



Europe and Middle East Candidate

**Ben Finlay-Mcdougall**  
Student  
King's College London  
Primary Location: United Kingdom  
*Running for 1<sup>st</sup> term*



**ABOUT THE APPLICANT:**

My name is Ben Finlay-McDougall. I am a Young Professional in the Themed Entertainment industry, currently studying at King's College London. I have been a TEA NextGen member for the past 2 years. I originally got in touch with the TEA during my earlier school years when I knew this was the industry which I wanted to progress into. The fantastic platform the TEA provides has already taken me across Europe to various events, with a large range of offerings in London. By being on the board I would hope to give back to the TEA and all the members who have helped me to open doors and experiences in the early stages of my career.

I have been lucky enough to complete work experience placements at the Alton Towers Resort & Holovis, along with being a seasonal scare actor at Spooky World Warrington back in 2019. I am excited to enter the next chapter of my development by joining Conductr as an intern from August 2023. I'm always open to new, interesting opportunities in the right areas, and I feel that volunteering with TEA EME would be an excellent next step. In addition to these opportunities, I have also carried out work experience at Airbus and London Heathrow Airport.

My early employment experience has focused on hospitality, working my way up from fast food restaurants to the Gordon Ramsay Group in Mayfair, London. I am currently employed with Rhubarb Hospitality, at Darwin Brasserie in Sky Garden, Fenchurch Street London: an upmarket restaurant within an observation deck with close to 850 bookings a day. I did take a short break from hospitality to join Merlin Entertainments as a Resort Scheduling Coordinator last summer, which would later lead me to volunteer in the running of the IAAPA EduTour at Chessington World of Adventures in September 2022.

This summer I have had the opportunity to be based out of Seoul National University in South Korea, whilst completing two courses in International Management and Economics. This has allowed me to experience the cultural and technological differences that Asia has to offer, whilst immersing myself in the experiences that the surrounding countries have to offer. This has been a world away from my usual day-to-day studies in London. Outside of my core studies, I spent a large amount of time closely with the sustainability institute and the entrepreneurial institutes, which has involved attending focus groups and decision-making sessions. Alongside this, it has

been a hugely rewarding experience to have participated in the NextGen Showcase as a Project Coordinator to help bring our attraction of 'Oma Alina's Subwaren Fabrik' to life.

I am always keen to implement volunteering into my everyday life, whether that is with IAAPA or the TEA. In the past, I have volunteered valuable hours for Cancer Research and a homeless food kitchen called The Wellspring. Over the next year I will be carrying out volunteer work at the National Funfair and Circus archive based at the University of Sheffield. One of the most exciting projects I am currently working on is a Kilimanjaro expedition for my university to raise funds for Restless Development. I am the challenge leader, overseeing recruitment, fundraising and trip logistics.

### **VISION FOR THE TEA:**

One of the key goals of the TEA is to stay progressive and recruit new members, including NextGens. This is something that I am keen to continue to push for. I have a vision to introduce an online portal for NextGens who are seeking internships or early career opportunities. I understand that it can be a daunting process to begin the search for internships, so I feel that TEA could provide such a system to assist NextGens. Using this system, a NextGen could register their interest in an internship in the industry, being able to filter via their specific requirements. From here participating organisations can view this and be in touch directly with the candidate and vice versa. Educational webinars could also assist such candidates in their early application processes. They can understand the right questions to ask and how to get the conversation going with their desired companies. Further to this, I think events are paramount to providing a higher educational giveback for NextGens, I look forward to organizing these to showcase where opportunities lie in the industry and which skills are in short supply. For non-Next Gen members, I hope to continue the wide range of offerings that the TEA provides, whilst ensuring that members do not feel like their region is not focused on as much as others.

### **SKILLS AND CORE COMPETENCIES**

For the past number of years, I have worked hard to make meaningful connections all around whilst experiencing every corner our industry has to offer. This year alone I have taken the time to visit the USA (Nov), Europe, the Middle East and Asia. This has provided me with a valuable perspective on how to be adaptable to different cultures and what these members might expect from the organisation. This has allowed me to understand the importance of worldwide connections in a global industry and work efficiently across time zones. Back in 2020, I was awarded my schools 'Albert Johnson Travel Award' which saw a bursary grant released to investigate the cultural and technological differences throughout the theme park industry in Japan. Due to covid this was later adapted to a European trip. I understand the importance of making strong data driven decisions. I feel this is a key skill I could bring with a vision to further my understanding of spreadsheet analytics and the strength of interactive Power Bi Dashboards. I predict that this would be a strong tool to be able to measure member engagement in events and be adaptable to the needs of the members. I look forward to attending frequent meetings to catch up with the other board members, and to checking the progress on deliverables that the team has been working on together.

Thank you for taking the time to review the above application, I look forward to hearing back soon.