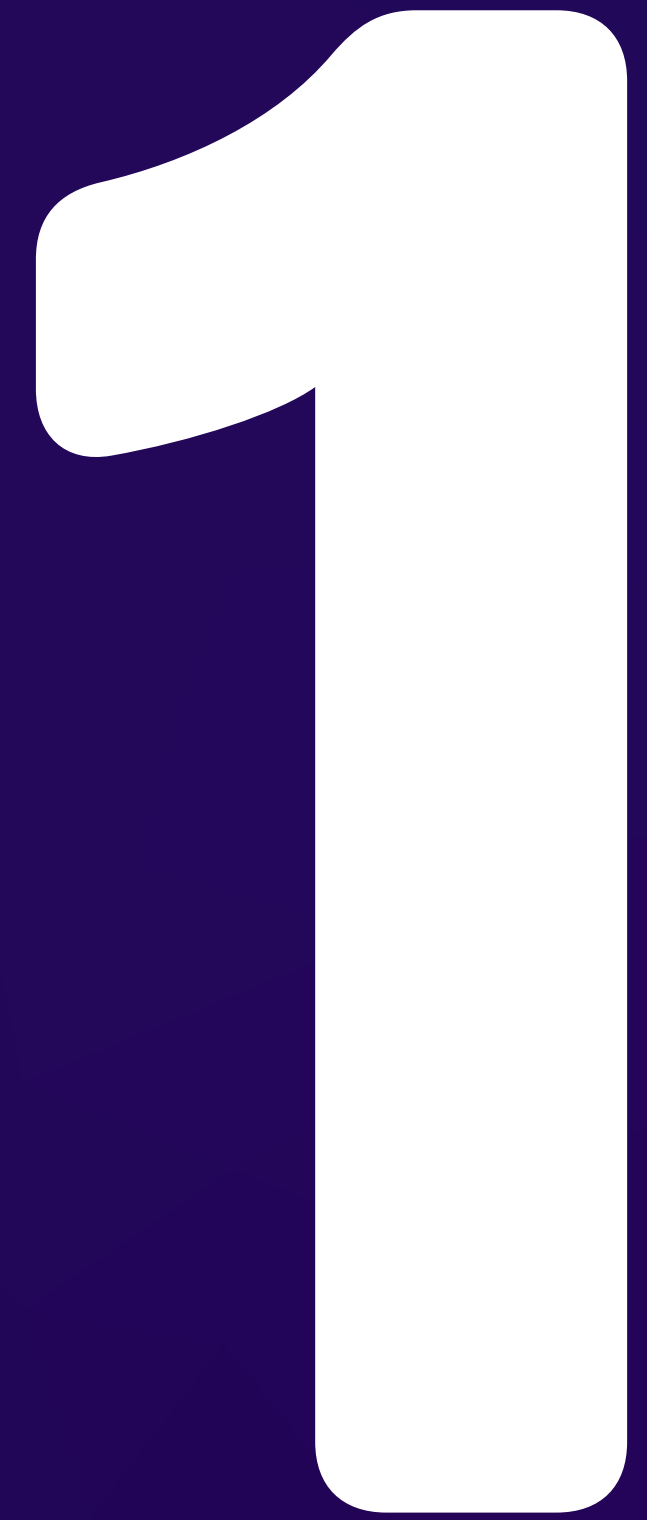


Corporate Plan 2023–24 to 2024–25

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Who we are



Chief Executive's introduction

Last year we set out our strategy and plan for three years. Since then, geopolitics have felt even more fractious and volatile with continuing challenges around economics, climate, technology and migration in the context of multiple battles around ideas, culture and values. This is not new for the British Council.

For nearly 90 years, we have operated through wars and natural, economic and political crises. Over that time, we have remained focused on helping people understand each other. Our purpose is to support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the United Kingdom and countries worldwide.

This document is an update of our plan covering the two years ahead. We have evolved to meet new challenges, but our strategic direction and priorities from last year remain largely the same.

We made significant progress last year.

- We focused on our core strengths in arts and culture, education and the English language and had meaningful engagement with over 100 million people across the world.
- We operated in over 200 countries and territories around the world and remained on the ground in over 100. The mix of a trusted human presence combined with continuously improving digital capabilities enables our impact.
- We continued to deliver significant benefits for all four nations of the UK. We supported the UK's influence and reputation by developing new opportunities and thousands of partnerships across the world. We supported UK prosperity. We did this directly by developing an enabling environment for trade in education and culture, influencing international students to come to the UK and creating opportunities for the UK

English sector and awarding bodies. And indirectly through our work to extend English around the world, as the principal language of business, science, academia and collaboration.

- We contributed to international development aims, providing women and girls with the skills, education and opportunities they need to succeed, building young people's agency and supporting the UK's leadership in climate change.
- We remained independent, enabling us to think and operate over the long term. But our relationship with the UK government across departments is strong and positive. We are not part of government, but we are part of the UK government ecosystem.
- Our internal employee engagement scores have increased as we took steps to reinvigorate our strong culture and remind ourselves why working for the British Council is so important and fulfilling.

Overall, our financial situation also improved, driven by increased funding from our English activities, efficiency gains from our restructuring and disciplined financial management.

- Our English teaching and assessment activities continued to recover as the world reopened after Covid-19. Income from those activities increased by 13 per cent.
- We completed the restructuring of our frontline operations and have emerged a more focused team supported by scalable global programmes.

Chief Executive's introduction

'I am confident in the integrity, dedication and ingenuity of all my colleagues and the support of our partners across the world to deliver this plan.'

Scott McDonald
Chief Executive

We are proud of the progress and, when all put together, we deliver £1 billion worth of activity every year in support of our purpose and the UK, of which 16 per cent is UK taxpayer-funded grant-in-aid. We were also pleased to be recognised in the government's Integrated Review Refresh for our role in creating strategic advantage for the UK.

The plan we describe in this document is ambitious. To take just a few examples, we will support governments in over 40 countries to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning in their education systems. We will build on our international award-winning programmes to showcase UK and international artists through our seasons of culture. This will include celebrating 50 years of diplomatic relations with Viet Nam in 2023 and in 2024 a season with France in the lead up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This year we will support 380 higher education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in the UK, and around the world, to work in partnership and provide access to UK qualifications. We will provide high-stakes IELTS English assessments to more than two million people. Through Alumni UK we are helping international students to stay connected with the UK, growing the network to 150,000 people by 2025.

In the next two years there is much more to do to deliver on our strategic priorities.

- We have focused our activities to concentrate resources on the areas where we are strongest. Now we will continue to invest to ensure our expertise and ability to create impact remain world class.

- We will continue to build our digital offerings to extend our reach and engagement globally.
- We play a leading role in English teaching and assessment globally, but there is much more we will do to make our customers' lives easier and experiences seamless across the entire learning and testing journey.
- We will do more to make the British Council the most attractive place to work, further developing our work on culture, our employee offer and simplifying processes.
- We continue to face challenges to our long-term financial model. We plan to return to surplus next year but will continue to remain reliant on UK government support for the foreseeable future. We will demonstrate our value to the UK and partners around the world, and continue to seek sustainable levels of funding. We have to grow our English language activities and delivery of UK qualifications around the world which provide essential funding. We have to find new sources of funding and more partners to support the increasing demand for what we do, including in countries not supported by official development assistance. We have to manage inflation. And through our restructuring programme build our finance, HR, digital and other professional functions for the future with the best technology and efficiencies.

I am confident in the integrity, dedication and ingenuity of all my colleagues and the support of our partners across the world to deliver this plan. I look forward with excitement and optimism to working with the British Council team and all of our partners in the years ahead.

About us

Vision

A more peaceful and prosperous world built on trust.

Purpose

We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

About us

Facts about us

We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2022–23 we reached 600 million people.

The majority of our income comes from partnership agreements, contracts, philanthropy, teaching and exams, and we also receive grant-in-aid funding from the UK government.

Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

How we deliver impact

We uniquely combine the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language, our global presence and relationships in over 100 countries, our unparalleled access to young people and influencers* and our creative sparkle.

We share our values and explore ideas. We have difficult discussions and find common ground. We create mutually beneficial relationships between the people of all four nations of the UK and other countries. This helps strengthen the UK's global reputation and influence, encouraging people from around the world to visit, study, trade and make alliances with the UK.

We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together we make a bigger difference, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We take a long-term approach to building trust and remain at arm's length from government.

* By influencer we mean a person or group that has the ability to positively influence the behaviour or opinions of young people through either face-to-face or online channels. This could include, for example, teachers, lecturers, education agents, artists, business and community leaders, and future leaders from young people's own peer groups.

Our strategy



Where we work

We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries

What we do

Building connections, understanding and trust

How we do it

**Arts and culture
Education
English**

Why we do it

The UK’s global reputation, influence and prosperity is strengthened, supporting the international ambitions of all four nations of the UK in arts and culture, education and English.

The UK sectors build international partnerships in places that matter to them through improved networks, knowledge and understanding.

Leaders in overseas governments, institutions and organisations have a long-term and trustworthy partner committed to achieving mutual benefit.

Young people and influencers transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK through increased skills, confidence and connections.

To support

A more peaceful and prosperous world built on trust

Strategic priorities

Our strategic priorities summarise our response to the changing world. They will help us make the biggest decisions and steer the development of our strategy and day-to-day actions.

1.

Focus on what we are best at:

We focus on young people, influencers and future leaders. We make an impact across arts and culture, education and the English language where we have global leadership, and we invest to maintain our competitive edge. We link our areas of expertise to make our offers distinct, connecting people across local, national, UK and international networks. We combine quality and creativity and stay relevant through changing times. We are well known in the UK and globally for what we do.

2.

Deliver a unique mix of physical and digital presence:

We maintain the broadest face-to-face network, complemented with an ambitious digital offering. This combination of face-to-face and digital sets us apart from our competitors and delivers a unique experience for our partners and customers.

3.

Maintain collaborative independence:

Our work supports the international aspirations of all four governments of the UK, and we operate at arm's length from the political process to ensure we build long-term trust wherever we operate.

4.

Be one British Council with an attractive culture:

We act as a single organisation to maximise our impact and efficiency, while allowing the flexibility needed for each area of our operations to thrive. Partners' and customers' journeys across the British Council are seamless. Our people and our partners experience a culture that promotes excellence, respect, inclusion and diversity. We are environmentally responsible.

5.

Be professional and constantly learning:

We will be financially sound, diversify our sources of funding, simplify and be agile. We focus on data and evidence. We constantly evolve and get better.

Our targets for 2023–24

We will reach 620 million people, of whom over 100 million will be meaningfully engaged in new partnerships, study and learning with the UK.

In arts and culture

- **26 million** people are meaningfully engaged through digital and face-to-face events, inspiring audiences, artists and creative professionals around the world to connect with the UK.
- **1,500** arts and cultural organisations in the UK and around the world are working together in partnership.

In education

- **23 million** policymakers, school leaders, teachers and schoolchildren are participating in our international education programmes.
- **1.8 million** people are taking UK school, university and professional exams with the British Council.
- **130,000** newly enrolled international students at UK higher education institutions are significantly influenced by Study UK on their decision to study in the UK.
- **24,000** UK alumni out of 125,000 people registered across the world, are actively engaged in British Council or UK government networking activities, helping build long term connections with the UK.
- **380** higher education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in the UK and around the world are supported to work in partnership.

In English

- **56 million** people connecting with the UK through our English language teaching and assessment and working with us as a trusted partner in quality English language education.
- **2 million** International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests delivered.
- **310,000** students learning English with us through our teaching centres and English Online.
- **40** national education systems are supported around the world to strengthen English language teaching, learning and assessment.

A unique mix of physical and digital presence

We have a physical presence in over 100 countries and our digital programmes reach people in over 200 (or 80 per cent) of the world's countries and territories.

We are committed to maintaining our worldwide network of physical operations. This provides a core and flexible platform for our talented teams to deliver programmes around the world that are underpinned by strong local insights, trusted networks and research into young people and the sectors in which we operate. They are supported by ambitious and creative digital offers that amplify and deepen our engagement with partners and customers all over the world – from learning English and taking exams online through to online showcases of UK arts, education and culture.

Our work celebrates the diversity, creativity and innovation of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Throughout this plan, we continue to align our work with the priorities of all four governments of the UK and of the UK arts and culture, education and English language sectors. This includes the priorities set out in the latest 2023 Integrated Review Refresh and those of our key stakeholders.

**Focus on what
we are best at**



Arts and culture

We strengthen creative and economic development and build trust through connections and collaboration between the arts, culture, heritage and creative industry sectors in the UK and internationally.

Arts, culture and the creative industries showcase the breadth and diversity of creativity. They support the free exchange of ideas, mutual learning and open markets. Strong creative sectors benefit societies, increasing individuals' and communities' social and cultural capital, and helping to provide paths to prosperity.

By building, deepening and extending international connections and partnerships, we increase trust in and favourability towards the UK. We also open vital avenues for mutual learning so that UK and international partners can benefit from the best practice developed and championed across the globe.

Our work contributes to the global recovery and growth of the culture and creative sectors in economically challenging times, and actively demonstrates the role of culture as an important driver of more sustainable and inclusive development.

To help increase scale and impact, we will increasingly work with partners to provide new international opportunities for arts and cultural organisations, and, through them, individual artists and creative professionals around the world and in all four nations of the UK. This will rely on our unique local and international knowledge and

personal connections with the sector, supported by our strong partnerships with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish and Welsh governments, and all four Arts Councils in the UK to support cultural diplomacy.

We will foster digital spaces for new international connections and to showcase the UK's exciting arts and culture to global audiences. We will expand the digital reach of our unique British Council Collection and use it to unlock global conversations on themes that affect us all.

Our relevant, inclusive and responsive portfolio will collectively deliver impact by focusing on three areas:

1. Cultural exchange
2. Creative economy
3. Culture responds to global challenges.

Cultural exchange

We connect the UK's arts and culture sectors with their peers and with audiences internationally, driving greater engagement with and favourability towards UK arts and culture.

We link artists, cultural professionals and organisations from the four nations of the UK with their international peers through dynamic professional networking opportunities. We also support creative collaborations, showcasing and touring of work, allowing audiences worldwide to experience the transformative power of art.

We believe that resilience for the UK's arts and creative industries sector in economically challenging times will rely on strong international working, and we will foster the continued development of digital and hybrid practices for international engagement.

We will create powerful platforms for cultural exchange through high-profile events and cultural programmes in the UK and internationally. This builds on years of experience of bilateral seasons and festivals of culture, support for UK Cities of Culture, and contributions to international events such as the Cultural Olympiads of the Olympic Games and World Expos.

Priorities

Showcase the UK's creativity and innovation at the Venice Biennale

We will showcase the UK's creativity and innovation at two of the world's largest and most important exhibitions in their field – the International Architecture Exhibition in 2023 and the International Art Exhibition in 2024.

Extend our programme of bilateral seasons of culture

In 2023 we will celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations with Viet Nam and increase the profile of the UK in France in the run-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024. We will also prepare for seasons with Poland and Kenya in 2025. Our programmes will build on historic links between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and our partner countries.

Internationalise UK civic festivals

We will support major city-based festivals, including Leeds 2023, and develop plans with Bradford, the UK's City of Culture in 2025, helping them to realise their ambitions and develop new international connections. This is alongside continued support and engagement with festivals including Outburst Queer Arts Festival in Belfast, FOCUS Wales and the Edinburgh festivals.

Expand our partnerships with the creative sector

We will support creative organisations across the UK and internationally, and the artists who work with them, to play a greater part in the design and delivery of our cultural exchange programmes. They will be working with us to connect UK and international artists and to provide access to UK arts and culture for global audiences. This will include developing virtual and face-to-face exhibitions showcasing the unique British Council Collection, which will move to a new home in Coventry in 2025.

Creative economy

We develop the creative economy as a key driver of sustainable, dynamic and inclusive growth, with the UK being recognised as a global leader.

The UK's creative industries are an engine of economic growth with digital innovation at its core. In 2021 the creative industries generated £109 billion for the UK economy and employed three million people.¹ Over the last decade the UK sector has grown at a rate of more than twice that of the total UK economy.

Original ideas and innovation, combined with the distinctiveness and diversity of our four nations, support and strengthen the vibrant and entrepreneurial vision of the UK.

Our work will help quantify and analyse the impact of the creative and cultural industries in priority countries. It will enable governments, funders and professionals in the sector to understand each other better and contribute to stronger creative economies. It will also continue to position the UK as a pioneer in understanding the power of the creative and cultural industries.

Priorities

Develop a creative economy knowledge hub

We will use our growing bank of research and insight about creative economies around the world to support the UK sector to increase its ability to build partnerships and develop its diversity, creative edge and innovation. In particular we will promote research on the social and economic impact of the creative sector. Given its geopolitical importance to the UK we will

prioritise work with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Advocacy and influencing policy to grow creative economies

We will strengthen collaboration with leading policy and creative economy practitioners across the world, supported by the UK-funded Policy and Evidence Centre. By working with entrepreneurs, researchers and policy experts from every continent, we will create opportunities to share findings and influence policy change related to the growth of fair and sustainable creative economies.

Promote leadership and learning

We will extend our work with policymakers and cultural leaders, for example through our policy training courses in Wider Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and the Americas. In Sub-Saharan Africa we have an existing partnership programme with Microsoft providing e-learning for early-stage entrepreneurs, and we will explore the potential to adapt and scale this to other regions.

Support sector development

We will develop cultural and creative sectors in the Western Balkans through a multi-year, EU-funded programme alongside UNESCO and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

1. lordslibrary.parliament.uk/arts-and-creative-industries-the-case-for-a-strategy/#heading-2

Culture responds to global challenges

We support the arts sector to respond to global challenges of inclusion and sustainability by capacity building and developing networks, celebrating best practice and giving people access to international showcasing platforms.

This work focuses on the transformative power of arts and culture. It protects and nurtures valued cultural heritage, supporting environmentally sustainable development and well-being. It creates opportunities for people, institutions and communities to connect and respond to challenges with local impact and global relevance.

Priorities

Support free creative and cultural expression and diversity

We support under-represented groups to participate in cultural life. Through our programmes in disability arts, gender empowerment and LGBTQIA+ culture, we build capacity and provide access to international showcasing platforms. Through our programme in partnership with BFI Flare: London, we will continue to grow the international reach of Five Films for Freedom, which has already been seen by more than 23 million people in over 200 countries and territories.

Support the UK's role as a leader in cultural heritage protection

We will support the UK's efforts to protect cultural heritage at risk through the extension of the Cultural Protection Fund in partnership with DCMS. £30 million was awarded to further develop the programme during 2022–25 in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and for emergency response, including in Ukraine.

Advocate and influence policy on the role of culture to address the Sustainable Development Goals

Through commissioned research, we influence understanding of culture's contribution to social development, climate and sustainability issues. In 2023 we will commission a follow-up to the acclaimed *Missing Pillar Report*, further exploring the role arts can play to help deliver against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will also launch a map of trends and best practice in the climate and arts space, to raise awareness of culture's role in addressing the climate emergency.

Stimulate culture-led conversations about climate change

We will extend our Creative Commissions combining arts, science and digital technology for creative, innovative and inclusive solutions to address climate change. We will also support improvements to the sustainable practice of cultural festivals and organisations, and support research and development collaborations on sustainable materials in design and fashion.

Education

Education is particularly effective at building trust and understanding because it reaches young people at a formative stage and positive experiences stay with them all their lives. The UK's strength in education makes it an excellent partner for people-to-people, institution-to-institution and government-to-government connections.

We promote study in the UK not only to support young people's education and careers but because international students bring new ideas and knowledge to UK campuses, broaden the university experience for domestic students, help to sustain and enrich UK universities, and have a positive impact on local economies. International students often use the knowledge and connections gained in the UK to positive effect in their own communities.

We enable education partnerships in basic education, technical, vocational education and training (TVET), higher education, and research. This builds stronger connections and collaboration between the UK and other countries, to learn from each other, and to contribute to tackling global challenges. These partnerships build global capacity and improve the quality of education systems, helping to meet the increasing global demand for transnational education (TNE) programmes.

We work with young people outside of the formal education system by supporting young people and future leaders to gain new skills and to take

positive action on the big global challenges that affect their lives and communities.

We support the four governments of the UK to learn from the best in the world and support their young people to develop a global outlook.

Our approach is guided by the SDGs to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. We also aim to embed the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls into all our programmes.

Our focus is on the following areas where our global footprint, longstanding relationships with international governments and the UK's education sectors, and record of delivery give us a unique opportunity to make a difference:

1. Student mobility, scholarships and alumni
2. Education partnerships
3. Qualifications
4. Non-formal education.

Student mobility, scholarships and alumni

We support the higher education sector to attract international students to the UK and create opportunities for UK students internationally. We support a lifelong engagement with international students.

We promote the whole of the UK as a destination of choice for international students. We work closely with the UK higher education sector, and our work is fully aligned with the UK government's International Education Strategy and supports the international priorities of the Northern Ireland Executive, and the Scottish and Welsh governments. Our Alumni UK programme extends students' connection with the UK and each other once they have finished their studies, giving them the opportunity to join a global community and to develop their skills to further their careers and to contribute to wider society. International students are the future leaders in their countries, and many have significant global impact. Fifty-five current world leaders have studied in the UK.

Priorities

Promote the UK as a world-class study destination

We will contribute to the sustainable growth and diversity of the UK's international student population, both in terms of the countries that students are from and the courses they choose to study. Through the GREAT Study UK campaign, we will promote UK higher education in China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and the USA. We will also work with our partners in government and the education sector to strengthen the international recruitment ecosystem. In 2023, as part of the

UK's Agents Quality Framework, we aim to train 20,000 agents and school counsellors around the world to improve the experience of students considering study in the UK.

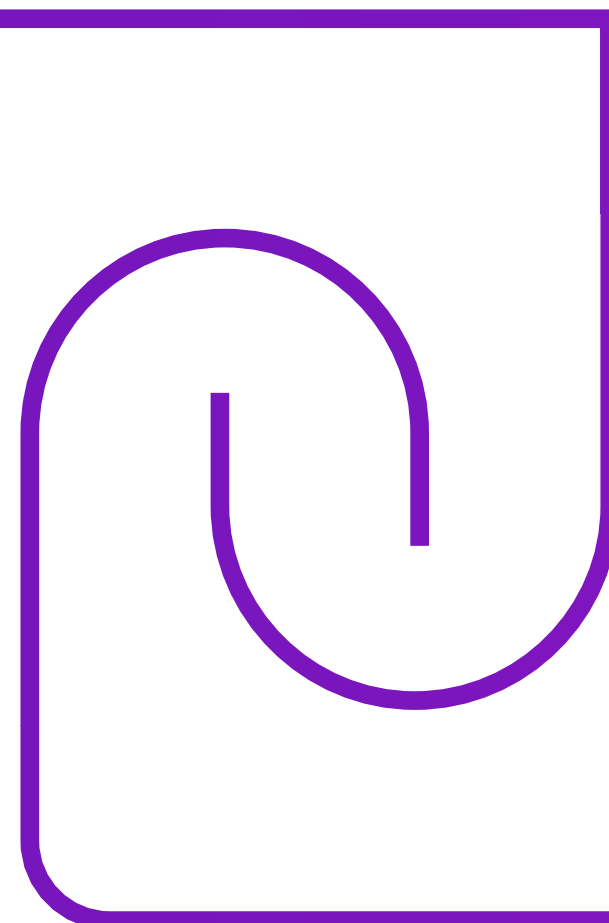
Build favourability towards the UK by increasing long-term engagement with international UK alumni

Through the Alumni UK programme we will continue to engage with UK alumni around the world, offering networking and training, including Alumni UK Live, an online global professional development festival. In 2023–24 we will work closely with UK universities in our ambition to build the world's largest international UK alumni network, aiming to reach 125,000 registrations on the online platform by March 2024.

Support international strategies and the brokering of connections and partnerships with the UK sector

In 2023–24, our seven regional Education Insight Hubs will provide relevant up-to-date insight and analysis. This will include reports on the global policy landscape for higher education, new opportunities for research partnerships, trends in student mobility and the benefits of people taking UK qualifications in their home country. Our Going Global Edinburgh conference in November 2023 will bring together hundreds of leaders in international education to share knowledge and expertise on the theme of how to ensure equity in an inequitable world.

Education partnerships



We facilitate higher education, TVET, science and school partnerships between the UK and other countries to develop better quality, more inclusive and globally connected education systems and contribute the UK's knowledge to international education.

We do this through our unparalleled access to, and strong trust-based relationships with, ministries of education globally and extensive connections with UK policymakers, universities, colleges and schools across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Priorities

Support school reform and development worldwide

We will work in partnership with ministries of education to help create high-quality, inclusive school systems, building lasting ties to the UK, through our Schools Connect global programme and a range of educational partnerships and contracts. We will support policy and practice, enabling school leaders and teachers to lead schools that are inclusive, effectively teach foundational and core skills, and integrate climate change and sustainability into the curriculum. We will also provide opportunities for schools around the world to form international digital partnerships with the UK.

Support the ambitions of the Department for Education, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish and Welsh governments

Our Language Assistants programme will support 860 students from universities across the UK and a further 990 graduates or people from other education backgrounds to gain work experience and develop their language skills by living and working in a country in Europe, East Asia, North America and Latin America. The programme also brings language assistants from those countries to support 131,000 primary and secondary school students in all four nations learning modern languages. It is funded by the four education departments of the UK.

Develop demand-driven and inclusive TVET systems

We will share UK expertise and support UK partnerships with low- and middle-income countries, primarily in Africa and South Asia, supporting the development of high-quality, inclusive TVET systems that meet demands for employment and entrepreneurship. Aligned to the SDGs, our work bridges the gaps between learners and decent employment and strengthens education and work systems to improve people's lives and build a prosperous, green and fair future.

Develop stronger, more inclusive and globally connected higher education systems

We will enhance the scale and impact of TNE and the acceptance of UK qualifications internationally through our Going Global Partnerships programme, working closely with the Department for Education, DBT and FCDO in the UK and in-country. This will include building on the mutual recognition of qualifications agreement signed by the UK and

Indian governments in 2022 to foster student mobility and improving quality assurance of TNE programmes in Nigeria. In 2023–24, we will provide funding opportunities that will support over 100 UK and 280 international universities and colleges to develop partnerships in TNE, research and to strengthen capacity.

Expand academic and scientific collaboration and mobility with the UK

As a delivery partner for the new International Science Partnerships Fund, we will work with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, UK Research and Innovation, the national academies, and public sector research organisations to deliver collaborative research activities, research capacity strengthening, and inclusion-focused work across seven priority developed economies from spring 2023. We will continue to develop our successful Women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) programme in the Americas, East Asia, South Asia and Wider Europe in 2023–24.

Qualifications

We create opportunities for people everywhere to achieve their potential by taking UK qualifications.

We provide examination services to UK education institutions and awarding bodies, enabling them to extend their reach internationally, diversify their offer and transform their qualifications with new technologies. This enables young learners and adults to enrich their education by taking UK school exams (GCSEs and A-levels), university exams and professional qualifications such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants qualifications.

In the longer term this supports individuals to develop their education and careers, internationalises their experience and helps them access opportunities in their home country and internationally. It also helps strengthen the UK's reputation for quality education and generates significant export revenues of approximately £50 million a year for the UK.

Priorities

Grow the influence and reputation of the UK

We will increase access across the world to UK education and qualifications. This will enhance the reputation of UK education, exams and investment.

Increase the number of individuals taking UK academic and professional qualifications

We expect to grow the number of people taking tests to help them advance in their career and/or education to two million people by 2024–25. We will support increased access to UK qualifications across Asia, Africa and the Middle East in particular.

Develop our range of technology-enabled services

This will give education institutions and awarding bodies greater choice and flexibility, with secure test centres and remotely invigilated exam delivery solutions. We will continue to invest in enhancing our client and customer websites, and in Pulse, our client portal dashboard.

Enable awarding bodies of UK school exams to extend their reach and grow their presence

Taking a tailored approach, we will continue to forge partnerships with awarding bodies of UK school exams. We will be driven by their priority markets and geographies and use our unique insight, expertise and networks to enable this.

Non-formal education

We empower young people and future leaders through skills development to contribute to trust-building, cohesion and stability in their societies and to represent their communities on a local and national stage.

We support young people and future leaders by sharing skills and providing platforms for them to come together with peers from the UK, their own communities and internationally. Working together, we help them to find their own positive pathways, develop their ‘voice’ and act positively on the big global challenges that affect their lives and communities. We will enable access to skills for life and work, building personal resilience and helping young people to realise their potential. With partner organisations we will also strengthen the local ecosystems and networks that enable young leaders to thrive in the long term, fostering new coalitions between the UK and international civil society, education, media and government organisations.

Throughout this work we engage and promote the UK’s vibrant youth sector, raising awareness of what the UK has to offer to young people around the world. And we promote UK values and nurture a diverse group of international future leaders who are attracted to the UK and act as positive advocates in the digital space.

Priorities

Support youth leadership and positive pathways

In Pakistan we will help provide platforms and access for young people at local, national and international levels to influence and participate in policy and decision making on climate action and adaptation. The Pakistan Youth Leadership Initiative is led by the British Council and implemented in partnership with the Government of Pakistan’s Youth Development Programme, UNDP Pakistan, 50 civil society organisations and 50 public universities. The project is co-funded by the Education Above All Foundation.

Building trust between young people

We are helping build trust between communities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, through the FCDO-funded People to People programme. The programme promotes 21st-century skills for young people and supports efforts to counter harmful online narratives which threaten stability in the region.

Support the next generation of climate leaders

We will provide opportunities for young people across the world, especially those affected by climate change, to participate in climate research and projects that address climate change, green skills, gender equality and leadership. In the lead up to and during COP28 we will work with our partners and networks – including YOUNGO² and the Climate Youth Negotiators Programme – to put young people at the heart of climate solutions as future climate leaders.

2. YOUNGO is a global network of youth and youth-focused organisations working on climate change and the official conduit for youth participation in the UN climate talks.

English

English is a global language for communication. It is the principal language of science, trade, tourism, the internet and of higher education and academia. English language skills increase opportunities for all, including girls, women and marginalised groups across the world.

There are around 2.3 billion people learning English globally, of whom two billion are in non-English-speaking countries.³ Governments everywhere are looking for support to improve English in their education systems. Confidence in English is positively associated with trust in the UK and intent to engage and trade with the UK. It can help address issues of equity and change people's lives for the better by increasing their opportunity to study or work in their own countries or abroad.

Through our work in English language teaching (ELT), assessment and system reform, we enable people around the world to improve and prove their English language skills. Our Future of English project will also enable a global conversation on what will happen to English as a global language over the next decade.

We continue to grow the UK's reputation as a leader and trusted partner in supporting a wider knowledge of the English language.

Our work in English language focuses on four areas:

1. Systems
2. Empowerment
3. Teaching and learning
4. Assessment.

3. Patel, M., Solly, M. and Copeland, S. (2023). *The Future of English: Global Perspectives*, Barry O'Sullivan and Yan Jin (eds). London: British Council.

Systems

We enable education systems to support inclusive, quality teaching, learning and assessment of English, widening knowledge of the English language and empowering people to access global opportunities and connections.

We partner with state and national governments seeking to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning in their education systems. In contexts where students are taught in English rather than in their home language, we support language policies and practices that leave no child behind.

Our expertise and experience enables more informed decision making about curriculum development, learning standards and teacher development needs. This supports partners to build sustainable education systems and introduce more effective and inclusive practices into everyday teaching of English and other subjects through English. Our work supports new international opportunities for the UK's English and education technology sectors.

Priorities

Improve standards of English teaching, learning and assessment and the teaching of other subjects through English

We will support governments in 40 countries, through partnerships with ministries of education and UK expertise. For example, in Pakistan, we will work with Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) to provide 150,000 primary school teachers with access to online professional development on QAED's Learning Management System over the next two years. In Colombia we will support our partners to implement Barranquilla's eight-year bilingualism policy, to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English in the city. We will reach over 1,450 teachers, 9,700 secondary students, 80,000 primary students and 154 schools.

Improve standards and break down barriers to inclusion using technology

In Nigeria we will provide thousands more teachers with access to innovative continuing professional development (CPD) with the aim of bridging the gaps that the demand for online education during the Covid-19 period exposed. This will be developed through an offline app version of a Learning Management System developed by eCom, a UK EdTech provider and working with Nigerian government agencies and partners across several states. In Rwanda, we will continue to support the Ministry of Education through our partnership with Mastercard Foundation which will improve the English language proficiency of up to 7,000 in-service and pre-service secondary school teachers across 14 districts. We will pilot innovative AI-powered video-based observation to monitor and evaluate impact, with a view to scale up and replicate across all the countries that we work in English systems.

Promote inclusive education reform

We will achieve this by mainstreaming gender-responsive and inclusive CPD for teachers and teacher educators, supporting classroom pedagogy, curricula and materials, and through targeted gender-transformative initiatives, for example in Rwanda and Egypt.

Empowerment



We support empowerment of girls and those affected by conflict to make more informed life choices in the future through building their English language, digital and other life skills.

Through Language for Resilience and English for Girls' Education, we support girls and boys, young women and men, and adults who have been displaced, affected by conflict or misunderstanding, or are from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds or isolated communities. Our work focuses on the role of language and other skills in building resilience – whether that's giving a voice to individuals affected by unrest or distrust, building social cohesion in communities or empowering young women and men with the language skills they need to access vital education, career opportunities, services and information.

Priorities

Help young people who have been displaced or affected by conflict

We will support 5,000 Ukrainian English language teachers and teacher educators, and teachers of Ukrainian refugees to access high-quality professional development which equips them to deal with the current crisis and improve their learners' success. In Jordan and Uganda we will provide over 1,000 teachers, teacher educators, school leaders and community leaders with the professional development they need to support refugees and their host communities to access quality education. The objective is to strengthen teachers' resilience by enriching their teaching practice with effective strategies and techniques with a focus on creating a trauma-sensitive learning environment, managing challenging behaviours and making classrooms safer spaces for learners.

Develop a new English and skills offer

In partnership with the Tamil Nadu Rural and Skills Department in India, we aim to enhance the employability prospects of 100,000 young women and men from rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities through the development of materials to support quality English communication and soft skills. In partnership with Microsoft India, we will enable 50,000 youth from marginalised communities to become self-driven future professionals through English skills. Building on our work in India, Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, we will develop a new English and skills offer for young women and men who have been disadvantaged.

Support girls' empowerment, agency and voice

We will give thousands more girls from marginalised communities in the Indo-Pacific and Africa the opportunity to make more informed life choices by building their English, digital and other life skills. For example, new partnerships in Pakistan will enable us to establish 100 clubs in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan provinces to support the empowerment of 2,500 girls and 300 peer group leaders. We will prioritise the inclusion of disabled girls in this work. Through our longstanding partnership with Al-Azhar University, young women in Upper Egypt will be able to access quality English courses at a new English training centre in Luxor, increasing opportunities for them to access the job market and higher education.

Teaching and learning

We reach more than 100 million people through our digital channels and social media and teach face-to-face in 145 centres across 44 countries. We also provide free content online and through apps, helping learners to improve their English with bite-sized lessons, quizzes and games.

We support the UK ELT sector to develop partnerships and engage internationally through our programmes. This includes helping 25 UK ELT organisations to partner with English teaching associations in 25 countries by the end of March 2024 through the Partnered Remote Learning Improvement project. We also support the ELT community in the UK, through Accreditation UK. Managed by the British Council in partnership with English UK, Accreditation UK is a quality assurance scheme for 385 UK providers of courses in English as a foreign language. The scheme gives an assurance of quality to international students who are taking or planning to take an English language course, helping maintain the UK's reputation as a leading destination for English language learning.

We support the professional development of individual teachers and teacher educators and teach English across all ages to help build core skills, critical thinking and shape new ideas.

Priorities

Develop stronger customer relationships

We will refresh and diversify our service by offering personalised, more flexible and convenient learning of English, growing the number of students who pay for our services. We will focus on high-quality and accessible teaching using in-person and adaptive online learning models. We will refresh the course content and enhance the student experience by connecting classrooms from different parts of the world and offering adult classes that better fit their lifestyles.

Invest in teaching excellence

We will invest in our academic teams to enhance quality, expertise and innovation, and boost recognition of our status as global thought leaders in English language teaching, learning and assessment. Our new learning and development programmes and classroom research initiatives will ensure we deliver the best for our learners worldwide.

Offer more face-to-face English teaching

We will open new young learner and mixed life stage centres in convenient locations for

our customers across several countries, including Romania, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and Viet Nam.

Grow the number of people learning English through our digital platforms

We will create a seamless customer journey, from our free web and app-based services through to subscriptions for online teaching. We will more than double the number of customers using our online learning offers to 230,000 customers by 2024–25, including by extending our online English teaching offer to young learners.

Nurture the world's largest online English teacher community and support the professional development of individual teachers and teacher educators

We will further expand our support networks for English teachers worldwide and, working with our UK partners, explore the intersection between ELT and thematic areas such as multilingualism, climate action and inclusion. By 2025, six million English teachers will follow our TeachingEnglish social media channels, up from 4.35 million today.

Assessment

We provide English language assessments enabling individuals to access life, study or work opportunities internationally or in their own countries and change lives.

The English language assessments we provide are designed to have a positive effect on learning and provide individuals and organisations with trusted proof of English proficiency.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the world's most widely used English language proficiency test for higher education and global migration. It is trusted by more than 11,000 organisations globally and recognised by educational institutions, employers, governments and professional bodies around the world. As one of the pioneers of English language testing 30 years ago, IELTS continues to set the standard today. The British Council co-owns IELTS with IDP Education Australia and Cambridge University Press and Assessment.

Our other English language tests, such as Aptis, provide flexible solutions for individuals and organisations to measure progress in learning and evidence proficiency for domestic education, employment and other uses. All have been developed in partnership with leading thinkers in language assessment in the UK and globally.

Priorities

Help to improve English language assessment policy globally

We will continue to share our experience of English language testing and enable others to do so, for example through our New Directions Conference in Viet Nam in 2023 and in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2024.

Launch new British Council tests

We will launch new British Council tests designed for specific learner needs.

Continue to innovate in IELTS

We continue to invest in improvements to the customer journey and learning support for test takers. We will grow the number of test takers from 1.7 million people in 2022–23 to over two million people by 2024–25.

Meet the growing demand for Aptis

We will leverage the Aptis Ofqual recognition to support more governments, businesses and educational institutions with their assessment of English language capabilities.

Introduce IELTS One Skill Retake

We will help more IELTS test takers who don't get the score they aimed for at the first attempt to improve it, by providing an opportunity to retake one of four skills (listening, speaking, reading or writing). We recognise that test takers can underperform for any number of reasons. IELTS One Skill Retake improves fairness if the test taker feels they haven't performed to the best of their ability. One Skill Retake will be available globally in 2024.

Operational focus for the year ahead

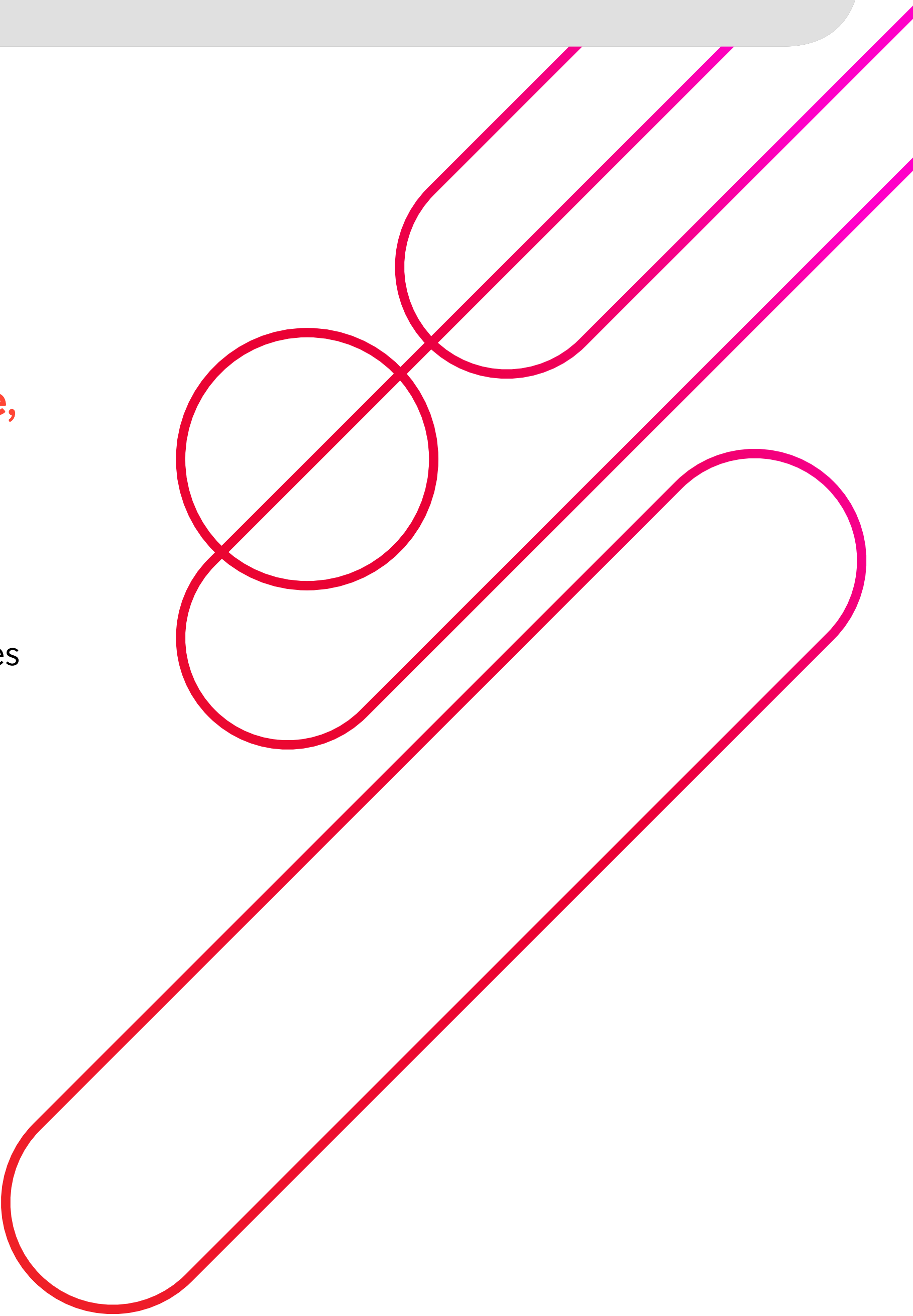
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We are transforming our operations so we can continue to deliver on our purpose, grow our global reach and engagement, return to generating a surplus, and build our reserves.

In 2023–24 as part of our wider commitment to social value we will continue to embed a culture that promotes excellence, respect, inclusion and diversity and that helps tackle climate change.

To ensure our long-term financial sustainability, we will grow and diversify our income, and maximise our efficiencies.



A culture that promotes excellence, respect, inclusion and diversity

By 2025 we will grow our employee engagement score to 60 per cent from a 2021–22 baseline of 50 per cent.

Professionalising, growing and investing in our talent is a priority. We will support career development and improved job satisfaction through a combination of learning, well-being, reward and flexible ways of working. To bring out the best in our diverse workforce we will continue to engage in open and honest two-way communication and increase confidence in our senior leadership. We will build a more evidence-led culture, enabling us to better demonstrate the value of our work.

At the heart of our mission is our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We want everyone coming into contact with us, off and online and regardless of reason, to feel respected, treated with dignity and to experience our stated commitment to EDI and anti-racism.

Priorities for 2023–24

- Develop leadership and digital capabilities and strengthen talent development to build our pipeline of diverse talent across our global operations.
- Develop and promote our employment offer including well-being initiatives, flexible working and new options for pay and reward to retain, attract and support our employees.
- Improve our recruitment process to create opportunities and remove barriers to progress for everyone, including people from under-represented backgrounds.
- Deliver on our global EDI action plan with clear, accountable targets to 2025. This includes 50 per cent of all senior roles filled by women (2022–23 baseline of 47 per cent), 16 per cent of UK minority ethnic employees are senior managers (2022–23 baseline of 12 per cent) and seven per cent of all employees globally self-define as disabled (2022–23 baseline of one per cent).
- Actively work towards more inclusive and anti-racist policies, practices and culture.

Tackling climate change

We support the UK's contribution to international leadership in climate change through arts and culture, education and English.

We engage with leaders, institutions, youth and communities in a constructive response to global climate challenges. We bring this together under the Climate Connection programme to support the COP process and international partnerships with the UK that:

Support policy development and the role education and culture can play in addressing the negative impacts of climate change.

Improve engagement, particularly focusing on young people including future leaders, early career journalists and young researchers, giving them the knowledge, skills and platforms to influence and participate in climate change solutions.

Drive knowledge exchange, technological transfer, creativity and innovation in tackling climate challenges through education.

This is underpinned by our own commitment to reach **net-zero emissions by 2040** at the latest. By 2025 we will have reduced our total carbon footprint by 33 per cent*, eliminated single-use plastics in all our premises worldwide and reduced annual flight distance travelled by 50 per cent.

Priorities for 2023–24

- Update our Climate Strategy bringing together our Climate Connection programme with our ambitions to reduce our operational carbon footprint.
- Refresh our Climate Connection programme working across our arts and culture, education and English specialisms, sharing learning and experiences at COP28 in Dubai.
- Improve understanding of our global carbon footprint and detailed plans to reduce our carbon footprint in priority areas to 2030, working towards our 2040 net-zero ambition.

* This target is against a 2017-18 baseline.

Grow and diversify our income

English language teaching and exams revenue will grow an average of 14 per cent year on year to 2025.

Our strategy for exams is to grow our customer base, to diversify into new markets with new products and services, and to accelerate digital and online offers, systems and capabilities.

In English language teaching, we will prioritise the growth of our young learner offers operating in over 80 countries. We will focus on high-quality and accessible teaching using a blended model of face-to-face and adaptive online learning. We will continue to strengthen and build our English Online offer, supporting our students to create their own study plans and learn at their own pace with courses available 24/7.

We are developing a new strategy for fundraising and partnerships, focused on developing and co-creating new programmes and opportunities with UK and international partners.

Priorities for 2023–24

- Optimise our investments for growth, including:
 - investing in the IELTS partnership, in new product development and system integration across partners
 - continued development and diversification of our English language teaching offers – face-to-face and online.
- Improve customer experiences and services.
- Develop new strategic partnerships with corporates, trusts and foundations.
- Grow our client-funded contracts with greater focus on a smaller number of high-value opportunities in specific geographies.
- Increase our fundraised income through a strategy focused on our new global programmes.
- Improve the enabling environment so our income-generating operations can compete more effectively.

Maximise our efficiencies

We will develop new, more efficient operating models and processes to deliver increased value to our customers.

In 2021 we announced a restructuring programme to help secure our long-term future. This was in response to the financial impact of the pandemic and reduced grant-in-aid as public finances became increasingly stretched. Our frontline operations have been restructured, allowing us more flexibility. Our priority is now the transformation of our professional services such as human resources, finance, procurement and technology. Our back office will be more reliant on shared services, standardisation and automation. And we are building a more mature control and compliance culture while reducing cost and effort.

Priorities for 2023–24

- Continue to support our colleagues and teams as we restructure across our operations and embed the benefits of transformation.
- Invest in systems and processes to continually improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations – including roll-out of marketing automation, workforce planning, and improvements to our exams and teaching operations.
- Simplify and streamline control and compliance policies.
- Improve our data and evidence platform by connecting priority data sources and increasing automation.
- Continue to rationalise our estate, including partnering on One HMG platforms.

Risks

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Risks

With a global presence and large, varied and often complex operations, the risks we face are significant and wide-ranging.



Effective risk management is a core part of building a resilient and successful British Council for the future. We are living in an increasingly turbulent decade shaped by geopolitics, rapid technological advances, climate change and economic challenges of inflation, high costs of living and ongoing recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the British Council, we are facing more scrutiny as part of this increased risk environment. We have a cautious and balanced appetite for risk. We are committed to a culture of risk management to ensure informed decision making and ownership of risk is recognised throughout the organisation. Our preference is for reduced risk and uncertainty, but we accept that to be successful, we must also embrace risk to be bold in our ambitions. We will do so with an understanding of the potential impact on the organisation.

Principal risk profile

Our risk profile is dynamic and ever-changing; new and emerging risks may be identified, analysed, tracked and managed throughout the year. At the time of updating this plan, the following principal risk areas are being reported as having the greatest potential impact on the achievement of our strategic priorities:

- our ability to meet the ambitions set by our key stakeholders and communicate the value of the British Council, including to all four governments of the UK
- our relevance to stakeholders in a digital world and building an efficient, data-led organisation

- our performance across English teaching and assessment in the face of increasing competition
- our reliance on performance in key geographies
- organisational culture, and employee recruitment and retention
- the successful delivery of the benefits of our transformation programme
- the integrity of our operations and our ability to meet regulatory, partner or contractual requirements through effective risk management, control and compliance
- the security of our IT systems and information assets
- our overall financial sustainability.

Each principal risk area is owned by a senior leader who is responsible for leading our response, ensuring risks are managed within agreed appetite levels and regularly reporting on progress.

Financial outlook



Financial plan

Our work is delivered through a mixed funding model comprising:

- fees from customers paying for services direct (the largest part of this is teaching and exam services)
- core grant-in-aid from the FCDO (allocated through the UK government Spending Review)
- funding for work delivered under contract to international and national bodies
- partnership income and fundraising.

The British Council has agreed with Trustees and the FCDO a five-year financial plan to deliver our strategic ambition. An investment loan agreed with the FCDO is supporting our transformation to grow our income-generating activities, accelerate plans for digital development and transition to new, more efficient operating models. Through this investment the British Council is planning to generate net surpluses from 2024–25 onwards.

The table shows the income and expenditure projection for the next two years. By the end of the Spending Review period, the grant-in-aid contribution to our total income will be just 16 per cent, helping deliver value for money to the UK government. In addition to this, over the next two years, we anticipate we will manage contract disbursements in excess of £100 million, which will help individuals around the world to gain UK and international experiences through study, partnerships and technical assistance.

£ in millions	2023–24	2024–25
FCDO grant-in-aid (ODA and non-ODA)	161.5	162.5
FCDO grant-in-aid (exceptional restructuring grant)	9.5	–
Earned income	778.9	879.4
Total income	949.9	1,041.9
Direct costs	(755.8)	(803.5)
Indirect costs	(172.7)	(171.6)
Tax	(12.7)	(17.8)
Other costs including interest, exchange rate movements and business as usual investments	(20.2)	(6.6)
Net (expenditure)/income – excluding transformation investments	(11.5)	42.4
Transformation investments	(61.5)	(37.7)
Net (expenditure)/income	(73.0)	4.7

