

Minutes of the 27th Meeting of the English UK Accreditation and Professional Services Board (APSB)

Held at: English UK, 219 St John Street, London EC1V 4LY

Date: 13.30 on Tuesday, 15 May 2012

Present: Andrew Hjort (Chair), Alison Chambers, Tony Evans, Janey Futerill, Patrick Lawlor, Nigel Heritage, Sue Edwards, and Tony Millns

In attendance: Huan Japes, Eva Zeising, Tom Weatherley

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dawn Abbott, Sarah Cooper, Geoff Hardy-Gould

2. Minutes of the 26th meeting of the APSB held on 2nd November 2011

The Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the Meeting.

3. Matters arising

None (all matters arising were covered by the agenda for the meeting).

4. Professional Services Update

4. Update on staffing in Professional Services from HJ.

HJ was welcomed by the board into the position of Deputy Chief Executive (Professional Services). HJ outlined the team structure of TW permanent, Elizabeth Macchi recently returned from maternity leave working 3 days per week, and EZ as an intern until the end of June.

4.b. Update on Training Days 2011 – 2012 HJ (ASPB 27/4b)

HJ spoke to paper 27/b, outlining the breakdown of attendance, cancellations and feedback. Compared to 2010 – 2011, the cancellation rate was higher (31% compared to 14%) and overall numbers were down (263 compared to 291).

22% of members sent a delegate to a training day. HJ stressed the need to find out why. TE noted the need to find out the year-on-year overlap.

There was a discussion about the location of training days and the wisdom of moving days around the country. TM noted London was often cheaper and easier to get to. AH suggested a later start time for London sessions to make travel arrangements easier. AC suggested webinars to extend the 'reach' of sessions. HJ stressed that the most popular training sessions are being moved around the country.

4.c. Teachers' Conference 2011 Report (TW ASPB 27/4c)

TW provided a brief overview of attendance (down from 271 in 2010 to 242). The overall rating and 'recommend to friend' ratings were up slightly, the value rating went down slightly.

The team went through a big change just before this conference with Mark Rendell leaving which affected promotion in the weeks prior to the conference. With a stable team and the online booking system, promotion and administration of 2012 conference should be more efficient. It was noted that

conferences later in the year, with the current team in post, showed a significant increase in delegate numbers.

The exhibition had more space, which was highly rated by exhibitors, and numbers of exhibitors can be improved to keep delegate ticket cost down.

The board noted that the conference has expanded greatly and is an important event.

4.d. Management Conference report HJ (ASPB 27/4d)

The event was held in Oxford on March 2 / 3. There was an increase in delegate numbers (up to 105 from 79).

The feedback was 3.65 / 5 for value for money, to 3.96 / 5 for overall quality of speakers. Some comments that the line-up was too 'safe' with recognised names. HJ suggested an 'outside face' to deliver one of the plenaries in 2013.

The venue meant that the exhibition was split between two rooms which was not ideal. Apart from this, it was a very smooth event.

4.e. Business English Trainers Conference report (HJ ASPB 27/e)

68 delegates, up from 49 in 2011.

HJ suggested re-branding the event to 'Business English and ESP trainers'. There are already elements of ESP in the programme. There was a positive reaction from the ASPB to this suggestion.

There is a possible linkup with BESIG, which may free up professional services team to run another conference. HJ noted if numbers continue to increase it may not be possible to keep the event at International House.

4.f. Qualifications offered by Professional Services (HJ – ASPB27/4f)

Both qualifications are popular and oversubscribed. PS will try to secure a venue for groups of up to 18 next year.

Some complaints on the DELTM course about the length of wait for assignment marks to be returned and out of date modules. Next year will see George Pickering operating as the course leader and overhauling the modules.

The Welfare Officer Course has now finished with all candidates passing (it was under moderation at time of meeting).

There is a possible use of moodle to make the submission and distribution of assignments and mark sheets easier on both courses.

There was a discussion about the level of the courses on national qualification scales which led to several board members suggesting that more could be made of the level of both qualifications. HJ agreed this could be something to consider, and that the WOCC course would benefit from external validation.

5. Matters for discussion and decision

5.a. Accreditation UK: Areas of Strength and Publishable statements (HJ ASPB27/5a)

There was a general acceptance that new publishable 'areas of strength' is an improvement. There were discussions on whether to publish full reports. There is an agreement between ASAC, inspectors and providers that more of the reports should be available.

Particular attention was paid to Independent Schools Inspectorate inspections – a new scheme, the key point of difference with AUK is that ISI publishes full reports. There were some concerns that full reports would be misinterpreted or even used by agents to exert leverage over schools. AH thought this was unlikely to be a problem.

Decision APSB welcomes the publishable statements, there now needs to be further discussion and recommendations on the future format of published reports. AH suggested a working party on publication issues.

5.b. Feedback from Accreditation UK Inspector's Conference (HJ ASPB 27/5b)

HJ attended, but was not allowed to enter all sessions. SE and TM noted this happened before, and it was unacceptable for one of the scheme partners to be told that they could not attend all the sessions: this had been agreed after a protest to the BC on a previous occasion.

There was a brief discussion on the closeness of EUK and the BC in the scheme. AH commented that ISI has the same issues with the Independent Schools Council. TM noted that the Independent Schools Council had had major problems over the last two years and ISI has seized the opportunity to become independent.

PL asked about inspectors working for both schemes. HJ and TM said inspectors for AUK UK have been discouraged from doing so, with TM adding legal advice on this issue indicates that AUK UK cannot prevent inspectors (who are freelance) from working for anyone they choose.

PL asked why AUK UK was not accepted for Tier 4. TM responded that civil servants say their decision was based on the Education Act 2006 inspection bodies.

There was a discussion about the future of the AUK scheme. AH noted that suggestions for the ASAC to be abolished have not been thought through. There could be reasonable changes to publishable statements and were suggestions that AUK UK could go further (see 5.a.). There were some suggestions that reports and statements are not concise enough.

AH noted if full reports are published, there is a need to check what is being written to ensure consistency of inspections and reports.

Decision AH suggested recommending to AUK UK that full publication of reports would be a good development, with some checks to ensure consistent approach.

5.c. Accepting other Accreditation (HJ and TM ASPB 27/5c)

TM outlined that the English UK Board can decide membership criterion. Currently AUK Accreditation is required, but with some centres potentially dropping AUKUK, this needs careful consideration.

TM said that the EUK position is that AUK is the best scheme, fit for purpose and has 30 years of experience in the sector. However, if there are fewer AUK centres EUK subscriptions may be under pressure.

TM also noted there could be a legal challenge from centres accredited under other schemes that there is a restraint of trade if EUK bars membership. Legal advice had indicated that it would be difficult to carry the argument that QAA (for instance) was not a reputable accrediting body.

TM suggested a two tier AUK scheme. Centres which are AUK and QAA / ISI inspected and are HTS might gain a 'premier member' logo. - no extra cost for 'premier members' but would be an incentive for centres to continue with AUK. The BC may have further incentives.

TE suggested a difference in fee, TM said this had been considered but may become too complex and generate problems.

JF noted schools that stick with AUK and do not have ISI they will not have premium status. PL noted some colleges and HE centres don't need ISI, so also couldn't become premium members. SE noted that if ESVV goes into Tier 4 this will exacerbate the problem.

AH noted that as in the paper, 'premier member' status might be accorded to centres which are AUK.

Decision AH suggested that the ASPB supports a change if one becomes necessary.

5.d. Training Day 2012 -2013 strategy (ASPB 27/5d)

HJ spoke to the board and highlighted several changes, including changing offer from 3 for 2 to an early bird rate, increasing maximum numbers (if venues can be found), introducing some new sessions, increasing the cost of a training day to 160 pounds (120 if booked in the early bird window), an improved basic rate for trainers, with a simplified pay grade system for sessions.

The board was supportive of the changes.

Next ASPB meeting – TM noted 18 October is the EUK Board meeting. Dates towards the end of September will be suggested by the PS team.