



Our strategy to **2030**

Driving sustainable
growth for UK ELT

A force for good

Changing lives and strengthening the UK

UK English language teaching transforms lives, strengthens our nation and builds enduring global relationships.

At a time of increasing geopolitical uncertainty, UK ELT is a powerful force for intercultural understanding, international connection and opportunity.

Each year, our sector helps people from around the world achieve their ambitions while making a major contribution to the UK economy. UK ELT is worth around £2 billion and supports tens of thousands of jobs across all four nations.

The value of our sector goes far beyond economics. Every learner welcomed into our centres deepens the UK's global influence, builds trust between cultures and reinforces our reputation as an open, outward looking country.

In an unstable world, language education remains one of the UK's most effective and enduring forms of soft power.



Changing lives and strengthening the UK

Our sector is facing significant challenges, but there are also clear opportunities for growth.

We are operating in an evolving global landscape shaped by geopolitics, technological innovation and intensifying international competition. Demand is shifting, markets are maturing and uncertainty has become a constant.

Yet, there are opportunities to grow market share in key global regions and initiatives such as the Youth Experience Scheme and Erasmus+ offer renewed potential for UK ELT.

As the sector continues to evolve, English UK must evolve with it, strengthening our role as the champion of UK ELT and ensuring our community is well placed for what comes next.

We believe our industry is a force for good, which can – and should – continue to thrive.

Our vision remains a UK English language teaching sector that transforms lives through learning and intercultural understanding.

This strategy, taking us into the next decade, sets out how we will achieve this together: building a strong, welcoming, inclusive, responsible and sustainable industry.

Our goals are to leverage growth opportunities for the UK ELT sector, broaden the English UK membership base, support greater financial sustainability across the sector, and strengthen UK ELT for students, staff and partners.

About English UK

What we do for our sector

English UK is the national association for accredited English language teaching centres, representing around 300 members.

These include family run schools, commercial groups, boarding schools, further education colleges and specialist centres within universities.

Our members work with a wide range of learners: academic students, schoolchildren and teenagers, business professionals, international teachers of English, and other specialists such as doctors, nurses, pilots and lawyers.

English UK members share a commitment to the highest standards of teaching, student experience and welfare.

Like us, they believe in the power of language learning to transform lives through intercultural understanding.

English UK's mission is to harness the collective energy of our membership to champion and advance UK ELT.

We lead, represent and support our members, who are at the heart of everything we do. Through our board of trustees, sub boards, advisory groups and day to day engagement with the English UK team, members help shape the direction of the association.

We work with and for our members, to strengthen their operating environment and support their success in a global industry. We provide community, events and training, and market intelligence and promotion to help them thrive.

We campaign on behalf of the sector, work with stakeholders, and promote the UK ELT offer internationally to students, parents and study travel agents.

Our strategy is new, but our values are fundamental — and unchanged.

Our values

The principles that guide our work



Helping each other to succeed: We can do more together than we can alone. In the English UK membership community, we celebrate and support each other.



UK ELT for all: Everybody belongs in UK ELT. We embrace inclusivity, celebrate diversity and value everyone's perspective and positive contribution to our community.



Accountability: We are responsible for our actions and inactions. We treat everyone with respect, professionalism and understanding. We listen to feedback and approach our work with transparency.



Safe learning and working: We prioritise the welfare and wellbeing of students, colleagues, partners, peers and communities in our behaviour, policies and practices.



Positive impact beyond our sector: We take our social and environmental footprint seriously and are committed to improving our impact, from our team and sector to local and global communities.

Why UK ELT matters

Export value and global influence

In 2024, the English language teaching sector generated almost £2 billion in added value for the UK economy, contributed £300 million to the exchequer and supported more than 40,000 jobs, hosting international students for over 12 million bed nights.

This impact is felt across all four nations of the UK, including urban, rural and coastal communities.

The UK ELT's sector economic contribution is broad and deeply embedded into these communities.

It includes the teachers and administrators who educate and care for students; the families, residences and hosts who accommodate them; and the local cafés, shops, taxi drivers and attractions that support their wider experience.



UK ELT contributes
£1.8 billion
to the UK economy each year



UK ELT supports
40k+ jobs
both directly and indirectly



Export value and global influence

The benefit extends to an even broader network of businesses, creating further employment and economic activity. From examination boards and insurance providers to accommodation and transport, every pound an ELT student spends in the UK counts as an export.

However, income and employment figures alone do not capture the sector's full value.

As our 2025 economic impact report notes, UK ELT makes a widely under recognised contribution to the country's long term economic prospects and global influence.

The benefits extend far beyond immediate economic impact. A positive experience as a language student is often the start of a lifelong relationship with the UK.

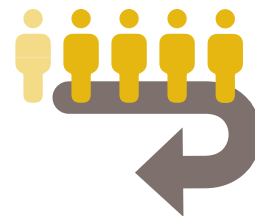
This brings downstream investment, strengthened international relationships and enhanced soft power for the UK.

By building intercultural understanding and trust between nations, UK ELT plays a vital role at a time of profound geopolitical uncertainty.



ELT students from
100+ countries

visit the UK to study English each year



80% of UK ELT students
hope to return

to the UK for leisure or further study

Opportunities and challenges

for the UK ELT sector

The UK has long been a global pioneer in English language teaching, opening the world's first English language school in London in 1912 and continuing to lead through innovation ever since.

We remain the world's most popular ELT destination but this is a challenging period for the UK English language teaching sector.

This strategy sets out how we will seize new opportunities and build for long term success, while broadening and strengthening both our organisation and the wider sector, for the benefit of all.

The context in which we operate has changed significantly over the past decade.

Brexit, Covid 19, technological advances, growing ELT capacity in some source markets and global political instability have all contributed to declining student volumes. Average course lengths have shortened, with short stay teenage visits now representing the largest segment of the market.

At the same time, there are opportunities for growth. As competitor destinations face their own constraints, the UK can increase market share in key regions, particularly Latin America and Asia, while consolidating in others such as the Middle East.

Momentum from initiatives such as the start of the Youth Experience Scheme, the return of Erasmus+, and our role in supporting delivery of the UK Government's International Education Strategy adds to this potential.

Innovation remains central to the sector's future success.



Opportunities and challenges for UK ELT

As our 2025 economic impact report highlights, UK ELT centres are demonstrating that growth and sustainability are achievable through innovation, quality and adaptability.

While the challenges are significant, the sector is building on strong foundations.

As the UK ELT sector adapts to a changing environment, English UK must evolve too.

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The sector is resilient and should be more confident in communicating its contribution to the UK economy but given the turbulent external environment it will need to continue to adapt and evolve in order to remain so over the next decade.

Like many others, [UK ELT] has had to move from a relatively stable economic and geopolitical environment to one fraught with uncertainty.

Now more than ever it's important to outline the unequivocal benefits of an immersive learning experience in the UK (or through UK centre-led transnational education opportunities).

– Examining the Economics of the ELT Industry, Pragmatix Advisory, 2025

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Our strategic goals

Looking ahead to 2030

To be effective, we must focus on clear goals that inspire and mobilise our leadership, team, members and partners.

The world and our sector are evolving — and English UK must evolve with them.

This is not a moment of crisis, but a moment of opportunity. Learning, creativity, communication and community are at the heart of UK ELT and remain our enduring strengths.

English UK is more than two decades old. While our foundations remain strong, what served us in 2004 may no longer be right for today's landscape.

Our four strategic goals set out how we will build on our strengths, adapt to change and work together to deliver sustainable growth for UK ELT.

- 1 Leverage growth opportunities for UK ELT
- 2 Broaden the English UK membership base
- 3 Build a financially sustainable membership organisation
- 4 Strengthen UK ELT for students, staff and partners

1

Growth

Leveraging opportunities for UK ELT

Leveraging growth opportunities is essential to strengthening the long term sustainability of the UK English language teaching sector.

Global demand is evolving, traditional markets are maturing and competition is intensifying.

To succeed, centres need clear intelligence, effective routes to market and practical support to convert opportunity into business.

English UK will help members identify, understand and pursue growth in new and existing markets, including through collaboration and consortium based approaches, strengthening market intelligence, promotion and partnership building to help deliver sustainable growth across the sector.



Leveraging opportunities for UK ELT

We will do this by:

- helping members understand and respond to growth opportunities and develop new routes to market
- promoting specific initiatives such as the Youth Experience Scheme, Erasmus+, scholarships and funded programmes
- sharing business development leads more effectively and supporting consortium bidding
- strengthening market intelligence and highlighting insights to drive growth
- ensuring StudyWorld is an accessible platform for partnership building and showcasing UK ELT excellence
- delivering targeted, in-market digital marketing campaigns.

Success will look like:

- more English UK member centres securing new business through our market development activity
- increased engagement and impact in priority markets, as measured by the reach of our market development activities
- successful and productive in-market collaborations and partnerships between English UK members
- market intelligence that supports member centres to make timely business decisions when the outlook is uncertain
- an established series of StudyWorld events that align with English UK's mission and support our strategic goal to leverage growth opportunities for UK ELT.

2

New members

Broadening the English UK membership base

Broadening English UK's membership base will strengthen our role as the national association for UK English language teaching.

The UK Government recognises all centres accredited under approved schemes for hosting students on visit and study visas as a legitimate part of the sector.

While English UK already represents the UK ELT sector in key national policy forums, engaging with this wider community will allow us to speak with a more representative voice, improve standards across the sector and advance our mission, vision and values.

By engaging with this wider community, we can speak with a more representative voice, improve standards across the sector and advance our mission, vision and values.

A broader membership base will also enhance English UK's resilience, influence and capacity to support our members as part of a strong ELT sector into the future.



Broadening the English UK membership base

We will do this by:

- developing and implementing a plan to bring UK ELT centres that are recognised by UK Government-approved accreditation schemes for hosting students on visit and study visas into English UK membership
- introducing and promoting a new category of associate membership for these centres
- building strategic partnerships with other tourism and education sector associations.

Success will look like:

- recognition of English UK as the representative voice of the UK accredited ELT sector
- a broader membership base, strengthening the association's influence, resilience, capacity and impact.

3

Financial health

Building a financially sustainable organisation

Building a more sustainable membership organisation is essential to the long term resilience of the UK ELT sector.

Robust financial health will help us to maintain trust among students, partners and stakeholders.

Stronger financial health across the membership, reduces the risk of unmanaged centre closures, protects students' money and supports stable employment for staff.

English UK will promote an ethical, responsible approach to financial sustainability that strengthens transparency, builds market confidence and supports viable business models.

By combining sector growth, targeted reform, practical guidance and dialogue across the supply chain, we will support members to build resilience and contribute to a stronger, more sustainable UK ELT sector overall.



Building a financially sustainable organisation

We will do this by:

- developing new opportunities for sector growth
- reforming the Student Emergency Support scheme to provide stronger protection for students affected by a centre closure
- developing and promoting an ethical and responsible approach to financial sustainability, including training and guidance for members
- introducing financial health checks for members, with targeted support where needed
- establishing ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and the wider supply chain to support realistic, financially sustainable business practices.

Success will look like:

- an English UK operated Student Emergency Support scheme that protects students' money and strengthens confidence in the UK ELT market
- increasing market confidence, as measured by the perception of our international partners
- financial training and guidance for members with strong engagement and feedback
- fewer unmanaged member centre closures, reflecting improving financial resilience across the membership.

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A strong sector

Strengthening UK ELT for students, staff and partners

A strong, trusted UK ELT sector depends on high standards, skilled and supported staff, and fair, accountable relationships across the supply chain.

Strengthening the sector for students, staff and partners underpins confidence in the UK ELT offer and supports sustainable, responsible growth.

English UK will promote excellence, professional development and responsible practice across the sector.

By embedding fairness, inclusion and accountability in our work, tackling discrimination and supporting environmental responsibility, we will help build a UK ELT sector that delivers positive outcomes for learners, staff and partners alike.



Strengthening UK ELT for students, staff and partners

We will do this by:

- promoting excellence through Accreditation UK and constructive engagement with other UK ELT accreditation schemes
- providing professional development for UK ELT staff, creating spaces to network, share expertise and learn
- delivering our social responsibility action plan to promote positive, fair and accountable relationships across the sector and supply chain
- implementing our antiracism action plan, including ensuring membership rules support action to end native speakerism
- refocusing on environmental responsibility, raising awareness and supporting action to reduce emissions and negative impacts.

Success will look like:

- recognition of UK ELT as a high-quality, inclusive and responsible sector for students, staff and partners
- increased trust in the UK ELT offer, reflected in stronger professional standards, fairer practices and positive student and staff experiences
- an effective and comprehensive professional development programme for UK ELT, as measured by engagement and feedback
- member engagement with content on social and environmental responsibility topics.

What we need

Our foundations for success

We will deliver this strategy by strengthening our operating environment, planning thoughtfully, embedding effective processes, communicating clearly and resourcing our work responsibly.

We will do this while nurturing and developing both our team and our partnerships across the sector.

By drawing on our strengths and continuing to evolve, we will support sustainable growth for UK ELT.

A supportive operating environment

A supportive operating environment creates the conditions for sustainable growth.

We will:

- influence government policy to create opportunity, with a focus on a supportive immigration system
- raise UK ELT's profile and promote the English UK brand through national and local media
- grow our network of supportive parliamentarians
- extend and strengthen relationships with partners and stakeholders across Westminster, local authorities and the devolved administrations.



Our foundations for success

Effective people and processes

Purpose-driven, value-led people and efficient processes underpin our performance and ability to adapt.

We will:

- build a staff team that feels valued and is mission-focused, responsible, adaptable and collaborative, with a strong commitment to learning
- strengthen the capacity of our boards and committees by widening and diversifying member participation
- review and streamline our systems and processes, adopting new technologies where they are beneficial and align with our values.

Clear communication

Clear, effective communication connects our team and community, enabling us to achieve our goals.

We will:

- engage English UK members, students, study-abroad agent partners and stakeholders in the UK and internationally through clear, relevant digital communication
- strengthen our brand, identity and voice, using language that is inclusive, accessible and reflective of our mission, vision and values
- develop a new accessible website for the association that speaks to all users and stakeholders and has a strong focus on user experience
- improve internal communication channels and practice so our team can work confidently and efficiently.



Our foundations for success

Sustainable finances and resources

Sustainable finances and resources allow us to deliver our strategy successfully and support UK ELT over the long term.

We will:

- build a strong and growing membership base as a sustainable source of subscription income
- manage overheads and delivery costs efficiently, while meeting revenue targets for income-generating events and services
- invest in and manage our team effectively to support wellbeing, optimise performance and deliver our objectives
- leverage the support of sponsors and partners to help deliver our goals.

Collaborative partnerships

Collaborative partnerships enable us to combine expertise, extend our reach and achieve more than we could alone.

We will:

- collaborate with governmental, non-governmental, education sector and corporate partners in the UK to strengthen our voice and support our public affairs and lobbying aims
- develop partnerships with governmental, non-governmental, education sector and corporate organisations to promote UK ELT internationally
- leverage relationships inside and outside UK ELT to deliver tangible benefits for English UK member centres.




English UK is the UK's national trade association for accredited English language teaching (ELT) centres. We represent around 300 member centres across the UK and have worked to raise standards in UK ELT since 2004.

We support our members through training and advice, international marketing, and advocacy for the sector – helping learners from around the world come to the UK to improve their English and experience our culture.

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