



# IH Directors' Conference 2025

Palermo, Sicily



**International  
House**  
World Organisation



## Welcome to Palermo, Sicily!

Back in 1975, Patricia Durden founded the Language Centre. She joined IH in 1984. So, this year we are celebrating 50 years in this city. The school is a big sister to Marco and Giuliana – an older and wiser sibling.

Palermo is a city full of history, culture and so much life. It's the kind of place that stays with you and we hope during your time here, you'll feel that same warmth and connection.

We hope you get a taste of what it means to be Sicilian while you're here. Cannoli, arancine, gelato, caponata, our local wine... so many flavours to enjoy.



This conference is all about connecting, sharing ideas and having a good time. Our conferences are special. Marco fondly remembers the DC in Valencia 2011 where he met Olga, his life partner. We also look back to our recent times in Madrid, London and Split. We always learn so much from each other.

International House has always been a huge part of our family and we can't think of a better group of people to celebrate with in 2025. Let's enjoy every moment and make some great memories together!

### **Marco Faldetta**

*Chairperson, IHWO Board Director, IH Palermo Language Centre*

### **Patricia Durden**

*Founder, IH Palermo Language Centre*





**Marco Faldetta**  
*Chairperson and Director of  
IH Palermo Language Centre*



**Mark Rendell**  
*CEO of IH London*



**Alejandra Garcia Nieto**  
*Director of IH Querétaro*



**Palmina La Rosa**  
*Director of the Coaching  
Department of IH Team  
Lingue*



**Josip Sobin**  
*CEO of IH Split*



**Emma Hoyle**  
*Managing Director*



**Samantha Grainger**  
*IH Trust*



**Daniel Saron**  
*Director of IH Madrid*

## Our core values

### Commit to Quality

We are dedicated to ensuring that excellence is at the forefront of everything we do.

### Embrace EDIB

We are building a strong, inclusive community that values and celebrates diversity and equity.

### Collaborate and Share

We believe we are stronger together and harness the power and knowledge of our global network to achieve the remarkable.

### Innovate and Transform

We create an environment to inspire innovation, embrace change, and constantly push boundaries to transform challenges into opportunities.

### Cultivate Curiosity

We promote a culture where curiosity is the driving force behind personal and professional growth.



## Welcome to the 2025 IH Directors' Conference in Palermo, Sicily

**We are delighted to gather in this vibrant city, rich in culture and history, for an inspiring few days of learning, collaboration, and connection. A special thank you to our hosts, IH Palermo Language Centre, for their incredible efforts in organising this conference in just four months – a remarkable achievement.**

This buzzing city, culturally moulded by its rich and eventful history and surrounded by spectacular landscapes, is the ideal location for our conference. Especially as it is home to two outstanding IH schools: IH Palermo Language Centre and IH Palermo London School.

As always, this event is a chance to connect with colleagues in the IH network, share the challenges we are facing, collaborate in finding solutions and be inspired by the initiatives happening around the network.

This year the programme has been crafted around five key themes:

- Innovation
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Business Development
- Marketing & Communication

We hope the sessions and workshops spark new ideas and provide fresh perspectives to help you navigate and thrive in our evolving industry. Alongside contributions from IH members, we are excited to welcome external speakers who bring expertise from across the education and business sectors.

One of the highlights this year is Lindsay Clandfield's thought-provoking StarPower workshop, which explores power dynamics and leadership in a highly interactive way. We are also introducing the Hackathon, an exciting new initiative designed to foster rapid problem-solving and innovation through collaboration.



In 2024, we announced the launch of the Mihai Laurențiu Gânj Award for Innovation to honour our friend, colleague and pillar of the IH community, Mihai. This year, we will be announcing the winners of the 2025 award – find out how the winning projects are pushing boundaries in the industry.

Our social events will introduce you to the captivating charm of this coastal capital city. Join the walking tour on Wednesday to get your bearings before gathering on the edge of the Mediterranean as the sun sets for the welcome dinner at CitySea restaurant. On Thursday we will enjoy the festivities of our annual IHWO Foundation Charity Auction and the Gala Dinner on Saturday will take place in what one of our Palermitani speakers called “the best restaurant you could have chosen”.

Throughout the conference, take the opportunity to connect with our valued partners and sponsors, whose support makes this event possible.

Thank you for travelling from near and far to be here. The people are what make IH such a unique and thriving community. Make the most of these days – learn, share, collaborate, and enjoy!

**Emma Hoyle (MD) and the IHWO team**



## Benvenuti a Palermo!

**Palermo is a city that welcomes you with open arms. It's vibrant, full of life, and rich in history, with a unique charm that blends centuries-old traditions with a modern, lively energy. Nestled between the mountains and the sparkling Mediterranean Sea, Palermo offers breathtaking views at every turn, from its golden beaches to its grand piazzas.**

The city has been shaped by Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, and Normans, each leaving behind stunning architecture, diverse traditions, and incredible flavours. You'll see it in the intricate mosaics of the Palatine Chapel, the stunning Teatro Massimo, and the lively markets where the scent of freshly baked sfincione and sizzling arancine fills the air. But more than anything, you'll feel it in the warmth of the people, always ready to share a story, a smile, or a recommendation for the best gelato in town.

We're lucky to be here before the summer rush, meaning we get to enjoy the city its best. Our hosts have planned unforgettable experiences, from discovering hidden gems in the historic centre to soaking in the Mediterranean breeze by the coast.

Palermo is a place to savour – its history, its food, its people. So take your time, explore, and let yourself be part of its rhythm.





**Emma Hoyle**

*Managing Director*

**emma.hoyle@ihworld.com**

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



**Belle Dowber Hawkins**

*Director of Operations and Membership*

**belle@ihworld.com**

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



**Giuliana Faldetta**

*Brand Engagement and Marketing Manager (until 10th May 2025)*

**giuliana.faldetta@ihworld.com**

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



**Shaun Wilden**

*OTTI Manager and IHWO Innovation Advisor*

**shaun.wilden@ihworld.com**

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

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**Imogen Key**  
*Marketing Manager*  
 (from 1st May 2025)  
**imogen.key@ihworld.com**  
*Ask me about...* IH branding, marketing, content and social media



**Marta Robles Villarino**  
*Events and Member Services Manager*  
 (from 1st May 2025)  
**marta@ihworld.com**  
*Ask me about...* Events, member services and study abroad



**Karolina Meena**  
*Financial Controller*  
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*Ask me about...* Payments, affiliation fees and IHWO accounts



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



**Monet Blanchard**  
*Membership Services and Marketing Executive*  
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*Ask me about...* Member services, IH World News and IH Teach English



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



**Lucie Cotterill**  
*IH Director of Studies Coordinator*  
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*Ask me about...* Academic management



**Fari Greenaway**  
*Quality and Inspections Advisor*  
**fari@ihworld.com**  
*Ask me about...* Inspections and reports



**Xana de Nagy**  
*YL Coordinator*  
**IHWOYLAdvisor@ihworld.com**  
*Ask me about...* Young learners and teenagers and the new IH online course for YLs and teens

## IHWO Language Advisors

**Arabic:**  
**Wessam Sayed**  
 IHWOArabicAdvisor@ihworld.com

**French:**  
**Estelle Héluin**  
 ihlanguages@ihworld.com

**German:**  
**Anette Igel**  
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**Italian:**  
**Chiara Passantino**  
 IHWOItalianAdvisor@ihworld.com

**Spanish:**  
**David Martínez Barraza**  
 IHWOSpanishAdvisor@ihworld.com

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15.30      **Afternoon walking tour - Meet at [Grand Hotel et Des Palmes](#)**  
Attendees are welcome to remain in the area where the tour finishes and make their way directly to CitySea at their convenience.

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19.30      **[Dinner CitySea](#)**  
Via Filippo Patti, 30 <https://www.citysea.it>  
Dress code: smart casual  
Return buses to Piazza Politeama

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Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

08.45	<b>Registration. Please bring your auction items!</b>
09.10	<b>Welcome</b> Emma Hoyle, MD IHWO & Marco Faldetta, Chairperson IHWO Board & Director, IH Palermo Language Centre
09.15	<b>StarPower: a simulation about power, leadership and diversity</b> Lindsay Clandfield
10.30	<b>Coffee break and meet the sponsors</b> Please buy your Foundation Auction raffle tickets from IHWO team
11.00	<b>StarPower (continued)</b>
12.15	<b>Building connections: how the British Council can strengthen International House's global English excellence</b> Adriana Colossio British Council   Director Exams France, Italy, Croatia and Slovenia
12.25	<b>The IHWO Hackathon: An Introduction</b> Samantha Grainger, IHWO Board
12.40	<b>Lunch in the Sala degli Specchi and meet the sponsors – three-course, sit down lunch</b>



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for schools

Primary  
Secondary  
Upper Secondary

Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

14.00	<b>Navigating 21st century education: a technonatural approach</b> Andrea Le Moli
15.00	<b>New opportunities with LANGUAGECERT</b> Liam Vint, Deputy VP Commercial & Henry Tolley, Director EMEA & Americas
15.10	<b>Coffee break and meet the sponsors</b>
15.40	<b>The IHWO Hackathon: planning session</b>
17.00	<b>IHWO Foundation Auction – Overture Terrace, Grand Hotel et des Palmes</b> Gavin Eyre, IH Cape Town & Katja Preston, IHWO  Collettivo Rewilding Sicily is a dedicated group working to bring tangible rewilding projects to the beautiful island of Sicily. As members of the European Rewilding Network, they join a community of 100 organisations across Europe, all committed to restoring nature and making our continent wilder. Your donation supports their vital work in implementing hands-on rewilding initiatives, helping to revitalise Sicily's natural landscapes and ecosystems.
19.00	<b>Finish</b>  <b>Free evening</b> See recommendations on pages 28 and 29

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Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

09.00	<b>The core quadrant: developing self-awareness for stronger relationships and communication</b> Memfi Sappa
10.30	<b>Coffee break and meet the sponsors</b>
10.50	<b>What's next? Adding value to your membership</b> IHWO Team
11.35	<b>Under pressure? Making inspections work for you</b> Belle Dowber-Hawkins & Fari Greenaway, IHWO
12.25	<b>IHWO and innovation</b> Shaun Wilden, IHWO Innovations Advisor

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Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

13.10	<b>The Mihai Gânj Award for Innovation</b> Introduction by Marco Faldetta, Chairperson IHWO Board & Shaun Wilden, IHWO Innovations Advisor Presentation by Alina Gânj	
13.20	Lunch in the Sala degli Specchi and meet the sponsors – three-course, sit down lunch	
14.35	Standing out from the crowd – marketing your school through differentiation Charlotte Ellis	
15.05	The IHWO Hackathon: planning session	
16.05	Coffee break and meet the sponsors	
16.30	IHWO AGM IH members only	16.30 Governance & Finance 16.40 AGM Business Meeting & Discussion Plaques, Anniversaries
Free evening See recommendations on pages 28 and 29		



The preferred exam experience



Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

09.00	<b>Study Abroad meeting: IHWO update and Committee election</b> Facilitated by Giuliana Faldetta	<b>Community School Committee: introduction and discussion of priorities</b> Facilitated by Fari Greenaway
10.00	<b>Future Leaders Get Together</b> Alina Ganj	<b>Digital engagement for IH Schools</b> Marco Faldetta
10.30	<b>How to make exams a tradition for clients?</b> Ariel Lopez	<b>Family succession in business</b> Salvatore Tomaselli
11.00	<b>Coffee break and meet the sponsors</b>	
11.30	<p><b>Digital marketing strategies</b></p> <p><b>AI for digital marketing:</b> <b>Beyond the clicks: mastering digital marketing KPIs for language school growth</b> Mauricio Segura, Platty</p> <p><b>Future-proofing school visibility: AI-powered SEO &amp; digital branding strategies for educational institutions</b> Ciaran Connolly, ProfileTree</p>	



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Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

12.15	<b>The IHWO Hackathon – refinement: your chance to put the finishing touches to your presentations!</b>
12.45	<b>Lunch at <a href="#">Mudu</a> (Via Enrico Albanese 24) and meet the sponsors</b>
14.00	<b>A journey of growth and integration in the language improvement sector: the International House Team Lingue Experience</b> Palmina La Rosa & Fabio Sgotto, IH Merate   Como   Lecco   Sondrio   Catania
14.30	<b>Resilience in action: lessons from navigating business highs and lows</b> May Mon Aung, IH Myanmar
14.45	<b>Our story – and how we choose to tell it</b> Peter Hayes, IH Manchester
15.15	<b>Coffee break and meet the sponsors</b>
15.40	<b>The IHWO Hackathon – presentation time!</b>
17.00	<b>Official Conference closing</b>
19.00	<b>Depart for the Gala Dinner</b> Buses depart at 19:00 sharp from Piazza Politeama Returning at 23:30 and 00:00 Dress code: smart/formal Villa Igtea <a href="https://www.roccofortehotels.com/it/hotels-and-resorts/villa-igtea/">https://www.roccofortehotels.com/it/hotels-and-resorts/villa-igtea/</a>



Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

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09.15

## **StarPower: a simulation about power, leadership and diversity**

Led by Lindsay Clandfield



**StarPower is a real time, face-to-face, non-computer-based simulation of an organization or system in which leaders are given unlimited powers to make and change the rules of the simulation. First created in 1969, it has been used in classrooms, business boardrooms and workshops around the world. This is a unique experience which will make participants really reflect on the nature of power and systems. It's highly communicative and once you've experienced it, you will have a better understanding of your own use of power in the workplace. It is also a great activity to eventually do with learners.**

**Lindsay Clandfield** is an award-winning writer, teacher, teacher trainer and international speaker in the field of English language teaching. He has written more than 15 coursebooks and is the main author of the new young adult course Studio (Helbling Languages). His other courses include Global and Straightforward (Macmillan). Lindsay has co-written various methodology books for teachers, most recently being Interaction Online (CUP) and Live Online Teaching (Pavilion) which he co-wrote with Jill Hadfield. Lindsay is also the creative force behind various web projects including the popular blog Six Things, the e-publishing collective The Round and the sci-fi/adventure materials website Extreme Language Teaching. He co-hosts the well-known podcast The TEFL Commute. You can find out more about him at his website [www.lindsayclandfield.com](http://www.lindsayclandfield.com).

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12.25

## **The IHWO Hackathon**

Led by Samantha Grainger, IHWO Board



**At our IHWO 2025 Directors' Conference, we're launching an exciting new initiative: The IHWO Hackathon.**

**A hackathon is a dynamic, problem-solving challenge where diverse teams come together to generate creative solutions within a limited timeframe. Participants will brainstorm, design, and develop actionable ideas, tackling real-world challenges aligned with IHWO's strategic objectives and the needs of network members.**

**Each group of Directors will be assigned a problem statement and guided by an IHWO Board or Team member to facilitate discussion and planning. On the final day, teams will pitch their solutions to their fellow Directors, who will vote for the most impactful project. The winning idea will be evaluated for implementation in 2026 – it's a chance to create solutions that directly address the real challenges our network is facing, driven by the ideas and experiences that matter most.**

**Samantha Grainger** is a Director of both the IHWO and IH Trust Boards. She has over 25 years' experience in English language teaching, blended learning, and digital product development. She has held senior roles including Global Director for Online Learning at the British Council and Director of Strategic Products & Partnerships for ELT at Oxford University Press. She is now Head of Partnerships at a communication skills training scale-up, Learnlight. She has extensive experience in conceptualizing and developing new products and businesses, applying agile product development methodologies, including hackathons and iterative design processes. She has built and scaled three major ventures: English Online, a digital learning platform with over 100,000 learners; EnglishScore, a mobile English language test taken by over 12 million users; and MyClass, a modular blended learning programme implemented in 30 countries.

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Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

14.00

## Navigating 21st century education: a technonatural approach

Led by Prof. Andrea Le Moli



**Balancing cutting-edge technology with human values that drive learning is a key challenge.**

**The concept of Technonaturality reveals how cognitive abilities, emotions and symbolic communication are intertwined with our technical skills.**

**How does the evolution of technology influence language, teaching practices and school culture?**

**Our exploration and group discussions will try to answer these questions:**

- **What criteria should we use to evaluate whether the use of machine learning technologies in the classroom is correct and responsible?**
- **How do we assess the role of emotions in education, especially regarding machine learning?**
- **To what extent can we control the use that students make of machine learning technologies?**

**Prof. Andrea Le Moli (University of Palermo) will connect our experience with strategic and ethical perspectives.**

**The lens of technonaturality integrates technology with humanistic values, drives school innovation, keeps education systems competitive and responsive to the needs of tomorrow.**

**Join us for an engaging dialogue on transforming education.**

**Andrea Le Moli** is full professor of History of Philosophy at the Department of Humanities of the University of Palermo, where he teaches Philosophy of Technology, Global Philosophy and Environmental Humanities. Former Coordinator of MA Programme in Philosophical and Historical Sciences, Vice-Director of Research and Innovation of Department of Humanities and Board Member of Scientific Board and Evaluation Office of the University is currently Member of PNRR Projects Sicilian Micro and Nano Technology Research and Innovation Center (SAMOTHRACE) and National Biodiversity Future Center (NBFC). His main research topics are the relationships between more-than-human cognition and technological development with particular attention to training and educational aspects. Among his latest publications: 'Pandemic and Infodemic' (2021), 'Animal Subjects' (2022), 'Technophysis' (2023), 'Primary Matter. The Technical Nature of Wood in Ancient Thought' (2024).



Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

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09.00

## Discovering your core self: enhancing self-awareness for stronger relationships

Memfi Sappa



How can a deeper understanding of your natural strengths – and the ways they can both support and create challenges – enhance the quality of your interactions with others? In this 90-minute interactive session, you will be guided through the Core Quadrant framework developed by Daniel Ofman. You will explore your Core Quality, Pitfall, Challenge, and Allergy – gaining insight into how these elements influence your behaviour and shape the way you relate to others.

Through structured reflection and peer exchange, you will identify patterns, recognise your personal triggers, and discover how to value qualities in others that may differ from your own. The process will support you in building more constructive, empathetic, and effective relationships. By the end of the session, you will walk away with greater self-awareness and practical tools to navigate interpersonal dynamics with increased clarity, presence, and confidence.

**Memfi Sappa** is a certified trainer and facilitator at TCO International, specialising in multicultural team building, cross-cultural communication, and leadership development. She brings a dynamic and interactive style to her sessions, drawing from her background in theatrical improvisation and her international experience across Europe. Memfi designs and delivers learning experiences that support professionals in developing self-awareness, navigating complexity, and enhancing collaboration in diverse and global contexts. She has worked with clients such as L'Oréal, EssilorLuxottica, Chiesi Farmaceutici, and ValoreD, Italy's leading association for diversity and inclusion. She is certified in several key methodologies including the Intercultural Preference Indicator, Influencing Agility Indicator, and Motivational Maps. She is also a certified facilitator by Voltage Control.

Memfi co-developed TCO's signature programmes such as The Bridge Builders, Developing Empathy, and Understanding Motivation. She also teaches Intercultural Management at CUOA Business School and is particularly passionate about engaging younger generations and bridging generational gaps. She holds a degree in Communication & Interpretation and has lived in England, Denmark, and Norway – experiences that deeply inform her intercultural sensitivity and training approach. [www.tco-international.com](http://www.tco-international.com)

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11.50

## Under pressure? Making inspections work for you

Belle Dowber-Hawkins & Fari Greenaway, IHWO

Join Belle and Fari for an engaging update on the IH inspection scheme – key updates, what we've learned so far, and what's coming next. We'll share inspection trends from 2024, common strengths in IH schools and areas for improvement and discuss why inspections are about more than just compliance. Plus, get practical tips from our inspectors and have your burning questions answered.



Venue: Grand Hotel et Des Palmes, Via Roma 398

14.35

### Standing out from the crowd – marketing your school through differentiation

Charlotte Ellis



This will be a back-to-basics, whistlestop tour around how to make the most of your marketing resources and ensure your efforts are falling on fertile ground. There will be practical tips to help you identify where you want to sit in the market, who is your customer and how to best speak to them in a language they understand. Whether you've got a complete marketing team, or you have somebody who posts every so often on social media, this session will give you the inspiration to develop a consistent and powerful marketing message.

**Charlotte Ellis** studied Modern Languages at the University of Oxford and, after a spell of teaching, entered the world of ELT publishing where she has been for the past two decades. She has long had a passion for sharing cultures, using languages to cross borders and exploring how we can use education to try to solve some of the biggest questions our generation has to face. In 2013 she achieved a Professional Diploma in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing, and more recently, studied with the Cambridge Institute of Sustainable Leadership. Until recently she was Head of Strategic and Digital Marketing at National Geographic Learning and is now pursuing a freelance career.

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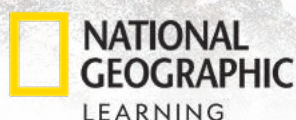
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Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

10.00

**Digital engagement for IH Schools**  
 Marco Faldetta, IH Palermo Language Centre



Years ago, the Language Centre in Palermo introduced an open platform with a student app. Designed as a portal for all IH schools, the platform evolved into a fully integrated system tailored to IH Palermo’s needs. It manages classwork, homework, attendance and student profiles, serves as a dynamic hub for weekly activities, student engagement and weekly event management.

It enhances student experience, drives marketing efforts, and facilitates sales processes. It enables students and the wider public to participate in social and language events, both paid and free. Running this digital infrastructure has become a core pillar of the school’s operations.



## LEARNING FOR THE REAL WORLD!

### EACH LEVEL FEATURES:

- ▶ 10 THEMED UNITS, THE CENTRAL PILLARS OF WHICH ARE MEDIATION AND DEBATE TASKS
- ▶ CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION AND RESEARCH
- ▶ CLEAR FOCUS ON CULTURAL CONTEXTS, LIFE SKILLS AND VALUES
- ▶ STUDY SKILLS AND WRITING TIPS
- ▶ MULTIMODAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE
- ▶ PRESENTATION SKILLS SECTIONS
- ▶ STEAM ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE EXPERIENTIAL AND HOLISTIC LEARNING



Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

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10.00

## Future Leaders Get Together

Alina Ganj, IH Bucharest

Future Leaders Get Together is a dynamic event by IH Bucharest, uniting alumni and current students to foster growth beyond English learning. Designed to strengthen community ties and promote essential life skills, the event highlights how language schools can become platforms for personal development. By focusing on leadership, communication, and future readiness, we create value for both students and parents. This initiative not only enhances our market position but also showcases our commitment to teaching more than English – empowering young minds to thrive academically, socially, and personally.



10.30

## How to make exams a tradition for clients?

Ariel Lopez, IH Mexico

In Mexico, over 80% of IELTS test takers are NOT using IELTS for travel. The number one destination for Mexicans is... Mexico. International Examination candidates do NOT need to take any test.

In this workshop we will explore ways to grow your examination business. We will focus on ways to persuade all those clients who do not need to buy from you to do so. We will explore ways to create the market and then turn it into a profitable one. We will try to show how to create demand where there is currently none. We will explore ways to turn the international examination business into tradition in your country too.



Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

10.30

## Generational transitions

Salvatore Tomaselli



In the coming years, many family-owned businesses will face one of the most critical challenges in their history: the generational transition – and English language schools are no exception. This shift is taking place at a time when the educational landscape is rapidly evolving due to technological innovation, changing learner expectations, and increasing global competition.

In this talk, we will explore how family businesses can transform generational change into a strategic opportunity rather than a source of conflict or decline. Drawing from international case studies and decades of research and experience, I will share key principles for preparing both the business and the family for this transition, aligning family and business visions, and designing governance structures that foster both continuity and innovation.

Tailored to the unique context of English language schools within the International House global network, this session offers practical insights for owners and directors seeking to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

**Salvatore Tomaselli** is an Associate Professor of Business Administration at the University of Palermo, specialising in Family Business Strategy and Governance. He has been a visiting professor at the Beijing Institute of Technology and the University of Zagreb.

Holding a Ph.D. from IESE Business School, he is a Certified Lego Serious Play Facilitator and has certifications from Cambridge University and MIT. A founding member of the Family Enterprise Research Academy (IFERA), he currently chairs its advisory fellows committee. With over 30 years of experience, Salvatore has advised family businesses across Europe, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa on governance, generational transitions, and strategic planning. He has consulted for the World Bank Group and served on multiple corporate boards.



Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

11.30

**Beyond the clicks: mastering digital marketing KPIs for language school growth**  
Mauricio Segura, Platty



In today's digital landscape, understanding and leveraging performance marketing is crucial for language school growth. Join Mauricio Segura, Founder and CEO of Platty for a concise ten-minute session designed specifically for directors, where we'll demystify key performance indicators (KPIs) for platforms like Meta Ads and Google Ads. Learn practical strategies to effectively manage your digital marketing investments, ensuring clear data and seamless integration with your CRM and admissions systems.

We'll illustrate how to translate complex data into actionable insights, even with limited integration, empowering you to guide your teams and drive enrollment success. This session will provide you with the great practical tips and advice to confidently navigate the digital marketing world, regardless of your technical background.

**Mauricio Segura** is the CEO and founder of Platty, a unique and innovative digital marketing, design studio, and AI/tech startup shifting the paradigm on international education marketing for governments, universities and institutions across the globe. Mauricio is a Brazilian, Aussie and a Kiwi and a long-standing entrepreneur, with previous and ongoing ventures in International Student Recruitment (Spiible – an innovative digital agency), App Development and International Trade. He has worked in some of the largest global companies and received education and training in locations such as Australia, China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, New York, London, France, Brazil, Sweden and Norway.

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- Marketing Campaign
- Branding & Visual Identity
- Data Dashboards & Analytics



Contact Mauricio Segura:

[Via WhatsApp](#)

[Via Email](#)

Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

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## **Future-proofing school visibility: AI-powered SEO & digital branding strategies for educational institutions**

Ciaran Connolly, Director of ProfileTree web design and digital marketing agency



**This practical, results-driven session focuses on how educational institutions can leverage Search Engine Optimisation, Content Strategy and a little AI to transform their digital presence and significantly improve their competitive positioning online. Drawing on data-backed strategies, the presentation delivers immediately actionable techniques that work for schools of all sizes and budgets.**

**Participants will discover how to:**

- Implement AI-driven content optimisation to identify gaps in keyword coverage and create high-performing website content
- Action keyword research and content planning for more efficient resource allocation
- Prepare for the evolution of search from text to video-based discovery and AI-powered search assistants

**This session equips educational leaders with the practical knowledge to implement cutting-edge digital marketing strategies that increase visibility, enhance engagement, and ultimately drive student recruitment in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.**

**It will be a presentation format followed by Q&A to make the session as practical as possible.**

**Ciaran Connolly** is the founder and director of [ProfileTree](https://www.profiletree.co.uk), an award-winning digital marketing and web design agency based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. A seasoned digital strategist, Ciaran has established himself as an authority in AI-powered SEO, content strategy, video marketing and digital branding.

His expertise spans website development, search engine optimisation, content creation, and the strategic implementation of artificial intelligence in digital marketing. Ciaran regularly delivers training sessions and presentations on cutting-edge digital topics including AI integration, evolving SEO practices, and content optimisation strategies.

<https://uk.linkedin.com/in/ciaranconnolly>

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Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

14.00

### A journey of growth and integration in the language improvement sector: The International House Team Lingue Experience

Palmina La Rosa & Fabio Sgotto, IH Team Lingue Merate | Como | Lecco | Sondrio | Catania

International House Team Lingue Merate | Como | Lecco | Sondrio | Catania brings its experience as an organization that, in recent years, has grown also thanks to the acquisition and integration of other schools.

The growth through acquisitions has followed a well-thought-out process, a conscious decision, a journey that has been refined thanks to the experience gained over time. This journey is shared through the testimonies of those who actively participated in the evaluation, decision-making, acquisition, and integration of the two entities.

There will be testimonies from those who decided to sell their schools and how they came to this decision, from the owner of International House Team Lingue and his collaborators, including the School Manager, Human Resources, the DOS, and the Marketing Manager.

The testimonies will also feature the person appointed as the new Branch Manager and those who actively embraced the change on the ground: the staff of the certification, course, and teaching departments.

A challenging journey of growth, not without obstacles and challenges, but stimulating and full of opportunities, with the understanding that integration and collaboration are the keys to a future increasingly rich in success.

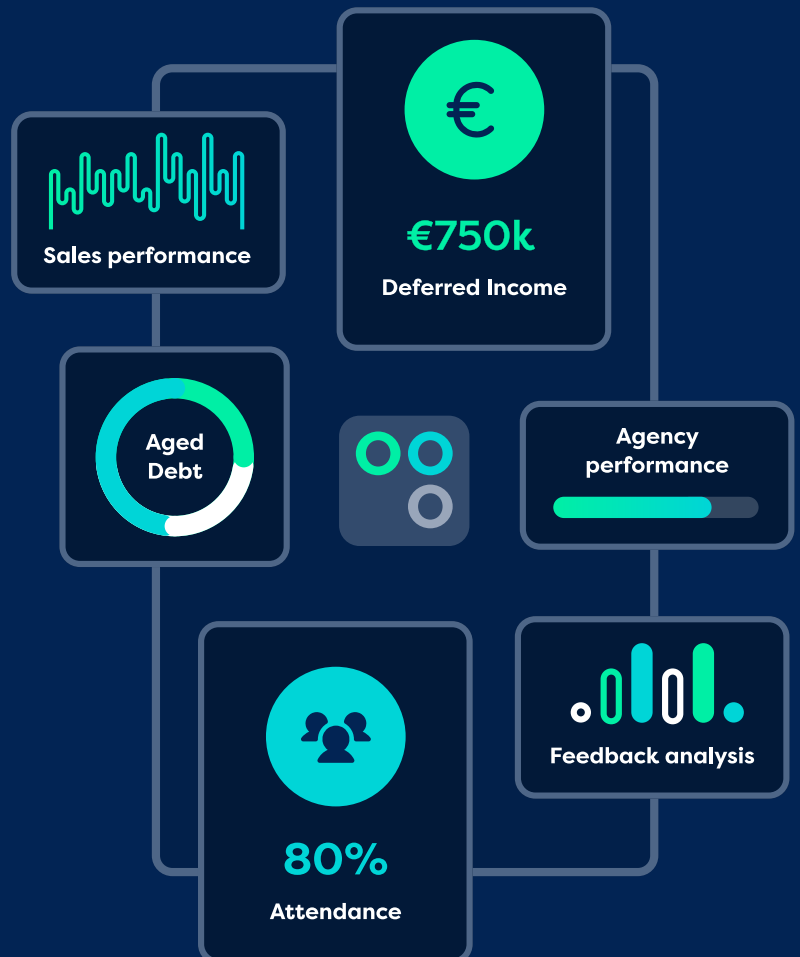


# School works

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Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

14.30

**Resilience in action: lessons from navigating business highs and lows**  
 May Mon Aung, IH Yangon-Mandalay



In the ever-evolving world of business, resilience is not just a trait but a necessity for survival and success. Drawing from personal experiences and real-world examples of other IH schools, this talk explores the highs and lows of running a school business, highlighting the critical role of adaptability, perseverance, and strategic thinking in navigating a vulnerable context with limited support. Participants will gain insights into overcoming unexpected challenges, prioritising effectively during crises, and fostering sustainable growth. This session will provide actionable lessons on turning setbacks into opportunities and building a foundation for long-term success.



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Venue: IH Palermo Exams and Training Centre, Via Enrico Albanese 15

14.45

Our story – and how we choose to tell it

Peter Hayes, IH Manchester

Typical of the IH network, the story of our school doesn't represent a 'text book' business model. But, like many others, we have managed to remain agile enough to meet the various challenges thrown at us over the years. However, it is only during the last four years that we have found the biggest commercial success. Fortunately for us, our school has grown considerably since the Covid era. So, in the IH spirit of sharing, the aim of our session is to share why we feel this has happened. We sincerely hope that it may be of help to others in the network who are tasked with sales and marketing in an IH school these days.

We will suggest that the 'humanisation' of our company, colleagues and students, and the way that we have told our story and theirs, via social and other media, as well as a systematic dedication to selling, have all helped drive this growth. We hope that what we have learnt is equally helpful to both study abroad and community schools.



[www.profiletree.com](http://www.profiletree.com)

# Free Digital Brand Audit



ProfileTree, an **award-winning digital marketing agency**, specialises in delivering high-performance **digital strategies, SEO optimisation, and website development services**. The company has established itself as a leader in integrating AI into digital marketing solutions, helping organisations scale their marketing efforts while reducing operational costs.

ProfileTree's expert team offers comprehensive services, including **content creation, video production, and bespoke digital training**, all tailored to boost online visibility and drive sales. With a unique approach that includes personalised strategy development and full digital audits, ProfileTree ensures your website becomes your most effective business asset.

[Get A Free Audit](#)

## How to get from Palermo Airport to the City Centre



**Palermo Falcone-Borsellino Airport (PMO) is located about 35 km from the city centre. You have several options to reach your destination:**

### Bus

The Prestia e Comandè shuttle bus is a convenient and affordable option, running every 30 minutes from the airport to Palermo's central station. The journey takes about 40 minutes, and a ticket (purchased online) costs €10 for a round trip. Purchased on the day, a single ticket costs €6 a round-trip ticket costs €11. To purchase online visit their website: <https://www.prestiaecomande.it/> The closest stop to the Conference hotel is Politeama (Piazza Ruggero Settimo).

### Taxi

Taxis are available outside the Arrivals terminal. A ride to the city centre has a fixed fare of €45. Be sure to confirm the price with the driver before starting your trip. Official Taxi company: <https://www.6878.it/>

### Train

The Trinacria Express train runs from the airport to Palermo Centrale Station every 30 minutes. The journey takes around 50 minutes and costs approximately €6. Tickets can be purchased at the station or online. If you are staying in the city centre we would recommend the first two options.

### Uber & private transfers

Uber is currently available as Uber Black which is great if you're looking for a premium ride, but it can be a bit pricey. If that's not your preferred option, we recommend getting a local taxi directly rather than through the app, as it's often quicker and more cost-effective.

With these transport options, getting to the heart of Palermo is easy, so you can start soaking in the city's charm as soon as you arrive!

### Emergency number

In case of emergency, dial 112, the European emergency line. This number works across all EU Member States and will connect you to the nearest emergency service.

### Phones & internet

For calls to Italy, dial +39 before the local number. There are no roaming charges within the EU. Wi-Fi is widely available in hotels, cafés, and restaurants. If you need mobile data, you can purchase a local SIM card from providers such as TIM, Vodafone, or WindTre, which offer tourist-friendly packages.

### Currency

Italy uses the Euro (€). Most places accept credit and debit cards, but it's always good to carry some cash, especially in smaller shops or markets as they prefer to be paid in cash.

### Useful phrases in Italian

Good morning – **Buongiorno**  
Good afternoon – **Buon pomeriggio**  
Good evening – **Buonasera**  
Hi – **Ciao**  
Have a nice day – **Buona giornata**  
Please – **Per favore**  
You're welcome – **Prego**  
Thank you – **Grazie**  
Excuse me – **Mi scusi**

## Eating, drinking, and shopping in Palermo

### Great dinner spots

#### [Antica Focacceria San Francesco](#)

A must-visit for classic street food like arancine and panelle. Via Alessandro Paternostro 58 Palermo.

#### [Osteria dei Vespri](#)

Elegant and creative, blending Sicilian tradition with innovative flavours. Piazza Croce dei Vespri, 6.

#### [Osteria Ballarò](#)

A charming spot inside a historic palace, offering traditional Sicilian dishes with a modern twist. Via Calascibetta, 25.

#### [Osteria Mercedes](#)

Is a popular seafood restaurant in Palermo, known for its fresh fish, traditional Sicilian flavors, and cozy, welcoming atmosphere. Via Sammartino 1.

#### [Gagini Restaurant](#)

Michelin-starred, offering a refined Sicilian dining experience. Via Cassari, 35.

#### [Gigi Mangia](#)

Traditional Sicilian dishes with a homely feel. Via Principe di Belmonte 104 D.

#### [Pescato](#)

A seafood-focused restaurant offering fresh catches and Sicilian classics. Via Nicolò Gallo, 5/7.

#### [Buatta](#)

A cozy spot with an emphasis on fresh, local produce. Via Vittorio Emanuele, 176.

#### [La Casa del Brodo](#)

Specialises in hearty broths and traditional Sicilian comfort food. Via Vittorio Emanuele, 175.

#### [Sardina Pasta Bar](#)

Is a bistro and takeaway where you can find a wide assortment of fresh pasta with different types of condiments.

#### [Trattoria Ferro di Cavallo](#)

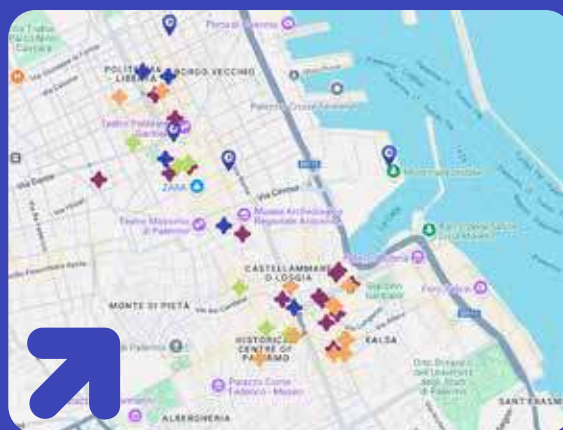
A casual spot with generous portions of local favourites like pasta alla Norma. Via Venezia, 20.

#### [Francu u Vastiddaru](#)

An iconic place for typical street food with a local twist. Via Vittorio Emanuele 102.

#### [Fud Bottega Sicula](#)

A fun and contemporary take on Sicilian street food, with great burgers and local ingredients. Piazza Olivella, 4.



[Please click here for our DC interactive Google map](#)

#### [Di Martino](#)

Known for its pasta dishes and classic Italian comfort food. Via Giuseppe Mazzini, 54.

#### [Bolazzi](#)

A contemporary spot offering creative takes on Sicilian dishes. Piazzetta Francesco Bagnasco 1.

### Light bites

#### [Antico Caffè Spinnato](#)

A traditional café with amazing Sicilian pastries, coffee, and gelato. Via Principe di Belmonte, 107.

#### [Pasticceria Cappello](#)

Famous for its heavenly Setteveli cake and other sweet delights. Via Nicolò Garzilli, 19.

#### [Il Monastero di Santa Caterina I Segreti del Chiostro](#)

A hidden gem offering traditional Sicilian pastries made by nuns in a stunning historic setting. Piazza Bellini, 33.

#### [I Cuochini](#)

A historic spot famous for its mini panzerotti, arancine, and other Sicilian snacks. Via Ruggero Settimo, 68.

#### [Caffè Morettino ai Quattro Canti](#)

A beautiful coffee spot in one of Palermo's most famous squares, serving expertly roasted Sicilian coffee. Via Vittorio Emanuele, 308.

#### [Ke Palle](#)

A speciality shop for arancine with creative fillings. Via Maqueda, 270.

## Eating, drinking, and shopping in Palermo

### Buzzing bars and aperitivo spots

#### [Ojda](#)

A lively bar in Palermo known for great cocktails, relaxed vibes, and a mix of locals and visitors enjoying the night. Piazza Aragona 1.

#### [Salumeria Alcolica](#)

A trendy bar in Palermo, offering a unique combination of delicious cured meats and creative cocktails in a lively, relaxed atmosphere. Via Alloro 149-151.

#### [Minimarket](#)

A trendy bar disguised as a minimarket, offering great cocktails and a fun, casual atmosphere. Piazza San Carlo 9.

#### [Botteghe Colletti](#)

A charming and cozy wine bar with reasonably priced drinks and a welcoming vibe, ideal for an evening out. Via Alessandro Paternostro 77.

#### [Hic](#)

A chic cocktail bar known for its expertly crafted drinks, modern design, and cool atmosphere. Via Giuseppe Mazzini 46.

#### [Dai Vicini](#)

A hidden gem for aperitivo, offering quality drinks and a friendly atmosphere in the heart of Palermo. Via XX Settembre 55 B.

#### [Ai Bottai](#)

A stylish bar in the historic centre, ideal for aperitivo. Via Bottai, 62.

#### [Cantavespri Vini e Vinili](#)

A mix of wine bar and vinyl music, great for a relaxed evening. Vicolo Valguarnera, 10.

#### [Sto'rto](#)

A casual and quirky bar with great cocktails and a lively crowd, perfect for a fun night out. Discesa dei Giudici, 31.

#### [Dal Barone](#)

A wine bar celebrating natural Sicilian wines and local artisanal products, offering a rustic experience.

#### [Tatum Art Jazz Club & Restaurant](#)

A must-visit for jazz lovers, featuring live music, a relaxed ambiance, and great drinks. Via Dell'Universita' 38.

#### [Taverna Azzurra](#)

A legendary local spot for cheap drinks and an authentic Palermitan vibe. Via Maccherronai, 15.

### Souvenir shopping

#### [La Coppola](#)

A boutique selling traditional Sicilian coppola hats. Via Bara All'Olivella, 103.

#### [Siculamente](#)

A shop with Sicilian-inspired clothing and accessories, known for its humorous and artistic designs. Via Roma, 230.

#### [Libera](#)

A cooperative store promoting Sicilian products from confiscated mafia-owned lands, supporting ethical and social initiatives. Piazza Castelnuovo 13.

#### [Ceramicando](#)

A wonderful shop specialising in handcrafted Sicilian ceramics, from traditional tiles to decorative pottery. Via Isidoro la Lumia, 43 Ceramicando di Elisabetta Castagnetta.

#### [Bartes](#)

A renowned ceramic workshop offering handcrafted Sicilian pottery, from Moorish heads to beautifully painted tiles. Via Archimede, 188.



## Valencia, Spain

Join us in May 2026 for next year's Directors' Conference in Valencia, Spain. Our hosts, IH Valencia, will introduce you to Spain's third-largest city on the eastern coast. Think fascinating architecture, think delicious gastronomy, think beautiful beaches – and all without the crowds.



Find all course details, dates and application forms on <https://ihworld.com/teach/ih-online-teacher-training>

## Courses for Academic Managers and Trainers

Course	Duration	2025 start dates
Teacher Training Certificate	10 weeks	Feb, May, Oct
Director of Studies	9 weeks	Feb, May, Oct
Academic Management – Observation & Feedback	6 weeks	Jul & Nov
Academic Management – Managing Customer Service	6 weeks	Sept
Academic Management – Managing Change	6 weeks	Mar
Academic Management – Performance Management	6 weeks	May
Academic Management – Young Learner Centre Management	6 weeks	Mar
Academic Management – Teams & Communication	6 weeks	Jan
Academic Management – Business Management	6 weeks	Nov
IH Diploma in Academic Management	2 years	Flexible

## Courses for Teachers

Course	Duration	2025 start dates
IELTS x1 module	4 weeks	Every month
IELTS Bundle of four modules	4 months	Every month
Content & Lang Integrated Learning	4 weeks	Feb & Jul
Cert in Online Tutoring	5 weeks	Jan, Mar, May, Aug, Oct
Teaching One-to-One	4 weeks	May, Nov
Young Learners and Teens	8 weeks	Jan, Feb, May, Jul, Sept, Oct
Very Young Learners	10 weeks	Feb, May, Oct
Business English Teaching	14 weeks	Feb, May, Oct
Certificate Advanced Methodology	15 weeks	Feb, May, Oct

## Collaboration features in the new IH World Member's Area

We have recently launched our new [IH World website](#) and [Member's Area](#). As well as a fresh new look, the site now has a range of new features to promote collaboration, community and innovation within the IH network.

### Forums

In the Member's Area you now have forums which provide private spaces to collaborate with your IH colleagues. You will find following groups in forums:

- Directors
- DoSes
- Teachers of English
- Teachers of French
- Teachers of Spanish
- Teachers of German
- Teachers of Arabic
- Teachers of Italian
- Teacher Trainers
- Inspectors
- Inspections & Quality
- Administrative Staff
- Sales & Marketing
- Study Abroad Marketing
- Community School Working Group

### Professional Development Resources in the IH World Member's Area

Have your teachers and marketing teams attended this year's webinar series to help with professional development?

#### • Marketing Webinar Series for IH Schools

- Creating a content strategy for your language school
- How to create engaging video content
- How to use Canva's full potential to make higher-quality marketing materials
- Bringing the IH Brand to Life with AI-Powered Creativity

See the recordings [here](#)

#### • IH Community Teacher Sessions 2025

- The Joy in Being Wrong – Lucie Cotterill
- Storytelling for and with Young Learners – Fari Greenaway
- Keeping it Real: Teaching useful idioms and getting rid of the old! – Glenn Standish

See the recordings [here](#)



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