EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

VISION STATEMENT

Equality, diversity and inclusion[1] 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 the British Council brand, reputation, success and cultural relations impact.

Our vision is to use our increasing knowledge and experience to make a leading contribution to international aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We will work energetically toward this by taking a mainstreaming approach and integrating EDI into the range of our work and how we do it. We will highlight the contribution that EDI can make towards greater trust, security and stability through shared efforts to meet the needs of all members of societies, irrespective of their status or attributes.

We will draw on the rich diversity of the UK and our workforce, partners, friends and contacts worldwide to nurture diversity themed or informed programmes and activities, based on common interest and ambitions to deliver impact for the UK.

We will harness the diverse contributions and considerable talents of our global staff and partners to provide the best practices and services possible in line with our organisational values and diversity principles.

OUR JOURNEY

We launched our first Diversity Strategy in 2002. This revision builds on what we have learnt since then and the progress we have made. It takes account of internal and external changes and outlines our priorities leading to 2017.

In bringing people together to learn, create and work to build long term relationships of trust for the UK, we recognise the role that a commitment to diversity plays in achieving stability, security and fulfilment for all global citizens. Increased interconnection, inter-cultural interaction and cultural proximity provide both benefits and challenges. The strategic and embedded approach to diversity that we strive for is an effective response to these.

DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL RELATIONS

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

Effective international cultural relations and leveraging soft power are unattainable without an applied understanding and appreciation of diverse people, cultures and approaches. Valuing diversity assists cultural relations in a number of ways including by:

- Helping to translate our values into action.

- Nurturing 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.

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[1] We define Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our Equality Policy and on our web and intranet sites. We use the 'shorthand' diversity to also include equality and inclusion.

- Demonstrating our respect for and knowledge of the cultures in which we operate.

- Encouraging ways of working based on compassion, empathy and mutual benefit, as well as what we have in common and what joins us as global citizens, rather than the ways in which we are different and what separates us.

- Providing a set of principles to guide our work and address and reconcile cultural dilemmas, drawing on overarching international instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.

OUR APPROACH

There are 3 main strands informing our EDI Strategy – Business, Ethical and Legal, alongside a focus on 7 main (but not exclusive) areas – age, disability, ethnicity/race, gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation and work-life balance. Together they help us give due regard to key aspects of diversity and use our resources effectively.

Business Strand and Business Case

Respect for diversity is inextricably linked to our values and cultural relations role. We welcome diversity and recognise that diverse teams can outperform teams that are not diverse. We continue to strive to mainstream diversity in all our work to enhance the quality of what we do, our effectiveness and our reputation and to positively benchmark us alongside other organisations.

In respecting and valuing diversity we will continue to seek out and attract new talent and fresh perspectives and maximise and retain valued knowledge, experience and expertise. We will also continue to nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility and spot new opportunities, approaches and sources of support, so that we remain relevant and dynamic and achieve greater reach and impact and ultimately inclusion.

Ethical Strand

We believe it is important to value everyone and treat them fairly as employees or participants in, or contributors to, our work irrespective of their background and the characteristics they have no control over. We recognise many benefits to doing at an individual, society and global level. This can be challenging, but a moral or ethical approach identifies inequality as dehumanising and inconsistent with social justice and inclusion.

Legal strand

The law continues to play an important role in supporting social justice, eradicating unjustified and unlawful discrimination and achieving positive change and inclusion. Policies to support strong customer service, speaking up about concerns, environmental awareness and sustainability, child protection, anti-fraud and corruption and general legal compliance, supported by a Code of Conduct govern how we behave.

Our ultimate goal is to be an organisation where everyone who comes into contact with us feels valued and where our programmes, services and general ways of working demonstrate our commitment to diversity.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Three main objectives with action points provide the focus for 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 are crucial in driving progress and enhancing our working culture, reputation and impact. They can ensure communications and policies are shared with all staff and allow people to speak up. Therefore our emphasis will continue to 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 and deliver the benefits of doing so. These include enhancing our people management and working culture and using the experience of our own journey and competence to position us as an organisation with a notable contribution to make to international aspects of diversity, as well as being a partner of choice.

Tools

- Diversity development activities for leaders.

- Performance deliverables against which to measure progress and attainment.

- Web, intranet and other 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, both 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 the broader societies in which we work. 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, the recognition and invariable learning, employee engagement and expanded relationships and partnerships delivered by having more diverse staff and participants in our activities.

Tools

- Equality targets to encourage actions that improve the internal representation and involvement of women, and in some 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 our success in making a leading contribution to international aspects of EDI 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 results will be improved performance against our own diversity standards derived from national and international benchmarks. This includes external recognition and strong compliance with legal obligations and the effective management of diversity related risk.

Tools

- UK and global Diversity Assessment Framework[2] targets, UK equality staff targets and relevant 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 Unit[3] and the strong support of staff globally. We will continue to share responsibility and require accountability, particularly from those with influence, authority and resources, including the Chair and Chief Executive of the British Council, the Executive Board and Management Board and senior managers. 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, business functions and teaching and exam centres, as leaders of large numbers of staff and areas of work closest to operational aspects, also have a special and important role to play.

Diversity Unit, November 2014

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[2] http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/how-we-work/equal-opportunity-diversity/about
[3] **The Diversity Unit** sets 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 email jane.franklin@britishcouncil.org or telephone +44 (0)207 389 4484.