

UK STRATEGY

**Internationally inspired
and globally connected**



**Strategic framework
2018–20**

SUMMARY



This strategy provides a framework for the British Council's work in, for and with the United Kingdom. It has five key strategic aims:

1. Represent and serve all parts of the UK and the particular interests of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
2. Engage with cities to support their international ambitions.
3. Work with institutions, networks and partners to share UK excellence, expertise and experience with the world and bring learning and insight back home.
4. Support an international outlook among young people in the UK, helping to ensure they have international experience as part of their development.
5. Help enhance the world's understanding of the contemporary devolved UK.

INTRODUCTION

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.



OUR UK STRATEGY

Our 2018–20 strategy provides a framework for our work in, for and with the UK. It builds on and consolidates decades of work in some areas and gives a clear focus to newer ambitions in others. The strategy takes account of a global context of exponential change in all spheres of life – technology, economics, demographics, society and climate – and a transitional situation in the UK. Wider global trends will continue to occur as the UK repositions itself in the international arena and, at the same time, devolved systems of government follow diverse approaches and priorities across the nations, cities and city regions of the UK.



A changing world

The 21st century will see more global change than ever before. We are already experiencing this through data and cyber security concerns, international terrorism, climate change, migration and growing inequalities. These issues put greater pressure on the world's prosperity, security and safety, and can only be addressed by countries and cities working together to achieve global solutions.

A changing UK

We also have our own challenges, including the process of the country's withdrawal from the European Union. The result of the 2016 referendum highlighted divisions between the UK nations, young and old, rich and poor, north and south. Brexit may also be perceived as projecting a message to the world that we are not as open and welcoming as we once were.

The UK's exit from the EU has different resonances across the country. In both England and Wales the majority of voters opted to leave, while the majority of voters in Scotland and Northern Ireland chose to remain. The Scottish and Welsh Governments are keen to maintain strong ties to the EU, while the result of the vote in Northern Ireland has highlighted concerns about the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, as well as uncertainty around the Irish border. In England, there is particular concern among cities and city leaders around the impact of Brexit on their economic growth and international position. It is a complex situation, and one that requires careful, nuanced responses.

The British Council has an important contribution to make, not least in our role in partnership with Ecorys UK as the appointed National Agency for Erasmus+, which sees us delivering the EU mobility programme across the UK, taking in the schools, higher education and civil society sectors.

Further, because we are on the ground in six continents and over 100 countries bringing international opportunity to life every day, we are uniquely placed to help connect our devolved nations, our cities, our institutions and our citizens to the world. It is from this position that we can work to ensure that all young people in the UK can benefit from international and intercultural experience and help support globally connected future generations.

The net effect will be a stronger UK, and a more inclusive, secure and prosperous world.



OUR VISION AND PURPOSE

Our strategy in, for and with the UK will run to 2020. It is founded on an ambition to inspire and inform an international outlook among our citizens and strengthen our global connections.

What will success look like?

By 2021 we will achieve:

- Increased recognition of the value of international and intercultural experience among UK stakeholders, including the devolved administrations of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, and the English regions.
- Improved international city-to-city engagement, supported and enhanced by our work.
- An increase in the number and quality of opportunities for UK institutions and stakeholders to work internationally, and better learning and skills provision for young people and professionals in the UK.
- Young people building their international understanding and experience through formal and non-formal learning, with increased support from a range of existing and new partners, including governments, industry and institutions.
- More young people in the UK increasing their understanding and appreciation of other cultures through new connections and partnerships.
- An increased level of understanding of the contemporary, devolved UK among priority countries globally.
- A clearer framework for measuring the value of international cultural relations to the UK.



An internationally inspired and globally connected UK

We aim to continue to be an excellent international cultural relations organisation for the UK, ensuring we support and enhance the country's soft power. In addition to working to our corporate objectives and outcomes as set out in the British Council's Corporate Plan,¹ we will ensure our approach is:

1. **Open and transparent** about what we do and why.
2. **Partnership and audience-led** – ensuring our work is co-designed and co-produced in order to make sure it engages with the needs and interests of our participants and stakeholders.
3. **Inclusive** – our offer will be inclusive, and we will reach out to new audiences.
4. **Diverse** – our work will represent and reflect the diverse nature of the UK.
5. **Insightful** – we will make full use of the relevant knowledge and insights of our global network, harnessing learning from and connections to practice and policy around the world for the benefit of the people of the UK.

¹ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/2018-20-corporate-plan.pdf>

OUR FIVE UK STRATEGIC AIMS





01

Represent and serve all parts of the UK and the particular interests of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We will be relevant to all parts of the UK, working to enable and support international co-operation between nations, cities and people. Our programmes will be tailored for the devolved nations, their agendas and their distinct assets and priorities, and we will adopt a focus on young people. Our way of working will be partnership by default, and we will develop a common narrative for the impact of our work, supported by evidence and research.



02

Engage with cities to support their international ambitions.

We will develop a new focus on cities, connecting and bringing coherence to the work we already do with institutions and organisations working in this area. Our aim is to work with the intrinsic soft power of the UK's urban centres to help them develop cultural relations strategies and activities which meet their priorities. We will concentrate our initial engagement in Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, and work with Coventry 2021 City of Culture to embed international cultural relations across its programme. In the devolved nations, our focus cities will include Glasgow and Belfast. In addition, we will co-ordinate our activities to inform a long-term approach for a global cities strategy and programme.



03

Work with institutions, networks and partners to share UK excellence, expertise and experience with the world and bring learning and insight back home.

We will build lasting international connections for the UK, sharing the country's cultural and educational assets with the world through our global network of offices. Our focus will be on connecting and supporting international opportunities for stakeholders and other relevant institutions. We will learn and understand from the world by harnessing our unique global reach, bringing ideas, learning and insight back to the UK.



04

Support an international outlook among young people in the UK, helping to ensure they have international experience as part of their development.

We will work with governments, cities, institutions, organisations and networks to develop policies and frameworks that support all young people in the UK to access meaningful international experiences. Drawing on the combined power of partners, employers, digital technologies and the contributions of young people themselves we will reach new youth audiences, prioritising those where we identify barriers to access. We will continuously update our expertise in this field through research, evaluation and advocacy, and we will work to establish greater recognition of the value of international experience.



05

Help enhance the world's understanding of the contemporary devolved UK.

We will increase international understanding of the devolved UK, in particular the distinctive assets and perspectives of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, using the most appropriate resources such as online learning platforms. We will work with our global network to ensure all of our offices are well-informed about social and political developments and trends in the UK, as well as the devolved nations and city regions.



OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

In delivering our strategy we will continue to be responsive to the factors that affect how we operate. These include the UK government's Tailored Review which began in July 2018 and will consider the effectiveness and impact of the British Council as a non-departmental public body.

Our funding situation also has relevance, particularly in the context of the UK Government Spending Review, as this affects our grant-in-aid allocation. In 2016–17 this accounted for 15 per cent of our overall income and was used to support both official development assistance (ODA) work and non-ODA activity. We welcomed the UK government's decision in 2018 to provide additional funding to support our non-ODA work, which is necessary to ensure we remain on a sustainable footing until the end of the Spending Review period in March 2020. After this time our grant-in-aid is expected to be available solely for spending on ODA activity, a situation that is likely to pose challenges for how we operate in the developed world.

The British Council has always worked according to the principle of mutuality and this extends to how we operate across the UK. This means we must ensure our programmes, products and services are relevant to all our stakeholders, and that they respect and promote core principles of fairness, equality and diversity. It is important that we respond effectively to cross-cutting campaigns, both those that are UK-wide such as GREAT, and those in the devolved nations, such as Scotland is Now and Global Wales. Finally, we must continue to engage with the devolved nations on matters that affect their particular international aspirations.



HOW WE WILL GET THERE

To deliver benefit in, for and with the UK, we will improve how we work and what we do.


We will:

- Develop more collaborative ways of working internally across the British Council's global regions and functions to adopt an outcomes-based approach.
- Ensure our work is led by audiences and that our programmes are co-produced.
- Support our work with clear research and evidence, drawing on our recently established results and evidence framework for measuring impact.
- Plan, deliver, monitor, evaluate, document and record our programme activity across the UK in a meaningful and systematic way.
- Manage stakeholder relationships with care, respecting and valuing the time and interests of those who work with us.
- Develop an overarching communications and engagement plan for the UK to build familiarity, understanding and advocacy for our work, and our contribution in each of the UK nations.
- Develop a digital-first approach for our work in the UK, particularly around our engagement with young people.
- Participate in and contribute to relevant opportunities through anniversaries, events and themes to enhance our work and improve our learning and practice: for example, Scotland's Year of Young People, Hull City of Culture, Mayflower 400, Roald Dahl City of the Unexpected and Liverpool's tenth anniversary of the European Capital of Culture.





FIND OUT MORE

A photograph of three women dancing on a stage. The woman on the left is wearing a plaid shirt and jeans, with her arms raised. The woman in the middle is wearing a light-colored shirt and jeans, also with her arms raised. The woman on the right is wearing a dark top and jeans, with her arms raised. They are all smiling and appear to be in the middle of a dance routine. The background is dark, and the stage is lit with warm, yellow light.

To learn more about our current work in, for and with the UK, please visit our websites. They contain information on active projects, partnerships and initiatives, our country advisory committees, and links to social media channels where our opportunities are shared with thousands of followers across the UK and the world every day.

British Council
www.britishcouncil.org

British Council Scotland
scotland.britishcouncil.org

British Council Wales
wales.britishcouncil.org

British Council Northern Ireland
nireland.britishcouncil.org



