



47 Brunswick Court
Tanner Street
London SE1 3LH

+44 20 7608 7960
info@englishuk.com
englishuk.com

15 May 2020

Dear Minister Stuart

The UK English language teaching industry, the Immigration Bill and Covid-19

Congratulations on regaining the international education portfolio within the Department for International Trade.

I am writing to reiterate some of the points that I raised during the very useful meeting of the Education Sector Advisory Group chaired by Minister Donelan on Thursday 14 May.

As interim CEO of English UK, the trade body representing our nation's accredited ELT centres, I am looking forward to working closely with you on supporting our industry through the challenges of Covid-19 and its aftermath and helping you to fulfil key Conservative manifesto objectives including the aims of the International Education Strategy, fostering and encouraging British businesses, helping SMEs to become exporters and levelling up every part of the UK.

You are of course aware of our industry, which brings 550,000 students and 1.4bn to the UK each year and supports over 35,000 jobs, including in many coastal and rural locations specifically targeted in the Government's levelling-up agenda. ELT in the UK attracts more students than any of our competitors and is second only to the US in the overall length of time students spend on their courses.

The importance of UK ELT was acknowledged in the International Education Strategy:

- Students' spending supports a wide range of jobs, both specialist roles within the teaching centres and more general ones within the community, as well as providing valuable income for homestay hosts, transport companies, tourist attractions and a wide range of retail and hospitality businesses.
- The health of the ELT sector and UK universities are closely linked as many English language students progress onto undergraduate and postgraduate degree studies.
- There are soft power benefits from hundreds of thousands of people enjoying positive experiences in the UK at a time when we are building new trade deals.



47 Brunswick Court
Tanner Street
London SE1 3LH

+44 20 7608 7960
info@englishuk.com
englishuk.com

- The ELT sector also plays a vital role in supporting skilled workers to meet immigration points requirements for employment in the UK in key areas such as health and social care.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the upcoming Immigration Bill risk all these benefits, and ELT centres would appreciate your support, both now when centres are closed for face-to-face teaching and in the recovery phase to come. Here are the key issues:

- 1. Business rates holiday and associated grants offered to the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors to include the ELT sector.** ELT centres are currently excluded from the expanded business rates relief scheme and associated retail, leisure and hospitality grant fund despite providing educational holidays for over 550,000 students a year, the majority of them juniors on short-stay programmes. Due to the current lockdown, schools are closed to international students and we anticipate that our industry will be particularly late to recover its international markets. We appreciate the efforts of the DIT team hitherto to secure the relief for our sector and urge you to help bring this to completion.
- 2. Ongoing support for ELT once the immediate COVID-19 lockdown ends.** ELT is a largely seasonal industry with peaks in the summer and at Easter; many centres have earned almost nothing this year and student travel this summer looks unlikely. Centres will need the extension of existing measures and additional support to keep going until they can reopen fully in 2021. This includes any further support targeted at the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors such as an extended furlough period. In addition, in the post-lockdown recovery phase ELT centres will need targeted support for their marketing efforts
- 3. Flexibility from the Home Office to enable students to extend the validity of their six- or eleven-month visas where their course start dates have been postponed.** This will ensure that the UK ELT sector is able to welcome back those students who already planned their courses prior to the pandemic to commence their studies as soon as travel restrictions allow.
- 4. We want the Home Secretary to support ELT's needs in post 2020 immigration regulations.** Plans to remove ID-card travel and not provide a seasonal worker route for ELT are particularly damaging. We would like to see:
 - Passport-free travel documents for junior group travel



47 Brunswick Court
Tanner Street
London SE1 3LH

+44 20 7608 7960
info@englishuk.com
englishuk.com

- A light-touch, flexible, short-term study visa for up to a year with no time restrictions for all ELT students.
 - Students already studying in the UK to be able to apply for a new visa for further study (e.g. at an HEI) without leaving the country
 - All English language providers to be accredited, and for Accreditation UK to be recognized on all visa routes.
 - Restoration of work rights of up to 20 hours a week for adult students on ELT courses with accredited providers, in line with the major English language competitor nations
 - Opportunities for ELT schools to get the qualified seasonal staff it they need for summer and Easter peaks by reconsidering the pro-rata block in the points-based system, allowing temporary workers or creating a youth mobility scheme.
- 5. While the Government negotiates with the EU, we need it to maintain Erasmus+ relationships and funding.** A significant proportion of ELT students and ELT teachers taking training courses are supported by the EU Erasmus+ scheme. Losing this business could close many ELT centres.

We would be grateful for any ongoing support from you and your team. Please get in touch if I can supply any more information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jodie Gray", written in a cursive style.

Jodie Gray
Interim Chief Executive
English UK