



Evaluating the impact of Commonwealth Scholarships in the United Kingdom:

Results of the alumni survey

CSC Evaluation and Monitoring Programme



Since 1960, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom has offered the following awards:

Commonwealth Scholarships: general Scholarships available for postgraduate, and in some cases undergraduate, study at any UK university.

Commonwealth Academic Staff

Scholarships: targeted at academic staff in specific developing country universities. These awards were merged with the general Scholarships in 2006.

Commonwealth Academic Fellowships: aimed at mid-career staff in specific developing country universities and provide for up to six months' work at a UK institution.

Commonwealth Split-Site Scholarships: to support candidates undertaking doctoral study at a university in their home country to spend time in the UK as part of their academic work.

Commonwealth Professional Fellowships: offering mid-career professionals from developing Commonwealth countries an opportunity to spend a period with a UK host organisation, working in a relevant field.

Commonwealth Distance Learning

Scholarships: allowing developing country students to secure Master's-level qualifications from UK institutions through distance learning study.

Medical Scholars: from the same pool, and offered on the same terms, as general Scholarships, to candidates with basic medical or dental qualifications, to enable them to pursue a higher professional qualification or advanced clinical training. These awards were merged with general Scholarships in 1996.

Medical Fellows: nominated through national agencies or medical schools, for up to twelve months' clinical and/or research experience at an advanced level in the candidate's field of specialisation. These awards were merged with Academic Fellowships in 1996.

The Commission and its secretariat would like to extend their gratitude to the many alumni who have taken the time to respond to the Evaluation Survey and to all those who have supported and who continue to support the work of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom.

This report was written by Rachel Day (of the Commission's secretariat) and Dr Norman Geddes (Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner), and published in November 2008.

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In recent years there has been increasing recognition of the importance of higher education

within social and economic development. At the same time, there is a growing impetus to ensure the relevance and continuing impact of international scholarship programmes such as the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). It is in this context, and with the support of its main funding body the Department for International Development (DFID), that the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC) is evaluating the impact of the awards it has offered over the past fifty years, on individual alumni, on their employing institutions and on wider socio-economic levels.

This report provides a relatively brief overview of the findings of a survey in which we asked alumni about their awards, employment and the extent to which they have been involved with projects, policymaking and wider socio-economic impact in a number of key areas. Even at this early stage, it is apparent that these awards have made a considerable impact on a number of levels and offer many benefits to a variety of stakeholders.

Over 2,200 alumni responded

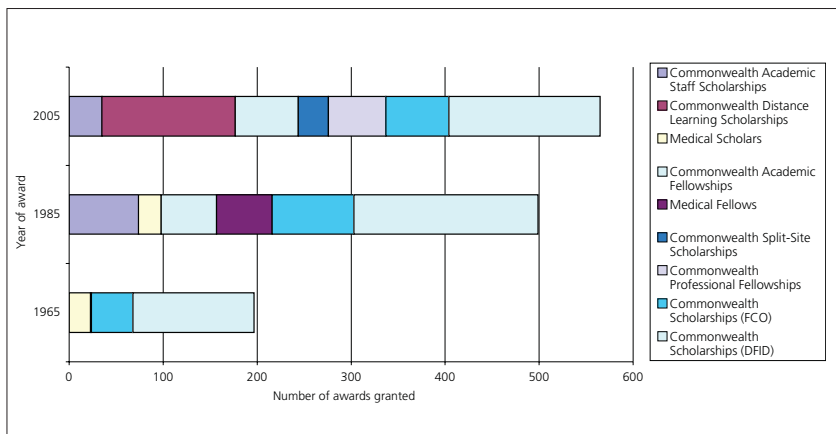
- The evaluation survey was sent to 5,673 alumni and 2,226 responses were received, giving us a response rate of nearly 40%.
- When analysed by region, gender, scheme, area of study and year of award, the respondents were broadly representative of the total alumni group of around 15,400.
- In contrast to concerns regarding brain drain, we found that 88% of respondents have returned home and are currently based in their home countries. Of the 12% who gave details of an address and employment elsewhere, 20% are still in their home region, and 53% are working or studying at overseas universities. Others are working for international governmental or non-governmental organisations, such as the United Nations or the World Health Organisation.
- Awards have had a direct impact on individual Scholars and Fellows. 99% reported that they had gained knowledge in their field of expertise and 96% that they had increased their analytical and technical skills.
- These benefits were extended to employing organisations. 95% reported that they used the specific skills and knowledge gained on award in their work, whilst 87% had at least to some extent been able to introduce new practices or innovations in their workplaces.
- A high number of our respondents, over 60%, work in the education sector; of those, 97% work in higher education.
- Large numbers of alumni reported that they had influenced government thinking and policy and/or had wider socio-economic impact through their work. Key sectors of involvement for our respondents included education and scientific and research applications.
- One of our objectives is to encourage and support partnerships and links with the United Kingdom. We found that 70% of respondents maintained links with UK universities and 52% with work contacts. 72% reported maintaining social links.

Evaluating scholarships and fellowships

Recognising academic merit and future potential

The fundamental purpose of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom has remained the same for the past fifty years: to bring to the UK men and women of high intellectual promise and who may also be expected to make a significant contribution to life in their own countries. Whilst this principle remains the same, the programme has evolved in recent years. In the 1990s, development goals became a key element of awards and new schemes introduced in the past twenty years have increased the accessibility of the awards (see Figure 1). At the same time, the high standard of applications continues to be a priority, with selection criteria for DFID-funded awards identified as:

‘the academic merit of the candidate, the likely impact of the scholarship on national development, and the quality of proposal’



A further recent development in CSC activity has been the launch of the alumni association which is assisting us greatly with evaluation. Since 2000, approximately 6,000 from a total of around 15,400 former Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows have been traced, enabling us for the first time to undertake meaningful analysis of the impact of our awards, not only on individual careers and experiences, but also on a wider basis – not only on workplaces, universities and communities but also on national and international levels.

Figure 1
Changing nature of awards

Evaluation is challenging but essential

The nature of scholarships and fellowships, the number of individuals who benefit and the range of schemes and sectors of study covered mean that meaningful evaluation and impact analysis can be challenging. The structure of the CSC evaluation programme emerged from a meeting hosted by the Commission in May 2007. Participants from across the world, all of whom had an interest in scholarships as recipients, administrators or funders, developed a series of guidelines which led to the creation of a three-phase evaluation programme. The information gained from these three phases is intended to enable us to undertake the challenging task of quantifying both the individual and the wider socio-economic impact of our awards.

Building a base line

The first phase of the programme involved building on the database already held in order to establish a robust source of empirical data as well as to identify a core set of indicators. Some of this work involved filling in gaps from early records, such as allocating academic disciplines to each record, to enable us to assess the areas our alumni have worked in throughout the history of the scheme. This work is ongoing as we continue to trace former Scholars and Fellows as well as regularly update information provided by our alumni members and current award holders.

Collecting the data

Phase Two involves the collection of qualitative and quantitative data through a survey, the initial results of which are the focus of this report. In particular, we sought information regarding:

- the skills and experience gained on award
- the ability and willingness to implement those skills and experience
- the level, sector and location of employment
- evidence of international links and collaboration
- involvement and influence within key leadership or development priority areas

The survey was sent to 5,673 former Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, for whom we held contact details assumed to be reliable.

Analysing the results

The survey responses allow us to analyse respondents' perceptions of the benefits of their awards and the extent to which they have had wider impact. The third phase of the programme will involve us further quantifying this impact through a series of detailed, in-depth studies focusing on specific sectors, regions and other areas of interest.

The survey: checking the facts

The first section related to primarily factual biographical information, covering contact details, employment, honours, public offices held and publications. In order to ensure consistency with our existing database and for the convenience of respondents, each individual was given access to a personalised online survey containing the basic biographical data already held in our records. Respondents were able to provide corrections and updates as well as enter details of their current employment, charitable work, honours and so on. The only open-ended question in this section asked alumni to provide details of their job description. In addition to providing up-to-date information for the 2009 edition of the *CSC Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows*, this section also provided us with information enabling us to identify key indicators of impact, particularly employment details and current location.

The survey: what respondents thought

The second section of the survey related to respondents' perceptions of the impact of their awards, both on themselves as individuals as well as on their workplaces and wider society. Many of the questions were multiple choice, asking alumni to rate their experiences on a four-point scale, and covered such areas as skills and experiences gained on award, whether they had been able to introduce new practices in their workplaces and to what extent they maintained links with the UK. In the final section, we asked respondents to identify whether they had:

- a. been involved in a specific project
- b. helped government thinking and policy, and/or
- c. contributed to wider socio-economic impact

in 12 key areas, relevant to the development and leadership priorities of our funding bodies.

Respondents were able to select as many boxes as they felt appropriate and were also given the option to add any priority they considered relevant that was not included. We then asked them in an open question to elaborate on those they had selected. Over 2,000 respondents (91%) indicated involvement in at least one of these areas and over 1,400 (63%) took the time to give us further information.

Who are we talking about?

Our respondents:

- are very likely to have held their awards in the past 17 years. 71% took up their awards from 1990 onwards.
- are more likely to be male, with approximately two-thirds being men, reflecting the composition of the survey population as a whole.
- tend to be from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (61%). Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) come from countries funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).¹
- are extremely likely to have returned home. Nearly 90% of respondents are based in their home countries, with a large proportion of the remainder currently working or studying in universities outside of their home countries and many remaining within their home regions.
- are more likely to have held a general Scholarship (56%). Over a quarter (27%) held an Academic, Medical or Professional Fellowship, and 1% a Distance Learning Scholarship.
- are more likely to have studied a subject from the Sciences (60%) than the Arts (40%).

When did they study?

Figure 2 reflects the distribution of all our alumni, those invited to take part in the survey and those who responded, by decade of award. We would expect numbers of recent alumni in the latter group to be higher, as more have been traced and more have reliable contact details. Although the majority of survey respondents held their awards in the 2000s (46%) or the 1990s (25%), 356 individuals (16%) held their awards in the 1960s and 1970s, offering a worthwhile insight into the long-term benefits of the awards. Proportionally, 8% of those from sub-Saharan Africa and 10% of those from South Asia studied in the 1960s and 1970s, compared with 34% of Australians in this subset and 27% of those from the Far East. The 1960s and 1970s alumni also represent 53% of the total undergraduate award, 24% of doctoral award and 10% of taught postgraduate course responses.

¹ FCO-funded awards are offered to citizens from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and, since 2003, the Bahamas, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, Malta, and Singapore.

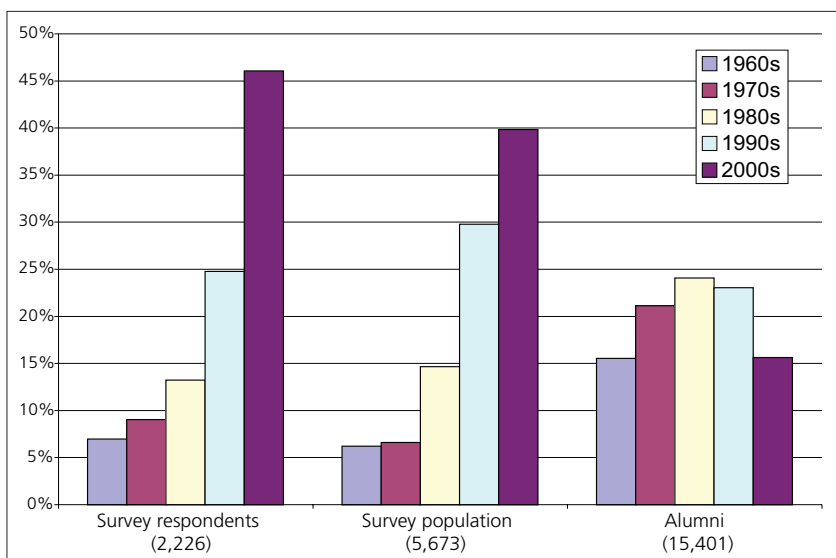
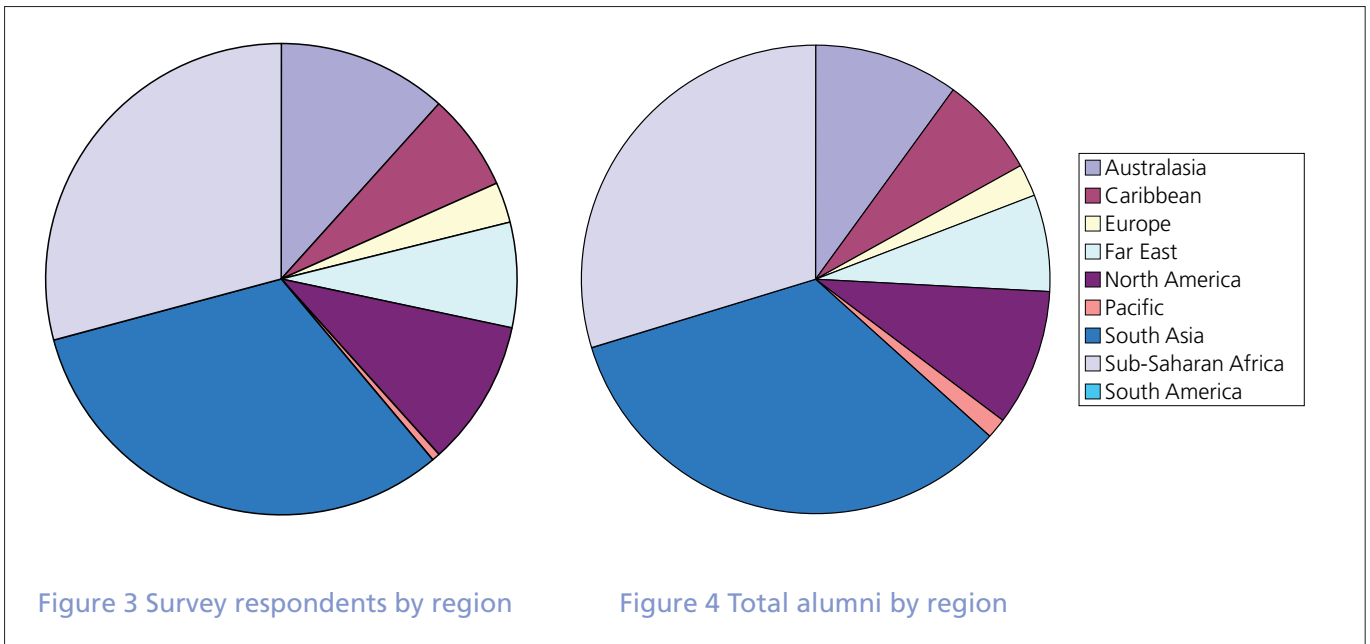


Figure 2 Distribution of alumni by decade of award

Where are they from?

Citizens from 64 countries have held awards in the UK over the past fifty years, and 55 countries are represented amongst the survey respondents. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of the regional distribution from the survey responses and Figure 4 from the alumni as a whole.



What kind of award did they hold?

The CSC offers a variety of awards through six main schemes. A list of the types of awards offered over the past fifty years is available on the inside front cover.

For the most part, the distribution of respondents’ characteristics broadly represents those of the alumni as a whole when broken down by scheme; however, there are some discrepancies. Alumni holding awards under our Split-Site programme, for example, form only 0.7% of the alumni total but 3% of the survey population and 4% of respondents. Similarly, one of our other new schemes, Professional Fellowships, represents 2% of the total, 5% of those invited to take part in the survey and 5.7% of those who responded. The older medical schemes are unsurprisingly less well represented amongst our respondents. The biggest group, as we would expect, are general Scholarships, those funded by DFID representing 35% of respondents and those funded by the FCO 21%. Academic Scholars, who are nominated by their employing universities to undertake postgraduate study, represent 9% of respondents. Academic Fellows were also well represented with 19%, despite forming only 12% of total alumni and 16% of the survey group. Our Distance Learning alumni are also represented, albeit on a small scale with 1% of respondents, reflecting the fact that they form only 2% of alumni as yet, with many undertaking their courses part-time and therefore yet to complete their time on award.

What level did they study at?

Whilst it is interesting to look at the response rate in terms of scheme, of more interest, particularly with regards to the level of potential impact, is the level of study undertaken on award. Although increasing numbers of our awards are now for Master’s study, we are, to the best of our knowledge, one of the few international schemes that offers full funding for PhD study, so the findings in relation to these awards are of particular interest. Of the respondents, 34% held awards for PhD study, with a further 4% holding Split-Site doctoral awards. 27% held awards for postgraduate taught

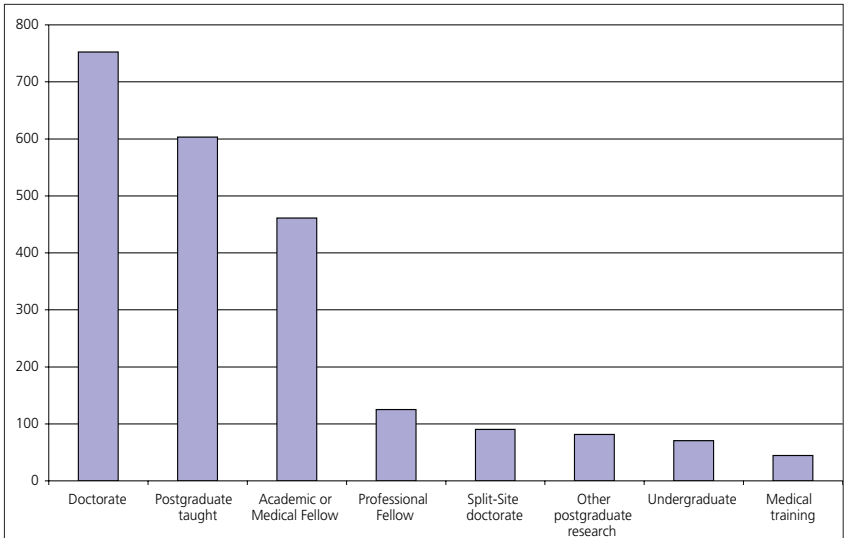


Figure 5 Respondents by level of study on award

courses, with a further 4% undertaking other postgraduate research, mostly at Master's level. 3% undertook undergraduate study, an option now only open to candidates from the Falkland Islands, the Maldives, Saint Helena and the Seychelles. Figure 5 shows the numbers of respondents by level of study.

What did they study?

In order to identify the areas in which our alumni and respondents held awards, we have categorised the 113 academic disciplines used by the CSC into nine categories. Figure 6 shows the breakdown of our responses within these categories. 28% of respondents held awards in Science, Technology and Engineering.

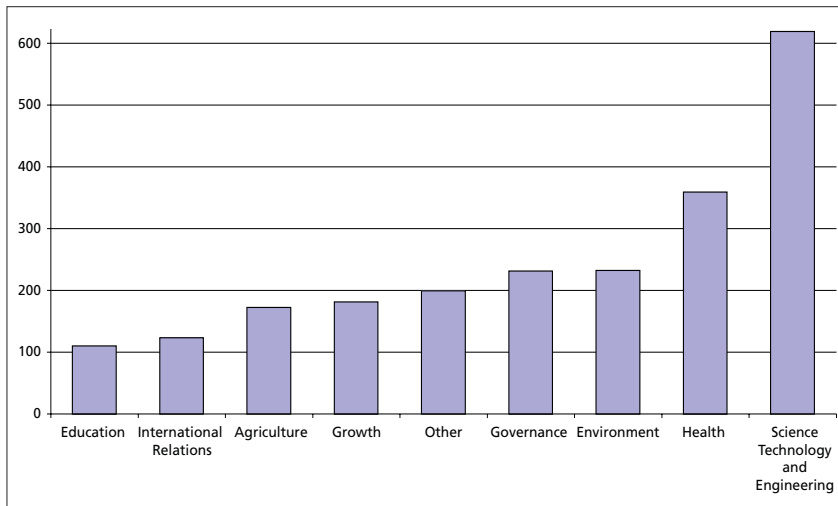


Figure 6 Respondents by sector of award

The second largest sector represented in the responses was Health with 16% of respondents, including 24% of those from the Far East and 21% of those from South Asia. Environment and Governance were also well represented with 10% each of the overall responses. The Other category included those studying subjects such as History, English Literature, Classics or the Performing Arts; 67% of those in this category held awards funded by the FCO.

A further point of note here is that whilst only 5% held awards in the field of Education, a large proportion of our alumni now work in higher education, which will be

reflected in the analysis of questions relating to actual impact later in this report.

Where do they work?

Employment data was classified using a combination of the ISIC and ISCO classification systems². We do not have historical employment data to correlate this to our alumni population as a whole, but the fact that some awards are targeted at academic staff, and the high number of research degrees we fund, means that we would expect a high number of alumni to work in education. Using the ISIC-ISCO system, 62% of our respondents were found to be working in the education sector and of these 97% in higher education. When broken down through the ISCO classification, 1,057 were identified as Teaching Professionals and 98 as Research Professionals. As those working in higher education are likely to be professionally involved in other sectors as well as in education, it is interesting to note the areas in which this group held their awards. Figure 7 shows the distribution by broad category of award.

The second largest employment category according to the ISIC classification was Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities with 11% of respondents. Some of the job areas covered in this category include legal activities, management consultancy and science undertaken in non-academic settings. The third largest group was Public Administration and Defence with 7.5% of respondents. The health sector was also represented with 6% of respondents although, as already noted, a number of our alumni working in Health are likely to be based in universities or other higher education institutions and so would come under the classification of Education. We were unable to classify 97 (4%) of our respondents.

2 This data was first classified using both the United Nations International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) classification system to determine the sectors within which alumni are employed (www.unstats.un.org). It was then classified according to the ISCO-CSC classification system (which is more comprehensive for use with respect to the professions of our alumni) which uses a combination of categories from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) from the ILO and the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) UK classification, to define employment according to the duties undertaken (www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/index.htm).

How many are female?

Overall, only 23% of the total alumni at the time the survey was carried out were female. In recent years, however, the proportion of women holding awards has increased to over 40%, reflecting the Commission's policy of encouraging agencies to nominate high quality female applicants. This trend is clearly illustrated in Figure 8. The higher number of female award holders amongst our more recent alumni is reflected in the fact that 32% of those invited to take part in the survey were female. This figure is accurately represented in the survey respondents, 32% of whom were women.

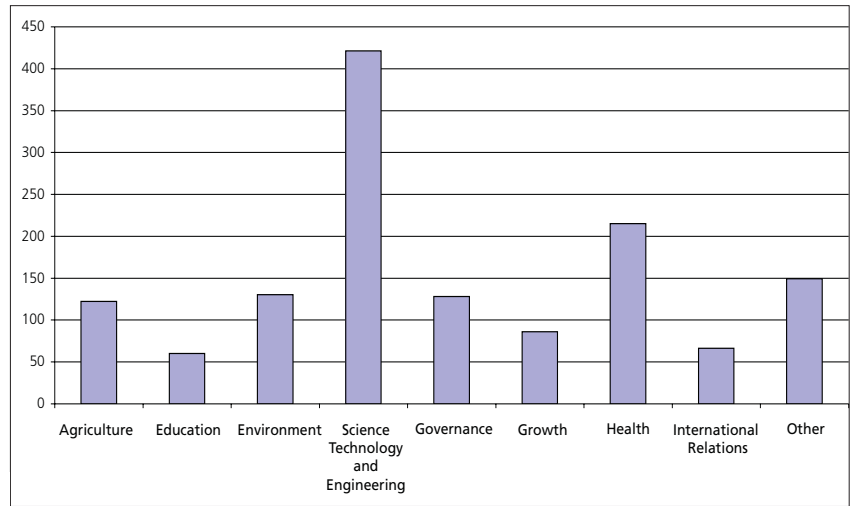


Figure 7 Award categories of those working in Education

Of our female respondents, 60% held their awards after 2000, with only 6% taking up their Scholarships in the 1960s and 1970s. 34% of female respondents held Scholarships for doctoral study, 5% of those on a Split-Site basis, whilst 15% held Academic Fellowships and 7% Professional Fellowships. Overall, female alumni are best represented amongst those studying for taught postgraduate awards, namely 45% of the 603 respondents who held such awards, and Professional Fellowships, representing 43% of the 125 Professional Fellows who completed the survey.



Applying research in the environment sector: distributing plants to remote communities to aid sustainability

On a regional basis, 54% of the Caribbean respondents were female, followed by 44% of the North American (Canadian) respondents. The breakdown of the African respondents by gender is similar to the breakdown overall, with 31% of them being women; the South Asian group was slightly lower with only 27% of respondents from that region being female.

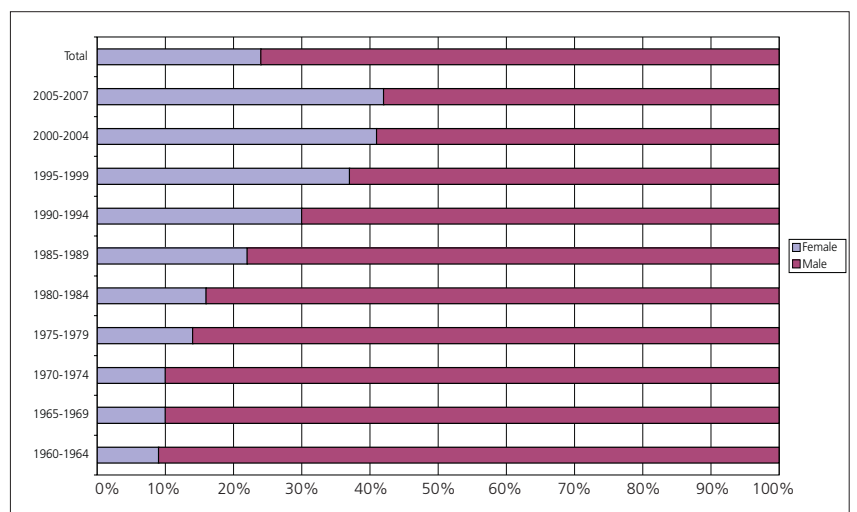


Figure 8 Gender distribution since 1960

Box 1
CSC development and leadership priorities

- Health
- Agricultural/Rural Productivity
- Quantity and Quality of Education
- Governance
- International Relations
- Poverty Reduction
- Social Inequalities and Human Rights
- Physical Infrastructure
- Environment Protection
- Conflict Resolution/Humanitarian Assistance
- Scientific and Research Applications
- Job Creation
- Other

What did we find out?

The evaluation survey was particularly seeking answers to the following questions:

- Did the award benefit you in terms of your individual knowledge and skills?
- Did the award, and those skills, benefit you in terms of your employment and career?
- Have you been able to pass those skills and that knowledge on?
- Has your award increased your ability to have an impact on your place of work?
- Have you maintained links with contacts in the United Kingdom?
- Have you been able to have an impact on wider society?

In order to assess the capacity for wider impact, we asked alumni to indicate whether they had participated in a project, had wider socio-economic impact, and/or influenced government thinking and policy in any of a number of areas identified by the Commission as key priorities for development and leadership (see Box 1).

These priorities, as with our broad sector categories, reflect the priorities of both our funding bodies, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, as well as referencing the Millennium Development Goals. Whilst acknowledging that this kind of reporting of involvement is subjective and perception of its importance very individual, we have been given enough practical examples of activity to demonstrate that our alumni are working in fields of key significance. The full details of these activities and their potential impact will be further analysed and investigated in greater depth in future reports; below we will consider some of the findings from the survey and give readers some examples of the kind of work our award holders are undertaking.

Our alumni have had an impact on wider society

In brief...

In total, over 2,000 alumni, representing 91% of the respondents, reported being involved in at least one of these areas in some way. Of these, 69% provided further information. Many reported being involved in more than one area. Unsurprisingly, considering that many of our respondents and indeed alumni work in higher education, the majority of responses were recorded in Education and Scientific and Research Applications, with 55% reporting involvement in the former category and 57% in the latter. Health and Environment Protection were also well represented.

The majority of responses came under the heading 'I was involved in a specific project' – 5,680 in total. However, there were also 2,841 responses to 'I helped influence government thinking and policy' and 4,623 to 'I have contributed to wider socio-economic impact'.

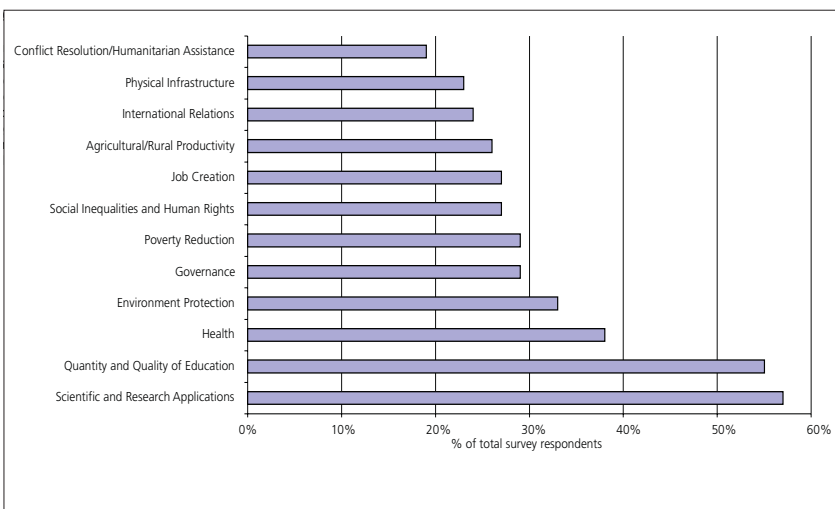


Figure 9
Reported involvement in development and leadership priority areas

ment thinking and policy' and 4,623 to 'I have contributed to wider socio-economic impact'.

Health

With three of the Millennium Development Goals directly related to health, and others indirectly connected through (for example) the need for improved public health and nutrition, the impact of our awards in this sector will always be of particular interest. 21% of our alumni held awards in health-related subjects as did 16% of survey respondents. Only 6% of respondents are categorised as currently working in the health sector, although a number of those classified as working in education are in fact working in departments of medicine or health in universities. 38% of respondents indicated that they had some specific involvement in the health field, demonstrating that the ability to have an impact extends beyond studying or directly working in the field. Of those 38%, 74% reported being involved in a specific project, 31% that they had influenced government thinking and policy, and 35% that they had had wider socio-economic impact.

I am a co-director of a project training community health workers to educate families and community members on child health and development. This project is serving about 100,000 people and it has been very successful as the retention rate of volunteers is over 95%. Child health is improving in the areas covered.

1992 Commonwealth Scholar, MPH, Uganda

My primary research interests centre on paediatric and perinatal HIV/AIDS, and include research on the epidemiology of paediatric HIV/AIDS in Jamaica, outcomes-based research on the impact of interventions for treatment and care of infected children and adolescents, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

2001 Commonwealth Fellow, Jamaica

Of the 38% involved in this area, only 36% studied in the field of health; they did, however, seem to have the most impact, forming 55% of those who indicated involvement at all three levels. Other sectors having an impact or being otherwise involved in Health include Science, Technology and Engineering (understandably, as this category covers many of the biological sciences) with 20% of the 38%. A number of those holding awards in the field of agriculture also noted having an impact – 9% of the 38% in total. One example of the crossover between the two areas is the work of one of our Bangladeshi alumni on rice production:

In recent years, my major involvements in research are in relation to socio-economic aspects of rice production as well as health and nutrition of the rural people in Bangladesh. Further, the effects of arsenic contamination on human health and rice farming have been studied.

1978 Commonwealth Scholar, PhD, Bangladesh

Agricultural/Rural Productivity

Agriculture and Rural Productivity are key development areas and ones in which a large number of our Scholars and Fellows study. Overall, 6% of our alumni held awards in agriculture, as did 8% of survey respondents. Amongst our alumni we can count professors, academic researchers, scientists, government and NGO workers, all of whom contribute in some way to this vital field. Of the total number of respondents, 575 (26%) reported some involvement in Agricultural/Rural Productivity; of these, 68% reported being involved in a specific project, 31% influencing government thinking and policy, and 42% having a socio-economic impact. It was interesting to note that only 26% of this group held awards in Agriculture, 27% held awards in the Science, Technology and Engineering category and 11% in Environment. In relation to our ISIC coding, well over half (61%) of the 575 are employed in Education and 11% in Professional, Scientific or Technical Activities. An example of the kind of work being carried out is given overleaf.



Dr Ndifon mentoring two colleagues in Guyana

Dr Cornelia Ndifon is a 2003 Commonwealth Scholar from Nigeria, and studied for a Master's in Public Health at the University of Leeds. She has held posts at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital and worked on the community outreach 'Health on Wheels' programme in Cross River State, Nigeria. She was until recently employed by the UNDP in Guyana as an HIV/AIDS specialist.

I was the sole physician managing the first prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT)-based care and treatment centre and enrolled over 250 HIV-infected women, children and men into continuing care since October 2005. I provided direct treatment, care and support to people living with HIV and AIDS both at the primary care level in communities and at the National Referral Hospital.

In addition, Dr Ndifon has mentored local physicians and trained other allied healthcare professionals in the clinical management of HIV/AIDS, as well as supporting the expansion of PMTCT/HIV treatment centres in five primary care facilities. Her personal aim is to work towards the registration of a non-governmental organisation to address adolescent/youth issues not fully tackled by the current global HIV initiative. Dr Ndifon has recently returned to Africa, taking up a new post as an HIV clinical mentor based in Namibia.

Professor Omkar Wakhlu

was part of our first ever cohort of Commonwealth Scholars, holding a Commonwealth Scholarship from 1960-1963. He obtained his DPhil in Fluid Mechanics from the University of Birmingham. Professor Wakhlu's work is in the field of promoting quality in engineering education and the development of research facilities in water resource engineering. He is currently working in the areas of water resources engineering, sustainable development, and leadership and quality in education. During his academic career he has had the opportunity to influence and teach many at the beginning of their careers. As he himself estimates:

Approximately 2,000 engineers have graduated after training during my active academic term of 12 years. Many of them work as chief engineers in India and other countries.

Professor Wakhlu has also conducted several management development programmes in both private and public sector organisations, and is actively engaged as a postgraduate research examiner.

Aquaculture is now being introduced at the School of Veterinary Medicine. There were no 'fish labs' or aquaria. I have designed and built an aquaculture unit from funding received from the university...With the closure of a major portion of the agriculture sector in Trinidad, over 10,000 people were out of jobs. I assisted the government in retraining and retooling some of these workers into the field of aquaculture. I assisted in developing a course and assessment package for the government. This has led to the training of over 300 people in aquaculture.

2005 Commonwealth Split-Site Scholar, PhD, Trinidad and Tobago

Quantity and Quality of Education

Given the high proportion of our alumni who work in universities, and the fact that we run schemes targeted at higher education professionals, it is not surprising that this particular priority saw high levels of respondent involvement, with 55% reporting some level of impact. Of these, 70% reported involvement in a specific project, 33% that they had helped influence government thinking and policy, and 42% that they had contributed to wider socio-economic impact. Of the 55%, 71% were employed in education and 96% of those in higher education. One of our alumni noted:

I think the greatest contribution I have made is in the area of education. Following my UK exposure and Commonwealth Scholarship, I have been able to introduce innovative methodologies in teaching and research; I have influenced significantly the curriculum development and trend in my institution because of the knowledge and exposure I gained through the CSC award. I feel I have demonstrated significant leadership in research, initiating and winning some grants as well as being a factor in many international collaboration activities.

2004 Commonwealth Split-Site Scholar, PhD, Nigeria

Although many of our alumni, as in the examples above, work in higher education, a number also work in primary and secondary education, as well as in education policy and in local communities. Other employment categories represented, albeit on a small scale, included Public Administration and Defence (7%) and Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (6%). Their work often has great impact, in some cases at grassroots levels, in others at national level.

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami affected nearly a third of the Maldivian population and I was the team leader for the assessment of affected islands in the education sector. As I work in the Educational Supervision and Quality Improvement Section of the Ministry of Education, I have also been able to contribute significantly to policy development, design and implementation activities with regards to quality education initiatives in the last eight years.

1997 Commonwealth Scholar, BA (Hons), the Maldives

Another point worth noting is that, of those alumni holding awards in the 1960s, 58% responded to this section, as did 60% of those holding awards in the 1970s and 59% of those holding awards in the 1990s. Conversely, 50% of those holding awards in the 2000s contributed in this section – still a positive proportion, but less than those holding awards in earlier years, perhaps reflecting the fact that many of the Scholars are still at the start of their educational careers. Of our academic schemes, over two-thirds of Academic Fellows and Academic Scholars reported activity in this sector.

Governance

Governance can be defined as the relationship between government and civil society and as such covers a wide breadth of activity. Overall, 29% recorded involvement in this area. It is also one of only two areas in which noticeably more respondents reported influencing government thinking and policy (45%) than having a socio-economic impact (33%). This may be because socio-economic impact in this area is considered harder to demonstrate, or because of the very nature of governance-related work; either way, our respondents provided us with some good examples of involvement at a variety of levels.

As a State Counsel, my duties involve representing and advising the government. I was appointed a special advisor to the central bank of Sri Lanka, in view of the specialist knowledge in financial law acquired by me during my tenure at the University of Oxford, consequent to the receipt of the Commonwealth Scholarship. This has enabled me to make a significant impact on the financial and economic governance of my country.

2004 Commonwealth Scholar, BCL, Sri Lanka

Interpretations of the specific areas of governance varied, with some, for example, referring to government and political activity, others to university governance, e-governance, or work in gender equality. If we look at the employment categories of those reporting impact in this area, over half (58%) work in education and 98% of them in higher education, demonstrating that the impact of academics and higher education can extend beyond university campuses. Looking at field of study whilst on award, respondents represent a wide range of disciplines. The largest group represented was the Science, Technology and Engineering category, with 19%.

It was also interesting to note that 45% of those responding to this section held their awards in the 2000s, suggesting that even relatively recent alumni are contributing in this field. Additionally, a third of our respondents from the 1960s also responded in this section.

International Relations

This section is in many ways closely linked with governance, and certainly there is an element of overlap in our own categorisation of these two fields. When reporting their own impact, the interpretation of respondents regarding the term 'International Relations' varied, with some referring to activity such as international diplomacy and others to international research collaboration. One excellent example is given here.

As a planning officer in the Canadian International Development Agency, and as a CIDA Field Representative responsible on two different postings for Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Kenya and Uganda, I had a major influence on the design and implementation of Canadian development assistance programmes and projects in those countries in a wide range of sectors, including health, education, environment, agriculture, job creation and poverty reduction. My work on and in South Africa involved shaping the direction of Canadian policy towards South and Southern Africa (governance and conflict resolution), recommending specific policy initiatives and consulting other public and private sector and NGO individuals involved in South Africa. As head of the Commonwealth section at DFAIT, I provided direction to Canada's involvement in the Commonwealth, including on the scope and priorities of Commonwealth governance and technical assistance programmes, with a particular focus on the Commonwealth's role in Zimbabwe, Fiji and Pakistan.

1969 Commonwealth Scholar, MPhil Research, Canada

Overall, 24% responded to this section, 31% of whom responded to both 'I influenced government thinking and policy' and 'I had a wider socio-economic impact'. 65% reported involvement in a specific project.



Dr Peter Manins held a Commonwealth Scholarship from 1970-1973, gaining a PhD in Geophysical Fluid Dynamics from the University of Cambridge. On returning home, he joined Australia's national science agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), working on research involving nocturnal winds and other aspects of air pollution meteorology. He has overseen research on air pollution, greenhouse gases, land and atmosphere exchanges, and earth observation. His impact has also extended beyond the laboratory, to schools and communities both in Australia and overseas.

I have been a key scientific resource for community groups concerned about the environmental impact of major public infrastructure and helped the formulation of government and community policy on the development of these projects from an air environment perspective.

Dr Manins is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and his work has been recognised with several honours, including the Centenary Medal for service to Australian Society in Meteorology in 2003 and, four years later, the Clean Air Medal for contributions to the science of air quality and environmental protection. Recently retired, he has returned to CSIRO as a part-time honorary Fellow.



Dr Judith Henry-Mowatt's

Commonwealth Scholarship, awarded in 1998, funded her PhD studies in Toxicology at the University of Manchester. She is now the Director of the Forensic Science Laboratory, Department of National Security in her home country of Jamaica. She has been actively involved in drafting the terms and conditions of operation for Jamaica's first sexual offenders' register, and has written and submitted a proposal to establish a national DNA database. She has also been instrumental in the reorganisation and restructuring of the island's rape units. Internationally, she is Jamaica's forensic representative to Interpol and one of the country's representatives on the Caribbean DNA working group.

In addition, Dr Henry-Mowatt is also actively involved in academic work. As well as contributing to the development of a new occupational and environmental health and safety Master's course at the University of the West Indies, she also teaches the toxicology module on a part-time basis. With Jamaica soon to pass its first law regarding occupational health and safety, these new graduates will be well placed to meet the need for trained occupational health and safety inspectors.

Poverty Reduction

As one of the Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction is an important area and one in which we would hope to have some measurable impact. 29% of respondents reported involvement in this development area, with almost half (48%) of them reporting having socio-economic impact, and 34% influencing government thinking and policy. Activities described included work at both policy level and at grassroots level, as shown in the examples below.

As adviser to the Minister for Economic Planning and Regional Cooperation, I designed and supervised the implementation of the emerging social relief programme that provided credit and other forms of economic assistance to very poor communities.

1985 Commonwealth Fellow, Ghana

I have been involved in several projects aimed at poverty reduction to lower income sectors of populations. The most successful ones include the training of pastoralists in one district on the preservation of meat by solar drying and smoking. They have now formed business groups engaged in selling preserved meat. This has reduced losses they used to incur as well as increasing their household incomes. Another ongoing successful project involves women street food vendors in two municipalities. We have managed to train them in hygiene, basic bookkeeping and meal planning. They too have formed business groups and have managed to attract more customers, and as such their incomes have significantly improved.

1997 Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholar, PhD, Tanzania

For many, activities such as enhancing agricultural output in rural areas or working on literacy projects were considered as having an impact in this field. 16% of those in this category, for example, studied subjects relating to agriculture on award, including the Tanzanian Scholar quoted above whose research was undertaken in food engineering, whilst 20% studied Science, Technology or Engineering-based subjects. Over half of those replying in this section held their awards in the 2000s, whilst less than 20% of those holding awards in the 1960s responded in this section.

Social Inequalities and Human Rights

27% responded to this section, 43% indicating having socio-economic impact, 32% government influence, and 60% being involved in a specific project. A number of respondents providing further information reported involvement in gender-based projects; as another of the Millennium Development Goals focuses on gender quality and the empowerment of women, this would be an interesting area for further investigation. An example is given below.

In the work that I do, I have built the leadership capacity of over 3,000 young African women in Africa and the UK through my organisation. I have also engaged government on polices and programmes that empower African women, like the law on land, domestic relations law, property co-ownership, employment laws, constitutional review processes, affirmative action, sexual, health and reproductive rights etc.

1999 Commonwealth Scholar, MA taught, Uganda

Inequality and human rights issues of course extend beyond matters of gender, and our alumni work in a variety of areas. One Indian alumnus' work encompasses working for women in the mining industry and promoting resource rights for indigenous communities:

I have developed a wide network with international human rights organisations and head the international secretariat for the International Women and Mining Network. I have set up a resource centre for women and children which is the only organisation in the region specifically working on gender concerns and children's rights in mining, indigenous people's rights, and research and advocacy for their rights. I have undertaken several training workshops on governance for indigenous communities to use the national laws newly created in India and international instruments for their resource rights.

2003 Commonwealth Professional Fellow, India

Physical Infrastructure

This sector produced the second lowest proportion of respondent involvement, with 23%. Of these, 67% reported involvement in a specific project, 31% having had wider socio-economic impact, and 34% government influence. 29% held awards in the Science, Technology and Engineering category and 22% in the Environment category.

I have significantly contributed to the development of water supply and sanitation infrastructure including setting up mechanisms for effective government and local community collaboration. I have also influenced government practice in the water and sanitation subsector through the advancement of reasons for community-led operation and management responsibilities and the involvement of women in all aspects of community projects.

2002 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholar, MSc taught, Nigeria

28% of those reporting involvement in this area held Commonwealth Academic Fellowships. 27% held awards for doctoral study and 25% for taught postgraduate courses. 41% of our Distance Learning respondents, admittedly a small number overall, also contributed in this section.

Environment Protection

This sector showed high levels of respondent involvement, with 33%, the fourth highest amount after Science and Research Applications, Education and Health. Again, this field is significant with environmental sustainability being one of the Millennium Development Goals and one of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's policy goals involving the promotion of a 'low carbon, high growth, global economy'. 10% of our total alumni held awards relating to this subject area, as did 10% of our survey respondents.

Of those who reported involvement in this sector, 71% were involved in a specific project, 36% reported having socio-economic impact, and 35% reported that they had influenced government policy. 61% were employed in Education whilst the second largest sector represented was Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, with 11%. The example below is given by an alumnus in the second category.

I have been actively involved in numerous projects to enhance the meteorological and oceanographic observations network in Mauritius and the South West Indian Ocean... I have written several papers on extreme events – tropical cyclones, tidal waves, floods and drought – in the South West Indian Western Indian Ocean. I have also contributed to many research papers aimed at improving tropical cyclone forecasts in the Indian Ocean region to save lives and property. My present activities involve raising awareness of the impact of climate change on ecosystems and socio-economic sectors and measures to be taken to combat climate change and sea level rise. I have given many talks and presentations to schools, youth and senior citizens.

1969 Commonwealth Scholar, BSc, Mauritius



Professor Wickramasinghe examining the utilisation of ecological resources

Professor Anoja Wickramasinghe

studied for a PhD in Forest Ecology at the University of Sheffield in the early 1980s, whilst on a Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholarship. Now Emeritus Professor at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, the university which nominated her for her Commonwealth Scholarship back in 1980, she is currently engaged in a range of work related to forest ecology, including ethno-forestry, renewable energy development, gender mainstreaming, and rural and community development. Her work is wide ranging and involves teaching, administration, research, supervision, training, dissemination of knowledge, action projects and programmes, consultancy and advocacy, grassroots mobilisation, capacity building and empowerment.

Professor Wickramasinghe has contributed towards building local capacity and building social capital in more than five administrative districts, through the establishment of women's organisations, revolving funds and income generating activities. Significant changes in rural areas have also been achieved through the livelihood development of the communities in the areas adjoining villages, alongside policy sensitisation work and the integration of energy into rural development.

Interestingly, only 21% of respondents in this section held awards in environmental subjects, with a higher number (27%) studying Science, Technology and Engineering-related subjects. 13% held agriculture-related awards, and 10% studied health-related subjects. When looking at individual disciplines, 10% of those responding to this section studied Biology and 10% Agriculture, with 8% holding awards in Environmental Studies.

Conflict Resolution/Humanitarian Assistance

This category produced the lowest number of responses at 19% of the total, probably due to the relatively specialised nature of the field. Nevertheless, some very valuable and interesting responses were given. Of these, 38% reported activity that had had a wider socio-economic impact, and 32% that they had influenced government thinking.

Two weeks after my arrival back in Kenya, I was nominated to be part of the team set up by the Ministry of Health to coordinate health and nutrition issues in the newly created IDP camps following the disputed elections. With fresh ideas from the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit, I led the team in establishing various sub-committees to deal with the following: shelter, sanitation and hygiene, safe water, liquid waste, preventive services, health promotion and psychosocial support. We took a little while in the execution of the plans but with the support of humanitarian agencies the ideas were widely accepted. The IDPs are still in the camps but at least they are able to access basic needs as we plan to reconcile the communities.

2007 Commonwealth Professional Fellow, Kenya

Some of our alumni reported being involved in international and national-level conflicts, others in local disputes.

One of the biggest challenges in managing water for irrigated agriculture in India is negotiating interstate river water disputes. My area of work, and also my area of research, is negotiating these interstate river water disputes based on the principles of sustainability. The findings of my research project are currently being applied in India in the ongoing deliberations to formulate the appropriate policy in this field.

2005 Commonwealth Scholar, MSc taught, India

Scientific and Research Applications

This category, along with that of Education, showed high levels of alumni involvement, with 57% reporting involvement. This is to be expected when one considers the nature of many of our awards and the employment categories of our respondents, and indeed 71% of this group work in the education sector. With so many working in higher education, it is inevitable that many will be working on research projects that have wider impact beyond their institutions, as in the example given below.

My research findings have a high positive impact on the inland fisheries of Sri Lanka because they were adopted by the government for defining management strategies. My research findings are immensely utilised by the public and private sector fisheries authorities for the development of culture-based fisheries in freshwater reservoirs of Sri Lanka.

1999 Commonwealth Fellow, Sri Lanka

Of course, many of our alumni carry out research in non-academic settings, with many reporting that they work for government or medical organisations. The 29% not recorded as working in Education work in a variety of sectors, 33% of them in Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities and 14% in Health-related activity.

Overall, 41% of this group held Scholarships for doctoral study, including 5% who studied in Split-Site mode. 28% held Academic Fellowships.

Job Creation

27% of alumni reported involvement in this sector, 34% of whom reported having influence on government thinking and policy, and 37% having a socio-economic impact. Over 60% worked in education, with 34% having held awards for study or research in the Science, Technology and Engineering sector. 42% of respondents were from sub-Saharan Africa and 33% from South Asia, including the alumnus quoted in the example below.

As Principal Investigator of three different projects, I have created employment for five contractual helpers and three Senior Research Fellows for 3-5 years. I have developed the commercial technology of extraction of oil from apricot stones which are otherwise thrown away. The technology has been adopted by farmers thus providing income for their produce. The people have started adoption of the technology by establishing their own unit thus providing them with a permanent source of employment and assured income for their produce. By establishing oil extraction units in different parts of the state as a facility to the farmers, I have created an infrastructure for the state for the benefit of rural people.

2002 Commonwealth Fellow, India

Other

A number of respondents answered the final question asking for any 'Other' areas of involvement. Many can be linked directly with those already considered above. One field that stands out, and in which a number of alumni are involved, is Arts and Culture. Although an area that may not traditionally be seen as 'development' or 'leadership' focused, the examples of work given in, for example, the field of art therapy, heritage studies, theatre, or art conservation demonstrate high levels of potential impact. As one Malaysian respondent reports:

I have been engaged in many projects in the area of the arts and education. In particular, I have developed a methodology for teaching children about their multicultural heritage in Malaysia using the creative arts such as music, theatre and visual arts. Through these projects, children of different races mix with one another and learn about one another's cultures. This reduces conflict between races. I have also helped to develop the music curriculum in secondary schools in Malaysia which incorporates traditional music. Until the 1990s, the music curriculum was based on Western music theory and practice.

1994 Commonwealth Fellow, Malaysia

Our awards have also benefited individuals...

The survey also revealed the impact of awards on individual and institutional levels, demonstrating benefits in the following ways:

The transfer of skills, knowledge and expertise

If we look first at the specific benefits of the awards on an individual basis, 99% of respondents reported that they had gained knowledge in their field of expertise, 91% significantly. This included not only those undertaking postgraduate courses, but those undertaking shorter-term fellowships and periods of medical training. Only 10 individuals reported gaining little expertise. Similarly, the vast majority (96%) said they had increased their analytical and technical skills significantly or to some extent. A further 2% did not answer this question and 35 respondents (also 2%) said they had increased these skills 'not much' or 'not at all', with the latter representing only 3 cases. There was no particular pattern with regards to level of study or category for the few who stated they had not gained much in the way of skills for either of these questions, suggesting these answers were based on individual experiences.

The international nature of the awards gave important added value

Another key finding that supports international scholarship programmes such as the CSC's is that 91% felt that they had accessed equipment and expertise not available in their home countries. When broken down regionally, this figure included 98% of respondents from European Commonwealth countries, 94% of respondents from the Caribbean and 93% of those from sub-Saharan Africa.

[I was] trained in neuro-otology and skull base surgery by virtue of the CSC ... The training I had was not available locally, and the CSC has enabled us to develop a referral tertiary-level medical subspecialty to a standard which may not have been attainable without the contribution of the CSC.

2002 Commonwealth Fellow, India

On a country level, the highest number of respondents answering 'not at all' or 'not much' came from India (39 individuals) and Canada (31) followed by Australia with 16 whilst, when broken down by category, the highest number of negative responses was found in Science, Technology and Engineering, with 54 individual responses.

The acquisition of other transferable skills and techniques

The final question in this section led to the finding that 80% learned techniques for managing and organising people and projects, 44% significantly and 36% to some extent. Professional Fellows were more likely to report significant gains (54%), with one of those already quoted commenting:

I personally feel that the award opened a new chapter in my work and I thank the Commonwealth for the sponsorship. I look forward to networking closely with CIEH and the Commonwealth. Thanks and I am proud to be associated with you.

2007 Commonwealth Professional Fellow, Kenya

Other anecdotal benefits of the award are less quantifiable and relate perhaps more to experience and personal development, as one Australian former Commonwealth Scholar noted:

My MSc in Manchester helped me enormously by giving me a more mature and global view of the social and political impact of science.

1979 Commonwealth Scholar, MSc, Australia

The enhancement of careers

Of the 744 who were students before the award, 80% obtained employment in the 12 months following the award. Of the 1,719 who were employed before the award, 1,048 or 61% felt they obtained a more senior position within the 12 months following the award. 81% of respondents felt that their award helped them obtain advancements after this 12-month period, 57% significantly so. 12% did not answer or answered not applicable. Only 3% felt it had no impact at all and 5% that it had not had much impact.

As a general comment, the CSC award and my years at the University of Oxford were key in my personal development, including my leadership skills, and I am extremely grateful for the opportunities the award has given me over the years. It was very important to my career. 1979 Commonwealth Scholar, MPhil research, Canada

...as well as employers and colleagues...

Whilst gaining skills and knowledge are obviously key aims of any scholarship programme, it is also important that alumni are able both to practice these skills and to transfer them to others. This is a long-term concern for both the Commission and its funding bodies, particularly with regards to those Scholars and Fellows from lower income countries. 95%, however, reported that they use the specific skills and knowledge gained during their award in their work, 75% significantly and 20% to some extent. Figure 10 shows this distribution by region.

The majority of respondents (92%) also reported that their award increased their ability to have influence and make changes in their work, 64% significantly.

...home countries and communities...

Conscious of the potential for brain drain, particularly from the developing Commonwealth, all award holders are required by the CSC to sign an undertaking to return home on completion of their awards. Our research to date tells us that the vast majority do so. This survey is no exception, showing that 88% are now working in their home countries, that is the country in which they were resident when they were nominated for the award, and, as has been demonstrated in this report, are making considerable contributions to their local communities and home countries.

That is not to say, of course, that those not at home are not contributing. As international mobility amongst academics and researchers, as well as development workers, has increased, so the need to return home to make an impact is less clear cut. In addition, the very nature of the work that many of our alumni pursue, from academia to politics, sometimes necessitates periods of work overseas. Of those respondents who are currently based overseas, over half (53%) are working or studying in universities, with many more working for international non-governmental or governmental organisations. Opportunities for impact are demonstrated more often than not, in many cases both to home countries and on a broader scale.

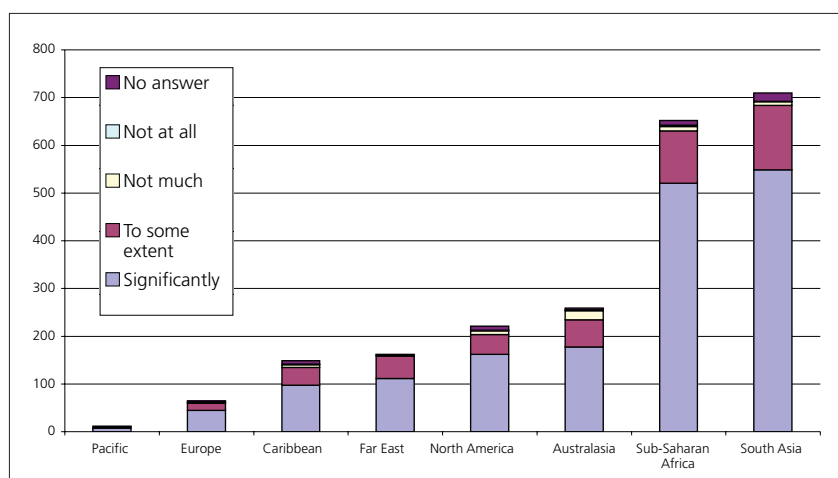


Figure 10 To what extent did/do you use the specific skills and knowledge gained during your award in your work?

Currently I am working with the Somalia Programme of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Nairobi, Kenya. I am actively involved in the management of multi-sectoral humanitarian and development programmes for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and other communities with an annual budget of over USD 15 million. Prior to my current assignment, I worked with UNHCR in Tanzania, and with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Pakistan and Kosovo.

2002 Commonwealth Scholar, MA taught, Pakistan

...and universities and organisations in the United Kingdom

One of the benefits of international scholarship programmes is the opportunity to establish and encourage international partnerships and collaborations. We asked alumni to indicate on a four-point scale the extent to which they maintained links with universities, professional associations, social contacts, and work contacts in the United Kingdom, as well as CSC networks.

70% of survey respondents maintained links with universities in the UK (29% significantly, 41% to some extent). One of these respondents held a Fellowship in Paediatric Cardiology and wrote:

We were doing 25 paediatric interventions a year until 2003. We achieved 250 interventions for sick children by 2007, of which 200 were curative. The training programme became active and the institute started a paediatric cardiology fellowship programme this year. This success was the outcome of the good relations I am maintaining with the training centre in the UK. In addition, a fellow doctor from Finland, who was on sabbatical at Guy's Hospital during my scholarship tenure, kindly deputed his colleague and a student to visit our centre and they participated in academic activities.

2001 Commonwealth Scholar, Medical Training, India

48% maintained links with professional associations in the UK (17% significantly), 52% maintained links with work contacts in the UK (23% significantly), and 72% maintained links with social contacts in the UK (33% significantly). The latter category, in particular, may seem of less interest with regards to political and social impact; however, as one Canadian alumnus now working for the United Nations in Guatemala pointed out, for many these social contacts are fellow scholars and researchers working in the same or similar fields.

The perspectives of my fellow students in my MSc at the LSE, who had many more years of experience than I at the time, were complementary to my course work.

2002 Commonwealth Scholar, MSc taught, Canada

Links with the CSC

36% maintained links with CSC Professional Networks (7% significantly). This figure seems low at first glance, but is in fact encouraging. Currently, we have seven networks covering seven different areas so, for some, the relevant network is yet to be established. Also, opportunities to participate and be actively involved are only just becoming established as the programme expands, so the fact that 811 respondents feel they maintain links to some extent is very promising.

International links and collaboration

Our survey focused on links with the UK, largely as we are exploring the direct outcomes of our awards, the majority of which are held in the UK. Some respondents, however, did note links with other countries, some attributable to the time on award as in the example given on the previous page, others not, at least not directly. In either case, these links are also worth exploring, particularly as we seek to align our aims and outputs with other programmes such as DFID's Partnerships in Higher Education scheme, DelpHE.



Creating opportunities for international collaboration: seminar participants at the 2007 CSC Welcome Day

The way forward

This is an initial report highlighting some of the findings from our alumni survey. Even acknowledging a natural bias from our respondents, and accepting that those who did not respond or could not be traced are perhaps less likely to be willing to share their experiences, this survey and its results demonstrate very clearly to us that the programme is, to put it simply, a good one. It works. The Scholarships and Fellowships offered by the Commission clearly enable the transfer of skills and knowledge not only to individual award holders but also beyond, to their colleagues and communities. In particular, we have:

- identified the main sectors of employment along with seniority levels and location of employment
- confirmed that our alumni have gained a wide range of skills and experience whilst on award, and that these skills can be readily implemented on return home
- shown that our alumni work and have influence in areas of high priority for development and leadership, including education, health and governance
- answered concerns about brain drain, by showing that over four-fifths of our respondents are working in their home countries
- found that the scheme contributes to international collaboration and partnerships, particularly in the field of research and higher education

These findings are just some of the very positive set of outcomes from the preliminary analysis of the evaluation survey. There is, however, still much to be done and we know that, although these findings are positive, there is always room for development and improvement, particularly for an international scholarship programme in an increasingly competitive, global and rapidly changing world. The next stage for the Commission, therefore, is to further verify and quantify the impact of this knowledge transfer and to continue to review the programme itself, assessing the outcomes of its particular schemes and policies and planning for future improvements and developments, thus ensuring the continuing relevance and impact of the scheme.

Established by Act of Parliament, the **Commonwealth Scholarship Commission** (CSC) is responsible for maintaining Britain's contribution to the international Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP).

The CSFP is an international programme under which member governments offer scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other Commonwealth countries. The Plan was instigated at the first Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in 1959 and is reviewed by Ministers at their triennial meetings – the only scholarship scheme in the world to receive such high-level recognition.

In the UK, awards are funded by the Department for International Development (for developing Commonwealth countries), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills in partnership with UK universities (for developed Commonwealth countries).

The Commission is a non-departmental public body in its own right, and members are appointed in line with the Code of Practice of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Commission's secretariat is provided by the Association of Commonwealth Universities; financial management and welfare support is provided by the British Council.



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