



# Minutes of the 97th Meeting of the English UK Board of Trustees (MB97)

Date: Tuesday 12 November 2024, 13:00 - 16:00  
Venue: Lecture Room, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester, M2 3JL  
Present: Shoko Doherty [chair], Mary Doody (MD), Neil Harris (NH), Francesca Giacomini (FG), James Herbertson (JH), Farhan Quraishi (FQ), Mark Rendell (MR), Victoria Paterson (VP) and Justin Quinn (JQ)  
Attending: Jodie Gray (JG), Huan Japes (HJ), Annie Wright (AW) and Susan Young (SY) [minutes]

---

## Action points

Action point	Agenda item	Action	Who	Completion date
a.	3	Complete the assessment template for the Charity Governance Code and JG to share details.	JG	Next board meeting
b.	3	Consider welcoming new members at the members' conference	Membership team	Before members' conference
c.	3	Website update to be a key agenda item at the next board meeting.	AW	Next board meeting
d.	7	Agenda item for subgroups meeting: could regional groups contact local state providers about associate membership?	HJ	Subgroups meeting
e.	8	Rework budget with a 4% subscription rise, and approve on that basis.	NFP	Next board meeting

f.	8	Ensure member messaging on the subs rise includes illustrations of the actual cost of the rise rather than imply the percentage.	English UK SLT	By when the ballot email goes out
g.	9	Executive team to draft emergency plan.	English UK SLT	Next board meeting
h.	13	Research options for strategy planning workshop, invite the chair of the Ents board, and share doodle poll for possible dates.	English UK SLT	By the next board meeting

## Constitutional business

### 1. Apologies for absence

Spencer Fordham

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Draft minutes of the 96th meeting of the English UK Board of Trustees held on Wednesday 05 June 2024

Action points for MB96:

- a. Member webinar on making the most of YMS in Korea and Japan to be discussed at the next meeting – completed said SD.
- b. HJ to write to the new minister for the economy in NI – completed, but no reply received.
- c. Trustees with ideas for the 20 Faces project should contact the executive team. Idea on hold awaiting the new comms manager. JG explained it was intended to be a small campaign to celebrate 20 years of English UK, visually led and featuring friendly faces of ELT working in schools.

- d. JH to join the accommodation working group – completed, but it had not met since June.
- e. Trustees to look at the Charity Governance Code before a discussion at the September meeting – pending but it was agreed to sign up to the Trustees' code and work towards achieving it.
- f. English UK executive team to create a calendar of events which trustees are encouraged to attend – completed, link to the live document to be shared.
- g. The November board meeting would be held in Manchester – completed.
- h. Investigate creating a group for members in devolved nations before the September meeting – completed, minutes shared with HJ.
- i. 25 September meeting to be online – completed.
- j. SD and JG to review job descriptions for chair/ vice chair roles – pending.
- k. The period of service as vice chair and chair to be changed to three years for each- completed.
- l. Board members interested in putting themselves forward for vice-chair should do so by Thursday 5 September and could talk to SD, MR or JG if they wished – completed.
- m. Executive team to look into a hotel accommodation deal for the members' conference and consider advising on cheaper options nearby – cleared. JG says this may not be the best way to do it.
- n. Consider welcoming new members at the members' conferences - JG agrees this is a good idea.
- o. Website update to be a key agenda item for the next meeting – AW provides an update. The project lead on this project had been the comms manager who had left English UK in the summer and the new one would start in January. This project had been the most affected by the lack of a comms manager, but it had been a good attraction when recruiting for a replacement and the successful candidate was very excited about the project which would probably now last nine months with a launch of the first phase in autumn 2025. The risk element had been that the current website was hosted by Marcom which at some point would want to move it on. AW had met Marcom's new owner at ICEF who had reassured her that maintenance would continue though no new functions could be added. She was confident that English UK would be the ones to give Marcom notice rather than the other way round. JG said the website was accounted for in the cashflow for the next two years. Costs would depreciate once the website was live.

**Action points:**

- a. English UK to complete the assessment template for the Charity Governance Code and JG to share details.

- b. Consider welcoming new members at the members' conference.
- c. Website update to be a key agenda item at the next board meeting.

The minutes were approved.

**4. Draft minutes of the 96th (extraordinary) meeting of the English UK Board of Trustees held on Wednesday 18 September 2024**

Action points for MB96a:

- a. Working group to explore sponsored student opportunities should be discussed at the November board meeting – on the agenda.
- b. Executive team to present a growth strategy plan for the Middle East at the same meeting - on the agenda.
- c. Rules around election of chair and vice-chair to be reviewed in the November board meeting. JG said this would be pushed back until after the next Board election.

The minutes were approved.

**5. Matters arising and updates**

All covered in the previous agenda items.

**Matters for information and/ or report**

**6. Review of the 2024 management accounts & cashflow update (English UK Ltd and English UK Enterprises Ltd)**

SD explained that she wanted the board to have more conversations and so NFP had helpfully put commentary notes in the pack and was present to answer questions. A question was asked about the CBILS Loan and whether it was better to pay it off sooner or keep the cash for now. NFP said there was no decision for now but when the interest on the savings account was less than that on the loan it would be decided whether to pay it off or keep it.

**Matters for discussion and/ or decision**

**7. English UK 2025 budget**

JG said the budget was conservative and the snip scenario usually presented was unlikely. Unlike previous years, two big items were included: the economic impact report and the development of a new website. The report's funding was

£20k and another £20K would come from sponsorship which was almost agreed. The website project was in cashflow with a small amount to be depreciated at the end of the year. Otherwise, it was the same projects as this year with StudyWorld and training and extra for public affairs to build engagement with the new government.

On subscriptions, there was the assumption that there would be not much movement among members and no growth.

JG said finance panel had approved the budget and recommended the board did the same. The proposed subscription rise of 3% would only go to a member vote with board recommendation.

NFP said Enterprises might be able to gift some profit to the charity but that would need to be agreed with the auditors. JG said typically any surplus within Enterprises would go on the management charge and beyond that as Gift Aid to English UK Ltd: this had not happened recently because of incurred losses from cancelling StudyWorld during the pandemic. The loss was now just £6k so any surplus would be gift-aided.

Was there any scope to increase the management charge? JG explained this was governed by a formula of staff costs and overheads checked by the auditor. A question was asked about the success of the FE/HE recruitment strategy: JG said the conference had been positive but there was little movement around associate membership. HJ had received an application from an unsuitable institution, but most weren't interested in joining despite the terms of membership having been suggested by a focus group of state centres remaining in membership. A short discussion around state sector budgets and provision of international education led to suggestions of regional groups engaging with local universities and colleges.

JG raised concerns about large numbers of unaccredited centres teaching juniors in the summer: there was perhaps scope for persuading more of those to join English UK. There needed to be a value proposition for them to become accredited, but the British Council unit had virtually no marketing budget. HJ suggested the BC could reach out to the unaccredited centres with a carrot and stick approach and English UK could then offer consultancy. JG said there was a risk with juniors in these unaccredited centres: something would go wrong, and everyone would get the blame. HJ had wondered whether to report these centres to UKVI but was always reluctant to say the sector had a problem with accreditation. JG said anyone studying at an unaccredited centre was breaking the law and that point had never been made to members or markets.

It was agreed to discuss subscription fees before approving the budget.

**Action points:**

- d. HJ to add regional groups phoning local state institutions about associate members on the agenda for the upcoming subgroups meeting.

**8. 2025 member subscription fees: proposal**

JG said it made sense to discuss this alongside the budget. The board needed to recommend any subscription increase to members, and a simplified version of the budget was usually shared as well. A 3% increase had been applied which was just above the 2.25 rate of inflation. The previous two years' rises had been below the inflation rate at the time, and followed years of no rise, which was why the 3% figure was suggested.

A wide-ranging discussion included debate on the actual inflation rate, the effect of the NI employers' rise on members, and the difficulty of state members affording any rise.

Individual points included:

- It was a very uncertain year ahead
- Any fee increase must go to a member ballot which is not a good way to engage people
- English UK was creating a new website, the sector was changing and we had to work out how to attract young learners – being part of an organisation doing that was worth an extra £10 or £15.
- Every penny spent on English UK membership was checked by the finance panel, auditors and the board, and went to helping the community. Spending was checked more rigorously than in most organisations.
- English UK subscriptions had not kept up with inflation.
- A 1% rise would raise £8,750 across the whole membership.
- Payments were very flexible and for the smallest members the rise would be miniscule.
- The suggested 3% rise had not included a growth strategy – it was important not to lose members but important to consider growth.
- English UK staff's pay had not kept pace with inflation during the pandemic and retaining staff was a risk register item.
- Was asking members to vote on subscription rises good for engagement? Should this be considered at an AGM?

The Board voted on a rise of 3% 4% and 5%, and 4% was carried.

**Action points:**

- e. Rework budget with a 4% subscription rise and approve on that basis.

- f. Ensure member messaging includes illustrations of the actual cost of the rise rather than just the percentage.

## **9. English UK risk register: annual review**

JG explained that this was a standing item for the November agenda. There were currently several medium risks and one critical. This was to do with the website and since AW's conversation at ICEF Berlin mentioned earlier in the meeting could perhaps be downgraded. Cybersecurity, previously rated as high risk, had been downgraded to medium because of significant actions taken in the summer.

The question was raised of who the spokesperson for English UK would be if there was a significant issue. JG said it would be her. Was there an emergency plan for if there was a problem in a school? JG agreed to draft an emergency plan.

### **Action points:**

- g. Executive team to draft emergency plan.

## **10. UK ELT growth strategy for the Middle East**

## **11. (Other) opportunities for ELT sector growth**

JG took item 11 before item 10.

She wanted to share some data from Bonard before focusing on the Middle East. Details included that 17% of all global ELT student weeks were spent in the UK in 2023 and the UK's growth in the year before had been much slower than in Australia and Canada: there was work to do. The UK's adult/junior split was flipped from the global picture and 37% of ELT students came to the UK.

The UK's market share of Africa was 18%, Asia 9%, Latam 7%, MENA 42% and Europe 41%.

The changing situation in Canada and Australia meant some agents were going to be moving students but there would not be a massive influx, for example, from Colombia. Agents who met English UK at ICEF Berlin had asked about work rights, and JG said to some extent students would stop travelling because the courses they wanted no longer existed.

A question was asked about the effects of new YMS arrangements. JG said so far, the Japanese allocation had not been fulfilled for various reasons and SD said a lot of agents were not well informed: information had not been properly shared, and it was a huge challenge.

JG said there were huge opportunities in parts of the world, but the question was how to make these work. Moving on to the Middle East (item 10) she said

the UK already had 46% market share but there was a strong desire to travel to the UK and a benevolent visa system.

Objectives were to increase the number of students, both government and self-funded, improve engagement with key stakeholders, develop market intelligence and knowledge of member centres in recruiting and hosting students. English UK also wanted to reduce policy barriers to growth though this region was well-served. While the focus was on GCC countries there was a wider area and Turkey, for instance, was growing significantly despite high visa rejections. The profile of this market differed to the GCC countries.

Activities could include engagement with government stakeholders and establishing and developing relationships. The DBT was good at this, but staff kept changing. It would also be good to engage with embassies and British Council offices. Saudi Arabia had been a priority in the previous International Education Strategy, and this was likely to continue as part of a wider security agenda.

She said the board could be involved in a programme with UK-based embassies and utilise the Embassy Education Conference. Sir Steve Smith was attending StudyWorld and he could be used to lead activities, lead policy discussion and as bait to encourage attaches and other attendees.

Inviting ideas from the trustees about the StudyWorld programme and ways in which Sir Steve could be used, JG said in future embassy officials could be invited to the Parliamentary Reception, MOUs could be signed with some embassies and market visits and participation in DBT trade missions could be considered.

SD said there were military and cultural attachés who played different roles in the embassy organisation, and different training opportunities for the three forces.

JG then ran through market development ideas from the paper, including building a network of engaged agents in the region, through attending ICEF Dubai prioritising new contacts, a targeted comms campaign and webinars, supporting agent training and accreditation and considering an English UK event in the region.

She also discussed improving intelligence about the region, including sharing and collating insights already held by members and the Ents board. Training English UK members to recruit more students and give them the best possible experience would also be useful.

Main points of the discussion included:

- Partners in the region should do the training of ELT centres in recruitment and student satisfaction
- How should we use Steve Smith? Could he do a panel on growth?

- Could there be a target of doing a yearly trade mission with the DBT, even if schools had to fund it? Also, embassy receptions added huge value and endorsement.
- Resuming English UK fairs – perhaps in the UAE – would be popular and should include a learning and education section for agents to teach ELT centres. JG said from the China Roadshow experience it would be interesting to see if members chose the English UK event over the ICEF one. Perhaps a Middle East roadshow? Or could we jump on the back of an existing trade mission?
- Names of trustees on the Middle East working group were confirmed as FG, JQ, MR, SF and SD.

## **12. Responding to increases for Disclosure & Barring Service fees**

HJ said the justification for the price rise was that more people were using the service so more staff were required as well as a major technical upgrade. English UK could push to enforce service standards, which had been slipping, but he did not think there was the leverage to enforce a discount or change the decision. He agreed to write to Liz McLaren to consider an increase to four-yearly vetting for permanent members of staff. SD said it was important to explain to members that English UK had tried to change this but was unable to.

## **13. English UK board strategy planning workshop**

JG said it would be good to hold a strategy planning workshop again: the last was a couple of years ago and ran overnight for one and a half days. That was where the three-year strategy had been discussed. The context was post-pandemic, thinking about recovery and she suggested early February. The strategy might not be finalised then, allowing May's new board members to also have input. The previous time this had worked well, held in a hotel just outside London and close to a major airport. JG agreed to look for options and share a doodle poll for dates.

### **Action points:**

- h. Research options for strategy planning workshop and share doodle poll for possible dates.

## **Matters for information and/ or report**

### **14. Membership update**

SD asked if there was anything to add to the paper. HJ said nothing specific.

## **15. Public affairs update**

HJ said engagement with Labour had been good since the party conference. ID cards would not be extended beyond France until ETAs was live in April, but English UK would continue to lobby.

There was a consensus that a Europe-wide YMS would be folded into the new EU deal, presented as a concession by the UK to get a better detail on goods and services with the bloc. This would take 12-18 months so there was no harm in pursuing bilateral arrangements and English UK would need to keep lobbying on other countries. There were positive developments likely in the medium to long term. FQ said he was involved in a meeting on YMS with the Major of London's office.

Responding to a question about the IES, JG said she attended a workshop in the early days and a lot of feedback was given. The big problem was ownership and structure of the IES which was why it didn't really work, and she did not think that would be addressed in the current review.

## **16. Capacity challenge update**

HJ said the team had attended lots of careers fairs and there had been a lot of interest.

He said 681 people had commenced the activity leader course with 551 people completing it. He said the course would be reviewed and possibly further enhanced for 2025.

It was asked whether it would be worth having workshops to promote AccessTEFL. HJ said one had been done, with a follow up next week. He felt member centres would start people on AccessTEFL in February or March who would then be in position for the summer.

Responding to a question, HJ said other routes into ELT were being promoted, namely CELTA and TESOL. JG said the teacher training leaflet promoted all routes.

HJ said there had been meetings about accommodation: there was plenty for July and perhaps opportunities to look at policies for 2026 including shorter contracts.

## **17. Research on the economic impact of UK ELT: update**

JG said this had been mentioned before and so did not need to be covered in detail.

## **18. English UK staffing update**

The team had been without a comms manager and the recruitment consultant hired had suggested commencing the process in September and advertising on

LinkedIn. There had been 70 applications, with six shortlisted for interview, cut down to three very strong candidates. The first, Bethany Ashcroft, had accepted and would start in early January and a second candidate from the final pool might join the team in a more junior communications coordinator role.

## **Meeting minutes & recent publications for info**

### **19. QUIC 2023 Q2 report: executive summary edition**

### **20. UK ELT & VAT: Guidance for members**

### **21. Draft minutes of the English UK Finance Panel meeting held on Wednesday 30 October 2024**

The Board noted items 19, 20 and 21.

## **Other business**

### **22. AOB**

Provisional dates for 2025 meetings were discussed. SD suggested in person meetings, in February in London and April in another UK city. JG said 23 April was aligned with the audit calendar, and June followed the AGM.

- Wednesday 26 February
- Wednesday 23 April
- Wednesday 4 June
- Wednesday 10/ 17 September – held for possible extraordinary meeting
- Wednesday 12 November

The Members' Conference & AGM is on Thursday 15 May.

---

The meeting closed at 16.01