

House of Commons

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Impact of Covid-19 on DCMS Sectors

Written evidence from the British Council

1 May 2020

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1. Summary

- 1.1 Covid-19 has resulted in over 90 per cent of the British Council's teaching and exams facilities closing, with a severe impact on the organisation's finances, reducing cash flow and income to critical levels. The British Council's work, spanning across a number of DCMS sectors, some directly funded or supported by the department, has been severely affected by our changing financial situation.
- 1.2 Activities in arts, heritage conservation, cultural exchange, sports, internationalising young people, social enterprise and inclusive communities have all been reviewed, with many now postponed and, in some cases, cancelled. This has ongoing impact as opportunities for individuals, partner organisations and others are cancelled or postponed.
- 1.3 UK partners across sectors have been significantly affected by the economic and social impact of this pandemic, and financial sustainability is a major concern across the piece. The British Council continues to work tirelessly with sector partners to provide support through facilitating dialogue and future planning. However, with no timeline for when we may be able to safely resume the teaching and exams operations we rely on to financially support our wider activity, there remains ongoing uncertainty for the organisation and its partners. This bears significant reputational risk to the British Council – and the UK – if international partnerships, initiatives and events are not supported long-term.
- 1.4 The British Council will need the support of HMG and wider partners to achieve its purpose:
 - To strengthen Britain's place in the world by showcasing the UK as a global creative powerhouse and creating more appreciation of UK arts, innovation and creativity;
 - To champion the UK as a force for good by creating a more connected, trusting world;
 - To improve attainment and skills for young people across the UK, regardless of their background;
 - To create international trade and business opportunities for all four nations of the UK.
- 1.5 The British Council needs the continued support of HMG to build trusting relationships across a complex geopolitical landscape. The relationships and partnerships developed by the British Council during the past 85 years may help mitigate some of the risks of the pandemic, demonstrated through the resilience and innovation of teams in response to Covid-19. These are significant relationships to enable the development of future international connections for UK sectors.
- 1.6 In the wake of Covid-19, there will be renewed importance in strengthening people-to-people connections internationally and across the UK. As the world recovers from Covid-19, the British Council remains ready to support dialogues and strategies with HMG and our valued partners across DCMS stakeholders and beyond, playing a major role in the UK's international relations post-Covid. The British Council is strongly placed to support the UK education sector on vital student recruitment, to help English language teaching providers strengthen their businesses, and to help British artists and cultural institutions re-engage with audiences and partners in the UK and internationally.

2. Impact of Covid-19 on the British Council's financial situation

- 2.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the British Council's financial situation, as it has the financial sustainability of many organisations across the cultural and creative sectors.

- 2.2 As of FY 2018-2019, 85.3 per cent of our turnover is earned through teaching and exams, tendered contracts and partnerships. The surplus generated through our English teaching services and exams delivery supports English, education and cultural programmes in 44 developed countries and sustains the overall organisational infrastructure by financially supporting our other activity in, for example, the arts and creative sectors. The further 14.7 per cent of total income is received through grant-in-aid funding from the UK FCO, which enables us to represent the UK's long-term interests in countries where we cannot solely rely on earned income.¹
- 2.3 The Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in over 90 per cent of our teaching and examinations operations having to close temporarily, with no clear timetable for when they can safely reopen. The organisation's cash flow and income has been reduced to critical levels. As a non-departmental public body (NDPB), the British Council has not been expected to hold the 4-6 months reserves held by a charity or commercial organisation, and we do not have access to a banking facility which might be held by comparable organisations.
- 2.4 We continue to engage with colleagues from our sponsor department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to try and remedy the current financial challenges we face. However, without timely support from HM Government, it is unlikely that the British Council will be able to overcome these challenges independently.
- 2.5 The impact of the current cessation of activities – and of the British Council potentially not being able to return to these activities in the future - will have significant, negative effects for the diverse range of individuals and organisations the we work with across the cultural and creative sectors: in 2019-2020, we engaged with over 21,700 UK-based artists, over 28,000 international artists, and over 7,400 arts organisations in the UK and internationally. This builds on the thousands of young people we engage annually and the 2,000 civil society organisations we helped to build capacity amongst in 2018/19.²
- 3. Immediate impact of Covid-19 on British Council activities in DCMS-related sectors**
- 3.1 In the face of unprecedented disruption to our work, British Council teams continue to provide tireless support to partners and networks: providing market insight for UK sectors, regular communications with partners and funded projects, approaching existing project requirements more flexibly, and sharing information and potential opportunities with the sector. In many cases, teams are developing digital strategies to continue important programme delivery and stakeholder engagement where possible.
- 3.2 Information on the status of projects shared below is correct as of 1 May 2020, however at this stage we cannot rule out further project postponements or cancellations if they become necessary. Whilst the long-term and unique relationships developed by the British Council are helping to manage the risks involved in this ongoing disruption, we need to continue positive engagement with partners, now and in the future, to avoid breaking the trust we have built with valued stakeholders and partners and losing the UK's strengthened position to engage positively in future opportunities.
- 3.3 Creative Industries – Overview**
- 3.4 As a convenor, the British Council works closely with the UK arts and creative economy sectors, particularly through the pan-UK Cultural Diplomacy Group and the British

¹ British Council (2019). *British Council Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019*, p81: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/2018-2019-annual-report-final.pdf> [Unless otherwise stated, all links were last accessed on 29 April 2020]

² British Council (2019). *British Council Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019*, p18: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/2018-2019-annual-report-final.pdf>. 19/20 engagement figures not yet published.

Council's Arts and Creative Economy Advisory Group. Through regular engagement with these groups, and our established relationships and ongoing communication with directors of major institutions, we know that Covid-19 is placing enormous hardships on the cultural sector and on individual artists and creative professionals globally. Financial sustainability is a major concern. Arts organisations operating in the context of a mixed funding model are concerned that it will be more difficult to engage philanthropists during this period. A priority for the British Council will be finding new approaches to our work which continue to provide opportunities for artists and creative sectors around the world to have access to culture and cultural connections, during a difficult and unpredictable time.

- 3.5 **Cultural Protection Fund:** The British Council works in partnership with DCMS on the [Cultural Protection Fund \(CPF\)](#), the first and only initiative of its kind in the UK. CPF supports projects which safeguard cultural heritage at risk due to conflict in 12 countries across the Middle East and North Africa. In response to Covid-19, most CPF projects are delaying starting any activities which involve travel or convening in public. As projects must be completed by this financial year end, some activities may need to scale back significantly or be cancelled, and projects are estimating that they will likely attract fewer participants even when lockdown restrictions are lifted. We are working with CPF projects to develop alternative activities and ways of working where possible. A principal risk is that cultural heritage operators will not survive the financial downturn, meaning fewer operators to deliver this vital work once activities can resume. A pause on intervention puts further strain on the heritage and communities that our funding supports in fragile contexts, and this uncertainty strengthens the case for the existence of the fund.
- 3.6 **Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth (CH4IG):** [CH4IG](#) is an action research programme running between 2018 – 2020 in three pilot countries - Vietnam, Colombia and Kenya - aiming to explore how local culture can improve lives, socially and economically. In 2019, the programme reached over 35,000 people through locally led interventions and engaged with 335 organisations from the UK and internationally. Covid-19 has severely reduced resources to develop activities in participating countries. A CH4IG Global Symposium has been cancelled, which aimed to share current learning and further develop programme support. We have paused work and delayed the completion of contracts, which impacts on our delivery partners.
- 3.7 **Coventry City of Culture 2021:** Our partnership on a [Global Media Exchange](#) between Coventry and Nairobi, featuring 12 participants, 2 production partners and thousands of digital participants, will be shaped in response to Covid-19 to include possible digital residency and, if necessary, we are considering postponement.
- 3.8 **Our Shared Cultural Heritage (OSCH):** OSCH is a three-year programme funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund. Cultural heritage provides an important framework to explore other cultures and create a dialogue between communities. Our Shared Cultural Heritage leverages this to improve young people's intercultural understanding, create new engagement and employment opportunities for young people with heritage and to connect heritage and youth sectors across the UK and India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Activity is led by people aged 11 - 21 in the UK and South Asia and is delivered in partnership with cultural and youth organisations across the UK (Manchester Museum, Glasgow Life, UK Youth). With heritage sites closed, it is increasingly challenging to create longer term engagement opportunities for young people. We are examining how apprenticeships and internships within the heritage sector can be delivered online.
- 3.9 **Music:** We work with our global network to [create music projects and opportunities](#) that allow people in the music industry to exchange ideas across genres and showcase their work, creating international opportunities across the whole sector. Of 52 planned projects

for this financial year, 3 are cancelled, 14 postponed, 33 under review, with only two proceeding as planned. This results in loss of profile and financial assistance for artists where grant making activity is withdrawn, reputational risk for the British Council, and inability to properly conclude programmes which have already begun. We are continuing to raise the profile of UK artists globally through Selector Radio.

- 3.10 **Theatre and Dance:** [Theatre and Dance](#) share the best of contemporary performance in the four nations of the UK and develop relationships in countries around the world through projects such as tours, workshops and collaborations, creating international opportunities across the sector. Of 38 planned projects, 1 is proceeding as planned, 12 are under review, 22 postponed and 3 cancelled. This includes engagement with [Unlimited Festival](#), a festival presenting work by disabled artists, tentatively rescheduled to January 2021. An estimated 150 international delegates were expected to attend to select work for their programmes and develop connections with the UK disability arts sector, and if the festival were cancelled altogether this would significantly reduce our global disability arts programmes across all artforms.
- 3.11 **Architecture, Design and Fashion:** We create [new international opportunities for the design sector across the UK](#) through collaboration and exchange, focusing on emerging design talent whilst also supporting major institutions in their international exchange and collaborations. In 2018, the British Pavilion was awarded Special Mention for the Golden Lion Award for Best National Pavilion by La Biennale di Venezia, the first time the British Pavilion and British Council has been honoured with an award at the [Venice Architecture Biennale](#). 191,467 people visited the British Pavilion and it featured in 411 media articles. Of 18 planned ADF projects, 1 is proceeding as planned, with 7 postponed, 2 cancelled and 8 under review.
- 3.12 **Visual Arts:** We [partner with arts sector organisations across all four UK nations](#), including museums, galleries and artists, to showcase the best of British artistic practice internationally, bring international work to the UK and deliver capacity-building projects and networking opportunities for our arts sector colleagues across the world. Many international delegations, residencies and new programme research have been postponed, some grant support offers withdrawn due to our funding situation, and some further work is under review. Covid-19 threatens our ability to support major UK events such as biennials, and to support the international mobility of artists and curators. High reputational risks are carried if withdrawal were necessary from the British Council's participation in major events such as [Venice Art Biennale](#).
- 3.13 **Film:** We celebrate the [innovation, diversity and excellence of UK film](#) around the world, including through major film screenings (including Cannes, Sundance), and create international opportunities through workshop programmes, travel bursaries and showcasing and networking opportunities. This includes the [#FiveFilmsForFreedom](#) programme, a partnership with BFI Flare, London's LGBTIQ+ Film Festival. Five short films from BFI Flare are made available online for a limited period for British Council offices to share with partners under the banner 'love is a human right'. To date, the programme has attracted over 15 million viewers from 202 countries and principalities in less than 70 days live, including all those where homosexuality is criminalised and punishable by death penalty. This year, BFI Flare Festival was cancelled with just two days' notice and the #FiveFilms was due to launch 2 days before UK lockdown began. In response, British Council Film and BFI Flare Festival focused on digital #FiveFilms showcases around the world. These received unprecedented press coverage and reached an audience of 1 million viewers worldwide for short queer films in a 10-day period. Due to Covid-19, 9 of 22 planned British Council Film projects are cancelled and 13 under review. There are no UK films being showcased at international film events, workshops are postponed, and bursary schemes are suspended.

- 3.14 **Literature:** We work with [writers, literature partners and publishers](#) to provide international opportunities across the entire literature sector, from major organisations to individuals including writers, translators and agents. Of 24 planned projects, 1 is proceeding as planned, 13 are postponed, and 10 cancelled. This includes cancellation of major events and collaborations with significant partners in the UK and internationally such as the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Hay Festival, who are developing digital alternatives. Cancellation of London Book Fair, for example, creates fewer connections and limits the impact on investment made by our Market Focus activities. Overseas study visits, showcasing and residency grants have been cancelled. There is delayed programme development, lack of future planning ability and uncertainty around our future contributions.
- 3.15 **Festivals and Seasons:** The British Council's [programme of festivals and seasons](#) have ambitious engagement objectives and aim to create opportunities for trade, business, and artistic, educational and cultural exchange. Over the past 5 years, our festivals and seasons have helped secure over £15million in new business wins for the UK arts and cultural sector. UK in Japan 19-20, developed in partnership with the British Embassy, DIT and the GREAT Britain Campaign, is postponed to 2021 to align with the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games. For UK/Italy 2020-21, the programme of mostly on-the-ground events is now uncertain or in some cases cancelled, with grants withdrawn for eight UK cultural sector organisations. For UK/Australia 2021-22, grants and donations may be delayed or scaled back, with difficulty to predict the medium-term impact of this on artists' livelihood and the sustainability of smaller arts organisations. Our partners in Italy, Japan and Australia remain keen for initiatives to proceed and the UK should capitalise on these opportunities after the pandemic.
- 3.16 **Internationalism:** Internationalism is the British Council's strategic strand to provide every young person aged 0-30 in the UK, regardless of their background or interests, the opportunity to learn from, and connect with, other people from around the world. It aims to level up opportunities across the UK to enable all children and young people to develop international connections and gain life-changing skills through study, work or volunteering overseas. This includes providing opportunities to connect internationally through virtual connections with peers or contact with people of other cultures in the UK. Key to achieving this work is convening expert forums with the UK youth sector and engaging directly with young people. We have connected with DCMS Youth Services unit to understand how the Youth Charter, currently in development, could reflect young people's need for international connections.
- 3.17 Due to Covid-19, we have cancelled planned workshops and are exploring virtual alternatives, delaying planned outcomes for the first part of 2020. We are using the [Internationalism Alliance](#) to convene and facilitate dialogue, currently focused on sector responses to Covid-19. Internationalism's budget, whilst modest, is at risk due to our financial situation and would pose a challenge to our work as some expenditure is required and partners are also struggling financially. This may include the planned Internationalism Youth Summit being revised.
- 3.18 Across youth internationalism, there is strong belief that the opportunities we provide and develop are more important than ever to young people and those that support them. Many partners are supporting us with their expertise in digital engagement, youth networks, and safeguarding considerations, helping us move towards virtual engagement. However, many - particularly in the youth sector - have been hit by their own funding crises and have furloughed staff, making delivery challenging.

- 3.19 **Erasmus+ Youth:** Erasmus+ Youth projects enable young people to learn together with counterparts in other countries, providing opportunities to some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people in the UK – and to those who work with them. The British Council, in partnership with Ecorys, is the UK's National Agency for Erasmus and since 2014 has supported 208,000 people from the UK to undertake international mobility experiences and welcomed a further 365,000 participants into the UK.
- 3.20 Due to Covid-19, all international youth mobility – including youth exchange, professional development, voluntary social action and youth democracy projects - is on hold with participants repatriated to their countries of residence. Planning meetings and conferences have been cancelled or postponed. We are working with beneficiaries and partners to move project activities online wherever possible, whilst mindful of the negative effects this can have on young people with limited digital access or who may be experiencing different forms of marginalisation.
- 3.21 **Global Social Enterprise Portfolio:** The DCMS Civil Society Strategy references thriving communities and, during the current pandemic, social enterprises (SE) hold a key role in helping maintain them. Our [global SE portfolio](#) engages recognised UK leadership with international stakeholders to improve the ecosystem that SEs and inclusive economies face and brings learning back to the UK, helping position the UK as a leader in the global social economy and an attractive destination for foreign social investors.
- 3.22 We operate in 31 countries around the world and have trained over 18,000 social entrepreneurs internationally, forming over 150 high impact partnerships across sectors. The impact of Covid-19 on our financial operations will reduce our portfolio of SE work by around 40 per cent in this financial year, with the remaining work mostly funded from partnership income and international development contracts. This will impact on the income of partner organisations. We are unable to deliver face-to-face activity for capacity building and policy dialogue on many programmes. Digital alternatives to activities are being rapidly developed but do not deliver equivalent impact, particularly as many young people engaged in our programmes are without internet access.
- 3.23 The potential long-term impacts on the SE sector are significant, including the 14 per cent of UK based SEs operating internationally.³ 42 per cent of UK based SEs are less than five years old, so are at significant risk from the economic shock of Covid-19.⁴ New contracts to procure services from UK SE experts will be significantly reduced across the year, directly impacting income for UK based organisations that provide support through our programmes, likely to remain slow for at least this financial year. This ultimately has substantial impact on the people reached through SEs: 48 per cent of social enterprises are based in the most deprived communities (quintiles 1 and 2)⁵ and 42 per cent of UK SEs work in industries hardest hit by the pandemic, including hospitality, education, creative industries, retail and leisure services.⁶
- 3.24 **Active Citizens:** The [Active Citizens social leadership training programme](#) equips people with the social leadership skills required to build trust and understanding within and between communities, bringing them together to address local challenges and inspiring them to engage peacefully with others and bring about lasting change. Active Citizens

³ Social Enterprise UK (2019). *CAPITALISM IN CRISIS? Transforming our economy for people and planet*, p19. <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Capitalism-in-Crisis.pdf>

⁴ Social Enterprise UK (2019). *CAPITALISM IN CRISIS? Transforming our economy for people and planet*, p7. <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Capitalism-in-Crisis.pdf>

⁵ Social Enterprise UK (2019). *CAPITALISM IN CRISIS? Transforming our economy for people and planet*, p20. <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Capitalism-in-Crisis.pdf>

⁶ Social Enterprise UK (2019). *CAPITALISM IN CRISIS? Transforming our economy for people and planet*, p21. <https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Capitalism-in-Crisis.pdf>

communities connect globally through online resources and social media, as well as participating in workshops, study visits and partner networking, hosted in the UK and around the world. As of March 2019, people were engaged in 77 countries with 1,163 partners, 9,045 facilitators trained, 286,243 Active Citizens trained, and 11,272 social action projects launched.

- 3.25 Each year the Active Citizens programme in the UK works with about 14 partner organisations who each deliver training workshops to approximately 30 participants in the community. These participants in turn develop social action projects, contributing directly to strengthening community cohesion in the UK.
- 3.26 In response to Covid-19, the Active Citizens team has adapted the programme to be delivered through distance learning and virtual approaches where possible to sustain impact. Recognising that Covid-19 needs a global response, the team launched their [#ConnectedbyAction](#) initiative, calling on their global community to share the ideas, innovations and practical solutions to overcome the challenges presented to communities by the crisis. This includes Jack Drum Arts in the UK launching the [#GoViral](#) campaign to provide arts and crafts activity packs to support young people that are at risk, in need, or vulnerable.
- 3.27 **Premier Skills and Premier League Primary Stars 2019 – 2022:** [Premier Skills](#), a partnership between the British Council and the Premier League, uses football to develop a brighter future for young people across the world, supporting grassroots educational and social cohesion projects engaging with marginalised or at-risk youth, particularly women and girls. Since 2007, Premier League club coaches have provided face-to-face training to over 28,000 aspiring coaches and referees in 29 countries, providing them with the skills and support to develop community football projects and developing the skills and confidence of 1.7 million young people. Currently, Premier Skills has suspended all face-to-face activities in response to the pandemic. Both the British Council and Premier League remain committed to the programme, and digital resources continue to support learning. Premier Skills will review programme priorities and explore opportunities to use football to address the impact of the pandemic on communities and young people.
- 3.28 The British Council wants to continue its support to create international opportunities for all the sectors it engages with, and its contributions to creating a positive space for the UK on the world stage. However, there is likely to be a long-term reduction in English language student numbers and there remains no clear timetable for when we will be able to safely resume teaching and exams operations globally. Our financial outlook for 2020/21 remains very challenging and impossible to accurately predict. The impact of continued uncertainty on our financial situation could lead to real reputational risk for the British Council – and the UK more widely – if our support for sectors reduces, major events and programmes are cancelled, and opportunities missed for future collaborations.

4. The role of the British Council post-Covid-19

- 4.1 Whilst Covid-19 shapes our understanding of 2020, the year also marks the opening of a new decade and a new chapter for the UK's place in the world. The British Council is uniquely placed to continue forging and strengthening international connections for the mutual benefit of the UK and the countries it works with. We have an unrivalled long-standing international network, a unique offer to the UK's arts, education, society and language sectors. The organisation's operational independence and strategic alignment with the UK's interests enables us to engage meaningfully with people and places which HMG cannot reach, which delivers against the UK's long-term foreign policy interests.

- 4.2 We are a creative, trusted partner for HMG, strongly supporting the key ambitions for Global Britain – enabling UK international trade, levelling up each part of the UK, strengthening Britain’s place in the world and acting as a force for good across the globe. We want to continue delivering on our purpose to build stronger international connections for the whole of the UK, to deliver more flexible and personalised offers to more people through arts, culture, education and English language, and to create deeper and more inclusive relationships worldwide. Through this, we hope to remain an efficient, global organisation and deliver activity worth at least seven times our grant-in-aid (£1.3bn against £173m in 2019/20).
- 4.3 As part of the UK’s response to Covid-19, the British Council has a significant role to play. We will help British artists and cultural institutions re-engage with audiences and partners in the UK and internationally, support the UK education sector on vital student recruitment, and help English language teaching providers strengthen their businesses. This contributes to the UK being trusted as a more generous international partner, committed to sharing international experience and expertise, and working with communities to address local challenges. We will:
- a. Be a leader in enabling international artistic connections, building the confidence of artists and arts institutions to work internationally and raise the UK’s reputation as a global creative powerhouse. This will aid HMG in strengthening the economy through supporting the creative industries to drive growth and jobs across the UK.
 - b. Support the DCMS international strategy as it develops and the international cultural strategies of the Devolved Administrations and city regions. We will leverage our relationships and insight to be the international education and cultural partner for the UK’s major events and festivals, from the Commonwealth Games to the Festival of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and we will partner to provide a UK programme to complement prestige events internationally.
 - c. Position the UK as a leader in heritage protection and champion the role of arts and culture in solving global and local problems. We will grow our global audience for UK arts and culture as we build partnerships with leaders in digital showcasing and creative technology.
 - d. More than ever, remain committed to supporting young people in the UK to develop the international outlook, skills and connections they need to thrive. We will develop curriculums to support development of intercultural skills and Modern Languages, and create opportunities for students, teachers and policymakers to be more globally mobile. We will support the DCMS Youth and Social Action team in the development of a cross-Whitehall Youth Charter, mobilising our alliance of youth partners to develop international opportunities in non-formal education, particularly supporting disadvantaged communities.
 - e. Continue to align our work with the ambitions of the Civil Society strategy and with the growing demand for international connections from the UK’s cities and city-regions. Through programmes such as Active Citizens and our social enterprise work, we will help people throughout the UK and internationally to develop the skills, voice and influence they need to participate fully in and shape their own communities, while gaining access to international experience and connections. We will ensure that those who may be excluded and unheard – young people, women and girls, disabled people and other under-represented groups – can influence and take part in decision-making.
- 4.4 To achieve this, the British Council needs to increase and expand its activities globally. There are challenges for the UK to remain a global powerhouse for the arts, education, society and language. Continued support for a strong British Council is an important step in the UK remaining a positive influence and trusted partner on the world stage.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 5.1 Cultural relations and human creativity are increasingly recognised as ways to address local and global challenges, and now is not the time for the UK to withdraw from creating people-to-people connections, both within the UK and internationally. Individuals, organisations and networks across the arts, society, sports and youth face unprecedented challenges as a result of Covid-19, both in the UK and internationally.
- 5.2 In a time where the importance of international understanding and cooperation is apparent, building and sustaining people-to-people connections has never been more important. It takes considerable time to build trust across the world, and only moments to break it. British Council teams are managing complex situations to adapt to challenging circumstances and maintain positive relationships with partners and stakeholders.
- 5.3 The resilience and innovation demonstrated by our teams is in large part due to the long-term, trusted relationships we have established across the world during the past 85 years. These relationships are vital to enable the development of future international connections between important UK sectors. The British Council needs the ongoing and active support of the HMG family to continue this critical work, to sustain these relationships and to keep building trust.
- 5.4 The British Council stands ready to support HMG and our valued partners and stakeholders across DCMS sectors and beyond to engage in dialogues, strategies and activities to help the UK re-emerge onto the global stage as the world begins to recover from the pandemic and face the local and global consequences of the crisis we have faced. But this is only possible if our current financial challenges are addressed.

6. About the British Council

- 6.1 The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. We work with over 115 countries worldwide and, in 2019, reached 80 million people directly and over 790 million people overall, including 100 million learners and teachers of English online.⁷
- 6.2 The British Council enjoys an excellent working relationship with DCMS, collaborating to deliver high quality international opportunities in relevant DCMS sectors including creative industries, sports, youth empowerment, social enterprise and inclusive communities. We are pleased to be working towards a structured British Council-DCMS partnership agreement. The British Council's work contributes to DCMS international priorities, nurturing long-term relationships in the firm belief that arts and culture can create new channels of partnerships for longer term prosperity and influence. We are committed to supporting the relevant international priorities and strategies of elected Governments across the UK and the elected Mayors of England's major cities, and we funnel the benefits of open, global connections back into the UK, supporting HMG levelling up agenda.
- 6.3 The direct economic value to the UK of the British Council's whole operation is estimated at over £2bn GVA per annum.⁸ Evidence shows that the trust generated through cultural relations can underpin people's decisions to do business with, study in and visit the UK. 75% of people who had participated in a UK cultural relations activity with British Council

⁷ British Council (2019). *British Council Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019*, p6.
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/2018-2019-annual-report-final.pdf>

⁸ London Economics (2018). *The economic value of the British Council to the UK economy*, p36.



said they trusted the UK, compared to 49% of people who had not.⁹ British Council showcasing work generates important exports for the UK, especially for the creative industries and education sectors. In 2018/19 our work in testing and assessment generated export earnings of £125 million for UK exams bodies.¹⁰

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For more information on this submission or on the wider work of the British Council please contact Sarah Giles, Policy and External Relations Manager at sarah.giles@britishcouncil.org.

⁹ British Council (2018). *The Value of Trust*, p11. https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/the_value_of_trust.pdf

¹⁰ British Council (2019). *British Council Annual Report and Accounts 2018-2019*, p13. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/2018-2019-annual-report-final.pdf>