



Commonwealth Scholarship
Commission in the UK

Commission Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25

cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk

Introduction

I and all my fellow Commissioners are committed to the importance of scholarships in providing opportunities for young people with outstanding talent and motivation who could not otherwise afford them. And we are very proud of the role that the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission has played over many decades to enable outstanding Scholars from across the Commonwealth to further their skills, abilities, and potential to make a real and lasting difference in their home countries. These Scholars have also enriched the UK's international research capacity and networks.

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission is unique in its function to advance Commonwealth talent, including people from disadvantaged backgrounds based in low and middle income countries, to serve as catalysts for sustainable change and to contribute to the UK's research and innovation base and international networks. Through our range of programmes (including Split-site and Distance Learning programmes) we enable the co-creation of knowledge, innovation, and solutions for sustainable development priorities across the modern Commonwealth. All Scholars participate in the Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme, which reinforces the CSC's robust support for the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and our distinctive Time Limited Programmes address critical contemporary challenges.

This Commission Strategy 2022-2025 document gives an overview of the outcomes of the CSC, its strategic context, key objectives, and priorities within the current Strategy period, alongside the key performance indicators which measure our success in achieving these objectives. The CSC's activities are structured around three objectives that form the basis for all our work: providing a world-class scholarship scheme that contributes to sustainable development; promoting equity, inclusion and widespread access; and supporting cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange across the Commonwealth.

With over 31,000 people having taken up Commonwealth Scholarships since the first group of 175 Scholars arrived in the UK in 1960, the work, reach, and impact of the CSC can only be hinted at by a few (truly impressive) examples. What is exciting is that each year, the CSC family continues to grow, further increasing the extent of our Scholars and Fellows' impact. We are making a particular effort to demonstrate this impact in new and innovative ways. Take a look at our latest Annual Report, website, and issues of Common Knowledge magazine for stories and statistics providing a flavour of the reach and difference which the Scholars and Fellows are achieving in their institutions, communities, nations, and internationally.

Over this Strategy period, we will sustain our dynamic focus on tackling the most pressing development issues of our time and building upon the excellent structures in place to enable greater collaboration and partnerships across the Commonwealth.



Professor Robin Mason ORB
Chair
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

Strategic Context

One of the Commonwealth's finest innovations and one of the UK's best conveyors of soft power, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission stands out among HMG's scholarship schemes through its robust support for the UN Sustainable Development Goals - which align well with the FCDO's international development priorities.



Over its now 63-year history, this prestigious and much respected global brand has supported over 31,000 individuals, or over 4 in 5 of the 36,000 funded under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. By empowering talented individuals across the modern Commonwealth to learn, innovate, and co-create knowledge and solutions for tackling global development challenges, the CSC helps to transform societies and build a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for all.

Supporting talented individuals to catalyse sustainable development across the modern Commonwealth will remain a critical focus for the 2022-2025 Strategy.



The CSC will continue to be highly collaborative. Our commitment to partnering with governments, universities, and organisations with shared interests across the modern Commonwealth will be sustained and enhanced, with a view to extending life-transforming opportunities to talented individuals and enabling them to pursue sustainable development priorities pertinent to their respective countries.

Working together with governments, universities and other organisations to transform talent and societies will remain a key priority for the CSC in the 2022-2025 Strategy.



The CSC also actively supports candidates of outstanding academic ability from disadvantaged backgrounds based in low and middle income countries (LMICs) with scholarships and fellowships to gain the skills and knowledge required to become innovators and leaders in sustainable development. This priority supports key aspects of HMG's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy and is an important principle of the UK's International Development Strategy.

Supporting candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds will continue to be a distinctive feature of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships during the 2022-2025 Strategy period.



The CSC makes distinctive contributions to the UK's international development priorities. It also plays an important role in attracting the best and brightest talent to UK universities in support of the UK's International Education Strategy.

The CSC promotes research excellence and innovation through international collaboration, enabling individuals and institutions across the Commonwealth to build sustainable partnerships. The CSC's programmes are a unique and innovative contribution to the ambitions of the UK's Research and Development Roadmap.

Attracting outstanding Commonwealth talent to contribute to the UK's research and innovation base and international networks will continue to be a key priority.



Our cutting-edge evaluation programme demonstrates how the CSC delivers impact as well as value for money for the UK taxpayer – attracting over £5 million of partnership funding annually. Innovations such as Shared Scholarships (jointly funded by UK universities), Distance Learning Scholarships, and Split-site Scholarships have facilitated this value. The latter two programmes enable Scholars to study for Master's and PhDs from their home country on a distance learning or a split-site basis respectively, thereby also extending access to Commonwealth Scholarships.

Value-enhancing innovations, including scholarship schemes enabling awardees to study from their home country, will continue to be prioritised during the Strategy period.

The CSC is proud to reaffirm its commitment to development, equity, access, and relevance. This 2022-2025 Strategy sets out priorities and pathways to the CSC's continuing delivery of impact and enhanced value to the UK taxpayer, the UK government, and the modern Commonwealth.

Key Objectives

The CSC's objectives are:

	<p>1. To provide an innovative world-class scholarship and fellowship scheme that delivers impact on sustainable development across the Commonwealth</p>
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In pursuing **Objective 1**, the CSC will:

- a) **Offer scholarships and fellowships to Commonwealth citizens relevant to the needs of their home countries.** We will apply selection criteria which ensure that those chosen are able to demonstrate academic excellence, high-quality research/study plans, and the greatest potential for development impact
- b) **Select candidates** for scholarships on the basis of their potential for local, national, regional, and/or global impact in one of six themes:

		
Science and technology for development	Strengthening health systems and capacity	Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship
		
Strengthening global peace, security and governance	Strengthening resilience and response to crises	Access, inclusion and opportunity

- c) Offer **a range of study, research, and professional development options** to maximise the opportunities available to citizens of Commonwealth countries, with a particular focus on the needs of least developed and lower middle income countries (as classified by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC))
- d) Deliver a CSC-designed bespoke **Leaders for Sustainable Development** professional development programme for Scholars and Fellows
- e) Use evidence to **ensure that awards are delivering value for money** in achieving development impact, including the continued support for co-funded awards and those which can be scaled to enhance value
- f) **Diversify funding** from across HMG departments and increase partnership funding to ensure financial sustainability and **to ensure that scholarships are available across the whole Commonwealth**
- g) **Support UK government objectives** in the promotion of the modern Commonwealth
- h) **Look forward, be dynamic and responsive** by continuing to offer 'Time Limited Programmes' and reviewing award types and nomination allocations on an annual basis based on strategic priorities



2.

To ensure that our programmes promote equity and inclusion, reward merit, and deliver widespread access, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups

In pursuing **Objective 2**, the CSC will:

- a) **Attract diverse talent to UK higher education** institutions by considering personal circumstances in all applications to ensure that, all other things being equal, candidates from disadvantaged, marginalised or underrepresented backgrounds are chosen
- b) **Work with our nominating partners** to ensure that their processes are robust and transparent in order that we are able to attract high quality candidates, including those from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds
- c) **Ensure that nomination routes and policies for delivering our awards** are inclusive and impose no significant barriers to particular groups
- d) **Fund courses and research which promote equity and inclusion**
- e) Provide specific **support for Scholars and Fellows from disadvantaged, marginalised or underrepresented backgrounds** from application, whilst on award, through to completion and as Commonwealth Alumni
- f) **Monitor and evaluate our work**, establish best practice, ensure key performance indicators (KPIs) are met, and commission research into the development impact that our scholarships have on recipients' communities and societies
- g) **Adapt our programmes** in line with research findings



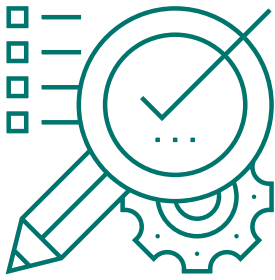


3. To support and encourage cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange throughout the Commonwealth

In pursuing **Objective 3**, the CSC will:

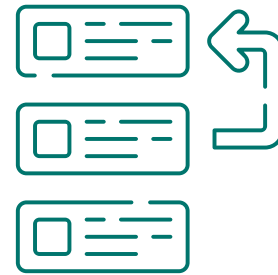
- a) Draw on the expertise of a distinguished panel of Commissioners to design and implement unique and distinctive **programmes at a range of academic and professional levels** within higher education institutions, public sector bodies, and civil society organisations
- b) Fund awards across disciplines to produce **high-quality research with the potential for development impact** and encourage cross-disciplinary research and that which enhances sustainable local, national, and regional research capacity
- c) **Build relationships between UK universities and institutions throughout the Commonwealth** to encourage new and support existing collaboration and research
- d) **Raise additional funds** to supplement UK government contributions
- e) Encourage applications that demonstrate **the potential to develop existing or new partnerships and international collaboration** between Commonwealth countries, including the UK
- f) Provide opportunities to **showcase the achievements** of our Scholars and alumni in research, innovation, and knowledge exchange, **demonstrating the impact of international scholarships** on institutions and international partnerships
- g) Lead the sector in the **comprehensive and innovative evaluation and monitoring** of the programme and its **rights-based approach to equity and access**, using its success in these areas to influence other programmes





Strategic Priorities

1. To ensure that all scholarships and fellowships are focused on six development-related themes and to further integrate the themes into CSC programming and impact reporting.
2. To remain dynamic throughout the strategy period, agreeing the balance of awards across programmes and countries annually, based on the strategic priorities of the CSC and the UK government as they emerge.
3. To embed the priority issues of climate change, female education and careers, employability and entrepreneurship across the CSC's communications, engagement, alumni, and evaluation programming.
4. To review the scholarship and fellowship programmes based on evidence of impact, include an analysis of overhead costs, and inform an appropriate allocation of resources between programmes.
5. To embed and promote the unique nature of the CSC offer – specifically the focus of all of its programming on Commonwealth needs in relation to research and development.
6. To sustain high level doctoral research opportunities and to scale up the number of Split-site Scholarships, recognising the unique opportunities this Programme provides in building collaboration and partnerships.
7. To scale up the number of Distance Learning Scholarships which provide vital opportunities for online study to Scholars otherwise unable to benefit from a mobility Scholarship.



Organisational Priorities

8. To review and improve operational efficiency across the Commission and the Secretariat.
9. To grow and diversify income in order to support the demand for high-calibre applicants across programmes and to seek to maximise opportunities for candidates across the Commonwealth.



Key Performance Indicators 2022 - 2025



The gender of candidates selected for each CSC programme in each year will be at least 45% female and 45% male.



Partnerships with UK universities will generate at least £4.5 million annually in matching contributions.



100 alumni profiles of CSC Women Leading Change and alumni positively addressing climate change will be published, demonstrating the CSC's support of cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange throughout the Commonwealth.



30 alumni profiles will be published demonstrating research which promotes equity and inclusion and supports those who have been left behind.



30 in-depth evaluation case studies will be produced to demonstrate the CSC's value as an innovative world-class scholarship and fellowship scheme that delivers impact on sustainable development across the Commonwealth.

