

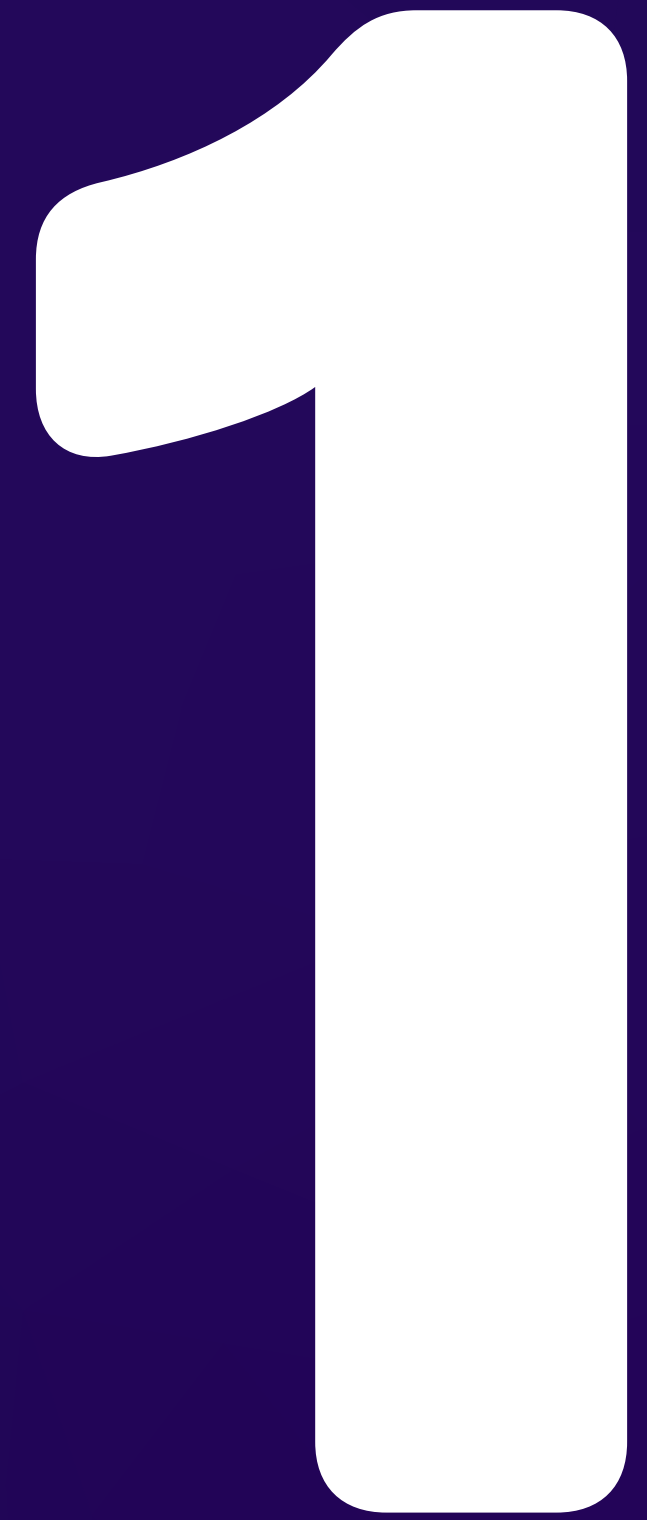
Corporate Plan 2024–25

www.britishcouncil.org

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Who we are



Chief Executive's introduction

This year is a landmark year for the British Council as we celebrate our 90th birthday.

We were established in 1934 in response to threats to British values, prosperity and security amidst the rise of extreme ideologies. Since then, we have developed a rich network of partners and stakeholders around the world that help to strengthen people-to-people relationships between the UK and other countries. This allows us to stay connected in times of peace and war, through economic cycles, through the rise of the digital age and, most recently, during the pandemic.

We remain focused on the most human of endeavours. We are here to get people connected, communicating and working together and providing opportunities for individuals to thrive. That leads to better understanding and more trust. And that trust can lead to more engagement, more trade, and less conflict – not always, but over the long term, often.

This document is an update of our corporate plan covering the year 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 reaffirmed our purpose and ambition and rebuilt our confidence. We worked across 200 countries, building connections with over 600 million people. We supported more trust through arts and culture, education and the English language. Our work during the year was focused, high-quality and high-impact.

As evidenced through our global perceptions survey, trust in the UK government is 15 percentage points higher in places where cultural and education exchange is curated by the British Council.

- We strengthened our economic model. We increased our focus on the areas we are best at: arts and culture, education and English. We continued with the implementation of our restructuring plans, reducing costs across our operations, and we are now focused on improving the effectiveness of our professional services: finance, HR and technology. Our goal is to reduce costs by £185m over 5 years, and we remain on track to deliver that. Our English teaching and assessment operations continue to recover and have grown strongly, with more than 28% income growth in 2023-24 compared with the previous year. We agreed on an extension of our loan from the UK government and will work to agree on a longer-term arrangement in the year ahead.
- We are a proud part of the UK ecosystem, uniquely placed to support the UK's soft power and foreign policy. As an arms-length partner of the UK government, we remain independent and dedicated to long-term impact and mutual benefit in all our interactions and partnerships.

Chief Executive's introduction

'I feel optimistic, determined, and more convinced than ever of the value of our work focused on building trust to support a more peaceful and prosperous world.'

Scott McDonald
Chief Executive

Regarding challenges:

- We are still recovering from the pandemic and continue with our restructuring plan to ensure we are structurally and financially viable for decades to come. That is tough on our teams. I can't praise and thank them enough for the sacrifices they make to ensure we continue to exist and deliver.
- In 2024-25 we are facing significant external financial headwinds, including inflation around the world, volatile foreign exchange movements and capital controls in countries with significant economic challenges.
- Demand for our work continues to grow, and outstrips what we are able to fund. This is something we are working on as we strengthen partnerships with government, donors, corporates, trusts and foundations.
- Crises around the world that put our people in danger and challenge our ability to operate are increasing. The resilience of my colleagues in the face of great danger and disruption is remarkable.

The plan we describe in this document is bold and ambitious. It is made possible by expert and committed colleagues with deep networks around the world. Without this, the British Council's magic would not be possible.

But there is much more to do as we head into a Spending Review and look ahead to our centenary:

- We want to strengthen ties with our closest neighbours and allies, particularly across Europe.
- We want to support fragile and conflict affected states, becoming quicker at giving voice and opportunity to the most marginalised and protecting cultural heritage at risk.
- We want to sow connections rather than divisions, and work on social cohesion, mutual understanding and cultural exchange. We will support individuals, institutions and governments to work together on the challenges of the day, including climate change, inclusion and improving the quality of education.
- We want to focus on employability and enterprise, giving young people the skills they need to achieve their aspirations and improve their communities in partnership with the UK.
- We want to share the skills and creativity of a modern and innovative UK and all four nations with the world, as a force for good.

I feel optimistic, determined, and more convinced than ever of the value of our work focused on building trust to support a more peaceful and prosperous world. I am also excited to celebrate our 90 years with our colleagues and partners. I look forward to sharing amazing stories of how our work has impacted people's lives, inspiring our global teams and stakeholders to ensure we remain relevant and trusted in years to come.

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 2023–24 we reached 589 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, creatives and educators, and our own 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.

2024 marks 90 years of the British Council. Over these years we have created opportunities for millions of people and developed deep and long-lasting relationships. We continue to adapt to meet the needs of a changing world, while remaining committed to the principles on which we were founded.

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.

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, educators and creatives 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.

Focus on what we are best at:

We focus on young people, creatives, educators 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 2024–25

We will reach up to 600 million people, of whom 150 million will be engaged in new partnerships, study, insights and learning with the UK.

In arts and culture

- **25 million** people are 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

- **24 million** people, including policymakers, school leaders, teachers, students and young people, connecting with and participating in our international education programmes.
- **725,000** people are taking 1.9 million UK school, university and professional exams with the British Council.
- **25 per cent** of newly enrolled international students cite the Study UK campaign, delivered by the British Council, as a significant influence on their decision to study in the UK.
- **125,000** people around the world are members of Alumni UK providing opportunities for students who have studied in the UK to grow their professional networks and build long term connections with the UK.
- **340** 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

- **100 million** people connecting with the UK through English language teaching and assessment, engaging with our digital content and working with us as a trusted partner in quality English language education.
- **2.4 million** International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests delivered.
- **230,000** students learning English with us through our teaching centres and English Online.
- **50** national education systems are supported around the world to strengthen English language teaching, learning and assessment.

**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.

We believe that resilience for the UK's arts and creative industries sector will rely on strong international engagement. 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 expand our work with more 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, building on the success of programmes like Selector Radio which reaches more than 18 million listeners a year on different channels. 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 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.

We will provide professional networking opportunities to connect artists, cultural professionals and organisations from across the UK with their international peers. We will support creative collaborations, showcasing and touring of work, allowing audiences worldwide to experience the transformative power of art. We will also foster the continued development of digital and hybrid practices for international engagement.

Priorities

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

We will showcase the best of the UK's contemporary artists, architects, designers and curators at two of the world's largest and most important exhibitions in their field – the International Art Exhibition in 2024 and the International Architecture Exhibition in 2025.

Extend our programme of bilateral seasons of culture

In 2024 we will deliver UK/France Spotlight on Culture, a six-month programme of over 50 events in 20 cities either side of the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games. We will also prepare for

seasons with Poland and Kenya in 2025 and a major bilateral season with Brazil in 2025–26. Our programmes will build on historic links between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and our partner countries.

Internationalise UK civic festivals

This includes helping Bradford, the UK's City of Culture in 2025, 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 and artists across the UK and internationally to play a greater part in the design and delivery of our programmes. This will strengthen international connections and global access to UK arts and culture. In 2024, we will run the second edition of the International Collaboration Grants, supporting new bilateral and multilateral partnerships. Our work will also include developing virtual and face-to-face exhibitions showcasing the unique British Council Collection, which will move to a new home in Coventry in 2025–26.

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 2022 the creative industries generated [124.6 billion for the UK economy](#) and [employed 2.4 million people](#). 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 bank

Our growing resource of research and insight on creative economies around the world will 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 Creative Industries 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 continue to 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.

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, champions cultural diversity, supports environmentally sustainable development, and promotes well-being. It creates opportunities for people, institutions and communities to connect and respond to challenges through people-centred, locally led approaches.

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. 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 26 million people in over 200 countries and territories over the last 10 years. We will support mid-career artists exploring marginalised narratives from climate justice to LGBTQIA+ identities through our Moving Narratives mentorship programme.

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 DCMS' International Cultural Heritage Protection Programme between 2022-2025. The British Council's Cultural

Protection Fund represents the primary delivery strand of the programme, supporting work across the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Sub-Saharan African and responding to emergencies such as 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 sustainable development. In 2024 we will continue to commission and share research exploring the integral role of arts and culture in tackling global challenges, including the climate emergency and gender equality. This will build on our Missing Foundation and Missing Pillar reports, which champion the role of arts, culture and heritage in support of the SDGs.

Stimulate culture-led conversations about climate change

We will support innovative and inclusive solutions to climate change, combining arts, science and digital technology through Creative Commissions for Climate. 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, including programmes across the Americas, Europe and South Asia.

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 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 and future leaders who are not part of the formal education system, supporting them to gain new skills and to take

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

We support the four governments of the UK to learn from best practice around 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 UK alumni by providing development and networking opportunities.

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, Welsh government and the new International Education Strategy for Scotland. Our Alumni UK programme extends students' connection with the UK and each other after 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-eight current world leaders 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.

Enhance the international student experience through the Agent Quality Framework

Our agent training is an integral part of the UK's Agents Quality Framework. By March 2025, we will have trained 20,000 agents and school counsellors in around 40 countries 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 2024–25 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 alumni by March 2025.

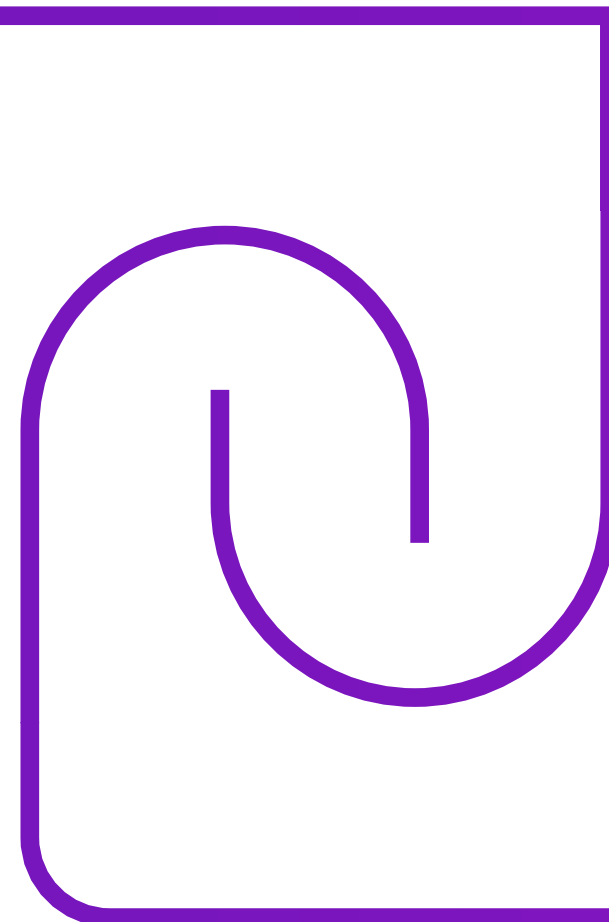
Support international strategies and the brokering of connections and partnerships with the UK sector

In 2024–25 we will provide relevant, up-to-date insight and analysis, leveraging local expertise and contacts provided by our regional Education Insight Hubs in East Asia, South Asia, Europe, MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Americas. This will include reports on TNE policy and regulatory development, insights into global trends in student mobility and new opportunities for research partnerships. Our regional Going Global education conference in Africa will bring together hundreds of education leaders from Africa and the UK to share knowledge and expertise on the theme of building sustainable and relevant tertiary education institutions and systems in Africa.

Create international opportunities for UK students

We continue to support outward mobility through programmes such as Study USA in Northern Ireland which provides one-year scholarships to the USA for Northern Ireland students.

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 and skills globally and extensive connections with UK policymakers, universities, colleges and schools across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Priorities

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

We will support UK and international knowledge exchange through national and international visits for UK policy officials and enabling international delegations to visit the UK. We will help UK schools to internationalise their curriculum through partnerships and exchange, connecting young people with their international peers in countries across Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. We will contribute to improvements in the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages in the UK through our Language Trends research series and

programmes that we run in partnership with the four UK education departments. These include Language Assistants, Language Teacher Training Scholarships, the Mandarin Excellence Programme and the National Consortium for Languages Excellence.

Develop demand-driven and inclusive TVET systems

We will share UK expertise and support UK partnerships with low- and middle-income countries, primarily across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, supporting the development of high-quality, inclusive TVET systems that meet demands for employment and entrepreneurship. We will respond to increased demand for policy engagement on skills. Aligned to the SDGs, our work enhances access to employment opportunities, strengthening education and work systems, improving people's lives and building a prosperous, green and fair future.

Develop stronger, more inclusive and globally connected higher education, TVET and science systems

We will support UK education providers, sector bodies and policymakers to work with international partners and help strengthen education and science capacity in over 50 countries. Priority areas include improving the quality of education; building stronger relationships between education institutions and employers; enhancing student outcomes; and enabling greater equality, inclusion and internationalisation. In 2024–25, we will provide funding to support partnerships between over 100 UK and 240 international universities and colleges.

Create and develop new opportunities for TNE

We will continue to support UK TNE by working with international governments, regulators and institutions, and with the UK sector, and the governments of all four nations in the UK, to understand common priorities and help achieve common goals. Delivering against our new TNE

strategy, we will contribute to better data and insight on TNE, create an enabling environment for TNE in other countries, promote the quality of UK TNE internationally and support TNE in contributing to the transformation of local education systems and the SDGs.

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 a number of priority countries. 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 2024–25.

Qualifications

We create opportunities for people everywhere to achieve their potential by taking UK school, university and professional qualifications.

We provide high quality examination services to UK education institutions and awarding bodies, enabling them to extend their reach into international markets. 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 life-changing 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 £60 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.

Enable awarding bodies to increase the number of individuals taking UK academic and professional qualifications

We will support 725,000 people to take 1.9 million tests by 2024-25. We will be driven by our clients' priority markets and geographies, supported by our unique insight, expertise, and networks to deliver high-quality customer experiences.

Trusted experts in digital and online qualifications

Through new strategic partnerships, we will take advantage of the latest technological and academic advances and provide a seamless, end-to-end offer that best meets customers' needs, providing greater choice and flexibility.

By building greater digital capacity and capability in computer-based exam delivery, we will become a knowledgeable and influential voice in the industry.

Non-formal education

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

We work together with young people to find their own positive pathways, develop their voice and act positively on the global challenges that affect their lives and communities. We do this in a range of challenging situations, including where people have been displaced by conflict, and in post-conflict reconstruction environments. With partner organisations we strengthen 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 shared 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, Water Aid, 50 civil society organisations and 80 public universities. Launched in November 2023, the project aims

to upskill 290,000 young leaders across Pakistan on climate action and leadership skills by the end of 2026. The project is co-funded by the Education Above All Foundation.

Building trust between young people

We are supporting communities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, through the FCDO-funded People to People programme. We deliver a combined social cohesion and skills-based approach that builds trust between linguistic communities and provides the 21st-century skills needed to deconstruct false narratives and operate safely in the online space. This helps 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 COP29 we will work with our partners and networks – including YOUNGO¹ and the Climate Youth Negotiators Programme – to put young people at the heart of climate solutions as future climate leaders. We will build on the success of our global partnership programmes, such as Climate Skills with HSBC, which will train 12,000 marginalised young people to be part of greener economies.

1. 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.² Governments everywhere are looking for support to improve English language skills 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.

2. 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, supporting their national reform ambitions to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning in their education systems. Where students are taught in English rather than in their home language, we support policies and practices to ensure that language is not a barrier to learning and that no child is left behind.

Our expertise and experience enable more informed decision-making about curriculum development, learning standards and teacher development. This supports partners to build sustainable education systems and introduce inclusive practices into everyday teaching.

Our work supports new international opportunities for the UK's education sector, including in English language teaching and education technology.

Priorities

Improve standards of the teaching, learning and assessment of English

We will support governments in over 50 countries, through partnerships with ministries of education and UK expertise. For example, in Iraq we will support improvements to pre-service curriculum and training across the country, benefiting thousands of future English language teachers. We will support foundational learning in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa, where English proficiency can be a barrier to progressing through education, particularly for girls. We will expand this work to additional countries in the region based on findings from current research. In alignment with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education's ambitions, we will provide professional development for 4,000 teachers to enhance the learning of English. 50,000 teachers of English in Vietnam will benefit from our work to establish teacher activity groups across the country.

Improve standards and break down barriers to inclusion using technology

Working in partnership with the UK EdTech sector, we will continue to build on our award-winning work using appropriate technologies to support teacher development at scale. We will expand our successful low-tech model for professional development implemented in Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, benefiting thousands of teachers of English and their learners in rural and remote areas. In Colombia, 420 Coding Hubs will be established across the country with 2,100 teachers trained in computational thinking, benefiting 896,000 students over the next three years.

Strengthen leadership in teaching and learning

We will facilitate international policy visits to the UK, including to the Education World Forum. We will support policies and practice that help school leaders strengthen inclusive education, improve the teaching of foundational skills and integrate global challenges such as climate change and sustainability into the curriculum. This will include continued support to school leadership reforms in, for example, Pakistan and Nigeria and expanding work that promotes gender equality in Zimbabwe to more countries across Sub Saharan Africa.

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.

Our programmes, including Language for Resilience and English for Girls' Education support girls and boys, young women and men, and adults who have been displaced, affected by conflict or who are from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and 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 in Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria 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 2,000 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 a focus on creating a trauma-sensitive learning environment, managing challenging behaviours and making classrooms safer spaces for learners.

Support refugees worldwide with guidelines on language and displacement

We will follow up on our pledge to the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) by working with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to build a coalition of key stakeholders in emergency education. Together we will draft guidelines on best practice in language education and displacement crises, suitable for all governments and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Implementation of the guidelines will clarify linguistic positions, access, and education modalities for over 100 million forcibly displaced people worldwide.

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. In addition to existing programmes in South Asia, new partnerships in Myanmar and Ethiopia with five different civil society organisations will enable us to engage a further 1,500 girls in peer-led clubs.

Teaching and learning

We reach more than 100 million people through our digital channels and teach face-to-face in 153 locations 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. Accreditation UK supports the ELT community in the UK. Managed by the British Council in partnership with English UK, Accreditation UK is a quality assurance scheme for 368 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 customers across several countries, including Japan, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and Vietnam.

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 direct delivery and online teaching. We will increase the number of customers using our online learning offers to 160,000 in 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 communities of practice for English teachers and teacher educators worldwide and, working with our UK partners, develop the agency of English language teachers in global priority areas such as multilingualism, climate action, gender and inclusion. By 2025, six million English teachers will follow our Teaching English 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 12,000 organisations globally and recognised by educational institutions, employers, governments, and professional bodies around the world. As one of the pioneers of English language testing more than 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 ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and the Foundation English Test (FET), 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 Conferences in Kenya and Thailand in 2024 and India in 2025.

Continue to innovate in IELTS

We continue to invest in improvements to test delivery and the value proposition for test takers and recognising organisations, including the delivery of faster test results. We will grow the number of IELTS tests taken to 2.4 million in 2024-25.

Grow Aptis into new markets

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

Operational focus for the year ahead

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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 collaborations with UK arts, education and culture.

Priorities

- Deliver great customer experiences and seamless customer journeys across our digital and face-to-face offers.
- Improve our digital and technology platforms and future proof the British Council.
- Strengthen our longer-term impact in developed economies, including Europe.

Maintain collaborative independence

Our work celebrates the diversity, creativity and innovation of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, connecting the four nations of the UK to the world.

We are an important part of the UK’s strategic advantage, supporting its influence, prosperity and security. Our arms-length status allows us to establish and build increased trust with stakeholders and partners overseas, including in regions where the UK government may not be able to maintain formal relations. And we know from our research that people who trust the UK are much more likely to have intentions to visit, study or do business with the UK.

Priorities

- Continued alignment with the priorities of all four governments of the UK and of the UK arts and culture, education and English language sectors.
- Strengthen our profile in the UK including through our 90th anniversary celebrations.

Be one British Council with an attractive culture

A culture that promotes excellence, respect, diversity and inclusion.

To bring out the best in our diverse workforce and to grow and invest in our talent, we continue to strengthen connections across teams and geographies and champion an inspiring and supportive experience that enables all our employees to develop and thrive.

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.

We are committed to tackling climate change through arts and culture, education and English. We connect and partner UK expertise with the rest of world to support young people and future climate leaders, strengthen climate and sustainability education and develop artistic and cultural responses to climate change. We are building our organisational capacity and capability to deliver our climate ambitions and to deliver net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 at the latest.

Priorities for 2024–25

- Strengthen leadership and digital capabilities to build a pipeline of diverse talent.
- Develop our employment offer to retain, attract and support our employees and improve our recruitment process to create opportunities and remove barriers to progress for everyone.
- Deliver our global EDI action plan and 2025 targets. Including 50 per cent of all senior roles globally filled by women, 7 per cent of all employees globally identify as disabled and 16 per cent of UK-contracted minority ethnic employees are senior managers.
- Actively work towards more inclusive and anti-racist policies, practices and culture.
- Consult, finalise and communicate our new Climate Strategy.

Be professional and constantly learning

We will be financially sound, diversify our sources of funding, simplify and be agile.

Our 2024–25 total revenue will grow by 8 per cent to over £1 billion compared with the prior year. This will be driven by our English teaching and exams operations, where we are expanding our customer base, diversifying into new markets, and accelerating digital offers.

Alongside growth we are investing in new ways of working. In 2021 we announced a restructuring programme helping us respond more efficiently and effectively to the changing needs of our customers, clients and partners. We have restructured our front-line operations and this year we are completing the transformation of our professional services including human resources and finance. Underpinning this work is access to new technologies to help streamline processes, improve access, and help build a more evidence- and data-led culture.

Priorities for 2024–25

- Continue to support our colleagues as we restructure our operations and embed the benefits of transformation.
- Invest in growth and improved customer experiences including in the IELTS partnership, new product development, English teaching and assessment, and in integrating AI technologies.
- Develop new strategic partnerships with corporates, trusts and foundations.
- Extend our portfolio of contracts with international development clients.
- Invest in systems and processes to continually improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations and reduce bureaucracy whilst enhancing management of risk, control and compliance.
- 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; 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 table shows the income and expenditure projection for 2024-25. We are planning for a deficit of £22 million which is being facilitated through loan funding for investments in growth and cost reduction as agreed with the FCDO. By the end of the Spending Review period, the grant-in-aid contribution to our total income will be just 18.5 per cent, helping deliver value for money to the UK government.

£ in millions	2024–25
FCDO grant-in-aid (ODA and non-ODA)	162.5
Earned income	885.0
Total income	1,047.5
Direct costs	(823.8)
Indirect costs	(171.1)
Tax	(16.9)
Investment programmes in growth and change	(40.3)
Other net costs including interest	(17.4)
Net (expenditure)/income	(22.0)

