

Minutes of the 21st Meeting of the English UK Enterprises Board

Held at: English UK, 219 St John Street, London, EC1V 4LY
Thursday, 9th February 2012 at 10:30

Present: Graham Simpson (Chair), Shane Wilkinson, Kevin McNally, Clare Gossage, Sarah Schechter, Stephan Roussounis, Heidi Gon-Paz (10.50), and Tony Millns

In attendance: Huan Japes, Jodie Gray, Siobhan Baccas, and Phoebe Allen.

1. Apologies for absence

All board members were in attendance.

2. Minutes of the 20th English UK Enterprises Board Meeting

The following comments were made with reference to the record of the 20th English UK Enterprises Board meeting which was held on the 29th September 2011.

GS pointed out that he had suggested stocking British beer and cider at the StudyWorld Monday evening reception, rather than English wine.

SS drew the Board's attention to a comment previously made by SR that universities enjoyed significant budgets. SS highlighted that not all university budgets are significant. She explained that it is necessary to be aware of the various constraints that exist within universities. The Board therefore agreed that 'some' universities enjoy significant budgets.

3. Matters arising and updates

JG spoke to the paper. TM suggested that the Enterprises Board would benefit from one or two new members; he asked if there were any nominations. JG stated that Steve Phillips (member of the Main Board) had expressed an interest. Nominations were requested via email. SW suggested that the Board could invite guest members, which would encourage a flow of people. The Board agreed that this would be a good idea. TM suggested looking at the list of attendees from the marketing conference. JG added that they could appeal to members in a newsflash.

Updates for information, discussion and decision

4. StudyWorld London 2012 – updates and plans

SB spoke to the paper and observed that the number of agent and exhibitor bookings had increased on last year, adding that this may be attributed to launching the bookings earlier.

SB reported that StudyWorld is participating in more profile-raising activities in order to promote the event to a greater number of educators. She pointed out that Bangor University has already registered as a direct result of exhibiting at the British Council Education UK Partnership conference in October. SB also showed an example of the A4 promotional leaflet that can be tailored for specific events and promotions.

SB explained that an offer was now available for selected school associations to have a 'village' for their members at StudyWorld. Some associations have also been offered a free table providing they can guarantee attendance from a minimum number of schools. A special promotion has also been marketed to members of SEA to encourage educators from Argentina to book.

SB informed the Board that there would soon be a party proposal for the Monday evening welcome reception. She added that more note will be taken of dietary requirements.

JG informed the Board that an English UK (EUK) branded party may be arranged in collaboration with Lost in London (LL) for the Tuesday evening, following the post-appointments reception. She pointed out that many of the delegates have nothing to do in the evening and that this would be a good opportunity to market EUK and the fairs; the invitation would come from EUK. She noted that the venue would have to be easy to get to, possibly in the West End, and that a shuttle bus to and from the venue may be provided. A British theme has been suggested but she is still waiting for the proposal. SR stated that Tristan (LL) is very proactive around London and usually organises student parties in good venues. JG added that he has lots of contacts and is willing to cover most of the costs. CG felt that a party would probably appeal to less senior delegates at the fair who don't know many people in the industry and are keen to do something in the evening. SR suggested that a student party could be arranged on the same night that includes a VIP area for StudyWorld delegates. SW suggested the possibility of having a jazz event. SB informed the Board that they are considering including a British film or TV series to watch as part of the evening. The Board agreed that timing would be very important so that people don't wander off after the post-appointments reception.

SB asked the Board to consider possible topics and speakers for the seminar programme. JG reported that ICEF Dubai had included market information sessions delivered by agents. CG felt that broader leadership sessions would be of value in addition to more targeted presentations. GS suggested that school associations could deliver presentations e.g. 'Recent developments for English in Australia'. CG added that a topic such as time management could be applied at all levels. SS suggested that something involving social networking could also be appealing.

5. StudyWorld London 2013 & beyond – building a competitive advantage for the future

English UK Fairs

JG drew the Boards attention to an existing idea that the EUK fairs could be linked to StudyWorld. She explained that feedback from the fairs was very positive as a result of their small size and their focus on UK ELT, so it may not be a good idea to change this. SR suggested that the fairs could be opened up to international educators in the USA and Australia. CG questioned whether the fairs should be re-branded as StudyWorld in a bid to make them more international. JG explained that they had built a brand for the fairs as EUK which people recognise and approve. She added that despite difficulty filling the fairs in Latin America, they have otherwise always been fully subscribed. She argued that if the pool of members becomes too limited, they could reconsider. SR added that if there was strong opposition from members regarding the participation of international educators, it would need to be explained in terms of the survival of StudyWorld London. CG questioned whether the fairs could be slightly bigger without changing what they are, noting that they would still be different to Alphe and ICEF. SW introduced the possibility of a quota for non-UK schools. JG pointed out that the introduction of international schools may affect the format of the fairs,

as they usually include dinners with the embassy. KM suggested that the fairs could split so that some are branded as EUK and some as StudyWorld. The Board felt it was a risk to disturb something successful but that it may be necessary to keep StudyWorld competitive. It was felt that the boutique fairs could be opened up globally in order to stay ahead in the market but this would need to be based on solid market research.

Agents

SB spoke to the paper and reported that agent prices had been frozen this year. She made the observation that StudyWorld competitors did not charge agents for attendance. She questioned whether charges should be abolished from 2013 onwards in a bid to encourage more agents to attend, including those from smaller markets. TM highlighted that StudyWorld has always charged agents and this has helped to maintain quality. He added that it would be difficult to source the additional £100,000 needed to cover the costs if agents are no longer charged. He suggested that attendance at the first two events could be free of charge, or differential payments could be introduced e.g. a Partner Agency (PA) discount. GS suggested that it could be used to encourage people to become a PA and added that PAs could have a different badge at StudyWorld. The Board agreed that if the agents themselves do not have any issue with paying, there is no reason to stop charging them.

Educators with larger budgets

SB spoke to the paper and raised the issue of whether StudyWorld should allow schools with bigger budgets to have stands in addition to tables. She explained that the stands would be in the middle of the room. GS expressed concern over what the neighbouring educators would think of the stands, but it was agreed that this would create traffic for those educators during coffee breaks. SR suggested that the stands could be placed near the refreshment area. GS added that educator stands could be pitched at a higher rate, and that stands could be charged according to their location. SR pointed out that spaces in the lobby could be sold at a much higher rate. SB reminded the Board that the lobby area is usually reserved for strategic partners. The Board were amenable to the idea of sacrificing a few tables in order to allow educators to take stands.

Educators with smaller budgets

JG spoke to the paper and reported that it was a challenge getting smaller schools to come to StudyWorld, she suggested the possibility of reducing the price to change this. SW added that they could pay a lower rate if they commit to a few years of attendance. TM made a suggestion that the trading days could be split into morning and afternoon sessions, with schools having the option to pay for individual sessions rather than the full conference. The Board agreed that splitting the trading days would create too many logistical problems. SS suggested that universities who are not already members should be incentivised and that a HE village could be offered to encourage them.

6. Marketing update – review of activities since September 2011 and plans for the next 6 months.

JG spoke to the paper and informed the Board of her recent return from a scoping visit in Kurdistan with Richard Day and Steve Phillips. She stated that there is huge potential in the market and that they are planning a follow up visit with members in May. She explained that there is a scholarship programme and that students tend to get a (student visitor) visa for one year to study English, then return to the country and apply for a general student visa for further study. Overall, the trip had been successful for forming relationships.

JG informed the Board that they are working on an agent survey and plan to commission an independent body (through the BC) to undertake the research.

JG stated that there are new templates for the interim website and that it would go live in the next 6 months.

7. English UK Fairs – update and plans for 2012 & beyond

JG spoke to the paper and reported that feedback from the fair in Singapore had been very positive. Athens is fully booked. The number of bedrooms has been reduced for Panama as bookings are slow. Bookings for Jordan are going well. She drew the Board's attention to the list of locations for 2013 which were chosen according to a list of criteria, including ease of flights, attractiveness, visa requirements, local support, and moving around the region. Locations include Prague, Lima, Phuket, and Beirut. SR stated that Phuket didn't work as a destination for Alphe and suggested Chang Mai as an alternative, but JG pointed out that Phuket had an international airport. JG also stated that they are looking at increasing the prices in line with inflation. Suggestions for future locations included Colombia, Cyprus, Miami, and a destination on the Black Sea. JG informed the Board that they would prefer to keep the costs below £3,000 per educator.

8. English UK Partner Agency Scheme – update

JG spoke to the paper and reported that the number of PAs is increasing, with an average of three new agencies joining per week. She explained that the main attraction for agents is use of the EUK logo and their profile on the website. GS noted it was surprising there was not much take up in major markets such as Germany and France. The Board agreed that members should be encouraged to promote the scheme to their agents and suggested a web banner could be produced for members to use on their websites.

Matters for information and report

9. Minutes of the October 2011 English Language Promotions Group (ELPG) Meeting

JG spoke to the paper and informed the Board that there was nothing additional to report other than what was detailed in the minutes.

10. The Education UK Partnership Conference

JG spoke to the Board and reported that the Education UK Partnership was to come to an end and would be replaced by Services in International Education Marketing (SIEM). This will be a menu of services that anyone can buy into with some discount package options available.

11. British Embassy of Panama Education & Skills Market Report

JG drew the Board's attention to the attached report.

12. Review of the English UK ELT Marketing Conference, January 2012

JG informed the Board that there was a press release on the website and that the online feedback had been very good. Most delegates responded to the questions with good or excellent. The venue received mixed responses; some felt that it was a too small, particularly crowded during the coffee breaks. CG added that getting to the toilet was not easy. JG noted that numbers were up on last year and there had been a waiting list. She confirmed that they would look at bigger venues for next year.

Other business

13. Dates of future meetings

Wednesday 6 June 2012

14. Any other urgent business

SB spoke to the paper regarding attendance criteria for independent schools at StudyWorld, following a query over the eligibility of Newbury Hall. She reported that Newbury Hall is not independently accredited and that under the current policy, an Ofsted inspection alone is not sufficient to approve attendance. TM argued that as the leading inspection body, Ofsted inspected schools should be accepted at StudyWorld but that there was a question over schools which receive 'satisfactory' grades, rather than 'good' or 'excellent'. TM observed that the latest Ofsted report for Newbury Hall states that they are meeting requirements, so they cannot be reasonably refused by StudyWorld. It was agreed that the Main Board should discuss this issue in order to pass a policy for future requirements.

The meeting concluded at 12.30.