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**CSC Equity, Access and Inclusion Statement and Policy**

**Statement**

One of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission’s (CSC) three main objectives is; *To ensure that our programmes promote equity and inclusion, reward merit, and deliver widespread access, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups.* These principles apply to all programmes offered by the CSC, and whilst this objective specifically refers to *programmes*, it is recognised that these values must be reflected in all the activities undertaken by the CSC as a core component of our mission alongside our focus on development impact.

The Commission’s approach to equity, access and inclusion draws on both the rights-based approach to development, and the ‘leave no one behind’ principles of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.[[1]](#footnote-2) We recognise that disadvantage and underrepresentation manifests differently across Commonwealth countries and work with partners and stakeholders to ensure we engage with people from all communities in order to build a diverse community of Commonwealth Scholars.

The CSC is working continuously to build on and improve our procedures to ensure we offer a scholarship programme that serves everyone, regardless of disadvantage or accessibility needs, and including those from historically marginalised groups.

We are committed to this work, and endeavour to ensure our commitment to widening access and participation is present in all the work that we do.

**Policy**

# Introduction

This Equity, Access and Inclusion Policy outlines the CSC’s responsibility to develop an environment and community free from discrimination for all those who encounter the CSC.

The Commission is determined to ensure that best practice is adhered to in all policies and procedures in line with its domestic obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and in addition takes into account The Public Service Equality Duty.

# Scope

This policy applies to all members of the CSC community, including, but not limited to, Scholars, Fellows, Commissioners, alumni, Secretariat staff, British Council staff, applicants, and participants at CSC events. All members of the CSC community are expected to act in accordance with this policy.

All members of the CSC community have a responsibility to promote equity, access and inclusion and to avoid discrimination. It is crucial that everyone takes personal responsibility to help ensure that the CSC community builds a culture of inclusion, respects the dignity of everyone and values the differences that exist between people and cultures.

# Commitment

In the implementation of this policy the CSC will aim to:

* Develop and promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion and that works to counter any form of discrimination across all its activities, policies and procedures;
* This includes discrimination against the protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act (2010)) of age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The CSC also has a commitment to protecting the rights of those with low socio-economic status, refugee and internally displaced communities and underrepresented groups in higher education;
* Work to prevent all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation and deal with all forms of discrimination consistently and effectively;
* Ensure that this Equity, Access and Inclusion policy influences and informs the culture of the Commission;
* Publish this policy on the Commission website and any relevant codes of practice and guidance;
* Use an evidence–based approach where possible to inform its activities to widen access and inclusion and to measure the impact of any changes;
* Review annually the progress of the CSC’s Equity, Access and Inclusion strategy;
* Monitor and publish annual data on nationality and gender;
* Regularly review, at least every 3 years, this policy and all associated codes of practice and guidance;
* Monitor the performance of key stakeholders involved in the recruitment of scholars and fellows and ensure they continue to attract a diverse pool of applicants.

# Application of the Policy

Recruitment and selection

* The CSC works with partners in the recruitment of its scholars and expects all partners to ensure that the application and nominating process does not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against applicants on the basis of age, health status, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy, maternity, marital status, socio-economic status or social position;
* The CSC and its partners will make every effort to make reasonable adjustments to ensure the application process is as accessible as possible for persons with disabilities;
* All individuals in the UK involved in the review and selection of scholars will have appropriate and up-to-date training in support of equity, access and inclusion objectives;
* Applications will be assessed by an independent assessor ahead of their review by the selection panel. Two Commissioners will assess the same application as part of the assessment process, and any conflicts of interest will be declared;
* If assessment methods such as interviews or written tests are used by our partners in the process of recruitment, these should be applied consistently across applicants and must not unfairly disadvantage applicants due to their regional location, caring responsibilities, disability, health condition, or socio-economic status. Every effort will be made to provide alternative arrangements, such as providing materials in a variety of formats or interviewing at a distance, where individuals may be disadvantaged.

Scholar on award experience

* The Commission and the Secretariat will ensure that all policies and processes (e.g: funding policies, programmes and events) are implemented without prejudice and in a fair and equitable manner that promotes inclusion, protecting and supporting the needs of all scholars, as long as they do not conflict with other Commission policies;
* Information will be provided to all scholars in order to raise awareness of equality and diversity and the contents of this policy;
* All CSC Scholars undertake an ‘Introduction to equality and diversity’ training course to ensure they are aware of the expectations around inclusion within the CSC community;
* CSC uses Equality Impact Assessments to ensure programmes, policies and activities do not present barriers or disadvantage any person from participation;
* Commonwealth Scholars are expected to support equality and inclusion in their interactions with one another and with the Commission. They are encouraged to draw attention to cases in which they see other scholars or those involved in the Commission not meeting the standards laid out in this policy. They are expected to all meet the standards they sign up to in the CSC Code of Conduct for Award Holders;
* Commonwealth Scholars are encouraged to take concrete steps to make CSC spaces more inclusive, and support and validate the experiences of all scholars in an equitable and fair manner and will work deliberately to foster an environment where all scholars feel safe, comfortable and supported.

Staff, Commissioners and Alumni

* All staff and Commissioners undergo a range of regular awareness and training initiatives including on unconscious bias, disability awareness and equality and diversity awareness;
* Secretariat staff, and Commissioners are required to ensure that external contacts including suppliers are aware of this policy and their obligations to work and operate within its parameters, as appropriate;
* The Commission will continue to work with the FCDO in supporting and maintaining a Commission that is as representative of its scholar body as possible, including with respect to diversity. The processes for recruiting new Commissioners are overseen and regulated by HMG’s Commissioner for Public Appointments and the guidance is designed to encourage as wide and diverse an application pool as possible, using, among other tools, specialist sites;
* Commonwealth Alumni are expected to support equity and inclusion in their interactions with one another and with the Commission. They are encouraged to draw attention to cases in which they see other alumni or those involved in the Commission not meeting the standards laid out in this policy. They are expected to all meet the standards they sign up to in the CSC Code of Conduct for Alumni;
* Commonwealth Alumni are encouraged to take concrete steps to make CSC spaces more inclusive, and support and validate the experiences of all alumni in an equitable and fair manner and will work deliberately to foster an environment where all alumni feel safe, comfortable and supported.

# Monitoring

Monitoring is essential to ensure that the CSC’s Equity, Access and Inclusion Policy is working effectively. The Commission publishes a report annually which includes:

* Data on CSC’s efforts to widen access to scholarships
* Some demographic data on scholars and fellows

The CSC collects demographic information at the point of application, which is anoymised before being used for monitoring and analysis. All data is processed and stored in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

# Communication

This policy will be available on the CSC website at <https://cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/> It will also be available, if requested, in different formats (e.g. printed form and/or large print).

# Responsibility

The CSC’s Equity, Access and Inclusion strategy, policy and associated work is lead by the Senior Programme Manager (Policy) and the Programme Officer (Policy)

# Confidentiality

Any information disclosed to the CSC in relation to equity, access and inclusion issues will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with legislative requirements. If you have any questions regarding the content of this policy or would like any further information please contact the Head of CSC: administration@cscuk.org.uk

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| Date of Last Review  | Version 1: 18/07/2024 (CSC ARM Committee) |
| Date of Next Review  | July 2027 (CSC ARM Committee) |

1. United Nations, 2015, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>, accessed 23rd November 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)