

Vision Statement

Equality and diversity are at the heart of our cultural relations ambitions. They contribute to the mutual trust, respect and understanding we strive for on behalf of the UK. They are integral to our brand, our reputation, our success and are an integral part of our cultural relations impact.

Our vision is to use our increasing knowledge and experience to make a leading contribution to international aspects of equality and diversity. We will work energetically toward this by a mainstreaming approach, highlighting what our collective efforts can achieve for individuals, communities, organisations and nations. Our emphasis will be on the potential of equality and diversity to help create more inclusive societies. We believe these contribute to greater trust, security and stability in the world where shared aspirations can flourish.

We will draw on the rich diversity of the UK and our workforce, partners, friends and contacts worldwide to nurture programmes and activities around shared interest and ambitions. We will develop new relationships and partnerships that deliver co-operative advantage and impact for the UK.

The diverse contributions and considerable talents of our staff and those we work with worldwide will be harnessed to provide the very best practices and services we can, in line with our organisational values and human rights' principles.

Our Journey

We launched our Diversity¹ Strategy in 2002 and revised it in 2004. This revision builds on what we have learnt, the progress we have made and outlines our priorities leading to 2015. It also reflects the changing external environment.

We have been on an interesting journey since 2002. We have laid a firm foundation towards mainstreaming diversity across our global network and developed our understanding of the issues and challenges in doing so.

In bringing people together to learn, create and work to build long term relationships of trust for the UK, we increasingly recognise the role that valuing diversity and co-operative ways of living, working and engaging play in achieving stability and security. We've learnt that people's expectations and aspirations are changing. They are far more networked and interconnected. There is increased inter-cultural interaction and cultural proximity. Some are at ease with multiple identities; for others the benefits are seemingly offset by perceived (or created) threats to traditional and local cultures, inter-communal suspicion and cultural, social, national and international insecurity. Concerns and confusion arise about a loss of identity. This has reinforced the importance of an overt commitment and strategic approach to managing diversity.

¹ We define Equality and Diversity in our Equal Opportunity Policy and on our web and intranet sites. We use the 'short hand' diversity to also include equality.

Diversity and Cultural Relations

The way we manage diversity internally, the standards and behaviours we display and the content of our programmes combine to establish our cultural relations offer.

Effective international cultural relations are simply not possible without an understanding and appreciation of diversity, of people and of cultures, translated into practice. A focus on diversity assists cultural relations in a number of ways including by:

- Helping to translate our values into action and nurture an organisational and service delivery culture in which the rich variety of the backgrounds and experiences of our staff, partners and contacts - our distinct feature - work effectively together on the basis of dignity and respect.
- Demonstrating our respect of and knowledge for the cultures in which we operate.
- Encouraging engagements characterised by sensitivity, understanding, compassion and empathy. This is done by focusing on what joins, rather than what separates us as humans and global citizens supporting co-operative and mutual advantage.
- Providing a set of principles to guide our work and address and reconciling cultural dilemmas. Overarching international instruments inform our guiding principles including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.

Our Diversity Business Case

Respect for diversity is inextricably linked to our values and cultural relations role. We welcome diversity and strive to manage it effectively. It can enhance our reputation, attract people to work and engage with us, extend our understanding of diverse communities and positively benchmark us alongside other organisations.

Respect for diversity supports us to make effective use of a wide range of internal and external contributions, achieve inclusion and comply with relevant legislation and supporting standards. By respecting and valuing diversity we are more likely to attract talent and fresh perspectives, nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility and new opportunities, approaches and sources of support, so we remain relevant and dynamic and achieve greater reach and impact.

Our ultimate goal is an organisation where everyone who comes into contact with us feels valued and where our programmes demonstrate strong cultural awareness and commitment to cultural diversity. This helps enhance our credibility and reputation and contributes to our goals including developing trust for the UK in changing local, national and global contexts.

Our Objectives

Three overarching objectives which are aligned to our Diversity Strategy Action Plan form the focus of the next phase of our work.

1) Developing capability and leaders. Leaders exist in different roles and particularly, but not exclusively, in senior positions. They play a crucial part in driving progress in diversity and enhancing our reputation and impact. Therefore our emphasis will be on nurturing and developing engagement, role models and capability, including that of senior leaders.

The result will be more confident and capable leaders, particularly senior leaders, who are able to promote diversity as an integral part of cultural relations.

The organisational benefits include a clear and widely felt commitment to equality and diversity as an indivisible part of our cultural relations activities, and a growth in our reputation as contributors to international aspects of diversity, as well as improved cultural relations competence.

Tools

- ✓ Diversity confidence and development activities for leaders.
- ✓ Performance deliverables against which to measure development.
- ✓ Diversity web and intranet sites and sources of information and guidance.
- ✓ Promoting and sharing our work and learning about international aspects of diversity with others.

2) Fostering inclusion. Greater inclusion is an important diversity outcome. To achieve this we intend to improve the involvement and representation of women in senior positions, and in some instances of men generally, as well as minority ethnic and disabled people in our workforce and activities. We will also nurture an organisational culture where people working and engaging with us feel respected and comfortable being themselves, free from unjustified discrimination.

The result will be an organisational and participant profile representative of broader society. In addition there will be expanded opportunities for under-represented groups internally and externally to participate and contribute. The organisational benefits will be an enhanced reputation, brand and performance. These come from the positive messages and invariable learning, employee engagement and expanded relationships and partnerships delivered by reflective diversity improvements.

Tools

- ✓ Equality targets to encourage actions that improve the internal representation and involvement of women, and in instances men, minority ethnic and disabled people.
- ✓ Actions that improve the involvement of under-represented groups in our activities.
- ✓ Forums and initiatives for staff contributions and engagement that nurture inclusion, regardless of hierarchy, contractual status or geographical location.

3) Performance, impact and legal compliance. Measuring our performance and identifying how successful we are in making a leading contribution to international aspects of equality and diversity is crucial in evaluating our effectiveness and impact. We will therefore identify mechanisms for measuring the extent and quality of the contribution and distinct impact we aim to make. In addition, we will ensure we comply with our legal obligations.

The result will be improved performance against our own diversity standards derived from national and international benchmarks, compliance with legal obligations and effective management of diversity related risk.

The organisational benefits include a widely felt and evidenced commitment to equality and diversity as an indivisible part of our cultural relations activities; a growth in our confidence, competence and reputation as contributors to international aspects of diversity; identifiable British Council contributions to the UK's international standing as an open, fair, democratic country that strives to achieve equality and inclusion; as well as an actively managed Strategy that meets its objectives and complies with legal obligations.

Tools

- ✓ UK and global Diversity Assessment Framework² targets, UK equality staff targets and Staff Survey Results to measure progress.
- ✓ Statutory Equality Schemes (Northern Ireland and Welsh Language), Equal Pay reviews and action plans, Equality Screening and Impact Assessment activity, and the implementation of statutory codes to ensure legal compliance and manage risk.
- ✓ Distinct diversity impact measures to be developed.

Responsibilities

The progress we have made towards mainstreaming diversity combines the direction provided by our Diversity Unit³ and the strong support of staff globally. We need to continue to share responsibility and require accountability, particularly from those with influence, authority and resources; the Chair and Chief Executive of the British Council, the Executive Board and Management Board and senior managers, are amongst this group. Their support for the Strategy and commitment to it through their behaviours, attitudes and effective use of resources will make a critical difference.

Managers of country offices, departments, of teaching centres, because they lead large numbers of staff and areas of work on an ongoing basis and are closest to operational aspects also have a special and important role to play.

Our collective efforts will not only help ensure stronger internal relationships but also contribute to enhanced long-term relationships and understanding for the UK and other countries, in order to address the global challenges we face together.

Diversity Unit, May 2011

² <http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-diversity-managing-geo-internally.htm>

³ **The Diversity Unit** set and drives the strategic direction of the British Council's Diversity work and are supported by a Global Diversity Network, alongside other internal and external groups. They welcome dialogue and feedback that help to identify barriers to progress and good practice. If you would like to get in touch please telephone +44 (0)207 389 4484