

Cultural Skills Conference

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia December 4th to 6th 2018

Context

The Culture Skills for the Future conference will be a unique opportunity to discuss the social and economic impact of programmes that create opportunities to improve soft and technical skills for talented individuals that would like to work in film, museums, festivals, music, live events, fashion, visual arts, performing arts, literature and design.

Promoting and developing high quality cultural experiences is a priority for governments in the Gulf as they seek to diversify their economy to create new attractions for citizens and tourists. Each Gulf State has ambitions to build new spaces for culture and entertainment, ranging from new libraries, theatres, concert halls, cinemas, museums and galleries. In parallel to this, there are plans in place to support Gulf nationals to develop careers in the growing cultural and creative sectors, but there are limited opportunities for young people aspiring to work in the cultural sector to develop their skills, this is, in part due to the early growth of higher education provision for this area or limited apprenticeship schemes on offer in the Gulf for those aspiring to work in the cultural sector.

The population in the Gulf is very young, most countries have around 60% of their population under the age of 25 and unemployment amongst this age group is high. Governments in the region are currently implementing strategic visions that put a large emphasis on developing youth capability and skills.

The British Council is working closely with DCMS, DIT and other partners on the delivery of a culture and sports programme in the Gulf region. The Gulf Culture and Sports programme aims to develop mutual understanding and respect through sharing and appreciating Gulf and UK culture, history and heritage with each other, and by developing long-term arts and education relationships between institutions. It is envisaged that over 500,000 people in the Gulf will be reached through the programme, but the impact will extend to millions more through a targeted social media and digital campaign, raising awareness of the benefits of culture, sport and healthy lifestyles on communities

The programme will create opportunities for the next generation in the Gulf, young people from 14 – 30 years-old by fostering the development of projects that will enable the local creative sector to flourish, empower cultural initiatives and find innovative and sustainable ways to guarantee a consistent and tangible legacy of the cultural field in the region.

Therefore, one of the main goals of the programme is to support and inform the creation of activities focused on the improvement of soft and technical skills for the cultural sector in the Gulf. British Council, in collaboration with local partners, will provide knowledge exchange opportunities to support a programme of capacity building which addresses local issues and links the cultural resources and expertise of the UK with local arts organisations, government departments for culture, festivals, universities, and creative businesses.

We will welcome contributions from academics and non-academic researchers, or cultural organisations that would like to be part of a strategic debate of the importance of cultural skills for the next generation in the UK and in the Gulf countries. We are looking for papers from UK organisations as well as those based in the Gulf.

- What skills are needed to support a vibrant and inclusive cultural sector in the Gulf?
- How can cultural skills help creative organisations and business to flourish and enable social and economic impact for local communities?
- What role can public policy play to guarantee that soft and technical skills empower young people for the long-term?
- How can universities help to create strategic collaborations with the arts sectors in this field?

Guideline topics

Submissions may include, but are not limited to, case studies, theoretical explorations, and evaluations of current practices or policies in both the UK or the Gulf. We are particularly interested in receiving papers that can help to share knowledge in these areas:

1. Cultural leadership skills for dynamic programming of cultural activities such as festivals and art in public spaces
2. Benefits of cultural skills development through informal learning, such as apprenticeships and other informal learning schemes that are directly linked to employment
3. What are the Cultural skills needs for the growth of a digitally literate and innovative workforce? VR and online cultural experiences are propelling the cultural sector into the development of new cultural experiences, how can we develop cultural skills offer to address this rapidly growing trend?
4. Cultural skills specific to the film sector, what skills are needed for the development of a dynamic film ecosystem?
5. Economic return on investment in cultural skills, how do we measure the impact of investing in Cultural Skills? How investing in cultural skills can result in economic and social development and employment opportunities.
6. When is the best time for the development of cultural skills, early years, school, college, on the job, university? What does the research tell us about the most impactful time to nurture cultural skills development?

Please note we envisage that presentation of the paper at the conference or by video conference link up will take no longer than 20 minutes with 15 minutes available for open questions.

Proposal

Proposals of up to 500 words in English including a 50-word biographical note about each presenter should be sent to the organizing committee by **Monday 10th September 2018, 2pm BST** to Futureskills@britishcouncil.org.

Decisions on submissions will be made by **14th September 2018**.

Information - Cultural Skills for the Future:

The conference will take place from December 4th to 6th in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, applicants whose paper has been selected for presentation will be invited to present their paper in person at the conference, for those who are unable to travel we will arrange for a video presentation of your paper. Please note your paper will be live translated at the conference on the day of presentation.

The conference is a unique and incredible opportunity to learn about the local context for culture development in the Gulf states, especially during a time of significant transformation in the region. We are expecting about 100 people from across the Gulf and other MENA countries to attend the conference, on day one, there will be a high-level key note address and senior officials who are responsible for cultural development and education in the Gulf states will also attend. There will be a number of facilitated networking events during the conference, alongside break out workshops and some fringe events giving delegates the opportunity to visit local cultural spaces and the opportunity to explore parts of Riyadh.

Criteria for selection

- Expertise of speaker – track record in field
- Relevance to the Gulf region
- Papers which discuss new ways of supporting creative industry sector
- Papers which suggest new working practices in the sector
- Papers which are relevant to the topics in the conference

If your paper is selected the costs of your visa, accommodation and travel to Saudi Arabia will be met by the British Council for anyone travelling from the UK*. All selected papers will be published and translated into Arabic and your biography information will form part of the delegates packs and will also be included in the conference report.

If you have any questions, please contact Futureskills@britishcouncil.org.

*the British Council will do its best to secure a Visa, but these cannot be guaranteed. If the person selected

