

# Education agency opens in Dublin

A new education travel agency has been launched in Dublin, Ireland, financed by Michael Stein, a former travel agent and Larry Finnegan, Director of International House Dublin.

Finnegan said that Stein Study Abroad was formed after the pair decided that there was definitely a market for language travel among local young people and adults. "Spanish, French and Italian language programmes would be the main markets, with German programmes for juniors and business people," he said, adding, "There are not many language travel agencies in Ireland. I think there are only a few small ones run from someone's home."



Finnegan emphasised that the agency would be run entirely separately from the business of IH Dublin, although he would be using contacts with some other IH schools to offer language programmes for students. "Michael and I have invested quite heavily in this agency and have employed a full-time staff member and we are developing a dedicated website that should be live very soon," he told *Lan-*

*guage Travel Magazine*. "Michael Stein is well known in Ireland due to his travel agency and I have spent 25 years working in schools and know what parents want," he said.

The new agency was due to start marketing its programmes to students in September, particularly targeting high schools, university students and older clients. "We already have some contacts with IH schools in Seville, Rome, Freiburg and Nice but 80 per cent of Irish school children study French so we need to make some new contacts with schools in France," added Finnegan. ●

## Polish agency opens new office in Sydney

POLISH education agency, Bridge Agency, held an opening ceremony in August to toast its move within Sydney to new offices. It is now sharing offices with a business partner, Global Law & Migration (Glam), which can offer complementary services to Bridge Agency's education and job placement portfolio.

Established in Poland in 2003, with offices in Warsaw, Poznan and a network of partner offices, Bridge Agency has had a presence in Australia for three years but recently moved to be able to offer a suite of services under one roof. As well as its education agency services (which includes a website branded Australia4U), the company has another brand, Go and Work Australia, a joint venture with Glam that deals with internships and job placements.

Nora Falencik, Executive Manager of the agency, explained that students can now access migration and residency services too via its business partner. "Our aim is to become a worldwide student centre talking many languages," she said, underlining that all staff speak either Polish, French or German as well as English. "We are moving to new premises with new ideas," she added, "offering many possibilities for students." ●



Staff at the new shared premises

## Agent training in Australia a big success

AN UPDATE from Australian company, Pier Online, regarding its education agent training course (EATC) available for any agent dealing with education placements in Australia, reveals that close to 700 individual agents are now successfully qualified.

This means that they have been formally assessed on their knowledge of the Australian education system and immigration requirements.

Eva Pap, EATC Manager at Pier Online, said, "On average, we have two tests undertaken every day of the month."

In April last year when we last wrote about the training course (see LTM, April 2007, page 10) 2,000 agents had signed up to work towards qualification. Now, almost 5,500 have registered their interest with a steady growth of five per cent per month in EATC subscribers.

Pap said, "Our aim for the future is to provide services to everyone in international education through our Pier portal." Chris Evason, Director of Pier Online, added that a number of agent counsellors were also choosing to undertake the diploma in international education services offered by the company, "to gain skills to enable them to move to other positions". He promised further expansion of services in due course. ●

## Agency of the month



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 to explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.

This month, **Torquay International School (TIS)** in the UK nominates **Together** agency, based in Argentina. Judith Hands, Director of the school, explains this decision.



"Here at TIS we particularly enjoy working with Together because they are such a loyal agency. Agents often say that Torquay is difficult to sell because they (wrongly) perceive it as 'too far from London' – but Together makes extra special efforts to sell our programmes because of the success rate of

the courses and the good feedback. We feel we have a real partnership with Together and it is based on a mutual trust and understanding which are the main foundations of all good relationships.

Tony and Patricia Cabral and their staff give their students great before, during and after care and we know that any student from Together will be a serious student and well prepared for their course and their homestay. Those are all factors that make a good agent – but what makes them even more special is that they pay on time! Our partnership with Together started in 1993 and has endured over 15 years – some of those years haven't been easy but if you survive the tough times, then there is always some good to come in the future."

## Industry issues - agents speak out

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

### Q. How much influence do you think marketing staff have over whether you represent a particular school?

#### Tasha Lewis, International Connections Consulting (ICC), USA

"With all of the choices of schools throughout the world that offer programmes, the ones that stand out are those who position themselves correctly regarding how they are marketed. The marketing staff has the responsibility to identify all of their benefits to future clients. These benefits will include programme details/location/personnel/quality/etc. Without staff that can effectively communicate these points to future students, the school will find it harder to compete with other schools who offer similar programmes."



#### Olga Namestnikova, Sales Director, Magister, Russia

"From my point of view both sides (the product itself and the staff) are important if you sell products such as education

because you are dealing with the marketing staff from one side and your customers/ students from another. The educational consultants are always in-between. Brand is important – the name and years of experience, high quality programmes and excellent facilities. When we start a new partnership, personality is also important because we need fast feedback after the application is done – and at this stage we have to get in touch with real people. The visa procedure in the Russian market is a complicated process. If staff are not efficient, we are unable to obtain the visa on time. Marketing staff move from one place of work to another, and this is understandable – everybody needs promotion or a fresh challenge. If I have been working with this person for many years I could accept this situation and to continue our cooperation and it will be a new destination and fresh challenge for both sides

– but the quality of educational product should be the same or higher. If the individual's requirements are taken into account, the customers' feedback is always positive. In conclusion, I would like to add that the agent has to be a good seller to select the right product from a lot of countries and different schools and universities for the client. It is hard work for both sides and personality is important when you are involved in a human business such as language travel."



#### Kemal Yildiz, Managing Director, Pasifik International Education

#### Consultancy, Turkey

"Having many years of experience in the education sector, I have seen that besides student feedback and school quality, marketing staff have a big influence over whether we represent a particular school. The most important thing of

all is working with marketing staff that we already met at a workshop to help us establish a long-term business relationship. I honestly believe that we always put faith in marketing staff rather than schools they work for. However, it disappoints us when we hear from people with whom we are use to working that they have quit their job. Because, starting to work with new staff means to me starting to work with a new school, even if we have been working for years with that particular school. A smooth application process is another subject that should be considered. Especially in summer seasons when it is extremely busy it becomes more important to receive enrolment documents in time. In summary, marketing staff are agents' main contact at schools and the first representative of their institutions; that's why they have big influence over new partnerships with agents."



## Enjoy a traditional British Christmas & New Year celebration!

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Minimum age: 16 years

Minimum level: Elementary

Bell's **Christmas Course**, hosted at the magnificent Bell Bedgebury estate, is perfect for students wishing to remain in the UK over Christmas and for those looking for a unique and memorable holiday experience, enhancing their language skills and gaining a fascinating insight into British life and customs.

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# Q&A

TONY MILLNS, Chief Executive of English UK, answers our questions regarding the impending visa rule change in the UK.

## Fact box

**Full name:** English UK  
**Year established:** 2004  
**Number of members:** 376  
**Type of members:** Members are private language schools, educational trusts and charities, and language centres in further education colleges and universities. All are accredited under the Accreditation UK Scheme  
**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, 219 St John Street, London, EC1V 4LY  
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7608 7960  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7608 7961  
Email: info@englishuk.com  
Website: www.englishuk.com

### What are your expectations for the efficacy and outcome of the new student visa system; what problems do you foresee?

Only language centres accredited by an approved accrediting body such as Accreditation UK can apply to be on the Register of Sponsors. And only organisations on the Register can issue a 'confirmation of acceptance for studies', a unique reference number that students must have to apply for a full student visa (from spring 2009). So non-accredited centres will no longer be able to enrol students who need visas next year. This is good news – the low-quality and sometimes frankly bogus non-accredited colleges damage the reputation of the UK. There are many details of the system to be sorted out before it comes into operation, but we are pleased to have been closely involved by the Home Office in the design of the system and we will continue to work with the Home Office and the UK Border Agency on how it will be implemented over the next few months.

### You estimated in the summer that only 10 per cent of known unaccredited education providers had sought accreditation. How does that figure stand now?

It's no more than 20 per cent of the 560 non-accredited private sector language centres. The rest face something of a shock come next spring.

### What does 2009 hold for UK ELT overall, in your opinion?

Our student week statistics for 2007 are 10 per cent up on 2006, which were also 10 per cent up on 2005. This is the first time since the 1990s that UK ELT has had two good years together. Despite the credit crunch and fears of a global downturn, the prospects for 2009 are still good. With the decline of the pound, the value for money of UK courses is likely to appear better, but the strong competition from other major English speaking destination countries will not lessen. English UK has a major role to play both defensively in working with the government to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks to the sector from changes to the visa system, and proactively in promoting UK ELT via our marketing activities.

## On the move

Alenea Consulting is delighted to introduce Marta Tagami as the Manager of its new sales office in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The office will bring a new dimension to Alenea's activities both in its role as a support office for client institutions, and as a central hub for teacher recruitment into Brazil. "I'm looking forward to providing first-class support to Alenea's growing client list," said Ms Tagami, who has worked in the industry for over 16 years.



Dan Meager is a new member of the Shane Global marketing team, based in London, UK. He has been working in the English language industry for nearly four years, having trained as a teacher initially. He has worked in the sales field in Thailand, Hong Kong and Indonesia and now looks forward to welcoming new students to learn English in a fantastic academic department.



Simon Baker is the new Business Development Manager for Twin Group in London, UK. Having previously run a travel agency in Australia, he is looking forward to moving into the education sector and meeting existing and potential partners of Twin Group, which provides targeted business and vacation courses and award-winning work experience programmes.



Monash Professional Internships in Australia is pleased to announce the appointment of David Wade as Director. Mr Wade's previous role in Monash Professional was that of Host Company Relations Manager, prior to which he served 30 years with Ford Motor Company Australia, with the last 10 in senior managerial positions.



Sharmila Brown joins the International Academy at the University of Essex in the UK as its new Commercial Development Officer. She will draw on her experience as an International Marketing and E-Marketing lecturer to foster long-term relationships between the academy and its agents, students and educational institutions.



Dirk Mulder has moved into the position of Director – Murdoch International at Murdoch University in Perth, Australia. Mr Mulder brings with him 11 years experience in education; six in international education. He was previously Deputy Director at Murdoch International and held an elected position with Perth Education City.



## Services summary

### Unite offers luxury student accommodation

Unite, a student accommodation provider in the UK, has reacted to the growing demand among students in the UK for more upmarket accommodation. In August, it launched a pilot scheme whereby university students studying in London are given the option of staying in luxury housing.

The properties are situated in prime locations around London such as Shoreditch, Hutton Garden and Russell Square, where there is always plenty of activity and a multitude of things to do. The properties are also placed conveniently only a short distance from a number of universities.

A further attraction is the number of desirable facilities provided. These include wall-mounted flat screen televisions, broadband, a cleaner, a concierge and even furniture featured in the James Bond film, *Casino Royale*. Over the next five years Unite hopes to develop a greater range of accommodation for students, an investment that will cost around UK£750 million (US\$1.3 billion) and will provide some 10,000 beds at 32

### Endsleigh launches student campaign

UK-based insurance company Endsleigh has launched an innovative new advertising campaign aimed at students, which makes use of Internet gaming technology.

The Internet game, walkofshamegame.co.uk was launched in August to coincide with fresher's week at many UK universities. Players choose a character in the game who is challenged to return to their student accommodation while dressed in fancy dress and collecting personal possessions lost on a night out the previous evening.

Students taking part in the game can get a quote from Endsleigh for their insurance needs and those doing so will be entered into a competition offering UK£10,000 (US\$17,800) worth of prizes. Mike Day, E-commerce Manager at Endsleigh, said, "We're constantly optimising our offer to make sure that it fits with students' needs and this year, we are offering unique tailor-made packages so they can choose exactly which of their valuable items they want to protect."

### US golf circuit introduces English test

The LPGA Tour, a women's golf circuit in the USA, has introduced a rule stipulating that all members be assessed for their English language ability and those not making the grade be suspended from further play. The new rule is to be introduced next year.

Currently, 45 of the 121 players are from Korea while the rest of the players come from 25 different countries. The language assessment will be an oral test assessing communication skills including conversation. Players will be required to conduct interviews, interact with other pro-am partners and fans and give acceptance speeches in English without the help of an interpreter.

Libba Galloway of the LPGA, said, "For an athlete to be successful in the world we live in today, they need to perform on and off the field of play, and communicating effectively with sponsors and fans is a big part of this. Being a US-based tour, and with the majority of our fan base, pro-am contestants, sponsors and participants being English-speaking, we think it is important for our players to effectively communicate in English."



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The highlight of Alphe UK this year was the LTM Star Awards, which were held at a central London venue in the heart of the financial district. The pictures above show agents and educators enjoying the welcome reception at Alphe UK (top left) and, dressed in their finery, enjoying the three course dinner and excitement of the Star Awards. Above centre, last year's winner of the LTM Star French Language School award, Jean-François Vouilloux from France Langue, congratulates this year's winner, Eleri Maitland from French in Normandy.



StudyWorld offered the usual round of parties and evening entertainment this year, with Kaplan Aspect offering agents a trip to a Las Vegas style casino. Left, Nicola Lutz from *Language Travel Magazine* tries her luck with other participants at the gaming tables, while above, Russian agent, Sergei Makhotenkov from Meganom Educational Centre in Russia, among others, gets to grips with the show girls! Above right, Joe Solomon and Carolle Rayner from Kaplan Aspect Opus Programme and Internships talk to Rachel Matthews, Principal of Kaplan Aspect London at the Kaplan Aspect party.

**Travel Update Travel Update Travel Update Travel Update Travel Update**

- British Airways, American Airlines and Iberia have signed a joint agreement on flights travelling between North America and Europe and have applied for **worldwide anti-trust immunity**. If agreed, this tie-up will allow the airlines to cooperate on flight schedules and capacity as well as allowing them to share profits and revenues. However, the agreement will face fierce opposition in the shape of Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic. Branson, who successfully lobbied against a similar alliance between British Airways and American Airlines in 1996, warned that such an alliance would result in a "monster monopoly" that will be "bad for passengers, bad for competition, and bad for the UK and US aviation industry".

- In a controversial move, Ryanair has **cancelled thousands of flight bookings** made through third party websites such as lastminute.com. The popular low-budget airline stated that it was only prepared to take bookings made via their own website or the telephone booking system. Contrary to the opinions of transport ministers

across Europe, Ryanair claimed that the decision was "consumer-friendly" and would benefit passengers in the "mid to long-term". Up to 20,000 customers are believed to have been affected by its decision.

- Bangkok has been voted this year's best city** in Travel & Leisure Australia magazine's Best Awards, trailed by Buenos Aires and Cape Town. These results point towards a trend in which holidaymakers favour more exotic, far-flung destinations as opposed to the more traditionally popular European cities.

- Amid myriad protests and complaints from airlines, the **European Parliament** approved a deal with governments earlier this year to include aviation from 2012 in the Emission Trading Scheme. This means that CO2 emissions from planes will be restricted to a certain limit and any emissions exceeding this limit will require the company in question to buy a permit for their excess CO2. Aviation had previously been excluded from the ETS as it was thought that it

could be detrimental to the industry's ability to compete in international markets. A spokesman from Lufthansa, a major German airline, remarked that the ETS is "ecologically counter-productive and economically harmful" to the aviation industry.

- Pan-European Internet travel agent **Opodo** is looking to add a personal touch to its trips with the introduction of the Tarmac Text. The idea is that when the customer books the flight, they give their mobile number, which is then sent a text message the day before the trip, informing the recipient of their flight number, departure time and booking reference. It even gives a summary of the weather at the destination and keeps them up-to-date with flight delays and other relevant travel information. Fellow online travel agency, Travelsupermarket, is also looking into using mobile phones for communication with customers. Chris Nixon, Director of the company, indicated that they were looking to be able to communicate with customers who needed information on booking their flights, citing that

they'd like to "let people know when the price goes below a certain level for a flight or when seats becomes available".

- According to the **International Air Transport Association** (IATA) the global airline industry stands to lose a whopping US\$5.2 billion this year. The price of oil coupled with slowed passenger traffic is said to be affecting the industry more severely than Sars and 9/11 did in previous years. Giovanni Bisignani, IATA's Director General and CEO, said, "The situation remains bleak. The toxic combination of high oil prices and falling demand continues to poison the industry's profitability."

- Outbound travel in the USA** grew by one per cent in 2007; its fourth successive record in a row. According to the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, US Department of Commerce, 64 million US residents travelled abroad last year, 0.4 million more than in 2006. The top five destinations visited by US tourists last year included Mexico, the UK, Canada, Germany and Japan.

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