

BBC Public Purpose Remit: Promoting education and learning

Promoting education and learning

You can look to the BBC to help everyone in the UK to learn. An important role for the BBC is to support formal education in schools and colleges. In addition, the BBC will offer engaging ways for everyone in the UK to build their knowledge and skills across a broad range of subjects.

What the BBC will do to achieve this Purpose

- 1. Stimulate informal learning across a full range of subjects and issues for all audiences.**
The BBC should enable people to learn about many different topics in ways they will find accessible, entertaining and challenging.
- 2. Engage audiences in activities targeted to achieve specific outcomes that benefit society.**
The BBC should engage audiences in output that brings benefits to the UK as a whole. Such output might, for example, promote healthier living, or encourage an active interest in the UK's history, heritage and environment.
- 3. Promote and support formal educational goals for children and teenagers and support adult education, especially related to essential skills development.**
The BBC should maintain its key role of providing formal educational output for everyone in the UK, including skills for learning, work and life. The BBC should provide a safe environment for learning, especially for children.

Guidance on how the Trust intends to measure performance against the Public Purpose priorities is contained in Annex I. Annex II explains the priorities, and how they have been developed, in more detail.

Annex I: Purpose Remit Measurement

In order to monitor the BBC's delivery of the Public Purposes, the Trust will use largely quantitative measures based on licence fee payer perceptions of the BBC's delivery of the Purpose priorities. In some cases it will be necessary to supplement or replace such measures with qualitative research on priorities which are not readily amenable to survey questions and therefore require more in-depth research. Where appropriate, the Trust will also gather comparative data, using its survey questions, to assess the BBC's performance relative to other media providers.

For details about how the Trust will use these measures in evaluating the BBC's effectiveness in delivering its Public Purposes, please see the Purpose Remit Operating Framework.

Priority (i): Stimulate informal learning across a full range of subjects and issues for all audiences.

The Trust will measure:

Audience perceptions of the BBC enabling them to learn different things.

Priority (ii): Engage audiences in activities targeted to achieve specific outcomes that benefit society.

The Trust will measure this priority qualitatively, using specific campaign examples.

Priority (iii): Promote and support formal educational goals for children and teenagers and support adult education, especially related to essential skills development.

Measurement of this priority will be split out into

- (i) formal education for children/teens and
- (ii) formal education/ skills for adults.

For children and teens education, the Trust will measure audience perceptions of the BBC helping their children/teens with what they learn at school/college

For adult education, the Trust will use qualitative research to measure the impact of adult education and support for skills development.

Annex II: Explanatory Note

Introduction

This Annex explains the background to the development of the 'promoting education and learning' Purpose Remit.

Under its Charter and the Agreement the BBC has six Public Purposes, which are:

1. sustaining citizenship and civil society;
2. promoting education and learning;
3. stimulating creativity and cultural excellence;
4. representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities;
5. bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK;
6. in promoting its other Purposes, helping to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services and, in addition, taking a leading role in the switchover to digital television.

For each Public Purpose the Trust must adopt a Purpose Remit setting out priorities and specifying how the Executive Board's performance against these priorities will be judged. The Trust must consult publicly in developing the Purpose Remits before adopting them.

The six Public Purposes should not be seen as entirely separate aims but as parts of a whole whose boundaries necessarily overlap. The six Remits should therefore be read together – and within the context of the BBC's overall mission to inform, educate and entertain.

Subsequent to public consultation, the Trust will use the Remits to commission Purpose Plans from the Executive Board. These will set out how the BBC's services and supporting activities will deliver the Purpose priorities. Once it has approved the Purpose Plans, the Trust will amend Service Licences, as necessary, to reflect the role that services play in delivering the priorities set out in Purpose Remits.

The Trust will conduct a full review of the Purpose Remits in 2011/12.

This Annex is divided into three sections:

1. Scope of the Public Purpose
This sets out the types of output and activities to be covered by the Purpose, as required by the Charter and Agreement.
2. Market Context and BBC Role

In this section the overall market context for the delivery of the Purpose is described, including major developments in terms of technologies, audiences and the wider political and policy context. Against this background, the BBC's particular role in delivering the Purpose is outlined.

3. Priorities

This section sets out, in detail, the priorities that the Trust has set the Executive Board.

1. Scope of the Public Purpose

Education and learning lie at the heart of the BBC's mission and have a part to play in the delivery of all its Public Purposes. The Charter and Agreement require the Trust to ensure that the BBC 'stimulates interest in, and knowledge of, a full range of subjects and issues through content that is accessible and can encourage either formal or informal learning.' The Trust is also required to ensure that the BBC: 'provides specialist educational content and accompanying material to facilitate learning at all levels and for all ages'.

2. Market Context and BBC Role

2.1 Market Context and Developments

Audiences are drawn to education and learning for many different reasons.

People learn - formally or informally - for many different reasons, such as intellectual stimulation or the desire to gain qualifications or learn new skills. People may be motivated to do so simply for their own sake or to increase employment prospects; or simply the enduring human urge to deepen knowledge of existing interests and explore new ones. Learning can also happen 'passively', when it is not people's primary motivation, for example through watching content designed primarily for entertainment but which is also educational.

People's attitude to education also varies widely, from reluctant learners to avid students. Individuals also learn in many different ways, including: conventional instruction; self-directed learning; learning through doing; and learning by observing and taking part in social groups. Effective promotion of education and learning has to take full account of this diversity of audience needs, attitudes and ways of learning.

Formal learning is being transformed by digital technology.

Formal learning is changing as institutions take advantage of the opportunities offered by the spread of digital technology, in particular its potential for interactive learning. It is helping to spur a move away from the traditional approach where teachers transfer facts to pupils. Increasingly, the tendency is to teach learning techniques and to encourage students to find things out for themselves, often from digital sources, with teachers acting as coaches.

Digital technology is transforming the supply of material to support formal and informal learning.

Educational suppliers have taken advantage of new technology to supply a wide range of digital services to support formal learning - including the provision of assessment and management systems, equipment and infrastructure, as well as a relatively small but increasing amount of online digital content. This has become a very active market involving a large number and wide range of suppliers, ranging from individual teachers to large publishing companies.

The supply of digital material that supports informal learning is also increasing rapidly. An enormous range of material is readily available via the internet, and research has been made easier by increasingly sophisticated search engines and website links.

The digital revolution can cause problems as well as solve them.

For some audiences, particularly informal learners, navigating the sheer quantity of information available on demand will prove a challenge. There is also the problem of finding material that is authoritative, trustworthy and accurate - a problem likely to grow as the amount of user generated content on the internet increases.

There is also the issue of a 'digital divide', where the less well-off are excluded from the educational benefits available to those with ready access to digital technologies.

2.2 The BBC Role

These market developments suggest a clear public service imperative for the BBC to support a wide range of formal and informal education and learning for all UK citizens regardless of age, income or cultural background. In making its plans for education and learning, the Executive Board should take full account of the learning needs of those with restricted access, or no access, to digital technologies. It should also respond to digital audiences' demands to access education and learning content via a range of platforms. Where possible it should work with appropriate partners.

Educational content should be authoritative and intellectually robust. Educational materials should demonstrate cultural sensitivity. The Executive should find creative ways to engage reluctant learners and provide opportunities for informal learning through a wide range of mainstream programming. The BBC's own archive is a rich educational resource and the Executive Board should seek appropriate ways to open it up to audiences.

The Executive should see introducing audiences to education and learning beyond that provided by the BBC itself as an important part of its role. It should work in partnership to assist people seeking reliable sources of educational content from other providers. While the BBC has a clear and important role to play in education and learning, it is one of many providers, and the Executive should bear in mind what is provided in the wider marketplace when deciding how most effectively to pursue this purpose.

3. Priorities

In delivering this Purpose, the Executive Board will focus on the following priorities, through which the BBC will also, to an appropriate extent, promote the delivery of the Public Purpose for 'leading digital switchover and encouraging emerging communications technologies'. The Trust has developed the following priorities with reference to the requirements of the Charter and Agreement, the emerging market context in which the BBC is operating and an understanding of the needs of licence fee payers.

(i) Stimulate informal learning across a full range of subjects and issues for all audiences.

There is a demand from audiences for the BBC to cover a broad range of subjects and issues as well as for it to offer opportunities to build knowledge in ways that are engaging, relevant and tailored to their needs.¹

In order to stimulate informal learning, particularly by those who may be reluctant learners, it may be appropriate to use entertainment techniques.² The priority here is breadth of provision to all audiences, although challenging material should not be sacrificed for entertainment and wide audience appeal. In order to fulfil this Purpose, content does not necessarily have to have the promotion of learning as its primary purpose - although its educational purpose should be explicit at the time of commissioning.

¹ 'What the audience wants and needs from BBC Knowledge Building', Sparkler; March 2006

² 'What the audience wants and needs from BBC Knowledge Building', Sparkler; March 2006

(ii) Engage audiences in activities targeted to achieve specific outcomes that benefit society.

The BBC's reach and impact put it in a strong position to inform and inspire its audiences in ways that benefit society as a whole,³ for example through output that stimulates interest in the cultural heritage and environment of the UK or social action campaigns on topics such as bullying in schools. Audiences support this approach, particularly when output delivers social as well as personal benefits.⁴

(iii) Promote and support formal educational goals for children and teenagers and support adult education, especially related to essential skills development.

The majority of the public regard the BBC as a learning resource for the nation⁵ and believe that one of the BBC's most important roles is to contribute to learning, particularly for children and young people, including skills for learning, work and life.⁶

While the BBC has a clear and important role to play in education and learning, it is one of many providers, and the Executive should bear in mind what is provided in the wider marketplace when deciding how most effectively to pursue this purpose. In particular, the Executive should ensure that a key focus is the provision of content and activities intended for learners themselves. The Executive should also consider how best within its education and learning offerings it can exploit the BBC's particular characteristics or established strengths, such as its archive or its multimedia nature, and ensure that those offerings are distinctive in the way they display appropriate public service characteristics. Key aims should be to reach learners of all ages who have been failed by the educational and training system and to make education exciting for everyone, whether they are inside or outside formal education. The Executive should provide some learning resources in languages other than English and ensure that a safe environment is provided, especially for the young.

³ Review of the BBC's Royal Charter: A strong BBC independent of government, DCMS; May 2005

⁴ Ofcom review of Public Service Broadcasting; 2004

⁵ Building Public Value: Renewing the BBC for a digital world, BBC; June 2004

⁶ BBC Trust Purpose Remit consultation: licence fee payer quantitative research; June 2007