

Summary Information Return 2011 (Online)



Summary Information Return 2011

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 period end: 31 March 2011

Submitted on 06 October 2011

This online version of the form shows the information you have entered through Annual Return 2011 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 06 October 2011. 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 creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide.

We call this cultural relations.

Our objects are to advance, for the public benefit, activities which

- promote cultural relationships and the understanding of different cultures between people and peoples of the United Kingdom and other countries
- 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 United Kingdom and other countries
- otherwise promote the advancement of education

Question 2 - Who benefits?

Who benefits from your charity's work?

The work of the British Council targets three main groups in the UK and in the more than 100 countries where we work around the world. In 2010/11 we engaged directly with more than 30 million people - an increase of almost 50% - and reached almost 600 million.

Specific groups with whom we work include

- Younger people who are in education or starting out in their careers. They have the potential to become the next generation of leaders and influencers.
- Career professionals, educators, artists, scientists, business leaders and policy makers.
- Leaders of societies and communities.

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

We work in different countries in different ways, adapting to contexts and constraints on the ground. Different countries want and allow different cultural relations programmes with the UK.

We work with UK partners in English language, education, arts and society. Partnership is at the heart of the work we do. By sharing our international network, our contacts and our knowledge of the countries where 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: the most effective approach to cultural relations is to bring together the partners with the right expertise to deliver programmes for the greatest impact.

Question 3 - The charity's strategy

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

Our strategy for 2015 is to enable the people of the UK to share their culture and way of life with more than 600 million people and partners around the world. We are committed to maintaining an extensive worldwide network of operations but will spend much less on our buildings and support services and more on our programmes.

At the heart of our growth is our renewed focus on sharing the UK's expertise, experience and content in English, the arts, education and our way of life. Our digital audience will grow to 140 million and our broadcast audience to 500 million, complementing the 16 million people who will be directly involved in our work.

Trust between the UK and other countries will remain at the heart of everything we do - to create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.

How does your charity measure the success of the strategy?

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

We use a corporate scorecard to track the

- scope
- scale
- quality
- impact

of the cultural relations work we undertake around the world

The data collected 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 work with 400,000 leaders and influencers and 16.7 million young people between April 201 and March 2011.	We have directly engaged with nearly 30 million people and 847,000 leaders and influencers.

To make £25 million of efficiency savings.	We have met our targets, restructuring to cut costs and maintain our impact by changing ways of working and reducing overheads. By reorganising our geographic regions and support services in the UK, we have freed funds to invest in our programmes.
To increase the number of people with access to high-quality English language services through our free access on-line materials, EL teaching and examinations; and our programmes supporting curriculum reform and teacher training.	We have met and exceeded our targets, working with 1,490 policy makers; 4.94 million teachers and learners; 478,000 teachers in community and 131,000 teachers and coaches in professional development.
To expand our programmes in Central and South Asia (CSA), the Middle East and Near East and North Africa (MENA) where there is, or may be potential for a lack of engagement and trust with the UK.	Despite political and social unrest, we expanded our work in MENA - eg with a Facebook English materials service for more than 100,000. In CSA we set up 203 collaborative partnerships: on joint research, programme delivery and skills development.

Question 5 - The charity's income and spending

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

Charitable activities	£ 000s
Educational co-operation and education advancement	411,507
Developing wider knowledge of the English language	155,917
Cultural, scientific and technological cooperation	38,810
Explanatory comments	
In our annual report, we represent 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	387,116	0
Grants receivable	196,161	0
Contract activity	105,054	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 2010-11, 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 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?

To fulfil our mission, we will increase our reach and impact still further. This will not be done solely through employing traditional models, particularly in the light of significant reductions in our core funding from government. We will significantly extend our reach through new digital channels; we will find new partners to help to fund and execute our work; and we will do more to build relationships for UK partners. We will also continue to make ourselves more efficient and to reduce our overhead costs.

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

Invest more to respond to the almost unlimited demand for English, education and arts and in digital platform, content and services.

Increase face to face and exhibitions work, engaging more people year on year.

Do more in partnership with governments, donors, corporations and foundations, for a greater impact than we could achieve alone. Have a small number of large scale partners with whom we routinely work.

Maintain an extensive network of operations around the world, giving priority to countries of strategic importance where we can achieve impact at scale.

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.

Declaration

This Summary Information Return was submitted online by MR ANDREW MACKAY on 06 October 2011, 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