UK was a strength – perhaps it should even be bolder in its difference. As long as StudyWorld was carving out a niche, people would come.
- The China event concept was a popular idea.
- One trustee thought the StudyWorld name did not sum up the UK focus and may be cause confusion, especially in relation to the China edition.

JG said one concern was that some people might think the UK edition of StudyWorld is likely to be somewhere different every year but noted was very unlikely that it would ever go to some locations popular with ELT students because it would be difficult to contract an appropriate venue and get people there in the numbers required. It was flagged that there were limited numbers of appropriate venues across the UK - perhaps three or four - and they needed to be booked well in advance. Would that end up disappointing people? There was some consensus that moving round was a good thing to do.

JG said the purpose of the strategy was to feel our way through, test ideas and see what worked.

MR thought the smaller size of StudyWorld was a good fit with English UK – there had been concerns about risk and liability in the past. He saw it could be filled with UK providers, it was portable and these both led to a better event atmosphere.

JG said there had been good feedback on location, rotation, brand, and China and thanked both the Board of Trustees and the Enterprises Board for their input.

Action point/s:

- a) English UK executive team to review the StudyWorld strategy incorporating feedback and plan next steps.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION AND/ OR REPORT

8. Review of the management accounts & cashflow update

NFP said that total income was slightly below the high case scenario but slightly above the base case. There was a significant reduction in expenditure compared to the budget, mainly on StudyWorld direct costs such as marketing and promotion.

Enterprises had enough money to retain a positive balance until the end of 2023 but the balance would drop when the management charge was paid. There was no income from the 2024 editions of the event yet.

NFP added that English UK Ltd's figures should be similar to budget by the end of April, with £461K cash. Membership subscriptions, events and training and corporate membership fees were the top three sources of income.

Events and training were expected to do better this year: the ELT conference and CELTSEM had done better than anticipated in the budget.

Comparing the budget with the forecast, NFP said seven members had been lost. Discounts had been offered to others and state sector members had taught fewer student weeks than anticipated, plus there was an increased cost from adding a parliamentary reception to the members' conference. An increased loss of £24K for the year was anticipated, but another source of income might come from renting out some of the English UK office desks.

Action point/s:

- b) English UK executive to look at increasing full-time staff later in the year to increase capacity.

9. Membership update

HJ said membership was 326 centres compared to 336 this time last year. There was a lower attrition rate of centres than during 2021-22, with interest in joining from two centres.

10. English UK 2023 position paper: Help us become the world's premier ELT destination again

MR said this was a great policy position paper. JG was looking forward to launching it at the parliamentary reception and urged the Board to it share widely.

Action point/s:

c) English UK executive to plan next steps for maximising the impact of the position paper after its launch.

11. Public affairs update | ID card travel issue & Youth Mobility progress

HJ outlined the nine asks on the position paper and said the two most active current campaigns were ID card travel and Youth Mobility Scheme expansion.

- ID cards – UKVI had now set up a policy team to look at solutions in the wake of the Anglo-French declaration. The first step had been achieved, which was to get the government to admit there was a problem.
- YMS – English UK was working with five other organisations and currently working on a paper including economic data, ramifications for the capacity challenge and perhaps wider freedom of movement to other countries.

HJ said all this was more drawn out than ideal and nothing was likely for the summer.

12. Capacity challenge update

HJ outlined progress including the teacher recruitment leaflet now on the website, the summer recruitment leaflet, and three summer careers fairs booked to encourage students to work in the industry. There would be another meeting with awarding bodies to create new CELTA centres and closer working with universities. Joint marketing was being developed with Cambridge and there were discussions with the British Council on how to promote the industry using its Teaching English website. There were talks with IALCA about making it easier for British people to work in Europe and also with the chair of the Migration Advisory Committee to say ELT needed more European workers through the shortage scheme.

Responding to questions, he said Cambridge's online CELTA promotion would be in late July, and a database of potential employees from the careers fairs would be created.

Action point/s:

d) English UK executive to feedback on experience of summer careers fairs.

DRAFT MINUTES & RECENT PUBLICATIONS FOR INFORMATION

13. Draft minutes of the Accreditation UK Executive Board meeting held on 24 November 2022

Shared for information. The board noted the minutes.

14. Draft minutes of the English UK Finance Panel meeting held on 22 March 2023

JG said there had been a lengthy discussion about the VAT issue. The board noted the minutes.

15. Draft minutes of the English UK Enterprises Board meeting held on 23 March 2023

JG called the Board's attention to the StudyWorld discussion. The board noted the minutes.

16. QUIC Q3 & Q4 2022 reports | executive summary editions

Shared for information.

LZ asked about the Accreditation UK scheme financial information he had previously requested a year ago: JG said she thought that had been dealt with. She had looked back through emails around whether this was being requested as a Board or as a personal request. LZ said he did not want to have to make an FOI request of the British Council and did not see why the information could not be provided. MR said this would be followed up outside the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

17. AOB

JG said English UK was discussing the benefits-in-kind policy with HMRC in relation to trustees and directors attending English UK events and a paper would go to the finance panel to ensure compliancy.

18. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 7 June 2023. MR requested the meeting be held in person with the option to attend online for those who can't. MR thanked the English UK team.

The meeting closed at 16:10