

Corporate Plan 2021–22



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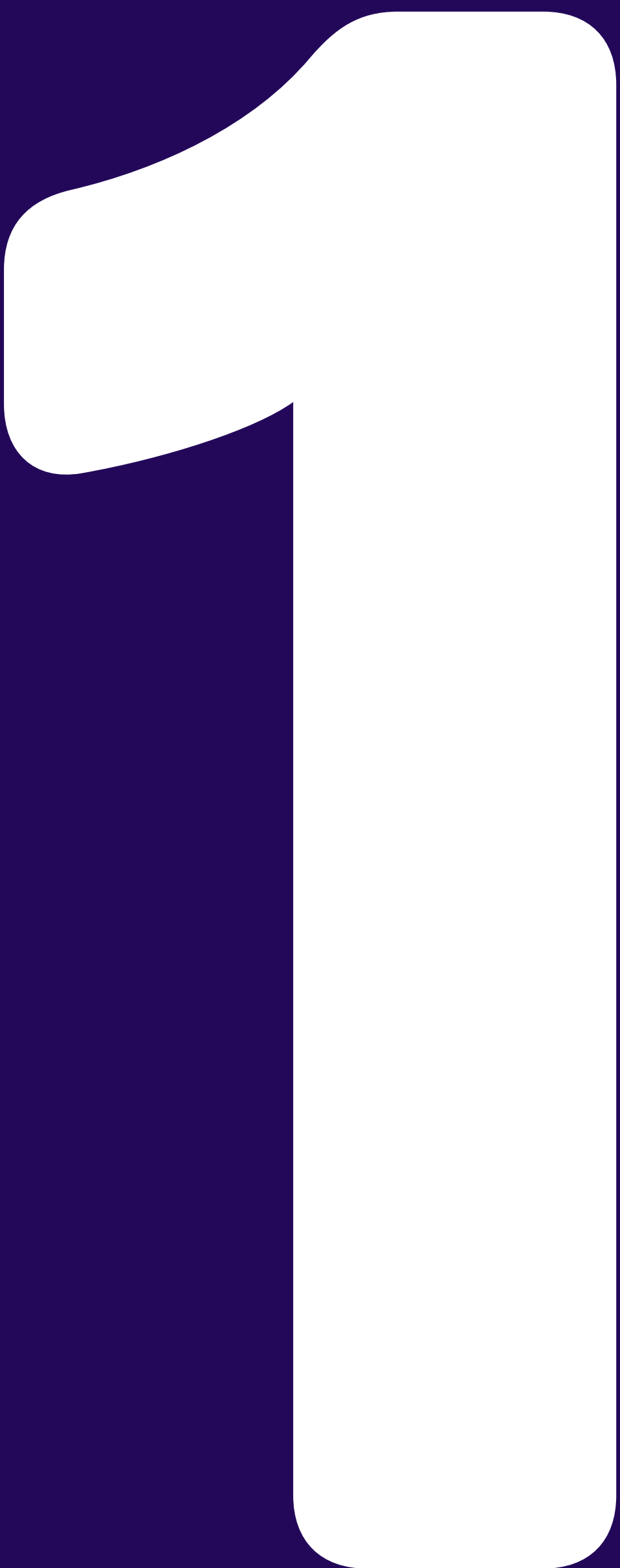
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Who we are



About us

We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.



Participants from our Future Leaders Connect programme.

We work in two ways – directly with individuals to transform their lives, and with governments and partners to make a bigger difference for the longer term, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We connect the best of the UK with the world and the best of the world with the UK. These connections lead to an understanding of each other’s strengths and of the challenges and values that we share. This builds trust between people in the UK and other nations which endures even when official relations may be strained.

In 2019–20 we connected with 80 million people directly and with 791 million overall, including online and through our broadcasts and publications.

Planning for the future



This plan sets out how we will build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries in 2021–22 through cultural relations, as well as our longer-term strategy and vision to 2025.

The pandemic continues to affect every area of our work. For English teaching and exams, we have responded by accelerating the roll-out of digital products to meet our customers’ and partners’ needs. We are focusing on supporting the higher education, arts and culture sectors to rebuild international partnerships and audiences as they recover from the severe constraints on mobility caused by Covid-19.

We aim to build on the digital innovation we have used to maintain engagement throughout the pandemic to significantly grow participation by our priority audiences.

As recommended in the Foreign Secretary’s Review, we are reprioritising use of the grant-in-aid for work in English, education – particularly higher education – and arts and culture, with a stronger emphasis on priority countries.

Global cooperation remains central to the interests of nations, organisations and individuals everywhere. We will leverage the potential of our network to nurture this interconnectedness. Initiatives include

a global campaign to support the objectives of COP26 through English, education, arts and culture, the expansion of our UK alumni platforms and the launch of the Turing scheme.

During the pandemic, our ability to earn income has been seriously impacted. In this plan, we set out our strategy for restoring income to pre-Covid-19 levels by 2022–23 and generating surplus by 2024–25. We will invest in our teaching and exams work including new products and services and increase efficiency and reduce costs through new business models and restructuring. We are grateful to the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) for providing the loan that enables us to start implementing this transformation.

Throughout the pandemic, our staff have remained steadfast in their professionalism and determination, despite its effect on lives and livelihoods. The changes to come will be challenging but we will ensure that they are managed in a way that aligns with our values, particularly our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. This year, we will invest in high quality engagement with millions of people around the world to support our long term sustainability and our contribution to the UK’s reputation as a global centre of cultural and educational excellence and a committed force for good.

Kate Ewart-Biggs,
Interim Chief Executive

Our vision

A more connected and trusted UK in a more connected and trusting world.

Our purpose statement

We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.

Our values

Expert and inclusive

Inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. By involving everyone in the conversation we learn from each other and bring together all of our experience, knowledge and expertise to do the best work that we can.

Open and committed

Our belief in what we do translates into a deep and long-term commitment to the people we work with and the places where we work. We tackle challenges and take responsibility with openness and honesty to bring about positive change.

Optimistic and bold

We believe in the potential of young people to create a better world. Inspired by this optimism, we are positive and creative and we focus on what works. We are not afraid to make bold choices to shape a better future for everyone.

Our strategy

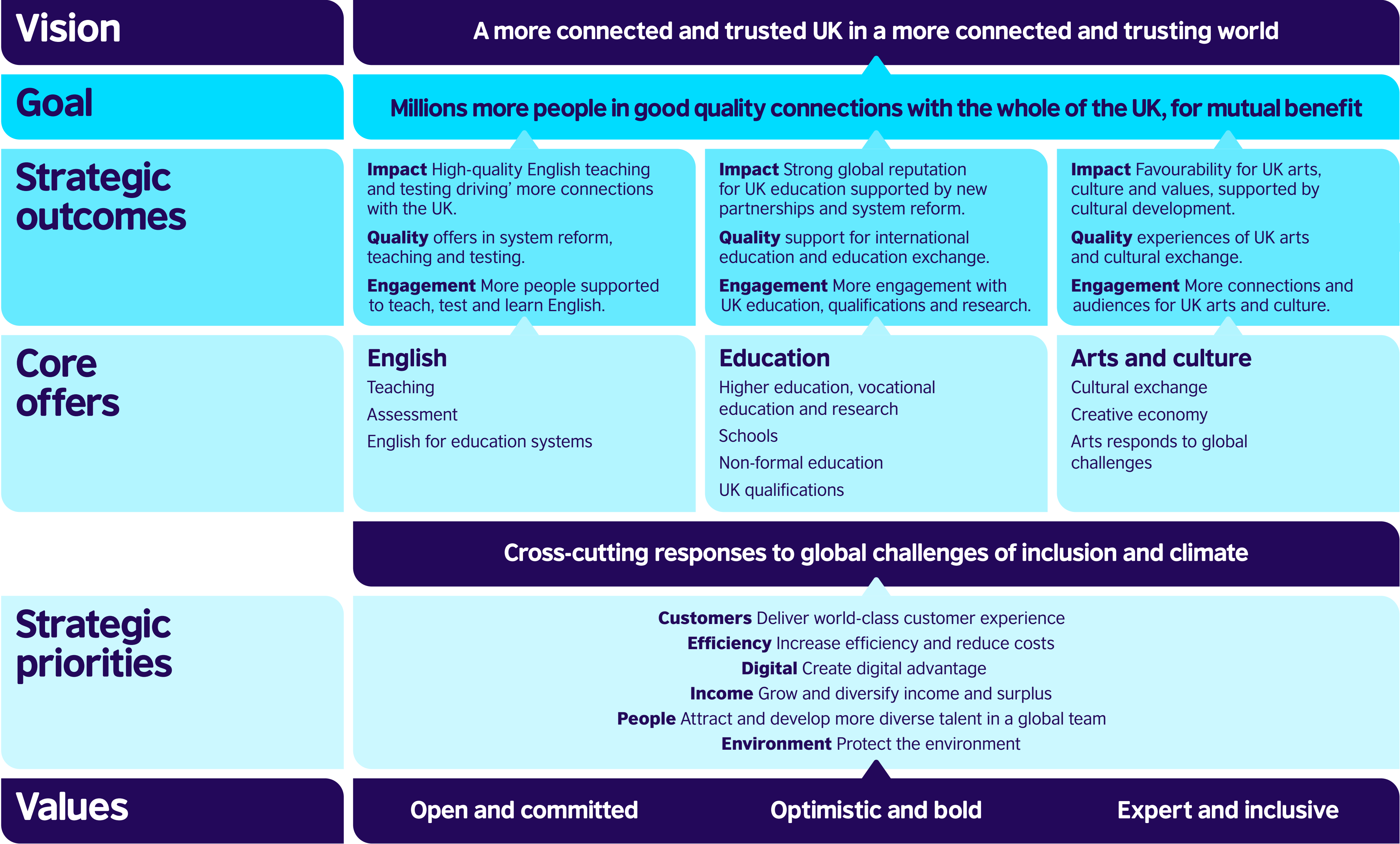


Responding to changes in the world

We are developing new digital solutions to respond to the disruption caused by Covid-19.

<p>The effects of the global pandemic will continue to be felt across all areas of our work. Continued restrictions on social gatherings and travel will affect face-to-face and mobility programmes throughout the year.</p> <p>The pandemic has changed the way that people – particularly young people – participate in cultural activities, learn new skills and interact with each other. We believe this is an opportunity to strengthen the UK’s brand as a leader in inclusive and high-quality arts, education and English language teaching and assessment.</p>	<p>To help the UK education and culture sectors engage internationally, we will accelerate the roll-out of digital participation platforms. This means not only increasing our overall reach but also increasing the depth of engagement through online channels. We will expand our digital arts offer, widening access to exciting new work from the UK, and increase the amount of meaningful engagement through online training and events. We will continue to expand our use of digital tools and approaches, such as remote invigilation of exams, to help meet the needs of our customers and partners.</p>	<p>Fifty per cent of the world’s population are now under 30. Young people are often affected hardest by instability and economic downturn, particularly women and girls. We will strengthen the importance of inclusion in all our education and culture offers and develop longer-term relations with young leaders and influencers. This includes a new alumni strategy to strengthen the favourability of this group to the UK and their ability to bring about change. In support of UK leadership on climate change we will use our convening power in culture and education to help build the global legacy of COP26.</p>	<p>Our geographical focus will include a shift to the Indo-Pacific, where we will spend nearly 40 per cent of the grant-in-aid. Over 50 per cent of the total grant will be allocated to priority countries chosen to maximise our impact in English education, and arts and culture and to support the UK’s international relations where intergovernmental relations may be constrained by other factors.</p> <p>Technology will also change how our teams interact with each other and our many partners and customers in ways which will both reduce costs and increase cross-cultural collaboration and innovation. Increasingly we will operate beyond and across borders and outside the narrow footprint of physical presence in capital cities to reach millions more people.</p>
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Strategic framework to 2025



Supporting the UK's priorities

- Strengthen the UK's place in the world
- Promote shared values
- Promote UK prosperity and trade
- Project the UK as a force for good and tackle global challenges
- Level up in the UK

ODA priorities

- Climate change
- Girls' education
- Science, research and technology
- Open societies
- Trade and economic development

The British Council in 2025

We are investing in change to create a modern, sustainable and resilient British Council with world-class digital and face-to-face customer experiences. Our new overseas model will depend less on physical presence and connect people seamlessly online and offline. We will be more efficient in our ways of working, supported by new technologies, automation and standardisation.

We will maintain our market leading position in English language teaching and assessment.

We will have new business and partnership models that guarantee our long-term future, and provide increased freedoms to operate commercially.

We will have generated benefits of over £500m from efficiencies and commercial growth across the 5 year period to 2025–26.

Our physical footprint will be smaller, able to flex with demand and more environmentally responsible with a 30 per cent reduction in carbon emissions (against the 2017/18 baseline).

With a more diverse and flexible workforce we will be able to make the most of our talent and skills.

What we will deliver by 2025

Our strategy is to create new opportunities for people to share, exchange, participate, learn and co-operate with each other and with the UK – face-to-face and online – so that together we thrive.

We will reach 140 million learners of English, that’s one in ten of all the people learning English in the world.

100 million people will be actively participating in good quality connections with the UK.

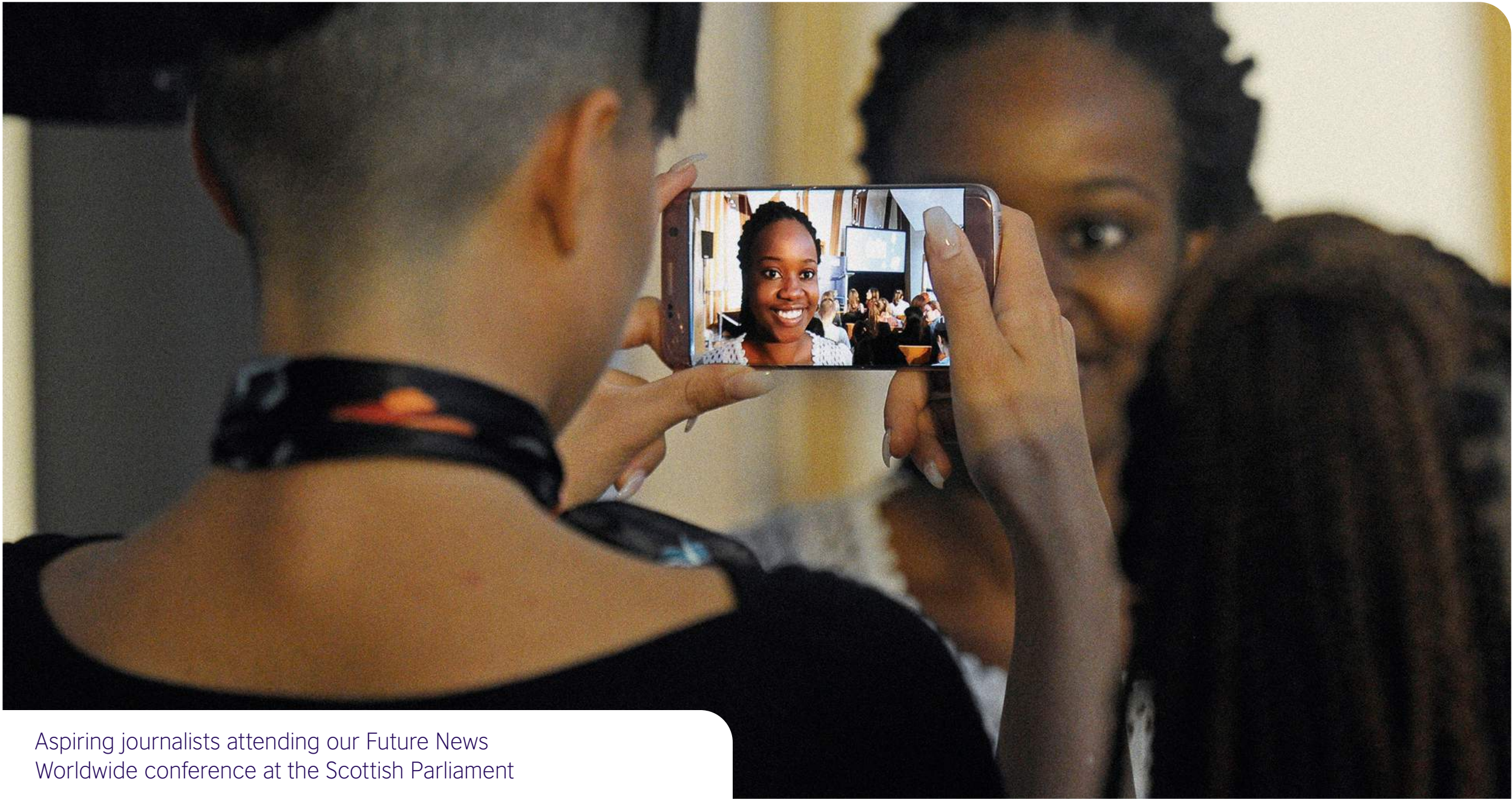
30m people will be experiencing UK arts face-to-face or online – up from 8 million in 2019–20.

By marketing the UK as a world-class study destination, we will help the UK education sector to recover by 2025 and support the national target of 600,000 international students by 2030.

70 per cent of people who participate in activities with the British Council will be more favourable to the UK.

We work for the whole of the UK

The British Council plays an important role in showcasing the creativity, innovation and values of the UK and its four nations to the world.



Aspiring journalists attending our Future News Worldwide conference at the Scottish Parliament

Our ambition is to create international opportunities in English, education, arts and culture which deliver on the promise and potential of people across the whole of the UK. We will celebrate the diversity and distinctiveness of all four nations that make the UK what it is.

We are committed to and aligned with the FCDO and HMG priorities, and the international ambitions of elected governments in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. This will inform the strategic choices we make, the value we seek to create and the partnerships we build.

We work with elected mayors of England’s major cities and across the country to champion internationalism, increase the UK’s soft power and support levelling up.

Global Britain takes the stage in 2022, with the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, Festival UK* 2022 and Her Majesty The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. We will contribute by offering international opportunities for individuals and organisations across the UK and by helping to establish partnerships in education and the arts.

Wales

Through Go Digital: Sub Saharan Africa – Wales 2021, arts organisations in Wales will work with partners in Africa on digital projects that support international collaboration, skills sharing and capacity building to help develop post-Covid-19 recovery strategies for the arts sectors. With researchers from South Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria and Wales, we will build new cultural connections and deepen relationships with partners including National Theatre Wales, National Youth Arts Wales, National Trust Wales, Circus Zambia, Lagos Theatre Festival and ASSITEJ South Africa, developing virtual, innovative and climate-friendly approaches to artistic exchange and showcasing.



Northern Ireland

We will strengthen our arts and cultural networks and partnerships between Northern Ireland and India. This includes a new partnership between the Belfast Photo Festival and the Chennai Photo Biennale and new music and film connections through the Belfast Film Festival. The Belfast International Arts Festival is connecting with Indian theatre in a digital world, and we are developing a new literature programme building on the rich history of literature in the two countries. We will continue to make connections for Northern Ireland internationally by sharing our experience, of a society emerging from conflict.



England

We are the international partner for Coventry UK City of Culture 2021. Projects include bringing together international teams from Brazil, Egypt, Denmark, Senegal and the UK to respond to site-specific briefs in Coventry and propose new ideas for the city that can be prototyped. Another of our partnership projects, Youthful Cities, invites young adults from Coventry, Lebanon, Colombia, US and Kenya to respond to urgent, youth focused issues in their respective cities. In Birmingham, Transforming Narratives, delivered in partnership with Culture Central and Arts Council England, offers a range of platforms for new artistic voices about contemporary lived experience across Birmingham, Pakistan and Bangladesh, ahead of Birmingham hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2022.



Scotland

We are supporting the UK’s ambition to make COP26 the most inclusive ever, connecting young people in Glasgow to our global schools network, providing access to resources on the environment and community action, and showcasing a programme of creative commissions bringing together art, science and digital technology.

We are working with the University of Edinburgh to develop a global massive open online course (MOOC) that draws on Scotland’s approach to learning for sustainability and creating opportunities for alumni of Future News Worldwide – a training programme for young journalists – to report on COP26 and issues around climate from their own countries. A partnership with Glasgow City Council aims to strengthen existing and develop new partnerships for community action and urban policymaking beyond COP26.



Our global campaign on climate change and the environment



We are drawing on our work in English, education and the arts to provide a platform for climate co-operation, dialogue and action.

In November 2021, the UK hosts the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26). To support the event’s ambitions, we are drawing on our global network to provide a platform for climate co-operation, dialogue and action. Our new global programme, The Climate Connection, will reach 233 million people across 78 countries. We will connect young people, policymakers, artists, scientists, students, academics, business and community leaders and others – to make new global connections, share ideas and achieve real change.

The Climate Connection will span our work in arts, education and English. In the arts we are planning a series of creative commissions, which will be developed by individuals and organisations in the UK working with partners in 28 countries. In education we are supporting young people to access specialist climate and environment-themed courses in the UK through our 26 scholarships for COP26. We are also supporting the development of innovative solutions through, for example, a new partnership programme for 26 rising star researchers from across the Commonwealth in partnership with the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

In English, we’re developing resources for teachers with our UK partners, enabling them to integrate environmental sustainability into their teaching.

Working with alumni of our programmes, including young journalists, we are also promoting the voices of young people through our Global Youth Letter from 4,000 young people across 23 ODA countries. Young people will help us host a global virtual policy round table series across the culture and education sectors, sharing the results of their work and giving a clear call for action.

Our geographical focus

We currently operate in over 100 countries and territories. Our priority countries are listed below. These are the countries and territories where we will prioritise resource and grant-in-aid funding.



Workshop in Saudi Arabia curated by Scotland's Highland Print Studio.

Criteria for prioritising

Their importance to the FCDO
Supporting country FCDO objectives and wider geographical priorities.

The unique ability of the British Council to operate on the UK's behalf
Helping to sustain relations in countries where British Council has a clear added value.

Arts and culture impact and potential
Changing perceptions of the UK for the better through arts. This includes supporting development and prosperity, strengthening cultural and commercial links with the UK,

and working with countries of most importance to the UK arts and cultural sectors.

Education impact and potential
Promoting UK education in priority markets for government and the education sector, including support for student recruitment and transnational education partnerships and supporting wider HMG priorities through schools and non-formal education.

English language impact and potential
Improving teaching quality and the learning of English to contribute to development and prosperity and to strengthen educational, cultural and commercial links with the UK.

Americas
Brazil, Mexico

East Asia
China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam

EU Europe
France, Germany, Poland, Spain

Middle East and North Africa
Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia

South Asia
Bangladesh, India, Pakistan

Sub-Saharan Africa
Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan

Wider Europe
Russia, Turkey, Ukraine

2021–22 English targets

310,000 students taught through British Council teaching centres and through paid teaching English Online products.

592,000 English teachers benefiting from British Council professional development programmes overseas.

2,039,000 IELTS tests delivered overseas.

28 Net Promoter Score reported by our teaching centre customers.

2021–22 Education targets

117,000 international students studying in the UK positively influenced by British Council activities.

25,500 British Council alumni actively engaged in British Council or HMG networking activities.

3.1 million policymakers, school leaders, teachers and schoolchildren participating in our international education programmes.

686,000 people taking UK professional examinations overseas with the British Council.

2021–22 Arts and culture targets

300 arts and culture organisations working with us in the UK.

18.7 million people engaged worldwide through digital and face-to-face events.

2,150 arts and culture organisations working with us overseas.

70 per cent of the people we engage with through the arts have increased favourability towards the UK.

2021–22 Organisational targets

19 per cent overhead and professional service costs as proportion of total income.

77 per cent of our meaningful engagement will be digital and 23 per cent face-to-face, compared with 48 per cent digital and 52 per cent face-to-face in 2019–20.

65 per cent staff engagement as measured by our staff survey, against a 60 per cent baseline from 2019–20.

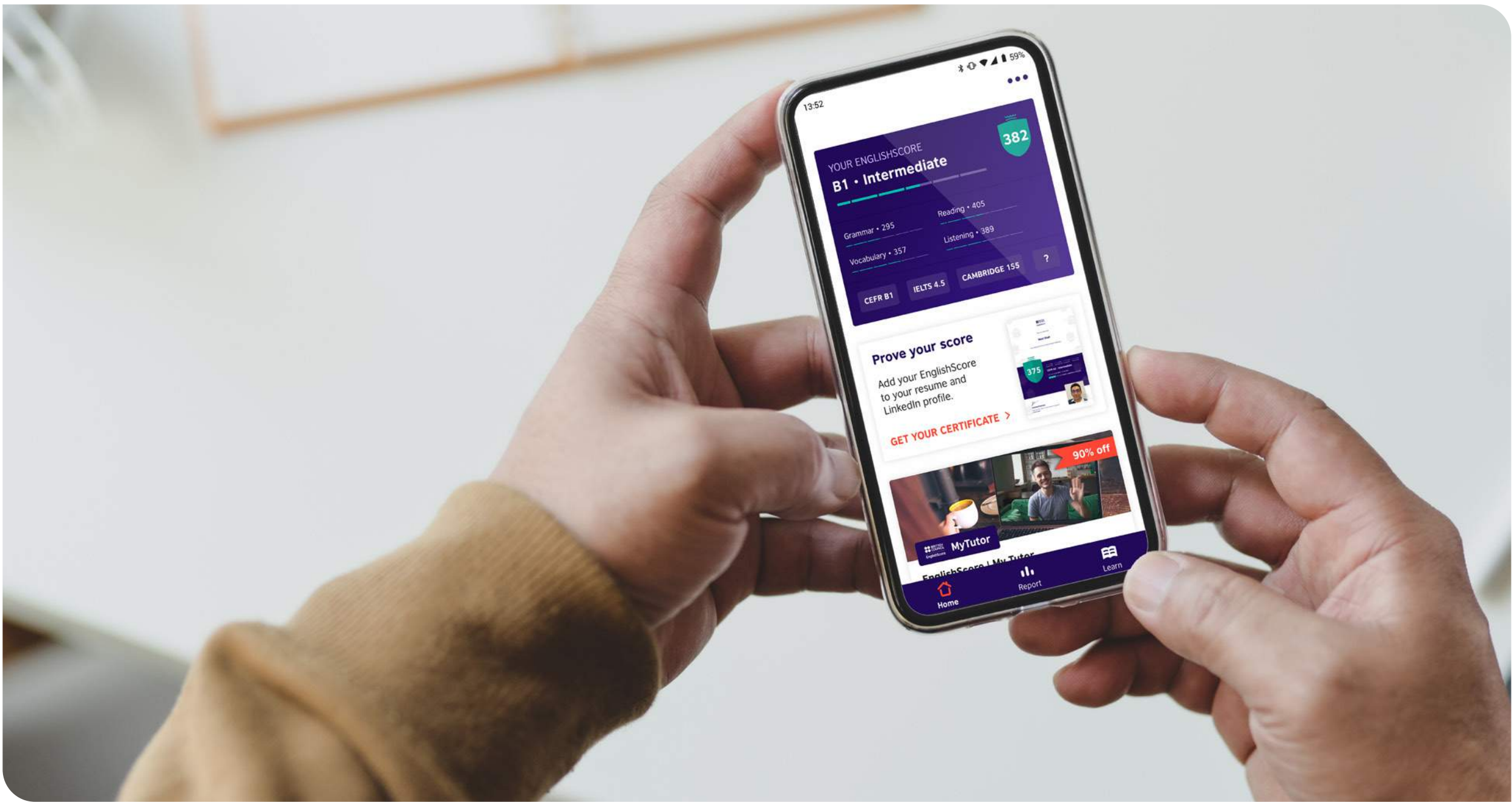
24,300 tonnes of carbon emissions from a baseline of 32,744 tonnes in 2017–18.

What we do



English

1.4 billion people want to learn – or are learning – English. English teaching and assessment is a global industry with an estimated value of \$38 billion, of which ten per cent is for digital services.



Governments everywhere are looking for support to improve English in their education systems. And confidence in English is positively associated with trust in the UK and intention to engage with the UK. For all these reasons we are working to grow the UK’s reputation as a leader and trusted partner in English teaching, learning and testing – both in our own teaching centres and in schools, universities, businesses and homes worldwide.

This year, as we respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, we will extend our online and blended teaching offer and accelerate the digital development of our English language assessment products. We will also ensure that our exam centre network recovers to meet the needs of key clients such as UKVI and UK universities seeking to recruit international students. Working closely with the UK English language teaching sector on project delivery, we will support governments worldwide to meet specific education needs that have resulted from Covid-19 and help to address FCDO priorities in girls’ education and language issues in the development sector.

Teaching

Our teaching centres are flagships of good practice in high-quality English language teaching and we are recognised as market leaders. We reach more than 100 million people through digital channels and social media, and teach face-to-face in 170 centres in 76 cities across the world.



Outcomes

Face-to-face and blended teaching Market leaders in quality English language teaching and learning face-to-face and blended.

Online teaching Market leaders in high-quality English language teaching and learning online.

Accreditation UK Quality assurance of UK providers of English courses in the UK.

Bilingual education A world-class English–Spanish bilingual and bicultural education.

Priorities in 2021–22

Restore our global teaching centre business to pre-Covid-19 volumes.

Grow our young learners’ face-to-face teaching business by opening new centres in locations which are convenient for our customers.

Grow our English Online offer.

English assessment

IELTS is recognised as a secure and trusted test by almost 11,000 universities, employers and governments worldwide. We co-own IELTS with IDP Education Australia and Cambridge Assessment.

Aptis is the British Council’s wholly owned English test, developed with input from leading English language assessment experts.



Students registering and taking IELTS exams in Istanbul.

Outcomes

English language testing (B2C) Market-leading position through continued continued digital development and product diversification, working with IELTS partners.

English language testing (B2B) To raise international English language standards in organisations and assess more people more efficiently and effectively.

Priorities in 2021–22

- Recover the business from the impact of Covid-19.
- Invest in IELTS to protect its market-leading position and support increased access to UK education and qualifications.
- Complete the sale of our IELTS exams operations in India.
- Develop new joint products by adopting new technologies and computer-based tests.
- Improve the customer experience.

English for education systems

Working with UK ELT and education technology providers, universities and academics, we help governments and other partners to improve the quality of English teaching, learning and assessment in their countries.



Participants from India on our English and Digital for Girls' Education programme.

Outcomes

English Connects Support teachers and teacher educators through the world’s largest online English teacher community.

English in education Support overseas governments, through partnerships with ministries of education and UK expertise, to improve the standards of the teaching, learning and assessment of English in a multilingual world.

English and empowerment Opportunities in formal and non-formal education with disadvantaged and marginalised groups where English builds resilience, broadens horizons and provides agency and voice.

Priorities in 2021–22

Extend the global TeachingEnglish website audience with a new Africa version, including new context-specific content, professional development pathways as well as ‘mobile first’ and offline capabilities for teachers with limited connectivity.

Roll out a new online learning management system in partnership with e-Com Scotland supporting professional development in Rwanda, Japan, Central Asia, and the Levant, and to be expanded globally.

Expand the English and Digital for Girls’ Education (EDGE) programme from its base in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, with new partnership programmes in Pakistan and Afghanistan and further investigation of expansion into 13 countries in Africa, ASEAN, South America, and in the Middle East.

Increase support for remote English language learning through radio and broadcast to ministries of education in development contexts, with an online capacity building course on broadcast learning materials production. Target countries include Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Morocco, Egypt and Uzbekistan.



An English language teacher in Mexico.

LearnEnglish websites and online events

The LearnEnglish websites will grow both their overall reach and the number of customers for the subscription model. We will streamline and update our app portfolio and increase their role in generating leads for other British Council offers, including in countries where we have no physical presence.

We have developed four new subscription based courses with FutureLearn and will continue to evolve the MOOC model to grow audience engagement and sustainability.

The biggest online English teacher community

The English Connects programme provides resources, networks and online professional development for the world’s largest online English teacher community of ten million teachers. A new learning management system partnership with e-Com Scotland will enable offline and ‘mobile first’ engagement.

A new TeachingEnglish Africa website provides contextualised professional development pathways for African teachers, ensuring equitable access for teachers where resources are limited. In response to Covid-19, model scripts, recordings, and capacity building courses have been developed as part of a toolkit for ministries of education to produce quality broadcast materials for out of school English language learners. The toolkit will be rolled out globally.

Education

Access to high quality education at all levels is more important than ever. The UK’s strength in education makes it an excellent partner for people-to-people, institution-to-institution and government-to-government connections.



Students at
Huddersfield University.

The British Council is well placed to support opportunities for inward and outward mobility, to facilitate international partnerships with UK schools, colleges and universities, and to broker the sharing of good practice to improve our four domestic education systems and those of the UK’s international partners. In places where formal education systems are less developed or affected by instability or conflict, we build connections with the UK and reach young people, their leaders and influencers with a skills development offer. This is delivered by local partners such as community and sports groups.

In 2021–22 we will work to deliver the ambitions of the updated UK International Education Strategy and will support the higher education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sectors to internationalise, diversify and recover sustainably from the impacts of the global pandemic.

Higher education, vocational education and research

We strengthen international connections between UK higher education and TVET and governments and institutions around the world, and support student and researcher mobility to and from the UK.



A Study UK showcase event in China.

Outcomes

Promoting study in the UK Increase the UK’s share of the global market for international student recruitment by marketing the UK as a world-class study destination.

International opportunities to study and work overseas Create more opportunities for UK students, TVET learners and researchers to study and work overseas.

Higher education and TVET partnerships Develop HE and TVET partnerships that support quality and internationalisation and grow the market for the UK sector.

UK alumni Increase long-term engagement with UK alumni to engage with the UK.

UK science and research Support the UK’s international reputation for science and research.

Research, insight and policy dialogue Create more opportunities to learn from global practice and insight.

Priorities in 2021–22

Increase the UK’s share of the global market for international student recruitment.

Launch a new strategy and digital platform to strengthen the engagement of international student alumni with the UK.

Provide UK young people with more opportunities to work or study abroad, including through the successful establishment of the Turing Scheme.

Contribute to significant increases in student and early career researcher mobility between India and the UK through a focus on the mutual recognition of qualifications and related policy and programme interventions.

Partner national state governments in Brazil, Mexico and Colombia on education reforms in science, technology, engineering and maths , including opportunities for women in science across all education levels in Brazil.

Establish a new global programme to support institutional partnerships between higher education institutions in the UK and overseas priority countries.

Schools

We support young people in the UK and other countries to gain knowledge and skills to contribute to global society. We do this by supporting educators, leaders and policymakers to strengthen quality and inclusion in schools and building long-term connections with the UK.



Outcomes

School system development and reform for quality and inclusion Support inclusive, quality education for all learners, including for girls and marginalised children, and enhance professional knowledge of school teachers, leaders and policymakers.

International opportunities for UK schoolchildren Increase the number of UK schoolchildren who have international experience, knowledge and skills.

Priorities in 2021–22

Support ministries of education, teachers and school leaders as they rebuild in the wake of the pandemic. We will focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and the UK, including a new digital Education Exchange event series for educators and policymakers in over 100 countries.

Develop international connections with the UK education systems.

Support students, teachers and policymakers to learn about climate change and take practical action as we approach COP26.

Support UK efforts to ensure a successful replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), culminating in the UK–Kenya GPE Summit in July 2021, which will have a particular focus on girls’ education.

Skills for young people

Our education work in non-formal contexts meets the needs of young people through UK-sourced leadership skills programmes which empower them to participate in the social and economic development of their societies, and to tackle important local and global issues. Our programmes also contribute to open societies and conflict resolution by creating positive pathways for marginalised young people.



Outcomes

Skills for young people and young leaders Needs and aspirations of young people met through non-formal education programmes that support personal, social and economic development.

Appreciation of the UK UK recognised as a country that understands and meets the needs of young people, and is a force for good in the world.

Priorities in 2021–22

To equip young leaders in their communities with the leadership skills and networks to rebuild following the Covid-19 pandemic. Our primary focus will be on South Asia, MENA, East Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

To expand our digital and remote skills offer, reaching millions more young people from diverse backgrounds, contributing to their personal, social and economic development, and connecting them with the UK.

UK qualifications

We create opportunities for people everywhere to achieve their potential by taking UK qualifications. We provide examination services to awarding bodies and UK examination boards enabling them to access international markets and extend their reach.

Outcomes

Distribution of UK qualifications UK academic and professional qualifications are valued, and taken by increasing numbers of individuals to help them advance in their career and / or education.



Remote invigilation of exams.

Priorities in 2021–22

Continue to develop our range of technology-enabled services to give awarding organisation clients worldwide greater choice and flexibility with secure test centre and remotely invigilated exam delivery solutions.

Continue to forge partnerships with UK school exam boards enabling them to extend their reach and grow their presence including in East Asia. We will focus especially on Vietnam with new and existing partner schools and extend the model to new markets such as the Philippines.

Support increased access to UK qualifications in China and support UK universities with remote invigilation solutions.

Provide access to school qualifications with leading UK providers in Africa.



Participants at our
Going Global conference.



Stronger international partnerships for the UK

Our new Going Global Partnerships programme will increase higher education and TVET partnerships that support quality and internationalisation and grow the market for the UK sector through regulatory and system-level reform.

We will help to create stronger, more inclusive and globally connected tertiary systems, using our insight and trusted relationships on the ground. We will work in over 50 countries to connect the UK sector with government ministries, institutions, sector bodies, researchers, academics, students, industry and communities.

International experiences for young people in the UK

The British Council in partnership with Ecorys will deliver the Turing Scheme for the UK government. This is a new scheme to fund international opportunities in education and training across the world. It supports UK organisations in the higher education, further and vocational education and schools sectors to offer students, learners and pupils life-changing experiences to study or work around the world.

Placements will enrich their learning by developing new skills and giving them international experience that boosts employability and confidence. The scheme will have a particular focus on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The first funded placements will begin at the start of the 2021–22 academic year.

Arts and culture

The arts and culture sectors have been badly hit by the global pandemic but their ability to connect people and transform lives has never been more important.



The Comet is Coming in Moscow as part of the UK-Russia Year of Music Programme.

Connecting the diverse cultural riches of the UK with audiences around the world and fostering new collaborations between British artists and their international counterparts – digitally and face-to-face – creates new opportunities and inspiration. Connection strengthens perceptions of a modern, vibrant and creative UK among millions in fast-growing economies – particularly young people – encouraging more trade, investment and tourism.

This year, our focus will be to help the arts and culture sectors across the whole of the UK to recover from the impact of Covid-19 through international opportunities.

Targeted grant schemes will help cultural professionals to form new networks and explore new markets for their work. We will use UK expertise to help countries to prosper through creative economies. We will significantly expand our digital offer, using new platforms to widen access to exciting and inspiring new work from the UK and provide opportunities to develop skills, share insights and collaborate creatively. We will continue to showcase the contribution the creative sector makes to changing attitudes towards inclusion and global challenges including climate change – making the most of the COP26 platform.

Cultural exchange

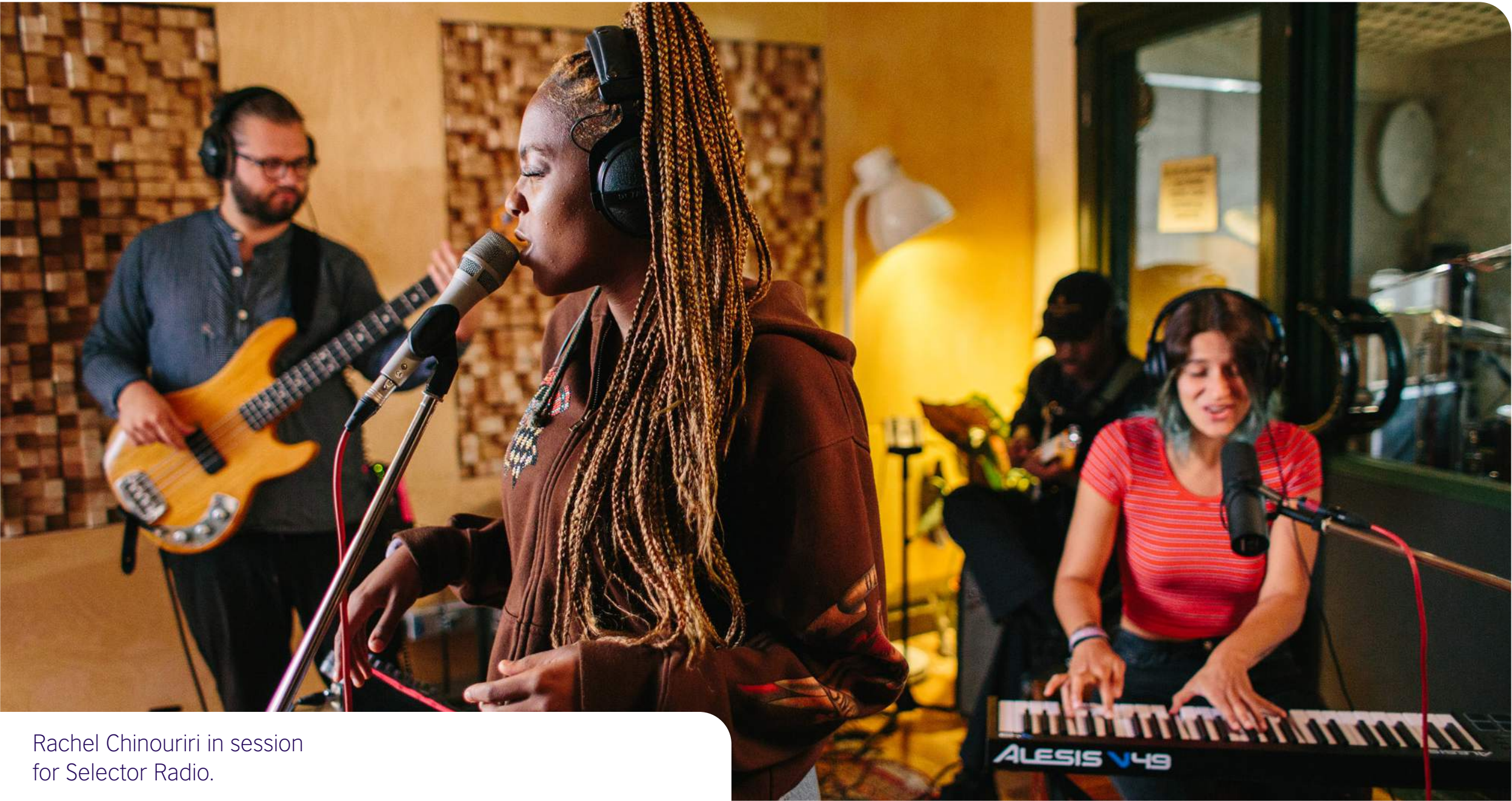
We support international network building and collaborations for the UK sector and provide opportunities for emerging and next-generation artists from all four countries in the UK to present their work internationally.

Outcomes

Cultural professionals connect Support organisations and artists to build networks, collaborate and develop markets.

Artists and audiences Share the work of UK artists with global audiences face-to-face and virtually.

Spotlights on culture Work with major UK and international cultural platforms, including festivals, seasons of culture, biennales and major civic anniversaries.



Rachel Chinouriri in session for Selector Radio.

Priorities in 2021–22

Showcase the UK’s creativity and innovation at the Venice Biennale, both at the International Architecture Exhibition in 2021 and the International Art Exhibition in 2022.

Develop new online platforms to provide global reach for UK arts and culture and maximise digital engagement with the British Council’s art collection and our music channel Selector.

Support cultural professionals to form new networks and explore new markets for their work through targeted grant schemes.

Help to maintain and enhance connections in the arts with EU countries.

Develop UK Arts and Higher Education contributions to the national celebrations of the 75th anniversaries of India and Pakistan.

Creative economy

Our work contributes to inclusive economic and social development and creates stronger links with the UK. We create international opportunities for the next generation of creative innovators, practitioners and entrepreneurs through exchange programmes.



One of our Creative Entrepreneurs workshops.

Outcomes

Enterprise policy and leadership Develop the capacity of creative entrepreneurs and policymakers to support sustainable creative economies in their countries.

Priorities in 2021–22

Expand our programmes to help develop skills in the creative economy and build connections with the UK, focusing on emerging economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Indo-Pacific region and Latin America.

Support the 2021 UN Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development by connecting partners from across the globe to kickstart collaboration and build understanding of the creative economy as a driver of sustainable development.

Develop our Creative Collective programme in the Americas, working with emerging entrepreneurs, leaders and policymakers from the UNESCO Creative City Network.

Develop the Future Leaders Connect global network of emerging policy leaders by enriching it with talent emerging from the creative economy.

Enable and stimulate inclusive collaboration and enterprise in the creative economy in China through development of a network of inclusive leaders.

Arts responds to global challenges

Through the transformative power of arts and culture to change attitudes we support more connected and equal societies and the protection and promotion of cultural expression, diversity and heritage at risk.

We create inspiring opportunities for people, institutions and places to respond to challenges with local impact and global relevance.



Trainee taking part in practical stonemasonry training in Jordan.

Outcomes

Cultural heritage Protect heritage at risk and generate sustainable socio-economic prosperity.

Our shared futures Transform lives through the power of art to change attitudes and create opportunities in the areas of inclusion and climate change.

Priorities in 2021–22

Further develop the Cultural Protection Fund and with our partner, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), build an integrated approach to cultural heritage protection focused on the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Continue to highlight the risks to cultural heritage from climate change and natural disasters.

Build and share evidence to demonstrate the value of cultural heritage as a driver of sustainable and inclusive growth.

Deliver a series of events and talks alongside the launch of The Missing Pillar – Culture’s Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Preparation workshop involving artists from Japan, the UK and Bangladesh for a performance of The Tempest as part of the UK in Japan season.



The British Council Collection showcasing UK artists online.

Celebrating cultural connections

The **UK/Australia Season**, delivered in partnership with the Australian government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, will present the UK as a creative, innovative nation and support Department for International Trade and FCDO stakeholder engagement. An extensive cultural, higher education and public engagement programme is in development. It will support 600 artists and 200 businesses to develop new knowledge and networks.

The extended **UK in JAPAN** campaign, delivered in partnership with the British Embassy in Tokyo, will see a range of multi-year projects coincide with the Games including a new production of The Tempest with Jenny Sealey of Graeae Theatre and an iconic installation by Jason Bruges Studio. The campaign has brokered 92 new creative partnerships and is promoting inclusion in the cultural sector. This year has brought an additional focus on Arts and Technology, featuring innovative UK work by Digital Catapult and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

British Council Collection – Museum without Walls

With the British Council Collection at its core, Museum without Walls is a unique accessible online exhibition experience showcasing works by UK artists together with those chosen by guest curators. The curators are selected by open call to spend a week in the UK learning about the British Council Collection and the UK contemporary art scene. The project offers a professional development opportunity for curators to hone skills in digital curation, accessibility and intercultural dialogue.

Since 2017 the programme has reached more than 850,000 unique visitors from more than 90 countries and received multiple awards. The first four editions have focused on curators from Turkey, Georgia and Ukraine – 2021 will see collaboration between emerging curators from Turkey and the UK. During 2021 we will build on the success of the Museum without Walls to create an ambitious and flexible programme of digital and blended collaborative programmes centred on the British Council Collection, skills development and diversity and accessibility.

How we operate



Strategic priorities

The financial and cultural impact of Covid-19 means we are accelerating our organisational transformation to ensure our long-term sustainability and to develop new ways of engaging with audiences and customers to deliver our mission.



Deliver world-class customer experience

New digital technologies are transforming how people work, study and exchange ideas.

To remain relevant and competitive we will prioritise improvements to the customer journey to offer personalised, more engaging experiences which build long-term loyalty and increase access and connections across the whole of the UK. We will invest in new products, services and programmes and use customer feedback to improve our offers, so that they remain fresh and relevant to existing and new users. Using the digital data generated by users of our products we will develop convenient, personalised and effective products through iterative improvement cycles.

Increase efficiency and reduce costs

2021–22 will see the start of a transformation programme which will deliver market and customer growth within a sustainable and affordable cost base. The new operating model will strengthen the strategic alignment with FCDO international priorities. We will deliver:

A global and more focused approach to programming that responds to and delivers against local market insights and needs.

A new overseas presence model based on more flexible, environmentally responsible and digital ways of working. This means in a small number of countries we will regrettably no longer have a presence, in others we will either no longer be able to spend grant-in-aid or will be delivering programmes remotely.

New partnership models for our commercial and grant-funded work that support increased income generation, quality of delivery and impact.

A more efficient, technology-enabled and standardised back office solution with much greater use of shared services to help drive down costs.

Organisational restructuring to help guarantee our sustainability.

Create digital advantage

We will accelerate the digital transformation of our products, programmes, processes and platforms to underpin our organisational change.

- We are building a strong digital culture, including through agile methods, agreed service standards, training and capacity building, to complement and embrace new technologies.
- We are championing the customer through customer experience design, outcome-focused delivery and rapid iteration to release value quickly.
- Data is integrated into how we work and validates customer needs and enables continually improving customer journeys. We will invest in our data capability to drive a more evidence-led culture and ways of working.
- To support our new operating models, we will increase automation of processes, and further strengthen new distributed ways of working and ‘light office’ solutions.
- Security will be integral to all of our systems and operations to maintain the reputation of the British Council across the world.

Grow and diversify income and surplus

Our teaching and exams businesses drive important benefits for the UK, strengthening customer relationships with the UK through the English language and providing a platform for UK exam boards to deliver international qualifications overseas.

- Our business model has relied on these operations to generate income and surplus to maintain our global network, including reinvesting over £100 million into arts showcasing and developed country programmes since 2015.
- Covid-19 has severely disrupted this model and we now need to invest to rebuild and renew our teaching and exams businesses. While face-to-face will remain a driver for the majority of the market, Covid-19 has accelerated a structural shift towards digital and online teaching and testing that can be taken anywhere, anytime, and the integration of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and remote invigilation.
- Through investment in our teaching and exams business, we will increase commercial income from £792 million in 2019–20 to nearly £1 billion in 2025. We will raise income in 2021-22 through the divestment of our IELTS operation in India.
- We will also reduce our dependency on traditional grant-in-aid funding for programmes across arts and culture, education and English for education systems. This will include the development of new strategic partnerships with donors, foundations and high-net-worth individuals as well as bidding for and delivering new contracts.

Attract and develop more diverse talent in a global team

To bring out the best in our highly capable and diverse workforce we will continue to build a work environment that is engaging with open and honest two-way communication and increased confidence in our Senior Leadership Team. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are core to our cultural relations mission and a strategic priority.

Our leadership team is committed to delivering our action plan on anti-racism including new and mandatory training, developing a shared understanding and a richer and more open and inclusive dialogue about race, racism and anti-racism, and strengthening recruitment and progression.

The Diversity Assessment Framework was developed by the British Council’s Diversity Unit to help measure organisational progress on mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion. In 2021–22 we will update the framework and set new baselines and targets to measure EDI to deliver this strategic priority, aligned with our anti-racism action plan.

Protect the environment

The environment is a priority for our stakeholders and our people, and as the UK gets set to host COP26 in Glasgow in November, we are responding.

We are launching a comprehensive set of global targets for our organisation to report against, covering areas including waste, travel, water and energy consumption, aggregated in target for reduction in our total carbon footprint.

Many of these targets have been set using the Greening Government Commitments, which we will begin reporting quarterly against to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the UK against 2017–18 baselines. By 2025 we will have reduced our total carbon footprint by 30 per cent, reduced waste to landfill to less than five per cent and met the consumer single-use plastic elimination commitment.

Risks

We face a range of risks in the countries where we operate.

As a global organisation with large commercial, cultural and charitable operations in some of the most challenging contexts in the world, risks can be significant, varied and potentially at times conflicting. We take a balanced approach to risk. We will ensure that we fully understand the risks we face and aim to manage risk across our activities appropriately.

We acknowledge, however, that successfully building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries, through arts and culture, education and the English language, will require some risk taking. It is not possible, and not always appropriate, to eliminate all risk inherent in our activities.

The short- and longer-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on our risk environment, as well as the wider context in which we operate. A holistic review of our risk profile was conducted in 2020, with the pandemic, the changed world, and the future British Council as the foremost context.

Principal risk profile

The following principal risk areas have been identified as having the greatest potential impact on the achievement of our strategic priorities going forward. Each area has been assigned to a senior manager who is responsible for leading our response.

- The success of our transformation programme.
- Successful delivery of our digital strategy.
- Our commercial performance across English and Exams.
- The future relevance of the Cultural Engagement portfolio.
- Our relationship with government and evidencing our contribution to UK priorities.
- Employee talent, capability, and well-being.
- Our strategic resilience to large-scale disruption, now and in the future.
- Our compliance and risk management culture.
- Information security and IT system stability.
- Our overall financial sustainability.
- Our organisational values and culture, and employee engagement.

All risks are reviewed regularly, and we constantly monitor emerging risks. As such, our risk profile is dynamic and ever-changing – new risks may be identified, analysed, tracked and managed throughout the year.

Financial outlook



Funding model

An efficient and sustainable British Council.

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 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (allocated through the UK government Spending Review).
- Funding for work delivered under contract to international and national bodies.
- Partnership income, including income-in-kind leveraged.
- Government grant for key activities.

Recovering from the impact of Covid-19

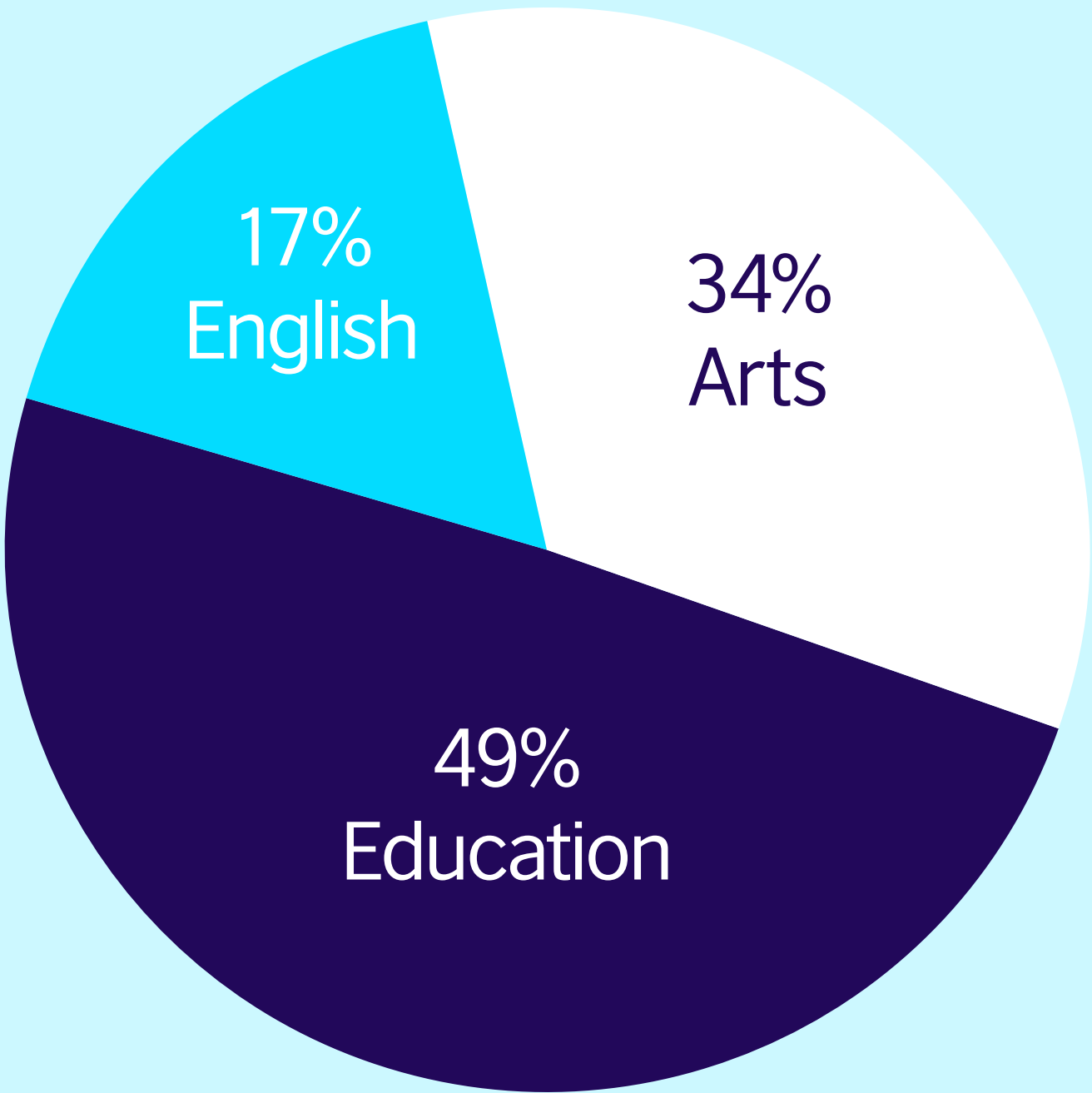
As with many other organisations, our ability to earn income from our teaching, exams and contract services reduced in the last year as Covid-19 reduced and stopped economic activity. It continues to impact our operations across the world. This means that we will be running a deficit in 2021–22 of up to £71 million prior to investment as we continue to manage the shortfall in income.

We have agreed with our Trustees and FCDO a five year business plan to rebuild and renew our operations. In 2021-22, this sees us invest up to £54 million as part of a longer-term transformation programme in the future growth of income-generating activity, accelerating our plans for digital development and supporting new operating models. We are grateful for the support of the FCDO who are providing commercial loan facilities of up to £245 million for this work – to manage our cashflow and to finance restructuring and investment in growth.

Through this investment we expect earned income to return to pre-Covid-19 levels by 2022–23. We also expect to break even by 2023–24 and generate a material net surplus by 2024–25.

Grant-in-aid allocation

In 2021–22 we anticipate the grant-in-aid spend of £179 million to be split across our three pillars as follows:



Financial plan

Our plan for 2021–22 is shown below alongside the provisional results for 2020–21:

£ in millions	2020–21 ¹	2021–22 ³
FCDO grant-in-aid (ODA and Non ODA)	144.5	179.0
FCDO grant-in-aid (exceptional restructuring grant)	-0	10.0
Earned income	763.3	845.5
Total income	907.8	1,034.5
Contract disbursements	(181.0)	(79.9)
Direct costs	(623.5)	(793.4)
Indirect costs	(159.0)	(175.9)
Tax	(6.3)	(13.7)
Other costs including interest, exchange rate movements, and BAU investments ²	(28.4)	(42.4)
Net (expenditure)/income – excluding transformation investments	(90.5)	(70.8)
Transformation investments	-0	(54.3)
Net (expenditure)/income	(90.5)	(125.1)

1. 2020-21 figures are draft and subject to audit.
2. This excludes the FX gains arising on consolidation of foreign operations of £6.4m.
3. The figures for 2021–22 do not take account of the divestment of our IELTS India operation.



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