

Minutes of the 42nd Meeting of the English UK Board

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

Date: Thursday 17 January 2013 from 13:00

Present: Sue Edwards (Chair), Sarah Cooper (Vice-Chair), John Barnett, Simon Cleaver, Richard Day, Caroline Hugo, Daphne Laing, Steve Phillips, Greg Watson (13:00 – 14:00) and Shane Wilkinson

Attending: Huan Japes, Tony Millns, and Annie Wright (minutes)

Constitutional business

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jane Dancaster, Andrew Hjort and Kevin McNally.

2. Any declarations of interest in the business of the meeting

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 18 October 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2012 were agreed to be an accurate representation of the meeting.

RD questioned whether there was an update on the British Council supporting Learn English in Wales, which contains non-accredited centres. TM reported the Council had recently appointed a new country director for Wales and the English and Exams team felt that this presented an opportunity to do things differently.

The Board asked if Steven Brine (MP for Winchester) had accepted the invitation to take over from Robert Syms as chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group. TM reported he was still waiting to hear from him.

4. Matters arising and updates (paper B42/1)

TM spoke to the paper.

Mortgage

TM confirmed the mortgage had reverted to the original agreement and the only outstanding matter was double-checking interest payments with the bank.

The Board agreed to ask the Finance Panel to consider at its meeting on 30 January 2013 the options presented for optimum use of the 2012 surplus.

VAT

TM reported that the voluntary disclosure of the VAT underpayment, following advice from Buzzacotts and their letter to HMRC, appears to have resulted in no penalty. It was however noted that the association might as a result be moved up the list for a VAT inspection.

Ballot for English UK subscription rates for 2013

The ballot for 2013 subscriptions was carried by a margin of 6 votes to 1 in both the state and private sectors of the membership.

5. Membership of the association (paper B42/2)

TM spoke to the paper.

Current position

TM confirmed the number of accreditations in membership is slightly ahead year-on-year although penetration was static.

Withdrawals & closures and new members

The Board noted the changes in membership, agreed to admit the applicants into membership, and delegated authority to the chief executive to admit the two accredited centres, OISE London and Babylon School of English, into membership when a duly completed application is received.

2012 subscription debtors

TM reported the number of subscription debtors was worse than in the last 5 years. GW suggested the terms of accreditation and access to the SESF in relation to subscription payments be discussed at the next meeting of the Accreditation UK Executive Board. The Board discussed the position of each debtor and agreed the Accreditation UK Executive Board should be approached with a view to agreeing a clear rule on the termination of accreditation when subscription payments are overdue. SW commented on the benefits of the SESF in terms of external relations and positive PR and felt these should not be overlooked in this regard.

Accreditation Consultancy Service

HJ reported the service was doing well with a healthy number of subscribers gaining accreditation. In addition to the developments reported in the paper HJ confirmed Languages 24/7 failed their accreditation.

Corporate members

The Board noted the number of corporate members in membership and that Cambridge English Language Assessment were celebrating their centenary this year.

Other membership-related updates

The Board noted the update from the British Council concerning SESF invoicing and non-affiliated centres.

TM noted the CLA contract was still with their lawyers.

The Board discussed the Accreditation UK fee. It was suggested the Accreditation UK accreditation mark was worth less now than in the past following the introduction of Tier 4 and ISI, but the Board saw no good reason to object to the increase proposed given the need to maintain a united front with the BC on lobbying.

RD questioned why inlingua Swansea was not in membership when inlingua Cheltenham was. TM confirmed inlingua was a franchise so the group rules did not apply. TM agreed to research the matter of franchises and membership and noted there may be risks relating to passing off and branding.

6. Membership of the Board and Honorary Membership (paper B21/3)

TM spoke to the paper.

Co-options

The Board ratified the co-option of Simon Cleaver and Daphne Laing following the e-mail circulation regarding their co-option in December. The Board noted both SC and DL are to serve as directors and trustees until the AGM on 15 May 2013.

Honorary Membership

The Board agreed Graham Simpson should be considered for Honorary Membership at the AGM on 15 May 2013. The Board agreed in principle that Michael Cornes also be considered when he is no longer working in the sector so no longer debarred under the Rules.

Matters for discussion and decision

7. Annual Conference 2013 (paper B42/4)

TM spoke to the paper and informed the Board of the main ideas for the conference programme. The Board welcomed the proposed sessions and agreed there should be a meeting of the regional sub-groups on the morning of the second day, prior to the main programme.

8. UK international education strategy (paper B42/5)

TM spoke to the paper. The Board welcomed the news about the BIS 'industrial strategy', which is to include education as one of its sectors. The Board also welcomed the news that English UK had been fully consulted and involved as the ELT sector lead body. JB commented the level of support from UKTI was encouraging. GW noted the opportunity the strategy presents to English UK.

9. Other public affairs updates (paper B42/6)

TM spoke to the paper.

Extended Student Visitor Visa

The Board noted the updates and welcomed the news that Home Office officials have indicated they continue to believe the ESVV is working as intended and should following the Alvi case in the Supreme Court be written into the Immigration Rules.

Accreditation UK and Tier 4

The Board welcomed the news that the case for Accreditation UK being approved as an accrediting body for the purposes of Tier 4 was gaining traction. TM confirmed English UK would be revisiting the 2010 research concerning non-compliance.

Visitors and study

TM reported on constructive discussions with the Home Office about people on visitor visas being prohibited from study. SC noted that the restriction had cost their London school significant sums.

10. Membership development incentives (paper B42/7)

TM spoke to the paper which developed the proposal presented at the last Board meeting to look at mobilising and incentivising existing members to recruit new ones. The proposal suggested a number of incentives including a reduction in English UK subscriptions for each of the first three years that a newly recruited member stays in membership, a personal gift with a value of approximately £90, and a half price place at an English UK training course and/or conference. The proposal suggested recruitment could also be through a sub-group and not just an individual.

RD expressed concerns that it would be difficult to allocate credit for recruitment to an individual/centre.

DL commented that 'selling' membership to the state sector is particularly challenging and it was suggested that this subject be discussed as a future agenda item.

Matters for report and information

11. Enterprises Board 18 October 2012

The Board noted the minutes of the Enterprises Board Meeting held on 18 October 2012. On the subject of membership of the Enterprises Board, TM suggested Sarah Schechter's colleague Mick Davies of Anglia Ruskin University and David Walker of Ardmore Language Schools be approached to join. SW asked whether the Beirut Fair would go ahead and AW confirmed the situation was being closely monitored but at present there was no reason why the fair shouldn't go ahead. The FCO advise against travel (or all but essential travel) to some areas of Lebanon but there are no restrictions in place concerning travel to Beirut.

12. Nominations Committee 17 January 2013

It was confirmed the Nominations Committee, which met on the morning of the Board meeting, would put out a schedule for nominations at the end of February. This timescale would allow enough time for the Nominations Committee to meet again prior to the AGM, if necessary.

13. Accreditation UK Executive Board 24 October 2012

The Board noted the minutes of the Accreditation UK Executive Board Meeting held on 24 October 2012.

14. Dates of Board meetings in 2013

The Board agreed on the dates for the remaining meetings in 2013 which are as follows:

- Tuesday 26 March
- Thursday 13 June

- Thursday 10 October

15. Any other urgent business or requests for future agenda items

The Chair concluded the meeting by welcoming DL and SC to the Board and all members introduced themselves.

The meeting concluded at 14:50.