

The logo for English UK, featuring the words "ENGLISH" and "UK" stacked vertically in a white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white square border.

ENGLISH
UK

Global language, global connections

A manifesto from English UK

April 2024

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English is the lingua franca of global trade. Many international businesses use English as their official language of communication.

Language proficiency can have a positive impact on employability, as well as on social and international mobility, and is without question a key driver behind the desire to learn English for many people.

– The Future of English: Global Perspectives, British Council, 2023

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The new government can take six simple steps to support our global export industry

The UK's English language teaching (ELT) sector is an important UK export industry.

It supports jobs in every region, sets many students on a path to our universities, and builds lifelong global affinities to our country.

Before Covid and Brexit, ELT contributed £1.4bn and over 35,000 jobs to the UK economy.

UK ELT helps to transform lives through learning and intercultural understanding. Children, older adults, students and professionals are attracted to learn at UK ELT centres.

They come from all over the world for education, career development, cultural immersion and leisure. Courses usually last from a week to eleven months.

Yet, it's all too easy for UK ELT to be overlooked or damaged by government policy, due to its reliance on temporary migration.

We believe the incoming government will benefit from a stronger UK ELT industry, achievable through a few simple, uncontroversial policy tweaks.

English language teaching is one of the UK's greatest assets

English language teaching is a global industry, which the UK led until 2019.

Before the pandemic and Brexit, the UK attracted 550,000 ELT students annually, with almost 60% coming from Europe.

Both of these events affected our ability to attract, accommodate and teach students.

With hard work and innovation, ELT centres are back at around 70% of 2019 business and in 2022 attracted a third of the world's ELT students.

But crucially, students come for far shorter courses than before the pandemic.

Despite leading the global industry in 2019, in student volume the UK is now level with Canada and the USA and outstripped by Australia.

We want the UK to become the world's biggest English language learning destination once more.

Our students include groups of children, young adults, professionals and older people who see English language proficiency as necessary for life, learning and employment.

They come from all over the world for courses and cultural immersion, and spend almost double what other inbound visitors spend during their stay in the UK.

“English is the most widely spoken language in the world. It is the global language of communication and is likely to retain this position for the next decade and beyond.”

– The Future of English: Global Perspectives, British Council, 2023



1. UK ELT is part of a global community of English language learners and teachers

According to the British Council, English is currently the most spoken language across the globe, with roughly 2.3 billion people speaking it as a first or additional language. English is set to remain the dominant global lingua franca for the foreseeable future.



2. UK ELT builds relationships across the globe

In 2023, students came from over 100 different countries to learn or improve their English in the UK. Under-18s stayed for an average of two weeks and adults for six weeks. 80% of students hope to return to the UK for further study or a holiday. At a time of increasing global tension, such connections across borders are vital.



3. UK ELT supports local economies around the UK

ELT centres are based all over the UK, including in coastal communities where every income stream is critical. As well as employment for specialist school staff, ELT also supports jobs in tourism, leisure, hospitality and retail, as well as people hosting students in their homes. ELT students spend almost double other inbound visitors.



4. UK ELT is a route for international students to reach UK universities

International students coming to our UK universities often first study with UK ELT centres to prepare for advanced English exams before beginning their degree courses.



5. UK ELT is a gateway for staff joining the NHS and healthcare sector

UK ELT centres offer the specialist English language training and qualifications that nurses, doctors and health care workers need to practise in the UK. Our sector can help the UK's health workforce grow now and in the future.

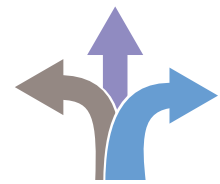


6. UK ELT is a valuable export industry, contributing £1.4bn to the national economy

Before Covid and Brexit, UK ELT contributed £1.4bn and over 35,000 jobs to the UK economy. We achieved about 70% of 2019 business levels in 2023 – and have the potential to grow beyond 2019 numbers.

Six policy recommendations

UK ELT helps people fulfil their dreams and connects people across continents – six simple steps can help us regain our position as the world’s number one English language learning destination.



1. Expand career-enhancing travel opportunities for young people

The Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) offers young adults the chance to live, work and study in another country for up to three years.

Expanding the YMS would give our ELT centres and tourism a boost by allowing more young people to experience life in the UK. Young Britons would also benefit from these career-enhancing travel opportunities.

The government has already raised numbers from Japan and Korea, and agreed to new partnerships with Montenegro and Uruguay.

We want to see more schemes of this kind, in particular with the EU and its member states.



2. Legalise short work placements on all ELT courses

Many English language learners want to practise their language skills in the workplace to enhance their careers.

Work placement programmes were a popular part of the UK ELT offer until Brexit. Now we are losing out against our international competitors, such as Ireland and Malta, as we are unable to offer them.

We want all adult learners on English language courses to be able to undertake short work placements.



3. Extend ID card travel for groups of under 18s from the EU

Organised under-18 group travel from the EU was one of the most important markets for UK ELT and tourism pre-Brexit. Now the need for passports – and in some cases visas – has made the UK uncompetitive against EU destinations, including Malta and Ireland.

Our recent campaigning encouraged the government to reinstate inbound ID-card travel for French school groups to the UK.

We want this extended to short child group visits from other EU countries including Spain, Germany and Italy.



4. Recognise UK ELT’s accreditation scheme for immigration purposes

The British Council runs Accreditation UK, a rigorous and specialist ELT accreditation scheme, which is widely recognised as the best in the world.

For this reason, it is the most popular accreditation scheme among UK ELT centres.

Yet, for the past decade, ELT centres offering student visas have been required to be inspected by ISI, which specialises in independent schools. Many centres end up paying for both schemes.

We want the government to recognise Accreditation UK for immigration purposes to ensure all our students have the best possible experience.



5. Increase government marketing support for UK ELT

Targeted government marketing support would help UK ELT extend its reach.

International education is one of the UK’s most important export industries and ELT is both an entry point and a significant sector in its own right.

We want UK ELT to be recognised in the government’s international education strategy, with its own growth target and dedicated marketing support.



6. Increase rent-a-room tax relief to help address our capacity challenge

Homestay accommodation is popular with ELT students, who want to immerse themselves in UK culture.

However, since spare rooms became home offices in response to the pandemic, there has been a shortfall in homestay accommodation.

We want rent-a-room tax relief increased to £10k from £7.5k. There has been no increase since 2016.

This would encourage people to welcome ELT students into their homes once more, and help householders manage the cost of living crisis.




[englishuk.com/
manifesto](https://englishuk.com/manifesto)

English UK is the national membership association of accredited English language teaching centres in the UK. Our 300+ member centres are fully accredited by the British Council to teach English.

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