



IH Young Learners Conference 2024

Sofia, Bulgaria



**International
House**
World Organisation





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Managing Director

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Ask me about... IHWO strategy, operations and all things IH



Belle Dowber Hawkins

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Ask me about... IH Quality Inspections, promoting Teacher Training courses on IH Teach English and member services



Giuliana Faldetta

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Ask me about... Marketing, IH branding, social media, sponsorship and Study Abroad



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Ask me about... Teacher Training, IH OTTI courses, AMT conference, and innovation

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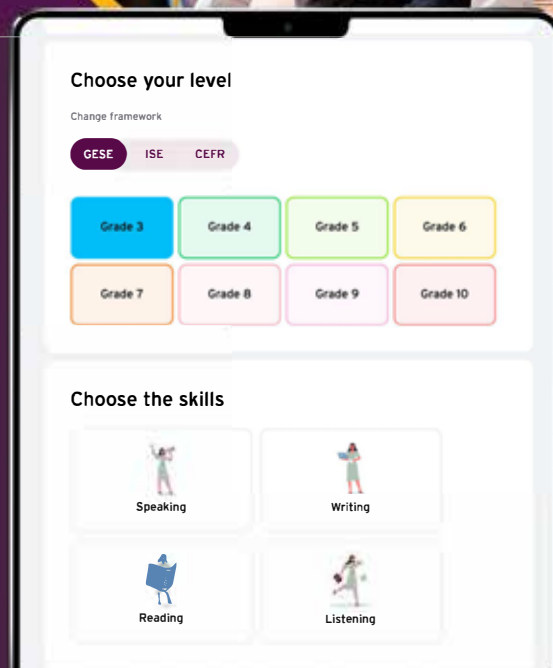
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Ask me about... Digital content, the IH websites, mailing lists and social media



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Ask me about... IHWO Assessment Unit, IH OTTI enrolment, and running IHWO Teacher Training courses



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Ask me about... Payments, affiliation fees and IHWO accounts



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Ask me about... Member services, IH World News and IH Teach English



Estelle Héloüin

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Ask me about... Support for French teachers, advisors for other languages and Google site



Lucie Cotterill

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Ask me about... Academic management



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Ask me about... Inspections and reports



Xana de Nagy

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Ask me about... Young learners and teenagers and the new IH online course for YLs and teens



Hannah Youell

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Ask me about... EDIB and the Celebration of Diversity webinars

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Zdraveite International House friends!

We are proud to welcome you to our home, the beautiful city of Sofia.

2024 marks a precious milestone for us, as we celebrate our 15th anniversary as part of the IH network. Because of this, we are especially grateful for the opportunity to host the IH Young Learners Conference this November 2024. Our school, located in the vibrant capital of Bulgaria, is a medium-sized but fast-growing hub of learning, known for our innovative and dynamic approach to young learner education.

The conference theme, Maximising the Potential of Our YL Centres, reflects our commitment to offering engaging and impactful educational experiences. Focusing on community, health, environment, diversity, and innovation, we're privileged to provide a wide range of courses for students from as young as four years of age, and it is rewarding to be able to nurture the development of our young learners right from the start of their journey. Some of our programmes have grown into collaborative projects, including EU Erasmus initiatives, and we are eager to share these ideas with you during the conference.

In addition to inspiring sessions, we have planned a range of cultural activities to make your stay memorable. You'll have the chance to taste delicious traditional Bulgarian food (we recommend the shopska salad, rakia and skara!), explore the historic city centre of Sofia, and for those who wish, join an optional tour to the beautiful city of Plovdiv – one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Europe.

Sofia itself is a city full of energy and contrasts, with vibrant nightlife, modern spas, lively shopping streets, and events happening all around. With reasonable prices, you can enjoy a full night out in the city – including meals, drinks, and entrance to clubs – for around 45 Euros. For nature lovers, Vitosha Mountain is just a short trip away, offering quick access to stunning landscapes, waterfalls, and trails.

We're thrilled to have you join us for this conference, and hope that it will be an unforgettable experience filled with learning, networking, and cultural exploration. We can't wait to welcome you all to our school and our city! Let's come together to share insights, exchange ideas, and celebrate the incredible work happening across the IH Young Learner network.

IH Sofia Team / Simon, Yoana, Lyndsey



16.00 - 18.00 **Walking Tour of Sofia**
Meet at Hotel Anel Sofia, 14 Todor Alexandrov Blvd.

18.30 **Welcome drinks and nibbles**
IH Sofia, 39A Sitnyakovo Blvd, 1505



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Venue: Hotel Anel Sofia, 14 Todor Alexandrov Blvd.

9.00 - 9.20	Registration	
9.20 - 9.45	Welcome Simon Harris, IH Sofia & Emma Hoyle, IHWO Let's Get Started Xana de Nagy, IHWO	
9.45 - 11.00	Embedding a Culture of Empathy in English Language Teaching Kieran Donaghy	 <p>Empathy may be one of the qualities which distinguishes an average teacher from an excellent teacher in the eyes of the student. In this session, we will look at what empathy is, its neurological foundations and why it is increasingly important in language education. Moving from theory to practice, we will explore how we could explicitly develop empathy as a skill among learners, teachers, and teacher trainers. We will explore how a variety of techniques and approaches from diverse sources such as humanistic education, literature, drama and the visual arts can be used to help to embed a culture of empathy in language education.</p> <p>Kieran Donaghy is an award-winning writer, international conference speaker and trainer. He is the author of books for students and teachers of English as a foreign language. His publications include <i>Film in Action</i> (Delta Publishing), <i>Writing Activities for Film and Video</i> (ELT Teacher2Writer), <i>The Image in ELT</i> (ELT Council), <i>Films in Health Sciences Education</i> (Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona), <i>Language Hub</i> (Macmillan) and <i>Multimodal Literacy In ELT</i> (Oxford University Press). He trains teachers in Barcelona and online at his specialist teacher development institute, The School for Training https://theschoolfortraining.com/. His independent publishing company Film English http://film-english.com/ has won a British Council ELTons Award, an English Speaking Union Award and the MEDEA Award.</p>
11.00 - 11.20	Coffee break	
11.20 - 12.20	What a Big Friendly Giant Can Teach Us About Life Chantelle Walsh	 <p>Through the power of stories, we will look at the transformative power of kindness, resilience and inner strength. We will look at how working on self-belief and mindsets in our classrooms enhance the relationships students have with themselves and others. This practical and fun session will give teachers activities for the classroom and a greater understanding of social-emotional learning.</p> <p>Chantelle has enjoyed working with teachers in both primary and secondary schools all over Italy and abroad for the past 20 years. Her main areas of interest in recent years have been in creativity, mindfulness, and well-being in education.</p>
12.20 - 12.30	Harnessing the Power of Technology in English Language Education Sally Bolton, Academic Lead, Trinity College London Spain + Europe East & West	
12.30 - 14.00	Lunch	

Venue: Hotel Anel Sofia, 14 Todor Alexandrov Blvd.

14.00 - 15.00

Unlocking Young Minds

Elena Malinovskaya, IH OTTI



When making decisions about YLs' language acquisition as a teacher or a manager we often rely on ingrained trends and patterns. But are they truly objective and effective? How viable are they?

Please join me on a mini journey into the world of neuropsychology and try to uncover some evidence-based strategies that enhance language learning while discarding the less effective ones. Let's optimize our YL teaching and management using the power of science.

Elena is an experienced English educator residing in Riga, Latvia, and has taught a wide range of learners, from young children to corporate professionals since 2005. She has worked as a YLC and a DoS at IH Minsk for ten years and is now a freelance language teacher, CELTA and IH CYLT trainer conducting training courses and workshops for teachers of English worldwide.

15.00 - 15.45

Developing My YL Centre

Simon Harris, IH Sofia



This interpersonal session is designed for YL managers to explore and exchange ideas on what makes an effective and efficient YL Centre through the sharing of best practice and developing existing products, approaches and procedures in their YL Centres. By the end of the session participants will have a clear action plan that can be implemented in their respective centres.

Simon Harris is the Managing Director of IH Sofia, celebrating 15 years in IHWO. He completed the IH YLCM course and subsequently worked with the IH Sofia management team to redesign the YL curriculum which is now an EU Erasmus project.

15.45 - 16.05

Coffee break

16.05 - 17.20

Write Your World: Creating Stories to Enhance Learning

Sezgi Yalin



Want to create stories about your country and its unique qualities? Discover how the author of *Jack-the-Cat Goes Wild* creates such stories and engages children through stories about her cat, using interactive storytelling to foster essential values like perseverance, self-compassion, confidence, and respect. Relatable stories can have a positive impact and help students reach their full potential.

Sezgi Yalin, an English teacher, CELTA trainer, and children's author, aims to inspire self-fulfilment through her *Jack-the-Cat's Adventures*® series. With experience in over 50 countries and a TESOL MA holder from the University of Illinois in Chicago, Sezgi seeks to educate and inspire, and always finds that others inspire her in return.

17.20 - 17.30

Thanks and housekeeping

Venue: IH Sofia, 39A Sitnyakovo Blvd, 1505

9.15 Registration/welcome

9.30 - 10.15

Paper-Lite: A Case-Study of a Summer School Syllabus

Diana Bauducco, IH London



This session presents a case study of IH London Young Learners Centres' initiative to develop and implement a paper-light syllabus for English Language lessons. We explore the challenges faced, solutions adopted, and the impact on teaching and learning. The presentation highlights the benefits of digital resources, discusses student and teacher adaptations, and offers insights for considering similar transitions in their own institutions.

Diana, the Academic Manager for the Young Learners division at IH London, is an advocate for innovative educational practices. With extensive experience in ELT, she continuously seeks and implements methodologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences in the YL classroom.

'Hands-on, Minds-on': Project Based Learning in Action

Lyndsey Thompson, IH Sofia



How can we transform traditional classrooms into hubs of creativity and collaboration? In this talk, I will discuss our school's experience of incorporating Project Based Learning into our curriculum and give you hands-on experience in participating in and managing a Project Cycle. Find out how to engage students, foster critical thinking, and promote interactive problem-solving while practising the language.

Lyndsey is the DOS at IH Sofia, where she has been working since 2017. She is passionate about curriculum development, and fostering creative and critical thinking in young learners and teachers alike.

10.20 - 11.05

Write, Play, Learn! Gamifying Writing for YLs

Jack Smiddy, IH Sofia



A whistlestop tour of a variety of practical, easily implementable writing activities for young learners between the ages of 5-10. A brief overview of the theory behind them but with a focus on giving teachers a range of activities that can be used to increase engagement in writing, from letter to sentence level.

Jack is Assistant Director of Studies at IH Sofia, specialising in the teaching of VYLs and Pre A1 level learners.

Using Authentic Video Material with YLs and Teens

Glenn Standish, IH Toruń



In this practical session, I will show you how to use a variety of authentic video materials in class with a range of students and different CEFR levels. There will be lots of laughs, some singing and above all practical ideas that you can implement into your class next week. Most importantly, the activities will aim to engage and motivate your learners.

Glenn Standish has been teaching English in Poland for over 22 years and has been the Director of Studies of IH Toruń for the past 11 years. He is also an IH CYLT and IH CAM tutor, an IHWO course moderator and has written numerous articles on Teaching English.

11.05 - 11.30

Coffee break



Venue: IH Sofia, 39A Sitnyakovo Blvd, 1505

11.30 - 12.15

Bluey; How the Heelers Can Help Us Maximise Our Potential and That of Our Students

Stephen Farren, IH Belfast



Session examines how the *Bluey* aligns with the theme of 'Maximising the Potential of Our YL Centres' by highlighting how imaginative play, storytelling, and creative learning methods can enrich a child's educational experience.

Just as *Bluey* uses playful, engaging narratives to teach valuable life lessons, YL centres can enhance their impact by focusing on interactive, fun, and developmentally appropriate learning methods that nurture children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

Stephen has been a member of the IH family since 2010 and is currently the DoS at IH Belfast. Stephen has previously spoken at the YL conference back in 2019.

Assisting Discovery (Student-Created Learning Games)

Nato Kakhadze, IH Tbilisi



In this session, we will explore strategies to encourage creativity and autonomy in the classroom by providing opportunities for students to design popular activities such as bingo, 'find someone who,' board games, and Taboo cards. By empowering students to create these materials themselves, we aim to foster more creative language use, leading to relevant, authentic, and motivating communication experiences.

Nato has been teaching at IH Tbilisi for 17 years already, since she did her CELTA course in 2007 in the same school. Except teaching she has been coordinating the YL department of the school as well as doing teacher training courses for the past seven years.

12.20 - 13.05

Maximising the Potential of Our YL

Carol Crombie, IH Viseu



Students may be happy enough drifting along, learning just enough. But are we doing enough to help them achieve that little bit more? We'll look at some ideas and activities to help break down barriers to maximise cooperation, show students how to 'learn' and make their progress more visible.

Carol has been DoS at IH Viseu for 30 years but still reckons she's got a thing or two learn, which is a good thing 'cos learning is fun.

Incremental Coaching in the YL Classroom

Nathan Barnes, IH Palermo LC



Formal observations can often be daunting for new and experienced teachers alike; they can be high-stakes and often include time-consuming plans. IH Palermo LC has been experimenting with an alternative to this which may benefit teachers' specific needs and boost the quality of teaching in the YL classroom.

Nathan is the Director of Studies at IH Palermo Language Centre. He has been teaching in the South of Italy for the past seven years, before this he taught in the UK and Spain.

13.05 - 14.30

Lunch

Venue: IH Sofia, 39A Sitnyakovo Blvd, 1505

14.30 - 15.15

Exploring Total Physical Response (TPR) and Guided Discovery (GD) with Unconventional Age Groups

Anna Pedzinska,
IH San Sebastian



This talk discusses the findings from my own action research into using elements of Guided Discovery (GD) with YLs and Total Physical Response (TPR) with teens. Was GD suitable for YLs? Was TPR too childish for teens? We will look at some of the theory and my own observations as well as activities that participants can use in their classrooms.

An experienced teacher with DELTA, CELTA, and YL CELTA, Anna specializes in training ESL professionals. She has trained with NILE and IH, ran her own school (2014-2016), and now focuses on preparing teachers to work with young learners.

From Blank Page to Masterpiece: A Step-by-Step Approach to Process Writing

Lyndsey Thompson,
IH Sofia



How can we turn the challenge of writing in English into a rewarding learning journey? In this talk, I will discuss how we incorporated a Process Writing approach. We will look at strategies to guide learners through brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing. Discover how this method fosters creativity, enhances language skills, and builds students' confidence in writing.

Lyndsey is the DOS at IH Sofia, where she has been working since 2017. She is passionate about curriculum development, and fostering creative and critical thinking in young learners and teachers alike.

15.20 - 16.05

Developing the Responsible Global Citizens Curriculum Builder

Simon Harris, IH Sofia
(20 mins)



The Developing Responsible Global Citizens (DRGC) Curriculum Builder is a quick way to write syllabi that are focussed on topics such as community, health, the environment, diversity and innovation. The software is accessible to all teachers and academic managers online.

Simon Harris is the Managing Director of IH Sofia, celebrating 15 years in IHWO. He completed the IHYLCM course and subsequently worked with the IH Sofia management team to redesign the YL curriculum which is now an EU Erasmus project.

Do I Have Your Attention?

Caroline Fonseca,
IH Torres Vedras and
Lisbon



In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, we face increasing challenges in maintaining student focus and attention. This seminar explores the struggles we encounter in the classroom such as lower achievement in reading tasks; the difficulty in following instructions; worsening social interactions and overall lack of accuracy. Drawing on research, we will examine the factors that are leading to a so called 'attention crisis'. We will then look at how small changes can make a big difference in reclaiming attention in the modern classroom.

Caroline has been teaching anyone who wants to learn English for 32 years. She is passionate about what she does and is an avid lifelong learner. She lives in Portugal with her family and her dog. She is currently the Director of Studies at IH Torres Vedras and Lisbon.

16.05 - 16.30

Coffee break



Venue: IH Sofia, 39A Sitnyakovo Blvd, 1505

16.30 - 17.15



Never Too Old to Play! Playful Learning in the Language Classroom

Beverly Whittall and Fran Seftel, IH Braga

Is there a place for more playful, joyful learning for students of all ages? And for making more connections with the world around us? In this session, we'll suggest what playful learning could look like with younger and older learners and show how their language learning can be more enriching and meaningful if we integrate EFL with areas like drama, art, music, science, movement, and storytelling.

Fran Seftel is an experienced EFL / CLIL teacher at IH Braga. Her special interest is teaching young learners through a more holistic approach, integrating English in a range of interconnected areas like science, maths, art, music, drama, PE and play. This has been inspired by her coordination of three Erasmus+ projects.

Beverly Whittall has been teaching young learners, teens, and adults in different countries and contexts for over 30 years. She is currently a teacher and Director of Studies at IH Braga, and one of her interests is bringing stories into the classroom.

Teaching the Rainbow

Xana de Nagy, IHWO



What colour do you feel, see and want today? How do our learners see and experience the world and how good are we at teaching the rainbow? In this session, using a story, we will look at the feelings colours invoke and how to help our learners express and understand the colours within them through some practical classroom activities.

Xana is the YL Advisor for IHWO and has been a teacher and teacher trainer for many years. She has always had a keen interest in teaching YLs and training on YL courses.

17.15

Rounding off

20.00

Dinner

Leave hotel 19:35

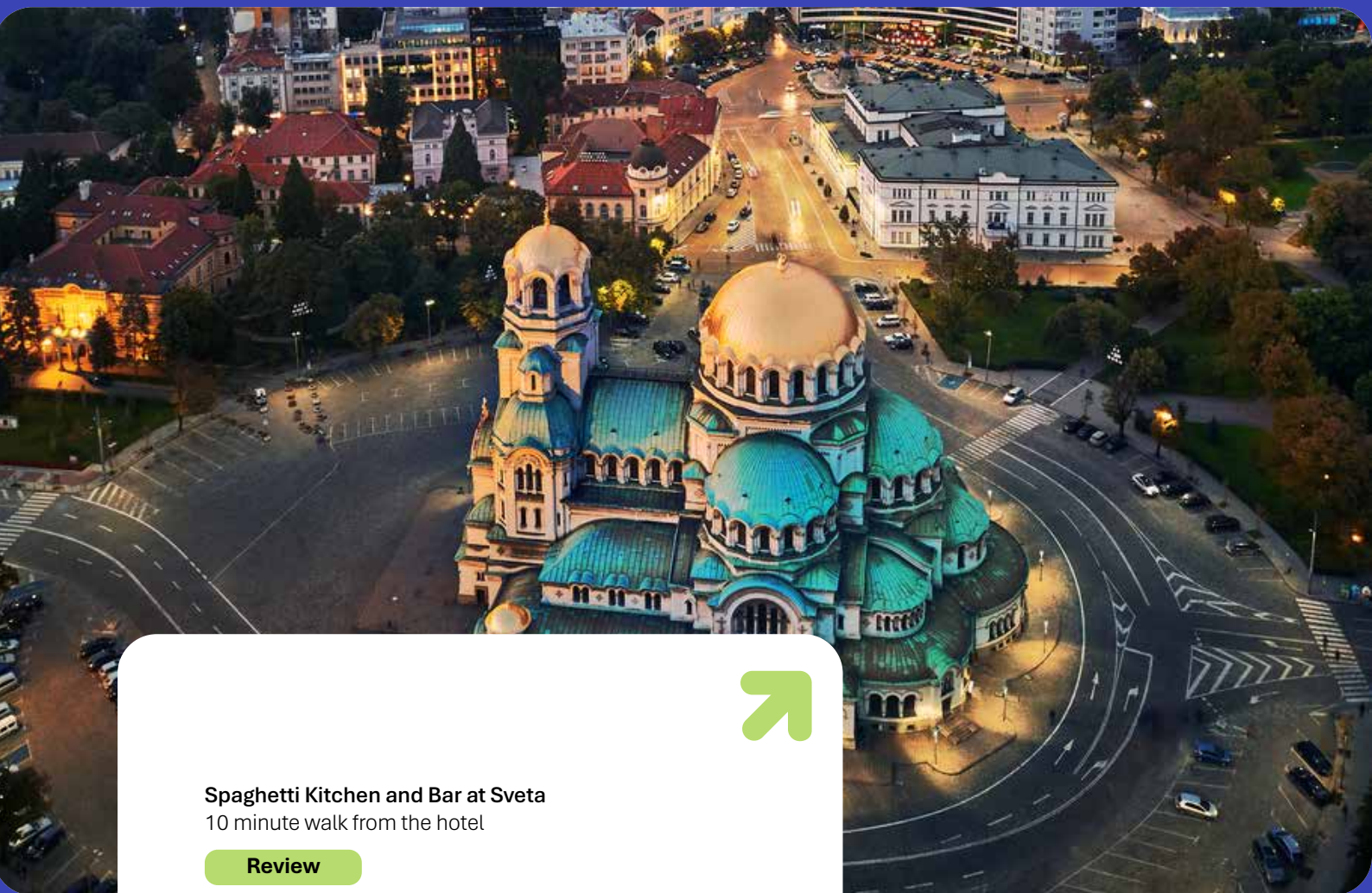
Dinner starts 20.00

Traditional Bulgarian food and dancing at Vittorio Pizza Bar.

Located near the Frederick Joliot-Curie metro station: [Find the restaurant on Google Maps.](#)

Delegates will take the metro from Opalchenska station (just a three-minute walk from Hotel Anel) to Joliot-Curie station. The IH Sofia team will be waiting at the metro exit to guide guests to the restaurant.

Approximate travel time 15 minutes.



Spaghetti Kitchen and Bar at Sveta

10 minute walk from the hotel

[Review](#)

Made in Home at Angel Kanchev – only accepts cash

20 minute walk from the hotel

[Review](#)

Made in Blue at Yuri Venelin

25 minute walk from hotel

[Review](#)

Manastirska Magernitsa

25 minute walk from hotel

[Review](#)





IH AMT Conference

9-11 January, 2025

The annual IHWO Academic Management & Trainers (AMT) Conference 2025 will be held at 10 Union Street, London in January 2025. This conference for Academic Managers and Teacher Trainers from around the IH network is a great opportunity to connect and share ideas and challenges with colleagues.



Our resource of recordings

In the IHWO website Members' Area, we have built up a bank of interesting resources from our range of online events and conferences. This includes:

- IH Young Learner Assessment – Online Seminars – 2018 and 2019
- IH Teachers Online Conference
- IH Online Modern Language Conference & Seasonal Webinars
- IH Wellbeing Season
- IH Innovation Conference
- IH Celebration of Diversity Webinars

We also have a range of presentations to view from our events:

- IH AMT Conference 2018-2024
- IH Young Learners Conference 2018-2023
- IH Directors' Conference 2018-2024

Log into our Members' Area and go to 'Events and Conferences' to view this collection of recordings and presentations. Alternatively, visit the link below:

ihworld.com/member-dashboard/events-and-conferences

The IH Online Teacher Training Institute (OTTI) is the teacher training wing of International House World Organisation. We provide online professional development courses for language teachers around the world.

There are courses for every stage of a teacher's career, from soon after your initial pre-service qualification, to DELTA level and management courses.

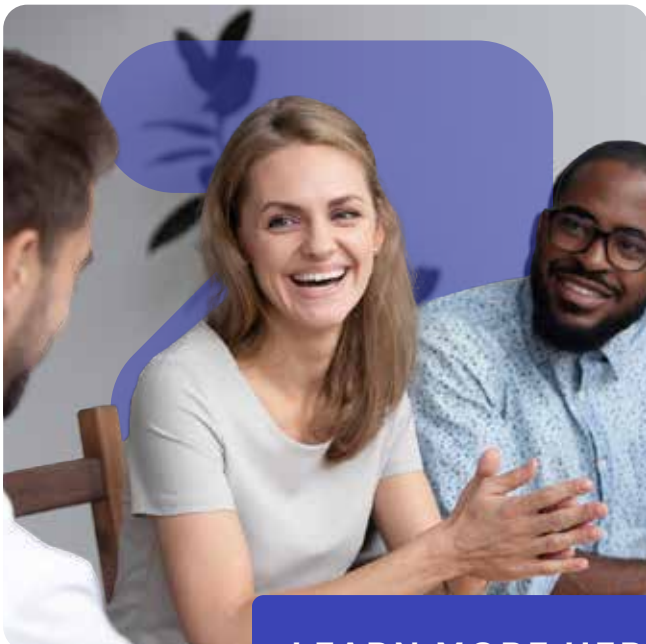
Find all course details, dates and application forms on ihworld.info/OTTI

See all YL specific courses listed here:






Course	Dates
IH Online Course in Teaching Young Learners and Teenagers	18 January - 8 March 2025
	22 February - 12 April 2025
	3 May - 21 June 2025
	5 July - 23 August 2025
	6 September - 25 October 2025
25 October - 13 December 2025	
IH Certificate in Teaching Very Young Learners	1 February - 12 April 2025
	31 May - 9 August 2025
	4 October - 13 December 2025
IH Young Learner Centre Management	15 March - 26 April 2025
IH Introduction to Teaching CLIL	22 February - 22 March 2025
	19 July - 16 August 2025

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