

UK based cultural skills activity

Assessing current provision and the demand for international partnerships

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About Creative & Cultural Skills

Creative & Cultural Skills gives young people opportunities to work and learn in the creative industries. We want to ensure that employers benefit from a skilled generation of talent and continue on a course of economic growth. Our network of industry and education supporters – the National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural – is open to those who are committed to the provision of high quality creative education and training, apprenticeships and careers advice. Together, we've created over 3,000 creative apprenticeships in the UK since 2008, and we will deliver a further 6,500 jobs in the next two years.

www.ccskills.org.uk

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About the report

In 2014 the British Council Cultural Skills Unit commissioned Creative & Cultural Skills to conduct a piece of research in order to gain a greater understanding of the UK's cultural skills development landscape. The research aimed to provide both an overview of the systems and organisations related to skills delivery, and assess current and future opportunities around international skills delivery and programme development.

This summary paper provides an overview of the findings from this research, conducted between February and May 2014. In total, over 40 stakeholders were involved in semi-structured interviews in order to give their views on the current skills landscape, evenly split between internal stakeholders at the British Council and external organisations. This qualitative work was also supplemented by a detailed piece of desk-based research into UK cultural skills development.

The report exposes numerous areas of opportunity for the Cultural Skills Unit. These should be treated as suggestions, rather than definitive statements upon which the British Council will act.

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Foreword

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It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that cultural activity can unite peoples and institutions around the

world. The UK's cultural sector is dynamic, varied and often world class; international cultural activity can offer exciting and differing perspectives for the UK to learn from. The British Council's mission is to make a difference to these cultural relations opportunities both internationally and here in the UK, for young people and established cultural institutions from across the UK. How?

The Cultural Skills Unit (CSU) was set up at the start of 2014 as a new department within the British Council, working across Arts, Education and Society, and English and Exams, tasked with the mission to strength cultural relations by developing the British Council's global cultural skills offer.

It is our ambition to service international market demand to build skills capacity within rapidly growing economies and position the British Council as a world leader within cultural skills provision by 2016.

In support of our remit, we will draw on UK expertise in the area of cultural skills to identify opportunities to

co-invest in strategic partnerships across the full spectrum of the cultural sector, from museums to film, from craft to theatre. Together with partners, we intend to build sustainable cultural skills programmes that will ensure that the cultural industries are equipped with highly skilled workers who can contribute to mutual economic and cultural benefit.

We are committed to evidence based programme development within three key areas: policy; continual professional development and youth engagement; and education and employability. We will develop and implement cultural skills programmes and products and pilots, which will focus on technical and production skills, qualifications, standards and vocational apprenticeships.

The CSU commissioned this report, *Cultural Skills Activity in the UK: Assessing current provision and the demand for new global partnerships*, to equip us with the knowledge to enable our first steps towards the attainment of our goals. These findings will provide the evidence base against which we deliver our cultural skills agenda and fulfill the British Council's mission to create international opportunities worldwide.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon T Dancey', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Simon T Dancey
Global Director, Cultural Skills Unit

Foreword

Image courtesy
of Paul Latham



For the past five years I have worked closely with various organisations dedicated to skills development within the cultural

sector. This has developed my understanding of the importance in opening access to careers across all areas of the UK's exciting and vibrant cultural industries, and has allowed me to grow Live Nation's workforce through training and nurturing apprentices.

It has become clear that in our globalised economy it is imperative we continue to strengthen activity aimed at developing the skills of our cultural sector workforce, while also working closely with other countries around the world on similar initiatives.

Sectors like music and theatre have always been strong parts of the UK's exporting economy, punching above their weight on many occasions. However, there are many other parts of the cultural sector which are no less important and could provide real value to other countries, leading to a shared transfer of knowledge. For example, many countries are growing their cultural infrastructure through new venues and theatres, creating opportunities for the UK to impart our first rate skills, and further strengthen our reputation as a world leader in cultural skills provision.

There are other reasons for the UK to be closely involved in this type of exchange. In the current economic climate, our education sector – colleges and universities – increasingly have to diversify their funding. By providing opportunities to acquire the relevant skills needed for employment in cultural occupations, these institutions could potentially prosper over the next decade.

This report and the work of the British Council Cultural Skills Unit clearly demonstrates that there is great potential and vital work to be done in this area, particularly in supporting our education and cultural institutions to grow and expand activity in this field.

Paul Latham is the current UK Chairman of Creative & Cultural Skills, linking industry, employers and educators with our employees of the future. He sits on the board for UK Music as representative of the Live Music sector and is the International Chief Operating Officer of Live Nation.

Paul is responsible for the most prolific live entertainment company outside the US. He oversees the management of venues, festival and event promotions and creation, marketing partnerships, ticketing and security services. Live Nation Entertainment has over 20 venues in its portfolio across Europe.

Introduction

The UK is considered to be a leader in the area of cultural skills provision, through its world class arts organisations and institutions, highly creative businesses and through a developed and internationally recognised education sector. Within this sphere, the British Council has worked to bring bespoke cultural skills training to a variety of countries and people through a range of programmes and initiatives.

Through the newly formed British Council Cultural Skills Unit, these programmes and initiatives are now being synthesised into a more joined-up, income generating offer with the aim of developing the skills of cultural sector professionals internationally and providing new pathways for young people to enter the cultural sector. This research was undertaken to provide an overview of cultural skills programmes in the UK, their relative strengths and weaknesses and the demand for them.

It also examines international training programmes, the models used to deliver them and the potential appetite for organisations to continue and upscale their work in these areas. The findings will be used by the Cultural Skills Unit to guide the development of new programmes, products and partnerships.

The research methodology involved:

1. A wide-ranging piece of desk based research which produced a categorised audit of 434 individual cultural skills programmes and a further 29 schemes aimed at linking education and employment for young people. In addition, a number of previous studies that have analysed audits of training and skills development in the UK were examined.

2. Twenty-two in-depth interviews with British Council staff, including senior decision makers within the organisation based across the European Union, East Asia, South Asia, Wider Europe, Americas, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

3. Seventeen in-depth interviews with various cultural sector organisations across the UK crossing all art forms (including: visual arts, film, performing arts, fashion, design, architecture, literature, music, cultural heritage, gaming and craft).

The cultural skills development landscape in the UK

The research uncovered a range of institutions and businesses involved in the delivery of cultural skills in the UK. These include membership organisations, specialist cultural training organisations and freelancers, arts and cultural organisations, industry-specific colleges and training centres and central-government funded schemes of cultural training.

The research found significant differences in the type of training and courses offered across the cultural sector.

The research also focused on initiatives that linked together education and employment. A number of large grant funded projects exist to bridge this gap, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund's Skills for the Future programme. Further to this, there exist a range of competitions aimed at discovering and nurturing talent. There are also a range of individual training opportunities, such as workshops, seminars and short courses, aimed at young people.





Film: Skills development is primarily centred on internationally-reputed film schools that offer a range of training and skills, focusing on creative abilities through to technical courses.

Performing arts (theatre and dance): Outside the higher education sector, training is primarily delivered by publicly funded arts organisations and theatres along with a range of membership organisations. Training in technical theatre is perceived as particularly strong in the UK.

Design and architecture: Design is dominated by training from membership organisations. Other training focuses around longer degree and postgraduate programmes.

Craft: Training and skills development programmes are often delivered through highly specialised education institutions. Training initiatives also focus on business incubation for individual designers.

Fashion: Training in fashion was found to focus more on high-level skills development and the incubation of specific businesses.

Cultural heritage: Large institutions (in particular museums) often have their own international training programmes, while membership bodies offer training in business planning and management.

Music: Many courses are provided by specialist colleges and training providers focused solely on music, which usually provide skills training and development through six month to one year accredited courses.

Visual arts and cross-sector training: Much of the cross-sector training provision (such as marketing skills, fundraising skills and strategic development) is delivered by arts organisations. Training in visual arts often focuses on skills related to artists working in community settings.

Literature and publishing: A number of creative writing courses were identified. A range of publishing training is available, largely focused around editorial processes and software training. This training is largely delivered by private providers and publishing companies, higher education institutions and membership organisations.

Gaming: Preparation for work in the games sector is primarily delivered through a number of highly regarded higher education institutions, particularly those with Creative Skillset's Pick the Tick® accreditation.



Key findings

Overall, the UK has a comprehensive coverage in terms of skills provision both through its higher and further education providers and cultural organisations and businesses. However, this training varies significantly by sector and furthermore is primarily tailored to a UK, rather than an international market. Training is also mixed between subsidised and grant-funded models of delivery, and direct commercial models between the individual and the supplier.

The research uncovered a range of past and existing models used by the British Council in skills delivery. Existing models include large structured training initiatives that have been delivered over a number of years, either in one country or across an entire region. Further to this, skills development often occurs related to a larger programme of artistic work or a tour schedule. Shorter, more ad hoc programmes were also organised by arts managers working in-country to address specific skills needs. Finally, online and digitally delivered content was also delivered by the British Council.

During the in-depth interviews, British Council staff working across art forms identified specific skills gaps and shortages in various countries. In particular, leadership and management skills were cited across all sectors, along with audience development skills. More specifically, curation and conservation in cultural heritage was cited, technical skills related to music occupations such as sound engineers, film production skills and cinema management skills were also mentioned.

External organisations are less able to identify specific skills gaps internationally, both related to their own area of specialism and the cultural sector as a whole. The primary exception to this was from various specialist schools and colleges, who understood

international demand better in terms of student need. Three specific areas brought up during interviews with this cohort were around succession planning and business management amongst family-owned businesses in the jewellery sector, the professionalisation and infrastructure of the theatre sector in East Asia and specific skills in museums such as collections care and management.

The majority of interview participants stress that skills gaps and shortages are best addressed through a two-way exchange of knowledge and abilities between UK-based providers and overseas cultural sector and educational institutions. A straightforward approach to simply 'delivering' knowledge and skills to other countries was perceived to be a reductionist and unviable approach.

Many interviewees from cultural sector organisations felt that more could be done to create a sustainable model of skills delivery which has traction and develops further over a period of time. A large number of organisations stated that they were actively looking at their current or prospective international work with a view to providing clearer strategies towards longer-term work in this area.

The research also shed light on the requirements needed by individuals and organisations to be successful in delivering an international cultural skills offer. Here, interview respondents highlighted the need to be flexible when working on international programmes and skills delivery; the focus of programmes on long-term outcomes rather than short-term financial gain; promoting a strong brand while also maintaining sensitivity to regional and local differences. Further to this, an understanding of the uniqueness of the UK-based organisation was key, and the ability to find common ground with international partners and those participating in skills development initiatives.

Organisations interviewed perceive the British Council as being able to add particular value to the growth and development of international cultural skills programmes through its expansive networks, prioritisation of knowledge exchange and ‘two way learning’ and its overall outlook on international development. Building on this, there are a number of specific ways in which the organisation can add value to the provision of cultural skills training and activity, such as:

- Expanding and upscaling existing programmes across different countries and contexts.
- Providing localised knowledge which would help with the effective set-up and running of programmes.
- Providing a leadership role around setting the cultural skills delivery agenda, identifying key areas for development and contributing to the research and development of cultural skills programmes.
- Using the British Council’s network and in-country connections in order to build and sustain international partnerships in relation to cultural skills development. Many interviewees also stated the importance of making personal relationships count, which the British Council can help facilitate.
- Creating a research base from which opportunities and partnerships could emerge, in particular through signposting specific countries’ needs and aligning this to UK provision.
- Using the British Council’s reputation and brand through marketing and promotion of cultural skills, along with providing additional capacity in terms of staff in this area.

Angel of the North
Sir Antony Gormley OBE, Gateshead, England

Conclusions and areas of opportunity

The UK benefits from a large inter-dependent network of training providers, arts organisations, higher education institutions and other organisations engaged in cultural skills development initiatives. Many of the institutions examined as part of this report, were also found to be active in an international sphere, though the drivers for working internationally vary according to the type of organisation in question. For example, findings suggest that knowledge exchange and sharing best practice may be the primary motive for arts organisations. For education providers, a strong international offer may lead to growth in international student applications at their institution.

The research has also demonstrated that organisations are exhibiting a clear demand for greater partnership working, international development, innovative programming and knowledge exchange around cultural skills provision. This understanding provides a platform upon which the British Council Cultural Skills Unit might develop an overall framework of delivery through bringing together new and existing initiatives and ideas with prospective partnerships. Building on this, the report makes initial suggestions to guide the new unit in this endeavour.

Maintaining transparency: The Cultural Skills Unit should maintain an externally-facing presence that indicates to UK stakeholders not only what its priorities are, but the specific regions and art forms that it is currently focusing on through individual programmes and interventions.

Building strategic partnerships:

The Cultural Skills Unit should examine whether it can form a number of key strategic partnerships with UK institutions to create a strong and internationally recognised approach to cultural skills provision. These partnerships should align to the British Council's core values around international working.

Providing leadership: The Cultural Skills Unit should provide leadership in terms of articulating to international stakeholders the range of programmes, products and partners that it works with in the UK in order to bring clarity to organisations that may not be able to fully express the demand for skills development in their region or area. The Cultural Skills Unit could also act as a conduit for the British Council's arts managers and in-country leads, in order to funnel a list of preferred suppliers and their parameters of working within a specific area.

Examining qualifications and quality assurance: The Cultural Skills Unit should continue to explore ways in which the UK's breadth of qualifications and formal courses could be best used within an international offer. There may also be implications around quality assurance here in an international context across the range of available qualifications.

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About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.

Our 7,000 staff in more than 100 countries work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes.

We are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter. All our work is in pursuit of our charitable purpose and creates prosperity and security for the UK and the countries we work in all around the world.

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