

# MINUTES FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE ENGLISH UK BOARD OF TRUSTEES (MB92a)



**Date:** Wednesday 27 September 2023, from 12:00  
**Venue:** Online via Zoom  
**Present:** Mark Rendell (MR) [chair], Jago Brown (JB), Tim Cooke (TC), Mary Doody (MD), Spencer Fordham (SF), Neil Harris (NH), Farhan Quraishi (FQ), Stephan Roussounis (SR), Richard Simpson (RS) and Leon Zhang (LZ)  
**Attending:** Jodie Gray (JG), Huan Japes (HJ), Annie Wright (AW) and Susan Young (SY) [minutes]

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## CONSTITUTIONAL BUSINESS

### 1. Apologies for absence

None

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

None

## MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

### 3. 2024 membership subscription fee | proposal

HJ outlined the four proposals. The first was not a change but a reversion to the previous status quo, calculating the basic subscriptions on 2022 student weeks. The second was a point of difference: that part-time student weeks should also be used, at 50% of actual numbers which should create a £9k increase in subscription revenue in 2024. MR asked if there were any questions. The issue was raised of non-commercial, no-fee courses. HJ said this was a good question: the test was whether they were inspected by the British Council. MR suggested a clause in the rules clarifying that the charge was not applicable on non-commercial courses.

HJ said proposal 3 was for a 5% increase to all basic and supplementary subscriptions in 2024 which would create a £32k increase in revenue. The fourth was to collect the direct debit in seven tranches from January rather than March, as had been done in 2023 and was thought better for cash flow and for members. Suggested wording for rule changes had been supplied. HJ said the membership working group had already discussed this.

Questions included:

- Was a 5% rise enough for a pay rise to English UK staff to cover the inflation rate?  
JG said the intention was for another 5% rise which was thought reasonable.

- Was the first proposal for 2024 only or moving forward? HJ said 2023's approach had been the exception. 2022 had been reasonably normal so it was a good time to revert to usual, basing basic subscriptions on student weeks from two years before.
- JG said the model used student weeks to judge the size of the provider as fairly as possible. Anomalous student week data in the pandemic made it difficult to fairly judge whether a provider fitted into one of the two smallest bands or the standard one. HJ said using the five-year average would raise slightly more money.

The board voted in favour of the first two points and moved on to a discussion on points 3 and 4.

Several trustees thought the rise should be higher than 5% as members had raised their prices but others thought it fair. The board voted in favour of points 3 and 4.

Action point/s:

- a) Consider arranging an online seminar for member centres on data collection.
- b) English UK executive to clarify the position of non-commercial part time student weeks in the rules.

#### **4. HE/FE associate membership and engagement | proposal**

HJ said this would allow HEIs and FE colleges to join English UK on a different basis, and was discussed at the last membership group meeting. Many had left Accreditation UK but had other accreditations: we wanted to increase engagement, maintain plurality of membership and ensure as many ELT organisations as possible contributed to our work.

This should not be seen as a substitute for full membership: it would run for an initial three years and we would work to move participants towards being full members. Participants would pay an annual fixed fee – possibly £650, in line with BALEAP – which would include a year's QUIC membership and discounted attendance at the Members' Conference. They would have to complete an annual declaration, and access to website member content, listing in a separate directory and separate mailings. They would not have voting rights.

Potentially, 119 centres had been identified as eligible.

There would be a conference next year and webinars in December. It was hoped to finalise the offer in October and have 10% of possible members converted early in 2024.

The proposal got a positive response. Suggestions and questions included:

- HE or FE members might leave full membership for this. HJ agreed there was a risk but this was an attempt to build bridges. JG agreed some would see it as a tipping point but thought this would bring some back as associates.
- Were the timelines realistic? HJ said if some missed the early 2024 window for QUIC they would join in 2025.
- Was the proposed fee realistic? The state sector representative thought so.
- Would the proposal require a change in the Articles of Association? JG said the rule book already included associate members including corporate and honorary members, and another category for HE and FE could be added. She clarified that the associate members could attend the members' conference but not the AGM. MR said there would be an amendment to the rules but that the Board could do this.
- Could there be a special HE/FE village at StudyWorld?

The board voted in favour of the proposal.

Action point/s:

- c) Any suggestions or comments about how this could work should be sent to MR and JG.
- d) New rules will go to the Board.

## 5. VAT & UK ELT | proposal

JG said that in June English UK knew the member involved in this case was not going to go to tribunal, and agreed to hire experts for a webinar and advice note. English UK had narrowed the contenders to Deloitte and Grant Thornton and we preferred the former, purely because of their team and in particular that their lead tax expert was particularly good at explaining the technical issues. This was important in terms of value for money and the member webinar. Both firms had the ability and expertise to do the job.

The fee was expected to be around £20k with VAT. The proposal was to ask private members to cover the out-of-budget costs which would be around £60 each and taken as part of basic subs. There would be an opt-out. The executive was seeking comments, to approve appointing one of the firms and next steps in covering costs. Observations and questions included:

- What assurances were there that the preferred tax expert would be available to us? JG said we could ask for her or a partner of equivalent seniority to manage the relationship and front the webinar.
- Why could the webinar not be recorded? JG suggested it was because VAT was individual to businesses and there might be anxieties about a recording with out-of-date advice. It was a red line for the advisors.

- What if too many members opted out? JG said English UK would cover any shortfall.
- Had we given up on the idea of hiring a barrister? HJ and JG said there was no legal case imminent and technical guidance was required. If there was an across-the-board VAT challenge as a result of this case the Board would have to decide what it wanted to do. We would consider supporting an individual going to tribunal.
- Should English UK cover the costs? JG said the association was a charity with no surplus and this was not day-to-day expenditure.

The board voted to support the approach, hire Deloitte and to charge members £60.

## **6. Accreditation UK inspection criteria review, ‘teaching & learning’ section | update**

JG said many trustees would have taken part in the four-yearly review of the inspection criteria. This was a particularly critical period because of the pandemic and the ongoing capacity challenge: Accreditation UK used centre feedback during the cycle to identify topics and areas for review, convening working parties. Their recommendations went to the Accreditation UK board, detailed draft criteria would be signed off in October and shared with Accreditation UK centres before the new cycle begins in February.

Given the capacity challenge around qualified teachers in particular JG wanted to share the working party’s proposals around teaching and learning. As a response to some of the ideas English UK is looking to develop a supported CPD route into TEFL. The working party proposed an apprentice teacher category, as well as embedding policy level rationales originally offered as mitigating measures, moving away from the focus on minimal qualification level, adopting a portfolio approach and strengthening the criteria around academic management.

Inspectors would look at the proportion of staff in each category, context of teaching, course design, teacher support and CPD rather than focus 100% on qualifications, and also teacher observation criteria and quality of delivery. This increased flexibility would go some way towards mitigating the capacity challenge while maintaining excellence in teaching quality.

After discussions with the Accreditation UK executive board, English UK was looking at developing the concept of the first proposal on apprenticeships and TEFL trainees. We would certificate this. Teachers without standard qualifications would be able to work in an accredited centre and undergo a process of observation, teaching, self-reflection and CPD and develop a portfolio which would go to English UK moderators to ensure they were at the equivalent level of CELTA/TEFLi and provide a certificate in case the teacher moved to a different organisation. The board’s comments and questions were invited.

- How was this going to be funded? JG said the centres or teachers could pay the moderation fee of around £300.
- A trustee member of the working party said there was no current relationship between teaching qualification and teacher quality. This would create fit-for-purpose teachers who would grow in the context of the organisations they were working with. There would be real teacher engagement with CPD benefiting their centre, and English UK and the British Council could demonstrate they were at the forefront of teacher development globally.
- Why was it necessary to get someone as well as the DOS to sign off the CPD done by the teacher? Why was it necessary to pay for the moderation? HJ explained that it standardised the process with observations, the teacher would get a certificate providing a TEFLi equivalent which could be ported to other British Council schools in the UK. It was a foundation stone and would grow and develop teachers. A CELTA cost somewhere between £1,500 and £1,800.
- How would this help summer schools? HJ said it was a way to bring more teachers into the system – those who had done purely online courses would have a way to get TEFLi equivalent. It wasn't a complete solution but there probably wasn't one.
- Did it have to take six months? HJ said this was a maximum: it was about completing the steps. JG said this was the most efficient and light touch way of ensuring a standard and creating a portable qualification.
- Was this for those whose qualification did not have any observation element? One board member said they put a lot of support in even when hiring teachers with CELTA. JG said CELTA was the start, not the end, and that this proposal balanced flexibility with beefing up academic management. One trustee raised the issue that CELTA was not the best qualification for working with young learners.
- HJ said this had to be seen as part of our response to the capacity challenge, and JG agreed that this was not a short-term fix. A fudge had been in place for the last couple of years and there was a drop in numbers going for TEFLi qualifications. This was about trying to increase the number of appropriately qualified teachers in the pool.
- How quickly could someone qualify? Potentially two months, said HJ.
- This issue had been top of the agenda at the English UK London meeting and it was thought the proposal would be very well received.
- A member of the working party clarified that the idea was to meet the needs of junior centres separately. JG said it might be that junior providers might not do the training but the proposal had been developed with their feedback and as a whole the approach looked at bringing in new alternative routes to the industry and hopefully everyone would benefit in the longer term.
- Amid positive comments, it was noted that some summer providers work for 20 weeks and it would be possible to get teachers qualified in that time.

## OTHER BUSINESS

### 7. **AOB**

JG said extraordinary meetings and their papers would now carry the number of the previous one, with the suffix 'a' (e.g. MB92a).

### 8. **Date of next (full) meeting: Wednesday 15 November 2023**

This would be at the Leather Market in London SE1 with a Zoom link for anyone who cannot attend.

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The meeting closed at 13.59