

MINUTES OF THE 94TH MEETING OF THE ENGLISH UK BOARD OF TRUSTEES (MB94)



Date: Wednesday 21 February 2024, 13:00 - 16:00
Venue: The Tannery Room, The Leather Market, Weston Street, London SE1 3ER and online
Present: Mark Rendell (MR) [chair], Jago Brown (JB), Mary Doody (MD), Spencer Fordham (SF), Francesca Giacomini (FG), 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), Nuria Felip Puignou (NFP) and Susan Young (SY) [minutes]

CONSTITUTIONAL BUSINESS

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Tim Cooke.

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

None.

3. Draft minutes of the 93rd meeting of the English UK Board of Trustees held on Wednesday 15 2023

No points of accuracy, minutes approved.

4. Matters arising and updates

No matters arising.

- Action point a (adjustment to wording around p/t student weeks): done
- Action point b (Karen Smith Watson to be thanked): done
- Action point c (consider a member webinar on YMS opportunities): HJ said this was paused in case new schemes were announced but hopes pre-general election were fading on this.
- Action point d (English UK and British Council to consider preparing for an Educational Oversight tender): HJ said discussions had been held but while the review process for the existing scheme had ended nothing more had been heard. JG said the government had parked things until the election.
- Action point e (HJ to contact tourism organisations about joint working on YMS schemes as in Bournemouth in 2023): HJ said this was in hand and

the Tourism Alliance was pushing for an EU-wide YMS scheme. This might be part of the 2025 renegotiation of the free trade agreement.

- Action point f (dates for 2024 Board meetings): listed at the end of the agenda.

The minutes were approved.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION AND/ OR REPORT

5. Review of the year end 2023 management accounts & cashflow update (English UK Ltd and English UK Enterprises Ltd)

Presenting the English UK Ltd accounts, NFP said revenue YTD was £967k, down seven per cent on budget and total expenditure was down 10% on budget.

The year showed £19.5k surplus, better results than anticipated. The main change between the actual and the November forecast was that it had been anticipated that all staff on part-time contracts as a result of the pandemic would move back to full-time, but some had chosen to stay on a 4-day week. The main income came from membership followed by events and training. Some money had been saved on premises and admin and because many board meetings had been held online.

Membership income was down £4k on forecast. Bonard had been commissioned to do some research on the non-accredited sector, which would be helpful in identifying new centres to approach regarding accreditation and ultimately membership.

The main difference this year had come from the increased revenue from events and training which had performed at a pre-pandemic level. Training had been more popular than anticipated and other unanticipated revenue increases had come from the desk rental of a bank of six desks in the English UK office and the Endsleigh partnership. Overall English UK was ending the year with better results.

A discussion began about a graph shown by NFP which showed the long-term decline in student weeks and also the drop in private centre numbers.

It was questioned whether the figures agreed with QUIC but pointed out that there were few state sector members in QUIC.

Responding to a question, JG said Bonard supply a global comparison which is shared on the English UK website, showing that the total number of people

travelling for ELT study has flatlined and destinations are sharing the remaining students: if more go to Ireland one year, fewer go to the UK.

NFP was asked for more of a breakdown of where the student weeks had been lost, and JG said the finance panel had offered suggestions on how to amend this table. She said further suggestions would be helpful.

Action point/s:

- a) Suggestions on how to amend the long-term student weeks information should be given to the executive team.
- b) Copy of Bonard report to be shared with the Board.

Moving on to the Enterprises figures, NFP said surplus was £31k after Enterprises had paid a higher management charge - £60k rather than £56k - than in recent years. Events had included StudyWorld London and online, and the China Roadshow had moved to Enterprises under StudyWorld branding. The positive figures were because of the very good performance of the Roadshow.

Some bookings for the 2024 StudyWorld China Roadshow were already received: StudyWorld London had raised £195k which was slightly below the budget figure by £24k because of fewer bookings of extra reps from members. It had made a healthy operational margin of £46.2k.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

6. English UK board elections, members' conference, AGM & parliamentary reception planning

JG said the next couple of months were a crucial period with Board elections and the AGM. Six seats would be contested and there was a clear timetable with initial communications sent out earlier in the month to encourage people to nominate others or stand. The Representation, Inclusion, Diversity and Engagement Committee (RIDEC) would also be convened under SD as vice chair. Nominations would open on 1 March and close on 22 March, with voting opening on 19 April and closing on 3 May. The AGM will take place on Friday 17 May.

This was the first election under new rules and the Board needed to look at transitional arrangements. There were currently 12 elected seats but would be 10 with two co-opted as needed by RIDEC. There was no provision in the rules for how this change should be made. All board members currently had the right to stand but in 2025 two would not be eligible so it would make sense to retire those two seats to RIDEC then.

She added that there would again be a parliamentary reception in the House of Commons before the members' conference. It would be hosted by Stephen Hammond MP and members would be asked to invite their MPs again. It was hoped that Lord Offord would speak.

JG suggested mini discussion groups as part of the members' conference afternoon session and said Diana Osagie, previously very popular, would be the closing speaker.

SD asked if it was necessary to decide who would sit on RIDECE today. MD, FQ, and JB expressed an interest in joining the committee.

The question was raised about why transitional arrangements were necessary. JG said it was possible to retire two of the six seats up for re-election. Two Trustees said that they would not be standing for re-election.

JG said it sounded like the Board was minded to go with the rules rather than a transition so there would be four seats for re-election and two co-opted by RIDECE.

This was put to the vote and passed unanimously.

Action points:

- c) Any comments about the members conference and AGM and in particular mini presentations should be sent to the SLT.
- d) SD to convene RIDECE.

7. AccessTEFL programme update

HJ said the point of this item was to establish if there were any comments from the Board before the documents were finalised. This initiative was not purely from English UK but had come from working groups on Accreditation UK's review process.

The scheme's five objectives were to increase access to industry with a low-cost route, contextualise teacher training, provide a training route for people with non-standard EFL qualifications, increase the pipeline of teachers and create a moderated and certificated qualification that EFL teachers could use to find work in the UK.

NILE had been chosen after a detailed evaluation of three proposals.

Teachers going through the scheme would gain knowledge and a skill-based qualification and would complete a portfolio in a maximum of nine months, although they could apply for an intermission which would allow a total period of not longer than 18 months, which might be of interest to some centres.

There were four modules: the first three could be done in any order and the observation of the portfolio would be done by a TEFLQ mentor. The candidate and the centre were equally responsible, and we thought it was very important for candidates to enrol and the £300 course fee to be paid at the outset.

There would be a launch and webinar. Teachers would not have to be in continuous employment but would fulfil the requirements if their total teaching time was 80 hours or more.

There would be a committee of up to eight people to review the scheme's workings – anyone interested should contact HJ directly.

— Action point/s: _____

e) Anyone interested in joining the AccessTEFL committee should contact HJ.

A discussion ensued.

- One board member said it didn't work with the junior sector as there would not be the capacity to observe the trainee and there were already qualifications out there. Others pointed out that there were young learner members in the group which had worked on this.
- HJ said this initiative would help teacher numbers overall: numbers coming through CELTA and Trinity courses were not large and significant numbers did not have UK working rights. This initiative was purely for people with the right to work in the UK.
- JG said this was not a fix-all and the qualifications working party had proposed a range of solutions.
- One trustee thought it was really exciting to have more routes for teachers in the UK and said it was wrong to suggest there was no capacity problem in year-round schools which often lost staff to summer operations. He welcomed the idea.
- HJ said there were no simple answers to the capacity challenge and attending recruitment fairs had shown that people lost interest when told how much a CELTA would cost.

- JG said changes to the Accreditation UK criteria and guidance looked at outcomes and management support for teaching teams and this should all be looked at in the round.
- A further discussion about providers of young learner courses noted that there were other measures in place for those centres, and that it would be possible for the AccessTEFL route to be followed over two summer seasons.
- A couple of trustees thought there would be a lot of potential for this route with undergraduates.

8. English UK finance panel | composition

JG said Judith Haste had stepped down in January after being an excellent chair and was already missed. It made sense to retain JB as chair for the next couple of meetings to take the panel through the audit process. On behalf of the Board, MR thanked Judith for her excellent work as chair of the Finance Panel.

Action point/s:

- f) Executive team to pass on thanks from the Board to Judith Haste for her work as chair of the finance panel.

9. HE/FE associate membership offer and engagement update

HJ said all eligible centres had been contacted and the offer finalised. There had been some expressions of interest but he thought it would be a slow burn.

10. VAT & UK ELT – next steps

JG said Deloitte had produced the draft report and had been asked to expand the section on TOMS and how it should be applied. The final report would be used as a basis for creating a more digestible guidance note to share with all the members who had not opted out of this. State sector members would also need to opt in. There would be a webinar with Deloitte.

There had been some good news on the Labour VAT policy: English UK had provided a letter for members in Sir Keir Starmer's constituency to send to his office about the issue and replies had confirmed that it would be for independent schools registered with the DfE and would not impact ELT.

Trustees praised the work done.

Action point/s:

- g) Trustees with further questions for Deloitte or comments should feed back to the JG and HJ.

11. Membership update

HJ said English UK had 324 members, six less than this time last year. Four of those were state sector and two private sector. Since producing the paper Capital School of English in Cardiff had closed, and HJ thanked NH for going to the school to talk to the students. NH said staff there had communicated with very well and the situation was under control. On behalf of the Board, MR thanked NH for his help with the closure in Cardiff.

HJ said this was the last opportunity for mothballed schools to get students and reopen or lose their accreditation.

12. Public affairs update

HJ talked about tax-free shopping, which would bring in more revenue than it lost but would not happen because of the optics. Everything English UK was campaigning for was up against the same problem – a lot of politics was involved.

He said educational oversight and ID card travel with other nations might be achievable. Talking to other countries' governments could be helpful: for instance, a language school in Italy was in direct contact with the British ambassador talking about how to get a bilateral youth mobility agreement.

There would be a document about achievements so far on the position paper asks, followed by a manifesto for the election campaign.

The team had also been working very hard to engage with Labour as we wanted a better immigration regime from an incoming government.

A question was asked about Transport for London and Oyster cards. HJ said there was a discussion with Caxton (a payment transfer platform) and Nimbl (a pocket money card) about providing debit cards to juniors loaded with money which they could use to tap in and out on transport but we might be back to bulk ordering Oyster cards.

13. Capacity challenge update

HJ said three trainers had been appointed to provide short training videos for activity leaders and there would be self-reflection and a quiz for candidates. The course was aimed at people employed by UK language schools who needed further training in the world of work.

DRAFT MINUTES & RECENT PUBLICATIONS FOR INFORMATION

14. QUIC Q3 2023 report | executive summary edition

Shared for information. No comments.

15. Draft minutes of the English UK Finance Panel meeting held on 7 February 2024

JG said this had been covered in the finance update.

OTHER BUSINESS

16. AOB

One trustee was about to meet their MP: HJ suggesting discussing ID cards and said Labour was very cautious on work rights.

17. Dates of upcoming meetings in 2024:

- MB95: Wednesday 17 April, 13:00 – 16:00
- AGM: Friday 17 May
- MB96: Wednesday 05 June, 13:00 – 16:00
- MB96a: Optional extra meeting (Wednesday 18 OR 25 September?)
- MB97: Wednesday 13 November, 13:00 – 16:00

The meeting closed at 15:58.