



# Candidate brief for the position of Chief Executive Officer British Council

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# Welcome from the Chair

Three years into my position as Chair of the British Council, I can say with confidence that this CEO role is a great opportunity to work with a team of passionate, committed colleagues and our nation's exceptional cultural, educational and civil society leaders to connect Britain with the world by building the relationships and trust that are so important to our country's future.

The successful candidate will be engaged, challenged and stimulated by our global remit and have a unique opportunity to make a difference by leading a team that makes a big impact on our nation's worldwide reputation.

If you believe you fit the brief, I would be delighted to hear from you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christopher Rodrigues". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Christopher Rodrigues CBE  
Chair, British Council



# About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with more than 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year, we reached more than 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall, including online, through broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Our work in English aims to bring high-quality language materials to every [learner](#) and [teacher](#) who wants them. In developing and post-conflict countries, we teach English and train teachers through radio, web and TV broadcasts. We offer more than three million UK [examinations](#) worldwide, helping people gain access to trusted qualifications to support their career and study prospects.

Our work in [education](#) and [society](#) helps transform national education systems, builds more inclusive and open societies and increases young people's opportunities. We encourage international students to come and study in the UK, and British students to [experience life abroad](#). We bring [schools](#) around the world together, so young people and teachers from different countries can learn from each other.

Our work in the [arts](#) involves the very best British and international artistic talent. We help increase audiences for international work in the UK and for UK work globally. We bring artists together and support the development of skills and policy in the arts and creative industries. Through this work, we ensure that culture in its broadest sense plays a

vital role in connecting with and understanding each other. In these ways, the British Council builds links between UK people and institutions and those around the world, helping to create trust and lay foundations for prosperity and security around the world.

The British Council is sponsored by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), from which we have operational independence. Our total income is £1.172 billion, of which 85.7% comes from commercial activities such as teaching English, administering exams overseas, and managing partnerships and contracts. The remainder of our income is grant-in-aid, which we receive from the FCO. Further information about the relationship between the FCO and the British Council can be found in the [Management Statement](#) and the [Financial Memorandum](#) on our website.

To ensure the greatest value for the UK, we are firmly committed to strategically aligning our work to the long-term policy priorities of the UK governments. This includes supporting the broad policy interests and priorities of the FCO, other relevant UK government departments in Whitehall and the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Further information about the British Council can be found on our [website](#). Detailed information about our strategy and finances is contained in our current [Corporate Plan](#) and our latest [Annual Report](#).



# The British Council's Plan on a Page

<b>Purpose statement:</b> Using the cultural resources of the UK, we create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries.					
<b>Vision for 2020:</b> To make a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. This enhances the security, prosperity and influence of the UK and, in doing so, helps make the world a better, safer place.					
<b>1. Strengthen impact and focus in our priority areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the UK's influence and prosperity in the world through stronger relationships with India, China and other high-growth developing and developed economies.</li> <li>Building education and cultural partnerships with countries of the European Union.</li> <li>Strengthening long-term connections and relationships with the next generation in Russia and neighbouring countries.</li> <li>Supporting stability and security in priority countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.</li> <li>Responding to the refugee crisis in Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries.</li> <li>Creating international opportunities and connections for young people in the UK.</li> </ul>				<b>Stronger impact</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving our customer and market research, analytics and insight to better understand our audiences' views and preferences so that we can develop services, products and communications that are relevant to them.</li> <li>Using this insight we will build stronger, more effective relationships with our customers and stakeholders so that they understand our work and value, and seek to engage with us in longer-term mutually beneficial relationships.</li> </ul>				
<b>3. Ensure financial sustainability and help fund developed country operations</b>	 Growing and diversifying income and surplus		 Improving our operational efficiency		
	 Increasing the capability and effectiveness of our people	 Creating a digitally enabled organisation	 Strengthening our insight, research and evidence base		
<b>4. Transform the British Council by investing in people, systems and culture</b>					
<b>Underpinned by our principles</b>	Sustainable	Impact led	Agile	Professional and specialist	
					<b>Faster change</b>



# The Role

The British Council is seeking to appoint a truly exceptional individual to succeed Sir Ciarán Devane. The Chief Executive will lead our global organisation into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Role purpose

The Chief Executive will lead a mission-driven, global business with some 12,000 staff and income of £1bn+. In this time of increasing tensions between and within nations, the next CEO will provide direction, motivation and inspiration to British Council colleagues worldwide, and deliver a lean, efficient, high-impact organisation that increases the UK's global influence.

## Key responsibilities

The Chief Executive will:

- Lead the Executive Board and the wider organisation both visibly and effectively. Embody the British Council's mission, ethos and values, and be the guardian of the organisation's role as an exemplar of best practice in equal opportunities and diversity
- Hold the organisation to account for successful delivery against the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan, and ensure that corporate performance is delivered to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.
- Lead all aspects of commercial strategy and performance to maximise commercial opportunities, control costs, and increase both reserves and sustainable surplus.
- Lead the development and implementation of strategies that further the British Council's aims, create a unique contribution to the UK's wider international objectives, increase the standing of the organisation, bring maximum value to the UK, and reflect the organisation's values.
- Maintain an excellent and mutually trusting relationship between the Executive Board (many recently appointed) and the Board of Trustees.
- Transform the British Council's operations – and ensure the business is fit for the digital age – by investing in people, systems and culture,
- Maintain and strengthen external relationships with those who influence or are affected by the British Council, in particular the FCO, which is accountable to Parliament for the British Council's performance.
- Strengthen the British Council's alignment with other relevant government departments and with other major UK players in the arts, English language, education and society sectors.
- Be instrumental in redefining both 'soft power' and 'cultural relations' in a disrupted and uncertain geopolitical world, and ensure that the contribution of the British Council to the UK's global presence is well articulated and understood.
- As Accounting Officer, ensure the British Council manages its financial affairs efficiently and exercises regularity and propriety in the use of public funds; lead on good practice and transparency in governance processes and controls to meet domestic and international legislative requirements.

## Key relationships

Chair and Board of Trustees; direct reports; all British Council colleagues; senior stakeholders in government, partners and client organisations worldwide.

## Remuneration

Up to £150k + bonus to 8% + Civil Service Pension Scheme.



# The Person

The successful candidate could come from a wide range of backgrounds, though is likely to have a demonstrable connection with civil society, arts or education. A very strong affiliation with the core mission of the British Council, driven by a strong sense of social purpose and the desire to make an impact, is essential.

The personal attributes and the knowledge, skills and experience set out below highlight the most important qualities sought.

## Personal Attributes

- Strategic thinker, with a sophisticated world view and a keen awareness of the geopolitical landscape and possible future developments and scenarios.
- Exceptional communication skills, with the proven ability to influence and negotiate both internally and externally, and to be at ease with any audience.
- Team builder, change agent and a pacesetter for the organisation.
- Passion for international cultural relations, with the proven ability to work across cultures.
- Committed to the mission, values and ethos of the British Council, with high personal resilience and integrity and a strong commitment to the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.
- High level of intellect, including honed emotional intelligence and the ability to master complex issues quickly and to deal with the challenges thrown up by a fast moving and constantly shifting agenda.
- Visionary leader, motivator and relationship builder.
- Innovative, dynamic, commercially astute and values-led.

## Relevant Knowledge, Skills and Experience

- Strong track record of senior leadership and management gained in substantial, complex organisations with an international footprint and a customer focus.
- Proven financial astuteness in ensuring the effective management of complex budgets and resources.
- Commercial acumen and entrepreneurial flair, with a track record of generating and diversifying income.
- Demonstrable experience of directing and managing innovative change and continuous improvement, ensuring excellent organisational performance and outcomes.
- Direct experience of working internationally, plus very strong geopolitical awareness.
- Experience of working with government, plus knowledge of how to build effective relationships in Whitehall, Westminster and with opinion formers.
- Demonstrable ability to forge and develop a high-performing team both quickly and effectively.
- Track record of identifying global trends and adapting organisational approaches to grasp opportunities quickly.
- Experience of working effectively with the media, together with the personal presence and authority to build effective relationships with a wide range of audiences.
- Proven ability to manage ambiguity and complexity in a pressurised and rapidly changing environment.



# Governance, Management and Structure

The British Council is a charity with a Royal Charter, regulated by the Charities Commission and audited by the UK's National Audit Office. All our work contributes to our charitable mission.

## Board of Trustees

The Trustees, a board of up to 15 individuals, are the guardians of the British Council's purpose and are ultimately accountable for the organisation. Chaired by [Christopher Rodrigues](#), they hold the Executive Board responsible for the organisation's performance, strategy and policy. The trustees meet six times a year, and [edited minutes](#) of their meetings are available to the public.

There are six sub-committees to the Board: Audit and Finance; Business Change; Commercial; Nominations; Remuneration; and Risk.

Further information about the Board of Trustees and its sub-committees can be found [here](#).

## Executive Board

The Executive Board is responsible for the overall strategy, direction and management of the organisation.

The Chief Executive, [Sir Ciarán Devane](#), works with the Director Global Network, the Directors of Cultural Engagement and English and Exams, and the Director Digital, Partnerships and Innovation, supported by the [Chief Operating Officer](#), the [Chief Financial Officer](#), and the [Global People Director](#).

Further information on the Executive Board can be found [here](#).

## Global Network

The Global Network encompasses our operations across 110 countries worldwide. It ensures that the British Council has a connected network, and is responsible for managing our strategic relationships with the FCO.

## Cultural Engagement

Our activities in education, society and arts bring people together to share expertise and innovation, enrich and improve teaching and learning, and open up new opportunities across the world. Our work in society helps people to have their voice heard and to access opportunities to shape their own futures. Our work in the arts has grown substantially over the last five years, with eight art forms covering the full breadth of UK creative industries. By 2021 we aim to have doubled the scale of international activity of the UK culture sector.

## English and Exams

We teach English to children and adults, and offer lessons in our English language schools and via online learning. Learners of English can also take internationally recognised proficiency tests, and gain qualifications that can open doors at leading academic institutions and improve employment prospects.

## Digital, Partnerships and Innovation

Creating a digitally enabled organisation and continuing to partner effectively are key to the British Council's future success.



# How to Apply

## Key dates

The British Council has engaged the services of Odgers Berndtson, to whom applications should be sent at your earliest convenience and in any event by no later than **Monday 11 February 2019**.

Following a long list meeting of the Selection Panel, successful candidates will be invited to attend a preliminary interview with Odgers Berndtson during **w/c 25 February or w/c 4 March 2019**.

The final interview process with the British Council will take place in London on **1 April 2019**. Candidates are kindly requested to diarise these dates.

## How to apply

In order to apply, please submit a comprehensive curriculum vitae along with a covering letter, setting out your interest in the role and details of how you match the required criteria. Please include in a **separate document** the names and addresses of three referees. Referees will not be approached until the final stages and not without prior permission from candidates.

The preferred method of application is online at [www.odgers.com/70260](http://www.odgers.com/70260)

If you are unable to apply online please email your application to [70260@odgers.com](mailto:70260@odgers.com)

All applications will receive an automated response.

If you prefer to send your application by post, it should be addressed to: Education Practice, Odgers Berndtson, 20 Cannon Street, London EC4M 6XD.

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process. This will assist the British Council in monitoring selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. Information collated from the Equal

Opportunities Monitoring forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

## Personal data

In line with GDPR, we ask that you do NOT send us any information that can identify children or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and / or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data in your CV/application documentation will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

## Recruitment timetable

Closing date:	11 February 2019
Longlist meeting:	21 February 2019
Odgers Berndtson interviews:	w/c 25 February and w/c 4 March 2019
Shortlist meeting:	14 March 2019
British Council interviews:	1 April 2019

We are committed to ensuring everyone can access our website and application processes. This includes people with sight loss, hearing, mobility and cognitive impairments. Should you require access to these documents in alternative formats, please contact [richard.heeks@odgersberndtson.com](mailto:richard.heeks@odgersberndtson.com)

## Queries

For a confidential conversation about this opportunity, please contact:

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