

Summary Information Return 2010 (Online)



Summary Information Return 2010

This return is intended to comprise a summary of key information contained in the Trustees' Annual Report and accounts and in other documents.

All this information will be made public - P

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Charity Number: 209131

Financial Year End: 31 March 2010

Submitted on 27 August 2010

This online version of the form shows the information you have entered through Annual Return 2010 Online and has been designed to make it easier for charities to print.

This Summary Information Return was submitted online by MR ANDREW MACKAY on 27 August 2010. You do not need to send us a signed copy.

Question 1 - The Charity's Aims

What are your charity's aims?

The British Council builds engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide.

Our objects are to:

- promote a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom
- develop a wider knowledge of the English language
- encourage cultural, scientific, technological and other educational cooperation between the UK and other countries
- otherwise promote the advancement of education

Question 2 - Who benefits?

Who benefits from your charity's work?

The publics who benefit from the work of the British Council are located both in the United Kingdom and in countries where we work around the world. We have a physical presence in more than 100 countries and in 2009/10 reached more than 652 million people worldwide, with direct engagement with more than 18 million.

Specific groups with whom we work include:

Young people and individuals who are in education or starting out in their careers.

Mid and mature career professionals, artists, scientists, community or business leaders and policy makers.

Leaders and high level decision makers.

How do you respond to their needs and how do they influence the charity's development?

The cornerstone of all our work in cultural relations is that it is developed and delivered in partnership. By sharing our international network, our range of contacts and our local knowledge of the countries in which we work, we support institutional links between the UK and other countries.

Our partners and our publics are at the heart of the development of our strategy and programmes: we believe that the most effective approach to cultural relations is to bring together the partners with the right skills and expertise to put in place services and programmes which achieve the greatest impact.

All of our work is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis, allowing us to review and revise our strategy and approach accordingly.

Question 3 - The Charity's Strategy

What are the key elements of your charity's medium to long term strategy?

In the UK, we provide educational opportunities for young people, internationally link schools, further and higher education institutions in England and Wales, as well as Northern Ireland and Scotland, and link the UK's artistic, creative and scientific communities with their global counterparts.

Outside the UK, we work on the ground where it matters for the UK in:

- Lifeline countries, where we are one of the few points of international contact.

- Building trust countries, where we work on dialogue, access to English, education and skills.

- New and emerging economies, where we work with partners to build prosperity and sustainability through access to education, culture and English.

- Developing countries, where we build capacity and understanding through educational development and cultural exchange.

- Open and developed countries where we work in partnership to connect young people and build networks to share experiences and strengthen cultural and educational relationships.

How does your charity measure the success of the strategy?

The British Council is a charity and a public body audited by the National Audit Office.

We use a corporate scorecard to track the

- scope

- scale

- quality

- impact

of the cultural relations work that we undertake around the world.

The data generated is used to evaluate the impact which we are achieving and to inform strategy review and development

Question 4 - The Charity's Objectives and Achievements

What were your charity's main annual objectives and were they achieved?

Objective	Achievement
To engage with 15.4 million people around the world	We engaged directly with a total of 18.4 million people through our activity, exceeding our target significantly. We also trebled our reach, to 652 million around the world.

To absorb the negative effect of currency fluctuation and inflation, to improve efficiency, reduce support costs and maximise funds available to devote to our charitable purposes.	Restructuring and the introduction of new ways of working have enabled us to make efficiencies and to move £25m out of back office and support activity.
Maximise our impact by diversifying our sources of income and secure our future by increasing the proportion of income earned from our own services.	In 2009/10, we earned £2.50 for every £1 we received in grant from the UK government - an increase of almost 10%.
Review our governance and business structure to ensure that it is appropriate to our plans for growth.	Current overall governance model endorsed; some changes to business structure, both in the UK and overseas, are in the course of implementation in 2010.

Question 5 - The Charity's Income and Expenditure

What were your charity's most significant activities during the year and how much did it spend on them?

Charitable Activities	£ 000s
Educational cooperation and education advancement	443,000
Developing wider knowledge of the English language	157,000
Cultural, scientific and technological cooperation	52,000
Explanatory Comments	
In our annual report, we present expenditure across categories which are aligned to our charitable objects. These are the three most significant areas of spend for our activity.	

What were your charity's three main fundraising activities in the year and how much did each generate and cost?

Fundraising Activity	Income Generated £ 000s	Cost of Activity £ 000s
Fees and income from services	362,000	0
Grants receivable	211,000	0
Contract activity	130,000	0
Explanatory Comments		
We do not engage in direct fund raising. Our income comes almost entirely from our services in education and English language, as well as from our core government grants. As such, there are no direct costs relating to the generation of income from each source.		

Question 6 - The Charity's Financial Health

How would you describe your charity's financial health at the end of the period?

At the end of the period 2009-10, the British Council had a total general reserve of £46m. This is a net figure, combining the reserves related to both the full-cost activities (teaching, examinations and contract delivery which generate funds to invest in the business) and the reserves related to the grant and partnership funded activities.

The policy, agreed by the Board of Trustees in November 2004, is to accumulate sufficient reserves from full-cost activities to cover fluctuations in income over the business cycle, protect the assets of the charity and grant funded activities, and to allow for investment in development of our activities. The Board of Trustees regularly reviews the reserves policy to reflect any changes in the size of the business or in the risk profile and to ensure prudent investment of surplus reserves. The level of full-cost recovery reserves at the end of the year was above target and therefore sufficient to cover assessed risk.

Question 7 - The Next Year

How will the overall performance last year affect your charity's medium to long term strategy?

Our corporate plan for 2010/11 reflects the final year of the spending period. With severe pressure on public expenditure, we aim to diversify our income, to grow our paid services, to identify partners who are able to fund our activities and to develop and deliver our programmes collaboratively, maximising efficiency wherever possible.

We will continue to focus on the public benefit for our work, reducing overhead and support costs to a minimum and freeing further resource for delivery of our mission. This will include further development of our suite of innovative, global programmes and greater emphasis on the development of digital services, to reach publics more effectively, irrespective of geographical location or economic means.

What are your charity's main objectives for next year?

In spite of the economic challenges, we will continue to operate where it matters around the world, to stay prominent in key global environments, and invest in increasing our work in the English language, education, and culture.

We will work with over 400,000 leaders and influencers and 16.7 million young people over the next year and will develop our education services to teach English to over 300,000 students and administer over 1.8 million exams.

We will deliver our Intercultural Dialogue programmes in priority regions; support education reform across the Middle East and Near East and North Africa; and increase the numbers with free access to quality English language programmes.

We will increase our income earned from our own services by 23 per cent, taking the year 2008–09 as a baseline.

Question 8 - The Charity's Governance

How does your charity ensure that its governance arrangements are appropriate and effective?

The Board of Trustees provides strategic direction. Members and officers are elected by the Board, in accordance with our Royal Charter, following an open recruitment process.

Trustees are chosen to contribute experience and expertise and serve for a term of three years, with the possibility of standing for re-election for one further term.

The Board has delegated certain responsibilities, in accordance with the Royal Charter, to subcommittees for Audit, Nominations and Remuneration.

The Chief Executive has delegated authority for executive direction of the British Council, supported by an Executive Board, and under the supervision of the Board of Trustees.

A review of business structure and governance was concluded in 2009/10.

Question 9 - Further Details

Further details on all the answers given in this Summary Information Return can be obtained from:

The Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts, which can be found at www.britishcouncil.org/.../BC%20Annual%20Report%202009-10_reupload.pdf

Otherwise, contact Andrew Mackay, Secretary to the British Council

Declaration

This Summary Information Return was submitted online by MR ANDREW MACKAY on 27 August 2010, telephone number 020 7389 3062.

MR ANDREW MACKAY certified online that:

- the information provided was correct

- it had been or would be brought to the attention of all the trustees

Those who give answers that they know are untrue or misleading may be committing an offence.

Contact Details

Address

The Charity Commission
PO Box 1329
Liverpool
L69 3DY

Telephone

0845 3000 218

Textphone

0845 3000 219

Email

enquiries@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

Web

www.charitycommission.gov.uk