CSC CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS REPORT

Version 1.0

Contents

Introduction

Since 2008, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) has had a dedicated monitoring and evaluation function to assess the impact of its programmes. Its purpose has been to demonstrate that the programme is achieving its goal of delivering sustainable development through the post-award activities of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows. Two of the overarching goals of the CSC's evaluation work are to constantly develop the evidence base around the impact of its programmes, and to continually explore the use of new methodologies. Within this context, the CSC's evidence base was assessed by HM Treasury in August 2022 against a version of the Nesta Standards of Evidence framework[1] that had been modified for the context of international scholarships. HM Treasury assessed the evidence base which was deemed to meet the threshold of Nesta Level 2 (out of 5), with the acknowledgement that due to their nature it would be challenging for international scholarship programmes to achieve Level 3 or higher. However, it was also noted that the CSC held a large body of evidence at Level 2, and guidance was provided for how Level 3 could be achieved including the use of more formalised methodologies.

In light of both this feedback and the overarching goals of the CSC's evaluation work, the CSC investigated potential methodologies that could be incorporated into its work, one of which was a Contribution Analysis. As summarised in HM Treasury's Magenta Book on evaluation, Contribution Analysis is a:

> 'Step-by-step process used to examine if an intervention has contributed to an observed outcome by exploring a range of evidence for the Theory of Change. It gives an evidenced line of reasoning rather than definitive proof.'[2]

This methodology was deemed suitable given the CSC had both a well-articulated Theory of Change as well as a substantial body of monitoring and evaluation data at its disposal. This report represents the first output based on this methodology. As described in the next section, an important element of a Contribution Analysis is that it is an iterative process whereby the Theory of Change is reviewed against the evidence available and both gaps in the evidence and inaccuracies in the Theory of Change are identified, further data collection and revision of the Theory of Change is done, and the contribution story is reviewed and re-assessed to further refine the Contribution Analysis.

Report Structure

This report is largely organised in a way that reflects the structure of a Theory of Change, with the main body of the report broken into sections covering the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact of the Commonwealth Scholarship programme. In addition to those sections, there is a section following this one which provides details on the data sources and methodologies used for this report, after which there is a background section on the CSC's Theory of Change that provides an overview of the Theory of Change that forms the basis for this report, including the four pathways of change.

After the background section is the main body of the report, with the sections covering the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact of the Commonwealth Scholarship programme. Within these sections is a series of subsections that cover each component contained within that part of the Theory of Change. Each subsection provides a brief description of what that component is, any assumptions about how that component takes place, a list of data sources, outputs, and reports related to that component, and then an analysis of the relevant data and evidence. There is then a broader overview and analysis at the end of each of these five sections that reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence covered in that section, and an analysis of the extent to which they support or disprove that part of the

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[1] Puttick and Ludlow, 2013.
[2] HM Treasury, 2020a: 45.

Theory of Change. This report then ends with a summary of the overall analysis, and a reflection on the next steps to be taken considering the analysis, including any areas that warrant additional data collection or redevelopment of the Theory of Change.

Data Sources and Methodology

This section provides a summary of the different data sources used in this report, including descriptions and the number of respondents to different surveys. It also provides an overview of the Contribution Analysis methodology as well as the supplemental methodologies used to analyse the data included in this report.

Data Sources

The CSC generates several data sources and reports via both its ongoing programme delivery and reporting, and its evaluation functions. Throughout this document these are mentioned in 'Data Collected' and 'Outputs and Reports' tables that were populated during the creation of the Theory of Change narrative that underpins this report. However, for the purposes of this analysis, an emphasis has been placed on the most recent relevant data sources and reports. A brief summary of these data sources is provided below, including overall respondent counts.

For all charts throughout this report, a reference to the data source is provided with it, however specific respondent counts for each chart have been omitted for the sake of simplicity.[3]

Longitudinal Baseline and Alumni Surveys

Introduced in 2016, the Longitudinal Baseline and Alumni Surveys underpin the majority of the CSC's data collection efforts when it comes to evaluating the impact of its programmes. The Baseline Survey is sent annually to all incoming scholars prior to the start of their study, while the Alumni Surveys are sent annually to scholars at regular intervals after the completion of their studies. These intervals are every two years post-study, starting at two years after the completion of their studies and up to and including ten years post-study.

The overall number of data sets associated with each phase of the longitudinal survey are provided in the table below, however it is worth noting that for some questions there are fewer responses due to the questions either being introduced to the surveys after 2016, or there are conditionalities associated with questions that must be met by the respondent for them to be asked those questions.

Figure 1 – Longitudinal Baseline and Alumni Survey response numbers

Survey	Total number of respondents
Longitudinal Baseline – Year 0	3,990
Longitudinal Alumni – Year 2	1,901
Longitudinal Alumni – Year 4	1,372
Longitudinal Alumni – Year 6	1,058
Longitudinal Alumni – Year 8	798
Longitudinal Alumni – Year 10	582

Counterfactual Baseline and Follow-up Surveys

The Counterfactual Baseline and Follow-up Surveys were also introduced in 2016 and serve as a complimentary data set to the Longitudinal Baseline and Alumni Surveys by asking a set of comparable

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[3] Note: A supporting appendix containing full data tables is planned for a subsequent version of this report.

non-recipients a similar set of questions contained in the Longitudinal Surveys. The specific wording of the questions is the same, however there are some questions contained in the Longitudinal Surveys that are not asked of the Counterfactual group as they are specific to having studied on a Commonwealth Scholarship. These surveys are also timed to align with their Longitudinal counterparts.

Another difference between the Counterfactual and Longitudinal surveys is that due to the need to secure initial and ongoing consent from participants for each round, there are currently only data points for the Counterfactual Baseline and the year two and year four follow-up surveys. The number of data sets associated with each phase of the Counterfactual survey stream are provided in the table below, however as was the case with the Longitudinal surveys it is worth noting that for some questions there are fewer responses due to the questions either being introduced to the surveys after 2016, or there are conditionalities associated with questions that must be met by the respondent for them to be asked those questions.

Figure 2 – Counterfactual Baseline and Follow-up Survey response numbers

Survey	Total number of respondents
Counterfactual Baseline – Year 0	919
Counterfactual Follow-up – Year 2	147
Counterfactual Follow-up – Year 4	22

Scholar Experience Surveys

Scholar Experience Surveys are annual surveys that are conducted with on-award Scholars who are currently studying in the United Kingdom. The questions in this survey cover several areas related to studying and living in the United Kingdom and the administrative support that they receive from the CSC and their university of study.

Figure 3 – Scholar Experience Survey response numbers

Survey Year	Total number of respondents
2018	525
2019	540
2020	554
2021	443
2022	461
2023	466

Case Studies

The CSC has produced 26 evaluation case studies based on key informant interviews with individual Commonwealth Alumni.[4] These case studies provide tangible examples of how the Theory of Change comes to pass in practice, featuring the impact that alumni have had through their work, and their

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[4] See https://cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/csc-case-studies/. Last accessed 23/08/2024.

reflections on how their Commonwealth Scholarship experience has impacted themselves and their career.

Annual Reports

As a part of its governance and reporting responsibilities, the CSC produces an annual report that is laid in parliament and provides a public record of its activities.[5] These reports are an account of the activities that the CSC had engaged in over the course of the previous reporting year to deliver its programme and include a number of key pieces of information including funding amounts and Scholar numbers.

Programme Management Data

Through the delivery of its programme, the CSC produces a variety of different types of internal programme management data. This includes numbers of applicants and nominations to each of the CSC's the different schemes, numbers of participants in the engagement and training activities offered to Scholars and alumni, and feedback surveys.

Other Data Sources

This report also draws upon data and evidence included in other evaluation reports that have been produced by the CSC, particularly evaluations of particular scholarship schemes offered by the CSC. These include the evaluations of the Commonwealth Doctoral Scholarship,[6] the Commonwealth Split-site Scholarship,[7] the Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarship,[8] as well as the evaluation of the Commonwealth Professional Fellows programme.[9]

Methodology

The over-arching methodology for this report is a Contribution Analysis, while a number of additional methodologies underpin the assessment of evidence. This subsection first provides a summary of the Contribution Analysis methodology, followed by a summary of the different methodologies used to assess the different types of evidence that have been included in the Contribution Analysis.

Contribution Analysis

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Contribution Analysis methodology was chosen as it aligned with both the type of intervention and the evidence base that the CSC currently possesses. The CSC has been collecting both qualitative and quantitative data annually through surveys and case study work, and it generates substantial management information data as well. As per the HMG Magenta Book, Contribution Analysis is a 'step-by-step process used to examine if an intervention has contributed to an outcome by exploring a range of evidence for the Theory of Change. It gives an evidenced line of reasoning rather than definitive proof' and is appropriate in instances 'where it may not be possible to establish an experimental design testing cause and effect', as is the case for Commonwealth Scholarships.[10] The difficulty in assessing direct attribution for interventions based around international scholarships has been well-documented,[11] however as per the Magenta Book, Contribution Analysis can be used to establish a 'reasonable contribution causal claim' if:

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[5] See https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/csc-annual-reports. Last accessed 23/08/2024.
[6] Day et al, 2017.
[7] Harrison et al, 2019.
[8] Harrison et al, 2022.
[9] Margolis, 2021.
[10] HMG Treasury, 2020a: 45; HMG Treasury, 2020b: 7.
[11] See Mawer, 2017.

- 'There is a reasoned Theory of Change for the intervention: the key assumptions behind why the intervention is expected to work make sense, are plausible, may be supported by evidence and/or existing research, and are agreed upon by at least some of the key players.'
- 'Activities of the intervention were implemented as per the Theory of Change.'
- 'The Theory of Change is supported by and confirmed by evidence on observed results and underlying assumptions – the chain of expected results occurred. The Theory of Change has not been disproved.'[12]

Contribution Analysis was first developed as a methodology by John Mayne, who described the process in 2008 and noting:

> 'When it is not practical to design an experiment to assess performance, Contribution Analysis can provide credible assessments of cause and effect. Verifying the Theory of Change that the programme is based on, and paying attention to other factors that may influence the outcomes, provides reasonable evidence about the contribution being made by the programme.'[13]

Mayne also laid out the six-step process which comprises a Contribution Analysis as:

- Step 1: Set out the attribution problem to be addressed
- Step 2: Develop a Theory of Change and risks to it
- Step 3: Gather the existing evidence on the theory of change
- Step 4: Assemble and assess the contribution story, and challenges to it
- Step 5: Seek out additional evidence
- Step 6: Revise and strengthen the contribution story[14]

It is important to note that Contribution Analysis is intended as an iterative process, whereby Step 4 includes a critical assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the evidence base and the underlying Theory of Change, with evaluators then seeking to further investigate identified areas of weaknesses in the evidence base in Step 5, and then revisiting the contribution story in Step 6 before returning to Step 4 for further iterations.

This report specifically addresses Steps 3 and 4 as described above, as Steps 1 and 2 have already been achieved through other activities. The development of a Theory of Change as covered by Step 2 was done as a distinct activity which resulted in an overarching narrative report in 2021 describing the CSC's Theory of Change which underpins this report (and is covered in more detail in the 'Background' section which follows this one). Step 3 was accomplished using the 'Data Sources' and 'Reports and Outputs' tables that were generated as a part of the development of the narrative report to identify the most up-to-date and relevant data sources to be used as evidence, as described in the previous 'Data Sources' subsection of this report. That data has then been analysed using several techniques described below.

Upon completing those analyses, as per Step 4 the evidence produced for each section of the Theory of Change has been assessed for its strengths and weaknesses and the extent to which that evidence supports the process that has been described in the Theory of Change. The final section of this report then takes a holistic account of those assessments and summarises the overall strengths and weaknesses of the CSC's current evidence base, areas where additional evaluation activities would prove fruitful, and the extent to which the processes described by the Theory of Change hold up or could

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[12] HMG Treasury, 2020b: 7.
[13] Mayne, 2008: 1.
[14] Ibid.

benefit from revision. The activities describe in Steps 5 and 6 of the Contribution Analysis methodology will then take place after the completion of this report.

Descriptive Statistics

Much of the data featured in this report has been analysed using descriptive statistics. The main focus of this analysis has been to summarise response frequencies to survey questions, with particular emphasis on the proportional breakdown of responses. For example, as is discussed above through its Longitudinal surveys the CSC has collected years of data measuring a wide variety of outcomes related to its Scholarships. In this report, descriptive statistical analysis has been employed to examine the trends in the data over the Baseline and follow-up periods. In the case of variables with binary response data (i.e. Yes/No questions), descriptive statistics show the proportion of Alumni responding 'Yes' in each survey year. The Longitudinal survey also collects data using various Likert scales. Examples include questions relating to the frequency with which Alumni engage in a given activity, with responses ranked on four-point scales from 'All the time' to 'Never', or questions relating to the quality of an activity, ranked on five-point scales from 'Excellent' to 'Very Poor'. In the case of Likert scales, descriptive statistics are employed to show the combined proportion of Alumni selecting the top two response options, e.g. 'All the time' and 'Often'.

Up to the year four point in the follow-up period, the CSC also collects equivalent data for a Counterfactual cohort, as is discussed above. The Alumni and Counterfactual data have been processed in the same way, enabling comparisons between the two cohorts. The data collected through the Scholar Experience Survey has also been similarly processed to allow for the visualisation of trends over time.

Comparative Statistics

While the statistical analysis in this report is mostly descriptive, in a few instances comparative statistical analysis has also been conducted between the Scholarship recipient and Counterfactual data sets to determine whether there are significant differences between them. Given the variables are nominal or categorical in nature, and the data is recorded as frequencies, the chi-square test for independence was employed. This test was also chosen as it can accommodate an imbalance in the sample sizes of each cohort; the number of Commonwealth Alumni who respond to the CSC's surveys far exceeds the number of Counterfactual respondents. This test was conducted for the two-year and four-year data points only, as the CSC does not hold Counterfactual data beyond this point, as mentioned in the previous section on data sources. It should also be noted that in some cases, the number of responses from the Counterfactual cohort was insufficient to support a chi-squared test; in these cases, results have either been caveated within the report, or testing has not been conducted.

Thematic Analyses

The Longitudinal Alumni survey, the Counterfactual survey and the Scholar Experience Survey all collect data via open free text survey questions. These questions allow Respondents to answer in their own words. They provide particularly useful insights in relation to more nuanced and individual experiences, such as the Scholars' overall view of the scheme or the best and worst aspects of their experience.

For these questions, a thematic analysis has been conducted. For each question, all free text responses were reviewed and grouped according to common themes that Scholarship recipients consistently raised across survey years. This allows for the discussion of trends in the data that emerge year-on-year, where Scholars consistently raised the same points. For a more in-depth analysis of the most recent survey (2023), responses were also analysed for word frequency and visualised using word clouds.[15]

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[15] Note: A subsequent version of this report will also include reference to the validation process used to assess and refine the findings of the report.

Background: CSC Theory of Change

The CSC Theory of Change is a visual representation of the different actors and processes that are involved in the Commonwealth Scholarship journey. Its purpose is to articulate the relationships between stakeholders, activities, and outcomes, and how they contribute to the different pathways of change through which the CSC meets its objectives. A narrative accompaniment was also created to both contextualise the Theory of Change and to act as a glossary that provides additional definition for terms that for brevity's sake are not included in the diagram. This supporting narrative is the basis upon which the contribution analysis is structured as it provides important information regarding the Theory of Change, including:

- A detailed description of what comprises the stakeholder, activity, or outcome;
- Any assumptions made about that stakeholder, activity, or outcome;
- Any enabling or constraining factors that exist that may enhance or inhibit that stakeholder, activity, or outcome; and,
- Any monitoring or evaluation data, studies, or reports held by the CSC on that stakeholder, activity, or outcome.

This background section provides a walkthrough of the Theory of Change and the four pathways illustrated in the diagram. The four pathways illustrated in the Theory of Change (see Figure 1) are:

- the **basic programme pathway**, which describes how the overall scholarship programme is structured and its expected sustainable development impact;
- the **skills and knowledge pathway**, which describes how the skills and knowledge gained from studies contribute to institutional capacity building and sustainable development impact;
- the **network development pathway**, which describes how the scholarship experience contributes to the development of interpersonal networks and soft power, and;
- the **research pathway**, which describes how research activities conducted during and post scholarship contribute to both additional research and the application of research findings towards sustainable developmental impact.

It is important to note that the Commonwealth Scholarships programme is comprised of multiple unique schemes and that not every scheme is intended to contribute equally to these pathways. For instance, the PhD and Split-site schemes, which focus on doctoral studies and research, play a far greater role in the research pathway than the Master's schemes. However, because this version of the Theory of Change is designed to encompass all CSC Scholarship activities, it reflects the contributions of all schemes to the objectives of the overarching programme.

Figure 4 – CSC Theory of Change
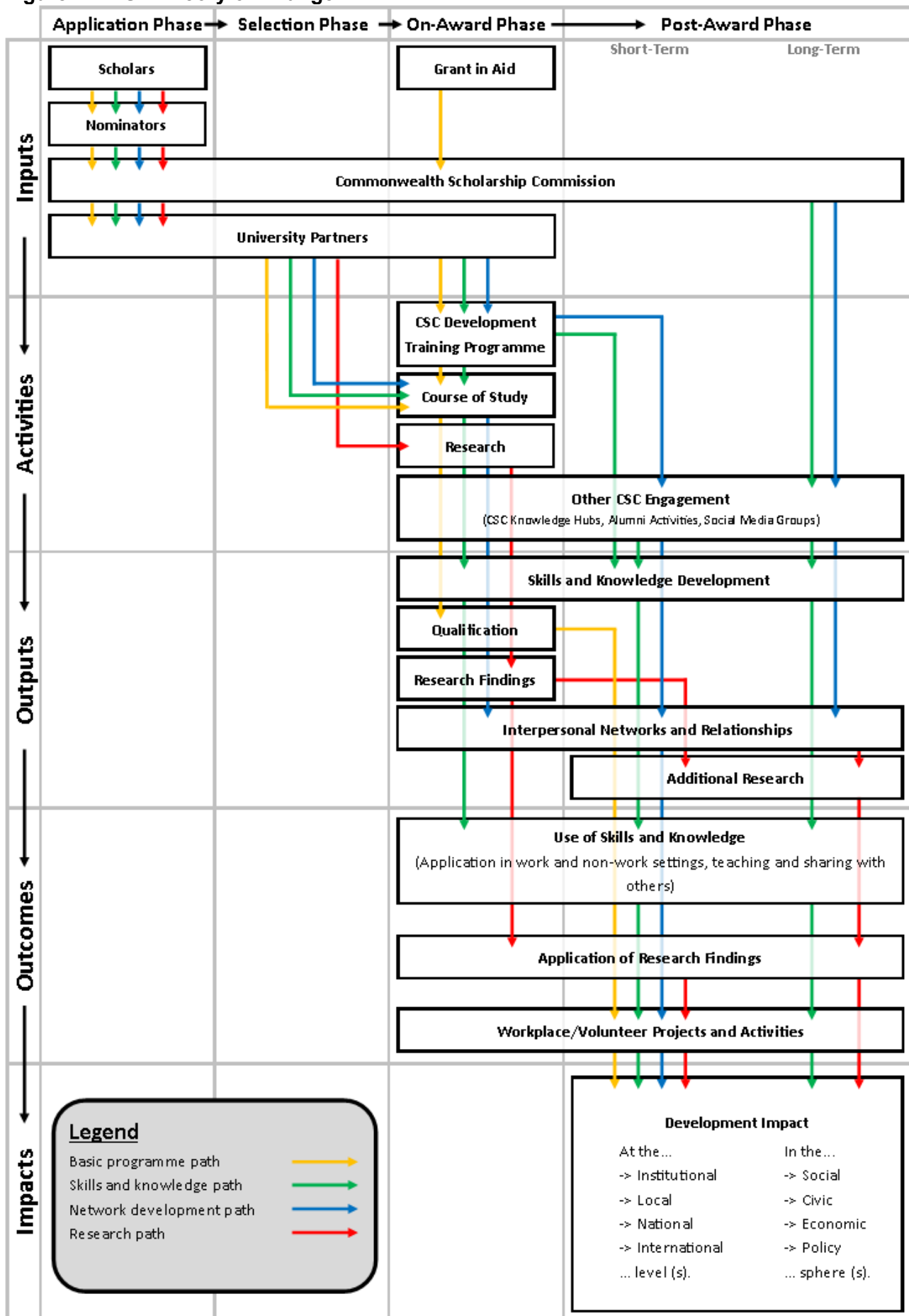
Pathways

There are four pathways of change that contribute to the ultimate goal of sustainable development impact: the basic programme path, the skills and knowledge path, the network development path, and the research path.

Basic Programme Path

The basic programme pathway represents the core concept of Commonwealth Scholarships. Scholars are either nominated for a Scholarship by a Nominating Agency or apply directly to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission to study at the UK University partners. The CSC then provides scholarships funded by Grant in Aid to selected Scholars who go on to both pursue their Course of Study and to participate in the CSC Development Training Programme. Upon completion of their Course of Study, Scholars receive a graduate-level Qualification which provides them with the opportunity to pursue employment and volunteer opportunities where they engage in projects and activities that have a sustainable developmental impact.

While this is the core concept of how Commonwealth Scholarships work, it does not convey the full breadth of the activities that occur over the course of the Commonwealth Scholarship journey that contribute towards the ultimate goal of sustainable development impact. Thus, there are three other pathways of significance contained in the Theory of Change.

Figure 5 – Basic Program Path

Skills and Knowledge Path

The skills and knowledge pathway is the first of these three pathways and details the different ways in which Scholars acquire and then apply new skills and knowledge. Scholars who are successfully selected for a Scholarship are provided with a number of different learning opportunities during and after their Scholarship. In addition to the soft skills and discipline-specific skills and knowledge that they learn from their Course of Study, Scholars are also provided with access to other learning opportunities through the CSC Development Training Programme.

The first of these, which they are invited to upon receiving their Scholarship, is the CSC's online course 'Understanding Development Impact', which teaches Scholars about sustainable development, current best practice in the sector, and a number of skills and tools that they can use to maximise the impact of their work throughout their career. Second, Scholars also have access to additional learning opportunities from external training providers organised by the CSC Engagement
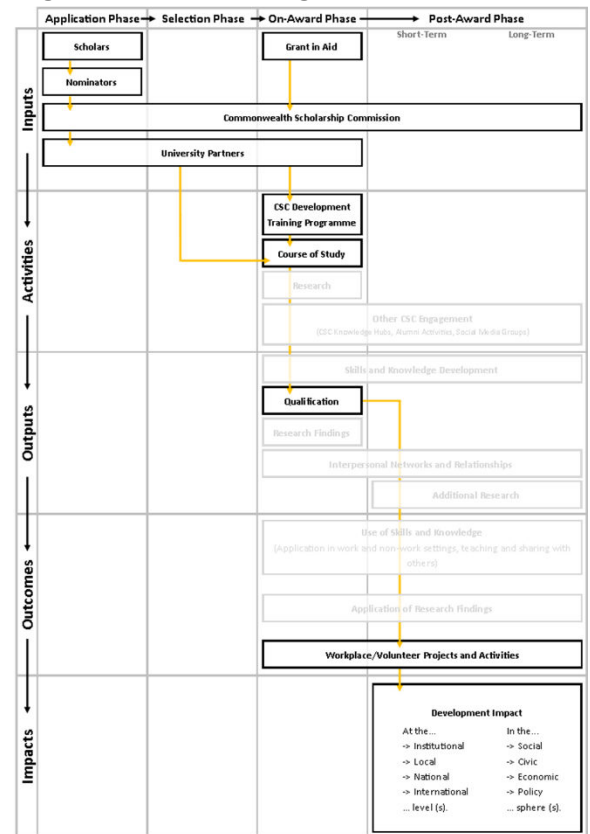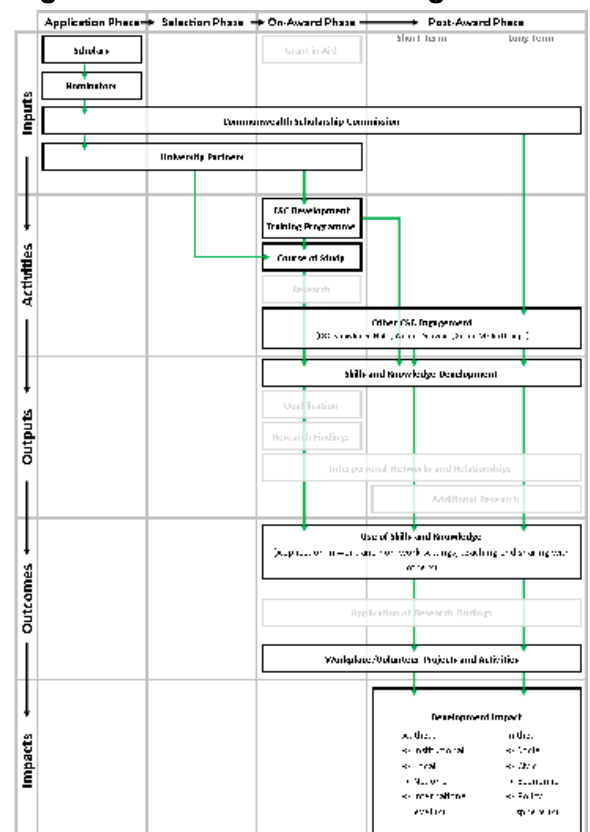
Figure 6 – Skills and Knowledge Path

Team where they can learn soft skills that they will be able to use during and after their Scholarship. Third, learning opportunities are provided by the CSC Alumni Team through online platforms such as the CSC Knowledge Hubs, webinars, and Alumni events. Taken together these activities all contribute to the Skills and Knowledge Development of Scholars, which leads to the immediate Use of Skills and Knowledge in work and non-work settings, and the teaching and sharing of the skills and knowledge they have developed with others. This Use of Skills and Knowledge contribute to Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities that the Scholar or Alumni is involved in, which contribute to sustainable development impact.

Network Development Path

The network development path is the second of the three additional pathways and demonstrates the way in which Scholars build relationships and networks during their Scholarship Journey, creating opportunities for future collaborations that represent tangible soft power outcomes of the programme.

Figure 7 – Network Development Path

Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni build relationships with each other through the CSC Development Training Programme as well as Other CSC Engagement activities, creating networks of relationships that span the Commonwealth. Scholars also build relationships with their fellow students, teachers and supervisors, and others over their Course of Study, developing linkages between themselves, individuals and institutions in the UK, and other international students. These bilateral relationships with people in the UK are an important soft power outcome both for the UK and for the Scholar's home country.

All of this relationship building results in strengthened Interpersonal Networks and Relationships that Scholars, Alumni, and in many cases their home institutions and employers can draw upon for the rest of their lives. They can also lead to collaborations that contribute to the Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities that Scholars and Alumni pursue during their careers, which contribute to sustainable development impact.

Research Path

The third additional pathway is the research path, which articulates how the research conducted by Scholars and Alumni feed into sustainable development impact. This pathway is primarily driven by Doctoral and Split-site Scholars, but not exclusively. The first point at which Commonwealth Scholars are involved in Research is during their time studying at their UK university. This Research then leads to Research Findings, which in turn can lead to one or both of the Application of Research
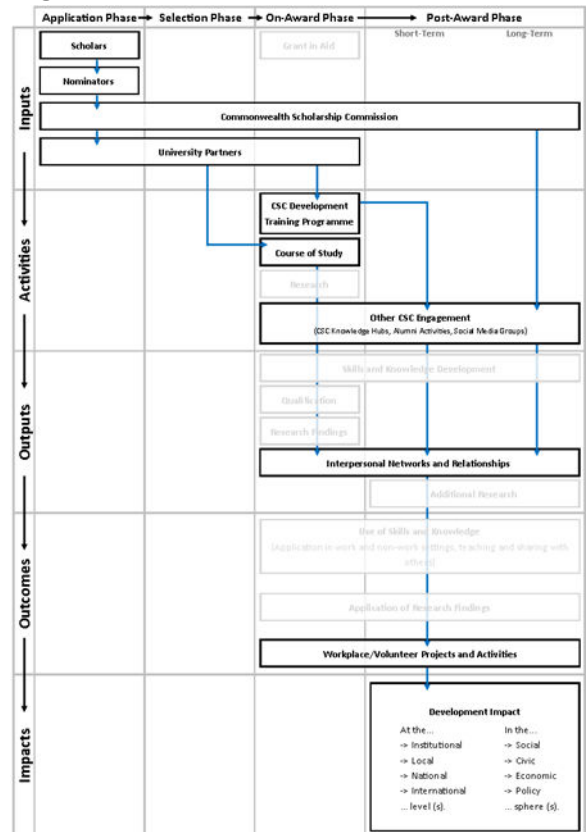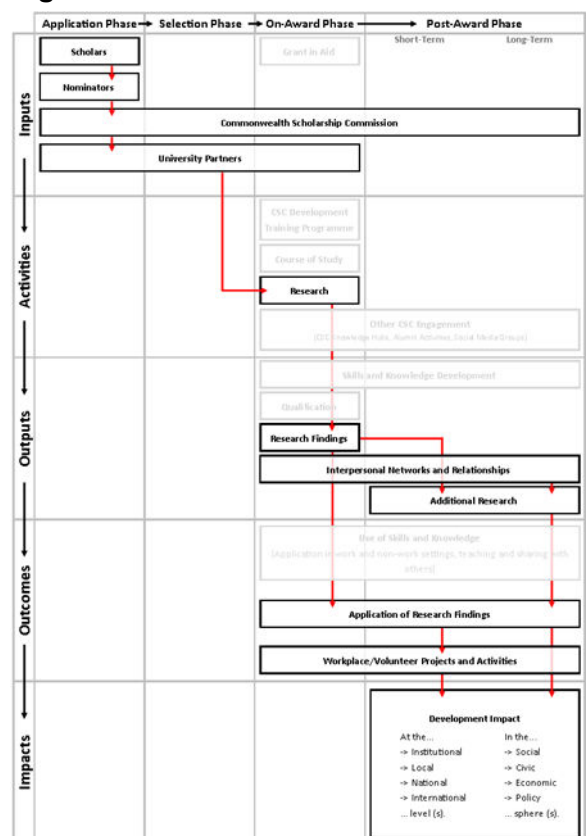
Figure 8 – Research Path

Findings, and Additional Research that builds upon the initial piece of Research they conducted during their Commonwealth Scholarship.

This Additional Research can also be fed into by Scholars' Interpersonal Networks and Relationships, which can lead to collaborations on projects involving Additional Research. This Additional Research then feeds into the Application of Research Findings, which in turn feeds directly into Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities that have a sustainable developmental impact.

Part One: Inputs

Introduction

Components that appear in the Inputs section are the 'ingredients' that contribute to the subsequent processes that take place over the course of the Theory of Change with the intention of generating a sustainable development impact, as covered in Part Five: Impact. These include the financial and other contributions of the UK government and the University Partners, the Scholars themselves who apply directly or are put forward by Nominators, and the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, which administers the early stages of the process, sets programme policies, and provides additional supports in the middle and later stages which are covered in Part Two: Activities.

Grant in Aid

Introduction

Grant in Aid is the funding provided by the UK Government to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Department for Education. Historically, funding has also come at different times through the Department for International Development, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, (both now the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office) the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, and the Scottish Government. This is the primary, but not sole, source of funding for Commonwealth Scholarships (see University Partners) and flows through the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK, which administers the funding and the programme. While the funding is primarily spent in the On-Award Phase of the Scholarship through tuition fees and stipends, it also covers the cost of the administration of the programme and activities that occur throughout the different phases of the Scholarship.

Figure 9 – Grant in Aid
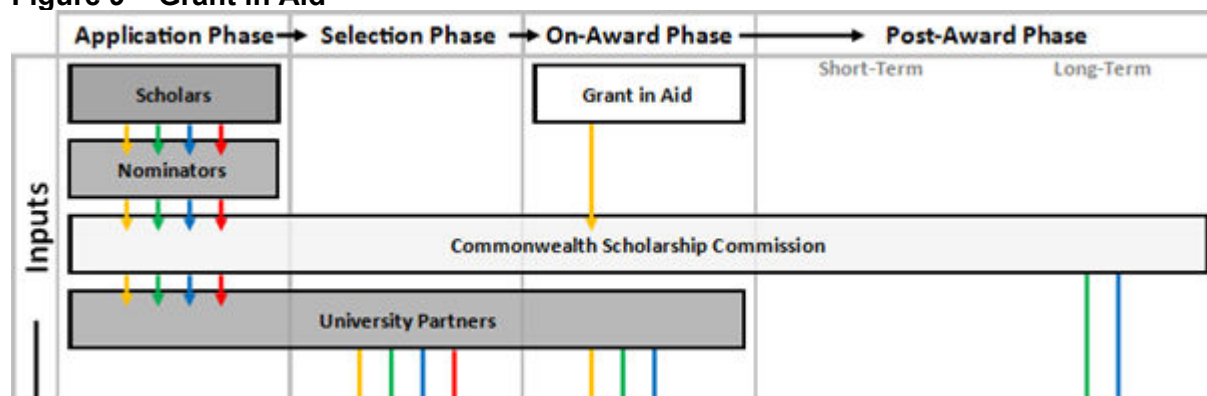
FROM: [UK Government]
INTO: Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

The vast majority of the Grant in Aid is Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding, which means the Commonwealth Scholarship programme sits within and contributes to the UK Aid Strategy. Consequently, the programme also sits within the global context of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4.b, which seeks to 'substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island Developing States, and African countries, for enrolment in higher education [by 2030]'.[16]

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[16] See https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4. Last accessed 23/08/2024.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Budget and Spend Data	Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual Report (yearly)
	Finance Report to Commission (yearly)
	CSC Evaluation: Identifying the Impacts of Commonwealth Scholarships (2020)

Analysis

For the financial year 2022/23, the actual expenditure reported by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission's Annual Report was over 28.2 million GBP, which is roughly the same for the 2021/22 financial year.[17] Of these annual spends, 98% was spent on funding mobilities, and the remaining went into the administration cost.[18] In terms of breakdown of the direct expenditure, 32% of the total amount was spent on PhDs, 17% on Shared Scholarships, 13% each on Agency nominated Master's and Distance Learning scholars, and 7% on Split-site PhDs.[19]

In addition to the funding received from the UK Government, financial support is also provided by the CSC's University Partners in the form of tuition reductions and stipend support.[20] It is important to note the funding support that the CSC has received from its University Partners, especially that in the form of tuition fee reductions. The nature and amount of the financial contributions varies between the different Scholarship programmes offered by the CSC. For example, for the General Doctoral and Master's Scholarship schemes University Partners have contributed approximately 1.1 million GBP in total for the year 2023, or just under 8,000 GBP per Scholar. Similarly, for the Commonwealth Split-site Scholarships, University Partners have contributed 0.3 million GBP in total, or approximately 6.5K per Scholar while for Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships, University Partners contribute approximately 1,500 GBP per Scholar.[21]

The largest financial contribution from University Partners is towards Commonwealth Shared Scholarships. Not only do University Partners contribute tuition fee reductions towards this programme, but they also pay the stipends to support Scholars' living expenses. For year 2023, the overall contribution of University Partners in the stipends category was approximately 4.4 million GBP, while the contribution toward tuition fee reduction averaged at 0.6 million GBP. The average UK University Partner tuition fee contribution in 2023 was 5,000 GBP per Scholar, demonstrating a high level of support and collaboration on behalf of University Partners.[22]

Scholars

Introduction

While they appear as an input at the application stage, Commonwealth Scholars are the primary and most lasting target of intervention for the Commonwealth Scholarship programme. The core of the programme is the investment in the skills and knowledge that Scholars learn while on-award, the

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[17] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2023a: 64
[18] Ibid.
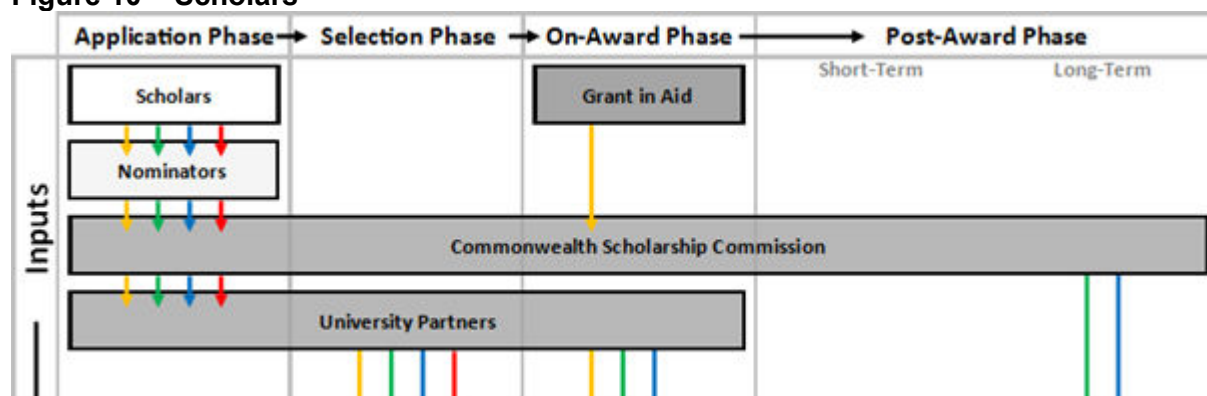[19] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2023a: 66.
[20] For more information on University Partners, see section on University Partners below.
[21] Internal figures.
[22] Ibid.

outcomes from the research that they engage in, and the impact of the work that they do upon graduating.

Figure 10 – Scholars

FROM: N/A
INTO: Nominators, [Commonwealth Scholarship Commission]

There are differing routes through which Scholars apply for Commonwealth Scholarships depending on the particular scheme. Scholars for Master's study apply indirectly and are nominated by either a UK university, a nominating agency in their home country, or an NGO. FCDO-funded Doctoral Scholars apply through nominating agencies, NGOs, or their employing institution in their home country, while Commonwealth Split-Site Scholars apply directly to the CSC.

| Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Application, Nomination, Selection and Take-up Data Longitudinal Baseline Survey Longitudinal Counterfactual Baseline Survey	Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual Report (yearly) CSC Business Plan Delivery Reports (yearly) Evaluation and Monitoring Report to Commission (yearly) Longitudinal Baseline Survey Summary Report (yearly) Longitudinal Counterfactual Baseline Survey Summary Report (yearly) Scholar Selection Paper (yearly)

Analysis

To date, over 31,000 people have taken up a Commonwealth Scholarship since the first group of 175 Scholars arrived in the UK in 1960. On annual basis between 2020 to 2023, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission has funded approximately 300 PhDs, 100 Split-site PhDs, 100 Master's, 200 Shared Master's, 900 Distance Learning Master's, and 15 Fellows. In the case of PhD and Distance Learning Master's, Scholar funding runs across multiple years.

Access

An important element of Scholar selection is to provide access to UK-based study to those who might otherwise not get the opportunity. Figure 11 demonstrates trends reported by the Recipients about their ability to undertake the same qualification in any of the UK, their home country, or a third country other than the UK or their home country had they not received a Commonwealth Scholarship. When asked,

the majority of recipients reported that they would have been unable to undertake the same qualification without their Scholarship, with two-thirds of them reporting that they would have found it impossible to undertake the same opportunity in the UK if they had not received the award.

Figure 11 – Ability to undertake same qualification in the absence of Commonwealth Scholarship
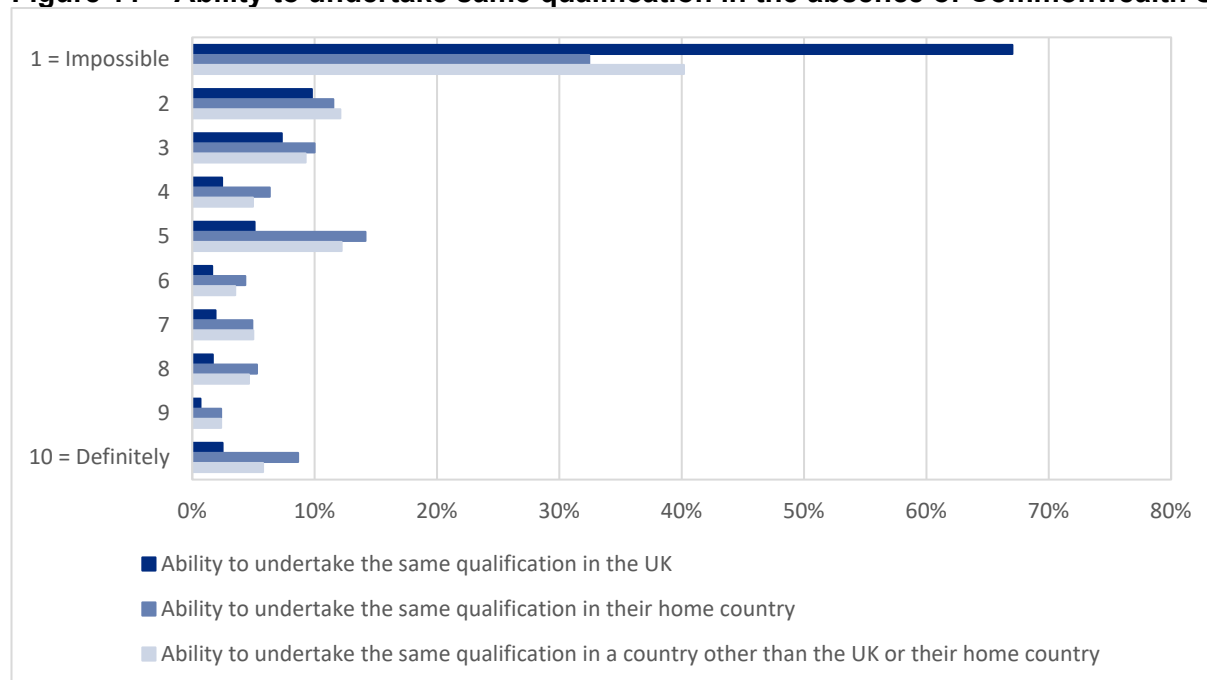

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey 2016–2023

Reflecting on the impact of their Commonwealth Scholarship, Femi Adekoya, a Commonwealth alumnus who graduated with Master's degree in Integrated Pest Management from Harper Adams University in 2019, identified the most significant effect of the Scholarship:

> 'Commonwealth Scholarship was hugely impactful on my life and career. I have noticed that the prestige attached to the Scholarship has opened doors for me, with many people being more willing to hear me out once they know I am a Commonwealth Alumnus … I would say it this way: the Commonwealth Scholarship is the foundation for virtually 80% of what I do today.' [23]

Experience Living and Studying in the UK

Another important aspect of the Scholar experience is that they have a positive experience living and studying in the United Kingdom. In the annual Scholar Experience Survey, Scholars are asked to rate their overall experience of living and studying in the UK. Respondents generally reported high levels of satisfaction, with the proportion of Scholars rating their experience as 'Good' or 'Excellent' remaining consistently above 80% from 2018-2023 as seen in Figure 12. It should be noted that the proportion of Scholars rating their experience as 'Good' or 'Excellent' dropped to 82% in 2021, however this was directly attributable to the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on Scholar experiences, including restrictions on travel, lockdown, and the need to study remotely. As the pandemic has receded these ratings have returned pre-pandemic levels.

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[23] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2024a.

Figure 12 – How would you rate your overall experience of living and studying in the UK?
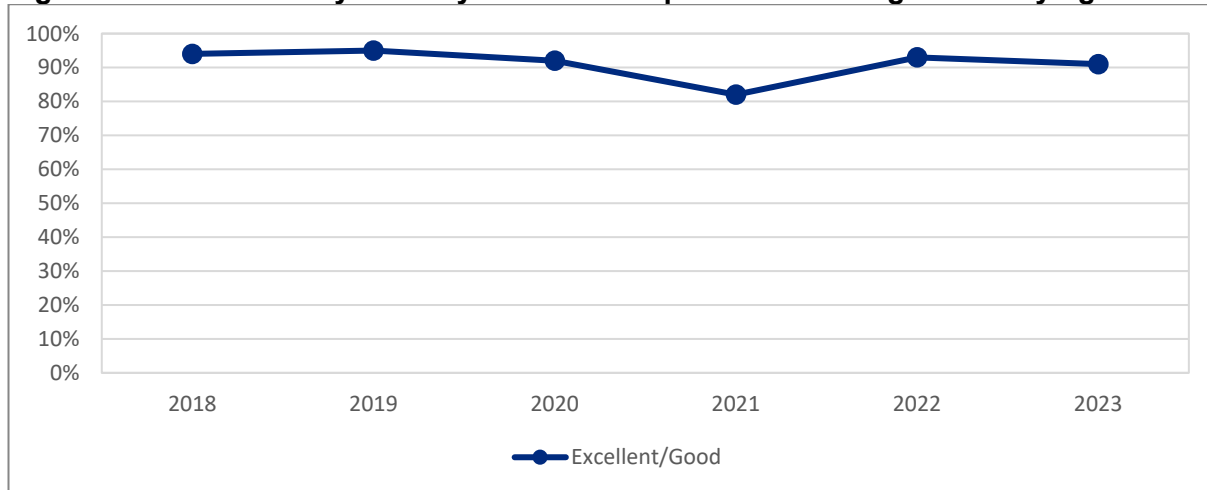
Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

Figure 13 shows the frequency of words that respondents to the 2023 Scholar Experience Survey employed most frequently when discussing the best aspect of their time in the UK. One of the most frequently mentioned words was 'research'. Other words relating to the theme of research included 'access', 'environment', 'learning', 'supervisors', and 'facilities'. This gives a broad overview of the elements of the academic experience that Scholars valued most highly. 'Different' and 'people' were also among the most frequently mentioned words. Other words relating to this theme included 'new', 'world', 'networking', 'culture', 'meeting', and 'diverse'. These comments indicate that Scholars valued the opportunity to meet new people and experience new and diverse cultures whilst studying in the UK.

Figure 13 – Word frequency, 'What has been the best aspect of your time in the UK?'

Source: 2023 Scholar Experience Survey

Scholars were also asked what the worst aspect of their time in the UK was. Figure 14 shows the words that 2023 Scholars employed most frequently when discussing the worst aspect of their time in the UK. The two most frequently cited words were 'cost' and 'living', indicating that financial hardship was a key issue for Scholars whilst they were in the UK. Related words included 'high', accommodation' and 'stipend'. The frequency of the word 'accommodation' is reflective of the difficulty of finding affordable student-friendly accommodation in the UK. Other frequently use words include 'weather', 'cold', 'winter', 'family', 'home' and 'health'. This suggests that Scholars often struggled to adjust to the UK's climate, and experienced other wellbeing issues relating to being away from home.

Figure 14 – Word Frequency, 'What has been the worst aspect of your time in the UK?'


Source: 2023 Scholar Experience Survey

Nominators

Introduction

Nominators are external organisations through which potential Scholars can apply for a Commonwealth Scholarship and who do the first assessment of applications before passing longlisted candidates to the CSC for the second round of assessment by Commissioners and Academic Advisors[24] (with the exception of the Shared Scholarships and Distance Learning schemes, where the University Partners do the second round of assessment). Depending on the scheme, Nominators are either National Nominating Agencies, often based in Ministries of Education, Human Resources or similar, NGOs, or Universities located in the UK or overseas. National nominating agencies play a crucial role in the wider Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, and the range of nominators CSC is working with ensures that the Commission's programmes reflect national and sectoral level priorities. The variety of nominating routes and individual country priorities means that in some cases, criteria around subject or discipline may differ. However, it is important to note that the CSC also has eligibility criteria that are applicable to all. In addition to the national nominating agencies, the CSC also works with a small number of non-governmental organisations or charities, who focus on thematic areas and help broaden the CSC's outreach to specific demographics such as African women or people with disabilities.

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[24] Academic Advisors are non-Commissioner volunteers who contribute their time to the CSC by reviewing Scholar applications in their subject of specialisation and contributing an independent expert assessment during the selection process.

Figure 15 – Nominators
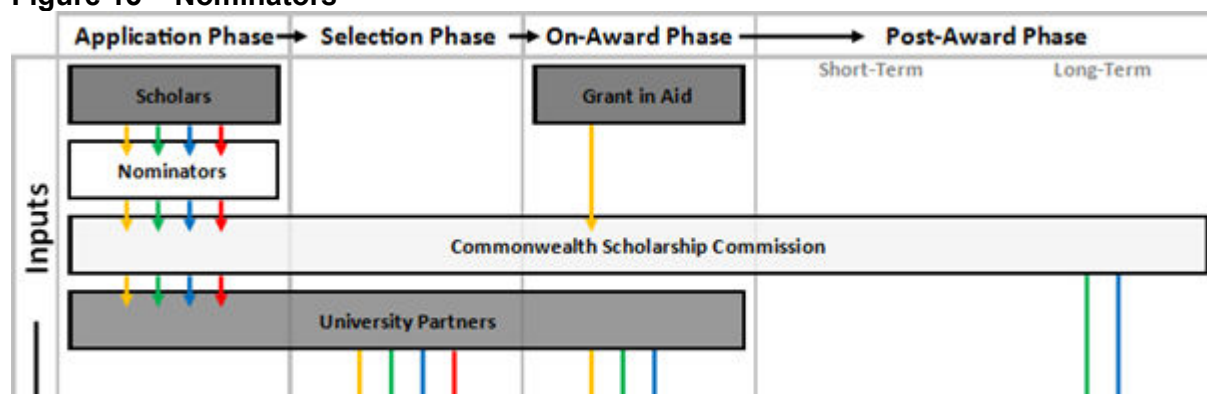
FROM: Scholars
INTO: Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

Nominating agencies are required to fulfil certain obligations based on the Memoranda of Understanding they have with the CSC, and it is expected that they fulfil these obligations as a part of their work. However, the CSC annually collects information from national agencies through its Agency Survey in order to help assess both whether each agency is meeting their obligations, and whether the CSC is meeting the needs of its agencies. This data is fed into the Agency Performance Matrix which is reviewed by the Commission in order to flag underperforming agencies, and in rare cases communicate and intervene with an agency in order to help them to meet their obligations. For some schemes, the nominating body is the University Partner, which is covered in a later section.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Academic Advisor Reports	Agency Performance Matrix (yearly)
Agency Survey	
Memorandums of Understanding	

Analysis

The CSC works with governments and trusted partners across the Commonwealth to recruit and shortlist candidates for Master's and PhD study, and also to ensure that national priorities are reflected in its awards. In addition to academic excellence and merit, Nominating Partners also take into consideration national development priorities while shortlisting candidates therefore play a pivotal role in addressing national development goals for each participating country. For example, in year 2022-23 Health and Medicine (48%), Economic Development (39%), and Education (38%) were reported by the Nominating agencies as the three top national development priorities.

Opportunity and Inclusion

In order to ensure equal opportunities, the CSC also works with NGOs and Charitable bodies for recruiting scholars. These bodies include Canon Collins Trust, Disabled People's Forum (CDPF), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), HALI Access Network, Wellcome Trust, and Windle Trust International. All of these bodies play a major role in fostering inclusion and representation on the scholarships schemes by prioritising key populations such as people living with disabilities; high-achieving, low-income (HALI) students; and refugees.

Nominated by one of the partner NGOs, Dr Tabeth Lynn Masengu was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship in 2010 to study for a Master of Laws degree in Human Rights at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She pioneered and led in South Africa the gender arm of the judicial

governance advocacy work, focusing on promoting the inclusion of more women in the judiciary and legal profession thus generating both national and regional impact. In her Case Study, Promoting Gender Equality in the Judiciary and Legal Profession in South Africa, speaking about the role of the Commonwealth Scholarships she adds:

> 'The scholarship allowed me to gain work opportunities in Human Rights Law and to pursue a joint doctorate degree in law. I am the University of Cape Town's (UCT) first ever joint doctorate degree holder from the Faculty of Law. This historical achievement could not have been possible if I had not completed my Master of Human Rights Law as a Commonwealth Scholar.'[25]

Academic Advisors

Furthermore, the CSC works closely with a panel of nearly 400 academic advisers, including internationally renowned experts in all subject areas. These experts provide support voluntarily and review scholarship applications by rating those based on merit, the quality of the proposal, and its development impact. These experts are one of the central collaborating partners for the CSC as their support consequently lead to the selection of candidates who propose solutions to key development issues therefore resulting in the CSC leading on promoting cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange throughout the Commonwealth.

Dr Nicole Greenidge is a Commonwealth Alumnus who completed a PhD in Human Geography at the University of Manchester in 2017. As part of her PhD studies, Nicole conducted a workshop in Barbados to gather multiple perspective of stakeholders on how to reduce flood related risks in the region. In her Case Study, Laying the Foundations for Community Resilience to Disasters and Tackling Climate Change in the Caribbean Region, she observed: 'When I did the application for the scholarship, I really felt that I needed to hone my skills more, and that we need to build the cadre of experts that we have in the Caribbean region.' [26]

After completing her PhD, she has had the opportunity to implement the recommendations from her PhD concerning the planning required on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, as is confirmed by her in the Case Study: 'They [Management Team] have given me the space to advance my research findings and to test the recommendations from my PhD. I have included recommendations from the PhD into a new policy for my country on comprehensive disaster management.'[27]

Furthermore, these advisers are not only experts of their fields but also are a reliable source to identify most suitable university in the UK that offers state of the art course(s) in a relevant subject area. Therefore, sometimes while reviewing the applications they also give recommendations on the suitability of the list of universities that have been selected by the applicants, which is also helpful in ensuring that Scholars are given the support they need to study at most relevant institutions that offer the best courses in a given subject.

Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

Introduction

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK is the non-departmental government body responsible for administering the United Kingdom's contribution to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. In addition to funding, the CSC provides Scholars with many supports and resources

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[25] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022a.
[26] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022b.
[27] Ibid.

during and after their Scholarship, including visa assistance, mental health resources, training opportunities, Scholar networks, and Alumni services. The CSC also has a monitoring and evaluation team which collects and analyses data about Scholars' experiences while studying and the impact of the Scholarship on their career and those around them. The work of the Commission is carried out by a Board, which is appointed by the FCDO Secretary of State and is comprised of 15 Commissioners (including a Chair) who provide oversight and strategic direction for the Commission and select candidates for its Scholarships, and the Secretariat, which is provided by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and which carries out the day-to-day functions to support the work of the Commission. The British Council also provides support in-country both pre-award and to Alumni. Because the CSC is the primary actor involved in this process, it is present in some form across all phases of the Scholarship intervention, and provides other activities that occur elsewhere in the Theory of Change, specifically the 'CSC Development Training Programme' and 'Other CSC Engagement' activities, including Alumni and Evaluation work.

Figure 16 – Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
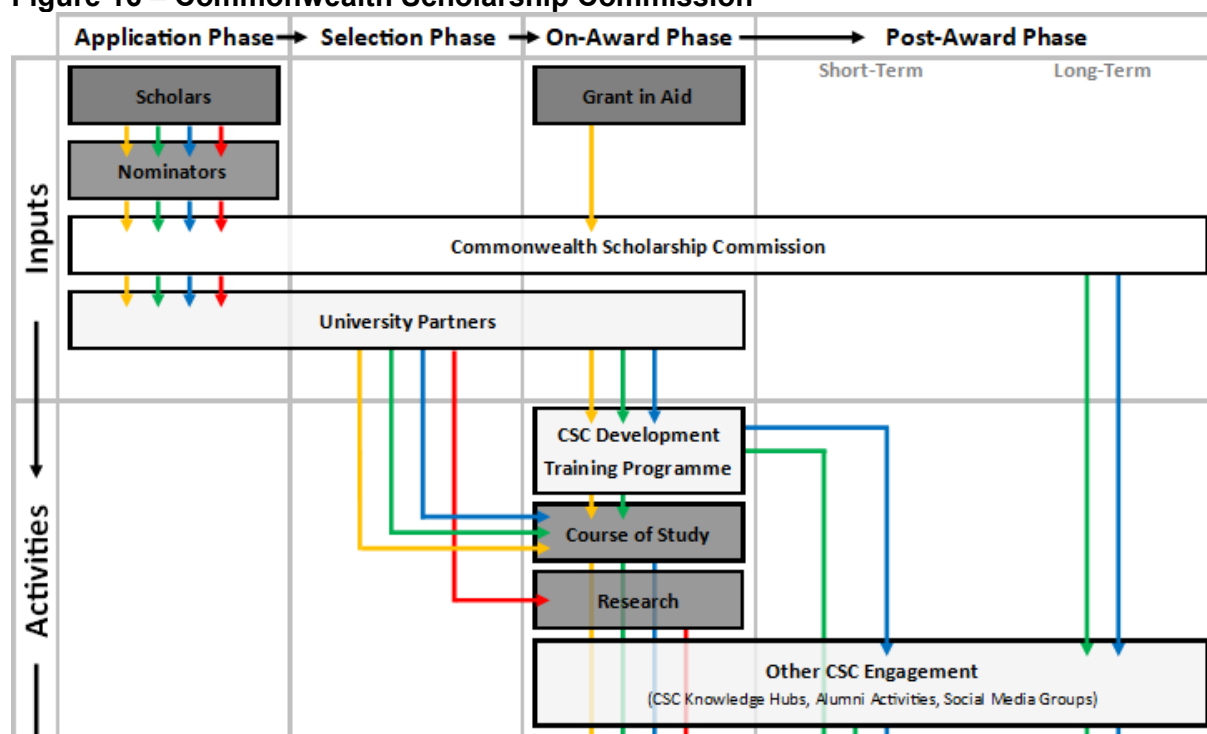
FROM: Grant in Aid, Nominators
INTO: University Partners, [CSC Development Training Programme], Other CSC Engagement

As an inward-bound international scholarship programme with explicit developmental and soft power foci, Commonwealth Scholarships sit within a unique space within the UK government. CSC policy and strategy are informed by several other government strategies including the UK International Research and Innovation Policy (which sits within the BEIS Industrial Strategy), the UK Aid strategy, DfE's International Education Strategy and the priority development themes of the CSC's primary sponsoring department the FCDO.[28]

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[28] See Geddes et al, 2020, 'CSC Evaluation: Identifying the Impacts of Commonwealth Scholarships': p6.

| Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Scholar Experience Survey Application, Nomination, Selection and Take-up Data	Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual Report (yearly) CSC Business Plan Delivery Reports (yearly) Evaluation and Monitoring Report to Commission (yearly) CSC Evaluation: Identifying the Impacts of Commonwealth Scholarships (2020) Commission Papers Freedom of Information and Parliamentary Question Responses

Analysis

Nominator Support

Commonwealth Scholarship Commission is the leading partner for Scholar recruitment processes and so therefore is also responsible for providing support to all its collaborating partners. In this regard the CSC has taken several initiatives including organising periodic webinars for the Nominating Agencies to discuss matters such as eligibility criteria, recruitment processes, the challenges and the barriers that are encountered during the recruitment and advertising process, and finally the best practices. These Webinars are run biannually each at pre- and post-nomination stages. Additionally, the CSC issues an online Newsletter three times a year that encapsulates similar topics sometimes featuring case studies on specific area. Furthermore, general support in the form of regular contact as well as one-to-one calls is also available for the Nominating agencies to discuss improvements on their recruitment processes.

Currently the CSC is developing a toolkit, specifically for new agencies or new staff members in the existing ones. The purpose is to consolidate in that toolkit information on the recruitment and selection processes, the importance of doing eligibility checks, how to set up a selection panel, general documentation requirements, and if needed how to do exclusive recruitment such as that for schemes targeting specific topics or development issues. Overall, the purpose of all these efforts is to maximise the experiences of the Scholars at all stages.

Scholar Support

The CSC also monitors its performance by running Scholar Experience survey each year inviting the leaving Scholars to feedback on various aspects of their interactions with the Commission and their UK institutions. For example, when Scholars were asked to rate their experience of the CSC's administration prior to starting their Scholarship, responses were generally very positive (see Figure 17); with the exception of the year 2021, the proportion of Scholars answering 'Good' or 'Excellent' on a five-point Likert scale never dropped below 85%. In 2021, this proportion fell to 75%, which can be directly attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 17 – What was your experience of the CSC's administration prior to starting your Scholarship?
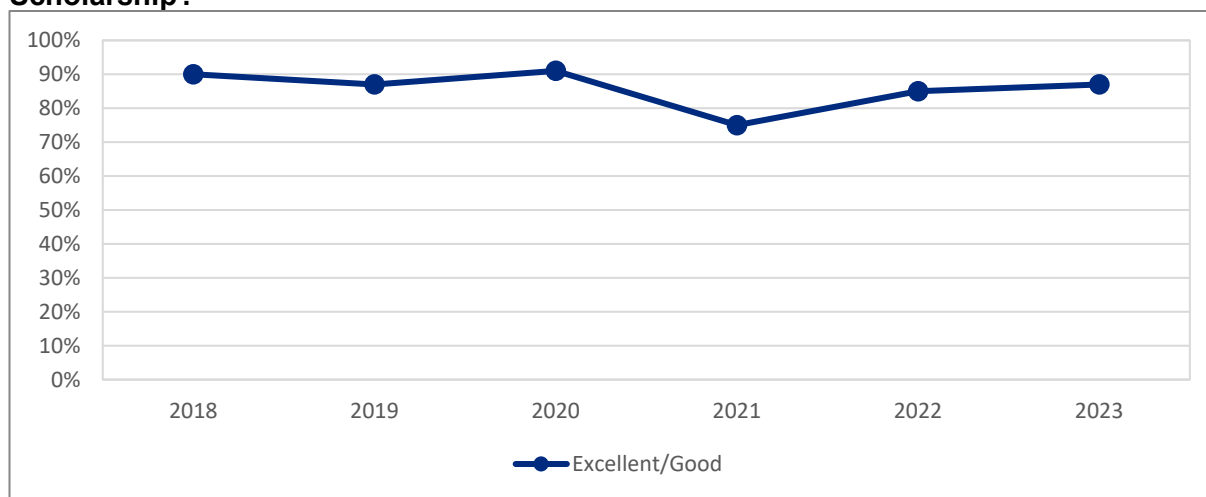
Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

Similarly, the Scholars were also asked to rate the CSC's administration since they started their Scholarship. Scholars once again answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'Excellent' to 'Very poor'. Figure 18 below shows the proportion of Scholars answering 'Excellent' or 'Good'. Responses were generally very positive, with the proportion of Scholars answering 'Good' or 'Excellent' never falling below 83%. The lowest satisfaction levels were reported in 2021, which can be directly attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, since pandemic restrictions have eased scores have recovered, and are now close to their pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 18 – Overall, how would you rate the CSC's administration of your scholarship since you started your scholarship?
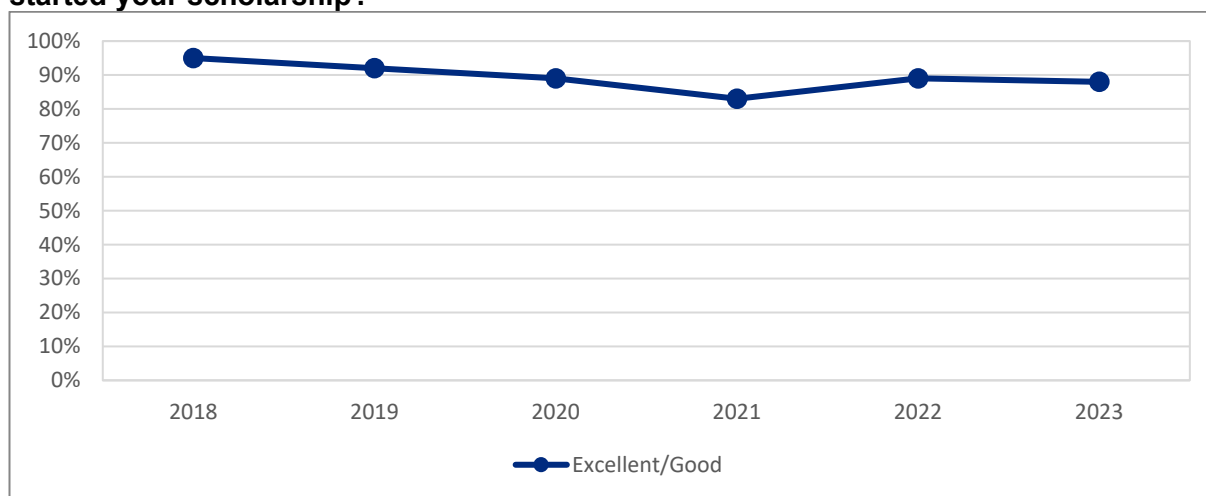
Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

In a related free text question, Scholars were asked to provide any additional comments relating to the CSC's administration of their Scholarship. Figure 19 below shows the words that appeared most frequently in responses to this question in 2023. The most frequently used word was 'helpful', indicating a generally positive experience of the CSC's administration. Another frequently appearing word was 'time', in addition to 'process', 'emails', and 'administration'. Potentially, this could indicate that prompt and timely communications with the CSC secretariat was a key concern for Scholars. Other frequently used words include 'communication', 'supportive', and 'great', suggesting generally positive views of the CSC's administration.

**Figure 19 – Do you have any additional comments about the CSC's administration of your Scholarship?**

Source: 2023 Scholar Experience Survey

University Partners

Introduction

The CSC's University Partners are a critical component of the Commonwealth Scholarships Theory of Change. They add to the process in many different ways, contributing not only financial inputs and tuition reductions, but also academic and administrative work, and institutional support. In addition to providing the educational and research experience for Scholars (and the associated support), University Partners act as Nominators (and co-funders) for the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship programme as well as Nominators for the Distance Learning Scheme.

Figure 20 – University Partners
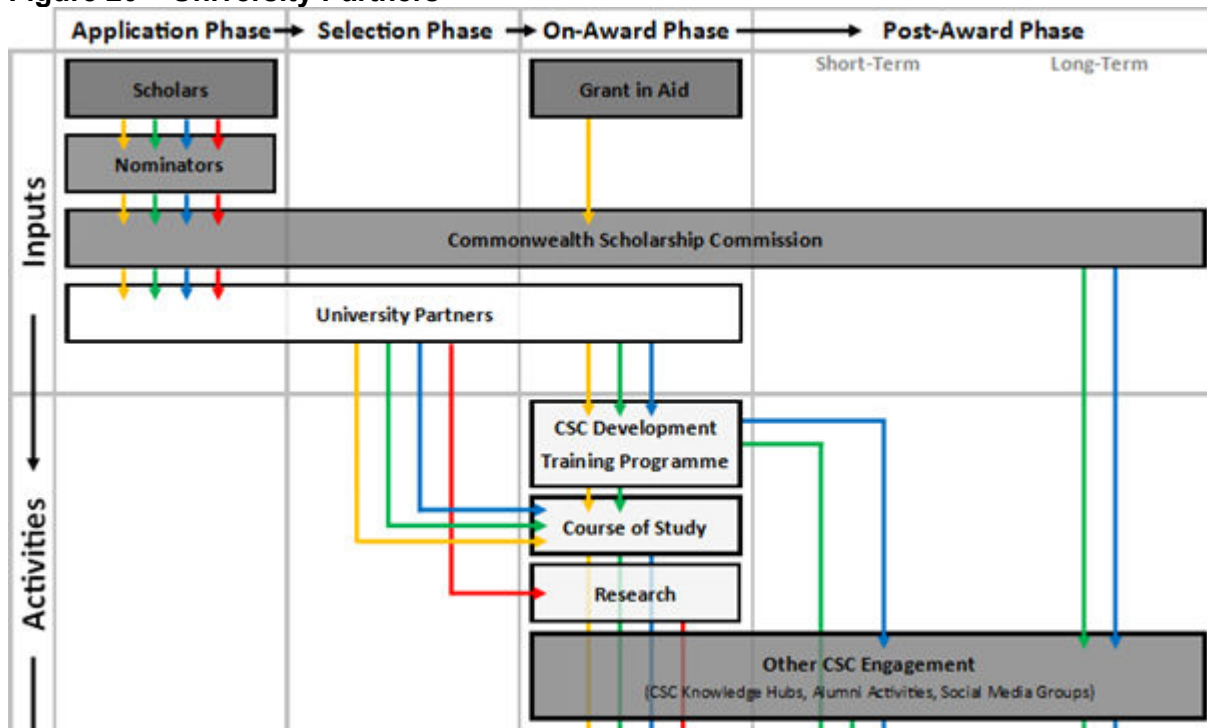
FROM: Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
INTO: Development Training Programme, Course of Study, Research

The specific details of the partnerships between the CSC and its UK-based University Partners is slightly different for each scheme. For general scholarships for Master's and PhDs, a Memorandum of Understanding is signed with the University Partners who host these Scholars, with these agreements renewed every three years. Alternatively for Commonwealth Shared Scholarships, the partnerships result from a closed bidding process. In the bidding process University Partners submit courses to the CSC for approval to host Commonwealth Shared Scholars prior to opening applications for the candidates. University Partners are invited to bid for up to ten Commonwealth Shared Scholarships in a given year and may put forward up to eight courses in the bid. The process is similar for the Commonwealth Distance Learning Scheme.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Institutional Annual Reports (Distance Learning)	Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual Report (yearly)
Qualifications Reports	Evaluation and Monitoring Report to Commission (yearly)
Scholar Annual Reports	
Supervisor Annual Reports	

Analysis

The CSC plays an important role in attracting the best and brightest talent to UK universities. In return, universities support the CSC's activities through part funding all scholarship awards, providing matching contributions. In 2022/23, Commonwealth Scholars studied at 95 UK universities.[29] In addition to national nominating agencies, NGOs and charities, and academic advisers, the other key collaborator with the CSC is its University Partners. In particular, the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship and Distance Learning programmes are delivered collaboratively and are the main schemes where University Partners are also the nominators and co-funders and have a greater role to play in not only the selection process but also ensuring effective administration of the schemes.

Commonwealth Shared Scholarships

The Commonwealth Shared Scholarship programme offers award to complete a Master's qualification at a participating UK University Partner and on a course that has been pre-selected by the CSC. The Commonwealth Shared Scholarship programme employs more strict eligibility criteria and is intended for applicants from least-developed and middle-income countries (including fragile and conflict-affected states), who have not studied for a year or more in a high-income country before, who would not otherwise afford to study in the UK, and who have the potential to enhance the development of their home countries with the knowledge and leadership skills they acquire.

Margret Nambatya Commonwealth Shared Scholarships Alumnus who studied for a Master's Degree in Engineering for Sustainable Development at the University of Cambridge in 2014. She was selected because her application proposed a novel approach to sustainable construction solutions through the use of Interlocking Stabilised Soil Block (ISSB) technology. In her Case Study, Margret spoke to her original study objectives from her application:

> 'Studying Engineering for Sustainable Development helped me to recognise and put into consideration the economic, social, environmental, technological and cultural aspects surrounding an infrastructure project…. When I return to Uganda, I hope to work as a change

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[29] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2023a: 52.

agent in the position of Project Manager encouraging the engineering organisations to have a mindset change from reductionist thinking to a complex system approach.' [30]

Shared Scholars were asked to rate their experience of their host university's administration prior to starting their Scholarship. Responses were ranked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'Excellent' to 'Very poor'. Figure 21 below shows that Scholars' responses to this question were generally very positive, with the proportion of respondents rating their experience as 'Excellent' or 'Good' never falling below 87%. Since 2020, responses to this metric have trended positively, from 87% in 2020 to 95% in 2023. This indicates that Scholars' experiences with their host universities were generally positive and have consistently improved further since 2020.
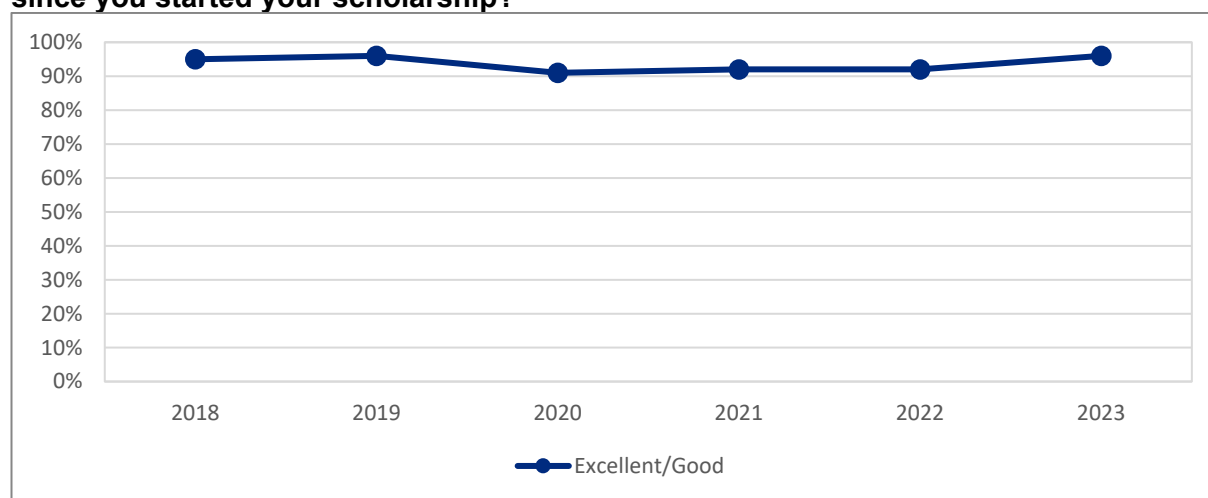
Figure 21 – What was your experience of your host university's administration prior to starting your Scholarship?
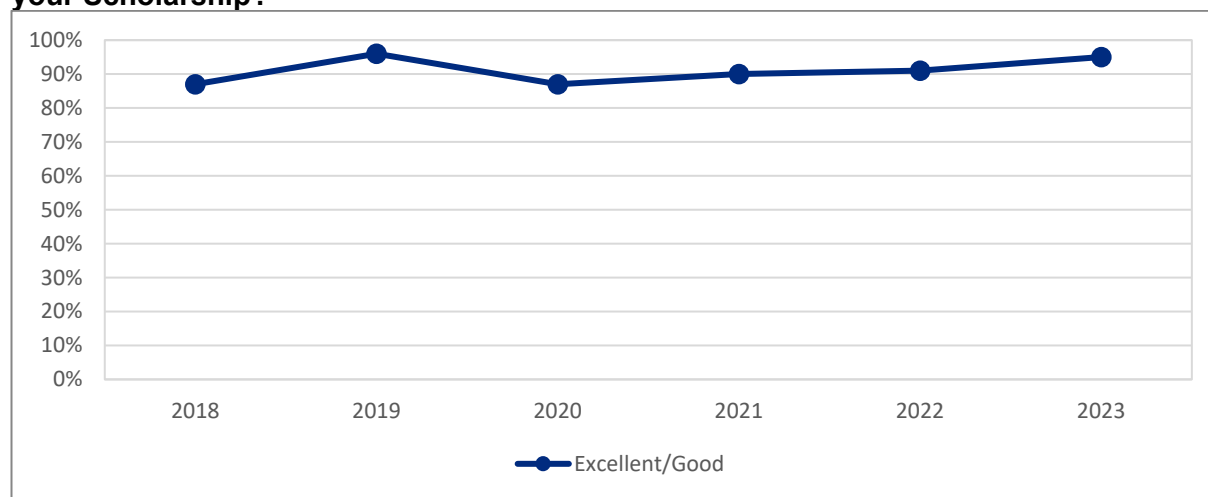
Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

Shared Scholars were also asked to rate their experience of their host university's administration since they started their Scholarship on the same five-point Likert scale. Responses to this metric were consistently very high; Figure 22 below shows that from 2018 to 2023, the proportion of Scholars rating their experience as 'Good' or 'Excellent' never fell below 91%. This indicates that in general, Shared Scholars' on-award administration experiences were similarly positive to the pre-award administration.

Figure 22 – Overall, how would you rate your host university's administration of your scholarship since you started your scholarship?

Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

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[30] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022c.

In a free text question, Shared Scholars were also asked to share any additional comments in relation to their university's administration of their Scholarship. Figure 23 below shows the most frequently used words in responses to this question in 2023. The four most frequently used words were 'supportive', 'responsive', 'excellent' and 'experience'; this suggests that in 2023, Scholars generally had a very positive view of their university's administration. Other frequently used words included 'great' and 'support', which further indicates that Shared Scholars often shared positive experiences of their university's administration.

Figure 23 – Do you have any additional comments about your host university's administration of your Scholarship?

Source: 2023 Scholar Experience Survey

Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships

The Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships are for candidates from eligible low- and middle-income Commonwealth countries to undertake part-time taught Master's study with UK universities while remaining in their home countries. The programme was started in 2001 and was initiated with the aim to expand the modes of scholarships offered by the CSC. It has funded nearly 4,000 Scholars from 41 Commonwealth countries to study at 45 different higher education institutions in the UK. [31] Each participating University Partner conducts its own recruitment process to select a specified number of applicants for Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships, and then provides the shortlist of nominees to the CSC for final selections.

The CSC conducted an evaluation of the Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarship in 2022 to examine the benefits of one of the few international scholarships offered to support study through online and distance learning modes. As a part of the evaluation, stakeholders at University Partners were asked about the benefits they derived from participating in the programme:

> 'University Providers identified many benefits that Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholars receive through their programmes of study. Chief among these is the high degree of expertise that Scholars can access from their lecturers, and the quality of the education that Scholars receive through their programme.'[32]

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[31] Harrison et al, 2022: 5.
[32] Harrison et al, 2022: 8.

Commonwealth Split-site Scholarships

This was also a finding of the CSC's evaluation of its Commonwealth Split-site Scholarship programme which started in 1998 offering PhD scholars who are already studying at universities across the Commonwealth the opportunity to conduct research at a UK based university for 12 months. The programme aims at providing access to lab facilities and expertise in the UK for high quality doctoral candidates from low and middle income Commonwealth countries, and to contribute to UK and Commonwealth higher education and research through collaboration and partnerships.[33]

According to the review, the overall benefits for the Scholars included 'the international experience and ability to access otherwise unavailable resources including knowledge and equipment'[34], while the benefits for the Supervisors from both the host and home institutions included the 'contribution of the scholar to their departments' research outputs' as well as the intercultural experience that both the staff and students at host institutions enjoyed.[35] The review also concluded that the presence of Split-site Scholars 'helped to raise the reputation and international profile of their universities'.[36]

Commonwealth Professional Fellowships

Commonwealth Professional Fellowships is yet another unique programme that offers high level of collaboration amongst the CSC and UK host organisations (including UK-based universities). These Fellowships are for mid-career professionals from low- and middle-income countries to spend a period of time at a UK host organisation working in their sector for a programme of professional development. By hosting Professional Fellows, UK organisations (including University Partners) provide support by developing key skills, as well as building relationships and opening up areas for collaboration with colleagues across the Commonwealth.

The CSC conducted a review of the Professional Fellowships programme in 2021.[37] According to the review:

> 'Host organisations reported being motivated to participate in the Professional Fellowship for reasons that closely align with the mission of the programme; namely, in order to contribute towards capacity building in Fellows' home organisations and in their professional sectors more broadly, to strengthen and expand their international networks, and to foster reciprocal learning.'[38]

Through Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships and University Partners overseas organisations benefit from better qualified staff with increased knowledge and skills, as well as access to international collaboration and partnerships.

Part One: Summary and Analysis

Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships are delivered through a combination of Inputs which include Grant in Aid as a financial contribution; Scholars who are the direct beneficiaries of the programme; and finally, a group of delivery partners that consists of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, Nominators, and University Partners. While much of the data held with respect to the

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[33] Harrison et al, 2019: 1.
[34] Harrison et al, 2019: 2.
[35] Harrison et al, 2019: 3.
[36] Ibid.
[37] See Margolis, 2021.
[38] Margolis, 2021:8.

Inputs is management and programme data, there is some evaluation data related to Scholars, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, and University Partners.

Grant in Aid

Overall the data held in relation to Grant in Aid demonstrates the sources of financial support for the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships programme. The Grant in Aid mostly comes from the UK government and is primarily spent on the recipients of the award during on-award phase in the form of tuition fees, research support grants, and stipends. Part of the funding is also used to cover the administrative cost of the programmes and the cost of some additional activities such as networking events and additional training programmes that are organised to maximise the award experience for recipients.

Financial support is also contributed by the University Partners who collaborate with the CSC on its programmes in different ways. These collaborations result in varying degrees of support and amounts of financial contribution as well as generally come in the form of tuition fee reduction. University Partners also contribute more to the Commonwealth Shared Scholarships programme through the payment of stipends to the Scholars.

Scholars

Scholars are the direct beneficiaries of the programme. One of the important objectives of these scholarships schemes is to provide access to UK-based facilities, equipment, and expertise for those who may not be able to get that opportunity otherwise. Based on the results of the Longitudinal Baseline Survey, it has been strongly indicated by the Scholars that they might find it impossible to undertake same qualification in the UK based institutions if they had not received the award. Similarly, in response to the Scholar Experience Surveys that are run annually, a large majority of the recipients have consistently reported high levels of satisfaction with their overall experience of living and studying in the UK. Furthermore, there is evidence of the breadth and depth of Scholars' experiences in the most commonly recurring themes that emerged from qualitative analysis of the free-text answers in the Scholar Experience Surveys, notably including the diversity of the United Kingdom, the cultural experience, the quality of education, the academic environment, both academic and non-academic support from the CSC secretariat, opportunities to network with likeminded people from other fields and institutions, and lastly the opportunities for skill development.

Some have also underscored the challenges that they experienced during their stay in the UK. The most recurring theme that emerge off the analysis includes 'weather' and 'the cost of living'. Few also raised well-being issues that were mostly the result of being away from family and home. Lastly, some Scholars also found the academic experience stressful and intense. It is important to note that the best aspects about the academic experience that are discussed above are regarding the quality of education, and access to resources and facilities, while the challenges are more related to the education system in the UK, for instance the length of the Master's programme is generally a year-long in the UK leaving not much time for other non-academic activities. While these challenges can be present, they are also mitigated against through the supports provided by both the CSC and University Partners.

Nominators

Commonwealth Scholarships are delivered in collaboration with several partners including national Nominating Agencies, NGOs and charitable bodies, academic advisers, and University Partners. Each of these groups of partners come with their own eligibility criteria however there are few overarching requirements that are mandatory and are part of the usual CSC screening processes. In general, these criteria include academic merit, quality and strengths of the application, and development impact. Additional considerations that are made by the partners range from equity and inclusion, such as people

living with disabilities or those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds to national development priorities especially in the case of national nominating agencies.

The collaborative efforts to deliver the scholarships schemes aim for achieving realistic representation from all participating countries as well as increasing access for those who require additional support or come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Based on the internal data on the number of applications that is received annually, all scholarships schemes are becoming increasingly competitive due to oversubscription. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the selection process has also resulted in higher number of recruitments from communities that had been historically underrepresented. Based on the feedback received from University Partners the Scholars that are selected are of a very high standard in their academic ability and potential, and strongly demonstrate their ability and willingness to contribute to the courses they join.

Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

In terms of the quality of the management of the schemes by the CSC, the overall satisfaction rating collected through the Scholar Experience Survey from the Scholars has remained consistently high. The majority of the Scholars report being highly satisfied by the administrative support they received from the CSC secretariat both prior to starting the award as well as during their studies. Scholars have also reported generally positive feedback about the quality of support they received from the CSC secretariat staff. It is important to note that a number of other functions of the CSC appear in the Activities section of this report, and will be covered in the next section.

University Partners

Similarly, University Partners receive high scores from Commonwealth Shared Scholars with respect to the administrative support that they provide both before and during their studies. Feedback from Scholars in the Scholar Experience Survey demonstrates the high quality and value of this support to Scholars. University Partners themselves have also fed back on the value that they derive from their involvement in Commonwealth Scholarships, citing the high-quality of students that the programme supports to study at their institutions, and the contributions of those students to their departments during their time there.

Analysis

Based on the evidence discussed in the preceding sections, there is nothing to suggest that the Theory of Change model is inaccurate with respect to the Inputs that feed into the Commonwealth Scholarships programme. Furthermore, both the management data and the evaluation data suggest that the components featured within the Inputs section are working as intended: Scholars largely indicate that they would have been unable to pursue their studies without the support of the Scholarship, they overwhelmingly report positive feedback regarding their experiences studying and living in the United Kingdom, and both the CSC and University Partners are reported by Scholars to provide high-quality administrative support both before and during their studies.

Part Two: Activities

Components that appear in the Activities section of the Theory of Change are the immediate programme activities that happen during the active intervention stage of the process. These include the Scholar's academic Course of Study, any Research that is done during their Scholarship, as well as the training and engagement opportunities offered to Scholars by the CSC. These activities are the site where most of the immediate skills and knowledge development occurs for Scholars and lead directly to the Outputs that are discussed in the next section.

CSC Development Training Programme

Introduction

The CSC Development Training Programme is a suite of training activities offered to Scholars by the CSC Engagement Team during their Scholarship to develop and enhance their skills and knowledge in areas important to their academic and career development, and that will ultimately help them contribute to developmental outcomes and impacts. The centrepiece of this programme is the CSC's online course 'Understanding Development Impact', hosted on FutureLearn and developed by the CSC in tandem with experts in online pedagogy and development studies from Open University. The primary goals of the course are to introduce Scholars to the CSC community and the different resources available to them through the CSC, to give Scholars an introduction into the main concepts and issues in the sustainable development sector, and to teach them about tools that can help their work including stakeholder mapping and PEST analyses. The course is made available to all new Scholars at the beginning of their Scholarship.

Figure 24 – CSC Development Training Programme
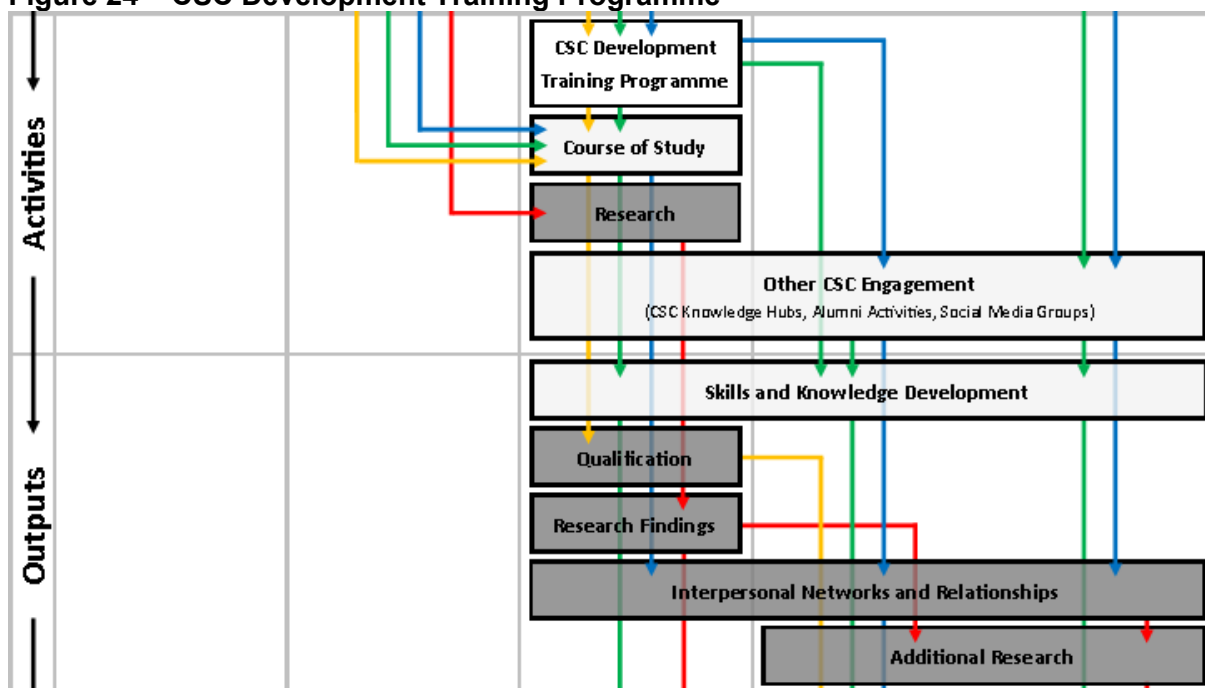
FROM: [Commonwealth Scholarship Commission], University Partners
INTO: Course of Study, Other CSC Engagement, Skills and Knowledge Development

Scholars are also offered several discrete training opportunities over the course of their Scholarship, targeted towards particular topics that have been identified as important enablers to their post-Scholarship career activities. These have been selected in part based on feedback from Scholars and Alumni about what skills they feel they need to succeed in their careers. Training offered through the CSC by providers cover topics such as grant writing, employability skills, and research communication.

It is assumed that Scholars have internet access and a device that allows them to be able to access the online course. This is not an unreasonable assumption as Scholars are either based in the United Kingdom during their study or are engaged in an online learning degree as part of their Scholarship. The course has also been designed so that it is accessible to Scholars with low bandwidth or intermittent internet access. It is also assumed that Scholars will sign up to and participate in the course. And while uptake and completion of the course is high, not all Scholars do so. This could be due to time constraints, low awareness, or lack of interest.

It is also assumed that while the smaller training sessions and workshops are appropriately targeted in their scope so that they are critical development opportunities for a subset of Scholars. For example, research-oriented workshops are important for doctoral Scholars and those who intend to pursue careers in research but are less important for those who plan to go into the NGO sector. However, it is also assumed that the range of training sessions means that there are opportunities for everyone for further skill development.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Scholar Experience Survey	Review of Development Training Programme (yearly)
Course Completions	
Post-training Feedback Surveys	Scholar and Alumni Engagement Strategy Reports to Commission (three times yearly)
Scholar Registration and Engagement	

Analysis

In the 2022-23 academic year, feedback was collected at five training sessions that had been run for Scholars. These training sessions were:

Leadership Models and Decision Making: An introduction to leadership models and frameworks, and the application of these models to potential real-life scenarios.
Mastering Networking: Developing networking skills and engaging in networking conversations with others to apply these skills.
Preparing for Social Impact: Mapping attendees' impact to the Sustainable Development Goals.
Research Project Management: Sharing research, intellectual property concepts, and principles of project management.
Writing for Development: Development concepts and principles and how they apply to research.

Scholars were asked to give an overall rating of each of these sessions, and to report on the extent to which each session met their expectations. Across all five sessions attendees gave very positive responses. All attendees reported that overall, they found the session to be 'Good' (23%) or 'Very Good' (77%). All attendees also felt that the event either matched their expectations (49%), exceeded their expectations (32%), or greatly exceeded their expectations (19%).

The 2023/24 Leaders for Sustainable Development Training Programme questionnaire also collected feedback from attendees of the CSC's most recent Development Training Programme workshops. The questionnaire assessed three key elements; the understanding and awareness of the various programme elements; the overall quality of the workshops; and the impact of the training programme. Scholars who attended the workshops were asked to rate the quality of the trainer running the session on a scale of 'Very good' to 'Very poor'. Of the 12 Scholars who responded to this question, 10 rated the trainer as 'Very Good', with the remaining two Scholars ranking them 'Good'. Scholars were also asked

to rank how useful they found the workshop to be in relation to their development impact. Almost all (10) Scholars found the workshop to be 'Very useful', with the remaining two indicating that they found it 'Useful'.

Course of Study

Introduction

The Course of Study is the primary focus of learning over the course of a Commonwealth Scholarship, and the associated fees for these studies are normally the single biggest cost component associated with the Scholarship. The Course of Study is provided by University Partners in the United Kingdom at both Master's and Doctoral level (depending on the particular scheme).

Figure 25 – Course of Study
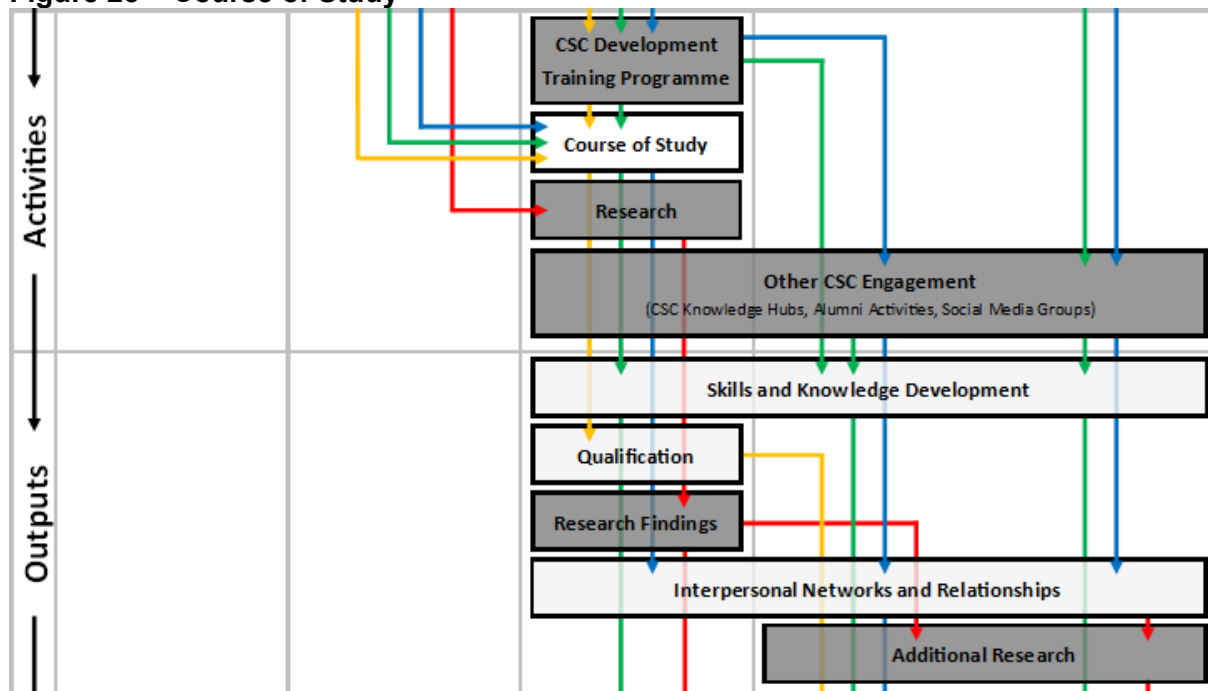
FROM: University Partners
INTO: Skills and Knowledge Development, Qualification, Interpersonal Networks and Relationships

For this component of the Theory of Change, the assumption is that Scholars will fully engage with their studies, and obtain the expected skills and knowledge and receive a relevant qualification (except in the case of Split-Site Scholarships where no qualification is awarded as a part of the Scholarship, but is used as an overall metric for success). It is also assumed that the course of study or research will be offered as planned. The CSC supports these assumptions by actively and routinely monitoring the progress of Scholars and working closely with their host institutions from the point of selection through to the completion of their awards.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Scholar Experience Survey Application, Nomination, Selection and Take-up Data First Term Reports Qualifications Reports Scholar Annual Reports Supervisor Annual Reports	Commonwealth Scholarship Commission Annual Report (yearly) Evaluation and Monitoring Report to Commission (yearly) Commission Papers

Analysis

Study Experience in the UK

In the Scholar Experience Survey, Scholars were asked to what extent their UK study experience was meeting their expectations. Answers were ranked on a five-point Likert scale from Completely to Not at All. Figure 26 shows the proportion of Scholars who selected one of the top two options, 'Mostly' or 'Completely', for this question. In 2018 and 2019, most Scholars responded in this way. However, in 2020 and 2021 there was a drop in the proportion of Scholars reporting that their UK study experience was 'Mostly' or 'Completely' meeting their expectations, falling from 93% in 2019 to 89% in 2020 and 83% in 2021. This drop in satisfaction can be attributed to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which substantially affected Scholars' ability to have a typical study experience. After 2021, the proportion of Scholars reporting high satisfaction has recovered to pre-pandemic levels with 92% of Scholars indicated that their expectations were 'Mostly' or 'Completely' met in 2023.

Figure 26 – Overall, to what extent is your UK study experience meeting your expectations?
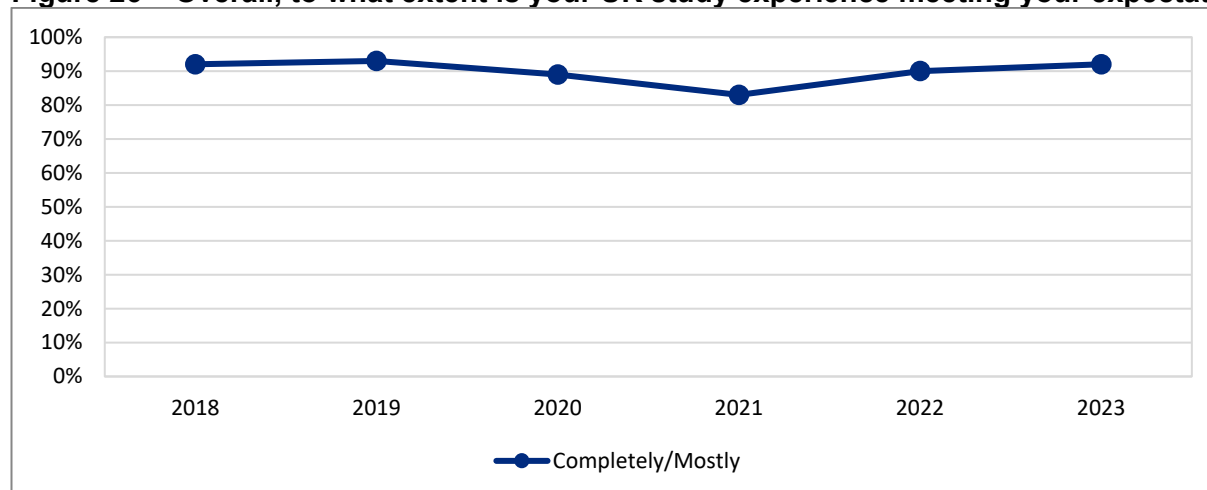
Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

Scholars were also asked to what extent their UK study experience fulfilled the purpose for which they took up the Scholarship. Figure 27 shows that in 2018 and 2019, these scores were very high, with 95% of Scholars or more reporting that their experience 'Completely' or 'Mostly' met their expectations. However, the Covid-19 pandemic also appeared to impact these scores; in 2020 and 2021, the proportion of Scholars answering 'Completely' or 'Mostly' dropped to 90% and 86% respectively, however scores trended positively from 2021 to 2023, and by 2023 this measure returned to pre-pandemic levels. This suggests that whilst the pandemic may have had a detrimental effect on the Scholar's experience at the time, the situation improved rapidly once the effect of the pandemic lessened.

Figure 27 – Overall, to what extent if your UK study experience fulfilling the purpose for which you took up your Scholarship?
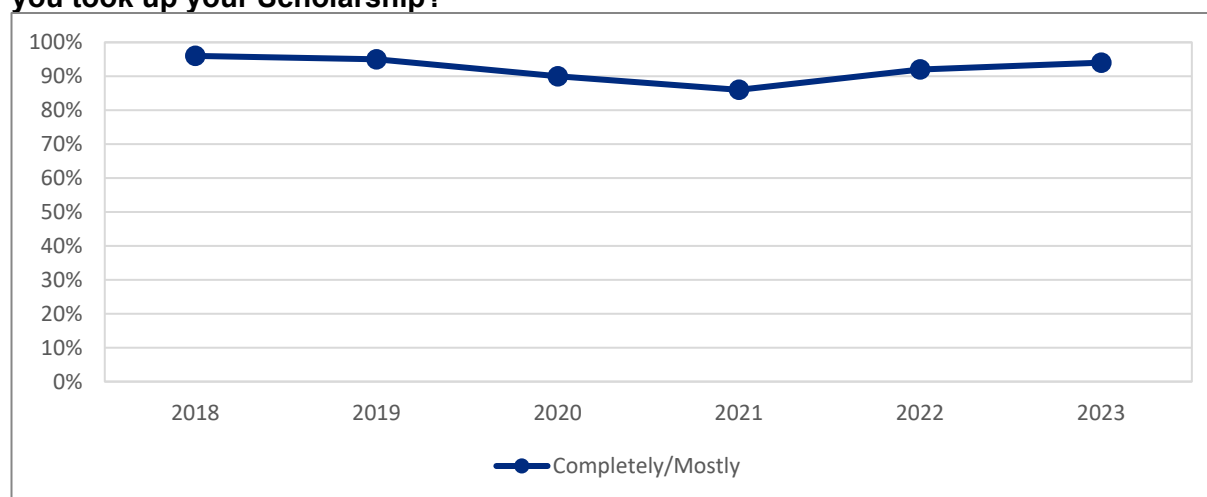
Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

Scholars were also asked to rate the standard of their academic experience during their Course of Study on a scale of 'Very Poor' to 'Excellent'. Figure 28 shows the proportion of Scholars answering 'Good' or 'Excellent' in response to this question. From 2018 to 2020, the proportion of Scholars answering 'Good' or 'Excellent' never dropped below 94%, demonstrating that satisfaction levels were generally very high. However, once again there was a small decrease in 2021, when the proportion of Scholars rating their experience as 'Good' or 'Excellent' fell to 90%. Whilst satisfaction levels remained consistently high, it appears that Covid-19 may have understandably had an impact on the standard of the academic experience the Scholars had. From 2021 to 2023, scores trended positively, and by 2023 the proportion of Scholars answering 'Good' or 'Excellent' recovered to 96%, exceeding pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 28 – Overall, how would you rate the standard of your academic experience?
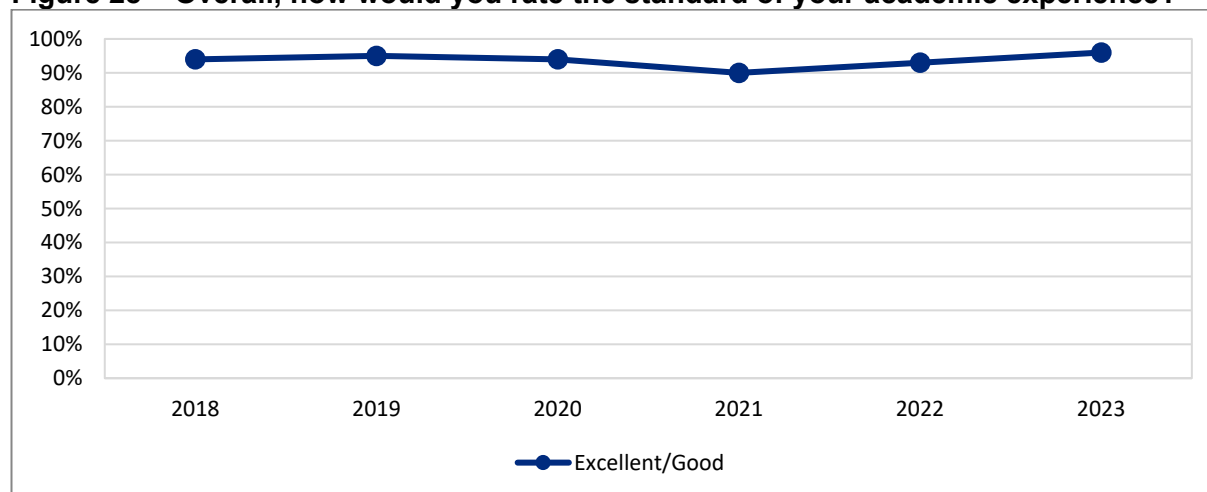
Source: Scholar Experience Survey 2018-2023

Figure 29 shows the words that appeared most frequently when Scholars were asked if they had any additional comments relating to their academic experience. Notable frequent words include 'research', 'learning', 'work', 'support' and 'great'.

Figure 29 – Do you have any additional comments relating to your academic experience?

Source: 2023 Scholar Experience Survey

Violet Tampiooru Gomba, a Commonwealth Scholarships Alumnus who was awarded in 2018 to study for a Master's degree in Genomic Medicine at St George's University of London, was driven by her burning passion and thirst to become a refined molecular geneticist and medical researcher, so that when she returned to her home country, Nigeria, she could effectively contribute to improving the healthcare and educational needs in Nigeria. In her application for her scholarship, she wrote:

> 'The courses taught in this programme will train me in genomic technologies, genetic basis of cancer, inherited and infectious diseases, interpretation of genomic data, counselling and research skills. This will grant me the privilege of learning from research, clinical and laboratory scientists as the Master's programme is affiliated with NHS hospitals.' [39]

Speaking of the impact that their exposure to the quality of education had, particularly access to resources and equipment in the UK, Babajide Milton Macaulay, a Commonwealth Scholarship Alumni from 2012 who undertook a Master's degree in Sustainable Environmental Management at the University of Greenwich, observed:

> 'Having won multiple international scholarships including the Commonwealth Scholarships for my Master's and PhD degrees, I was inspired to create iLLUMANIA to help African proteges access international scholarships to fund their career dreams. Moreover, having experienced a digitalised process of accessing research equipment at the University of Manchester, I transferred a similar idea upon my return to Nigeria to resolve the problem of poor access to research equipment by creating Wadi.'[40]
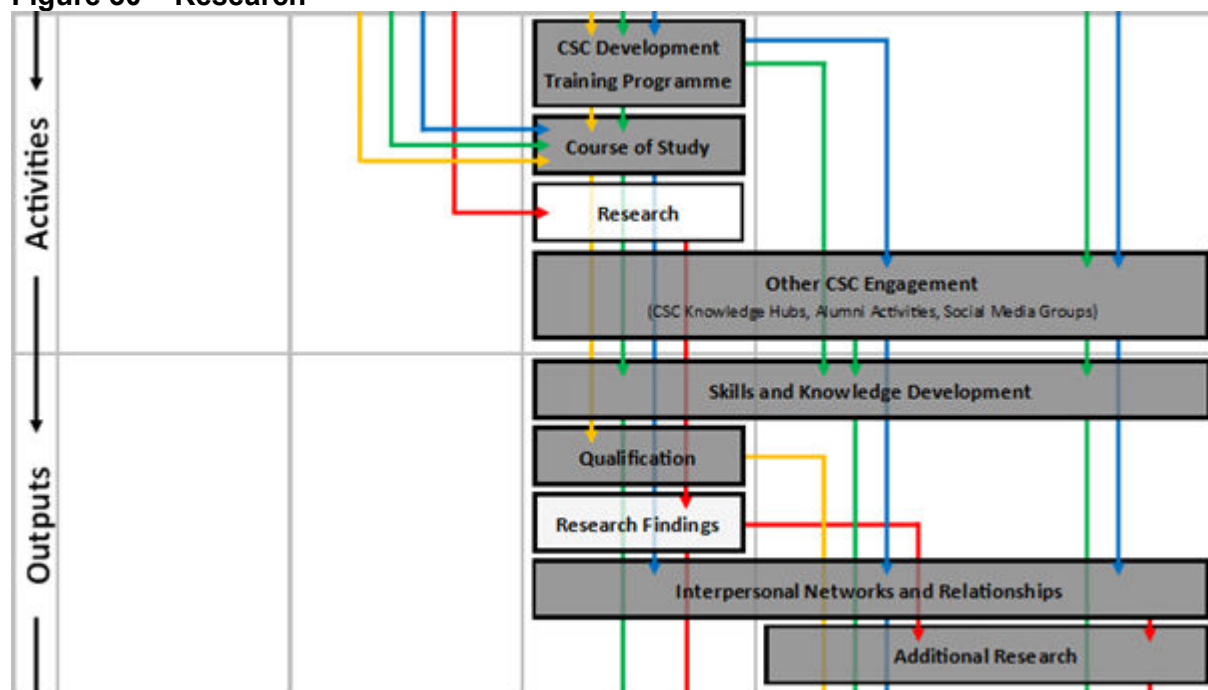
Research

Introduction

A significant activity that Commonwealth Scholars engage in during their Scholarship is Research, particularly for those Scholars in the Doctoral and Split-site programmes. For these Scholars, their area of research will have been the core component of their application, and they will have been selected in large part because they were able to demonstrate the link between the proposed research and how it will have a sustainable development impact. This can be seen further along in the red Research path in the

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[39] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2023b.
[40] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2024b.

Theory of Change, where the application of the research findings leads to a sustainable developmental impact (discussed below).

Figure 30 – Research

FROM: University Partners
INTO: Research Findings

Again, it is assumed that for this component of the Theory of Change the Scholar will be able to undertake their research as planned or that any changes will have equal potential for later developmental impact. It is also assumed that the necessary resources will be available, and that the Scholar will be able and willing to undertake the research as required to obtain their desired qualification. These assumptions are validated through the routine monitoring of the progress of Scholars, and by working closely with the supervisors and institutions during the Scholar's study period.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Scholar Experience Survey	Best Journal Article Prize Results
Application, Nomination, Selection and Take-up Data	Common Knowledge
Best Journal Article Prize Applications	Evaluation and Monitoring Report to Commission (yearly)
First Term Reports	Building Bridges: The Commonwealth Split-Site Doctoral Scholarship Programme 1998-2018 (2019)
Qualifications Reports	Commonwealth Doctoral Scholarships 1960-2015 (2017)
Scholar Annual Reports	
Supervisor Annual Reports	Successes and Complexities: the outcomes of UK Commonwealth Scholarships 1960-2012 (2016)

Analysis

Research Support in the UK

Scholars were asked in the Scholar Experience Survey to what extent they agree that their supervisor(s) have the skills and subject knowledge to support their research. Scholars answered on a scale from 'Definitely agree' to 'Definitely disagree'. Figure 31 shows the proportion of Scholars indicating that they 'Definitely' or 'Mostly' agreed with the statement. This figure was consistently above 95% at all survey years.

Figure 31 – My supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to support my research
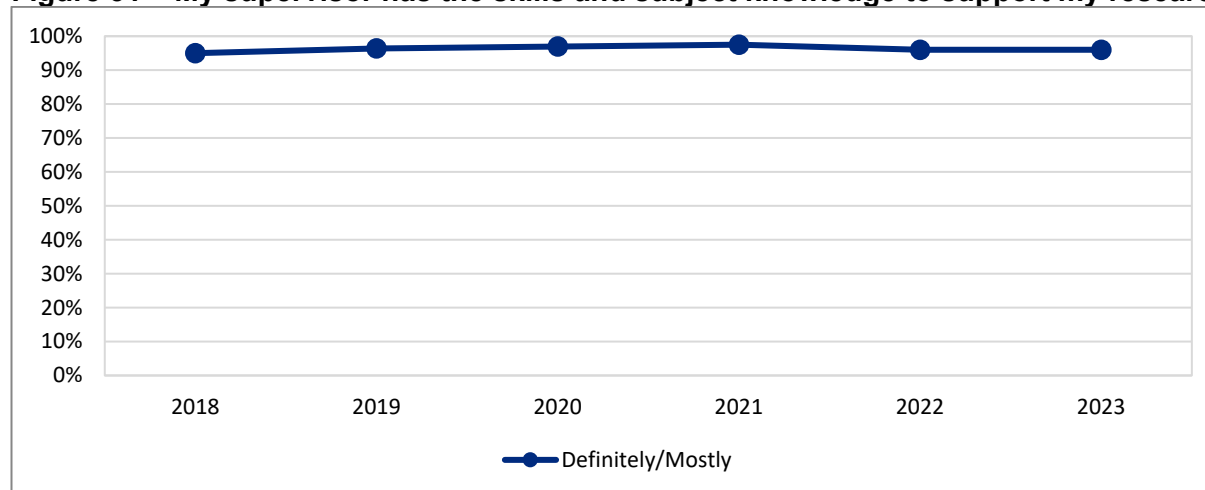
Source: Scholar Experience Survey

Scholars are also asked if they had access to the specialist resources that they needed for their Research. Scholars rated their response to this on a scale from 'Definitely' to 'Not at all'. From 2018 to 2020, satisfaction levels in relation to specialist resources were very high. The proportion of Scholars reporting that they 'Definitely' or 'Mostly' had access to the specialist resources that they needed never dropped below 90%. However, the proportion of Scholars answering 'Definitely' or 'Mostly' fell dramatically in 2021, dropping to 83%. This can likely be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented Scholars from accessing labs and other specialised equipment. By 2022, scores recovered to pre-pandemic levels, and 90% of Scholars reported that they 'Definitely' or 'Mostly' agreed with the statement.

Figure 32 – I have the specialist resources I need for my research
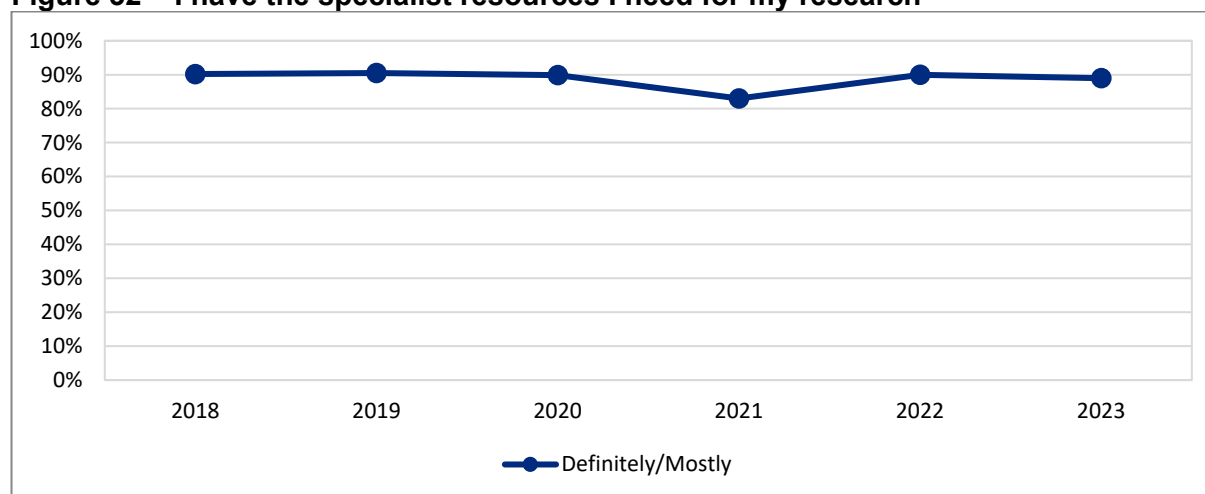

Source: Scholar Experience Survey

Other CSC Engagement

Introduction

In addition to the CSC Development Training Programme, the CSC also offers Scholars and Alumni a variety of other resources through the Alumni and Engagement teams. These other forms of engagement consist of an array of networking, learning, and career development resources across the CSC community. The CSC provides opportunities for Scholars and Alumni to network with each other through the Regional Networks during their Scholarship, and previously through the CSC Knowledge Hubs and social media groups on Facebook and LinkedIn during and after their awards, as do in-country Alumni Events post-Scholarship. The CSC Knowledge Hubs also provide Scholars and Alumni with opportunities to learn from each other, as do Alumni 'Development in Action' Webinars, the Best Journal Article Prize (BJAP), and Common Knowledge (the CSC Alumni magazine). Finally, Alumni are provided a wide range of career development resources (in addition to those provided by the Development Training Programme) as through the Alumni Resources part of the CSC website, including resources to support job seeking and a list of external funding opportunities that Alumni can apply for.

Figure 33 – Other CSC Engagement
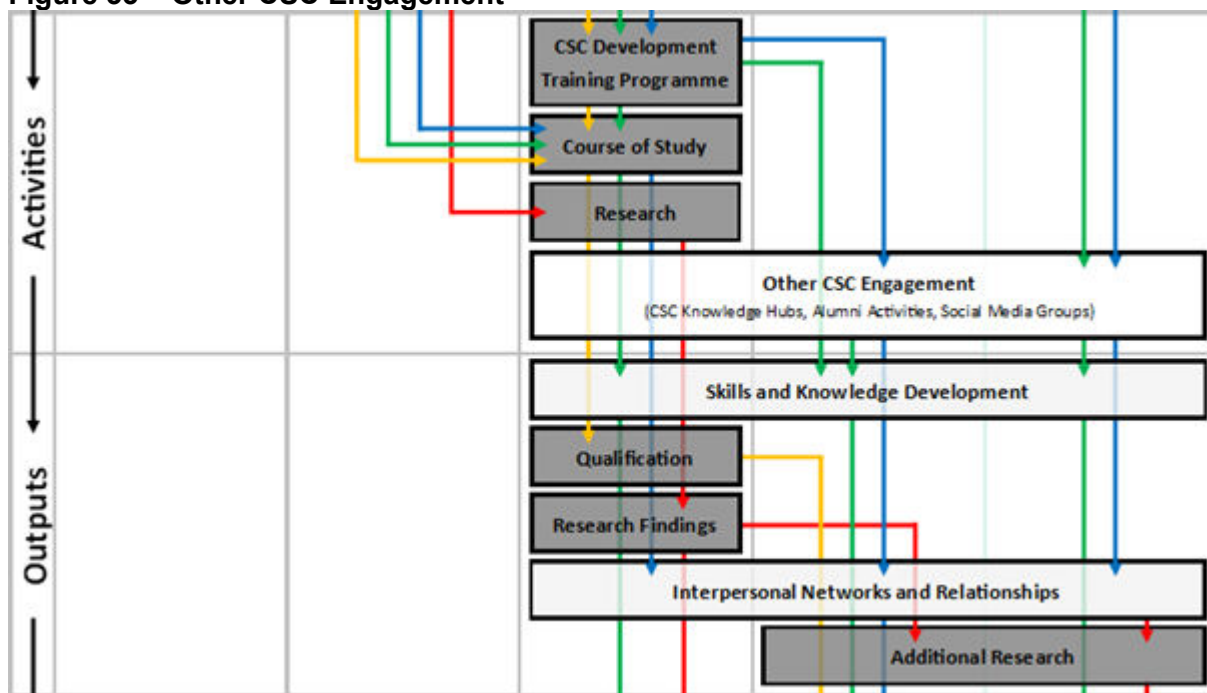
FROM: Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, CSC Development Training Programme
INTO: Skills and Knowledge Development, Interpersonal Networks and Relationships

It is assumed that Scholars and Alumni remain engaged and active participants in the CSC Community. This is checked through the frequent monitoring of engagement levels and by regularly soliciting feedback from Scholars and Alumni.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Alumni Volunteerism (event speakers, coordinators)	British Council Summary Report on Engagement (yearly)
Scholar Experience Survey	Review of Alumni Engagement Activity (yearly)
Knowledge Hub Engagement	Review of Development Training Programme (yearly)
Knowledge Hub Membership	
Post-event Feedback Surveys	Scholar and Alumni Engagement Strategy Reports to Commission (three times yearly)
Post-training Feedback Surveys	
Scholar and Alumni Registration and Attendance Data	
Webpage Impressions	

Analysis

As part of their engagement activities, the CSC's Alumni Team offer webinars under the Development in Action series. This monthly webinar series gives Commonwealth Alumni the opportunity to both present on the work that they are doing and its contribution to sustainable development, as well as to learn from other alumni about the research and actions they are taking. From December 2022 to November 2023, 612 Commonwealth Alumni attended at least one of these webinars with hundreds more viewing the recordings afterwards. Attendees are asked to complete an evaluation survey to reflect on the content of the webinars and measure the success of the programme. Overall feedback was very positive; of those who responded, 100% indicated that they would attend another Development in Action webinar in the future. Furthermore, 95% of attendees indicated that they had learned something new either to a 'Large' (53%) or a 'Moderate' (42%) extent.

The CSC also runs a mentoring programme which pairs new Commonwealth Scholars with Commonwealth Alumni working in a related field of work to provide advice and guidance during their Scholarship.[41] Since its creation the programme has been very popular, and in 2022-23 there were 174 mentor-mentee pairs. Mentees have reflected positively on the value of the programme to their career development, with one Mentee commenting:

> 'I'm finding the CSC Mentoring Programme very essential for my academic and personal development. Apart from discussing academic matters, my Mentor and I often discuss career and professional development matters, set goals, and constantly evaluate them.'[42]

Part Two: Summary and Analysis

The components featured in the Activities section of the Theory of Change largely revolve around things that take place during the Scholarship, with the exception of alumni activities which continue to provide opportunities for Scholarship recipients to learn and network after their studies.

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[41] See https://cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/alumni/mentoring-programme/. Last accessed 23/08/2024.
[42] Ibid.

CSC Development Training Programme

The evaluation data that the CSC holds in relation to its Development Training Programme suggests a generally very positive view of the sessions that are offered, with Scholars indicating that the quality of the sessions was high and that the training met or exceeded their expectations. However, compared to other elements of work, the CSC has a limited amount of evaluation data in this area. The Theory of Change specifically links the training offered to Scholars to the application of skills and knowledge they learn through this training to alumni's post-graduate careers. Whilst the data collected demonstrates the quality of the training, the CSC does not currently hold evidence that demonstrates a link between these sessions and post-Scholarship development impacts. Therefore, whilst the initial results are encouraging, further investigation and evidence is needed targeted towards this component of the Theory of Change.

Course of Study

In relation to the Course of Study, the data collected indicates that the vast majority of Scholars hold a positive view of their UK study experience. Across all survey years there is robust evidence to demonstrate that Scholars felt that the academic experience met their expectations and fulfilled the purpose for which they took up the Scholarship. Scholars also consistently rated the overall standard of their academic experience very highly.

The evidence in this section does clearly indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic had a measurable impact on the quality of the Scholar's academic experience; across nearly all metrics, satisfaction scores fell in 2020 and 2021 when the pandemic was at its peak. It is worth noting that the Theory of Change stipulates the assumption that the course of study will be offered as planned, and the global pandemic caused major disruption to the delivery of many courses. However, as the pandemic receded satisfaction scores returned to their pre-pandemic levels suggesting that under normal circumstances the Course of Study is delivering as postulated by the Theory of Change.

Given that this section focuses on Scholars' on-award study experience, there is no equivalent Counterfactual cohort to compare to for metrics in this section. The evidence in this section is therefore not complemented by a comparable control condition.

Research

The evidence collected in relation to the Research section primarily focusses on the support that Scholar's received whilst conducting their research. There is strong evidence to suggest that the vast majority of Scholars were happy with the scope and quality of the support that they received with respect to their research activities. Respondents provided positive feedback both in relation to the skills and knowledge of their supervisor, and their access to the specialist resources they needed for their research. However, the nature of the evidence that the CSC collects in relation to this measure means that there is no equivalent Counterfactual cohort against whom the Scholars can be compared.

Other Engagement Activities

Finally, the evidence held by the CSC suggests a very positive view of the other engagement activities offered by the Commission. In particular, there is strong evidence to suggest that the Development in Action programme is well-received by participants. However, the lack of longitudinal data in this area is a weakness of the analysis, and the evidence for this component in the Theory of Change is therefore relatively weak compared to other areas.

Summary

In summary, there is strong evidence to indicate that Course of Study and Research components the Activities section of the Theory of Change are delivered as expected and to a high quality. The impact of

the Covid-19 pandemic further underscores that under normal circumstances these components are operating as intended.

With respect to the Development Training Programme and Other Engagement Activities, the evidence is weaker. The evidence that does exist suggests that these components are operating as intended, and that the training and engagement opportunities being provided by the CSC are generally well-received and are of high-quality, however the collection of additional data would help to boost the robustness of this evidence. There is also a need to investigate the longer-term effect that these Activities have on the development of skills and interpersonal networks of Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni, as there is minimal data collected on the extent to which alumni make use of these Activities over the course of their careers.

Part Three: Outputs

The Outputs components of the Theory of Change are the immediate results of the activities that occurred during the intervention, for example Scholars gaining a qualification from their Course of Study, or the Research Findings created from a Scholar's Research. These immediate Outputs from the Activities stage create the opportunity for and lead to subsequent short and medium term Outcomes from the Commonwealth Scholarship programme. Thus, these Outputs should be seen both as a product of the programme, and as a steppingstone to further results.

Skills and Knowledge Development

Introduction

The development of Scholars' Skills and Knowledge is one of the four primary outputs of the Commonwealth Scholarships programme. This is achieved through the Scholars' Course of Study, the CSC Development Training Programme, as well as through participation in other CSC Engagement activities. Taken together, Scholars develop both subject matter expertise and soft skills that enable them to better navigate the complicated terrain of sustainable development.

Figure 34 – Skills and Knowledge Development
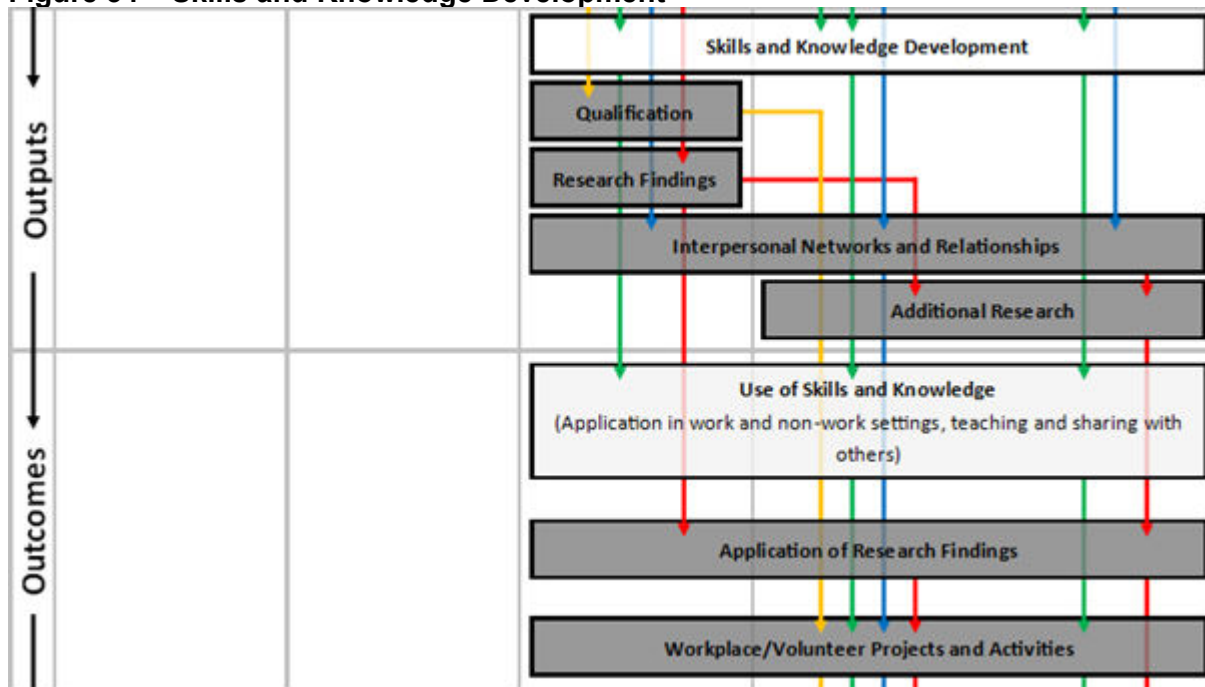
FROM: CSC Development Training Programme, Course of Study, Other CSC Engagement
INTO: Use of Skills and Knowledge

It is assumed that Scholars will take advantage of the additional training opportunities offered by the CSC during and after their Scholarship, something that is routinely monitored by the CSC through engagement levels and Scholar feedback, as well as reports from University Partners about Scholar progress. A majority of Scholars participate in the Online Development Module (including Distance Learners), where the engagement level is consistently high, while the vast majority of Scholars complete their studies within the expected timeframe and obtain their qualification.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Scholar Experience Survey	Commission Papers
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	Common Knowledge
Longitudinal Counterfactual Follow-up Survey	
Post-training Feedback Surveys	
Scholar Annual Reports	

Analysis

This section explores the extent to which Commonwealth Scholarship developed or enhanced their knowledge or skills in areas including research and research ethics; critical thinking and technical skills; leadership and decision-making skills; and information management. This information is all sourced from the Longitudinal Alumni Survey and is asked only of respondents in their year two survey, the first data collection point after the completion of their studies.

When asked about the extent to which the recipients perceived change in their knowledge and skills development in research techniques, four-fifths reported a 'Substantial change', with an additional one-fifth reporting a 'Moderate change', as shown in Figure 35 (below). This result is noteworthy as it suggests virtually all (97%) Scholars experienced a moderate or substantial change in their skills in this area. This evidence supports the Theory of Change by evidencing a link between the skills acquired on award and the post-award work that Commonwealth Alumni go on to conduct.

**Figure 35 – Knowledge of research techniques**
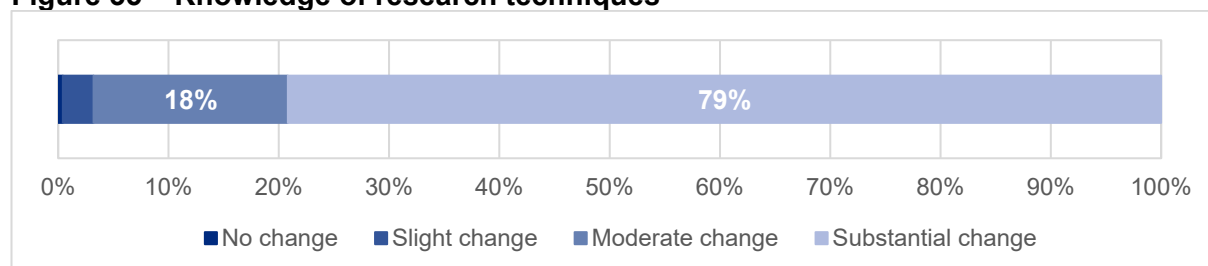
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Alumni were also asked to rate the extent to which the Commonwealth Scholarship developed their knowledge of other research in their field. The acquisition of specialist subject knowledge is one of the clearest direct outcomes of the Scholarship programme. Seven-tenths reported that they had realised a 'Substantial change', while an additional quarter reported a 'Moderate change'. This suggests that the Course of Study successfully equipped nearly all Scholars with new knowledge which can then be applied in their post-award careers. While a small handful (11) of respondents reported that they had experienced 'No change' in this area, it is important to note that they constitute just 1% of the Alumni who responded to this question and therefore these responses are clear outliers.

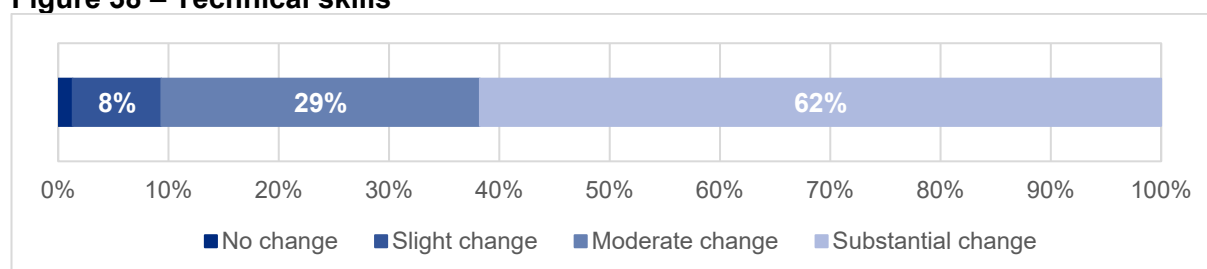**Figure 36 – Knowledge of other research in the field**
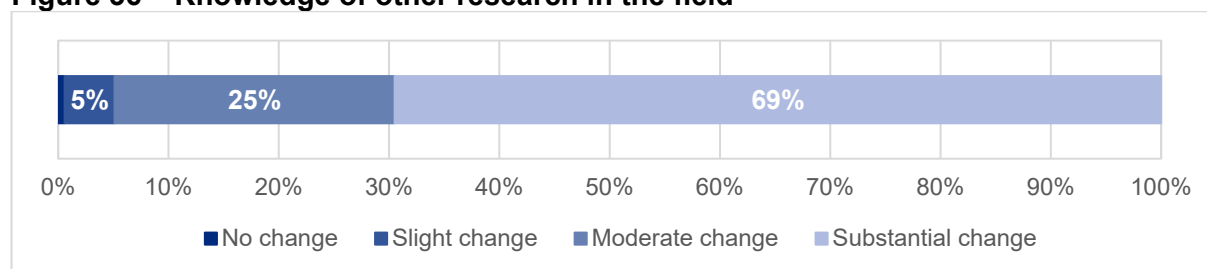
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Alumni were also asked to report on the extent to which the Scholarship changed or enhanced their critical thinking skills. This question is intended to quantify the impact of the Scholarship on the methods and approaches employed by Scholars when problem-solving. When asked about the development in their critical thinking skills, four-fifths of respondents reported a 'Substantial change' with an additional tenth reporting a 'Moderate change' to these skills. No respondents reported that they had experienced 'No change' to their critical thinking skills. This is an encouraging result, as it indicates that the teaching received by Scholars had a noticeable impact on their approach to problem-solving.

Figure 37 – Critical thinking skills
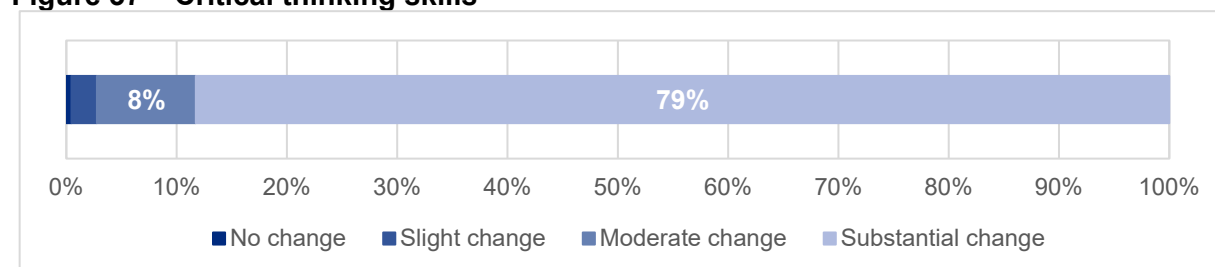
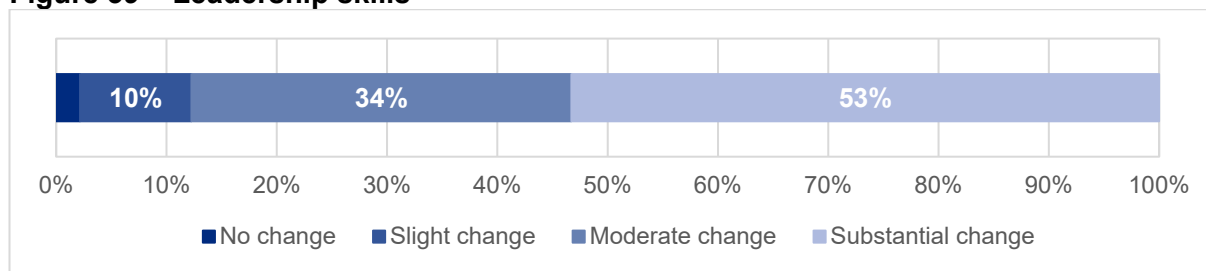Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Respondents also reported on changes or enhancements in their technical skills. Whilst the above questions assessed the development of soft skills, this question focussed more specifically on the development of specialist hard skills through the Scholarship. In response to this question, just over three-fifths of Alumni reported a 'Substantial change' and just under one-third reported a 'Moderate change'. A slightly lower proportion of Respondents reported a 'Substantial' change in this area as compared to the soft skills discussed above; this is perhaps unsurprising, given that the development of hard skills is much more programme-specific than the general development of critical thinking and research skills.

Figure 38 – Technical skills

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Returning to the development of soft skills, Alumni were asked to report on changes or enhancements in their leadership skills. Just over one-half of respondents reported a 'Substantial change' in their leadership skills, while one-third reported a 'Moderate change'. A further 8% reported 'Slight change' in this area. Whilst the majority of Alumni indicated that their leadership skills had been substantially enhanced by the Scholarship, responses to this question were slightly softer than those seen above.

Figure 39 – Leadership skills

| 10% | 34% | 53% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ No change ■ Slight change ■ Moderate change ■ Substantial change

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Alumni were also asked to report on the extent to which the Scholarship changed or enhanced their ability to disseminate knowledge. This is a measure of alumni's confidence in their ability to communicate information clearly and effectively. Similar to knowledge of other research in their field, seven-tenths of survey respondents reported a 'Substantial' change to their capacity to disseminate knowledge, while one-quarter reported a 'Moderate change'. Just 5% of respondents reported a 'Slight' change (4%) or 'No change' (1%). This indicates that for the vast majority of Scholars, they graduate with newfound specialist knowledge and confidence in their ability to disseminate that knowledge.

Figure 40 – Capacity to disseminate knowledge

| 4% | 25% | 70% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ No change ■ Slight change ■ Moderate change ■ Substantial change
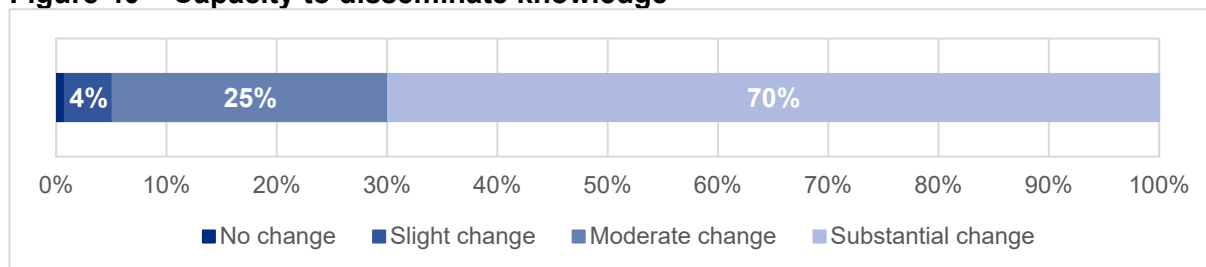
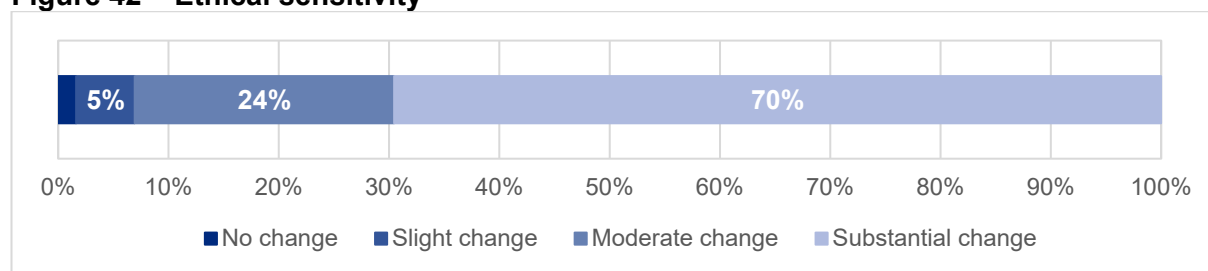Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Following from this, Scholars were asked to report on the level of change they experienced in their capacity to influence decisions. This relates closely to the question above regarding the development of leadership skills. It is intended to assess Scholars' preparedness to use their skills and knowledge to confidently push for positive change in their workplaces. Regarding the capacity to influence decisions, six-tenths reported a 'Substantial change' while three-tenths reported a 'Moderate change'. A further 7% reported 'Slight' change, and only 1% reported 'No change'.

Figure 41 – Capacity to influence decisions

| 7% | 31% | 61% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ No change ■ Slight change ■ Moderate change ■ Substantial change
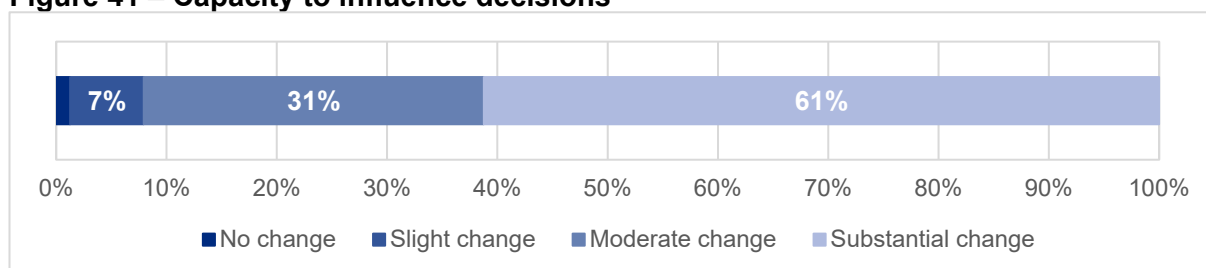
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Finally, Scholars were asked to report on the extent to which their Commonwealth Scholarship developed or enhanced their knowledge and skills in relation to ethical sensitivity. In response to this question, seven-tenths of respondents confirmed a 'Substantial change', while just under one-quarter reported a 'Moderate change'. This indicates that for the vast majority of alumni, the Scholarship left them feeling more confident in their ability to navigate ethical issues.

Figure 42 – Ethical sensitivity

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey 2018-2023

Overall, a strong majority respondents perceived a 'Substantial' or 'Moderate' change in their knowledge and skills in research ethics, critical thinking and technical skills, leadership and decision-making skills, and knowledge sharing. Conversely, under 2% of the total respondents reported 'No change' to these different areas indicating consistent and reliable development of skills and knowledge by recipients of Commonwealth Scholarships.
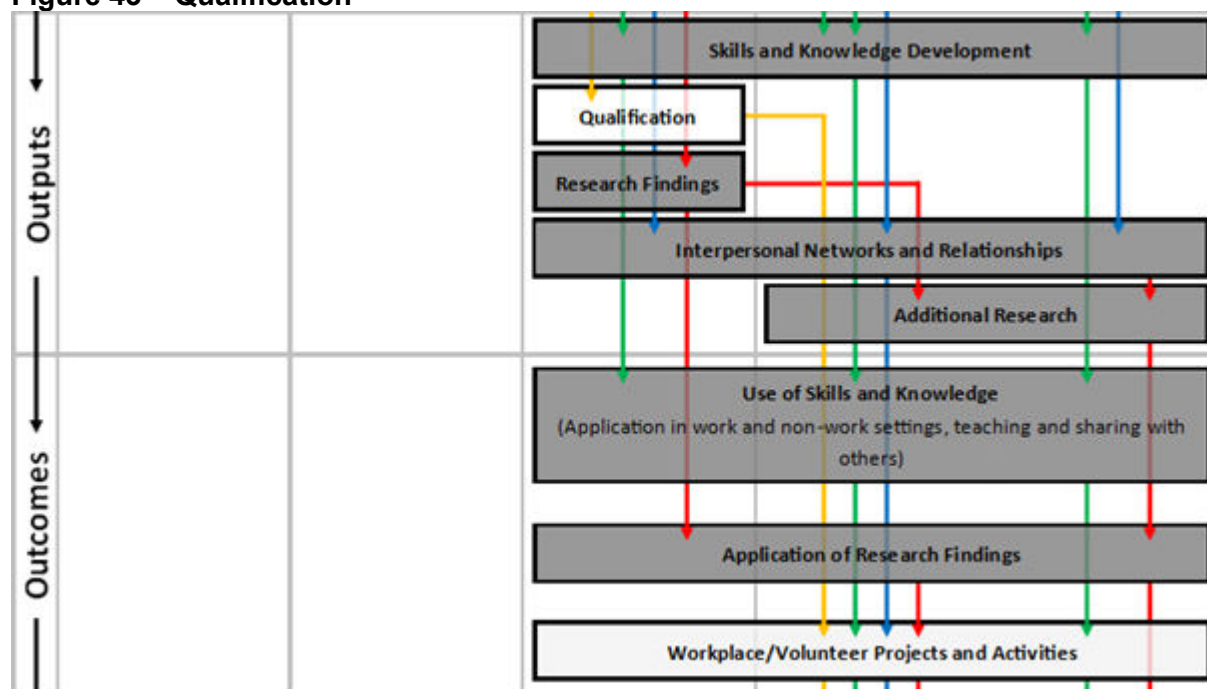
Qualification

Introduction

The Qualification earned by Scholars upon the completion of their studies is the second of the four primary outputs, and the most formal of the outputs from the Commonwealth Scholarship programme. Depending on their programme, Scholars receive either a Master's or Doctoral degree from their institution as a result of the skills and knowledge that they have learned with the support of their Scholarship.[43] While the degree itself is symbolic of the learning, personal development, and research that they would have done during their studies, Scholars have reported that the Qualification can also provide them with a higher level of respectability or authority among peers and co-workers, which gives Scholars a greater ability to advocate for and implement change in their workplace and communities.

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[43] The one exception is Distance Learning Scholars who can choose to exit their programme at an earlier stage with a different qualification such as a Post Graduate Diploma or Certificate if they feel this best meets their career aspirations.

Figure 43 – Qualification

FROM: Course of Study
INTO: Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities

As noted previously, it is assumed that Scholars will complete their degree programme, be awarded the relevant qualification, and return to relevant employment in order to apply their skills. The CSC monitors Scholars' completion of their programmes through qualification reports provided by University Partners, while it also collects data on post-scholarship employment through the Longitudinal Alumni Survey.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Longitudinal Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Qualifications Reports | Evaluation and Monitoring Report to Commission (yearly) |

Analysis

With regards to the Qualification section of the Theory of Change, completion rates are the most direct measure of success. While the CSC does not have completion data for all of its awards stretching back to 1960, it does hold this information for most.

Completion rates – PhD Scholars

As per the review of the Doctoral Scholarship published in 2017, looking at those PhD Scholars for whom the CSC does have completion data, almost nine-tenths (87%) of PhD Scholars completed their studies and successfully obtained a doctorate, while only a small fraction (3%) were unsuccessful at completing their degree. The remaining Scholars either obtained a lower qualification or the results are still outstanding.[44]

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[44] Day et al, 2017: 26-27.

Completion rates – Distance Learners

On average, three-fifths (59%) of Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholars successfully exit the programme with a Master's degree (based on the period 2002-2016).[45] However, in addition to the provision for part-time study, the Distance Learning scheme is unique among the CSC's Scholarship programmes in that it allows Scholars the option to exit the programme with a certificate or diploma rather than the full degree. In these instances, the Scholar's funding ends, and they are recorded as having successfully completed the programme with a lower qualification. For the period 2002-2016 this route was chosen by approximately one-sixth (16%) of Scholars.[46]

Research Findings

Introduction

The third primary output from the Commonwealth Scholarship programme is from Scholars' research activities during their Scholarship, namely the Research Findings that they produce. These findings are the product of the research plan included in their application for a Commonwealth Scholarship and any adjustments made over the course of their research and consultations with their supervisor. The findings are published in the form of their dissertation, and in some cases also in journal articles. However, it is important to recognise that the Research Findings are also an intermediate step between Scholars' studies and both Additional Research and the practical Application of their Research Findings.

Figure 44 – Research Findings
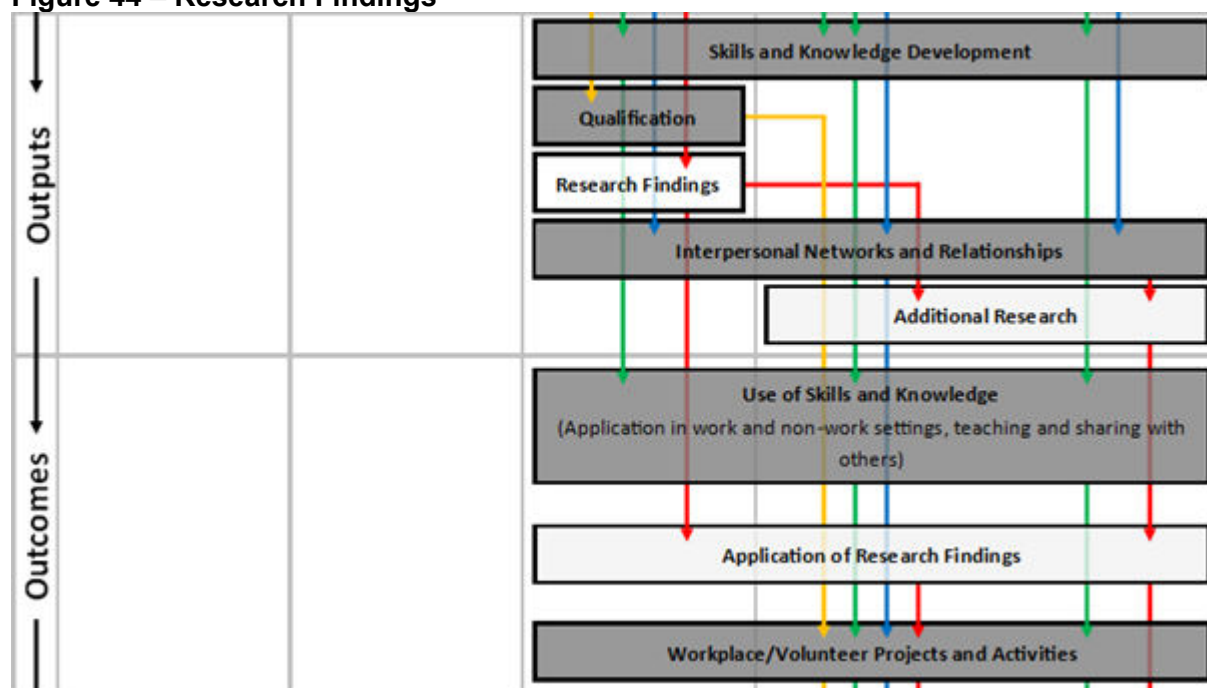
FROM: Research
INTO: Additional Research, Application of Research Findings

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[45] Harrison et al, 2022: 73-74.
[46] Ibid.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Best Journal Article Prize Applications	Alumni and Evaluation Case Studies
Dissertation Details	Best Journal Article Prize Results
Interviews with Alumni	Common Knowledge
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	
Scholar Annual Reports	
Supervisor Annual Reports	

Analysis

Thinking of the two years immediately prior to the survey, respondents were asked to report how often their research activities had been directly related to work that they conducted during the Commonwealth Scholarship. This question was asked from the two-year mark onwards. At year two, the vast majority of Alumni (88%) reported that their work was directly related to their Scholarship 'All the time' or 'Often'. By contrast, only 12% reported that their work was 'Rarely' or 'Never' related to their Scholarship. Results remained consistent across the follow-up period, and the proportion of Scholars answering 'All the time' or 'Often' never dropped below 85%.

Figure 45 – In the last two years, about how often have your academic activities been directly related to work you conducted during your Commonwealth Scholarship?
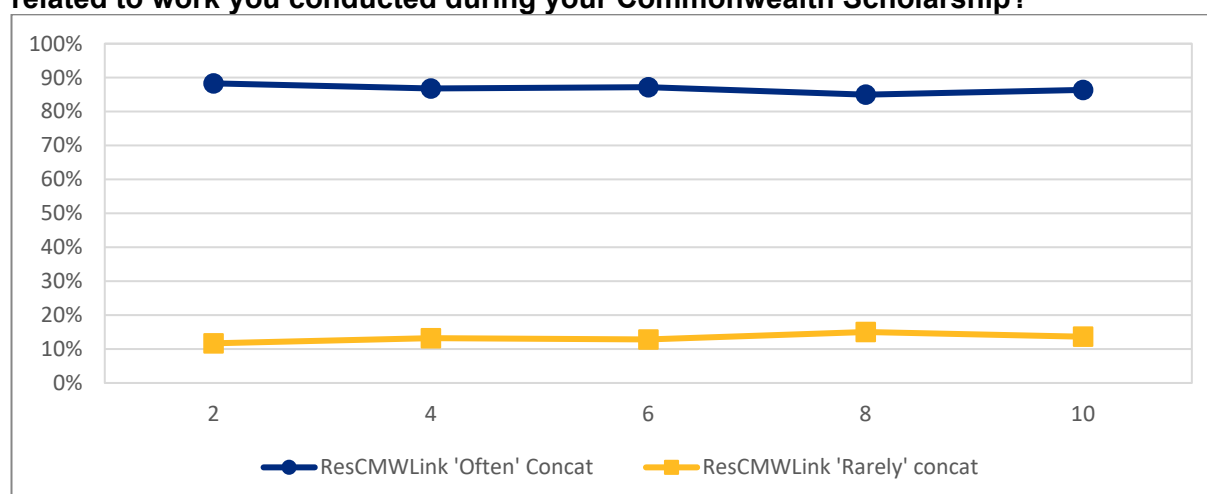

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Interpersonal Networks and Relationships

Introduction

The fourth and final primary output from the Commonwealth Scholarship programme is the Interpersonal Networks and Relationships that have been made and strengthened during Scholars' study periods. Scholars build these networks and relationships with a number of other parties including other Commonwealth Scholars, fellow students, university lecturers and researchers, and members of the UK general public during their Scholarships, all of whom are potential collaborators for Additional Research or Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities. Additionally, the CSC seeks to give Scholars an opportunity to network with a wider audience through events, including UK Parliamentarians, representatives of High Commissions, as well as members of professional bodies. It also seeks to

involve Scholars in events hosted by partner organisations in order to maximise and diversify their networking opportunities.

Figure 46 – Interpersonal Networks and Relationships
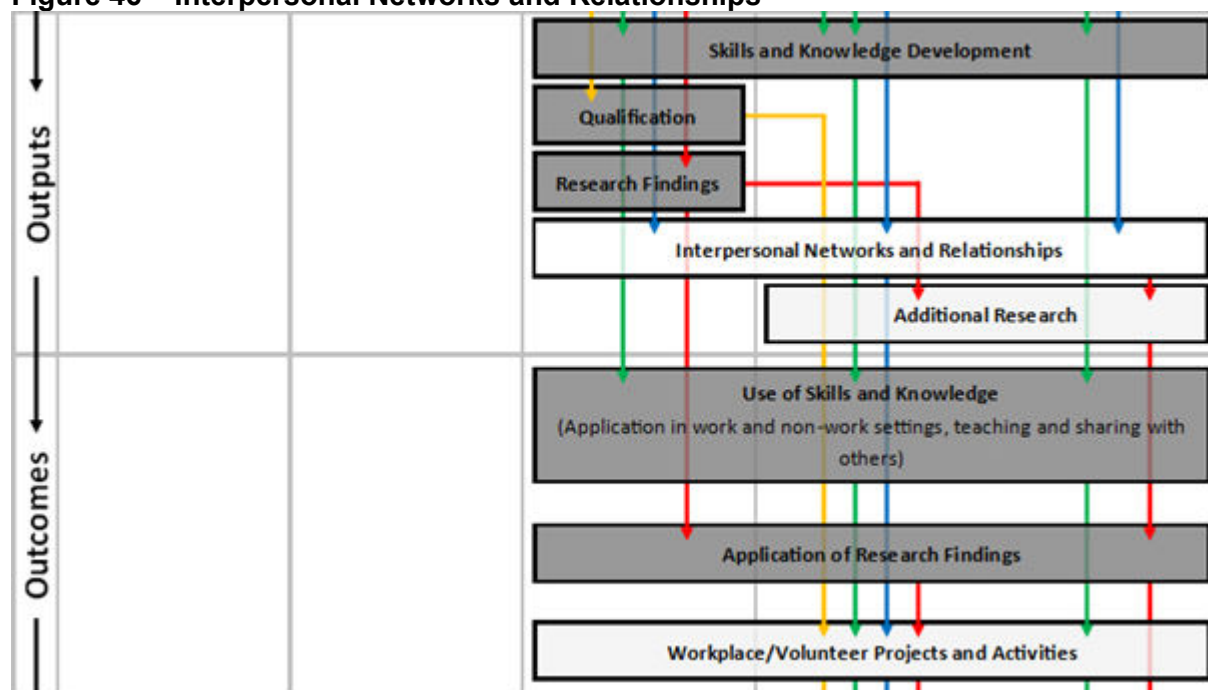
FROM: [CSC Development Training Programme], Course of Study, Other CSC Engagement
INTO: Additional Research, Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities

The networks and relationships Scholars build with individuals and organisations located in the United Kingdom are also major contributors to the soft power outcomes of Commonwealth Scholarships through the strengthening of bilateral relationships between the United Kingdom and Scholars' home countries. These bilateral relationships can also help form or strengthen partnerships between institutions or organisations in the United Kingdom and Scholars' home countries, as well as between the countries of the Commonwealth.

It is assumed that Scholars will be willing and able to maintain these networks and relationships over time. Based on the responses provided to the Longitudinal Alumni Survey, it appears that this is generally the case. In some cases, there is some decline in the frequency with which they are in touch with particular types of contact, but on the whole the data suggests that Scholars still largely maintain these networks.

| Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Scholar Experience Survey	Alumni and Evaluation Case Studies
Interviews with Alumni	Commonwealth Scholarships and Soft Power Outcomes (2020)
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	
Longitudinal Baseline Survey	Building Bridges: The Commonwealth Split-Site Doctoral Scholarship Programme 1998-2018 (2019)
Longitudinal Counterfactual Baseline Survey	
Longitudinal Counterfactual Follow-up Survey	

Analysis

This section examines the frequency of interactions reported by Scholarship recipients and the Counterfactual group with different types of contacts of interest that respondents may have cultivated. These graphs use combined proportions of the top-two responses to these questions ('All the time' and 'Often') in order to simplify the visualisation of the time-lapse analysis.

Professional Contacts

Almost half of the alumni (47%) interacted with professional contacts in the UK ('All the time' or 'Often') two years post-Scholarship, compared to 24% prior to the Scholarship, a 23% increase from the Baseline. Meanwhile, the Counterfactual group showed the opposite trend, reporting decrease in interaction with professional contacts in the UK by 12% from 62% at the Baseline to half of the respondents (50%) at 2-year period post application, further decreasing to 41% four years post application.
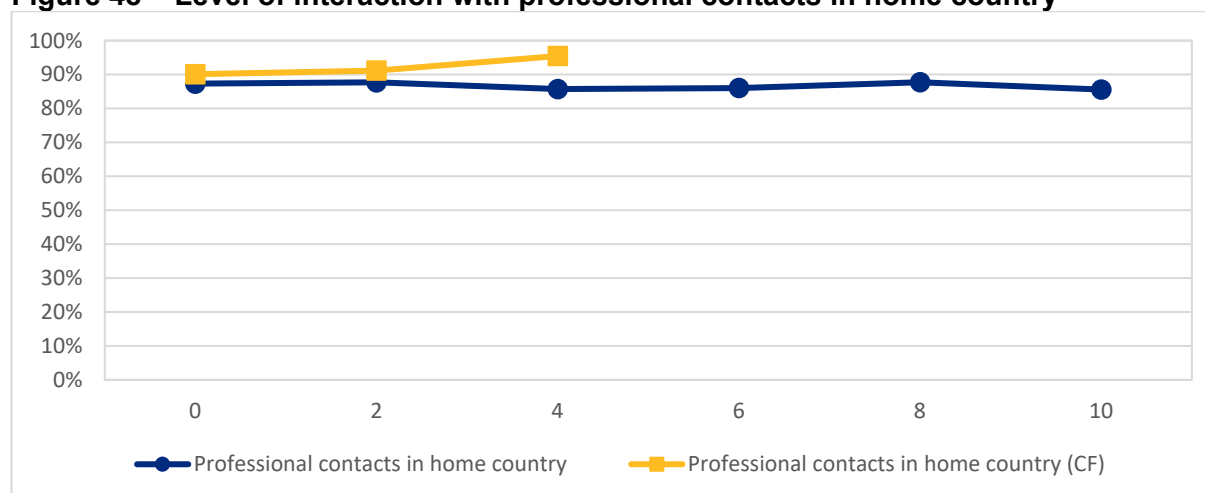
Figure 47 – Level of interaction with professional contacts in the UK
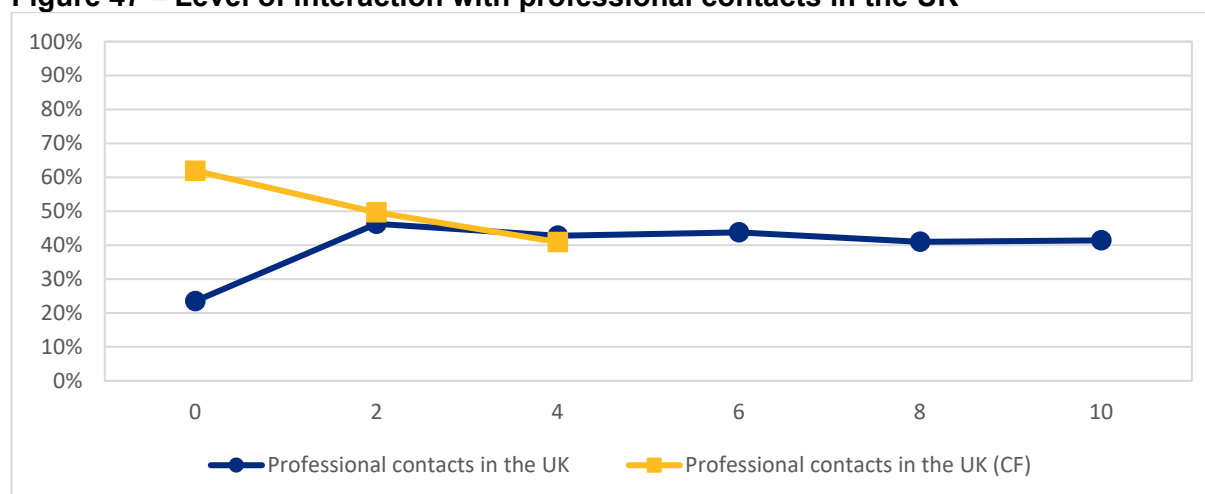
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

In comparison, after substantial increase two years post award, the alumni group interaction with professional contacts in the UK remained relatively stable with only slight decrease in the four-year period to 43% and ultimately to 41% at 10-year survey period. This suggests that the Scholarship had substantial influence on developing professional contacts in the UK immediately after the award and supported maintaining them in the following years compared to the counterfactual group where there was a steep decline in acquiring and maintaining UK professional contacts two and four years after the application.

Alternatively, the level of interaction ('All the time' or 'Often') of Scholarship recipients with professional contacts in their home country remained stable, with little variation from the Baseline through to the ten-year period. The counterfactual group, on the other hand, reported slight increases in the interactions with professional contacts in their home country from the initial 90% at the Baseline to 91% at the two-year period and 95% at the four-year period post-application.

Figure 48 – Level of interaction with professional contacts in home country

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

This suggests that the Scholarship resulted in a slightly lower frequency of contact with professional contacts in recipients' home country after the award compared to the Counterfactual group. This could be due to the impact of Scholars moving to their country of study, while the applicants who did not receive a Scholarship were more likely to remain in their home country and have more opportunity to maintain or increase their local professional contacts.

However, when it comes to the frequency of interaction ('All the time' or 'Often') with professional contacts outside both the UK and home country, Scholarship recipients saw this increase considerably from 37% at the Baseline before the award to 53% at two-year period post-award and continued to increase steadily to 65% at the eight-year point, dropping slightly to 63% ten years after the Scholarship.

Figure 49 – Level of interaction with professional contacts outside the UK and home country
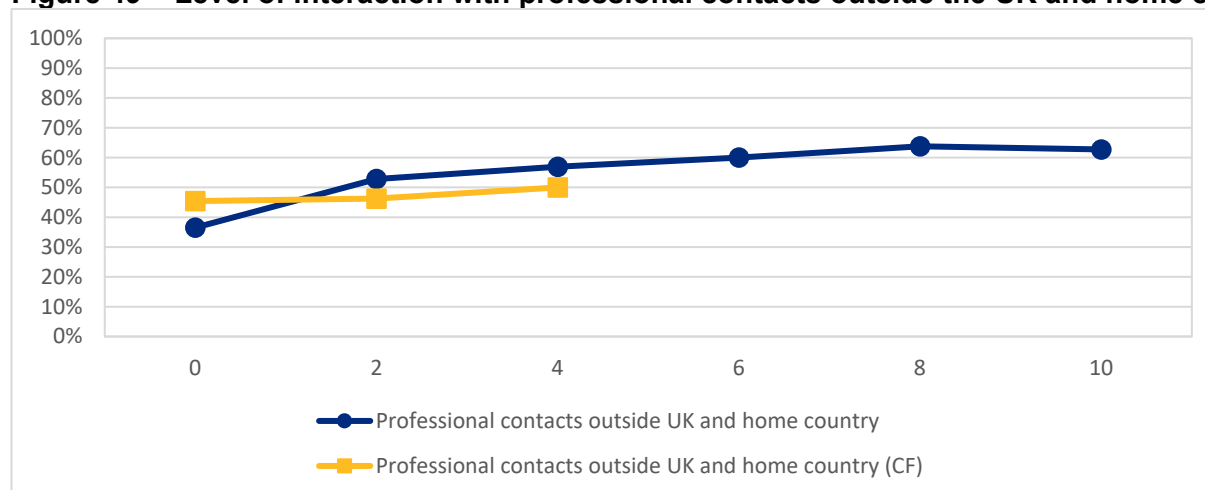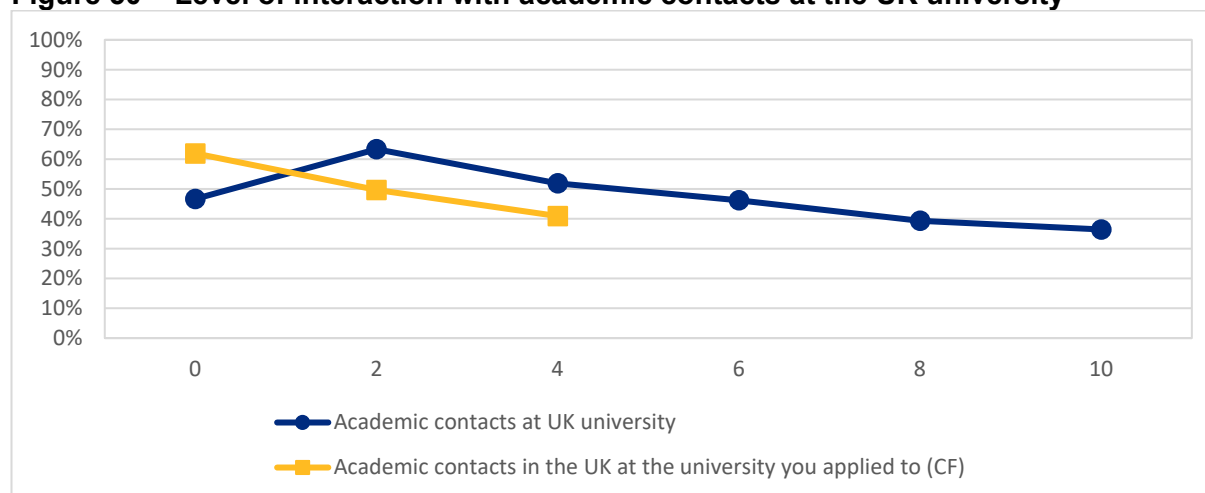

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

For the Counterfactual group however, there was a negligible increase of 1% in the frequency of interaction with their professional contacts outside the UK and their home country two years after their application, with a greater increase of 4% to 50% four years after their application. This result indicates that the Scholarship helped to increase level of interaction between recipients and professional contacts outside of the UK and their home country as compared to Counterfactual group.

Academic Contacts

With respect to academic contacts at the UK university of application, for Scholarship recipients there was a steep increase in the proportion who said that they interacted ('All the time' or 'Often') with academic contacts at the UK university, increasing by 16%, from 47% at the Baseline to 63% at two years post-study. However, this initial rise gradually reversed in the following years, with slightly more than half (52%) respondents selecting these answers four years after the award, further decreasing to 46%, 39% and 36% in years six, eight and ten after the award respectively.

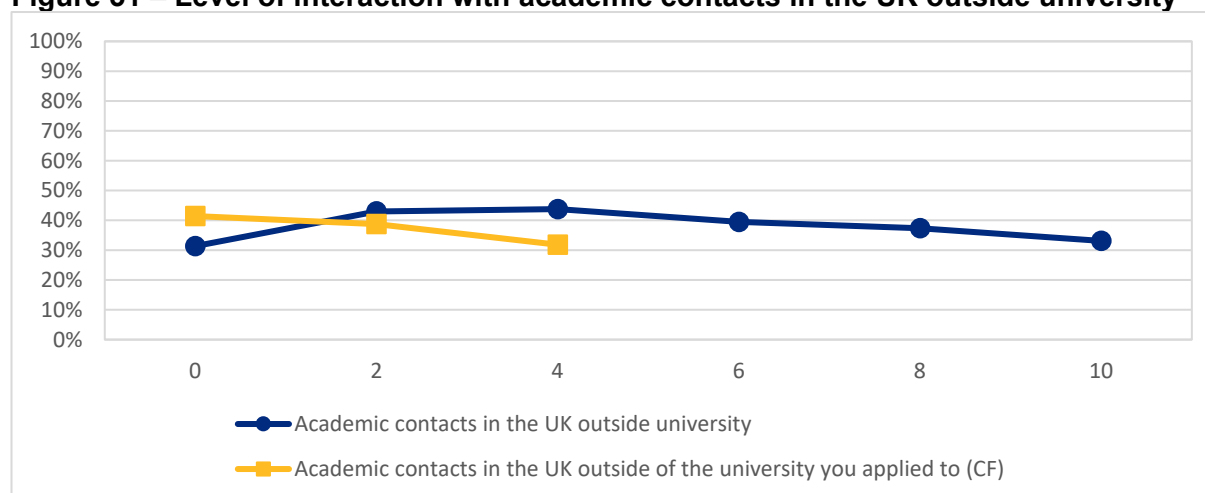**Figure 50 – Level of interaction with academic contacts at the UK university**

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

However, the Counterfactual group showed sharp decline in contacts with academics in the UK university after application, falling from 62% at the Baseline to 50% at the two-year period and 41% at the four-year period. This illustrates that the Scholarship award helped to substantially develop and strengthen interactions with academic contacts in the UK universities, although this increase does dissipate over time.

A similar trend can be seen in respondents' frequency of interactions ('All the time' or 'Often') with academic contacts in the UK outside of their university of study where there is a 12% increase in the alumni reporting interaction from application to two years after the award, from 31% to 43%, with further slight increase to 44% in year four, followed by gradual decline in the following years, ending with 33% of alumni reporting interaction with this group at ten year period.

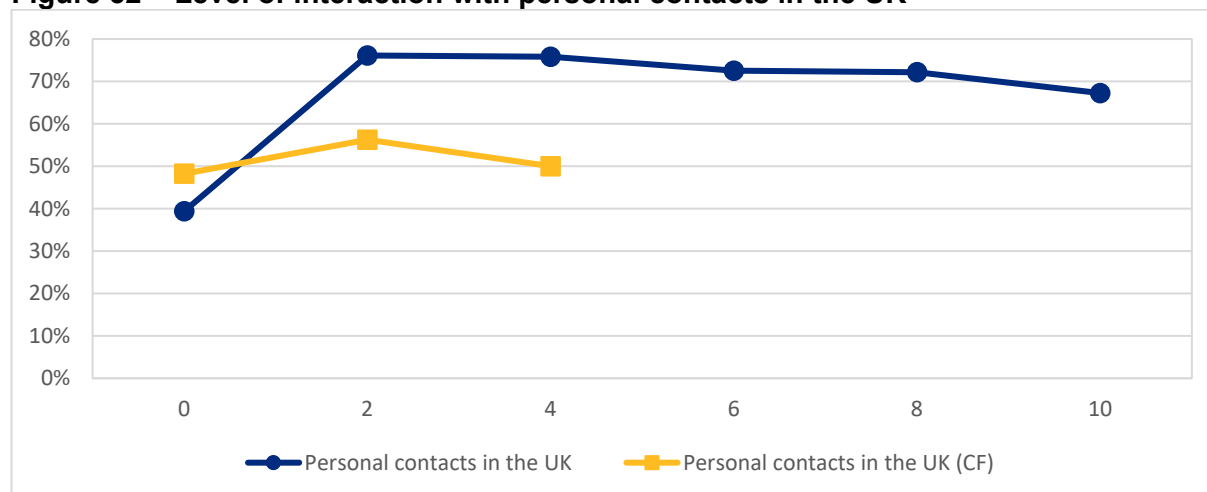**Figure 51 – Level of interaction with academic contacts in the UK outside university**

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

By comparison, the Counterfactual group showed a decline in the frequency of these types of interaction from 41% at the Baseline to 39% and 32% at the two-year and four-year follow-up points.

Personal Contacts

When it comes to the frequency of interactions with personal contacts in the United Kingdom, Scholarship recipients had substantial increase in the proportion reporting they interacted ('All the time' or 'Often') with these contacts from the Baseline, increased by 37% from 39% at the Baseline to 76% at the two-year follow-up point, and reduced only slightly in the following years, remaining considerably higher than the Baseline at the ten-year survey period at 67%.
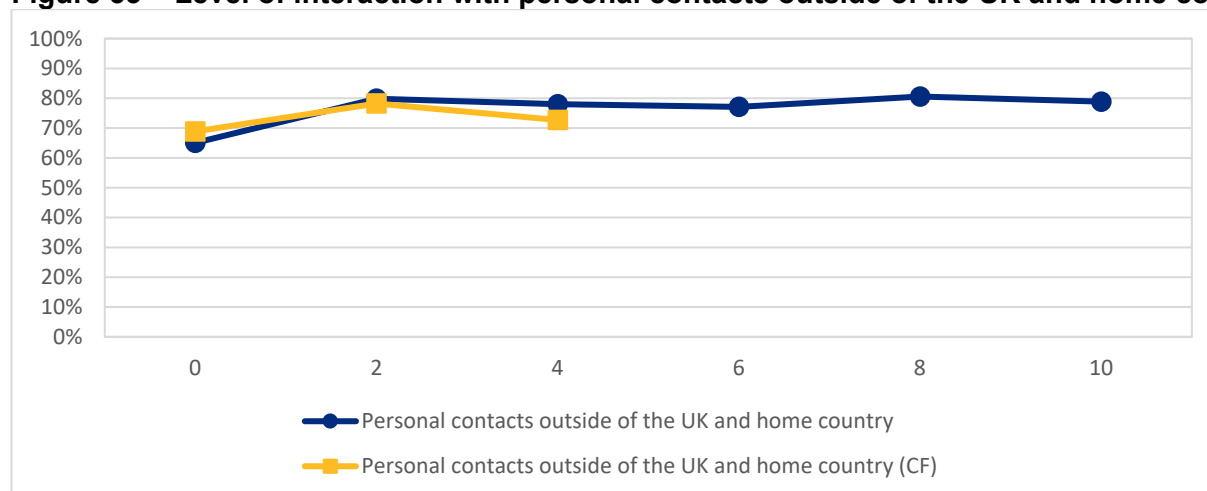
Figure 52 – Level of interaction with personal contacts in the UK

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

In comparison, the proportion of the Counterfactual group of respondents who reported interaction with personal contacts in the UK rose from 48% to 56% at the two-year period, with only half of respondents (50%) maintaining these interactions 'All the time' or 'Often' at the four-year point, 26% lower than reported by the Scholarship recipient group in the same period.

In contrast to the considerable difference between levels of interaction with personal contacts in the UK between the alumni and counterfactual group respondents, the level of interaction with personal contacts outside of the UK and home country ('All the time' or 'Often') were relatively similar for both groups across all survey periods. The Scholarship recipient group reported increase in these interactions from 65% at baseline to 80% at two-year survey period, remaining stable after ten-year period.
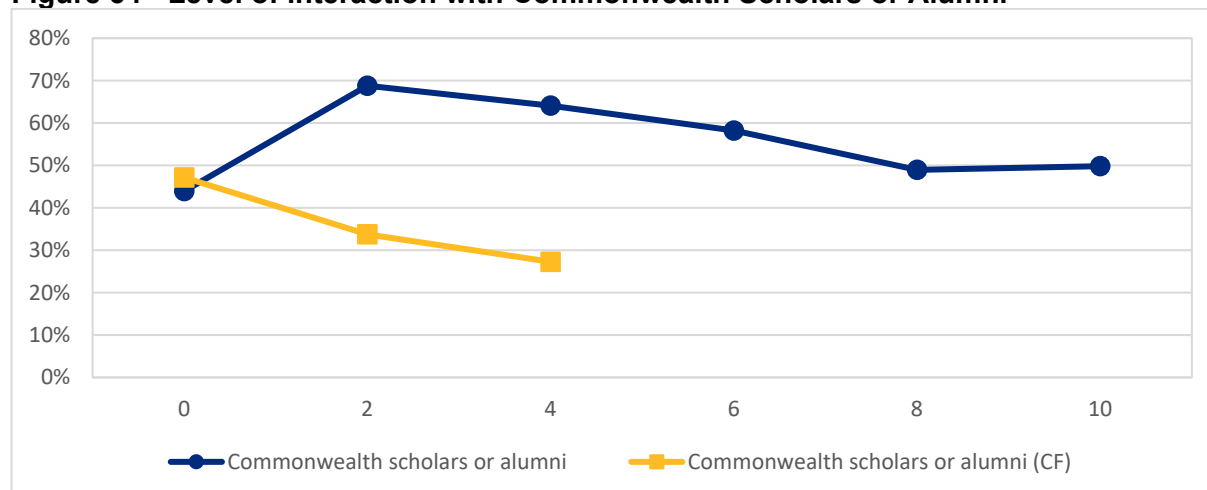
Figure 53 – Level of interaction with personal contacts outside of the UK and home country

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Similarly the proportion of the counterfactual group respondents reporting interacting with personal contacts outside of the UK and home country increased from 69% to 78% at two years, reducing to 73% at four-year survey period.

Contact with Commonwealth Scholars or Alumni

Finally, the level of interaction with Commonwealth Scholars or Alumni ('All the time' or 'Often') was reported by a similar proportion of Scholarship recipients and the Counterfactual group at the Baseline (44% and 47% respectively). Understandably, the level of interaction with Commonwealth Scholars or Alumni decreased after application in Counterfactual group while rising after the Baseline survey in the alumni group, reaching 69% at two-year survey period, and then decreasing gradually to 64% at year four, which is 37% higher than reported by the counterfactual group in the same period. Half of the alumni (50%) reported still frequently interacting with these groups at the ten-year point.

Figure 54 - Level of interaction with Commonwealth Scholars or Alumni

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Scholars were also given opportunity to provide additional comments about how they have made use of these networks in their professional or personal life, with 1,620 Scholars providing feedback. These comments were then coded by the theme or themes that were present in the text. Within these 1,620 comments, the most frequently mentioned themes were 'Networking' (14%) and 'Professional' (11%), followed by 'Receptiveness' and 'Alumni', each at 8%. Those who wrote about 'Networking' and 'Professional' focused primarily on how the Scholarship helped to establish professional contacts, and

how these have benefited and continue to benefit their career and growth. Many acknowledge that without the Scholarship they would not have these professional contacts and all support provided them.

For example, studying at Harper Adams University opened a new world of opportunity for Femi Adekoya who was able to connect and collaborate with like-minded colleagues who were also studying and working at the school. In his case study, Transforming Nigerian Agriculture through Practice, Advocacy, and Education, he says:

> 'I met my co-founder, this perfect I call a partner, because I was awarded CSC Scholarship to study in the UK. We have steered the agritech startup, Integrated Aerial Precision, into new heights with several awards such as the Eco-innovation in Technology Award, Orange Corner Innovation Fund Grand prize award by the Kingdom of Netherland (40,000 Euro Financial Aid), +1 Global Food Security Award (12,000 USD Grant) and many more.'[47]

Those who mentioned 'Receptiveness' revealed that the Scholarship helped them to become more open and respectful to other people's cultures and views and that it helped to broaden their intellectual and professional horizons as well as their worldview more generally. Some said that they learnt to view issues from different perspectives, acknowledging the experiences of others and learning from them, and opening their mindset as a result.

Respondents who commented on 'Alumni' related activities mentioned that they joined alumni associations which supported continuous learning, helped share information and discuss matters of importance in the relevant sector. They reflected that alumni networks helped to promote their publications and campaigns, supported them in designing strategic direction of their organisation, helped with mentoring other scholars, was a source for information on funding, etc.

One fifth of those who provided comments (19%) specified whether their experience was positive or negative. Most of these respondents (84%) indicated positive experience, with the rest (16%) reporting only limited or no effect of the Scholarship on their networking. Some said that interactions ceased when they left the UK, while others could not identify relevant topics for communication.

Additional Research

Introduction

Additional Research is an important follow-on activity from the Research Findings that Scholars have developed during their Scholarship. As research is an iterative process, there are almost always new questions or lines of inquiry that have emerged during the original research process that can be explored. This Additional Research can in turn lead to other Applications of Research Findings. However, it is important to realise that this Additional Research is dependent upon the research that was done during an Alumni's Scholarship and may not have taken place without that initial Research.

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[47] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2024a.

Figure 55 – Additional Research
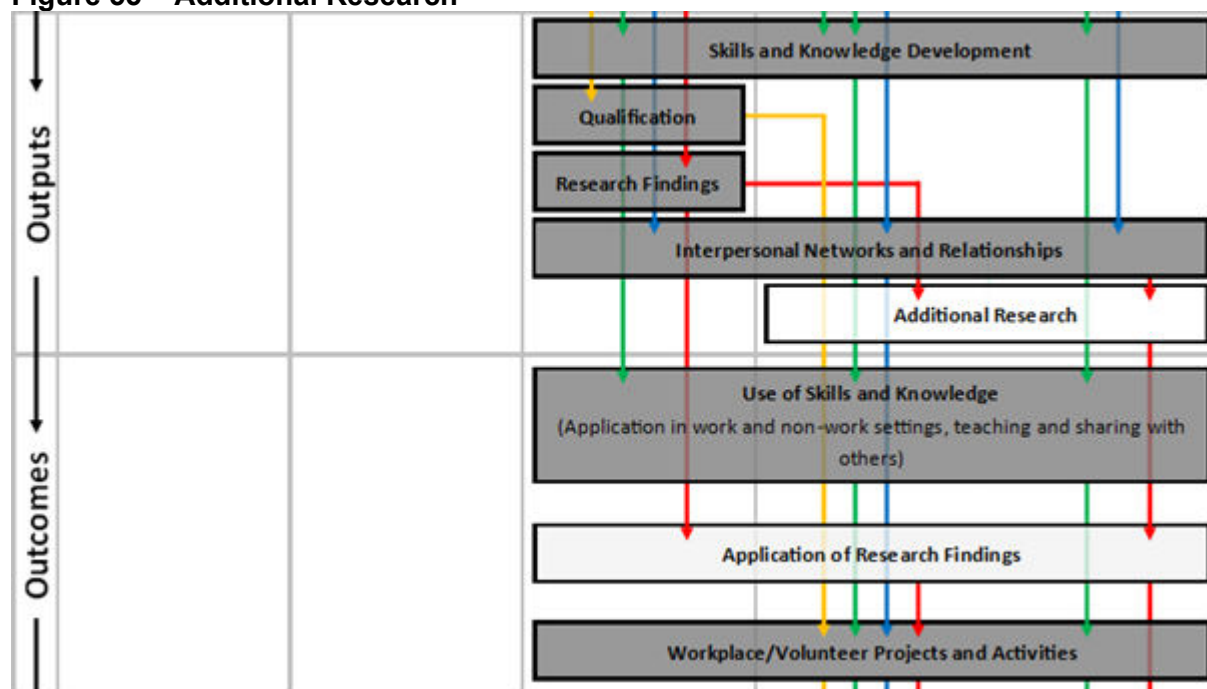
FROM: Research Findings, Interpersonal Networks and Relationships
INTO: Application of Research Findings

It is also important to note that a significant assumption related to the Additional Research component is that Scholars are able to secure funding to conduct the Additional Research after becoming Alumni. This has been reported to be an important barrier that Alumni have to overcome to continue their research. The CSC attempts to mitigate this issue through the provision of grant writing workshops in the Leaders for Development training programme, and the signposting of resources through the Alumni website. Alumni's ability to continue to conduct research is monitored through the Longitudinal Alumni Survey.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Best Journal Article Prize Applications	Alumni and Evaluation Case Studies
Interviews with Alumni	Best Journal Article Prize Results
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	Common Knowledge
Longitudinal Baseline Survey	Building Bridges: The Commonwealth Split-Site Doctoral Scholarship Programme 1998-2018 (2019)
Longitudinal Counterfactual Baseline Survey	Commonwealth Doctoral Scholarships 1960-2015 (2017)
Longitudinal Counterfactual Follow-up Survey	Successes and Complexities: the outcomes of UK Commonwealth Scholarships 1960-2012 (2016)
	Assessing Impact in Higher Education and Development (2012)

Analysis

This section explores whether the Recipients and Counterfactual groups have held responsibility for conducting academic research in their most recent employment. Overall, approximately three-fifths of

Scholarship recipients reported having held responsibility for conducting academic research in their most recent employment, with this figure remained consistent across all follow-up surveys. On the other hand, the proportion of the Counterfactual cohort conducting academic research declined from the Baseline to the two-year follow-up. Whilst there is a slight gain from year two to year four, it did not take the cohort back to the Counterfactual Baseline level. It is noteworthy that across all survey years with comparable data, a higher proportion of Counterfactual respondents than Alumni reported that they were responsible for conducting academic research. However, the chi-squared test of independence revealed that at both year two and year four, there was no significant association between the award of the Scholarship and the responsibility for conducting academic research.

Figure 56 – Responsibility for conducting academic research
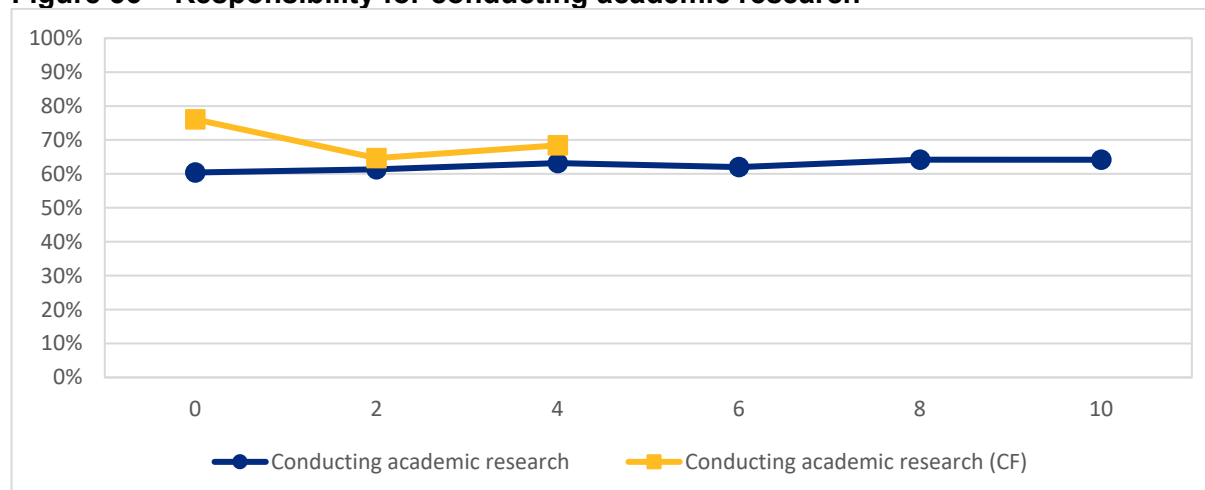
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Participants were asked how often in the last two years their academic activities were directly related to work they conducted during their Commonwealth Scholarship. This question is a key indicator, as it is illustrative of the extent to which Alumni's research careers build on the research that they conducted over the course of their studies. Figure 57 (below) demonstrates that across all follow-up periods, the proportion of Alumni reporting that their academic activity related to their Scholarship 'Often' or 'All the time' never fell below 85%. This suggests that for the vast majority of Alumni, the Scholarship formed the basis of the research that they would go on to conduct after the completion of their award.

Figure 57 – In the last two years, about how often have your academic activities been directly related to work you conducted during your Commonwealth Scholarship?
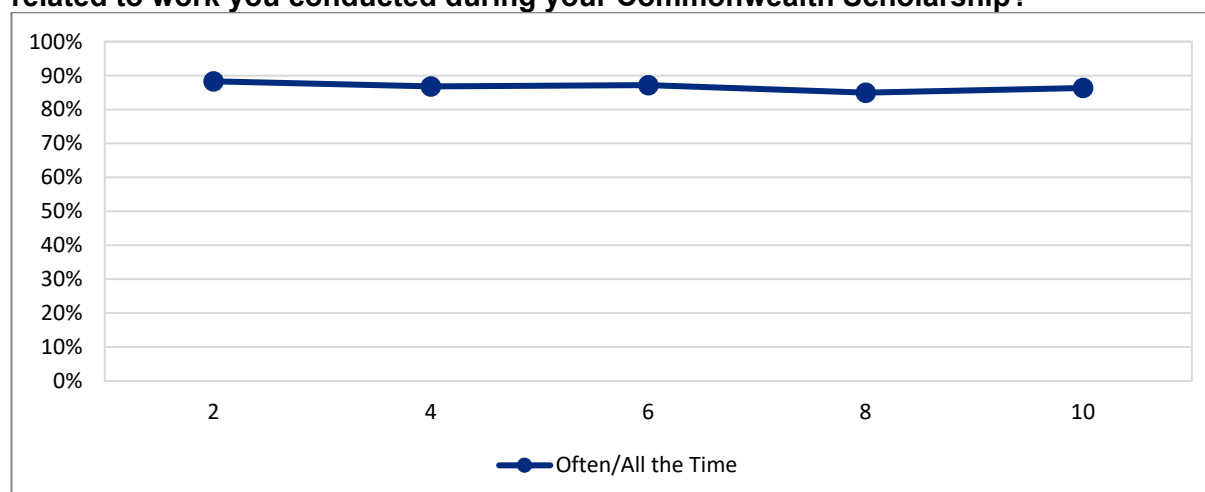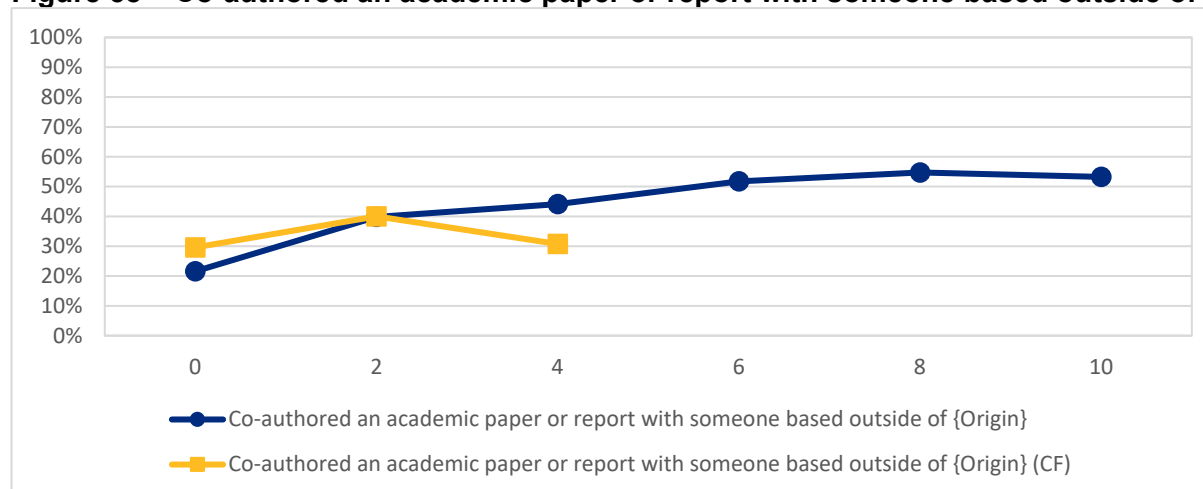

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

International Collaborations

This section presents results about how often within the last two years from the survey, the Recipients and Counterfactuals have been engaged in research related activities within an international collaboration specifically co-authorship of academic papers, grant proposals, and participation in a research conference.

Participants were asked how often in the last two years they had co-authored an academic paper or report with someone based outside their country of origin. At the Baseline, only 22% of Recipients answered 'Often' or 'All the time', as compared to 30% of Counterfactual respondents. However, by year four this trend had reversed, with 44% of Alumni answering 'Often' or 'All the time' as compared to 31% of Counterfactual respondents. The proportion of Recipients reporting co-authorship trended positively from the Baseline to year eight, before levelling out between year eight and year ten.

Figure 58 – Co-authored an academic paper or report with someone based outside of {Origin}

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Participants were asked how often in the last two years they had co-authored a grant application with someone based outside of their country of origin. This is an important element of assessing the Alumni's capacity to conduct additional research, as the acquisition of funding poses a major barrier to continued research activities. The trends demonstrated by both groups are contradictory. For the Recipients, the change in their engagement levels for co-authoring grant applications is on the rise up until year six and then remains at that level. However, the Counterfactuals reported a downward trend in their engagement levels all along from the Baseline to year four.
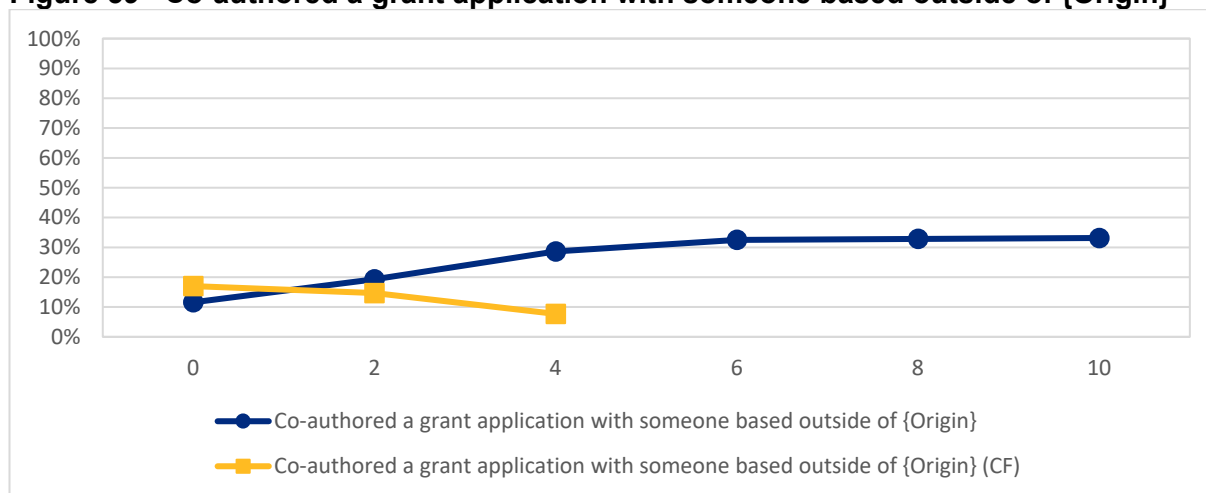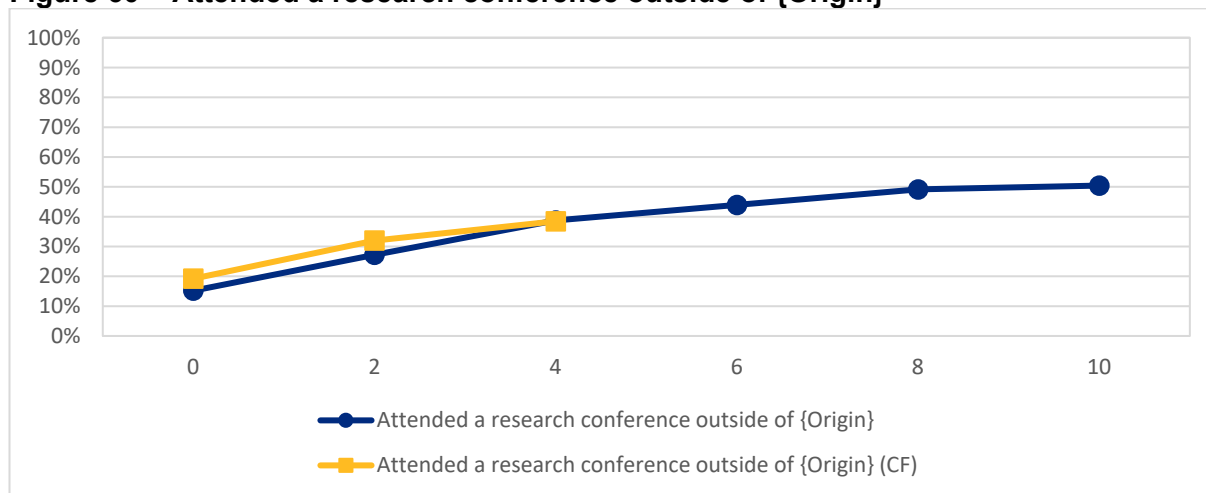
Figure 59 –Co-authored a grant application with someone based outside of {Origin}

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Participants were asked how often in the last two years they attended a research conference outside their country of origin. The trend appearing across the follow-up years indicates that for both Alumni and the Counterfactual cohort, the proportion of Respondents attending conferences rose steadily. The comparison between the Recipients and Counterfactuals between the Baseline and year four is inconclusive as the trends are the same.

Figure 60 – Attended a research conference outside of {Origin}

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Involvement in Research Community

This section presents results about how often within the last two years of the survey the Recipients and the Counterfactuals have been engaged in research community activities such as being an editor of an academic journal, peer-reviewer, or an organiser of a research conference.

When asked whether they have been editor or member of a steering committee for an academic journal in the last two years, over one-tenth of the Recipients and Counterfactuals confirmed that they were an editor or member of a steering committee for an academic journal at the Baseline. The trend for both groups is positive, however at year two a chi-squared test of independence indicated that there is no significant association between the award of the Scholarship and the likelihood of acting as an editor. At year four there is insufficient data to conduct statistical testing.

Figure 61 – An editor or member of a steering committee for an academic journal?

Participants were asked how often in the last two years they had acted as a peer-reviewer for an academic journal. From the Baseline to year two, the Recipient and Counterfactual cohorts both trended positively, with roughly equal proportions of respondents answering 'Yes' in each cohort. However, between year two and year four, the Counterfactual cohort dipped sharply, falling from 37% to 23%. For the Recipients, however, the trend remains consistently on the rise until year six. Between year six and year eight the trend remains almost unchanged and then rises again. A chi-squared test of independence revealed no significant association between Scholarship award and peer-reviewing at year two. At year four, there is insufficient data to conduct statistical testing.

Figure 62 – A peer-reviewer for an academic journal?
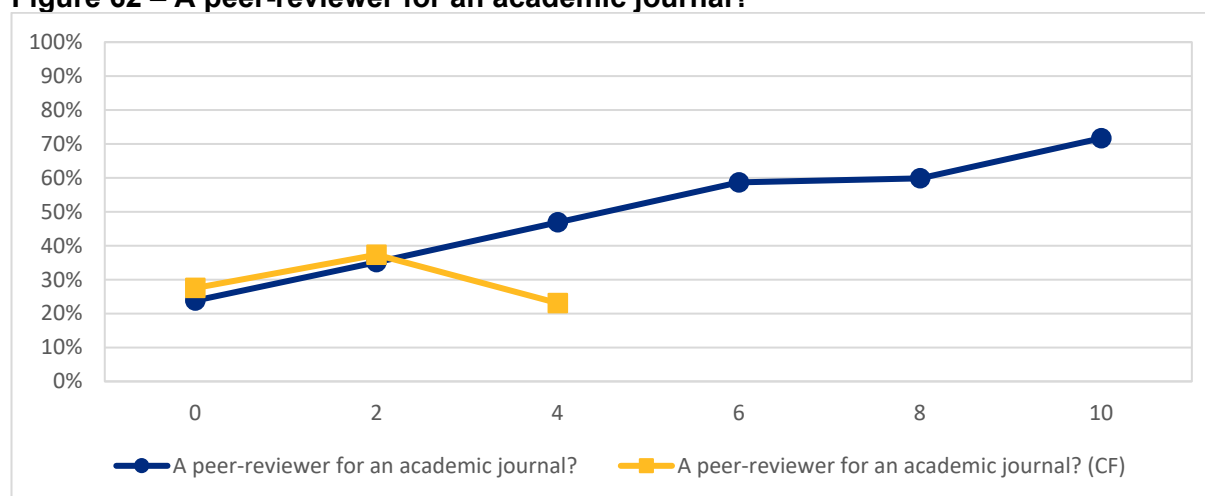
Participants were asked how often in the last two years they had acted as an organiser for a research group or conference committee. The Counterfactual cohort once again appeared slightly ahead of the Recipients by this metric. Whilst both groups trended positively from the Baseline to year four, a marginally higher proportion of the Counterfactual cohort answered 'Yes'. However, a chi-squared test of independence revealed that at year two, there was no significant association between Scholarship status and the acting as an organiser, and there is currently insufficient data to replicate this test at year four.

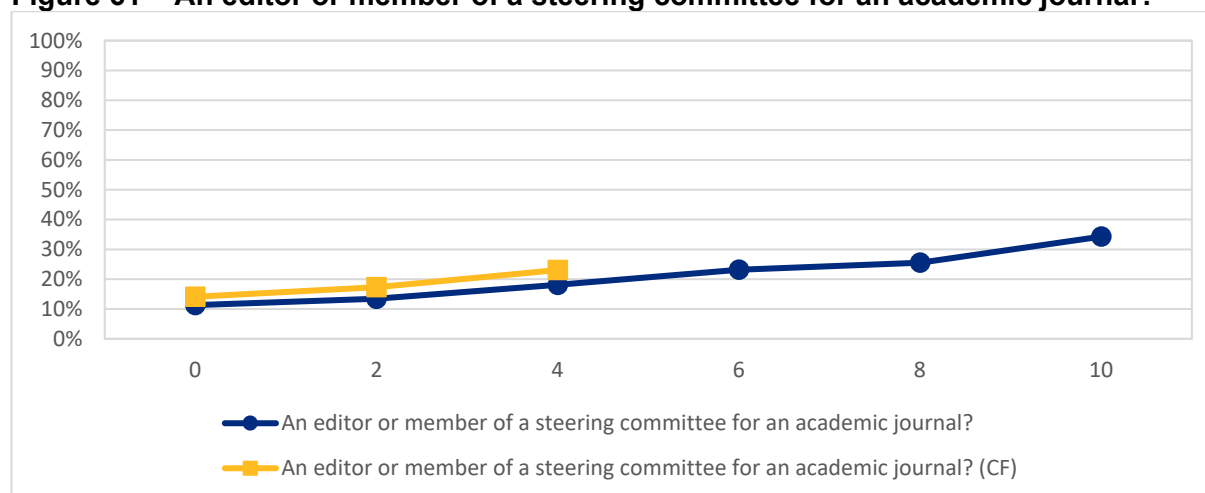**Figure 63 –An organiser for a research group or conference committee?**

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Research Activities

Participants were asked how often in the last two years they had published academic articles. At the baseline, the Counterfactual cohort reported slightly higher publication rates, with 47% of this cohort answering 'Often' or 'All the time' as opposed to 41% of Recipients. Both cohorts trended positively from the Baseline to year two, resulting in 60% of the Counterfactual cohort and 50% of Alumni answering 'Often' or 'All the time' at the two-year follow-up. However, from year two to year four the trends diverged. The proportion of the Counterfactual cohort reporting that they frequently published academic articles dropped sharply, falling to 46% at year four. By contrast, the Alumni cohort continued to trend positively across all follow-up periods, reaching 55% by year four and 70% by year ten. However, statistical testing revealed no significant relationship between the award of the Scholarship and the publication of academic articles at either year two or year four.

Figure 64 – I published academic journal articles (either solely or collaboratively)...
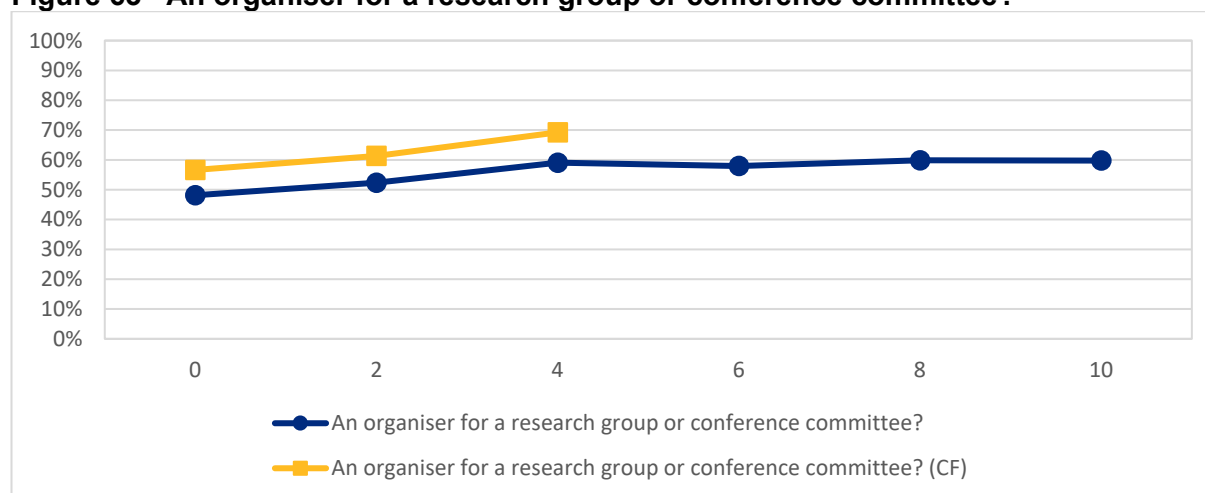

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

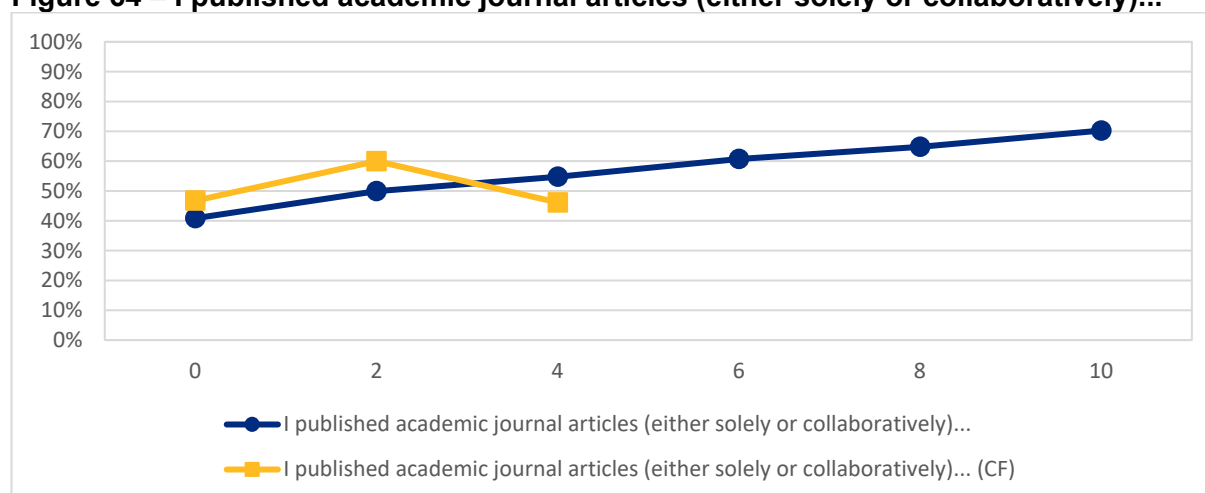Participants were asked how often in the last two years they were involved in academic research projects. At the Baseline, Figure 65 shows that 77% of Counterfactual respondents answered 'Often' or 'All the time' as compared to 72% of Recipients. Whilst both cohorts trended positively across the follow-up periods, the Counterfactual cohort consistently reported more frequent involvement in academic research projects than their Alumni counterparts.

Figure 65 – I was involved in academic research projects...
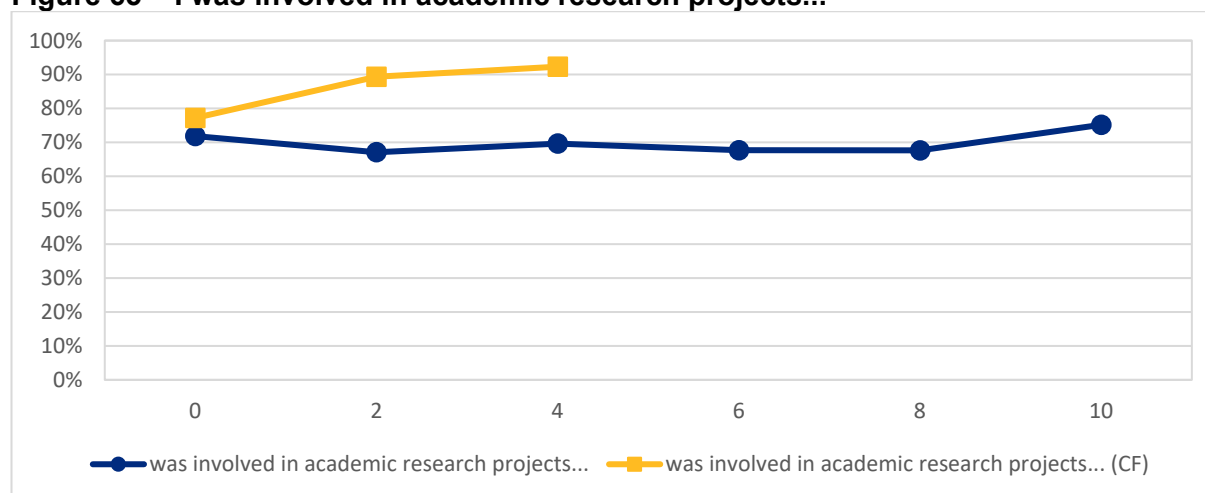
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Respondents were asked how often in the last two years they had applied for research funding. At the Baseline, the proportion of the Counterfactual cohort answering 'Often' or 'All the time' was considerably higher than the proportion of Recipients giving these answers (54% of the Counterfactual cohort as compared to 29% of Recipients). However, Commonwealth Alumni trended upwards across the follow-up periods, whilst the proportion of the Counterfactual cohort reporting frequent funding applications decreased. By year four, only 31% of the Counterfactual cohort answered 'Often' or 'All the time' as compared to 53% of alumni. Alumni continued to trend positively, reaching 58% by year ten.

Figure 66 – I applied for research funding...
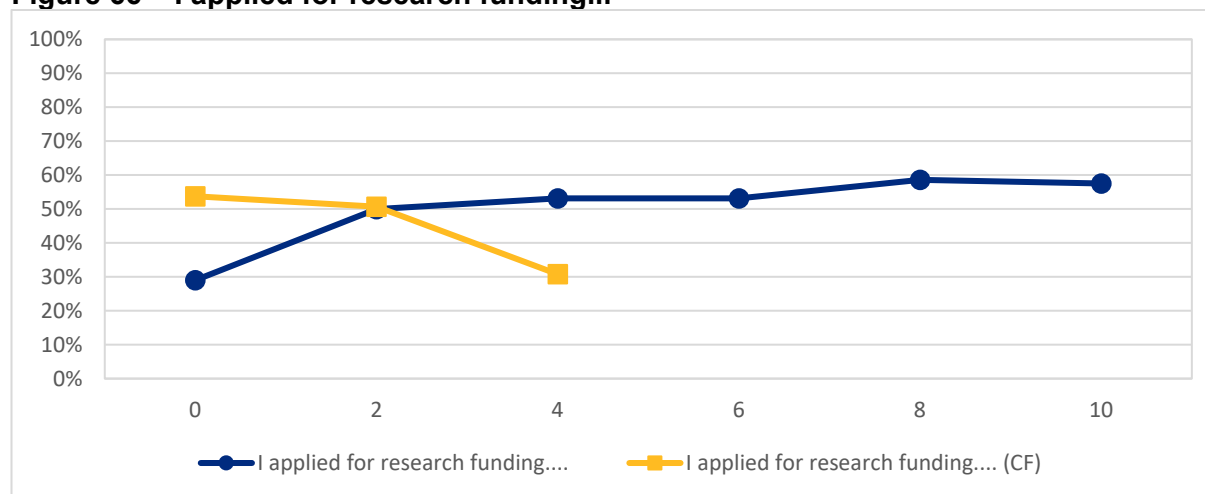
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

# Part Three: Summary and Analysis

This section examined the components of the Theory of Change that are the immediate Outputs of the programme's activities. These are the immediate effects of the programme, and thus the components that the CSC has the greatest degree of control over.

Skills and Knowledge Development

There is extremely strong evidence that Scholars develop their skills and knowledge as a result of their Scholarship. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they had realised 'Substantial' or 'Moderate'

change across a range of skills and knowledge directly as a result of their Scholarship. Across all categories this is the case, including soft skills like leadership, critical thinking, ethical sensitivity, and hard skills such as technical skills and research techniques. While there is no Counterfactual group to contrast these findings with, the overwhelming proportions of Scholars who report that this is the case provides a strong basis to support that this component of the Theory of Change is taking place. There are also clear linkages between the development of skills and knowledge and their applications in workplace environments, which is covered in the Application of Skills and Knowledge section in Part Four.

Qualifications

Programme data shows that a strong majority of Scholars receive qualifications by completing their degree programme. In some instances Scholars may exit their programmes with a qualification that is not a degree, such as the case of the Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarship where this is an intended feature of the programme where Scholars who have acquired the skills and knowledge they sought can decide to exit the programme at an earlier stage.

Research Findings

Almost all Alumni said that their academic activities in the past two years were related to the work they conducted during their Commonwealth Scholarship, which demonstrates continuous strong influence of the award on Scholars' future research activity and academic careers.

Interpersonal Networks and Partnerships

The networks and relationships Scholars build while on the Scholarship in the United Kingdom are major contributors to the soft power outcomes of Commonwealth Scholarships. Alumni response data suggest that despite gradual decline in frequency of contacts over time in some cases, they largely continue to network with professional and personal contacts acquired during their studies. The sharpest rise in the level of interaction with contact in the UK is immediately after the award and it remains stable throughout the follow up period for professional contacts, while declining over time in relation to their UK academic contacts and for interaction with Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni. There were marked differences in the trajectories between the Recipient and Counterfactual groups when it came to professional contacts in the UK, academic contacts in the UK, personal contacts in the UK, and Commonwealth Scholars or Alumni suggesting an effect of the Scholarship in these areas.

Additional Research

Academic research was among employment responsibilities of three-fifths of the Alumni at the time of receiving the award and remained at the same level throughout the follow up period after their studies. There was a consistent gradual increase in frequency of publishing academic articles and involvement in research projects. Most Commonwealth Alumni also indicated that their academic research activities were directly related to the research they conducted during their Scholarship even up to and including the year ten survey, suggesting that the research activities funded as a part of the Scholarship continue to be relevant to alumni's academic research careers.

Around half of alumni involved in research activities have been an organiser for a research group or conference committee following their studies, while attendance of research conferences outside their country of origin rose sharply every year after the award. However, both trends were mirrored in the Counterfactual group in the follow up survey periods. In contrast, applications for research funding increased substantially immediately after the award and continued to increase slightly in the follow up period in the Alumni group as opposed to the Counterfactual group who reported steep decline in research funding applications in the follow up period suggesting a potential effect in these areas.

Summary

Overall there is strong evidence to support that these Outputs are taking place for recipients of Commonwealth Scholarships. The development of skills and knowledge is strongly evidenced across a number of different areas, while most Scholars appear to exit their programme with the desired Qualification. While there is strong evidence linking the Research Findings produced by Scholars through their on-award research to future research activities, this component could perhaps be bolstered through the collection of data related to publications associated with these findings.

The development of Interpersonal Networks and Partnerships is also strongly evidenced given the focus is on the development of these networks with UK-based contacts as well as other Commonwealth Scholars, Fellows, and Alumni. The fact that it is these particular types of relationships where there is divergence between the Recipient and Counterfactual groups supports the argument that these relationships are being formed as a result of the award.

Finally, with respect to Additional Research it is clear that alumni who are involved in conducting research activities and engaging with the wider research community continue to do so across all follow up surveys, in many cases there is little in the way of divergence with the Counterfactual group which would provide stronger evidence. There does appear to be some effect when it comes to international collaborations, peer-reviewing and publishing for academic journals, and applications for research funding, however the collection of more Counterfactual data is needed to more definitively evidence these differences.

Part Four: Outcomes

The Outcomes described in the CSC's Theory of Change are the short-to-medium-term effects that occur after, and as a result of the Activities and the Outputs that the Activities generated. These are additional activities undertaken by Alumni that have been enabled by their experiences at the Activity stage of the process and the Outputs that those Activities generated.

It is important to note that at this stage the CSC's ability to influence the Alumni's activities and their results has become extremely limited, and external contexts and factors play a much more significant role. This dynamic is discussed extensively in the CSC report 'Context Matters: Enablers and Barriers to Scholarship Impact'.

Use of Skills and Knowledge

Introduction

The Use of Skills and Knowledge by Alumni in workplace or volunteer activities is the most immediate outcome of the learning that takes place during a Commonwealth Scholarship. Scholars and Alumni take what they have learned from their studies and the training offered by the CSC and use those skills and knowledge in their workplace and volunteer activities. This can take two main forms, either as the direct application of their knowledge and skills, or the sharing of that knowledge and skills with others either as teachers in an educational capacity or through formal or informal training in the workplace (which creates a multiplier effect and results in the strengthening of institutional knowledge). It is worth noting that most Distance Learning Scholars are in the unique position whereby they are able to use the skills and knowledge they acquire in their workplace immediately since the vast majority are employed while they are studying.

Figure 67 – Use of Skills and Knowledge
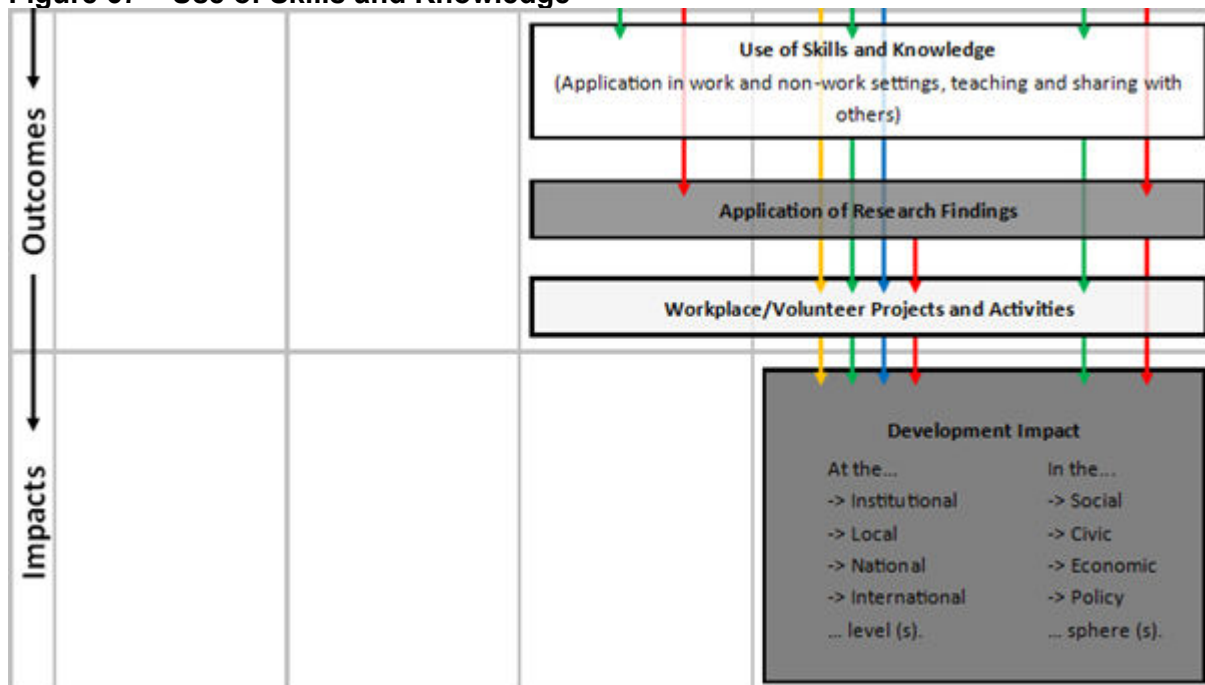
FROM: Skills and Knowledge Development
INTO: Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities

It is assumed that Scholars and Alumni will be given the opportunity to use their skills and knowledge and share it with others at their organisations. However, there is evidence that sometimes Scholars and Alumni encounter barriers in the form of resource limitations and resistance from management or other

co-workers within their organisation when they try and use their skills and knowledge, particularly when trying to implement changes within their organisation.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Distance Learner Annual Survey	Alumni and Evaluation Case Studies
Interviews with Alumni	Common Knowledge
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	Context Matters: Enablers and Barriers to Scholarship Impact (2020)
Longitudinal Counterfactual Follow-up Survey	

Analysis

This section explores whether the Recipients have used their skills and knowledge that they studied during their Commonwealth Scholarship in both employment and non-employment situations.

General Usage

Generally, majority of the respondents reported that they had been using knowledge or a skill from their studies in their employment. As can be seen in Figure 68 below, within the first two years from their award end date, 92% of the respondents reported using knowledge or skills from their studies in a work-related context. Respondents consistently reported using this knowledge and skills at an even higher rate across the other follow-up points, reaching a peak at 96% at the eight-year point.

Figure 68 – Use knowledge or a skill from your studies in your employment
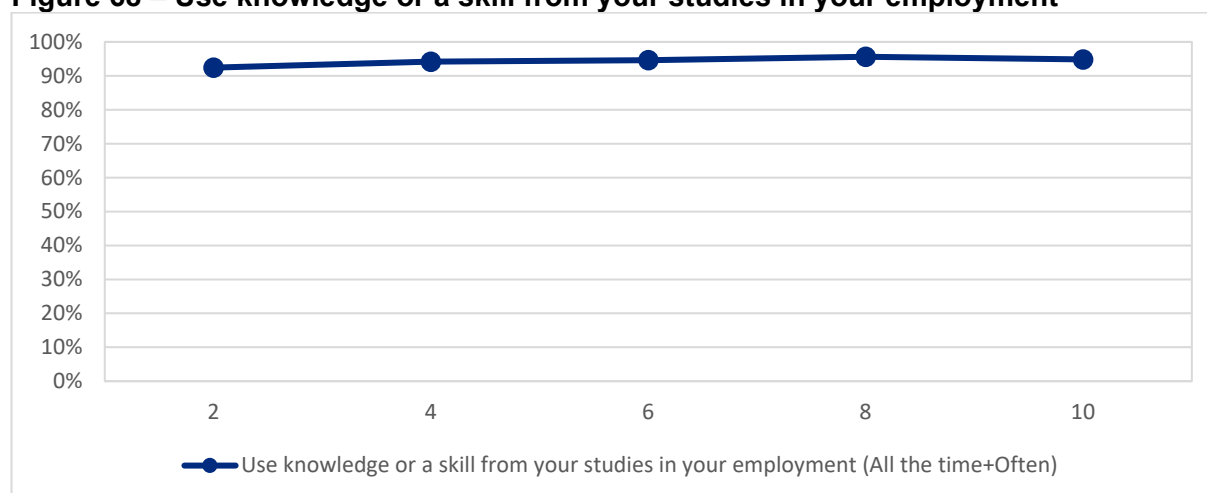
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Similarly, when asked to report on the use of knowledge or a skill form their studies outside of their employment, 83% of the respondents reported that they had been using knowledge or a skill from their studies either 'Often' or 'All the time' in a non-work-related context. The trend remains relatively consistent across all follow-up periods.

Figure 69 – Use knowledge or a skill from your studies outside of your employment
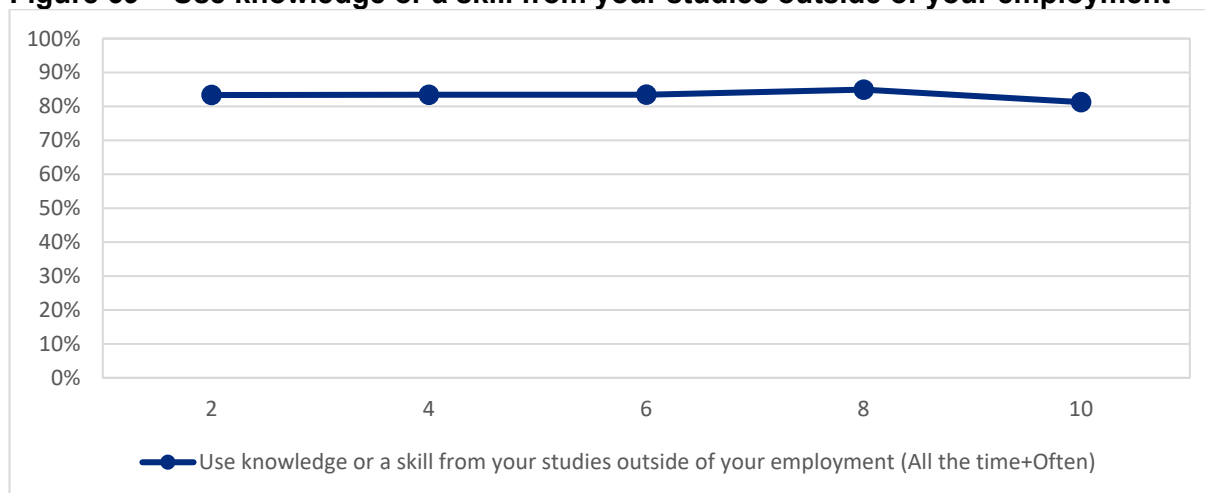
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Specific Usages

Respondents were also asked how often they approached a problem in a different way because of something that they learned during their studies. Figure 70 below shows that the vast majority of respondents reported that they approached a problem differently 'Often' or 'All the time'. Across all follow-up periods, the proportion of alumni giving these answers never dropped below 94%. This suggest that the problem-solving skills acquired by alumni through their studies remain useful to them throughout their careers.

Figure 70 – Approach a problem in a different way because of something that you learned during your studies
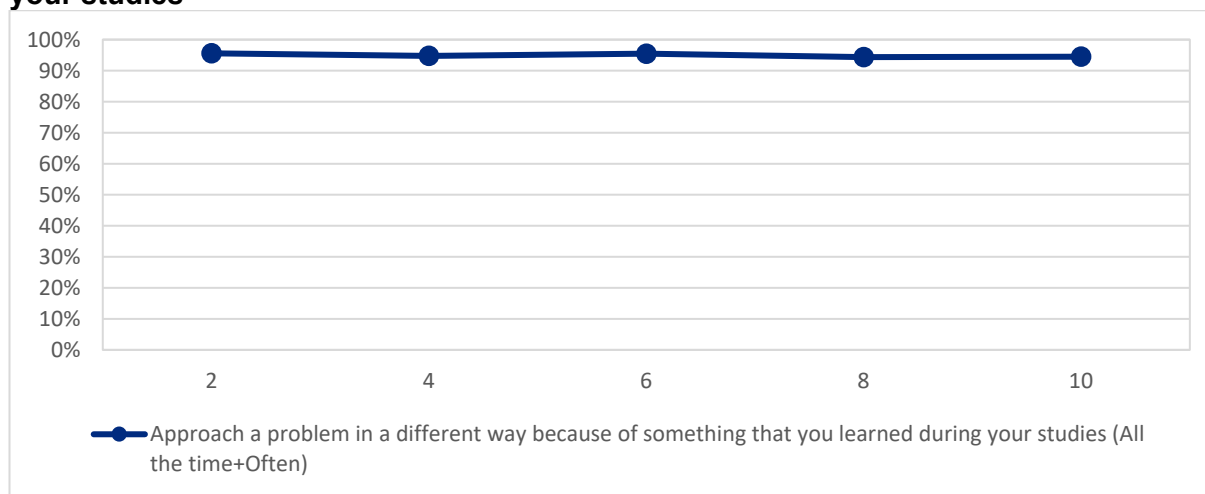
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Alumni were also asked how often they taught a colleague to do something that they learned during their studies. Across all follow-up periods, more than four-fifths of Respondents reported that they taught a colleague something they learned on-award 'Often' or 'All the time' (see Figure 71 below). Whilst there is a slight negative trend over time, from 88% at year two to 83% at year ten, the overall picture suggests that after the completion of their studies, Commonwealth Alumni consistently continue to share skills from their Scholarship with others in their workplaces.

Figure 71 – Teach a colleague to do something that you learned during your studies
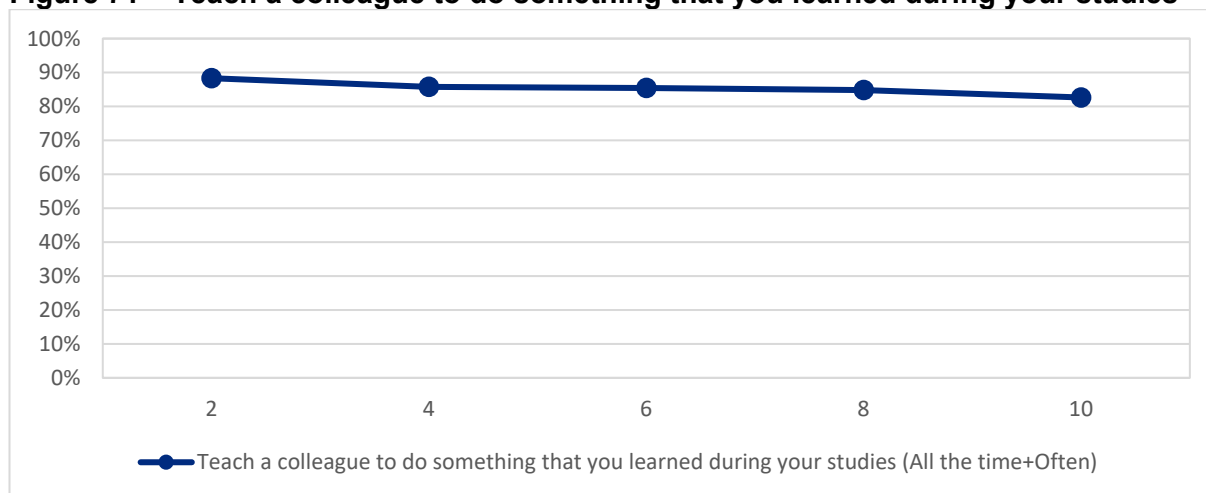
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Relatedly, Alumni were also asked how often they developed training resources or guidance for others based on something that they learned during their studies. Figure 72 below shows that across all follow-up surveys, close to three-quarters of Respondents indicated that they developed training resources 'Often' or 'All the time'. This result supports the conclusion above; whilst Alumni do not develop formalised training resources as often as they teach a colleague something, Figures 71 and 72 together indicate that Commonwealth Alumni consistently continued to share their Scholarship skills and experience with others in the ten years following the completion of their award.

Figure 72 – Develop training resources or guidance for others based on something that you learned during your studies
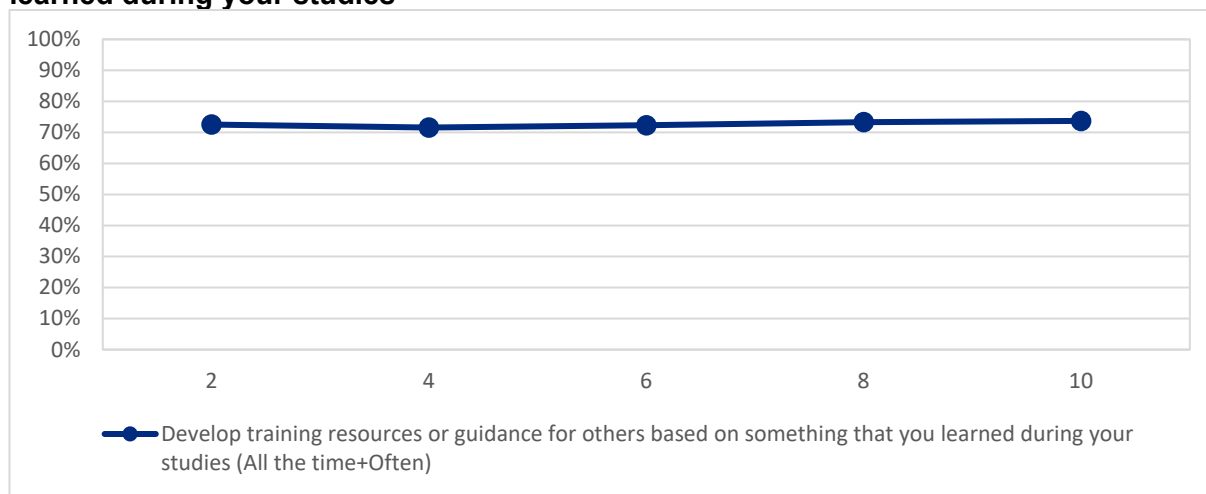
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

For those respondents whose roles involved teaching students, the vast majority consistently reported that they used skills and knowledge from their Scholarship in their teaching 'Often' or 'All the time' across all follow-up years, as shown in Figure 73 below.

Figure 73 – About how often do you use skills or knowledge from your Commonwealth Scholarship in your teaching?
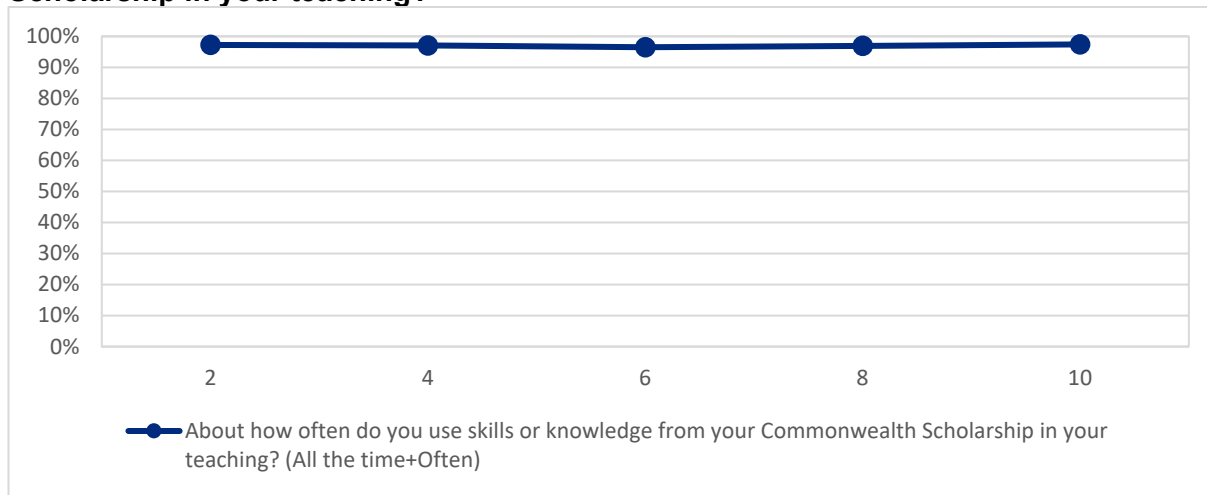
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Organisational Changes

Alumni are also asked how frequently they encourage their senior managers to make changes based on their studies. Approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated that they did so 'All the time' or 'Often' across the first four follow-up surveys, with a slight decrease taking place at the year ten point.

Figure 74 – Encourage a senior manager to make a change based on something that you learned during your studies
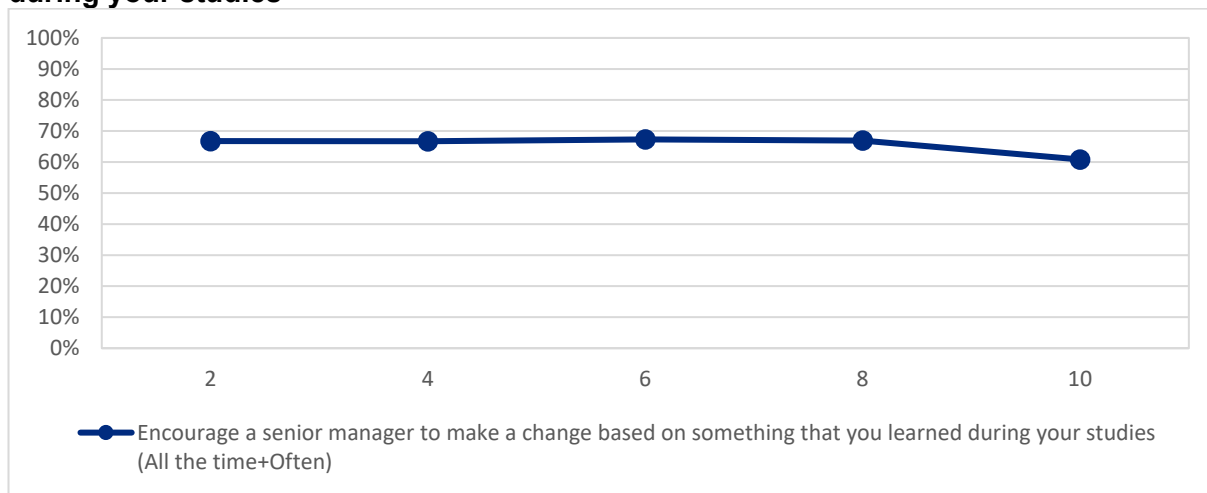
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Figure 75 shows a similar proportion of respondents indicating that they themselves made a change to their organisation's working practice based on their studies during their Commonwealth Scholarship. As is the case for advocating for change with their senior managers, approximately two-thirds of respondents consistently indicated that they did so in their workplace 'All the time' or 'Often' across all follow-up periods.

Figure 75 – Make a change to your organisation's working practice based on something that you learned during your studies
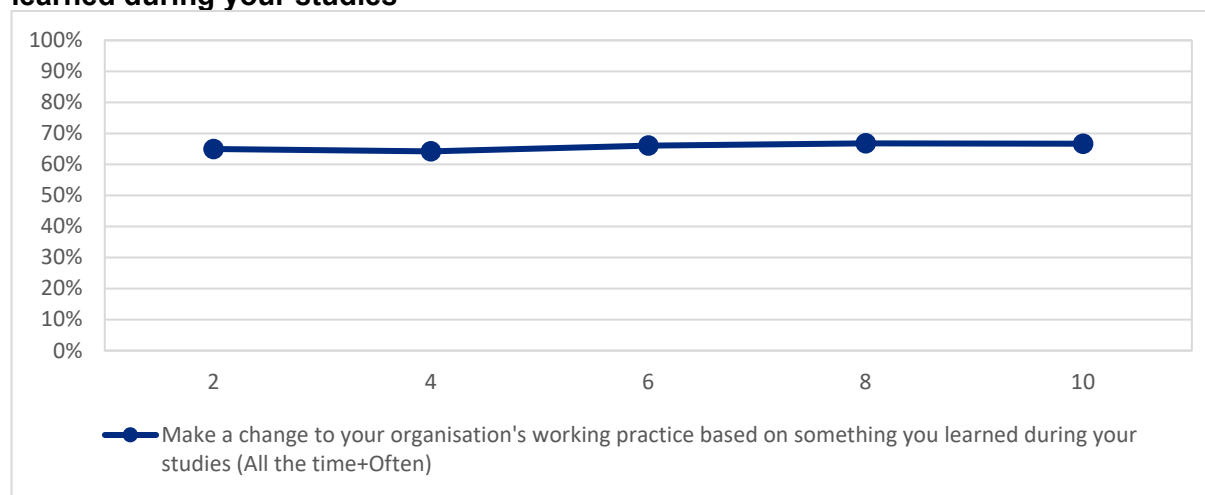
Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Free Text Responses

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide more details about how they had been applying knowledge or skills from their studies to their work and non-work-related environments. Overall, 2,492 comments were received which were then coded into themes in three distinct categories: the application of knowledge and skills in a work-related environment; the application of knowledge and skills in a non-work-related environment; and the application of knowledge and skills in their respective sectors. These categories were then re-analysed and coded further into specific skills, activities, and areas or issues.

When it came to workplace applications, three-tenths reported application of skills and knowledge in research. Those who spoke about being active in research made references to activities such as supervising PhD students, writing research grants and proposals, designing and leading on research projects, conducting research related training workshops, and research management. Approximately one-tenth of comments mentioned knowledge application, with a similar proportion referring to teaching. In both categories the respondents talked about direct application so their knowledge, however those categorised under teaching are the one who used their knowledge to teach their students, while the other used their knowledge to design projects, draft policy briefs and recommendations, and advise technical changes to systems such those improving general infrastructure.

Approximately one-eighth of comments mentioned direct application of knowledge in skills from their studies in communication skills and management. For those mentioning communication skills, respondents made references to presenting to their colleagues or in public events such as conferences, publishing, writing, and editing. Comments categorised under the management theme are those that talked about using skills such as interpersonal skills, leadership, relationship building, negotiation, as well as technical skills such as project design and management.

Of those who reported activity in a non-work-related environment, one-fifth had been applying their skills and knowledge in mentoring colleagues and other people they have in their networks. Less than one-tenth of comments reported activities that have led to personal development or volunteering.

Of those who provided comments, 31% of the time respondents reported about sectors in which they had been applying their skills and knowledge that they studied during their Commonwealth award. Majority of the times respondents reported application of knowledge and skills either in their work-related environment (97%) or in a non-work-related environment (85%). The thematic analysis corroborates the results of the closed ended question that have been discussed above and visualised in Figures 68 and 69.

Of those who reported applying their skills and knowledge in specific sectors, their comments were coded further in to seven themes. The health and education sectors emerged as the primary sectors where the respondents have reported activity. Two-fifths of the respondents reported that that had been applying their skills and knowledge in the health sector, while one-third reported the education sector as their primary field of activity. Around one-tenth of the respondents reported applying skills and knowledge in the area of the environment or climate change, with a similar proportion reporting doing so in ways related to development.

Application of Research Findings

Introduction

The Application of Research Findings is the implementation of the Research Findings or Additional Research in a practical manner whereby communities and wider society directly or indirectly benefit. Frequently this application is framed as a product that improves the lives of others, but it can also take the form of new medicines or medical interventions, improved services, policy changes, etc. The important factor is that the research and its consequences move from a theoretical, academic, or laboratory setting into a broader community application.

Figure 76 – Application of Research Findings
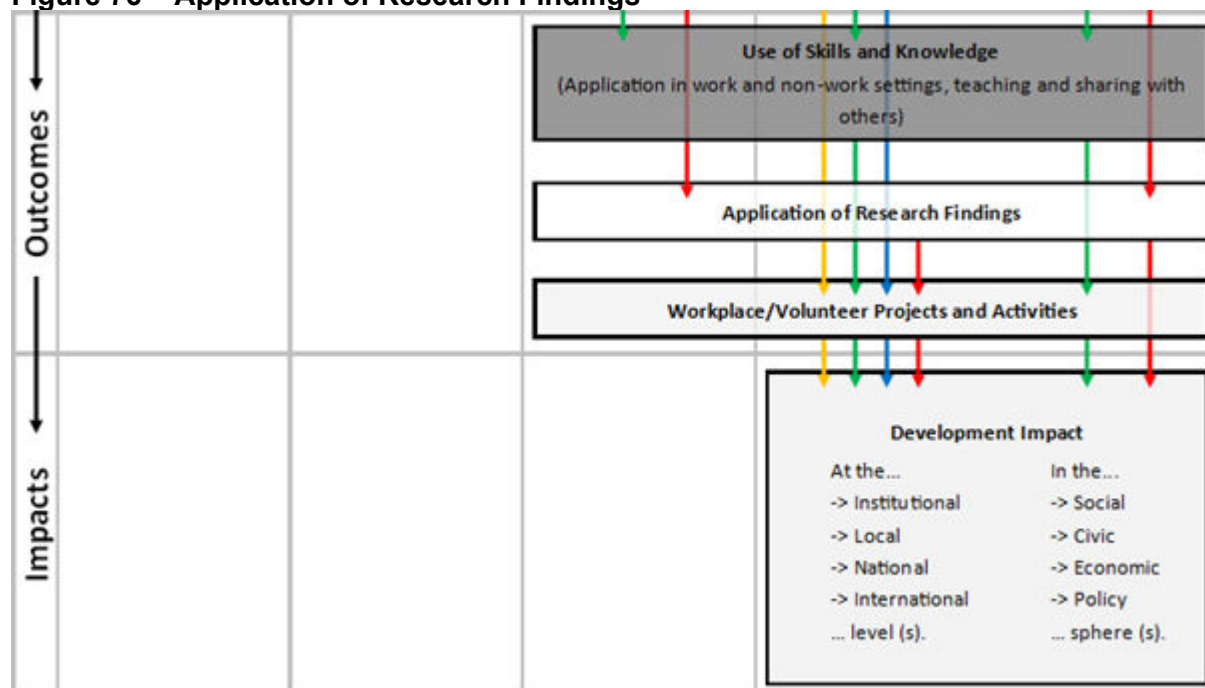
FROM: Research Findings, Additional Research
INTO: Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities, Development Impact

It is assumed that the research undertaken by Scholars and Alumni will ultimately have these kinds of applications. However, it is important to note that by its very nature sometimes research does not lead to these types of tangible or identifiable outcomes and its impact might be more tangential, sometimes accruing through the lessons and skills learned from the research process itself rather than the outcome, and in some cases even determining that some research pathways should not be pursued.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Best Journal Article Prize Applications	Alumni and Evaluation Case Studies
Interviews with Alumni	Best Journal Article Prize Results
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	Common Knowledge

Analysis

This section explores whether the Recipients and the Counterfactuals have been able to apply their knowledge and research findings in designing projects, writing grant applications, or initiating a startup. Overall, three-quarters of the Recipients consistently reported across all surveys (including the Baseline) that they had personally led or designed a new initiative or project 'All the time' or 'Often', as seen in Figure 77, with the proportion rising slightly over time from the Baseline to the year ten follow up point.

Figure 77 – Personally led or designed a new initiative or project
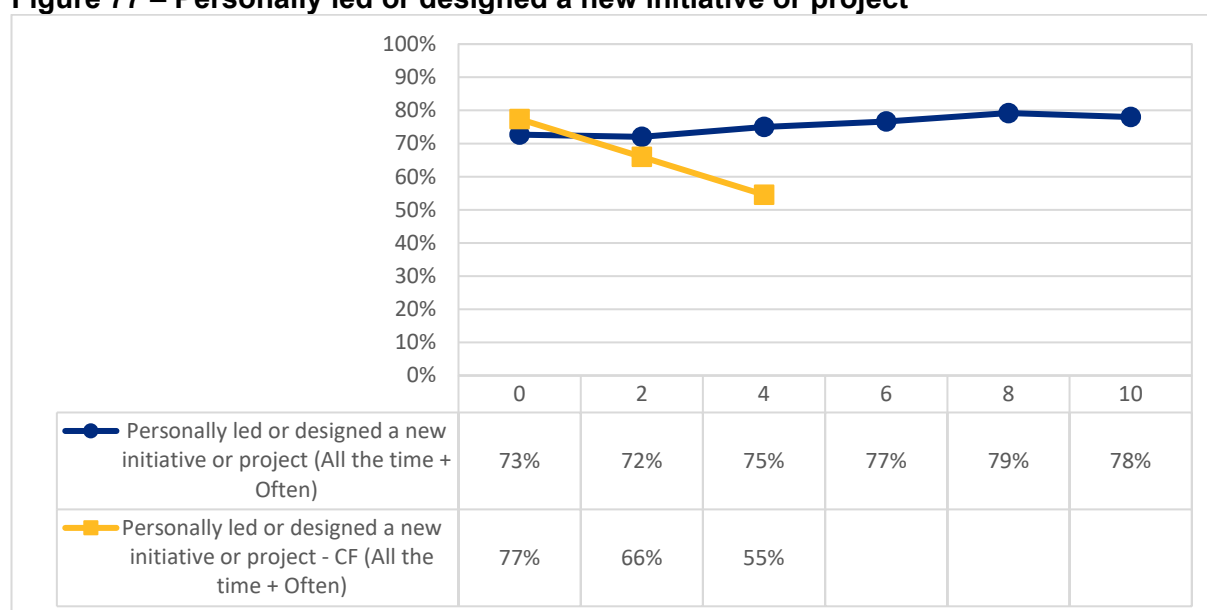
	0	2	4	6	8	10
Personally led or designed a new initiative or project (All the time + Often)	73%	72%	75%	77%	79%	78%
Personally led or designed a new initiative or project - CF (All the time + Often)	77%	66%	55%			

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

In comparison, while the Counterfactuals reported personally leading or designing a new initiative or project at a greater frequency at the Baseline, this proportion decreased at both the two year and four year points showing a notable downward trend in the frequency with which the Counterfactual group engages in these activities.

A similar trend can be seen when it comes to involvement in being a lead author or negotiator in bids for funding or investment. As can be seen in Figure 78 below, while Scholarship recipients report engagement in these activities at a lower proportion than the Counterfactual group at the Baseline, the proportion of alumni reporting that they were involved in these activities 'All the time' or 'Often' rises over time to over two-fifths of respondents at the year six, eight, and ten follow-up points. Conversely, the Counterfactual group sees a slight decline from the Baseline to the year two point before dropping more substantially at the year four follow-up survey.

Figure 78 – Been the lead author or negotiator on a bid for funding or investment

	0	2	4	6	8	10
Been the lead author or negotiator on a bid for funding or investment (All the time + Often)	29%	35%	37%	42%	43%	42%
Been the lead author or negotiator on a bid for funding or investment - CF (All the time + Often)	39%	33%	5%			

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

A similar trend can be seen with respect to having founded or co-founded a new company, department, or institute (Figure 79). When asked if they had done so within the two years preceding the survey, one-fifth of the Recipients group replied 'Yes', a proportion that remained consistent across all follow-up points. In comparison, the Counterfactual group reported founding or co-founding a new company, department, or institute in the last two years at a similar proportion at year two, but none indicated they had done so at year four.

Figure 79 – In the last two years, have you founded or co-founded a new company, department, or institute?

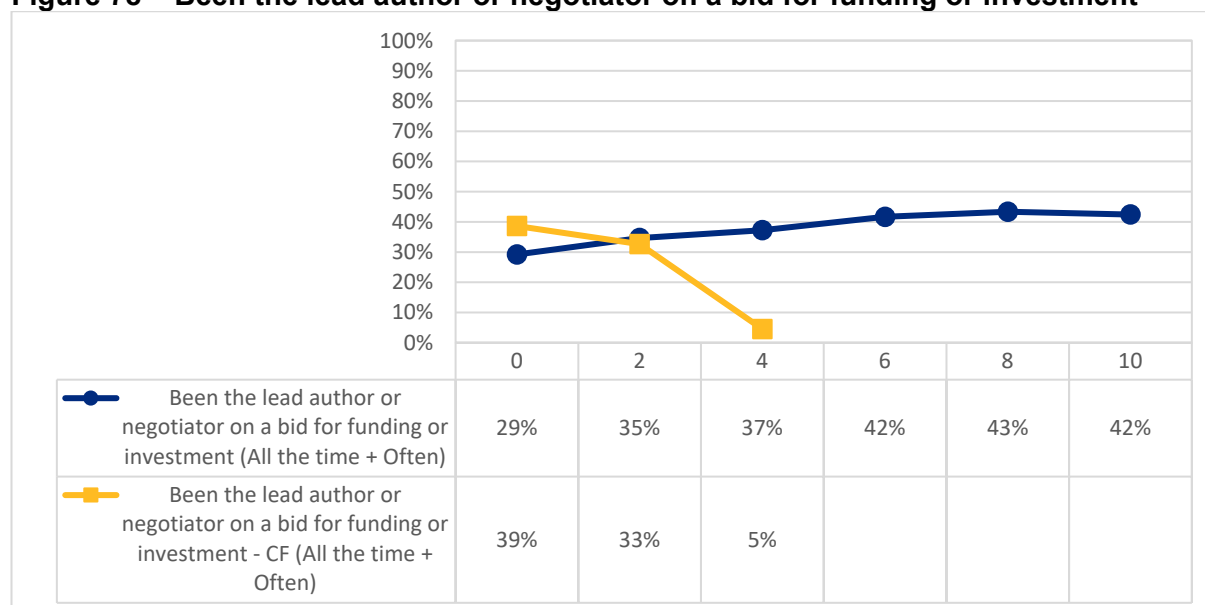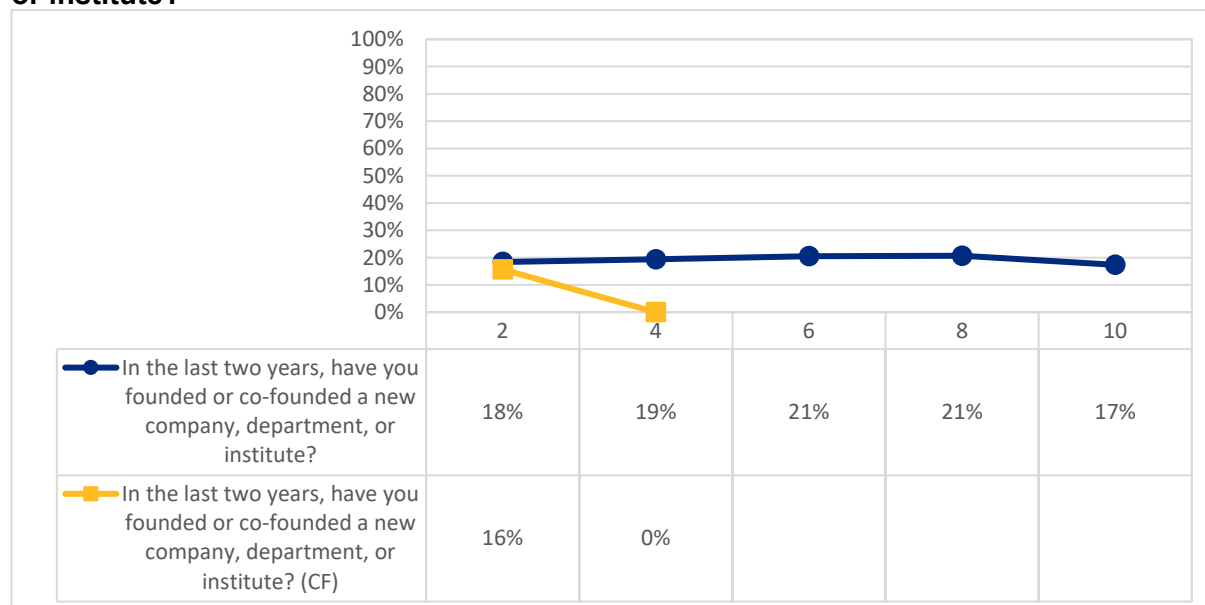|	2	4	6	8	10
In the last two years, have you founded or co-founded a new company, department, or institute?	18%	19%	21%	21%	17%
In the last two years, have you founded or co-founded a new company, department, or institute? (CF)	16%	0%			

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Respondents were also asked to provide details of the new company, department, or institute they have founded or co-founded in an open-ended question. Those responses were then coded and converted into categorical data with six themes emerging (including 'Other'). Overall, just under one-half of the Recipients who had indicated they had founded something indicated that they had founded or co-founded a 'Private Company'. These companies generally cover areas including health, research, and

education. The nature of Private Companies also varies, ranging from consultancies to services and equipment providers.

One-fifth of comments indicated that they had founded or co-founded a 'Department' (19%). These Recipients have shown leadership skills in initiating consultative processes that have either resulted in branching out of their employers' businesses or in setting up new departments or research institute at a university or a college. About 16% of the comments mentioned that they had set up a 'Charity'. The nature of these Charities varies widely from civil society organisations that work with communities at a grassroots level to organisations that work with other registered entities and provide services such as capacity building.

A handful of comments (3%) came from those who have initiated medium to large scale projects or programmes. Majority of these projects/programmes are either delivered by national or regional governments alone or in collaboration with an international NGO such as the UN systems and focus on improvement of the public services such as health, infrastructure, and education.

Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities

Introduction

Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities are the areas of work that Scholars and Alumni engage in that have an effect on the lives of others in their communities and beyond. These are the activities where the outputs and outcomes are the long term impact sought by the Commonwealth Scholarship programme. The work that Scholars and Alumni do, enabled through the learning, networking, and development opportunities afforded to them through the Commonwealth Scholarship experience results in the changes at the different levels and in the different spheres of the people's lives that they work with. These activities have been made possible in part due to their Commonwealth Scholarship experience, and the skills, knowledge, and relationships that they gained as a result.

Figure 80 – Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities
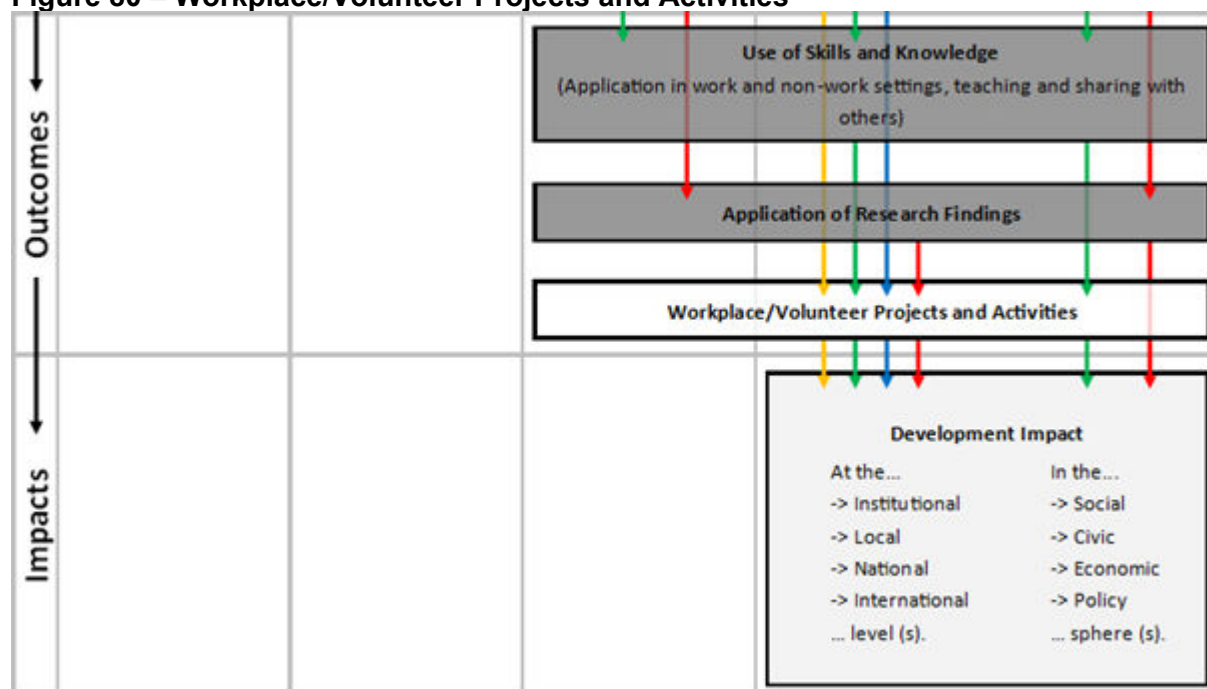
FROM: Qualification, Interpersonal Networks and Relationships, Use of Skills and Knowledge, Application of Research Findings
INTO: Development Impact

It is assumed that Scholars and Alumni are able to secure funding, resources, and stakeholder support that allows them to engage in the types of activities that result in development impact. In some cases, this can be difficult,[48] however as with other instances where this barrier exists, the additional training offered to Scholars through the Leaders for Development programme seeks to provide Scholars with skills, knowledge, and strategies to help understand and overcome these issues.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
Interviews with Alumni	Alumni and Evaluation Case Studies
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	Common Knowledge
Longitudinal Baseline Survey	
Longitudinal Counterfactual Baseline Survey	
Longitudinal Counterfactual Follow-up Survey	

Analysis

Leadership Responsibilities

This section explores whether the Recipients and the Counterfactuals have held leadership positions that held responsibility for oversight of others' work, management of projects, and leadership for giving strategic direction to the organisation or the department.

As shown in Figure 81, three quarters of both the Recipients and the Counterfactuals reported that that were responsible for supervising the work of other employees at the Baseline. However, the Counterfactuals have reported an overall downward trend on supervising the work of other employees to 66% and 47% at years two and four, respectively. On the other hand, approximately three-quarters of Recipients have consistently reported that they held this responsibility 'All the time' or 'Often'. Overall, the Recipients have reported better score at leadership activities requiring supervision of the work of other employees.

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[48] See Marango and Harrison, 2021.

Figure 81 – Supervising the work of other employees
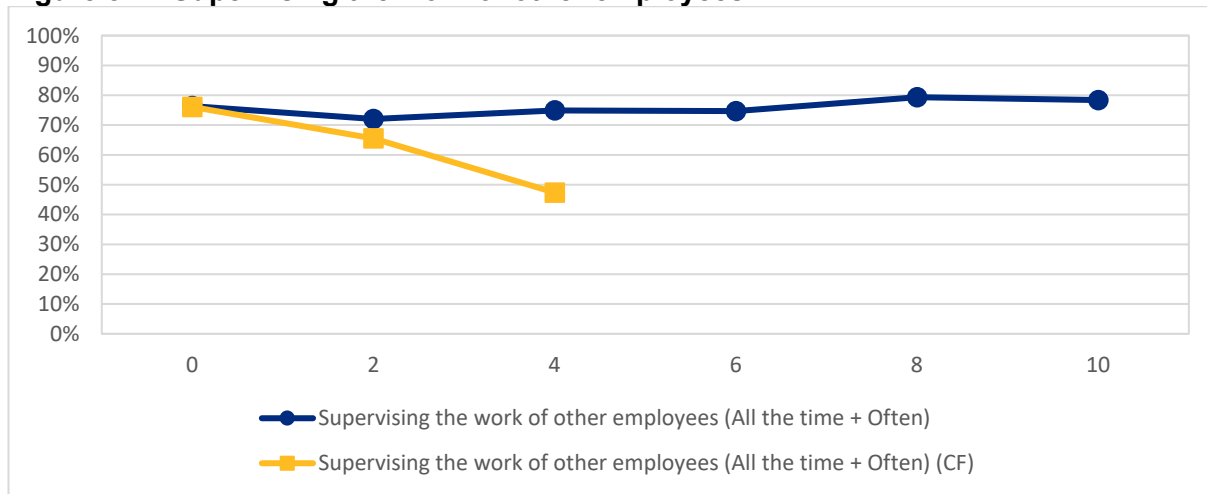
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

With respect to overseeing the budget of an organisation or department, Recipients have reported an upward trend starting 37% at the Baseline to 47% at the year ten follow-up point. By contrast, a slightly higher proportion of Counterfactuals (40%) reported involvement in oversight of an organisation or department's budget 'All the time' or 'Often' at the Baseline. However, this proportion drops at year two to just over one-thirds, which is a lower score than that of the Recipients (40%). At year four, the proportion of Counterfactuals who report frequently holding this responsibility improves slightly to 37%, however this proportion remains lower than that reported by Commonwealth Alumni.

Figure 82 – Overseeing an organisation or department's budget
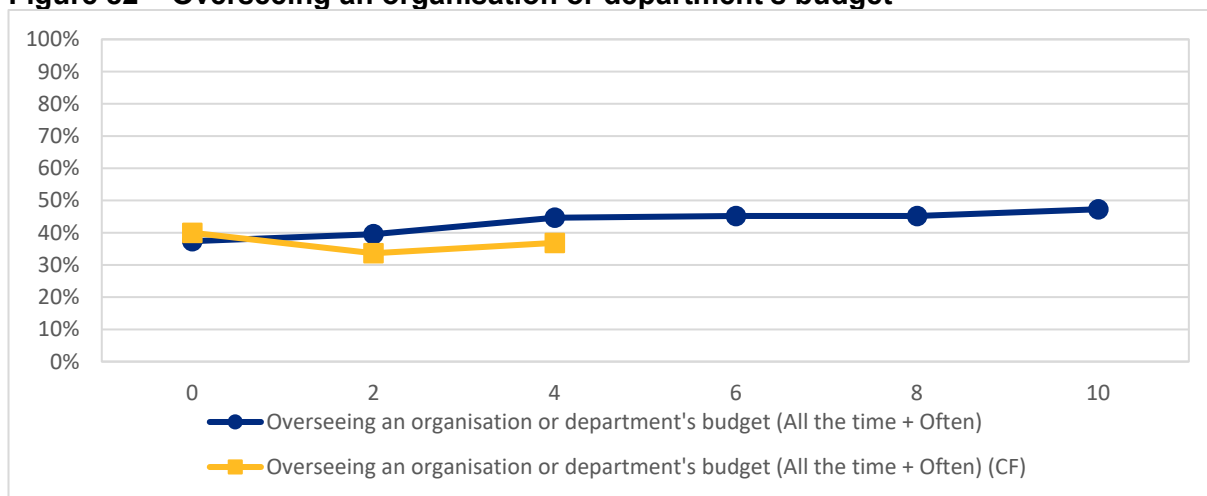
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

In relation to activities that require managing or chairing a company or department (Figure 83), the trends similar to that of shown in Figure 82. A higher proportion of the Counterfactual group (43%) reported being engaged in leadership activities requiring managing or chairing a company or department than the Recipients (39%) at the Baseline. The overall curve for the Recipients, however, shows a slightly positive trend and by year ten nearly half have reported holding responsibility for managing or chairing a company or department. The pattern for the Counterfactual group tracks closely to the Recipient group from the Baseline to year four.

Figure 83 – Managing or chairing a company or department
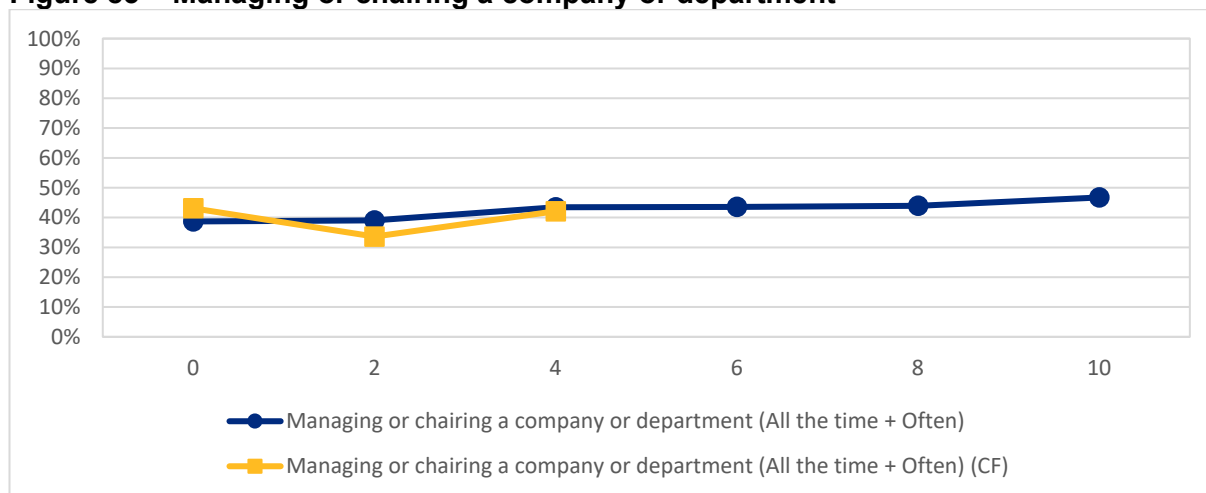
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Figure 84 shows the proportion of respondents who frequently were involved in devising the strategic direction of an organisation or department. At the Baseline, the proportion of Counterfactuals engaged in these activities 'All the time' or 'Often' is slightly higher (58%) than that of the Recipients (54%). However the trend for Recipients improves over time eventually seeing the proportion rise to 62% at year ten. In contrast, respondents from the Counterfactual group reported frequently holding this responsibility at a lower rate at the year two and year four survey points.

Figure 84 – Devising the strategic direction of an organisation or department
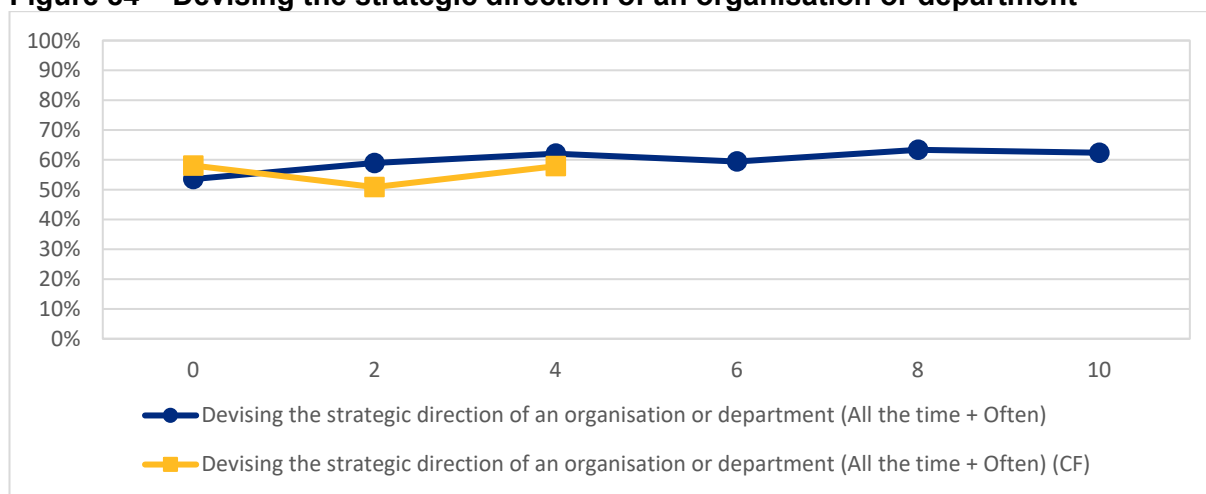
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Teaching

Figure 85 shows the proportion of respondents that are involved in teaching students. Overall, both curves show a sudden drop at year two potentially suggesting that both groups stop undertaking teaching-oriented jobs and move to other professions. However, from year two onwards the proportions remain consistent with approximately three-fifths of respondents reporting involvement in teaching students.

Figure 85 – Teaching students

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Among those respondents who reported that they taught students, they were asked a series of follow up questions about the level of education at which they taught students. Figure 86 shows the proportions involved in teaching primary or secondary students. At the Baseline just under one-third of Recipients reported that they had been undertaking teaching activities at the school level while one-fifth of the Counterfactual group reported the same. This proportion drops at the year two point for both groups, although the Recipient group sees a greater reduction, with proportion of the Counterfactual group reporting that they teach primary and secondary students remaining higher than the Recipient group at both the year two and year four survey points.

Figure 86 – Teaching School (primary or secondary)

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

In contrast the majority of respondents in both groups who were involved in teaching reported that they were involved in teaching undergraduate students. Overall, a higher proportion of Counterfactual respondents reported teaching at the undergraduate level compared to Recipients who nevertheless still consistently reported doing so at a high rate.

Figure 87 – Teaching Undergraduate higher education
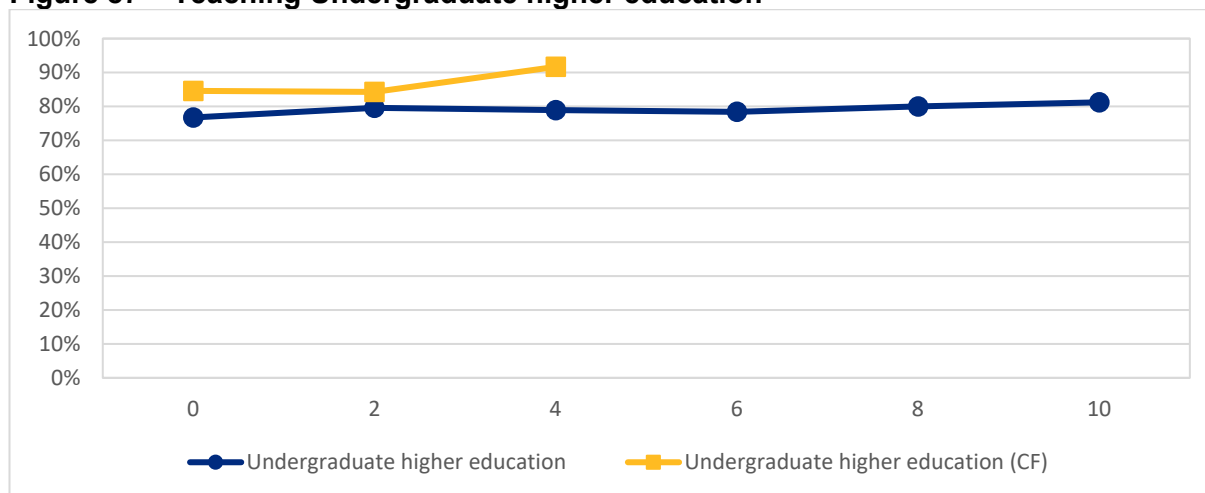
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

However, the trend for the Recipients reporting teaching activities at the postgraduate level is upward over time, as well as a much higher rate than the Counterfactual group. For instance, just under one-third of the Counterfactual group reported teaching activities at the postgraduate level at the Baseline and year two which drops to one-quarter at year four. By contrast, while a slightly lower proportion of the Recipients (27%) reported teaching activities at the postgraduate level at the Baseline, the proportion rises sharply at the year two point and continues to rise over time to the point that at year ten just under four-fifths of these respondents reported that they had been engaged in teaching students at the postgraduate level.
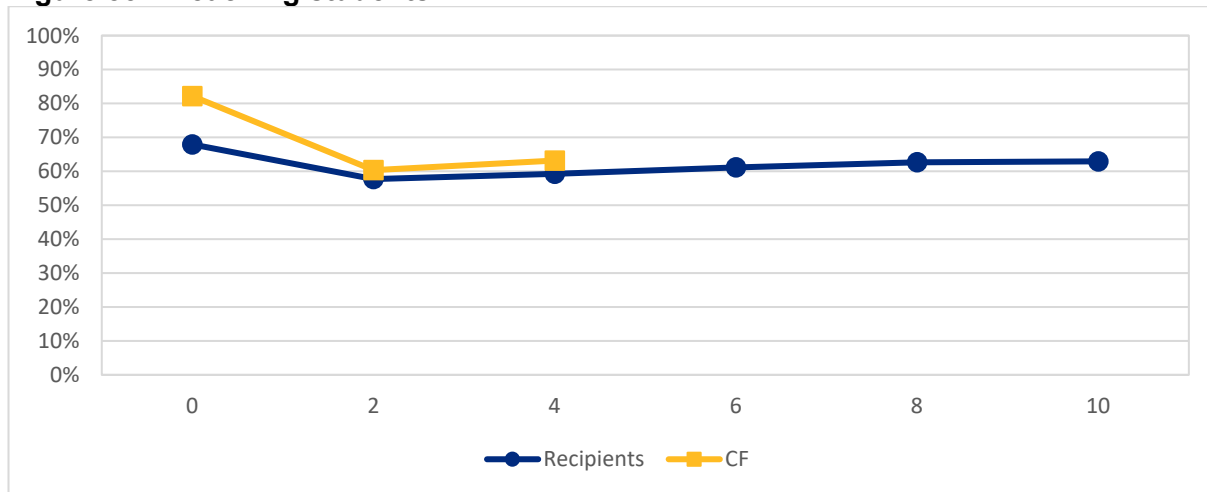
Figure 88 – Teaching Postgraduate higher education
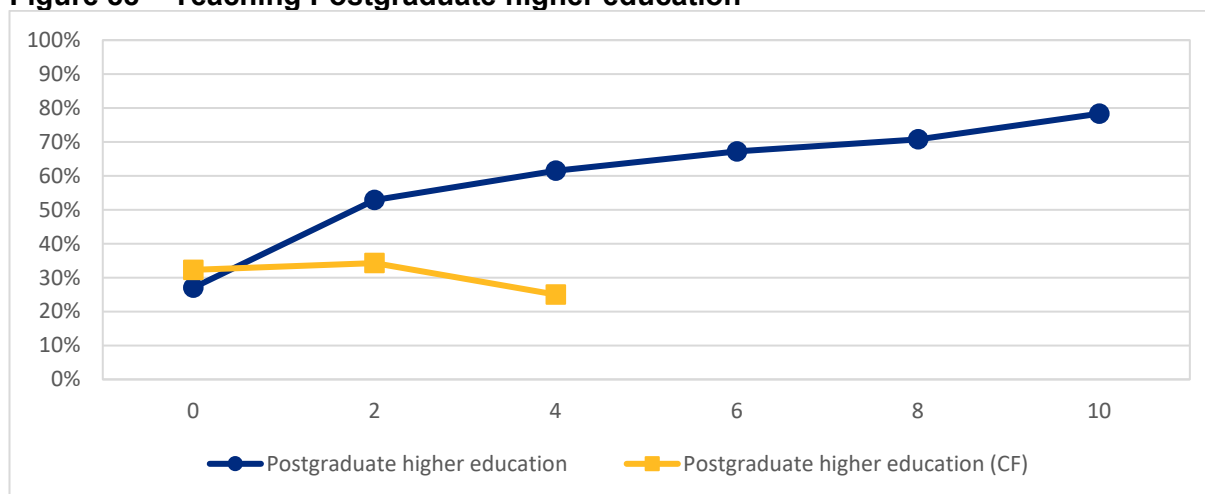
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

A similar but even more stark pattern can be seen when it comes to doctoral degree supervision (Figure 89). When asked whether they are providing supervision of doctoral students, the trend on the Recipients' curve show a sharp rise over time in contrast to that observed for the Counterfactual group. By year ten, almost half of the Recipients reported that they were involved in doctoral degree supervision compared to nearly none at the Baseline.
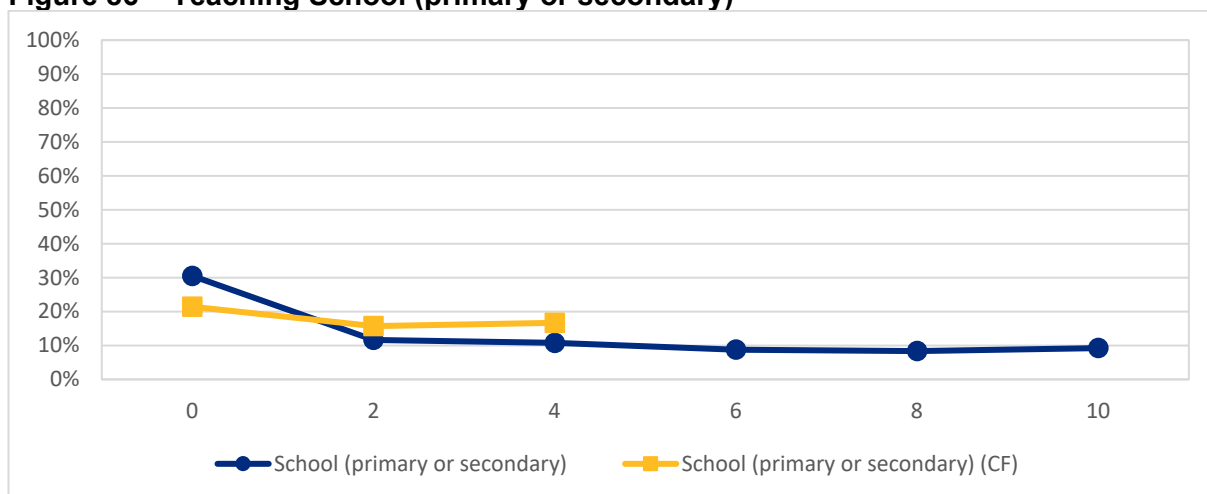
Figure 89 – Doctoral degree supervision
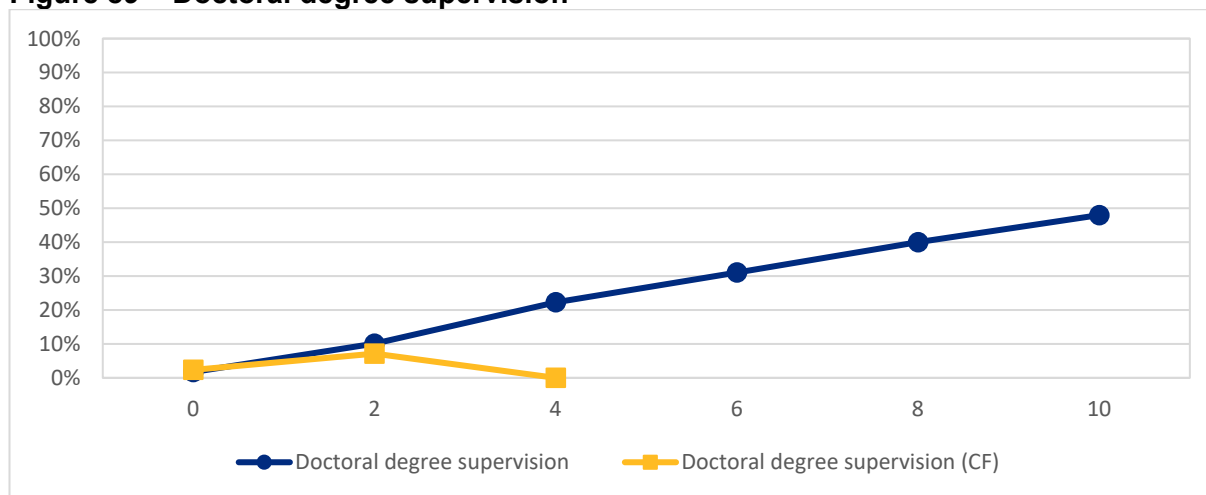
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Finally the overall trend for those who reporting involvement in technical or vocational teaching activities is negative for both groups. At the Baseline, over one-third of both the Recipient and the Counterfactual groups reported involvement in providing technical or vocational training, however the score drops to one-quarter for the Recipients by year ten and to less than one-fifth for the Counterfactual group at year four.

Figure 90 – Technical or vocational training

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Workplace Context

As shown in Figure 91, overall the proportion of Recipients reporting that their senior managers supported suggestions to implement new practices 'All the time' or 'Often' is relatively consistent over time and compared to the proportion of the Counterfactual group reporting the same. At the Baseline, a slightly higher percentage of Counterfactual respondents (81%) reported being supported by their senior managers in this way compared to Recipients (79%). However at year four the proportion of Counterfactual respondents reporting this was the case drops to 74% while for the Recipients there is a slight upward trend. Gradually, the proportion of Recipients who reported being supported by their senior managers when suggested to implement new practices increases and by year ten the score is at 84%, higher than that at the Baseline (79%).

Figure 91 – Senior managers were supportive when I suggested implementing new practices...

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

When asked the same question but regarding support from coworkers when they suggested implementing new practices, the percentage of Recipients who reported being supported by their immediate co-workers has remained consistently higher than the percentage of the Counterfactual group. For the Counterfactuals, however the curves tapers from 89% at the Baseline to 84% at year four, while for the Recipient group more than nine-tenths report that this was the case across all data points.

Figure 92 – My immediate co-workers were supportive when I suggested implementing new practices...
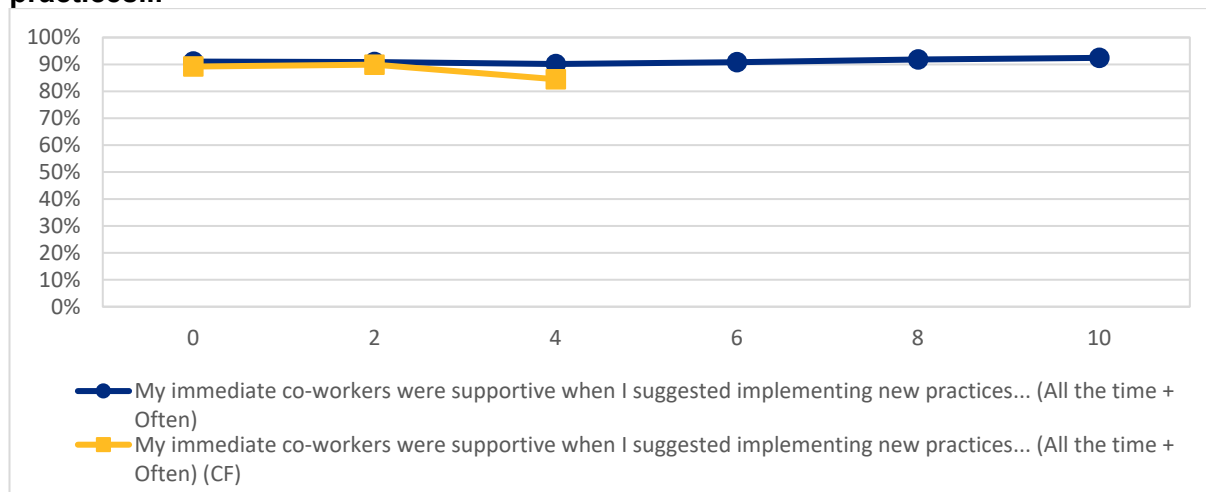
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

In the case of respondents' organisations having the resources to implement new suggested practices, a higher percentage of the Recipients reported that their organisation did so 'All the time' or 'Often' compared to the Counterfactual group. There is also a positive trend in this response from Recipients over time as between the Baseline and year ten the proportion rises from 55% to 61% while the proportion for the Counterfactual group remains flat at 50% across all periods.

Figure 93 – My organisation had the resources to implement new practices I suggested...
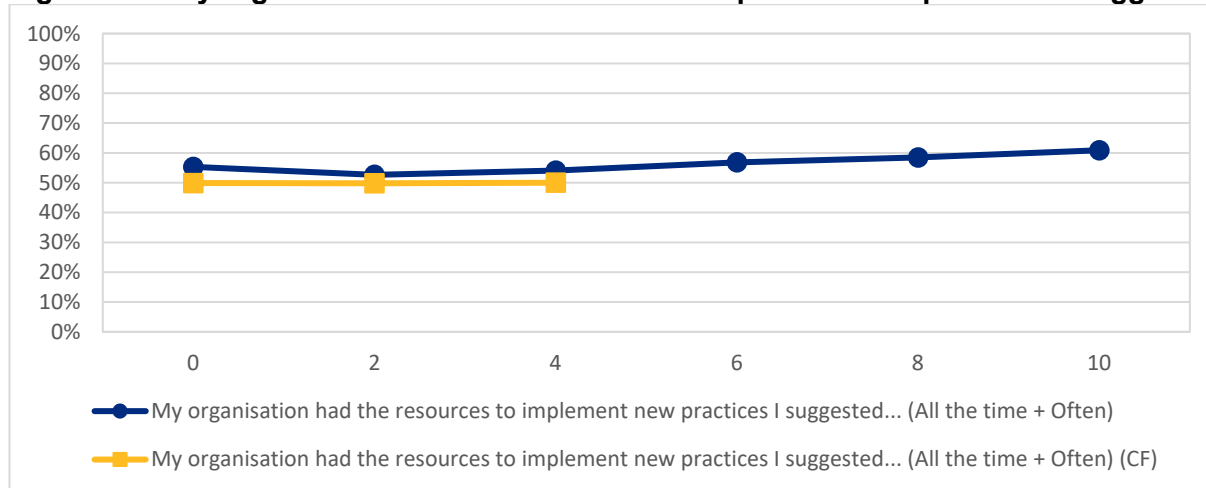
My organisation had the resources to implement new practices I suggested... (All the time + Often)

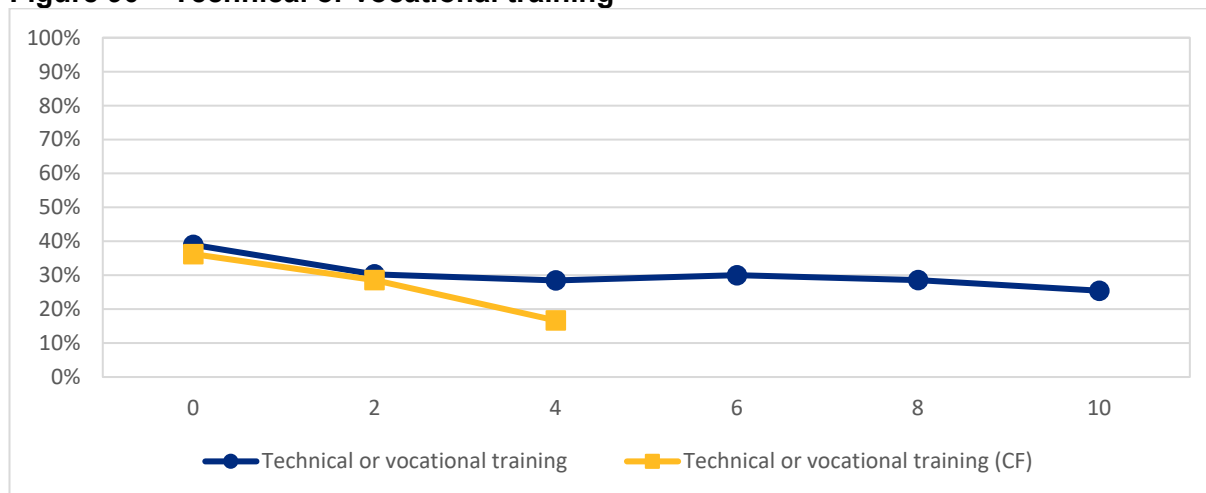My organisation had the resources to implement new practices I suggested... (All the time + Often) (CF)

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Figure 94 demonstrates that a higher number of Recipients reported that they had a voice in deciding how to do their job at the Baseline (86%) compared to the Counterfactual group. The opposite is the case at the year two survey due to a drop in the proportion of Recipients, but then reverses again at year four. Between year four and ten the curve remains relatively flat with a slight upward trend.

Figure 94 – I had a voice in deciding how to do my job...
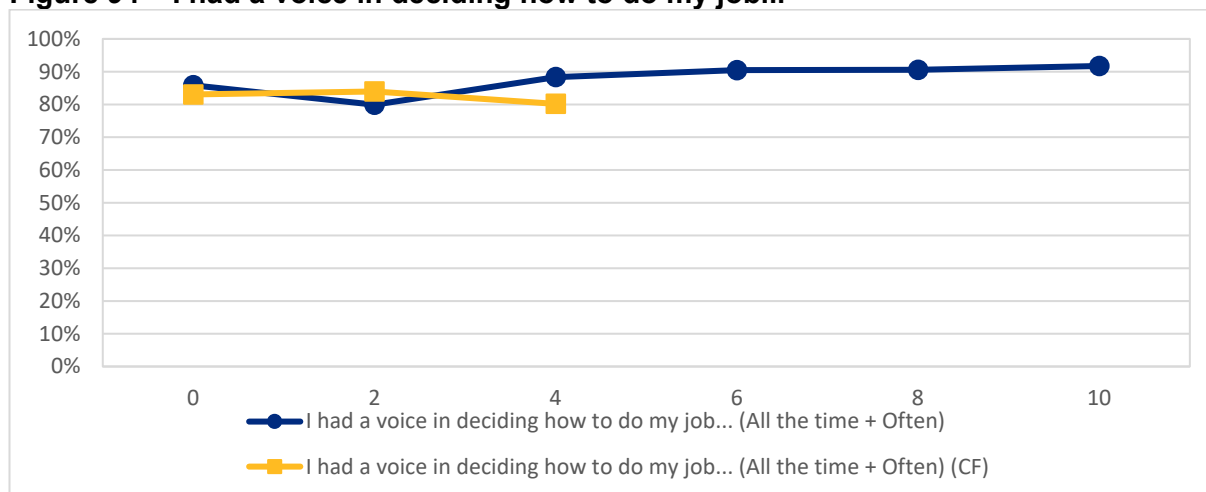
I had a voice in deciding how to do my job... (All the time + Often)

I had a voice in deciding how to do my job... (All the time + Often) (CF)

Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Figure 95 shows a similar trend as is shown in Figure 94. Overall, the trend for the Recipients remains positive except that the change towards the last two surveys is sharper. Overall, the curve reported by the Counterfactuals shows a negative trend.

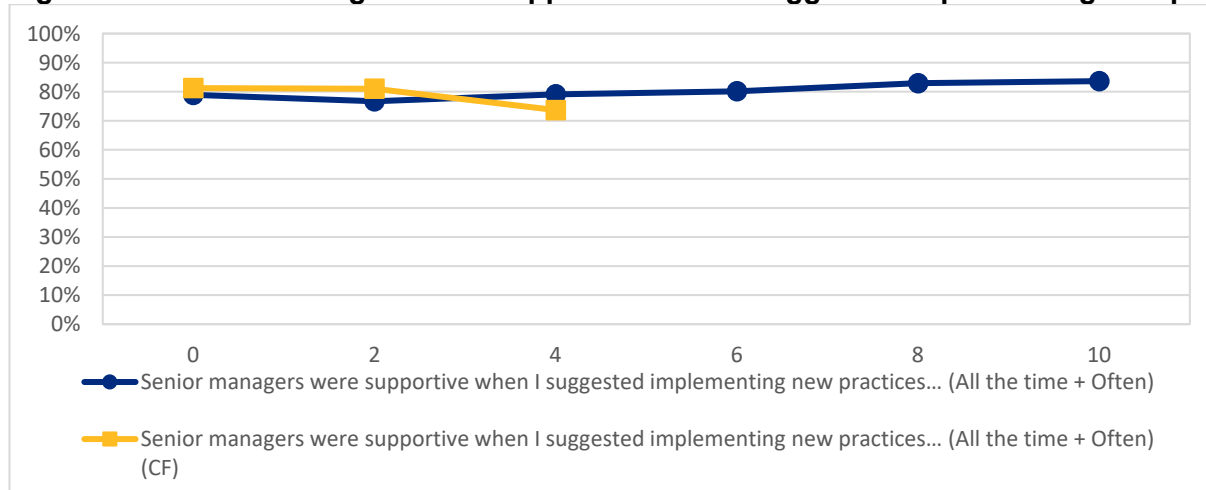**Figure 95 – I had a voice in what goes on within my work team...**
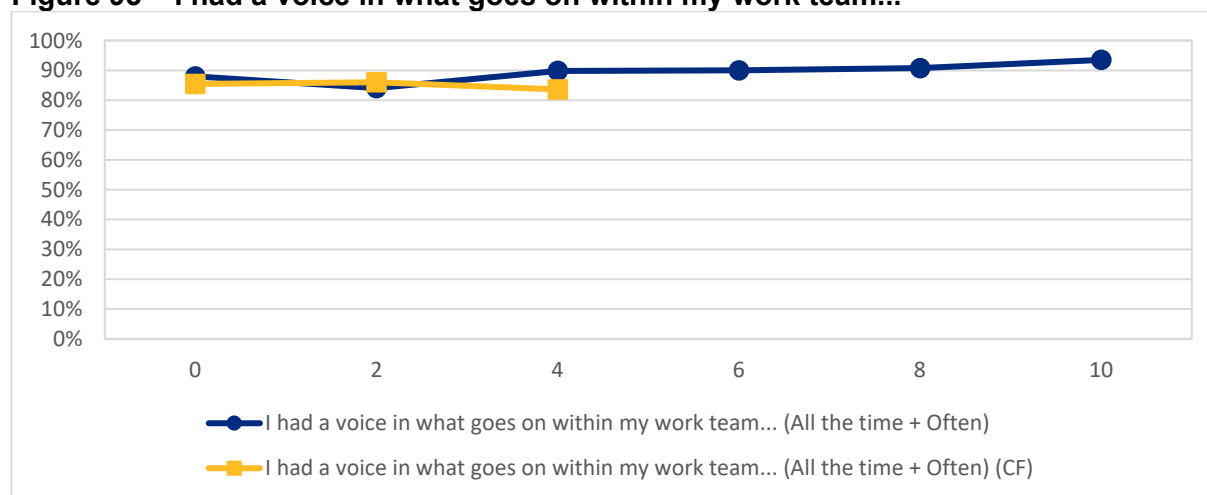
Source: Longitudinal Baseline Survey; Longitudinal Alumni Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Follow-up Survey

Part Four: Summary and Analysis

This section examined components of the Theory of Change where Commonwealth Alumni begin to apply the immediate outputs from their studies into broader workplace settings.

Use of Skills and Knowledge

The overwhelming majority of alumni consistently reported throughout the follow up period that they have been using skills and knowledge acquired while on CSC Scholarship in their current employment as well as outside employment. Almost all said that they approach a problem in a different way because of something that they learned during their studies, and more than four fifths reported that they teach their colleagues something that they learned during their studies. Additionally, more than 70% of alumni developed training resources or guidance for others based on something that they learned during their studies. This demonstrates a multiplying effect of the Scholarship, with knowledge and skills originally acquired by Scholars shared with others in their workplaces post-Scholarship.

There is a strong perception by more than 70% of the alumni that they have been able to encourage a senior manager to make a change based on something that they learned during their studies, which is a demonstration of influence and authority Scholars acquire with their degrees. Almost all respondents said that they made a change to their organisation's working practice based on something that they learned during their studies, demonstrating the translation of on-award learning outcomes into changes to organisational working practices.

Application of Research Findings

The proportion of alumni who reported personally leading or designing a new initiative or project increased slightly but consistently over the years from the initial follow up period as opposed to the Counterfactual group, where the initial high proportion of respondents choosing this answer decreased substantially over time. This indicates that the Scholarship was an important factor in taking on leadership role and initiating a new initiative/project in post-study period.

Even more profound was the difference between the two surveyed groups in relation to being a lead author or negotiator on a bid for funding or investment, where the alumni group showed steady increase over the years, while the Counterfactual group reported a steep decline from the initial Baseline to the year four point.

Another notable difference between the Alumni and Counterfactual groups was their response to the question about founding or co-founding a new company, department or institute. While the proportion on the Alumni group who responded positively to this question remained steady at about one-fifth throughout the years, the counterfactual group showed a steep decline from the Baseline to the four-year period of the follow up. It is worth noting though that there were considerably fewer respondents within the counterfactual group than in the alumni group which may have influenced the results to some extent, however the effect on being a founder of a private or charitable organisation, department or other type of enterprise in the post-Scholarship years appears present.

Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities

Receiving a Scholarship appears to be some effect on holding the responsibility for supervising the work of other employees, as around four fifths of alumni confirming they held this responsibility throughout the follow up period. In comparison, the proportion of Counterfactual group of respondents who supervised other employees was the same as in the alumni group (almost four fifths) at the Baseline, however it reduced to less than half in the four years following the initial response. Overseeing an organisation or department's budget, devising the strategic direction as well as managing or chairing a company or department increased in the alumni group over the years compared to the counterfactual group where, after staring higher than in the alumni group, it initially decreased and then remained below the alumni group in the follow up period. Alumni also reported strong support from their managers and co-workers when suggesting or implementing new practices and increased authority over time on decision making in their own and their team's work.

Alumni who were involved in teaching students reported reduced teaching activities at the primary and secondary level, showing a sharp drop from pre-scholarship to the post-scholarship period and remaining below the Counterfactual group in the follow up period. While there was no reported reduction in teaching university undergraduates, the proportion of respondents selecting this answer remained steady, with only slight increase over the years. The Counterfactual group in comparison showed higher proportion of respondents teaching at this level at the beginning, followed by a sharp increase within four-year follow up period.

However, there are major differences in relation to teaching postgraduates and doctoral degree supervision, where the Scholarship appears to have made substantial positive difference with the proportion of alumni supervising and teaching at this level increasing sharply immediately after their studies, and continuing to increase over all follow up surveys. The Counterfactual group, while initially starting at a higher proportion than alumni of postgraduate teaching, showed decreases over time in the proportion of respondents supervising doctoral students and teaching at the postgraduate level. Providing technical and vocational training decreased in both groups over time, albite more gradually and to a lesser extent in the alumni group compared to the Counterfactual group.

These results indicate that Commonwealth Scholarships had a substantial influence on the increase in the proportion of the alumni group teaching at postgraduate level and supervising doctoral students, which in turn demonstrates a wider outcome of the Scholarship on spreading the knowledge and benefits within academia beyond the immediate alumni group and by training and supervising the next generation of researchers.

The alumni group also appeared to gradually become more influential in convincing their managers and co-workers to support implementation of new practices. The proportion of alumni reporting this increased consistently over time in comparison to the Counterfactual group where the trend was negative. A similar trend is observed when it comes to having a voice in deciding how to do their job and what goes on within their work team. Alumni's ability to influence workplace related activities can be interpreted as strong and long term, allowing the alumni to shape and influence their organisations' work practices and direction.

Summary

This section of the Theory of Change is broadly supported by the evidence held by the CSC. There is substantial evidence demonstrating that Commonwealth Alumni are taking the skills and knowledge that they learned during their studies and applying them in employment and non-employment contexts. Alumni have also reported that they share the skills and knowledge they acquired while studying with others in their workplace, either through on the job teaching or through the development of training resources for their organisations.

When it comes to the Application of Research Findings, there are clear differences in the trends between the Recipient and Counterfactual groups in the frequencies with which they start new businesses or departments and pursue funding opportunities. However, these are perhaps not the strongest metrics with which to assess the Application of Research Findings as the CSC does not hold evidence directly linking these activities to previous research. There can also be instances where alumni engage in these activities in ways that are separated from research activities. This suggests that some reflection is required in both the place of innovation activities in the Theory of Change, and how the Application of Research Findings is measured.

Finally the evidence related to Workplace and Volunteer Project and Activities shows increases in leadership-related activities, and broadly supportive workplace contexts. There are also clear differences between those alumni involved in teaching and the Counterfactual group when it comes to teaching at the postgraduate level and supervising doctoral students. However, much of the specific activities related to sustainable development impact are covered in the next section.

Part Five: Impact

In a Theory of Change, Impact is the long-term result of the Inputs and Activities that comprise an intervention. For the Commonwealth Scholarship programme, the Impact is represented by the changes made to people's lives through the Application of Research Findings and their Workplace/Volunteer Projects and activities. These are the culmination of the initial investments that provided Scholars with the education, training, and opportunities that they might otherwise not have had without their Commonwealth Scholarship.

Sustainable Development Impact

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Impact of the work that Scholars and Alumni do during and after their Scholarship is the ultimate end-goal of the Commonwealth Scholarship programme. It is the realisation of the investment made in each individual Scholar through their studies. It is important to recognise that the types and scopes of impact that Scholars and Alumni have will differ greatly from each other due to the variation in both their subjects of study, the types of work that they do post-Scholarship, and the geographical regions in which they work. As discussed earlier, this flexibility is one of the strengths of the programme because it does not prescribe the subjects of study or potential career paths of Alumni and allows for people to apply to study in any area as long as they can make a credible case for how it will ultimately have a development impact.

Figure 96 – Sustainable Development Impact
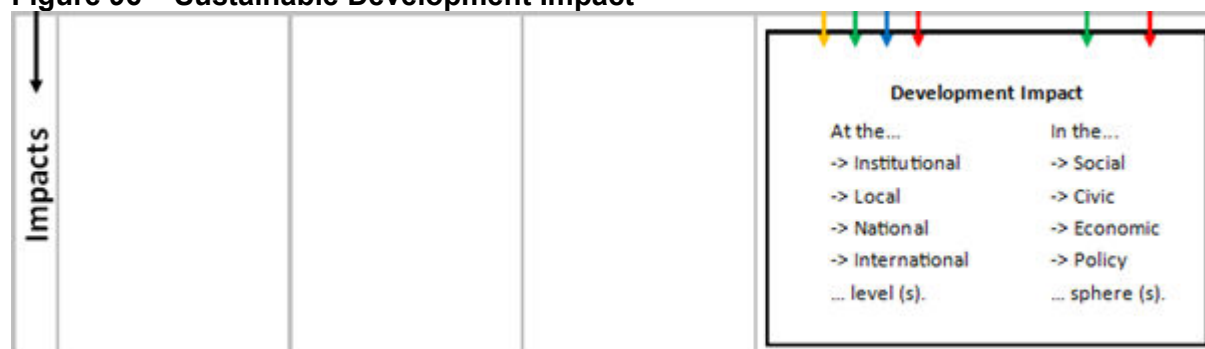
FROM: Application of Research Findings, Workplace/Volunteer Projects and Activities
INTO: N/A

Most of the assumptions associated with this component are extensions of the assumptions that appeared in the Outcomes section around Alumni's abilities to secure funding, resources, and support for their work that will enable them to undertake activities that have a Development Impact. As noted previously, the CSC provides Scholars and Alumni resources to overcome these issues through training and signposting of funding opportunities and further training resources that they can use to help overcome any of these issues that they may encounter.

Data Collected	Outputs and Reports
CSC Alumni Survey (2012-2015)	Alumni and Evaluation Case Studies
Distance Learner Annual Survey	Common Knowledge
Interviews with Alumni	Building Bridges: The Commonwealth Split-Site Doctoral Scholarship Programme 1998-2018 (2019)
Longitudinal Alumni Survey	Commonwealth Doctoral Scholarships 1960-2015 (2017)
Longitudinal Baseline Survey	
Longitudinal Counterfactual Baseline Survey	Successes and Complexities: the outcomes of UK Commonwealth Scholarships 1960-2012 (2016)
Longitudinal Counterfactual Follow-up Survey	Assessing Impact in Environmental Sustainability (2013)
	Assessing Impact in Higher Education and Development (2012)
	Assessing Impact in the Asia-Pacific Region (2011)
	Assessing Impact in Building and Sustaining Commonwealth Principles on Democracy (2011)
	Assessing Impact in the Health Sector (2010)
	Assessing Impact in the Caribbean (2009)
	Assessing Impact in Key Priority Areas (2009)

Analysis

This section aims to examine the long-term impact made by the Scholarship Recipients compared to the non-recipient Counterfactual group and to what extent the Scholarship contributes to Recipients' impact. By doing so, it seeks to establish a reasonable pathway for demonstrating how Commonwealth Scholarships contribute to sustainable development impact.

The following section utilises descriptive analysis to portray how the Recipient and Counterfactual respondents perceived their development impact at different levels and in various spheres over time, whether similarly or differently. Subsequently, the chi-square test of independence is employed to investigate whether a significant difference existed between the two groups in making an impact across levels and spheres at the year two and year four follow-up points, as these were the only comparable follow-up points. Following this, the section offers insights into where and how the Commonwealth Alumni impacted various levels and spheres by visualising the impact examples in the survey and excerpts from previously conducted case studies.

Levels of Impact

Figure 97 displays a consistent hierarchy representation of the impact levels between Recipient and Counterfactual respondents over time, with the most reporting their impact at the institutional level and

the fewest reporting at the international level. This suggests that irrespective of receiving the Scholarship, institutions or organisations are more likely a starting point for making changes or impact.

What also stands out from the figure is the divergent trend between Recipient and Counterfactual respondents in reporting their national and international impact. The Scholarship seems to increase the possibility of making an impact at the national and international levels. As is shown in Figure 97, despite the lower percentage of Recipient respondents reporting impact at national and international levels than Counterfactual respondents during the Baseline phase, an upward trend was observed over time; specifically, those Recipient respondents reporting having an international impact increased by 13% after ten years of completing their Scholarships.

On the other hand, although more Counterfactual respondents than Recipient respondents indicated impact at the national and international level at the Baseline, with a 12-13% higher rate, these percentages dropped substantially after their applications, decreasing by 15-22% at the year four follow-up point.

Figure 97 – Levels of impact perceived by Recipient and Counterfactual respondents over time
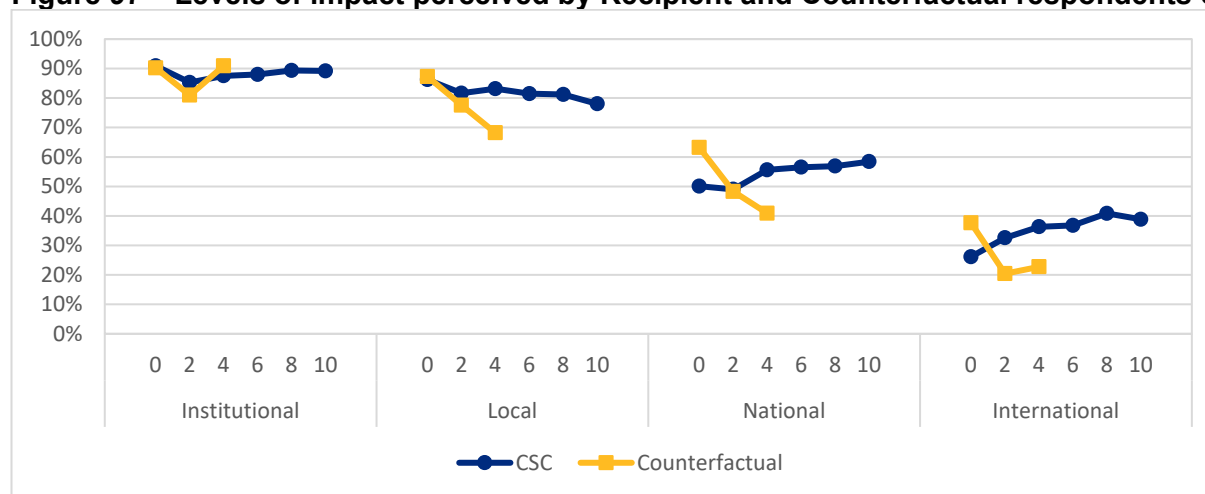
Source: Scholar Baseline Survey; Alumni Longitudinal Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Longitudinal Survey

Further statistical analysis revealed that respondents who received a Commonwealth Scholarship were more likely to create an impact at the international level (33%) than the CF respondents (20%) at the year two follow-up point. The chi-square test of independence resulted in a chi-square statistic (χ^2) of 9.311, with 1 degree of freedom. The p-value (0.00227782) being less than 0.01 indicates a statistically significant association between receiving Scholarships and international impact. However, despite the statistical significance, Cramer's V value (0.067), the most commonly used test to examine the chi-square results, is less than 0.1, indicating a weak association.

No statistically significant differences between the two groups were observed in any other levels of impact at this follow-up point; and no significant differences in any levels of impact at the four year follow-up point. This result may be subject to the relatively small data samples collected from the Counterfactual group.

Spheres of Impact

Figure 98 shows that more respondents from both Recipient and Counterfactual groups reported impacting the social sphere compared to other spheres during and after applying for the Scholarships.

In every impact sphere, the percentages of Counterfactual respondents reporting an impact were higher than those of Recipients at the Baseline. This was particularly noticeable in economic, policy, and

environmental spheres, with a 7-13% higher rate. However, these percentages decreased by 9-16% at the year four follow-up point.

On the other hand, despite the lower percentages of Recipients reporting impact in the economic and policy spheres than Counterfactual respondents, the percentages of those alumni reporting impact in both spheres had been increasing in the post-Scholarship period. Notably, the percentage of Commonwealth Alumni reporting having a policy impact increased by nearly 15% after ten years of completing their Scholarships.

Figure 98 – Spheres of impact perceived by Recipient and Counterfactual respondents over time
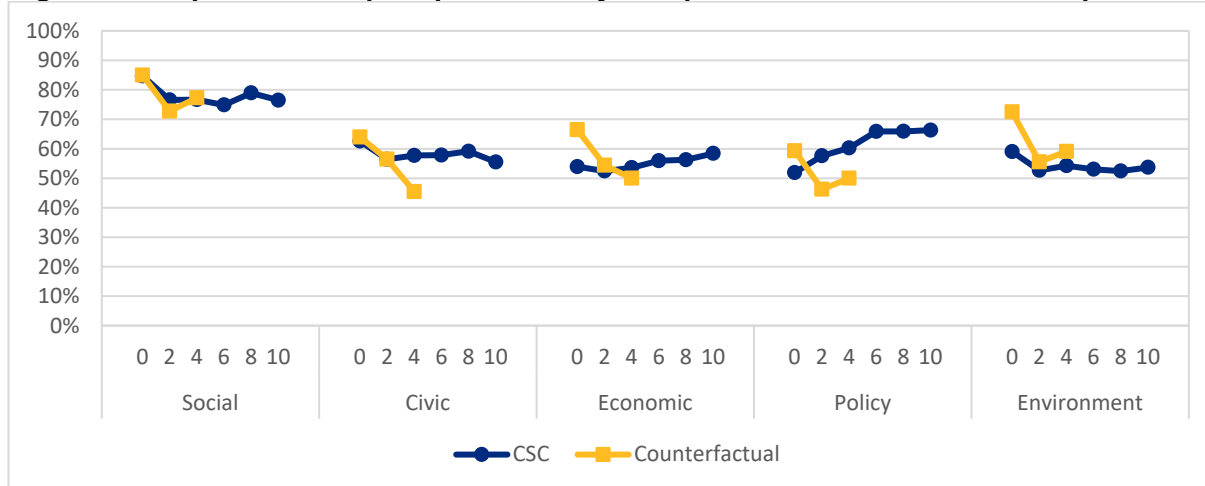
Source: Scholar Baseline Survey; Alumni Longitudinal Survey; Counterfactual Baseline Survey; Counterfactual Longitudinal Survey

Further statistical analysis revealed that respondents who received the Commonwealth Scholarships were more likely to create an impact in the policy sphere (58%) than the Counterfactual respondents (46%) at the year two follow-up point. The chi-square test of independence resulted in a chi-Square statistic (χ^2) of 7.154, with 1 degree of freedom. The p-value (0.0074797) being less than 0.01 indicates a statistically significant association between receiving scholarships and policy impact. However, despite the statistical significance, Cramer's V value (0.059) is less than 0.1, indicating a weak association.

No statistically significant differences between the two groups were observed in any other spheres of impact at this follow-up point, and no such differences were observed at the year four follow-up point. This result may also be due to the relatively small data samples collected from the counterfactual group.

Examples of Impact

Commonwealth Alumni were also asked to provide specific examples of how they have made an impact in areas such as social development, civic engagement, economic development, policymaking, the environment, or climate change. Of 9,701 (29%) respondents, 35% provided examples after two years, 24% after four years, 18% after six years, 13% after eight years, and 10% after ten years of completing their study under the Commonwealth Scholarships. To glimpse what specific impact the alumni have made and how, 2,766 impact examples were coded, analysed and visualised, with excerpts selected from case studies for examples of impact.

The most frequently cited themes throughout the comments were 'health' (30%), 'policy' (29%), and 'education' (21%), mentioned by over one-fifth of respondents. Other key themes cited by over 10% of respondents were 'economic' (17%), 'publishing' (16%), 'community' (15%), 'environmental' (14%), 'research' (13%), 'training' (11%), and 'equity and access' (10%). This suggests that the reported impact was closely associated with the health, education, economic, and environmental sectors or issues. The community might be the primary beneficiary or the commonplace where the impact happened, and

policy, research, publishing, and training could be the common approaches through which respondents created their impact.

As shown later in this section, the theme 'policy' was closely linked to all the impact sectors, such as 'health', 'education', 'economic', and 'environment'. Instead of reporting separately, it was reported in association with different impact sectors.

Firstly, under the theme of 'health', Figure 99 shows the reported impact closely related to 'policy', 'community', 'research', 'care', and 'service'. This suggests that health challenges, particularly healthcare and services, could typically be addressed through research and policy influence, ultimately benefiting the community.

Figure 99 – Emerged themes of health-related impact

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Respondents reported various health-related engagements, including improving healthcare access, strengthening the quality and efficient healthcare facilities and services, addressing specific physical healthcare and issues related to eye, dental, reproductive, palliative care and mental health, as well as tackling public health challenges like communicable and non-communicable diseases, e.g., HIV and Covid-19. Children, adolescents, women and marginalised groups were frequently highlighted, especially in the rural and remote areas facing healthcare and hygiene challenges. For example, Dr Olusimbo Kehinde Ige[49], a 2012 Distance learning Commonwealth Scholarships awardee from Nigeria, spearheaded the One Million Children initiative between 2015 and 2020, leading to a 25% reduction in child mortality from malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhoea.

> 'A total of 1,075,732 children [exceeding the one million target] were reached with live-saving interventions, ensuring that they had access to all essential health services up to the age of five.'

Dr Shadrach Dare[50], a double Commonwealth Scholarships awardee from Ghana, co-founded the Dr Nana Gruer Health Initiative (NGO) in 2015 with his PhD supervisor while he was studying at the University of Glasgow. Through fundraising activities, they have improved access to health care facilities and services in rural Ghana by providing motorcycles for healthcare staff to deliver home services,

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[49] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022d.
[50] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022e.

distributing food supplements for children, and offering clinical and logistical training for maternity care providers.

> 'Based on the response we heard two years ago, after donating two motorbikes, we found that the motorbikes were making a huge impact. The work with Dr Nana, the motorbikes, is serving a constituency of people who would otherwise not have access to healthcare. Last month, we donated five more motorbikes, and we had some tremendous responses from community leaders and the district health directors about the impact the motorbikes were making.'

'Policy' was the second common theme associated with health-related impact reported at the institutional, local or national level, ranging from nutrition, sanitation, insurance, and non-communicable disease policy to youth-centred drug policy. Distance Learning Commonwealth Scholarship Alumnus Joab Tusaasire[51] led a research trial supporting the Ministry of Health in Uganda in recommending an appropriate dosage of the local ready-to-use therapeutic food to be administered to malnourished patients.

> 'The dosage that could bring out complete treatment of malnutrition was arrived at from these trials and this informed the Nutrition Assessment Counselling and Support (NACS) guidelines for the Ministry of Health.'

Additionally, 'care', particularly palliative care, and 'training' emerged as another oft-mentioned theme. Respondents contributed to capacity-building activities by providing skills training to healthcare professionals, pharmacists, and students, increasing awareness among community members, and nurturing them to become healthcare champions.

Figure 100 – Emerged themes of education-related impact

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Figure 100 displays the reported impact on education, which was closely associated with 'school', 'students', 'children', 'community' and 'policy'. Although the impact occurred at different levels of education (including pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education), 'secondary education' was often mentioned in the comments concerning improving school access and quality education. For example, Commonwealth Alumnus Banduga Ismail[52] worked with UNESCO to improve access to quality

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[51] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2023c.
[52] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022f.

education in Uganda by influencing the development and implementation of the National Teacher. The policy has resulted in the establishment of the Teacher Management Information System (TMIS), facilitating teacher recruitment, registration, and management.

> 'The National Teacher Policy was approved by the Cabinet of Uganda in 2019 and it is now a published government policy that is being implemented by the Ministry of Education.'

Moreover, there was a specific focus on child and girl education. Various educational topics such as health, hygiene, nutrition, sexuality, civic education, and language education were also addressed. The impact on education was mainly through a capacity-building approach. Respondents were involved in teaching students at schools, online, or universities, developing curriculum and teaching resources or providing training to teachers as teacher educators. At the Higher Teacher Training College (HTTC) in Cameron, Commonwealth Alumnus Dr Glory Enjong Mbah[53] has trained a total of 115 student teachers who have since become teachers themselves. She is also a pioneer member of the African Schools Outreach Programme organised by the International Veterinary Vaccinology Network to inspire the next generation of young female scientists across Africa.

> 'In 2021, an outreach training workshop was delivered to 160 students from United High School and Isanbi Comprehensive High School in Nigeria. In Kenya, 82 students were trained at Naivasha Secondary School. Following the training, Glory's Team mentored and offered career guidance talks to 1,000 schoolgirls at this school. In Loise Girls Secondary School, in Kenya a training workshop was conducted with 40 girls.'

Additionally, respondents mentioned mentoring students from rural communities to support their access to education and their educational pursuits. Commonwealth Alumnus Babajide Milton Macaulay[54] initiated a startup – Illumania – to reach out to talented students from low-income backgrounds and offer them study-abroad scholarship opportunities.

> 'Since 2018 to date, graduates of Nigerian universities applying for Master's/PhD scholarships abroad have probably tripled, and more than half of them are winning international scholarships at first or second attempt … In total, I was able to produce 250 scholarship winners across Africa in 4.5 years: attracting scholarship benefits of up to 10 million USD [as of publication in 2022]'

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[53] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022g.
[54] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2024b.

Figure 101 – Emerged themes of economic-related impact

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Figure 101 depicts the economic impact associated closely with 'community' and 'policy'. Most economic activities and impacts were observed in remote and rural communities, with farming and fishing communities frequently mentioned in the comments. Respondents strongly supported small-scale, environmentally friendly and sustainable businesses, particularly in agriculture. Farmers, particularly smallholders and those from rural farming communities were frequently mentioned in the comments. For example, Commonwealth Alumnus Sidney Muhangi[55] designed the Green Business Programme at the Ubunye Foundation, transforming smallholder farmers' livelihoods and business practices in the rural province of Eastern Cape, South Africa.

> 'While implementing the Programme, I facilitated in establishing over 200 sustainable smallholder businesses. These enterprises operate in an environmentally conscious manner. These are also a source of valuable skills and knowledge in business management and environmental stewardship for their owners. Furthermore, due to the Green Food Project initiative under the wider Green Business Programme, more than 1,500 children now have uninterrupted access to fresh vegetables ensuring good health and well-being.'

Respondents also expressed support for early-stage business development through establishing incubators, launching start-ups, and coaching entrepreneurs. Additionally, they provided vocational, entrepreneurship, and business management skills training programs or projects to improve trainees' employability, focusing on empowering economically disadvantaged youth, girls, and women. At Ressect, a start-up specialising in farming black soldier flies, Commonwealth Alumnus Proscovia Amondi Alando[56] and her colleagues had trained 200 small-scale farmers in Kenya on the Black Fly Soldier (BSF) technology. They offered consultancy and facility set-up to farmers. Moreover, having experienced the weight of the burden for women to practice farming in Kenya, Proscovia has also been promoting the inclusion of women in fish farming by influencing the policy in Kenya.

> 'We [Proscovia and colleagues] came together as one voice to make changes in policy. We developed a framework of policy reforms for the aquaculture industry, saying this is what challenges women and youths face in the industry, and shared it with the government...We

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[55] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2024c.
[56] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2023d.

recommended the inclusion of the youth in value addition and providing technology to support aquaculture.'[57]

Their work gained the government's attention. A black soldier fly facility for a youth group framing fish was set up and implemented in partnership with the county government of Nakuru's Fisheries Department and the Agricultural Sector Development Support Program (ASDSPII).

Figure 102 – Emerged themes of environment-related impact

Source: Longitudinal Alumni Survey

Figure 102 underscores the environmental impact closely associated with the themes of 'community', 'climate change', and 'policy' themes. Respondents have actively implemented projects to mitigate and adapt to climate change. These initiatives often include environmental management, such as biodiversity, water resources, forest conservation, and waste management. Respondents also engaged in various forms of waste management, including the handling of solid, liquid, mining, wood, recycling, medical, and domestic waste. Furthermore, they promoted clean, renewable, and sustainable energy initiatives. In addition to these practical efforts, respondents also played a role in influencing policy matters related to climate change adaptation, renewable energy, beekeeping, wildlife, and agricultural policies. For example, Commonwealth Alumnus Dr Nicole Greenidge[58] joined the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), where she applied the knowledge and skills honed through her doctoral research to inform the policies for strengthening resilience and response to natural and climate change threats in the Caribbean Region.

> 'Given the technical strengths I honed in disaster management during my PhD study, I have supported the participating states to identify stronger evidence base for the development of policy, legislation and country strategies.'

Commonwealth Alumnus George William Ilebo[59] spearheaded the establishment of Conservation International Liberia's Blue Oceans Programme (BOP) to conserve and restore marine and coastal ecosystem services. His work with Conservation International has also influenced national and international environmental policy decisions.

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2022b.
[59] Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. 2022h.

'I have supported critical national policy processes such as Liberia's Low Carbon Development Strategy, the National Interpretation of the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil, REDD+ strategy, and revising Liberia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).'[60]

Part Five: Summary and Analysis

The evidence shows that Commonwealth Alumni do report a degree of impact across all levels and spheres. In the context of reported impact spheres, Commonwealth Scholarships may particularly contribute to impact generation in the economic and policy spheres. Compared to the social, civic, and environmental spheres, where the reported impact exhibited a fluctuating trend over time, there has been a noticeable upward trend in reporting impact on the economic and policy spheres during the post-award period, contrasting with a downward trend observed from the Counterfactual respondents. However, the statistical analysis only revealed a weak association between receiving Scholarships and impacting the policy sphere, at least at the year two follow-up point. This association indicates that policy impact may be partially contingent on individuals receiving the Scholarships. In other words, policy impact might not have materialised if the recipients had not been awarded the Commonwealth Scholarships.

It is also important to note that the impact reported by Commonwealth Alumni is not confined to a singular level or domain. Instead, it demonstrates overlaps and intersections, constituting a complex network of cross-level and inter-sphere interactions. For example, policy impact displays close associations with sectors such as health, education, economics, and the environment; impact stemming from local or institutional levels extends to the national or international arena. These interconnections underscore the intricate and dynamic nature of creating a sustainable development impact.

Statistical analysis suggests that Commonwealth Scholarships may not significantly contribute to differences in outcomes in sustainable development impact at the institutional or local level. Recipients and Counterfactual respondents reported similar trends in their impact over time. After the Baseline, the proportions of both groups reporting impact at this level dropped and recovered over time but only reached about the same level as the Baseline. Compared to the flattening trend in reporting impact at the institutional level, the percentages of those reporting impact at the local level from both groups continued to decline.

However, Commonwealth Scholarships may be important in facilitating the impact at the national and international levels. It was observed that respondents in the Recipient group noted a consistent upward trend in national and international impact over time, while Counterfactual respondents indicated an overall downward trend. Moreover, despite a weak association, the statistical analysis showed a significant difference between these two groups in creating an impact at the international level at the year-two follow-up point, further backing up that receiving the Scholarship can make a difference in creating an international impact.

Last, it is acknowledged the limitations of using a self-reported approach to capture the impact. This impact is the change that respondents believe or perceive they have made to people's lives by applying their knowledge, skills or research through their workplace or volunteering projects or initiatives. The responses can be influenced by respondents' interpretations of the questions. Although respondents are asked to provide examples of their impact in the survey and invited some of them for interviews to gather further evidence to support their perceived impact, not all alumni do so. As a result, the analysis of development impact was mainly based on the assumption that participants provided genuine responses. Additionally, there is a limited understanding of whether receiving Scholarships makes a difference in the

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[60] Ibid.

longer term due to the lack of comparable data from the Counterfactual group at the six, eight, and ten year follow-up points. However, ongoing data collection and analysis will further address this limitation.

Summary and Findings

Overall, the CSC holds a strong evidence base to support both that the processes articulated in the Theory of Change are taking place, and that the programme is contributing to impacts in sustainable development.

Basic Programme Path

The Basic Programme path for the Theory of Change is the most straightforward. All Inputs are taken to support Scholars to participate in the CSC Development Training Programme and their Course of Study, which results in a Qualification, which enables Commonwealth Alumni to pursue Workplace and Volunteer Projects and Activities over the course of their career which leads to Sustainable Development Impact.

The supporting evidence to demonstrate that this pathway does indeed take place is very strong, with the exception of the evidence around the CSC Development Training Programme. As noted in Part Two, there is evidence showing that the sessions provided through this programme are of high-quality and that Scholars do learn important skills from it, however this evidence could be strengthened through additional data collection both about the programme itself, and how the skills learned specifically in those sessions are put into practice further along in alumni's careers. However, despite this one weakness the evidence supports the case that this pathway in the Theory of Change is both accurately conceptualised, and taking place in practice.

Skills and Knowledge Path

The Skills and Knowledge path reflects the learning that Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni do through the CSC Development Training Programme, their Course of Study, and Other CSC Engagement, and how that learning is used and applied in Workplace and Volunteer Projects and Activities in the service of Sustainable Development Impact.

Overall, this pathway has possibly the strongest evidence to support it, with two notable exceptions. There is strong evidence to show that Scholars receive high-quality educational opportunities through their Course of Study, that they see significant development to their Skills and Knowledge, that these Skills and Knowledge are then put to use in employment and non-employment contexts, that they use them in their Workplace and Volunteer Projects and Activities leading to Sustainable Development Impact.

The two exceptions where the evidence is not as strong are the CSC Development Training Programme and the Other CSC Engagement activities. Again as noted in Part Two, there is evidence to suggest that these activities are delivered to a high quality, and that Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni value them, however the overall base of evidence currently presented could be bolstered through additional data collection activities. It is important to note that there is no evidence that suggests that these components of the Skills and Knowledge pathway do not take place or that the pathway as conceptualised is not an accurate reflection of the process. However, additional investigation and data collection activities with respect to these two components would serve to strengthen the evidence base demonstrating the value of these activities.

Network Development Path

The Network Development Path reflects how Scholars build relationships and networks over the course of their Scholarship, particularly with contacts in the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth Scholars, Fellows, and Alumni. They do this through their Course of Study, and their participation in both the CSC Development Training Programme and Other CSC Engagement opportunities. Through the development and strengthening of these networks and relationships Commonwealth Alumni then have more

opportunities to work with international partners on Workplace and Volunteer Projects and Activities that contribute to Sustainable Development Impact.

Once again there is strong evidence suggesting that this pathway as presented in the Theory of Change is both an accurate reflection of the process, and that it is taking place. While noting the general weakness of the evidence base around the CSC Development Training Programme and Other CSC Engagement that has been discussed previously, there is strong evidence to suggest that Commonwealth Scholars do develop their UK-based networks and relationships, and their relationships with Commonwealth Scholars, Fellows, and Alumni. This evidence is particularly strong given the divergence currently seen in the evidence between those who received Scholarships and those who did not in the Counterfactual.

Research Path

Finally, the Research Path shows how the research conducted by Scholars and Alumni feed into Sustainable Development Impact. The Research particularly conducted by Commonwealth Doctoral and Split-site Scholars during their Scholarship generates Research Findings which both generates Additional Research and can be used (along with the Additional Research) in the direct Application of Research Findings. These applications take the form of Workplace and Volunteer Projects and Activities which have Sustainable Development Impact.

There is strong evidence to support many aspects of this pathway. Scholars report that they have access to high quality and supportive research environments during their award, and for a strong majority of alumni their ongoing research is directly related to the research they conducted during their Scholarship. Three-fifths of alumni report continued research activities as a part of their employment and show strong engagement with the broader research community during their careers.

The one component of this pathway which is somewhat weaker is the Application of Research Findings. While there is evidence to suggest that alumni are applying their research findings in the founding of new businesses and activities, more could be done to investigate this link. The evidence presented for this component also touches on innovations and creation of new departments and organisations more broadly, suggesting that the Theory of Change could potentially be revised to reflect 'Innovations' in a more general sense.

Reflections and Future Actions

Overall, the Contribution Analysis has found strong evidence in support of the Theory of Change. While there are areas of weakness in the evidence, they are isolated and can be addressed through additional targeted data collection to investigate those areas further. On the whole, the Theory of Change stands up to scrutiny.

There are four areas of action that are suggested by the findings of this report with respect to data collection. First, the Counterfactual data set is still quite small, and additional data should be collected from this group. However, this is already taking place as the Counterfactual data collection is one of the core annual data collection activities done by the CSC. As additional data collection exercises take place, the number of respondents for both the year two and year four follow periods will grow, and data will begin to be collected for the year six and onward points.

The other three areas of action are to collect further data in relation to the three components of the Theory of Change where the evidence base was identified as weaker, namely the CSC Development Training Programme, Other CSC Engagement activities, and the Application of Research Findings. For each of these components additional data collection would serve to either further evidence that these aspects of the Theory of Change are taking place as postulated or show that revision to the Theory of Change is needed.

Finally, one additional action suggested by the Contribution Analysis is to revisit how the Application of Research Findings is conceptualised and evidenced. Currently the evidence base may be more suited to some form of 'Innovation' component that is not currently featured in the Theory of Change, and additional data collection could be warranted around the Application of Research Findings once this revision has taken place.

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