



COMMONWEALTH
SCHOLARSHIPS

CSC ‘Apply’ Section Website review

Alumni Advisory Panel Report
2019-2021 Panel

A close-up photograph of a computer keyboard. The central focus is a large, rectangular blue key with rounded corners. On the key, the words "Apply now" are printed in a white, sans-serif font, slanted upwards from left to right. The surrounding keys are white and slightly out of focus, creating a sense of depth.

Executive Summary

The CSC's Alumni Advisory Panel provides a platform for Commonwealth Alumni to support the future of the programme and its Scholars by sharing personal insight and expertise to contribute to the development of CSC activities. Panel members are appointed for a two-year term and are expected to advise on at least one activity per year. As of March 2021, the panel is comprised of 100 members (one resignation).

The refreshed CSC's website was launched in September 2020 to provide a platform for more effective communication of the impact of Commonwealth Scholarships; improve functionality and navigation, making it easier for applicants and other users to find the information they require; optimise the site for use on mobile/tablet devices; enable better presentation of case studies and evaluation findings; and inform external stakeholders about our awards.

Following the launch of the redeveloped website and a subsequent review by the Alumni Advisory Panel which gave recommendations for its continuing development, the Communications Team have been focusing on improving various aspects of the website. We are now inviting feedback from panel members on an aspect of the website which is crucial to Scholarship applicants – the 'Apply' section.

Earlier this year we launched the '[Professional Fellowships in Girls' Education](#)' programme and refreshed the layout of the application information. We are inviting panel members to comment on the functionality and accessibility of this section of the website, including comments on the user experience, navigability, presentation of content, and overall appearance. The feedback received will help us to assess the changes made and incorporate any further developments to improve applicants' experience and the online presence of the CSC.

Methodology

Panel members were invited to attend one of two focus group discussions to share their thoughts on and experiences of using the redeveloped CSC website.

In advance of the focus group discussions, panel members were asked to assess the Commonwealth Professional Fellowship page, focusing on its design, readability, and presentation of content, as well as the extent to which it provides ease of navigation for applicants.

Panel members were also asked to test the page's accessibility and navigability using different devices, noting down any difficulties they may have experienced.

The task was open to all panel members and 8 panel members registered to attend the focus group discussions and 4 attended, a response rate of 50%.

Results

Key findings from the survey are summarised below under the following headings reflecting the two activities set within the review: Assessing the section design, readability, and presentation of content and Testing accessibility and navigability.

Assessing the section design, readability, and presentation of content

It was expressed and widely agreed that the menu feature has made it easier for website users to read and move to different sections of information on the page. It was felt, however, that the current text is overly long. Discussants suggested bolding some text or adding more short bullet points which will be helpful to read information and identify key points. It was also felt that it would be useful to replace the 'Apply now' hyperlink with a button, making this information easier to find, especially for those whose application is under progress.

One discussant suggested including an infographic to showcase the application process on the Scholarship page would be informative for prospective applicants.

Testing accessibility and navigability

All discussants stated that the user journey had improved but reiterated previous mention of text being too long.

Summary

Overall, feedback from members of the Alumni Advisory Panel on the Apply pages is useful and there are immediate changes that can be made.

Areas for development identified include reducing application text and reformatting some sections to save users from scrolling to reach specific sections.

Next steps

The Communications Team will consider the feedback from members of the Alumni Advisory Panel as part of ongoing work and future developments for the CSC website.

The feedback will be used to inform the following steps:

- Add an 'Apply now' button
- Reduce text by adding anchors or read more function
- Make text more concise by adding bullet points
- Create infographic that showcases application process for prospective applicants