UK-Viet Nam Research Grants

* **Assessment and testing (including online provision)**
* Digital provision and equitable access

Concept Note

About British Council

We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.  We work in two ways – directly with individuals to transform their lives, and with governments and partners to make a bigger difference for the longer term, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We connect the best of the UK with the world and the best of the world with the UK. These connections lead to an understanding of each other's strengths and of the challenges and values that we share. This builds trust between people in the UK and other nations which endures even when official relations may be strained.

We work on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2019-20 we connected with 80 million people directly and with 791 million people overall, including online and through our broadcasts and publications.

We are funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK government and with significant additional income from partnership agreements, contracts, teaching and exams.

Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

# **About English in Education Systems (EES)**

The British Council’s work in English for Education Systems (EES) aims for transformational change in English language policy and practice. We believe that better teaching and learning of English increases academic and career opportunities and enables people to participate actively in a global society. Our research and innovation with UK and overseas partners provide evidence of 'what works' in English language teaching and learning and contribute to the development of English language teaching and learning worldwide. We support language teaching and learning in a multilingual world, helping to ensure inclusive and equitable quality language education in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.

As of 2021, our EES programmatic framework is thematically organised into three key impact areas:

* ELT in Education,
* English and Empowerment
* English Connects (digital)

Underpinning these priorities is our approach harnessing UK expertise in teacher education, education technologies and inclusive pedagogies and research, insight, and innovation. We seek to document and share learning gained from practical experience. Our role in global English means that advancing thought and positioning the UK as leaders in English language education are at the heart of our mission.

About British Council – NFLP collaboration in Viet Nam

Since commencing operations in Viet Nam in 1993, we have cooperated closely with both Viet Nam’s Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) on a wide variety of projects and programmes. English Language Teaching (ELT) development in support of NFLP’s 2025 Strategy has long been a priority area for the British Council.  NFLP and the British Council in Viet Nam continually seek ways to cooperate in order to support inclusive, quality English language teaching, learning and assessment.

In June 2021, MoET, the National Foreign Languages Project and British Council held a ceremony to sign a collaboration plan for the next year, with a vision for the next four years. The collaboration plan outlines a series of research areas, activities and resources all designed to support NFLP in its ambition to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of English in Viet Nam.

The Annual Collaboration Plan signals exciting prospects ahead (next 3-4 years and beyond) in four key activity areas:

* **research and insight** – Ensuring a strengthened evidence base can inform policy and decision making and support specific interventions aimed at improving English language teaching, learning and assessment systems.
* **engaging with stakeholders in both VN and the UK** – Increasing our contribution to and dissemination of relevant research and insight between Vietnamese and UK partners. We shall also enhance our contribution to thought leadership in ELT through conferences, policy dialogues and symposia aimed at policy and decision makers, academics, teacher educators and teachers themselves.
* **capacity building and CPD** – Improving access to evidence-based, quality digital, blended and face-to-face CPD programmes and Communities of Practice (CoP) for both teacher educators and teachers across Viet Nam, resulting in improvements in English language teaching, learning and assessment systems.
* **curriculum, resources and assessment** – Offering improved access to better-quality, teaching and learning resources, especially online, that help improve teacher language levels and student learning outcomes.

Following the signing of this collaboration plan, the British Council is now inviting applications from UK and Vietnamese HEIs to partner and collaborate in two research projects to establish a baseline and explore more inclusive and accessible approaches to the provision of quality English language teaching, learning and assessment in Viet Nam. This is viewed as particularly important in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had a massively disruptive effect on education systems globally, including here in Viet Nam.

About the Projects

Project Objectives

The aim is for the research projects to produce a reliable, up-to-date research and evidence base to inform both the UK and British Council positioning in these key areas of ELT development in support of NFLP’s strategic priorities and Viet Nam’s education system.

Ensuring a strengthened evidence base can inform policy and decision making and support specific interventions aimed at improving English language teaching, learning and assessment systems.

* A research grant into the online provision of digital teaching and learning resources in Vietnam with a focus on ensuring that there is equitable provision of digital resources and access to online learning for both teachers and learners
* A research grant to investigate the provision of English language assessment and testing (including online and automated provision) to ensure fairness and inclusivity

Full details of both research projects can be found in **Appendices 1 and 2** at the end of the Concept Note.

Project Outputs

The projects are expected to produce:

1. Final reports

* Comprehensive Report including recommendations section
* 2-3 Page Executive Report

1. Report dissemination plan which covers plan on:

* how to best present the research outputs to key audience/stakeholders (including innovative visualisations of research data/findings)
* creative platforms for promotion of the research and engagement of stakeholders

Project Duration

The project is expected to run for sixteen (16) months from December 2021 to March 2023.

Project Governance

This project will be supported by a Project Management Group (PMG) in the British Council who will play strategic advisory role to the lead researcher (Lead Institution) to be engaged to carry out the research.

UK-Vietnam Research Grants

Two grant amounting to £40,000 (£20,000 each) are available for individual UK higher education institutions to carry out the research[[1]](#footnote-2) as part of joint proposals.

Grants will be awarded to the Lead UK institutions.

Through this grant scheme, we aim to facilitate the production of research in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) context to benefit the ELT sector in Viet Nam. Resulting articles will be published as part of the British Council Research Papers series online.

The Call for Application for this research grant will be issued in September 2021. The research grant is expected to be delivered over sixteen (16) months from December 2021 to March 2023.

# **Appendix 1: Research and insight - Assessment and testing in Vietnam**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Research and insight: Assessment and testing in Vietnam |
| Context | Since 2018, MOET have implemented a new English language curriculum. Specific reference is made to testing and assessment of learning (Section VII) as ‘important elements in the teaching [and learning] process… that should include formative and summative assessment’. Formats of assessment ‘need to be diverse in nature…throughout the learning process and combine teachers’, students’ peer and self-assessment’. Notwithstanding the above, there is still a tendency to rely on summative testing (MCQs, essays) rather than employ more diverse assessment formats that could provide stakeholders (schools, teachers, students, parents) ‘feedback on the communicative competencies acquired by students’ [washback].  Recent research into English as a subject in basic education across ASEAN countries (Zein, 2021) identified one of the main challenges in Vietnam being learners’ demotivation, with many studying English merely to pass exams, rather than to use the language to communicate. Learners’ lack of motivation could well blend with test-oriented pedagogy to create an unfavourable learning environment. There have been reforms in terms of teaching methods and assessments to suit communicative approaches. However, data suggest that the majority of teachers remain relying heavily on reading and grammar-based instruction tests. Indeed, one of Zein’s contributors stated that in the majority of the cases, “no matter what kind of test you are using, you are still assessing the students in the old way.”  It is within the above context that NFLP and British Council have agreed that assessment and testing (including the expansion of digital/EdTech/online provision in response to the pandemic) should be identified as an initial area of national research (November 2021-December 2022) which could support one of the British Council’s longer-term impacts regarding ‘language assessments measure ability accurately and efficiently and drive positive learning experiences’. (British Council EES East Asia Theory of Change, 2021) |
| Aims | * To conduct a landscape review with needs analysis of Viet Nam to better understand teachers needs with respect to and audit the range of assessment and testing tools that are currently offered, used and available for in-service English teachers in their delivery of the 2018 English language curriculum. * To establish a baseline of assessment and testing modes (formative and summative) in use across Viet Nam * To identify potential opportunities and outline recommendations for a range of assessment and testing tools and resources, including digital/online assessment and testing resources for English teachers and learners across Viet Nam. |
| Project duration | November / December 2021 – December 2022  Reporting and dissemination by 31 March 2023 |
| Proposed partners | The research will be conducted through an international collaboration between the UK and a local research partner (organisation or institution) in Viet Nam. As part of their proposal, the local research partner can ensure a local dimension is provided on any insight and recommendations.  The key audiences and users of this research could include (not exhaustive):   * National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) * MOET   + MOET Primary Department   + MOET Secondary Department   + MOET Higher Education Department   + MOET Quality Control Department   + MOET International Cooperation Department * National research institutions and think tanks   + Vietnam National Institute of Education Sciences (VNIES)   + National Academy of Education Management   + Association of Viet Nam Universities and Colleges (AVNUC)   + VietTESOL Association representatives * National ELT / Teacher Associations / HE/research institutions * 10 key NFLP teacher training universities * Provincial DOETs * British Council EES team * National digital/online EdTech platforms/providers * UK DIT * Potential UK HE / ELT / EdTech sector partners including ELT assessment bodies |
| Proposed activities | **Policy dialogue/workshop discussion as part of New Directions 2021 (10-11 December 2021)**  At the start of the 12-month research period, this is an opportunity for the selected UK-VN research team to use the Country Spotlight event to introduce their research with key stakeholders and policymakers (see possible format below). One suggestion is that topics are themed according to key strands from New Directions 2021 as they pertain to Vietnam and the research areas, namely (list not exhaustive):   * Inclusivity and access in language testing * Learning from the legacy of assessment in Viet Nam during Covid-19 * Assessment as part of a comprehensive learning system in the context of the policy (2018 curriculum) and its application at the school and classroom level * Automated language testing   **Format** will be dependent on the Covid-19 situation in Viet Nam by December 2021. Preferably a hybrid event with MOET and National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) colleagues in Hanoi, joined by local university colleagues from around Vietnam and appointed researchers joining from the UK and Viet Nam to:   * outline their areas of research over the next 12 months * facilitate discussion and gain insights from invited guests representing key Vietnamese stakeholders with a professional interest in assessment * develop a community of practice related to assessment and testing in Viet Nam   **Research methodology**  It is envisaged that research methods will be a combination of desk research that initially builds a comprehensive literature review, supplemented by online surveys and individual interviews with key stakeholders and experts in the field of ELT assessment and testing.  Interviews will likely cover areas such as English teacher needs and attitudes towards assessment and testing, the current digital landscape and predictions for future development, and insight into sector trends. Interviews may also include discussions with internal British Council staff in relation to identifying stakeholders, and other relevant considerations[[2]](#footnote-3).  It is likely that many external respondents in country will prefer their L1 to provide data and feedback, therefore corroborated translation may be required for dissemination purposes.  **Landscape review and needs analysis**  A landscape review report for Viet Nam. (For internal and external audiences). The exact content will be defined by the agreed research areas and questions. Dependent on the area of focus and based on the aims stated above.  **Possible Research areas/questions:**  Fairer: inclusivity - automation   * How can we improve accessibility, inclusivity and opportunity for all through assessment and testing? * How can we drive greater inclusivity in language assessment and language education policy? * How can testing be more representative of the diversity of language learners and speakers? * How can the widening digital divide be addressed and mitigated as language assessment shifts towards digitalisation? * How can we responsibly incorporate the advantages of automated assessment system into language testing?   Stronger: learning from Covid-19 and future-readiness   * When considered as part of a comprehensive learning system, how can the relationship between curriculum, teaching and testing be used to positively influence learning? * How can teachers respond to changes in tests and assessment, or how can they adapt their assessment practices to changes in the curriculum or teaching methodology? * How can tests be strengthened and used to strengthen the wider educational and social landscape to address future challenges? * What have we learned from Covid-19 and how could language assessment and learning systems in VN become more resilient?   **Reporting**  The report should be presented in a format suitable for publication and dissemination to high-level stakeholders[[3]](#footnote-4) within the region. The report should include the following sections (or similar as agreed):   * + Rationale and purpose of research   + Executive Summary of key findings and recommendations for external dissemination (Not to exceed 10 pages)   + Literature review incorporating a contextual overview of digital products, services and content on offer     - Research scope and questions     - Research methodology     - Data analysis and research findings     - Recommendations     - Bibliography   + Appendices including tools and questions used, etc.   **Review and finalization of reports**  The draft reports and research summary presentation will be subject to a review by the British Council. This will likely result in the suggestion of revisions which will require a response by the supplier before the final report can be accepted.  **External Dissemination**  To share the outcomes of research, relevant report findings and recommendations will be shared with key stakeholders and presented at a series of dissemination events or activities to be agreed (see example below).  **A research summary presentation**  The presentation should provide a summary of the report appropriate for delivery at a policy round table or online conference format, accompanying notes, and other support to be agreed with the British Council. This presentation should be in sufficient detail to be shared externally and contribute to the British Councils’ thought leadership position in the region. |
| Expected outcomes and outputs | **Outcomes**   * Strengthened evidence base informs policy and supports specific interventions aimed at improving English language teaching, learning and assessment systems. * Increased generation and dissemination of relevant resources and insight contributes to thought leadership in ELT. * The VN and UK ELT and EdTech sectors benefit through improved dialogue and access to key stakeholders.   **Outputs**   * Landscape review/needs analysis * Dissemination of research |
| Expectations | * The British Council encourages partnerships between the UK and Viet Nam / East Asia in the development of research teams. * The selected partnership may also be required to engage with specific national bodies during the course of the research. |
| Budget | up to GBP 20 000 |
| Contact | Davide Guarini Gilmartin, Academic Manager, [Davide.G.Gilmartin@britishcouncil.org.vn](mailto:Davide.G.Gilmartin@britishcouncil.org.vn)  Nga Le, Programme Manager, [Nga.Le@britishcouncil.org.vn](mailto:Nga.Le@britishcouncil.org.vn) |

# **Appendix 2 Research and insight: Digital/online provision of ELT in Viet Nam**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Research and insight: Digital/online provision of ELT in Viet Nam |
| Context | As of 2021, British Council’s EES programmatic framework is thematically organised into three key impact areas: ELT in Education, English and Empowerment and English Connects, the latter of which encompasses the British Council EES team’s digital offer globally.  The English Connects impact area is a key aspect of the current British Council EES strategic refresh and offers an amalgam of the British Council EES’s global digital English teacher CPD resources[[4]](#footnote-5), communities and online professional development opportunities whilst also being responsible for maintaining the world’s largest online English teacher community.  The British Council East Asia EES team (including Viet Nam) are currently implementing a 3-year programme in East Asia and ASEAN focused primarily on the ELT in Education and English Connects impact areas as they relate to supporting English teachers in public education sectors within identified priority countries.  In Viet Nam, MOET and NFLP have also prioritised the need for a focus on digital resources and online learning as part of the NFLP strategy to 2025. This shift in emphasis has only been exacerbated by the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has seen a necessary move to emergency remote teaching and the development of online learning.  In this regard, recent research for British Council East Asia in the field of English as a subject in basic education (Subhan Zein et al, 2021) has found that there are challenges concerning the implementation of digital learning and teaching across the region, including Vietnam…  *“Vietnam has improved the technological sector in its attempt to reach the status of “an industrialised nation by 2020” (Viet-2). An increasing rate of “people using digital devices is favourable” for a shift towards digital learning and teaching (Viet-2). This is in line with an increase in Internet penetration which in January 2021 reached 70.3% across the nation (Datareportal, 2021e).*  *However, data also suggest that “transmission of network system” (Viet-1) and “Internet access” in rural areas remain “very limited” (Viet-3). The challenges amplify with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. Participants of this study stated that teachers resorted to various platforms such as “Zoom” and “Facebook” to promote interaction and group work activities (Viet-2) as well as “cross-word” and “interactive games” using “Kahoot” and “Quizziz” (Viet-1).*  *Nonetheless, their limited pedagogical competence in incorporating digital technologies into language teaching means that they were struggling in doing so.*  *Further, academics have encouraged the government to accept assessment results from digital teaching and learning, as attested by Viet-3, although it is unknown whether the proposal has been accepted. Meanwhile, the efficacy of digital teaching and learning is unknown while monitoring is relatively low. Participants reported a number of problems such as learners losing concentration or deviating from the tasks or activities prescribed by the teacher.”*  It is within the above context that this research opportunity is now being offered. |
| Aims | * To conduct a digital landscape review with needs analysis of Viet Nam to better understand teachers needs and audit the range of products and services that the British Council and other interested parties and stakeholders (i.e., partners, competitors e.g. Cambridge, NatGeo, etc.) are currently offering in terms of digital resources[[5]](#footnote-6) for in-service English teachers and English teacher continuing professional development (CPD). * To conduct needs analysis with local in-service English teachers and education officials to explore experiences of online CPD activities or resources, needs and the kind of content[[6]](#footnote-7) that they would find useful * To establish a baseline of digital/online platforms across Viet Nam that offer digital resources and online English teacher CPD opportunities * To identify potential opportunities and outline recommendations for online resources, communities, and online professional CPD for English teachers across Viet Nam. |
| Project duration | November / December 2021 – December 2022  Reporting and dissemination by 31 March 2023 |
| Proposed partners | The study will be conducted through an international research collaboration between the UK and a local research partner (organisation or institution) in Viet Nam. As part of their proposal, the local research partner can ensure a local dimension is provided on any insight and recommendations.  The key audiences and users of this research could include (not exhaustive):   * National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP) * MOET   + MOET Primary Department   + MOET Secondary Department   + MOET Higher Education Department   + MOET Quality Control Department   + MOET International Cooperation Department * National research institutions and think tanks   + Vietnam National Institute of Education Sciences (VNIES)   + National Academy of Education Management   + Association of Viet Nam Universities and Colleges (AVNUC)   + VietTESOL Association representatives * National ELT / Teacher Associations / HE/research institutions * 10 key NFLP teacher training universities * Provincial DOETs * British Council EES team * National digital/online EdTech platforms/providers * UK DIT * Potential UK HE / ELT / EdTech sector partners |
| Proposed activities | It is envisaged that research methods will be a combination of desk research that initially builds a comprehensive literature review, supplemented by online surveys and individual interviews with key stakeholders and experts in the online education and IT fields.  Interviews will likely cover areas such as English teacher needs and attitudes towards online CPD, the current digital landscape and predictions for future development, legal ramifications, and insight into sector trends.  Interviews may also include discussions with internal British Council staff in relation to identifying stakeholders, and other relevant considerations[[7]](#footnote-8).  It is likely that many external respondents in country will prefer their L1 to provide data and feedback, therefore corroborated translation may be required for dissemination purposes.  **Landscape review and needs analysis**  A digital landscape review report for Viet Nam. (For internal and external audiences). The exact content will be defined by the agreed research areas and questions. Dependent on the area of focus and based on the aims stated above.  Possible research questions (to be developed and refined):   * What are British Council currently doing in Vietnam in terms of digital/EdTech/online provision, particularly in the area of English teacher support and English teacher CPD? How do English teachers and stakeholders in the region currently engage with the BC offer e.g. Teaching English, Facebook, etc.? * What are Vietnamese ministries, partners, stakeholders, competitors offering? Are current digital solutions regarded as temporary or permanent in the current climate? * What online CPD do English teachers (and learners) currently engage in? What are their experiences? * What are the social media habits of English teachers (and learners)? What are the feelings of English teachers (and learners) towards social media as part of their CPD? * What are English teachers motivations for engaging in online CPD? What are their feelings towards online CPD? * What are English teacher’s (and learners’) digital support needs? Are they being met? * What are the challenges regarding access to digital teaching and learning in remote areas or among disadvantaged communities? Are there any specific challenges for women and girls, ethnic groups or others to access digital teaching and learning resources?   **Reporting**  The report should be presented in a format suitable for publication and dissemination to high-level stakeholders[[8]](#footnote-9) within the region. The report should include the following sections (or similar as agreed):   * + Rationale and purpose of research   + Executive Summary of key findings and recommendations for external dissemination (Not to exceed 10 pages)   + Literature review incorporating a contextual overview of digital products, services and content on offer     - Research scope and questions     - Research methodology     - Data analysis and research findings     - Recommendations     - Bibliography   + Appendices including tools and questions used, etc.   **Review and finalization of reports**  The draft reports and research summary presentation will be subject to a review by the British Council. This will likely result in the suggestion of revisions which will require a response by the supplier before the final report can be accepted.  **External Dissemination**  To share the outcomes of research, relevant report findings and recommendations will be shared with key stakeholders and presented at a series of dissemination events or activities to be agreed (see example below).  **A research summary presentation**  The presentation should provide a summary of the report appropriate for delivery at a policy round table or online conference format, accompanying notes, and other support to be agreed with the British Council. This presentation should be in sufficient detail to be shared externally and contribute to the British Councils’ thought leadership position in the region. |
| Expected outcomes and outputs | **Outcomes**   * Strengthened evidence base informs policy and supports specific interventions aimed at improving English language teaching, learning and assessment systems. * Increased generation and dissemination of relevant resources and insight contributes to thought leadership in ELT. * The VN and UK ELT and EdTech sectors benefit through improved dialogue and access to key stakeholders.   **Outputs**   * Landscape review/needs analysis * Dissemination of research |
| Expectations | * The British Council encourages partnerships between the UK and Viet Nam / East Asia in the development of research teams. * The selected partnership may also be required to engage with specific national bodies during the course of the research. |
| Budget | up to GBP 20 000 |
| Contact | Davide Guarini Gilmartin, Academic Manager, [Davide.G.Gilmartin@britishcouncil.org.vn](mailto:Davide.G.Gilmartin@britishcouncil.org.vn)  Nga Le, Programme Manager, [Nga.Le@britishcouncil.org.vn](mailto:Nga.Le@britishcouncil.org.vn) |

1. We define research as original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Relevant British Council staff who can contribute to the research will be identified and communicated to the selected researcher when research is ready to proceed. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Stakeholders may include, but is not exclusive to, local ministries of education, regional research organisations or influential think tanks [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Digital resources for CPD may include: lesson plans, language learning content, research dissemination, communities, events, including peer to peer events and expert to non-expert events; platforms for learning; courses [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Digital resources for CPD may include: lesson plans, language learning content, research dissemination, communities, events, including peer to peer events and expert to non-expert events; platforms for learning; courses [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Content for CPD may include: teaching resources, topic areas, communities, events – live and recorded, courses – MOOCs, SPOCs and all other relevant digital options that may be of interest to teachers. This may overlap with the term digital resources. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Relevant British Council staff who can contribute to the research will be identified and communicated to the selected researcher when research is ready to proceed. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Stakeholders may include, but is not exclusive to, local ministries of education, regional research organisations or influential think tanks [↑](#footnote-ref-9)