

Online training for agents

Next issue

In our August issue, **Special Report** examines global statistics to give a comprehensive account of the world language travel industry, while **Market Report** finds out about market trends in the UK last year. **Direction** looks at the evolving workshop market and **Feedback** finds out what students studying in the USA think about their study abroad experience. **City Focus** visits Malaga in Spain while **Destination** reports from France. **Status** provides data from Australia.

The British Council has unveiled an online self-access training programme for agents as part of its agent strategy. The move is the latest effort from the Council to encourage the involvement of agents in the process of promoting UK education to potential clients overseas.

'[The agent strategy] will result in the British Council playing a supporting role for high quality agents rather than acting as a competitor,' said Jane Lowther, Marketing Services Manager at the Council. 'We aim to ensure that our training will provide quality agents with the UK education product knowledge they require to provide a professional service to customers.'

The self-access course, which is delivered online via the Education UK website, has been developed to educate agents about the range of UK education products available and advise them of

the benefits of a UK-based education. The course will be tailored to meet the needs of a specific agent market. In countries where the agency market is mature and developed, the training course will reflect this.

'[The course] is supported through a core learning resource, 'The essential guide for agents', which has briefings about key aspects of UK education and training,' explained Lowther. 'In each unit, participants are provided with learning activities, core learning resources and a self-assessment facility.' The online course takes between 10 and 12 weeks to complete.

Sixty agents from three countries helped to pilot the course and have already completed the programme. Lowther explained that all agents who successfully complete the course would receive a certificate, which is supported and recognised by UK institutions.



Evidence of the BC's new agenda

This year, certain mature agency markets will also benefit from Agent Zones, which will be introduced on national versions of the Education UK website. These zones will provide information on events, downloadable promotional materials and news, as well as training packages. Agent Zones are scheduled initially to be launched in Russia, Japan, Thailand, China, Turkey and India.

The British Council's agent strategy was announced last year alongside plans to gradually phase out its placement schemes (see *Language Travel Magazine*, January 2003, page 8). □

Industry issues - agents speak out

January February March April May June July August September October November December

Q Is it becoming harder to recruit clients at the moment and what do you find are the best methods to attract business in the current climate?



'At the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES), applications are up eight

per cent for summer programmes and 17 per cent for full year study. While the impact of the war, anti-Americanism, and Sars has had an effect, IES sees a noticeable shift in attitude since the end of the war in Iraq, when the US media frenzy declined slightly. We surmise that there has also been a numbing factor, a 'fear fatigue factor'; that in spite of the news, parents and students are saying, 'We must move on'. To counter the recent media news barrage that can have enormous influence on parents' perceptions of safety abroad, IES has worked hard to separate the hype from reality through regular emails, letters and updates posted on our website. IES posts comments from students currently overseas and from

overseas programme directors about the situation in their home cities.'

Carla Slawson, IES, USA



'From my own point of view, the business is getting tougher and tougher, especially [in] Indonesia. Apart from the

many reasons related to the multiple local and global impacts in economy, politics, terrorism, wars and even health, there are other factors. The change of immigration policy in Australia that has increased the Assessment Level of students from Indonesia, from level 2 to level 3, has made it almost impossible to market Elicos products because students will only be granted a visa if they enrol for a minimum of 12 months. We cannot deny that cyber-marketing has an important role in the business. But I still believe that the best method of marketing products is by 'word of mouth' - agents must still be very creative in finding ways to

secure business.'

Udaya Halim, Kings English and Education Centre, Indonesia



'Yes, it has become more difficult to recruit clients this year. We are placing a stronger emphasis on our

marketing activities. We will be increasing the number of seminars and educational fairs [we attend]. In addition, we have taken out more ads in local magazines and newspaper. I feel it is more important to remind people of our agency. In Korea, we are going through difficult economic times. In addition, the Sars scare is not helping business. We feel that our website is very important - it gives an impression of our agency to the public. Even though business is slow, I feel that I must invest in my website and provide more current information.'

Mansuk Bae, KAMC, Korea

Wasels holds second agent workshop

THE WORLDWIDE Alliance of Small English Language Schools (Wasels) held its second agent workshop earlier this year. The workshop, held in Paris in April, allowed French agents to meet a group of small owner-operated international language schools.

'The workshop was appreciated by both the French agents who were invited, and by the [association] members, and many new and potentially beneficial relationships were established,' commented Barry Morris from Totnes European School, Chairperson of the association.

The event also served as the venue for Wasels' annual general meeting where it was agreed that further agent workshops would be held in Switzerland in October and in Japan in early 2004. 'One of the main purposes of Wasels is to act in a cooperative, non-profit making way as a self-help group,' Morris explained. 'By arranging workshops in different countries, we can share the costs and reap the benefits.' □

Italian in Italy workshop

AGENTS had the chance to meet Italian schools earlier this year during the Italian in Italy workshop organised by the association of the same name.

Thirteen agents attended the event, which took place in March and was designed to enable agents to meet not only Italian language schools, but schools of fashion, music, design, art and cookery. Giuseppina Foti of Italian in Italy explained, 'The demand for [Italian cultural immersion] is growing fast and to meet this [increasing] demand there is a great potential for developing a broad range of offers in such fields as the arts and crafts, folklore and tradition [of Italy].'

Four different fam trips were organised by the association for attending agents, to enable them to visit language schools and

other schools of their choice in various regions throughout Italy. 'We had the wonderful opportunity to meet the schools and visit quite a few of them, which was a great way to get to know the people, their schools and the courses they offer,' commented attendee Magdalena Jugovic from Kub Travel Enterprises agency in Serbia & Montenegro.

Fifteen schools were at the three-day workshop, which welcomed a group of Brazilian agents from Belta as guests of honour. Stefania Frappi at Studioitalia, who was involved in organising the event, explained that many more agents had been expected, however a number cancelled at the last minute because of the war in Iraq. Italy's General Director of Tourism, Franco Vitale, opened the event. □



Face to face

Each month, we profile the people from language schools who deal directly with agents, in order to give you the chance to get to know some of the people you work with.

Who are you?

Vern Bruce, General Manager, International Education Office.

Where do you work?

William Angliss Institute of Tafe in Melbourne, Australia.

Why and how did you start in the industry?

I commenced teaching English as a foreign language back in the early 1980s in Japan, UK and Saudi Arabia, and English as a second language in Australia in the late 1980s. I gradually moved over into a marketing/management role within the international student industry.

Why should agents choose to represent your school?

We train our students for careers in the world's second largest industry, hospitality and tourism. We are Australia's largest and oldest specialist government-funded institute with top-line training facilities and a curriculum designed and monitored by the hospitality and tourism industry.

How does your school promote itself to agents?

We [go to] education fairs and exhibitions and rely on agents to contact us. Australian government agencies abroad also refer agents to us.

What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

In the second semester, 2002, over 51 per cent of our enrolments were through agents and in the first semester, 2003, this figure was 59 per cent.

How do you believe your institution will develop in the future?

We are diversifying our intake of international students into [Australian visa] Assessment Level 1 and 2 countries in Asia, Europe, North America, South America and Africa.

Agent uncooperative over 'no-show' students

AN AGENCY that sent a group of Turkish students to Japan has been accused of being uncooperative after the students did not turn up at the school at which they were enrolled. The missing students have still not been found, despite efforts by the school and Japanese authorities.

Global school chain, Eurocentres, contacted *Language Travel Magazine* to warn others of the disreputable service that they received from the Turkish agent, based at a branch of Arsan Travel Center. The agent, Ayse Nur Arun, sent a party of 22 Turkish students to Japan to study at Eurocentres Kanazawa in January.

According to the school, all of the students disappeared, some on arrival in Osaka and others once they had been placed with a host family. Despite receiving a copy of a bank transfer prior to the students' arrival, Eurocentres says it has not received any money from the agency or help in tracking down the missing students.

'This kind of incident will affect the whole language training and travel industry by increasing visa regulations,' said Michael Gerber, Chief Executive of the school chain. Arsan Travel Center declined to comment. □

Amendments

We had an overwhelming response to our latest UK Feedback survey, which was printed in the June issue of *Language Travel Magazine*. Unfortunately, not all those schools that took part were credited at the end of the article. We would also like to thank Anglo-Continental School of English, Bournemouth; Basil Paterson College, Edinburgh; Bath Spa University College, Bath; Central School of English, London; Chichester College, Chichester; ELC, Reading; Evendine College, London; Gateshead College, Gateshead; Gordonstoun South International College, Basingstoke; Harrow House International College, Swanage; Interlink School of English, Bournemouth.

In the May issue of *Language Travel Magazine*, Tamsin Plaxton of Tamwood International College in Vancouver, Canada, was not appropriately credited for her comments in the Special Report. The comments attributed to Paxton are in fact made by Ms Plaxton. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

On the move



Stephen Carter (top) has joined the Anglo-Continental Educational Group in Bournemouth, UK, as a Business Development Coordinator. He will work with representatives and clients abroad to promote the English language



courses of the group's schools in England and the USA. Mandy Kerr (middle) has also joined Anglo-Continental Bournemouth as a Business Development Coordinator. Fluent in Spanish and a qualified teacher, she is looking forward to working with the group's representatives in Spain and Latin/South America. Deborah Jones (below) is the new Marketing Assistant. She speaks French and Italian, and will also maintain close cooperation with the group's representatives overseas.



Harry Crawford has taken over as Director at the Université Jean Monnet's Centre International de Langue et Civilisation (Cilec) in Saint Etienne, France. As well as overseeing the department's move into larger and better-equipped premises, Mr Crawford plans to develop the teaching quality on offer at Cilec. He said, '[I now have] the opportunity to take up a new challenge, developing and promoting what is after all my second language, and hopefully developing the quality teaching Cilec has offered over the years.'



Regent Language Holidays, a division of Regent Language Training in the UK, has boosted its team by appointing three new members of staff to provide expertise and support during its busy summer period. Johanna Flippent (top) and Rosa Owen



(middle) have been appointed as Registrars and will be responsible for overseeing course bookings. To ensure that the centres' activity programmes are managed effectively, Rob Hughes (below) has been taken on as Courses Coordinator to organise and implement a wide range of activities and excursions for juniors.