

# ELTons Judges' Commendation for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

## Guidance on the British Council's approach to EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)

### Guidance found in this document

This document gives further information on the British Council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), which we hope will be helpful if you are considering applying for the Judges' Commendation for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the ELTons Innovation Awards 2024.

While the document gives guidance and examples on our own approach, we do not intend it to be exhaustive. Actions to integrate equality, diversity and inclusion can only be made based on your products and target audience.

Your application should show how decisions to integrate equality, diversity and inclusion have been positively and proactively considered, planned and acted on at key stages in the development of your entry. We welcome original and innovative ideas which address how to overcome barriers that may hinder learning progress.

This document is adapted from our [equality policy](#), [EDI strategy](#) and guidance for resources on the British Council's [TeachingEnglish](#) and [LearnEnglish](#) websites. Sections can be found on:

- Our general approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in English language teaching, learning and assessment.
- The six main equality areas: age, disability, race or ethnicity, gender, religion or belief, sexual identity, and additional areas: socio-economic background, linguistic diversity, urban/rural realities, and intersectionality.
- Key concepts: access and engagement, inclusive language, special educational needs (SEN), anticipatory adjustments, universal design for learning, neurodiversity and inclusive assessment.

### The ELTons Judges' Commendation for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The British Council ELTons judges' commendation for equality, diversity and inclusion are special commendations for finalists which promote proactive and positive approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion in English language teaching, learning and assessment.

The commendation aims to celebrate the courses, books, apps, resources and projects which:

- Bridge educational inequality
- Reflect diversity
- Promote inclusion of certain, typically underrepresented groups

The commendation is intended to encourage improving access to high quality English language teaching for all, and specifically for those who may not typically get access.

The commendation is part of the British Council and the ELTons Award's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. This is based on a 'mainstreaming' approach, which means embedding EDI into all that we do.

### **Our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in English language teaching, learning and assessment**

- At the British Council, and by extension in the ELTon Awards, we are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We take a 'mainstreaming' approach, which means embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into all that we do. This involves showing that we consider, plan and act on opportunities to integrate equality, diversity and inclusion as we develop and deliver our own policies, services, programmes, products and teaching and learning resources.
- Our approach to integrating equality, diversity and inclusion in English language teaching, learning and assessment is a proactive and positive one, which may aim to be inclusive, have a focus on specific accommodations, or celebrate aspects of equality, diversity and/or inclusion.
- It is our aim to enable access and engagement for all with teaching, learning or assessment products which meet participants' learning needs.
- We factor a range of differentiated approaches into the development of our products or resources, from planning to production and delivery.
- Where necessary and appropriate, we make specific accommodations for individuals or groups who may otherwise be unfairly under-represented or excluded from some aspect of English language teaching, learning or assessment.
- This does not mean we can always meet everyone's needs all the time, but we do what we can to take actions to support equality, diversity and inclusion, while ensuring the highest-quality learning experience for everyone.

### **The six main equality areas**

#### **Age**

- Content and images should reflect the needs and interests of target audiences' age groups.
- Resources should also give consideration to reflecting a broader range of age groups.
- Resources should avoid stereotypes based on age.

#### **Disability**

- The British Council approach to disability is broad. It can involve both short- and long-term needs.
- We take a social model approach to disability. This involves a positive approach to disability and not a negative identification of disability. It's the role of society and education systems to respond positively to disabled peoples' needs and to how disabled people want to control their own lives.

- We take a 'nothing about us without us' approach which prioritises the active engagement of disabled people in decision making.
- We understand that not all disability is immediately obvious, and we recommend against thinking of a hierarchy of disability.
- This, therefore, needs to be reflected in teaching and learning resources. For example, inclusion of disabled peoples' voices and positive images of disabled people engaged in learning.

## **Race or Ethnicity**

- Resources should represent people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- They must not disparage ethnic or cultural groups, and avoid unconscious biases and stereotypes, based on for example: names, images, cultural events, places or dress.
- Note how the roles of people from different ethnic backgrounds are represented in images, activities and tasks and who might be dominating.
- There may be a different emphasis for different markets but we should not assume that within one region people *only* wish to see local images or a focus on a particular culture or cultures.

## **Gender**

- We ensure our resources represent gender balance and that roles assigned to different genders do not perpetuate stereotypes.
- We give consideration to roles assigned to different genders in content, activities, tasks and images.
- We try to use gender-neutral language where the gender of the person is unknown: whether 'he/she' or 's/he' is most appropriate and whether to use 'they' and 'their'.
- We consider how gender fluidity can be represented in a relevant and sensitive way in different contexts.

## **Religion or Belief**

- Resources should show respect for all religions and beliefs
- Content, activities and tasks related to religious celebrations should allow for a variety of religions and other beliefs to be included.
- Where appropriate, comparisons should be made of different faiths from positive understandings and perspectives.
- There may be a different emphasis in different markets but we should not assume that any one region only wishes to see images relevant to majority religions or beliefs or that there is a focus on a particular religion or faith.

- A secular approach should be considered as part of religion and belief.

## **Sexual identity**

- With the sensitivity of context in mind, resources should express the positivity of sexual orientation differences.
- Consider how a more in-depth exploration on sexual orientation/sexual identity *may* be desirable in specific contexts.
- Activities may reflect a spectrum of possibilities, for example from friendship to intimate relationships, as appropriate to context.
- Avoid stereotyping of people with different sexual orientations/sexual identities.
- There will be a different emphasis for different markets but we should not assume that an audience or a market may not wish to explore any typically sensitive issues.
- We ensure content, activities, tasks are suitable for target audiences and markets and do not challenge legal status in any country.

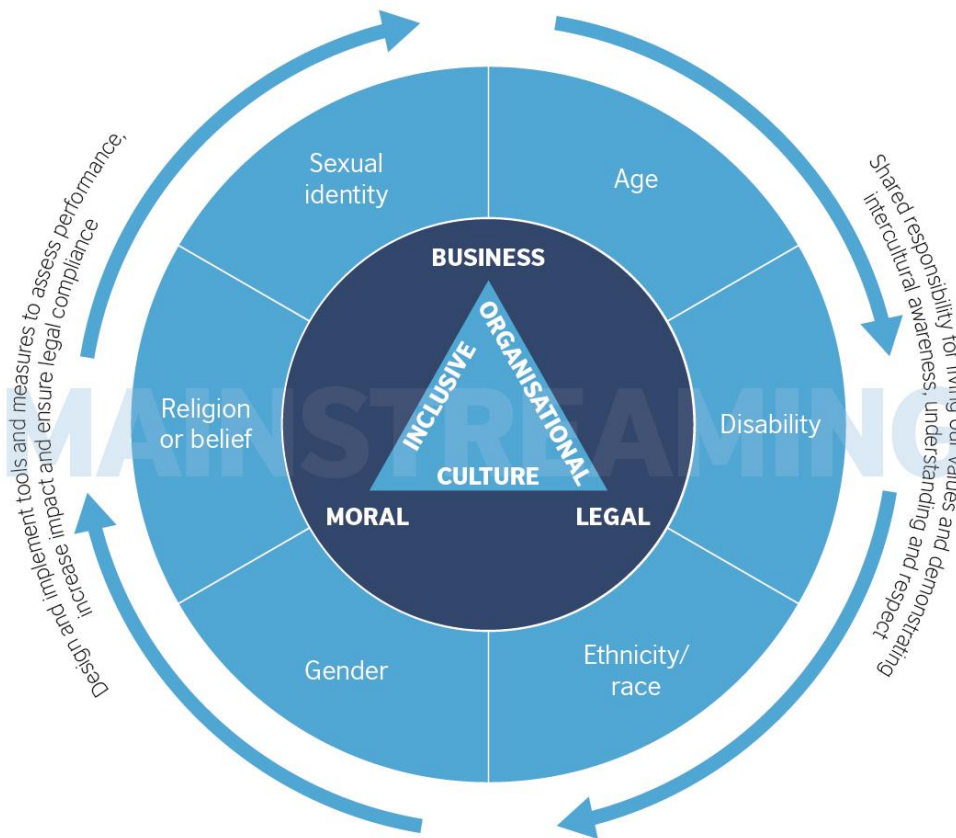
## **Additional areas: Socio-economic background, linguistic diversity and urban/rural realities**

Besides the six main equality areas set out in the British Council's strategy, socio-economic background, linguistic diversity and urban/rural realities are likely to cut across characteristics.

We advocate for multilingual approaches and celebration of language diversity in all resources even if focused on English language learning and teaching. Language rights are an important inclusion issue.

We proactively encourage entries to the ELTons Innovation Awards by those who do not have English as their first or other language.

Socio-economic factors are a main factor in inclusion and exclusion. Globally, this is often expressed through education. It is important that different socio-economic backgrounds and urban/rural realities are reflected in resources' content, tasks and activities, as well as in access to and engagement with resources.



## Intersectionality

At the British Council, we take an 'intersectional' approach. This means, rather than looking at the six main equality areas (and additional areas) through a separate segmented lens, we look at how issues of equality, diversity and inclusion may cut across the equality areas. For example, we might focus on how disability may also positively reflect gender, age, socio-economic background or linguistic diversity.

Intersectionality is often reflected through exclusionary practices and multiple barriers that impact groups or individuals that need to be overcome to ensure more equitable and inclusive practices.

We advocate for a strength-based approach to intersectionality, where an individual's or group's multiple identities can positively inform inclusive practices.

Our resources can be a starting point for this approach. For example, in English language teaching resources, families tend to be represented simplistically as a middle-income mother and father, with two children. Families come in all shapes and sizes. The one reflected above is one model though there are many family realities - single parents, divorced/separated parents, second and further marriages or partnerships with children, mixed-minority ethnic, mixed religion or culture and same-sex partners, adopted or fostered children, children in care, disabled parents or children, families impacted through loss, displacement, war or trauma.

The important issue is not that a resource would cater for all of these different family scenarios but how the reality of learners' experiences are reflected and represented in resources in inclusive ways.

## Key concepts

### Access and engagement

Both access and engagement are essential requirements for implementing a positive approach to EDI.

**Access** ensures someone or a group can take part in and use resources regardless of their age, gender, disability, race and ethnicity, religion or belief, linguistic background, ability or social-economic situation.

**Engagement** is about ensuring that participants' experiences are meaningful, empowering and beneficial.

Access, therefore, focusses on ensuring all can take part. Without **access**, an engaging curriculum, resource or course will be difficult to implement.

Without **engagement** there is unlikely to be quality learning. Therefore, every resource or approach that claims to be inclusive needs to be based on a positive approach to *both access and engagement*.

### Inclusive language

The British Council does not advocate a 'politically correct' approach to terminology in courses, resources and materials. It's important to strive to use language that is as inclusive as possible and that does not label or discriminate.

As an international organisation, it good practice to take care to ensure materials are appropriate, relevant and sensitive in different contexts, for example, on the topics of politics, religion, sexual orientation, narcotics, different dietary customs (often referred to as 'PARSNIPS').

The British Council does not advocate a 'PARSNIPS' approach. This focuses on what to avoid rather than to promote proactively.

We also strive to avoid unconscious biases through stereotyping.

### Special educational needs (SEN)

- Support for special educational needs (SEN) is now a feature of many teaching and learning resources. For example, support for:
  - Dyslexia
  - Autism-spectrum conditions
  - Sensory needs, e.g. visual, hearing, physical and mobility
  - Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
  - Social, emotional and mental health conditions
- A special educational need may or may not be a disability and our approach will always be strength-based - starting from what a learner can do rather than what they can't.
- As well as our learner, teachers may also have SEN-associated needs, which should also be reflected in teaching resources.

## **Anticipatory adjustments and universal design for learning**

- The British Council also promotes anticipatory adjustments. This involves pre-planning what is likely to address specific needs and ensures access and engagement with our resources whether or not users identify as disabled.
- We recognise that supporting learners with special educational needs is likely to be helpful for all learners. In this way, a universal design for learning will encourage a range of ways of learning. We advocate for a range of differentiated and multisensory approaches, which may include use of:
  - A variety of video, visual, audio and text.
  - Accessible PDFs or Word versions.
  - Captioned video.
  - Different language options
  - Integrated options for assistive technology.
  - Multisensory options for dyslexia support.
  - Autism-friendly environments.
- The main principle is that the adjustments we make do not compromise quality of learning.

## **Neurodiversity and differentiated learning**

We recognise neurodiversity as variations in ways of thought (which may or may not be defined as a disability) which may impact teaching and learning. While we don't wish to minimise the concept of 'learning difficulties', we emphasise different ways of learning. We advocate for differentiated learning experiences to reflect neurodiversity.

We do not advocate for the concept of 'learning styles' (which has been broadly discredited in education). Recent research confirms that our learning experiences affect our cognitive make-up, rather than our cognitive make-up determining how we learn.

## **Inclusive assessment**

Inclusive assessment is an essential part of equality, diversity and inclusion in education. Assessment should align with inclusive teaching and learning practices. As with any inclusive teaching and learning resource, a range of options is important. For example:

- Continuous, formative assessment designed to support learning and learners' progress.
- Summative assessment that includes a variety of task types, so that learners with different needs can show the best of their ability, e.g. multiple choice, alternative answers, open-ended, gap fill, drop-down menu, matching.
- Ensuring a range of options for students' responses: orally, written, on paper, electronically, through use of assistive technology, or audio-visual responses: video, voice recording, mind maps, modelling, etc.

Standardised assessment can be inclusive if based on standardised outcomes, rather than one-size-fits-all standard response formats.