Minutes of the 33rd Meeting of the English UK Accreditation and Professional Services Board (APSB)

Held at: English UK, 219 St John Street, London EC1V 4LY
Date: Wednesday May 28th 2014, from 14:00
Present: Andrew Hjort (Chair), Dawn Abbott, Sarah Cooper, Tony Evans, Janey Futerill, Geoff Hardy-Gould
In attendance: Huan Japes, Beth Okona-Mensah, Tom Weatherley, Annie Wright, Claire Wade and Alice Marcolin

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Tony Evans, Nigel Heritage, Tony Milns, Eddie Byers, Patrick Lawlor and Edward Bressan.

2. Minutes of the 32nd Meeting of the APSB held on 26 February 2014

GHG asked if the under 18s guidance was publicly available. Huan confirmed it’s in members only zone of BC site, and will check to make sure is on EUK site

3. Matters arising

a) 24 hour emergency phone numbers

The issue of centres needing to provide a 24 hour emergency phone number was discussed. SC commented that her college had received a ‘not met’ rating for this criterion. HJ had previously raised this issue at the BC Inspectors’ Conference – he had received the response that if there are circumstances where other conditions can be put in place then it should be commented on and the criterion met. SC responded that at her college adult learners arranged their own accommodation but was still a ‘not met’ criterion.

SC asked if it was possible to share other centres’ practices. SE commented that at Kaplan Pathway Colleges, students have access to the campus 24 hour number but this is only possible for university campus courses; at other centres Kaplan pay staff with emergency contact responsibilities.

AH noted that the main problem was in finding a way of wording this succinctly as any distinction between FE and private institutions would disadvantage one or the other. Also, if exceptions are allowed this encourages some centres to aim for this. There is a need to rely on inspectors’ common sense. SC suggested that a 24 hour emergency number might not be needed for adult students.

Action: HJ to follow-up with the BC Accreditation Unit on this issue.
4. Matters for discussion and decision


HJ spoke to the paper. Cambridge English have been the main supporters of Professional Services events since 2006, and have also sponsored SW and the current Action Research scheme. Cambridge have a new CEO and as yet there is no definitive answer on whether they want to continue the current arrangement with English UK Professional Services in 2014/2015. Henry Tolley of Trinity is extremely keen to offer sponsorship, offering a year-on-year arrangement with a cost of living increase or slightly more.

SC asked if Trinity are a better fit compared to other potential sponsors? HJ answered that their examinations are particularly well suited to Young Learner programmes, including PON groups, even if not specifically aimed at them. SC noted that there was no harm in spreading around sponsorship opportunities. AH commented some events in the North had support from Cambridge, but were able to use careful wording to provide additional opportunities for other sponsors.

AH asked if either party would refuse to be involved if the other was also involved? AW commented that when Cambridge sponsors SW then other examination boards (only) cannot sponsor the event. However, there are other smaller sponsorship packages for other companies so there is a way of wording things to allow other sponsorship opportunities. HJ commented that for PS events, we do have other opportunities for sponsorship such as drinks receptions, prominent adverts on programme covers. AW suggested a ‘bidding war’ was no bad thing even when dealing with one preferred sponsor.

SC and AW both thought it probably better to agree a three-year deal to save on time overall. The board was in agreement that there needs to be a ‘strategic approach’ to sponsorship – ensuring longevity.

SE suggested leaving this discussion until Eddie Byers has met with Cambridge English (with a meeting scheduled for 11th June)

AH noted that if exclusivity lasted for five years, we may lose potential streams if other potential sponsors find other things to sponsor in the meantime. AW suggested being careful with exclusivity as this might cause others to lose interest.

GHG raised the issue of the value of the sponsorship. Do we know what it’s worth? AW suggested English UK doesn’t have a good track record of getting the maximum benefit from sponsorship. Also once set with a particular sponsor, it’s hard to move on from the
benchmarked amounts - increases usually require extra benefits. AH noted it’s hard to find a comparable event, let alone find out what their sponsorship deals are.

HJ /AW commented that we should review sponsorship across the board – are we selling ourselves short? GHG suggested this is a good moment to do this with the new CEO and Henry Tolley now working for Trinity. Good time to restructure. Good to look outside the industry.

**Action:** HJ to brief Eddie in preparation for his meeting with Cambridge.

**Action (2):** an internal review across all English UK events and other services to try and ascertain if our sponsorship deals are sufficiently

HJ added that Trinity are sponsoring YLEUK so any YLEUK event would be outside of Cambridge agreement.

**b. Conferences 2014/2015**

HJ: The Student Experience Conference is fixed for September 26th. George Pickering and Nigel Heritage are confirmed speakers, also probably Dianne Phillips and Keith Harding. The intention is to run this event every two years.

The Teachers’ Conference is going from strength to strength and Silvana Richardson is confirmed as a plenary speaker.

The Management Conference will be in York (for preference). AH recommended approaching ‘Visit York’ for shortlist of venues.

Also, we will organise the first public-facing conference with YLEUK at some point in 2015 – possibly January or June.

There followed discussion on joining the Marketing Conference and AGM. SE agreed it was important that we discuss but the decision was the Chief Executive’s. AH: we need to do research but there does seem to be a large crossover in delegates - the more stand-alone events there are the easier to leverage sponsorship. Also, the AGM is facing challenges with quality and perhaps AGM is stretched.

AW commented that as the Marketing Conference has developed, the AGM has struggled. The marketing-themed sessions were out of place in the Annual Conference.

AW added that the feedback is ambiguous re - moving or shortening the AGM, but we are only polling those who attended

AH added that there are possibly too many other events detracting from the Annual Conference. There used to be only one conference per year but now there are several large specialist events. AW added that we have been aiming the AGM at owners /directors but they are an extremely diverse crowd. HJ noted the AGM programme is much harder to fill then other conferences. AH commented on its weakness compared to the other more successful EUK conferences. SC felt the AGM should be a short, intense day focussed on strategy.
SC added that we need to speak to members that are not coming. AH added that we could ask those who came in the past but now no longer do, or those who attend other events but not the AGM. AW suggests this could be discussed in EB’s forthcoming consultations.

**Action:** this discussion to be passed to EB for his thoughts on the matter and direction.

**Action (2):** themes for the AGM and our events as a whole could be included in the proposed membership survey.

BE Conference (HJ)L: BEUK is keen to have this event yearly. But the numbers remain low at 50 – 60 teachers. One possible problem is that teachers are not identifying themselves as specialist BE trainers. HJ suggested alternating with the YLEUK Conference.

There followed discussion on the scope of Business English Conference and whether to include ESP, as Business English may be a very small market. HJ noted English UK have more ESP sessions in the Business English Conference and would like to try this as a separate one day session. However moving EAP and other elements of ESP into the conference makes it difficult to plan appropriate plenary sessions.

AH wondered on the size of the market overall? AW asked if 50 delegates was actually sufficient - the event might not need to have a large attendance to be a success. HJ confirmed that with a free venue the conference is not losing money.

**Action:** BE Conference to continue, but look also at a one day EAP event.

c. **Training Days 2013/2014**

HJ spoke to the paper. Professional Services has had a good year with Training Days. So far there have been 560 trainee, at least 100 more than last year. The vast majority of sessions showing good or excellent feedback. We have also held days in more locations than previous years, the team have added more days during the run of the year (responding to member requests) and we have had more management-based sessions.

HJ noted several possible developments - e.g. running half-day sessions to enable the participation of teaching staff on time and cost grounds. Professional Services are also considering higher priced events with more expensive trainers – e.g. Marketing Conference plenary speakers. SC recommended using more members in London. SC recommends 'managing people' type sessions. AW added that many of our legal calls are about line management issues and motivation.

HJ suggested a possible session on managing HR for smaller organisations. HR companies might sponsor this. GHG notes procedures often exist but there is no support and SC noted there is no forum for this. Could a training day on this incorporate webinars after the event? SE added that unless the director /owner buys in, the benefit of the training day is lost. GHG thought one possible solution is to find industry insiders to deliver these courses.

**Action:** contact SC re: using their venue.
**Action:** contact SC re the procedures for supporting underperformers etc.

d. **International Accreditation and Associate Membership**

HJ is soon to run a pilot inspection in Mexico with a stripped down version of the Accreditation UK criteria. There was a generally positive response to this approach. However AW noted that the outcome was unclear. What branding and/or benefits will international associate centres get? Will they be listed on the website?

SE and SC: we need to discuss an associate member scheme after the pilot. AH noted the criteria are identifiably BC Acc UK – are there issues with the BC and ownership of the criteria? HJ answered that he had discussed the pilot with the BC, who are enthusiastic about the potential of the scheme. SE noted it would be good to send this to EB as he has contacts in the BC which may be useful.

**Action:** Discuss with EB with a view to securing BC involvement. After the pilot, work out the branding /benefits that centres will get.

4e Accreditation UK Executive Board Minutes (May 2014)

SE noted the reference to meeting with UKVI. It is difficult for the BC to approach or intervene with government departments due to the sensitivity of their position.

SE commented that it is important that we have a different approach to UKVI. We need a new approach perhaps through the Department of Education.

AH noted ASIC can accredit to same level as Accreditation UK despite their criteria being extremely lax. AH stated there is a need for English UK to approach this issue by pointing out the sub-standard company that Accreditation UK keeps, with the aim of removing them from this grouping. HO statistics had used flawed data in arriving at their decisions.

AH: the Accreditation Unit could approach the government on this – the BC can’t, English UK can.

GHG asks about the alternative observational process noted in the papers? HJ answered they were very different observational criteria which haven’t been adopted but could be modified for 2016. JF asked if this means a different way of observing or different way of evaluating? AH answered it referred to different assessment criteria and different percentages of observations (of teachers in a centre). Seeing 100% of teachers looks good but is a very small fraction of their total teaching. AH thought changing this is unlikely as inspectors know a great deal about teaching, and perhaps less on other areas. This explains lack of award of ‘areas of strength’ for teaching as inspectors are likely to be stricter in this area.

**Action:** Ask the unit about the minutes and the actions in the minutes as many seem out of date.
e. Qualifications 2014/2015

HJ explained the idea of a Teacher Trainers’ Certificate. This was proposed by Jim Scrivener and Silvana Richardson with both face to face sessions and online modules. Professional Services also thinking about a DELTM in the North – would this work? AH commented that we don’t know the demand in the North as it has never been offered.

**Action:** develop the Teacher Trainers’ Certificate, consider a second DELTM cohort

5. Professional Services updates

a. Feedback on the Management Conference

TW spoke to the paper. There followed discussion on title of the Management Conference to make more of the number of ‘Academic Managers’ attending. It was generally thought the conference had grown to incorporate elements of general management skills. State sector participation remains extremely low but there is no clear reason why – possible lack of funds?

b. Business English Trainers’ Conference Programme

HJ ran through the programme. SE asked about number of delegates year on year. HJ: about the same as last year – i.e. 50+

c. Student Experience Conference

Covered above

d. Action Research Scheme 2014

HJ: this is running well, not only for the research but also developing skills in other areas such as how to present research to an audience. Ideas are progressing well, hopefully leading to elective sessions at the Teachers’ Conference.

e. Welfare Guidance Document

Nigel to send this document round after the summer.

6. Date of next meeting

Dates to be circulated.

7. AOB

The board sends best wishes to Tony and good luck to Eddie!

*The meeting finished at 15.30*