

European norm is ratified

The European quality standard known as the norm has been ratified by the working group and is now available to industry members interested in discovering the minimum voluntary quality levels for "language study tour providers", which includes both language schools and agencies.

The initiative to create the norm was spearheaded by representatives from German agency association, FDSV, and the French who adopted a national norme in 1999 (see *Language Travel Magazine*, May 1999, page 14). According to Holger Muehlbauer of DIN, the German Institute for Standardisation – which has been responsible for overseeing the creation of the Comité Européen de Normalisation (CEN) and working with the multinational working group – agents are one of the key target businesses of the norm.

And while some schools will certainly decide to conform to the norm standards, Muehlbauer added, "There will be an indirect impact [on schools] as those agents who want to use the declaration of norm conformity as an advertisement tool and as a trust-building measure will have to make sure that all statements they make with reference to the schools are true." And while the definition of

language study tour provider primarily addresses the party taking student booking details, language schools that accept direct bookings are also in this case considered to be the provider.

Key provisions of the norm cover topics such as tuition, accommodation, welfare, group leaders, pre-booking information and management. The standards were agreed upon after a five-year process and represent agreement between 28 European countries. Muehlbauer said, "The standard is not imposed by bureaucrats that are removed from business reality but from experts involved in the business themselves. That's what the CEN stands for. Participating experts in the working group came from agencies, schools, consumer protection and education institutions."

He said that the topics that required most technical discussion were pre-booking and pre-departure information, accommodation requirements, teaching staff qualifications and group leader/group size ratios. From now on, businesses in the language study tour provider remit can make a self-declaration that they conform to norm standards, or have the "conformity assessment carried out by a neutral certifier".

USA working to woo Chinese

THE BEIJING EMBASSY Consular and Public Affairs section is reported to have embarked on a campaign to promote the USA and demystify the visa application process, with the help of a member of staff provided

by the Institute of International Education (IIE), who has been transferred to visit campuses and educational counselling centres around China.

Embassy officers in Beijing gave presentations to students in the spring with a clear message that all qualified students would receive a visa and that there were no visa quotas. A web chat about study in the USA was also organised, hosted by Sina.com (an established Internet portal), at the end of the outreach programme. Thousands of students are reported to have logged on to ask questions about the visa process.

These efforts, made to improve the reputation of the country as a study destination among Chinese nationals, appear to have paid off as visa applications were up in May and June this year, compared with the previous year (see *Education Travel Magazine*, September 2005, page 41).

Visa regime tightened in UK, NZ

FOLLOWING ON from the news that the UK now requires long-term visa applicants to undergo TB testing (see *Language Travel Magazine*, October 2005, page 6) New Zealand has announced that all foreign visitors planning to spend more than a year in the country must have a blood test that screens for HIV, hepatitis B and liver and kidney function.

Previously, only those staying for more than two years were required to undergo this process.

The immigration department stated on its website, "The new migrant health screening policy is the final stage in the government's progressive implementation of tighter health and disability screening for migrants. The aim of the policy is to protect and minimise the costs and demands of immigration."

Meanwhile, the UK has announced that from 13 November, all nationals from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) – other than visa nationals and those from 10 countries where the ruling was brought in two years ago – must obtain a visa prior to entry if they intend to stay in the country for longer than six months.

While the ruling does not affect students, who are required to obtain a specific student visa if this is their main intention of stay, it will have an impact on visitors from countries such as Brazil and Mexico, who were previously able to enter the UK for stays of more than six months without entry clearance (a visa). The change in ruling has been made to enable common format documents to be used throughout Europe. The visa will cost UK£85 (US\$156).



The Alpha Russia Workshop
Date: 1-3 November
Venue: St Petersburg, Russia
Email: jane@hthousemedia.com
Web: www.hthousemedia.com

The Language Show
Date: 4-6 November
Venue: London, UK
Email: jrs@thelanguageshow.co.uk
Web: www.thelanguageshow.co.uk

Expolingua Praha
Date: 11-12 November
Venue: Prague, Czech Republic
Email: prague@expolingua.com
Web: www.expolingua.cz

21st International Fair "Education and Career"
Date: 11-12 November
Venue: St Petersburg, Russia
Date: 17-19 November
Venue: Moscow, Russia
Email: rtv@znanie.info
Web: www.znanie.info

Icef Berlin Workshop
Date: 13-15 November
Venue: Berlin, Germany
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

CIEE Annual Conference
Date: 16-19 November
Venue: New Orleans, LA, USA
Email: conference@cief.org
Web: www.cief.org

Education & Career 2005
Date: 17-18 November
Venue: Kiev, Ukraine
Date: 19 November
Venue: Odessa/Kharkiv, Ukraine
Date: 20 November
Venue: Dnyepropetrovsk/Donetsk, Ukraine
Email: uief@dteducation.com
Web: www.dteducation.com/fair

Toefl wants access into Australia

ETS, WHICH OWNS Toefl, has approached the Australian government's immigration department under the auspices of the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement, asking it to consider Toefl as an equivalent English language test to IELTS – currently required by certain visa applicants.

According to the Australian Council of Private Education and Training (Acpet), Toefl was not originally considered as being adequate as a language testing system because it did not measure speaking ability. But the "next generation Toefl" was launched in September and is being released gradually around the world, testing verbal competence using online technology. So far, it has been phased in in Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the USA.

The immigration department in Australia has produced draft benchmarks against which an English language test should be measured and is inviting feedback from the industry on these and on educators' experience to date with the Toefl test. ●

Industry old-hands buy UK school

KEVIN MCNEANY and Celine Cameron, ex-owner and ex-employee of education group, Nord Anglia, have taken over the Manchester Academy of English, based in Manchester, UK. Celine Cameron told *Language Travel Magazine* that she felt Manchester's profile as a world city – already established internationally thanks to its football team, Manchester United – was rising.

"Manchester has also gained enhanced prominence through the successful hosting of the Commonwealth Games," she said. "With four universities and many thousands of young people who contribute to a lively

social scene, Manchester is now seen as a 'trendy' place to study."

The investment is a "one-off" for new co-owner McNeany, said Cameron, who added that he was "a serial entrepreneur in education" who was always interested in a value-for-money business proposition. McNeany no longer works at Nord Anglia Education, which now specialises in mainstream education provision. Its language school division ILA was sold to David Jones, who merged it with the Aspect/Anglo World group in August 2000.

Former owners of Manchester Academy of English, John and Sandra Kaufman, are working with the new management team for a handover period. Cameron, who will act as Managing Director (with McNeany as Chairman) said, "The school will be keeping the same mission and is looking to grow new niche markets." ●



New owners Cameron and McNeany (right) with vendors, the Kaufmans

Netherlands attracts more students

THERE HAS been a 200 per cent rise in student visa applications to the Netherlands and as a result, a special department has been set up to speed up the visa issuance system. According to the country's immigration service, IND, 4,000 applications were received between 1 May and 15 August 2005, 700 more than in the same period last year. Most applications came from China, Indonesia and Russia.

All non-EU nationals need a temporary stay authorisation (MVV) and nationals from China also require a Neso Certificate, issued by the Netherlands Education Support Office (Neso) in Beijing. This ensures an IELTS test has been taken. There are over 850 international programmes in the Netherlands that are taught entirely in English. ●

Currency

	1xUS\$ =currency*	
Argentinean	Pesos	2.909
Australian	Dollar	1.305
Brazilian	Real	2.330
British	Pound	0.543
Bulgarian	Leva	1.569
Canadian	Dollar	1.190
Chilean	Pesos	534.54
Chinese (PR)	Yuan RMB	8.091
Czech	Koruny	23.33
Danish	Kroner	5.979
Egyptian	Pound	5.797
EU	Euro	0.802
Hong Kong	Dollar	7.767
Hungarian	Forint	195.45
Icelandic	Kronur	61.65
Indonesian	Rupiah	10,331.6
Israeli	New Shekels	4.483
Japanese	Yen	109.65
Maltese	Lira	0.344
Mexican	Peso	10.684
New Zealand	Dollar	1.412
Norwegian	Kroner	6.282
Polish	Zloty	3.163
Russian	Rubles	28.227
Singaporean	Dollar	1.675
Slovakian	Koruny	30.622
South African	Rand	6.289
South Korean	Won	1,023.9
Swedish	Kronor	7.463
Swiss	Franc	1.238
Taiwanese	NT Dollar	32.583
Thai	Baht	41.066
Turkish	Lira	1,333,499.9
Venezuelan	Bolivar	2,147.3

*Rates are subject to change and should be used as indications only. 06/09/2005

New schools in South Africa

TWO SCHOOL CHAINS have expanded their networks by adding a location in South Africa. The LAL Group, which has schools in four countries, is opening a new school in Durban, to accompany its existing school in Cape Town, Cape Communication Centre. Meanwhile, Eurocentres has added a school in Cape Town to its network, venturing into South Africa for the first time.

At LAL, Karl Rutti explained, "South Africa is a fast growing market which until now has been based around Cape Town. As market leaders, we are keen to offer a second exciting new destination [and] Durban fits the bill perfectly."

At Eurocentres, Brian North said that the One World Language School had decided to become part of the Eurocentres group. "It is one of the oldest schools in Cape Town and is completely integrating in our group," he said. ●



The new LAL Group school, located in Durban

Expolingua Berlin

Date: 18-20 November
Venue: Berlin, Germany
Email: info@expolingua.com
Web: www.expolingua.com

Foreign Educator Seminar

Date: 23-24 November
Venue: Almaty, Kazakhstan
Email: iccmm@nursat.kz
Web: www.icc-education.com

Oriente European Ed & Employment Fair

Date: 24-26 November
Venue: Brussels, Belgium
Email: oriente.international@cpexpo.com
Web: www.cpexpo.com/

Le Salon de L'Education

Date: 24-27 November
Venue: Paris, France
Email: camille.rabehanta@letudiant.fr
Web: www.letudiant.fr

The Icef Americas Workshop

Date: 11-13 December
Venue: Miami, USA
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

Expolangues

Date: 18-21 January
Venue: Paris, France
Email: camille.rabehanta@letudiant.fr
Web: www.expolangues.fr

Fitur 2006

Date: 25-29 January
Venue: Madrid, Spain
Email: fitur@ifema.es
Web: www.fitur.ifema.es

The Pacific-Rim Workshop

Date: 28 February 28 - 2 March
Venue: Tokyo, Japan
Email: info@icef.com
Web: www.icef.com

The Alphe Korea Workshop

Date: 11-13 March
Venue: Seoul, Korea
Date: 15-17 March
Venue: Tokyo, Japan
Email: jane@hothousemedia.com
Web: www.hothousemedia.com