

Record numbers at Alphe UK and StudyWorld

This year's Alphe UK and Studyworld agent conferences, both held in London at the beginning of September, saw record numbers of attendees with hundreds of agents and education providers flying in to attend the two events.

At Alphe UK, 119 education providers from 20 different countries and 193 agencies from 46 countries attended the event, which celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. Alphe Manager, Jane Gilham, said, "This is our biggest event yet. We were very pleased to welcome so many schools and agents to the conference and there was also a long waiting list for agents this year."

Agnes Gonczi from Quaestor Travel in Hungary said that she was surprised at how busy she had been. "I booked late but have not had a break in my appointments. I had to unblock all my lunch and early morning appointments. It has been very good," she said. Jean Carlo Bonilla from Polytechnic University in New York, USA,



The 10th Alphe UK in London was the biggest Alphe conference so far and was also host to the annual LTM Star Awards

was similarly impressed with the event. "It's the first time we've made a move into the European market and the conference certainly provided us with an avenue into this sector. I've been impressed with the calibre of agents and am very, very satisfied."

The Alphe conference was also host to the annual *Language Travel Magazine* Star Awards, which were held after a three-course dinner on the evening of the first day of the conference. Pictures of all the winners and a description of the highlights of the evening can be found in our Direction feature in this issue (pages 22-28).

This year was also special for language school association English UK, the organisers of StudyWorld, as it marked the first time the annual fair has moved from its usual venue in Brighton. The fair attracted 255 educators from 19 countries and 330 agents from 58 countries and most said that they were happy with the new London location. Agent, Galina Kriusheva from Moscow Linguistic Center in Russia said, "I prefer the London venue to Brighton as it is easier to get to."

Educators were also happy with the large number of attendees at the event. Suzanne Jackson from Stott's College in Melbourne, VIC, Australia said that there were not many other Australian schools present, which was good for her. "I have been very busy and met some good agents. It's a new venue so there have been some teething problems with the fair being spread over two levels but I have had lots of agent interest."

Pat Clay from Accademia Britannica language school in Italy said that this was her first time at the event and her attendance came about after Tony Millns, Chief Executive of English UK, visited an AGM of the Italian school association AISLI two years ago. "It has been going very well and has definitely whetted my appetite to attend more fairs in the future," she said.

The StudyWorld Fair was followed by a selection of 12 fam trips for agents, which were organised by schools and associations and visited various areas of the UK, including Scotland, Yorkshire and central England, as well as Ireland and Malta.



The annual StudyWorld fair was held for the first time in London this year and attracted a record turn out

Agency of the month



This month, **Living Learning English in Bristol, the UK**, nominates **DEC** in Ukraine. Kate Hargreaves, Principal at the school, explains this nomination:

In a series appearing each month in *Language Travel Magazine*, we ask a different language teaching institution to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.

"I have been working with DEC since the company started in 2003 and have found them to be [a] highly professional and caring agency. Much of their success is due to the personal attention all staff give their students and the preparation they receive for study in the UK – their customer service is excellent!

DEC is a dynamic company with enthusiastic, knowledgeable staff and I am sure that their intended growth will be backed up by the supportive family atmosphere – the warm welcome and hospitality I have received in the Ukraine with DEC is second to none! On individual homestay courses, the student has to be fully briefed to know what to expect and we need a lot of information about the client to be able to place them with the best match of teacher and family, so attention to detail is important. If we have a request, we usually get an answer within 24 hours. We look forward to many more years of successful partnership!"

Industry issues - agents speak out

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

Q. What 'extras' do you offer clients? How important is this aspect of your business?



Maren Borkowski,
Experience! Sprach-
reisen, Germany

"The importance of offering a variety of extras increases constantly. Many clients are very busy and ask for complete solutions. These clients don't want to invest much time in comparing and combining different components of their journey. Decision and booking processes have to be easy and fast. We meet the requirements of these clients by offering them the possibility to book flights and travel insurance packages. We are always thinking about new services for the future, e.g. visa service, bus or train tickets, hire car reservation. At Experience Sprachreisen we earn less than 10 per cent of our sales volume by selling flights and travel insurance, but the profit is secondary. The language travel market is a highly competitive one and we use a comprehensive service

to help generate our unique selling proposition."



James Herbertson,
Answer English,
England

"We find that students are interested in the whole experience [of studying abroad], and especially like meeting native speakers. The biggest challenge language learners have is meeting [and speaking with] native speakers. Answer English's 'extras' include one hour's free English practice with a native speaker on a weekly basis; invitations to our social events like 'Best of British' parties and dog racing; and language exchange evenings. Many language agents tell me that students expect more from their agent than previously and we have been approached to help provide their students with the best possible service locally in London. Our regular language learning evenings where we bring Spanish, French, Italian

and Chinese speakers together with Londoners learning those languages helps us attract students from those markets. We are happy to extend invitations to agents in other countries who want their students to have the chance to meet native English speakers. We see ourselves working with more agents in the future and intend to provide the best possible local service at both ends of the students' journeys."



S Ather Hasan,
Director, Education
Information Bureau,
India

"[The] education market is as demanding as any other market. You need to provide complete satisfaction to your customers. Extras play a very important role in selling your product. We have always provided extended services like visa guidance, ticket advice and post-arrival services. This makes life much easier for all our students. If services like

insurance, sim cards and an airport pick up is provided by the education providers, then the chances are a student will prefer that school."



Edith Staller,
Director, Sema
Sprachreisen,
Switzerland

"We provide a very high standard of service [to our clients] and we spend a lot of time with the students. Once they've booked [a course] we give them all the information they require about insurance, flights, etc, and we help them with their visas. We also help them during their time abroad. We've built up our name as a high quality agent over the last 20 years and I guess that we have most of our clients due to good customer care and through the 'extras' that we provide. We are also planning monthly events where old and new clients/students can meet and share information."



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Q&A



English UK, the national association of English language centres in the UK, has had a busy few months. JODIE GRAY, International Marketing Manager, takes the time to answer our questions.

Fact box

Full name: English UK

Year established: 2004

Number of members:
360 members

Type of members: Members are private language schools, educational trusts and charities, and language centres in further education colleges and universities. All members are accredited by the British Council under the Accreditation UK Scheme, which is managed by the British Council in partnership with English UK.

Association's main role: Our main roles are promoting quality and representing our members' interests. We are also a UK registered charity with the key aim of advancing the education of international students in the English language.

Government recognition: yes

Code of practice: yes

Complaints procedure: yes

Agent workshops/fam trips: yes

Contact details:
English UK, 56 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6AG
Telephone: +44 2078029200
Fax: +44 2078029201
Email: reception@englishuk.com
Website: www.englishuk.com

What has your association been up to in the last 12 months?

This year has been busy with five well-attended professional development conferences held around the country, the re-launch of the Fair as StudyWorld and a move to London, the first offshore workshop organised for English UK members in Mexico, continual lobbying on visa issues and mandatory accreditation (and) a busy programme of marketing activities!

How has membership of English UK been increasing since the UK government announced that language schools enrolling international student visa holders be accredited?

We strongly support the UK government announcement on accreditation and particularly welcome the fact that the only accreditation scheme currently endorsed by the Government for the English language sector is Accreditation UK, which is managed by the British Council in partnership with English UK. Through our Accreditation Consultancy Service (ACS), we assist and advise English language centres on how to successfully negotiate the accreditation process. Once a centre has gained accreditation, they are eligible for membership of English UK – the voice of the accredited sector. Since the announcement on 24 July, we have contacted all unaccredited centres and hope to see our membership increasing.

What main challenges are your members currently facing when it comes to recruiting new students?

Misconceptions of prohibitively high prices and the difficulty in obtaining a visa, coupled with the growing strength of English language teaching provision 'in country', continue to challenge our industry. However, thanks to successful lobbying, visa fees for students and visitors will increase only marginally in the new charging regime for Immigration and Nationality Fees, as announced in March. We are yet to see the effects of the introduction of the Student Visitor Visa, but continue to work closely with UKvisas.

What marketing activities are you planning for the near future?

Following the success of the 'The Cancun Fair: Working for the Americas', we are looking at running similar workshops in other parts of the world in the future.

On the move

Chamber College in Gzira, Malta, has appointed Dominic Calleja as its new Marketing Manager. Mr Calleja, a graduate in Marketing, brings with him extensive marketing experience. He was employed by one of Malta's foremost players in the language school field during his time at university. After eight years within the export marketing department of the Governmental External Trade Agency, and another three years of specialised marketing, Mr Calleja went back to his roots with the mission of building on past success.



Martin McDonald has joined Global Village (GV) Brisbane & Noosa in Australia as Marketing Director after two years out of the industry. Formerly Asia Marketing Director at British Study Centres and Shane Global Village, he finds himself reunited with former colleague Ian Pratt, now Managing Director of GV's expanding operations in Queensland. Drawing on his British Study Centres experience, Mr McDonald is already actively involved in marketing GV Noosa's new Caloundra campus, which features a combination of academic English and vocational training programmes.



Tran Nguyen has recently joined OEC Global Education in Thailand as Managing Director. Mr Nguyen has 20 years of international management experience in Europe and Asia-Pacific. He said, "With the new management team, together we will bring OEC to the next level. The current priorities are to be more focused on our partner institutions and looking for opportunities to expand, beginning with the opening of the new Chiangmai branch."



Lucy Heron (above) has given up her post as Group Marketing Manager at St Giles International in London in order to become a full-time mother. Her position as Manager of the marketing team has been taken over by Mark Lindsay (below). Ms Heron told agents, "It has been an absolute delight to work with you during my six years at St Giles and I would like to thank you for making my job so enjoyable."



Kelly Franklin has joined the Center for International Programs at the State University of New York – New Paltz in the USA, where he will be Coordinator of the Haggerty English Language Program. Mr Franklin, formerly at Maryville College, is a past-President of AAIEP and is currently ELTA coordinator on the Nafsa national team.



Grapevine



Magister Academy in St Julians, Malta, became the latest school to gain Feltom accreditation earlier this year. Pictured left, Chairperson of the Feltom Accreditation Council, Professor Mark Borg, presents a certificate of accreditation to Paul Fenech, Director of Magister Academy, in front of staff and teachers at the school. The Maltese language school association has so far accredited two language schools, while six applied for voluntary accreditation in 2007 before accreditation becomes mandatory for all Feltom members in January 2008.



Attendees at this year's StudyWorld agent fair were treated to Scottish dancing at the welcome reception. Above, Andrew Fisher from EAC in Edinburgh takes a turn on the dance floor in traditional kilt and shows everyone how it is done. Meanwhile, David Diplock, President of Ialc, and Max Wey, Ladina Frasciati and Bettina Wiils from Boa Lingua in Switzerland get down to the serious business of the evening, networking....

David Diplock from Ialc announced during a reception at the StudyWorld fair that the venue of their workshop next year would be Munich in Germany. At the event (pictured right), Florian Meierhofer from Germalingua in Munich, who will be hosting the workshop, advertised the German venue by wearing traditional Lederhosen and singing a rendition of Ein Prosit – a traditional song more commonly heard sung at the Oktoberfest!



Next issue – December 2007: Special Report provides an overview of 2007 • **Market Report** charts trends in Ireland • **Agency Survey** canvasses Brazilian agencies • **Direction** investigates agency "extras" • **Destination** takes us to New York and Massachusetts in the USA • **Feedback** surveys students in Canada

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