

Introduction

Alongside the academic awards it provides, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC) offers individuals the opportunity to pursue career development through the Commonwealth Professional Fellowship scheme. Since its inception in 2002, the scheme has provided a total of 745 awards (as of 2012) to Fellows from across the Commonwealth, with numbers steadily increasing in 2013.

Although a variety of programme data has been collected since 2002, resource limitations have meant that no specific analysis of monitoring and evaluation data has taken place until recently. As of 2013, new mechanisms have been put into place to ensure more efficient and reliable data collection from Fellows and host organisations, as well as Fellows' employers, which will enable a full-scale evaluation study in the future if need be. This consists of a tailored survey schedule in which Fellows receive a total of three surveys over an approximate three-year period: one after six months to a year, a second after 18 months, and a final after three years. This represents a change from previous practice, which was to include Professional Fellows in the broader evaluation surveys sent to all alumni on a five-yearly basis.

In addition to ensuring that data is captured from Fellows much sooner after their awards, host organisations and employers will also receive a one-off survey after a period of six months to a year following completion of the Fellow's award. It was felt that asking them to contribute anything further would be unreasonable, given time and resource constraints.

The overall aim of this report is to provide an overview of the existing data that is held on the Professional Fellowship scheme, including the most recent survey exercise, as well as outlining the new methods and procedures being implemented by the Evaluation Team to ensure consistent data collection going forward. The report also provides first-hand evidence of participant perspectives through summaries of focus group discussions that were held with both Fellows and host organisations in November and December 2012 respectively.

The report begins by providing a brief overview of the scheme and purpose of the review. The next section of the report consists of descriptive data analysis of the Professional Fellowship scheme and basic data regarding the Fellows. The second chapter provides a summary of the focus group discussion held with Fellows, and the third chapter reports on our engagement activities with hosts and employers. Finally, Chapter 4 provides some individual examples of impact and the type of work being undertaken by Fellows on their return home. In conclusion, we note that, although there is scope for greater data collection and more rigorous analysis in due course, we are still able to report that data currently held clearly demonstrates the positive impacts that Professional Fellowships have on individuals, institutions, and wider society.