

## **Minutes of the 41st Meeting of the English UK Main Board**

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

Date: Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012, 13:00 – 15:30

Present: Sue Edwards (Chair), Sarah Cooper (Vice-Chair), Michael Cornes, John Barnett, Richard Day, Kevin McNally, Graham Simpson, Shane Wilkinson, Greg Watson, Caroline Hugo

Attending: Andrew Hjort (Chair, APSB); Tony Millns; Huan Japes (minutes); Annie Wright

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### ***Constitutional business***

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Received from Jane Dancaster and Steve Phillips. Sarah Cooper and Graham Simpson were present from 14:00.

#### **2. Declarations of any interests in the business of the meeting**

TM reminded the board that JB and SW were up for re-election to the board. JB declared a possible interest in that Cambridge Academy Summer Schools were requesting membership of English UK.

#### **3. Minutes of the meeting on 14 June 2012**

These were agreed to be an accurate representation of this meeting.

#### **4. Matters arising and updates (paper B41/1)**

TM highlighted the apparent anomaly of the British Council supporting an association in Wales – '(Learn) English in Wales' – that contained non-accredited members. This needed to be clarified with the British Council before further consideration was given to the formation of an English UK Wales sub-group. RD mentioned that the participating non-accredited centres were likely to be College Glenhafren and Cardiff University.

219 St John St Mortgage: TM confirmed that despite requests, no mortgage renewal documents had been sent by Nat West and there was no indication of what the direct debit withdrawals were for. It was suggested that if no adequate answer was received by the following Friday, the Direct Debits would be cancelled. MC cautioned this approach, although he felt it could be considered – his concern was that Nat West might respond by declaring that as there was no formal mortgage agreement, English UK were liable for the full amount.

Publication of Accreditation UK reports: HJ mentioned that as envisaged this would include the reports of centres under review. TM commented that this would provide a powerful incentive for centres to aim for higher standards, but that reports needed to be made more consistent prior to publication.

## **5. Membership of the association and membership development (paper B41/2)**

TM confirmed that as Harrogate Tutorial college had not been able to find an investor they were now back in liquidation proceedings.

The board agreed to admit to membership the five accredited centres that had applied since the previous board meeting, and that for the other anticipated applications the Board would delegate authority to the CEO to admit them.

CH offered to contact Alison Blythe at Students' International to try and persuade her to pay her outstanding membership fees.

TM confirmed that Belgravia College was withdrawing from accreditation. In addition, AESTYG's separation would eventually lead to one new member. TM felt that Study-In UK would not be suitable as corporate members but could be eligible as partner agents.

TM reported on the continued downward drift of ABLs, and raised the possibility of offering them a free ACS. In response to RD he mentioned that Ben Whittaker of ABC Languages Cambridge is the ABLs chair. RD suggested approaching ABLs centres individually.

'Member get Member' scheme: TM mentioned that there were over 200 additional potential members in total in the UK, of which 50% were reasonable prospects for membership. 150 of these have some other form of accreditation currently. How could incentives work?

RD saw an opportunity to exert pressure within the regional groups – e.g. by inviting non-members to the English UK North event in November. TM to assist by provided regional contact lists to current membership. SE agreed that this should be taken forward through the regional groups in the first instance.

TM asked for ideas for 'recommend a friend' type incentives. Suggestions included: offering free training days or conference attendance; giving members a discount on their subscription fees; a case of champagne. There could also be incentives for new members to join – e.g. a free ACS.

## **6. The SESF and implications for subscriptions (paper B41/3)**

TM outlined that heavy use of the SESF in the last two years had depleted the fund from 96K to 56K in 2012. The proposal is to put a further 25K into the SESF in 2012 and another 25K in 2013.

RD asked if 2012 was exceptional. TM reiterated that the last two years had been exceptional, and might stay at the same level in coming years. GW commented that the maximum risk was as much as 100K in any one year, so should our commitment be weakened to some extent? TM replied that most closures are when schools have very few students left, although closures related to UKBA action might become more common in future and might well be more expensive.

## **7. Membership of the Board, including a report from the Nominations Committee meeting on 12 October 2012 (paper B41/4)**

TM mentioned first that the draft minutes of the Nominations Committee had now been approved by the Chairman, Martin Raven. Specific points raised by TM:

- a) There needed to be a member of the Finance panel to report to the main board until at least the 2013 AGM. TM had the Board's consent to approach Simon Cleaver about this.
- b) AH's position on the main board needed to be regularized
- c) More urgently, a Higher Education representative needed to be appointed. The minutes show that SP had been asked to approach Daphne Laing of the University of Wolverhampton

SE/TM will decide whether to invite Simon and Daphne to the main board meeting in January 2013. SE emphasized the need to be pro-active in appointing individuals to one of the sub-boards, before considering whether they could be appointed subsequently to the main board.

### ***Matters for discussion and decision***

## **8. Budget 2013 and subscriptions (paper B41/5)**

TM spoke to paper B41/5. The year's out-turn is likely to be in the region of £70K. A Nat West mortgage re-arrangement fee of £9.5K is likely to be due in either 2012 or 2013. In addition, the auditors had not yet sorted out the issue of VAT underpayment and there could be an HRMC penalty fee. There is also likely to be a short-fall of c. £40K once the mortgage is finally rearranged.

In the light of this, the FP has recommended a 3.75% subscription increase for 2013, to be put to members in a postal ballot. TM commented that over the last 8 years, real-

term subscription fees have fallen. SE commented that this point needs careful communication. GW asked about supplementary subscriptions. TM commented that some would decrease to a lower band if student weeks declined, although this would take some time to impact on revenue.

RD asked if English UK staff should have a cost of living increase. TM outlined that the FP had suggested a c. 2% increase for 2013. GW asked what could be trimmed to allow a slightly higher increase in 2013. TM suggested c. 15K from marketing and 5K from administration. CH asked about the auditors' costs; TM replied with a figure of c.£9K to £11K. GW felt this expensive for this size of organization. MC suggested a provincial centre might charge a lower fee.

RD commented that 25 new members would square the revenue circle. TM responded that this could not be counted on. SE suggested that English UK salaries could be reviewed in Summer 2013 if there had been a material improvement. GW asked about the maximum room for manoeuvre. TM suggested £50K in cuts from marketing and the website.

SE asked the Board to approve the 3.75% recommended increase, subject to a postal ballot. This was done. GW asked what would happen if there was substantial resistance. This would need to be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

## **9. Public affairs update (paper B41/6)**

TM outlined changes to the All Parliamentary Group. Robert Syms had been promoted to the whips so was not now in the group. Steven Brine had been approached as a replacement. RD asked if the replacement needed to be from the Commons – TM confirmed so.

TM had written to the new Immigration Minister, Mark Harper. He appears to have some extreme views which may not be helpful to our progress. SE added that it was like starting over again. In more positive news, there was the possibility that students might be taken out of net migration, the IPPR report having done some good in this debate.

MC suggested sending the report to Mark Harper. TM had found Ed Milliband's responses at the IPPR meeting reasonably encouraging as an indication of future Labour policy. SE asked about Teresa May's position – did she favour a cap in student numbers? TM replied that if she did this is a debate she would probably lose.

CH asked about the study/visitor visa issue. TM replied that it has always been UKBA policy that visitors must state their genuine intentions – those changing their plans may not be genuine. But there is no immigration risk here; Neil Hughes of UKBA is aware the situation is unsatisfactory as it stands. CH asked whether ELT courses could be defined as leisure-based. TM suggested combined courses as a potential work around – e.g. English and scuba-diving. MC cautioned on VAT liability.

TM also mentioned that it would be good if the ESVV could now be written into the immigration rules, but better not to force the issue.

### ***Matters for report and information***

#### **10. Reports from the Finance Panel meeting on 31 July and 1 October (Minutes provided)**

MC pointed out that the date of the meeting was wrong, but the minutes were otherwise clear.

#### **11. Report from the Accreditation & Professional Services Board meeting on 19 September (Minutes provided)**

HJ talked about some of the CRB changes. SE asked for clear information, particularly ISI's requirements. HJ agreed to follow up with ISI. When is a CRB check a legal requirement? HJ confirmed that it is not in fact currently a legal requirement for staff at private organizations in England and Wales. TM pointed out that the main risk was in insurers not supporting providers in cases of abuse where CRB checks had not been done. CH pointed out that ISI had taken their compliance requirements from the regulated sector. JB suggested approaching them at the end of the year as they will have taken on board feedback by then from our (private sector) members.

#### **12. Reports from the Accreditation UK Executive Board meeting on 25 July and the 'strategy day' on 21 August (oral – minutes provided subsequently)**

TM commented that in the Strategy Away day, the British Council/Michael Carrier had been more open to possible extensions to the scheme – e.g. for IFY programmes.

#### **13. Report from the Enterprises Board on 18 October (oral)**

StudyWorld: SW commented that numbers, although generally down, were up in some areas – e.g. agents from the Ukraine and Turkey, and independent schools. It was suggested that the SW Event Guide is only a short summary document in future as it is now superseded by the E-Marcon software. The hotel had had mixed reviews despite refurbishment – e.g. bed-bugs in some older rooms. Name badges would also be revamped to make them more readable – with shorter lanyards. Feedback had been good, including for the different receptions.

Given the popularity of ALPHE at the Park Plaza Westminster, SW suggested holding SW there a few days before ALPHE. RD pointed out that the Park Plaza is cramped, with little lunch or exhibition space. AW commented that fewer than 50% of the SW delegates had attended ALPHE. SW also pointed out that this might create a problem with fam trips. TM mentioned the Heathrow Hilton Metropole as a potential new venue as well.

On the issue of apps, AW pointed out that there had been little interest in a fixed template app. – a mobile website would be more useful.

***Other business***

**14. Date of next meeting (17 January 2013) and any items for the agenda**

17<sup>th</sup> January 2013 was confirmed for the next meeting.

There was further discussion on CRBs. CH wondered if English UK members could have access to list 99? HJ: yes, if in regulated activity under new definitions. Banned list checks would not normally be available however for host families, unless registered for hosting for more than 28 days. CH pointed out that insurers would expect key staff to do level 1/2/3 Safeguarding training according to role and have enhanced disclosures.

**15. Any other urgent/relevant business**

AH mentioned that some embassies are using the UKBA HTS list in making decisions on where to send students. TM would try and find out from Tony Jones which countries other than Saudi Arabia were doing this. There had also been cases of Saudi students erroneously refused an ESVV because their IELTS score had been too low, and Vietnamese students refused visas even though they had a CELT. TM asked to see evidence of these decisions.

RD offered thanks to MC and GS for all their hard work and this was echoed enthusiastically by the rest of the Board.

***End: 15:30.***