



COMMONWEALTH  
SCHOLARSHIPS

# Commonwealth PhD Scholarships

For candidates from least developed countries  
and fragile states in the Commonwealth

## 2021 terms and conditions

## About Commonwealth Scholarships

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) is one of the largest and most prestigious international scholarship schemes in the world. Since it was established in 1959, over 30,000 individuals have held a Commonwealth Scholarship or Fellowship – 28,500 of them were funded by the UK government, through the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC).

The CSC awards around 700 scholarships and fellowships for postgraduate study and professional development to Commonwealth citizens each year.

The CSC's Secretariat is provided by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, based in London; overseas services are provided by the British Council.

For information about the other scholarships and fellowship offered by the CSC, visit the [CSC website](#). For information about Commonwealth Scholarships offered by other Commonwealth countries, visit the [ACU website](#).

## Commonwealth PhD Scholarships

Commonwealth PhD Scholarships are for candidates from Least Developed Countries and Fragile States in the Commonwealth, for full-time doctoral study at a UK university. Funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Commonwealth PhD Scholarships enable talented and motivated individuals to gain the knowledge and skills required for sustainable development and are aimed at those who could not otherwise afford to study in the UK.

**Purpose:** To contribute to the development needs of Commonwealth countries by supporting research that will have a developmental impact. These awards will also enhance individual teaching and research capacity leading to increase institutional capacity in academic and other sectors in Commonwealth countries, and will contribute to UK higher education and research by attracting high-calibre international candidates and encouraging links and collaboration.

**Intended beneficiaries:** High-quality graduates who have the potential to undertake world-class research of a developmental nature and to become influential leaders, teachers, or researchers in their home countries.

Commonwealth PhD Scholarships are offered under six development themes:

### 1. Science and technology for development

The scholarship, which may be in any area of science or technology (including, for example, agriculture, veterinary science, or forestry), will develop knowledge and/or skills that are directly related to the specific needs of a low or middle income country. Where possible, applications should cite expressed national or local priorities.

### 2. Strengthening health systems and capacity

The scholarship will develop knowledge and/or skills that will improve health provision or outcomes for disadvantaged groups in low and middle income countries. A range of approaches could be adopted, such as training staff to fill critical shortage areas; establishing better systems, processes, or management; health promotion and improving understanding of non-take up; or developing new treatments.

### **3. Promoting global prosperity**

The scholarship will support economic prosperity in low and middle income countries. The knowledge and/or skills gained could lead to, for example, enhanced trade capacity; improved economic understanding or decision-making by business or government; new products and services; or long-term capacity building, through the development of entrepreneurial skills, for instance.

### **4. Strengthening global peace, security and governance**

The scholarship will develop knowledge and/or skills that will strengthen peace and security at national, regional, or international levels. Multiple approaches could be used, such as strengthening open and transparent governance; improving mutual understanding within and between societies; or building systems that reduce the potential for conflict or encourage its resolution.

### **5. Strengthening resilience and response to crises**

The scholarship will develop knowledge and/or skills which will help low and middle countries adapt to changing contexts, withstand sudden shocks, or increase capacity to preserve the continuity of operations following such events. This could apply to a broad range of threats, including natural and physical disasters; long-term threats such as climate change; interruptions to the supply of key resources; or sudden economic or technological disruption.

### **6. Access, inclusion and opportunity**

The scholarship will develop knowledge and/or skills that will promote opportunity amongst historically disadvantaged groups in low and middle income countries. This could be through, for example, expanding educational opportunities; conducting community outreach; enhancing access to decision-making; or increasing understanding of the barriers faced. A range of disadvantage can be addressed – including social, economic, gender, ethnic, regional, or political – provided that the need is clearly stated.

## **Eligibility**

To apply for these scholarships, you must:

- Be a citizen of or have been granted refugee status by an eligible Commonwealth country, or be a British Protected Person
- Be permanently resident in an eligible Commonwealth country

- Be available to start your academic studies in the UK by the start of the UK academic year in September/October 2021
- By September 2021, hold a first degree of at least upper second class (2:1) honours standard, or a second class (2:2) degree and a relevant postgraduate qualification (a Master's degree)
- NOT be registered for a PhD, or an MPhil leading to a PhD, at a UK university before September/October 2021
- NOT have commenced and be currently registered for a PhD, or an MPhil leading to a PhD, in your home country or elsewhere
- Have the support of a potential supervisor from at least one UK university listed in your application form
- Have provided all supporting documentation in the required format
- Be unable to afford to study in the UK without this scholarship

The CSC aims to identify talented individuals who have the potential to make change. We are committed to a policy of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, and encourage applications from a diverse range of candidates. For further information on the support available to candidates with a disability, see the [CSC disability support statement](#) as seen on the CSC website.

## Eligible commonwealth countries

Bangladesh  
 Cameroon  
 Kenya  
 Kiribati  
 Lesotho  
 Malawi  
 Mozambique  
 Nigeria  
 Pakistan  
 Rwanda  
 Sierra Leone  
 Solomon Islands  
 Tanzania  
 The Gambia  
 Tuvalu  
 Uganda  
 Zambia

## How to apply

You should apply to study at a UK university which has a part funding agreement with the CSC. Part funding agreements are at the discretion of individual universities.

For a list of universities that have agreed to part fund Commonwealth Scholarships, visit the [CSC website on UK universities](#).

**The CSC does not accept direct applications for these scholarships.**

You must apply to one of the following nominating bodies in the first instance:

- National nominating agencies – this is the main route of application. For a full list including contact details, the [CSC website on National nominating agencies](#).
- Selected universities/university bodies, which can nominate their own academic staff. For a full list, visit the [CSC website on National nominating agencies](#).
- Selected non-governmental organisations and charitable bodies. For a full list, visit [the CSC website on NGOs and charitable bodies](#).

All applications **must** be made through one of the listed nominating bodies. Each nominating body is responsible for its own selection process and may have additional eligibility criteria. **You must check with your nominating body for their specific advice and rules for applying, and for their own closing date for applications.**

You must make your application using the CSC's online application system, in addition to any other application that you are required to complete by your nominating body. **The CSC will not accept any applications that are not submitted via the online application system.** Information on how to use the online application system is on the [CSC website](#).

All applications must be submitted and all mandatory fields completed in the application form by **16:00 (GMT) on 18 January 2021** at the latest.

You are advised to complete and submit your application as soon as possible, as the online application system will be very busy in the days leading up to the application deadline.

Your application must include the following supporting documentation by **16:00 (GMT) on 1 February 2021** in order for your application to be eligible for consideration:

- Proof that you are a citizen or have refugee status of an eligible Commonwealth country: a copy of your valid passport (or national ID card) showing your photograph, date of birth, and country of citizenship – **uploaded to the online application system**
- Full transcripts detailing **all** your higher education qualifications including to-date transcripts for any qualifications you are currently studying (with certified translations if not in English) – **uploaded to the online application system**
- References from at least two individuals – **submitted directly by the referees to the online application system** (referees will be sent an email request to submit their reference online)

Supporting statement from a proposed supervisor in the UK from at least one of the institutions named on your application form — **submitted directly by your proposed supervisor to the online application system** (supervisors will be sent an email request to submit their statement online).

**If any of this documentation is not provided by the dates specified above, your application will be considered ineligible. It is your responsibility to ensure that your referees and proposed supervisor(s) are able to complete the references and supporting statements by the deadline and that they receive the reference and statement requests.**

**The CSC will not accept supporting documentation submitted by nominating agencies or outside the online application system.**

Supporting documentation uploaded to the online application system must be uploaded as files which are no more than 5 MB in size and must be in one of the following formats: PDF, .doc, .docx, .odt, .jpg, .jpeg. Files submitted in any other format (including Zip files and PDF Portfolios) will NOT be accepted.

Awards offered by the CSC are subject to the ongoing endorsement of the nominating body. The CSC cannot accept nominations for these scholarships from other organisations or applications directly from individuals; such applications will not be acknowledged.

## **Selection process**

Each year, the CSC invites each nominating body to submit a specific number of nominations. The deadline for nominating bodies to submit nominations to the CSC is **1 March 2020**.

The CSC invites around three times more nominations than scholarships available – therefore, nominated candidates are not guaranteed to be awarded a scholarship. There are no quotas for scholarships for any individual country. Candidates nominated by national nominating agencies are in competition with those nominated by other nominating bodies, and the same standards will be applied to applications made through either channel.

Each nominated candidate's application will be considered in line with the CSC's PhD Scholarships Selection Criteria, including by the CSC selection committee in competition with other candidates.

Applications will be considered according to the following selection criteria:

- Academic merit of the candidate
- Quality of the research proposal
- Potential impact on the development of the candidate's home country

For further details, see the Commonwealth PhD Scholarships 2021 selection criteria on the [CSC website](#).

## Tenure and placement

Awards are tenable at any approved UK university or higher education institution with which the CSC has a part-funding agreement (as mentioned previously) for a specific programme of research for 36 months of full-time study only.

Awards are to obtain one degree; funding will not be extended to enable candidates to complete a qualification in addition to or higher than that for which the selection was made. Awards are made in respect of **full-time study only** and no other course of study may be undertaken at the same time.

You must make clear in your application which qualification you are applying for. This will enable the CSC to consider your application in the correct category. Applications which do not make this clear may be considered ineligible.

You are advised to list three universities and supervisors that you think are the most appropriate for your study, in order of preference, and to explain your reasons. This is important because the CSC will not change the university or supervisor (or the order of preference) of a provisionally selected candidate after the point of selection, unless exceptional information becomes available that could not have been foreseen at the time of application.

You may propose to study at one university for a four-year PhD, but this must be based in a recognised Doctoral Training Centre. You must research this option thoroughly and justify its added value compared with a three-year PhD. As the CSC will fund only a limited number of four-year PhDs, if you do choose this option, you are strongly advised to also propose at least one three-year PhD choice.

The CSC will make the final decision on institution of study, and reserves the right to overrule any preferences indicated by the candidate. The CSC will consider the suitability of the course and its value for money when deciding on any overrule.

**You must take the necessary steps to apply for admission to your preferred universities in advance of your scholarship application. Many courses have strict admission deadlines,** you should check admission requirements carefully when applying. If you are selected for a Scholarship and have not applied and been accepted for the course(s) for which you are selected it may not be possible to proceed with your Scholarship.

**You must provide a supporting statement from a named supervisor from at least one of the UK universities to which you are applying. Applications without any supporting statements will be considered ineligible.** You are strongly advised to provide a supporting statement from a supervisor at your first choice university. If you do not, the CSC reserves the right to select you for placement at another university for which you have provided a supporting statement.



## Value

Each scholarship provides:

- Approved airfare from your home country to the UK and return at the end of your award (the CSC will not reimburse the cost of fares for dependants, nor the cost of journeys made before your award is confirmed)
- Approved tuition fees
- Stipend (living allowance) at the rate of £1,116 per month, or £1,369 per month for those at universities in the London metropolitan area (rates quoted at 2020-2021 levels)
- Warm clothing allowance, where applicable
- Study travel grant towards the cost of study-related travel within the UK or overseas
- Provision towards the cost of fieldwork undertaken overseas (the cost of one economy class return airfare to your fieldwork location), where approved
- Paid mid-term visit (airfare) to your home country (unless you have claimed (or intend to claim) spouse and/or child allowances during your scholarship, or have received a return airfare to your home country for fieldwork)
- Family allowances, as follows (rates quoted at 2020-2021 levels):
  - If you are accompanied by your spouse but no children: spouse allowance of £240 per month for a maximum period of nine months, if you and your spouse are living together at the same address in the UK (unless your spouse is also in receipt of a scholarship; other conditions also apply)
  - If you are accompanied by your spouse and children: spouse allowance of £240 per month and child allowance of £240 per month for the first child, and £118 per month for the second and third child under the age of 16, if your spouse and children are living with you at the same address in the UK (unless your spouse is also in receipt of a scholarship; other conditions also apply)
  - If you are accompanied by your children but no spouse: child allowance of £480 per month for the first child, and £118 per month for the second and third child under the age of 16, if your children are living with you at the same address in the UK
- If you declare a disability, a full assessment of your needs and eligibility for additional financial support will be offered by the CSC.

**The CSC's family allowances are intended to be only a contribution towards the cost of maintaining your family in the UK.** The true costs are likely to be considerably higher, and you must be able to supplement these allowances in order to support any family members who come to the UK with you.



For more information, see the current Handbook for Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, available on the CSC website under [Handbook, Policies and Forms](#).

Please note that the conditions outlined in the Handbook are subject to change.

## General conditions

- A Commonwealth Scholarship covers fees, approved fares, and personal maintenance. Other scholarships, awards, or bursaries that cover the same costs may not be held concurrently.
- In order for the CSC to administer your application effectively and efficiently after you have submitted, it will be necessary to create a record in your name. If you are nominated for an award to the CSC, your details will be kept on file. Basic anonymised demographic data for all applicants will be kept for analytical research. The CSC is committed to protecting your personal information and to being transparent about the information we are collecting about you and what we do with it. To find out more, see our [privacy notice](#).
- If your application is successful, the CSC will notify you that you have been provisionally selected (selected for an award subject to the CSC agreeing your terms of admission to the university)
- The CSC does not require any candidates to take an IELTS (English language) test. You should note, however, that, as a further condition of award, you may be required by your university to provide evidence of a level of English language proficiency.
- The CSC will not be able to offer you a scholarship if it would contravene the terms and conditions of another scholarship that you have previously held.
- When terms of admission to the university have been agreed, the CSC will send you a Notification of Award (formal offer of a scholarship).
- When all conditions of the Notification of Award have been met, the CSC will send you a formal Confirmation of Award.
- You will be required to submit a health and disability form before your Confirmation of Award can be issued.
- You will be required to sign an undertaking to return to your home country as soon as possible after the end of your award.
- You are expected to start your award on the date stated in your Notification of Award.
- If you require a Student visa to come to the UK to study, you must meet all relevant immigration requirements set by UK Visas and Immigration. You should check the [GOV.UK website](#) for updated information.
- All UK immigration regulations are set by UK Visas and Immigration and are subject to change. The CSC has no control over these regulations.

- You will be selected for an award based on the plan of study outlined on your application form, which is not expected to change significantly during your award. Any such changes must be agreed by the CSC.
- You are expected to reside in the UK throughout your award, and to seek approval from the CSC in advance of any overseas travel.
- You must not undertake paid employment during your award without approval from the CSC in advance.
- Collaboration is a feature of doctoral research. The CSC expects that participants in collaborative projects will develop a collaborative agreement to clarify the contributions and rights of each partner. The CSC will not get involved in negotiating an exploitation agreement but will need to be assured that an arrangement acceptable to all parties exists. Arrangements should be made to identify, protect and value any arising intellectual property and to secure a suitable return to the institution and the investigators through exploitation. The CSC considers the intellectual property ownership to lie initially with the student; however, many universities have their own locally applicable policy. In many cases, it is in the best interest of a student for ownership to be vested with the university, which will have greater negotiating powers and will be likely to be able to seek the best returns in any exploitation agreement. Award holders are expected to notify the CSC when CSC-funded intellectual property is exploited.
- The CSC cannot provide a letter of support or permission for you to remain in or return to the UK after your award to enable you to work or undertake postdoctoral study.
- Scholars will be expected to abide by the [Commission's Code of Conduct for Award-Holders](#) and [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#). Your award may be terminated at any time for reasons of unsatisfactory conduct, progress, or attendance, or if your registration is suspended or terminated by your university for any reason.
- In line with the UK Bribery Act 2010, any applicant convicted of bribery will be banned from reapplying for a Commonwealth Scholarship or Fellowship for a period of up to five years.
- Applicants are expected to adhere to the [CSC's Code of Conduct for award holders](#)
- The CSC is committed to administering and managing its scholarships and fellowships in a fair and transparent manner. For more information, see the [CSC anti-fraud policy and procedure](#) at and the [FCDO guidance on reporting fraud](#).
- All terms and conditions of award are subject to UK local law and practices, and are subject to change by the CSC.

For more information, see the current [Handbook for Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows](#).

Please note that the conditions outlined in the Handbook are subject to change.



Commonwealth Scholarship  
Commission in the UK

**Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK**  
Woburn House  
20-24 Tavistock Square  
London WC1H 9HF  
United Kingdom  
[cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk](http://cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk)