

AKAMAI CUSTOMER STORY

Building Connections, Understanding, and Trust

The British Council securely delivers online classes, exams, and arts and cultural events to millions of people around the world, with Akamai

738M

Annual visits to websites
from global visitors

100/100

100% availability in more
than 100 countries



Protection from
cyberattacks

Winning the confidence of people around the world

Operating in more than 100 countries, the British Council builds connections and long-term trust through global expertise across arts and culture, education, and the English language. This delivers impact for the United Kingdom and the countries it works with. The British Council supports growth by building partnerships and by creating an enabling environment for trade, culture, education sectors, and beyond. The Council needs to deliver a fast and modern web experience that serves as a primary touchpoint for millions of people around the world, while also keeping its websites protected from cyberattacks that can occur at any hour of any day. The British Council is succeeding on both counts, with their trusted partner Akamai.

When the website is your public face

The British Council has a unique status: It's sponsored by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, but operates at an arm's length from the government. The British Council connects the best of the United Kingdom with the world, and the best of the world with the United Kingdom. "What makes the British Council special is the diversity of what we do," says Katherine Nicol, Operations and Commercial Manager at the British Council. "Our commercial arm focuses on English language instruction and exams, whilst our cultural engagement arm is about language learning, gender issues, and other societal topics." The Council has more than 500 websites, which include English language-proficiency exams, free English courses for children and teens, cultural training, virtual events, and more.

A great digital experience, around the world

"Our digital offer is expanding rapidly and the organisation is executing digital transformation at scale. This includes launching English language assessment in multiple countries, a new Corporate English Solutions business, and our first digital IELTS test to customers in Syria and Tajikistan," said Andrew Horton, Director of Digital, Technology & Innovation.



British Council
London, England
britishcouncil.org

Industry
Public Sector

Solutions

- App & API Protector
- Bot Manager
- China CDN Manager
- Global Services
- Edge DNS



As an employee since 2002, Katherine Nicol has had a front-row seat to its digital transformation. “Today, all our programmes are either all digital or combine digital and face-to-face elements,” she says. Over the 2020–2021 financial year, the British Council saw more than three-quarters of a billion visits from users in more than 200 countries and territories.

Most website visitors live outside of the United Kingdom, and delivering a smooth website experience can be challenging in countries with slow internet speeds.

“Consistent and reliable performance is especially important for our commercial programs,” says Konrad Fedorowicz, Global Digital Network Manager at the British Council. “If someone searches for English classes, for example, they probably won’t take a second look at a website that’s slow to open.”

The British Council found its answer to consistent web performance around the world with Akamai’s content delivery network. “The fact that Akamai has a presence nearly everywhere we operate is a big advantage,” Nicol says. In one year, Akamai delivered content to 7 million visitors to the British Council’s Teaching English websites, and 5.6 million prospective international students who visited Study UK websites. “With Akamai, our websites have 99% availability, even in countries without good tech infrastructure,” adds Fedorowicz.

Identity security protects reputation and revenue

As its digital programming expanded, the British Council set about strengthening its security posture. “Protecting user data, like identities and payment information, is important to our mission and our reputation,” Fedorowicz says. Threats can include attempts to access personal information, ransomware, and bot attacks. Unscrupulous competitors, for example, have been known to use bots to book all available English-language exam appointments, hoping to drive exam-takers to their own sites.

Fedorowicz secures websites and information with Akamai solutions. “With Akamai, the security happens in the background, quietly and effectively,” he says. “Bot Manager has been especially useful because it lets the friendly bots in, like the ones used by search engines, while keeping the bad bots out.”

As the British Council continues its good work forging connections around the world, Nicol sees Akamai as a trusted partner. “The pandemic expanded our digital ambitions by giving us a glimpse of what more we can do through digital channels,” she says. “Akamai has given us the confidence to introduce additional digital programmes because we know we can deliver consistently good performance while also protecting our websites and our visitors’ personal information.”



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Katherine Nicol
Operations and Commercial
Manager, British Council



The British Council builds connections, understanding, and trust between people in the United Kingdom and other countries through arts and culture, education, and the English language. It has a unique global presence and unparalleled access to young people and influencers. Its work reaches over three-quarters of a billion people and it provides online resources for 70 million English language learners and teachers. It helped 3.3 million people gain life-changing qualifications and engaged over 2,700 arts organisations globally. In the arts the Council explored new ways to deliver Festivals and Seasons and cultural experiences through digital.

Its priorities, such as improving access to girls’ education, strengthening the creative economy, building digital skills, and facilitating access to UK qualifications, contribute to economic growth and sustainable development in the countries and communities where it works: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>.