

OPENING A LANGUAGE SCHOOL IN THE UK

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English UK gets regular enquiries about how to open an English language centre, and this leaflet can only cover the basics: you'll need much more information and research before you can get your business up and running successfully.

We can provide more formal help in one area, which is accreditation. Unless you are happy to limit your school's reach to UK and EU students you will need to get accreditation, which will also ensure that your school meets the highest standards. We can help and support you through this with our Accreditation Consultancy Scheme which covers the key aspects of preparing for an Accreditation UK inspection. Your centre can then teach a wider range of students, and become a member of English UK, with the support and associated benefits we offer.

1. Getting started

The legal requirements for opening a language centre are the same as for any other new business -- but be careful about immigration law. Until you have official accreditation, such as from Accreditation UK (which takes time to achieve) you can legally only accept students from the UK, the European Economic Area, and Switzerland.

Once you have the necessary start-up capital, you'll need to consider:

- Hiring teachers and a Director of Studies/academic manager
- Buying or renting a property with D1 educational use – or planning permission for a change of use
- Acquiring furnishings, equipment and resources, including teaching aids, books, computers, audio/video equipment, classroom furniture and so on
- Arranging student accommodation, including host families and/or residences. Alternatively, there are specialist agents offering accommodation services to language schools
- Appointment of a welfare/accommodation officer and creation of a policy for student welfare and safeguarding, particularly covering the care of under-18s
- A fee structure for tuition and other costs
- Administration systems for student enrolment, registration, class placement, the issuing of questionnaires and general record keeping. It is good practice to get on top of these systems from the start as they become vital once you recruit students on study visas
- A fee structure for tuition and other costs
- Possible appointments of sales/marketing staff and a (part-time) activities organiser.

2. Recruiting students

With the basics in place, you can begin to recruit students. Some basic marketing steps might include:

- Production of a brochure
- Creating a website and social media sites and presence

- Advertising in relevant publications
- Recruitment of overseas agents
- Attendance at exhibitions, workshops and overseas fairs.

New centres can often find this side of the business tricky, especially since many official promotional opportunities provided by the British Council (Services for International Education Marketing), VisitBritain and regional tourist boards are only available to accredited language schools.

VisitBritain, which promotes all tourism in Britain, can give some help to non-accredited centres. Amongst other things, it produces market profiles for key countries or regions, which contain invaluable background information, often including specific details relating to the language travel market. These are available from VisitBritain at www.visitbritain.org.

3. Accreditation

Language schools must gain official accreditation before they can legally accept students from countries outside the EU. Centres must be accredited by Accreditation UK before they can become English UK members.

Accreditation UK is jointly managed by English UK and the British Council, with the British Council Accreditation Unit carrying out the inspection visits. The Accreditation UK scheme is widely recognised around the world as a benchmark of high-quality language provision. A centre can apply for inspection with Accreditation UK once it has been trading for one calendar year, or two summers for a seasonal centre.

Accreditation opens up many promotional possibilities through events organised by English UK, VisitBritain, the British Council and others. Information about the requirements and procedure for gaining accreditation are available from the Accreditation Unit of the British Council: www.britishcouncil.org/accreditation.htm.

If you aim to become a Highly Trusted Sponsor, enabling you to accept longer-stay students under the Points-Based System (PBS), you will need additional accreditation from QAA or ISI. For more details visit:

ISI: www.educationaloversight.co.uk

QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk

4. Accreditation Consultancy Scheme

Centres aiming for Accreditation UK status can subscribe to English UK's Accreditation Consultancy Scheme (ACS). This offers an independent consultancy on your fitness to meet required standards, including a report on the areas you will need to address.

It's also very cost-effective: if you join ACS, gain Accreditation UK status and then join English UK, we'll discount the cost of your initial ACS subscription from the first year's English UK membership fee. Further details are available here:

www.englishuk.com/en/training/consultancy/accreditation-consultancy-scheme.

We can also organise specific consultancies on particular aspects of your centre, such as financial management and budgeting. Please contact Huan Japes, huan@englishuk.com to discuss your requirements in more detail.

5. English UK Membership

One of the best things about gaining accreditation with Accreditation UK is that it allows you to become an English UK member. Here are just a few of the key benefits of membership:

- Your profile on the English UK website - our course finder tool holds details of more English language courses at accredited centres than any other database in the world
- Major discounts on attendance at StudyWorld London, English UK's annual international student recruitment workshop (typically saving at least £400)
- Marketing and promotional activities, inward missions, market research and country visit reports
- Substantial discounts on our training days, qualifications and conferences
- Access to our members-only e-forum for support, discussions and networking
- High-level representation to national and international government bodies
- For more information on becoming an English UK member, go to:
www.englishuk.com/en/english-uk/membership/benefits-of-membership.