



One resilient common future: transforming our Commonwealth

Annual Report

For the year ending 30 September 2024

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Paragraph 5 (2) of
Schedule 2 of the International Development Act 2002



Celebrating
65 years of
Commonwealth
Scholarships



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Foreword

As Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC), I am once again struck by the remarkable dedication and resilience of our Scholars and Alumni. Their unwavering commitment to tackling some of the world's most pressing challenges – whether in healthcare, climate change, or fostering peace and security – continues to inspire and reaffirm the vital role that the CSC plays in advancing sustainable development across the Commonwealth.



This year's Commonwealth Day theme, 'One resilient common future: transforming our Commonwealth', underscores the urgent need for global collaboration in tackling the most pressing challenges of our time – climate change, inequality, health crises, and beyond. At the CSC, we have always believed in the power of education and the exchange of ideas to address these shared issues. Our Scholars and Alumni, through their research and professional work, continue to transform lives, communities, and nations, embodying the very essence of this theme.

Since 1959, the CSC has supported over 31,000 individuals in pursuing higher education and professional development in the UK. The reach and impact of their work spans across disciplines and borders, contributing to innovation in healthcare, governance, environmental sustainability, economic development, and much more. Thanks to funding by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Department for Education and UK University partners, each year we are able to welcome another cohort of Scholars who bring with them diverse perspectives and a shared vision of creating positive change. From advancing research in geothermal energy exploration to addressing global health inequalities, our Scholars and Alumni continue to be at the forefront of solutions to the world's most complex challenges.

In this report, you will read about some of the remarkable work being undertaken by our community. We feature case studies highlighting the contributions of our scholars across the six CSC development themes – ranging from science and technology for development to strengthening resilience and response to crises. For instance, the work of current Scholar Suame Ampana is driving sustainable energy solutions in Papua New Guinea through his research on geothermal resources. With a background in applied physics and volcano monitoring, Suame pursued a PhD at Cardiff University under a Commonwealth Scholarship. His work focuses on mapping geothermal reservoirs to expand the country's energy infrastructure, supporting Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7) and Climate Action (SDG 13).

Dr Jacqueline Fonkwo, Global Consultant for Youth Partnerships at Family Planning 2030 (FP2030) and CSC alumnus, is a dedicated advocate for adolescent and youth reproductive health. With a medical background and a Master's in Global Health, Jacqueline leads FP2030's strategy for youth engagement in sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). She co-founded Youth 2 Youth in Cameroon, a platform that provides SRHR information and services to young people via digital technology. Her work emphasises the importance of youth leadership and collaboration in addressing global health challenges.

See also the profile of Dr Iffat Zafar Aga, who is revolutionising healthcare in Pakistan with Sehat Kahani, a telemedicine platform connecting rural communities to remote medical consultations. Trained in Global eHealth through a Commonwealth Scholarship, Iffat has expanded Sehat Kahani to 63 e-clinics, reaching over 1.4 million users. The platform not only enhances healthcare access but also empowers female doctors, who make up 85% of its workforce. Iffat's efforts in digital health continue to bridge critical healthcare gaps and support gender equality in Pakistan's healthcare sector.



These are just a few examples of the transformative impact Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni are making, as showcased in this Annual Report. With our network of award holders expanding, their influence within communities and workplaces continues to grow stronger. It's truly inspiring to see the creative and meaningful ways Scholars and Fellows are affecting change, and my fellow Commissioners and I are excited to see what they will accomplish in the future.

We also continue to focus on excellence, equity and inclusion as a cornerstone of our work. By working closely with our nominating agencies, we ensure that opportunities are provided to the brightest individuals, regardless of their circumstances, enabling them to unlock their full potential and contribute meaningfully to their communities. This year, we have made significant strides in ensuring that our programmes reach those from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, I am reminded of the collective resilience and dedication of our scholars and alumni. Their contributions, whether through groundbreaking research, policy innovation, or community engagement, serve as a testament to the lasting impact of Commonwealth Scholarships. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our partners, funders, and supporters, whose ongoing collaboration makes this work possible. Together, we continue to build a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous future for all.

Professor Robin Mason ORB
Chair, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
in the UK (CSC)



About us

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC) is an executive non-departmental public body and operates within the framework of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP).

Funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Department for Education and UK University partners, the CSC offers a range of study, research, and professional development options for people throughout the Commonwealth.

We have three objectives:

1. To provide a world-class scholarship scheme that contributes to sustainable development across the Commonwealth.
2. To ensure that our programmes reward merit, promote equity and inclusion, and deliver widespread access, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. To support and encourage cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange throughout the Commonwealth.

Throughout this report, we have demonstrated how these objectives were met in the year ending September 2024.

2023-2024

Key performance indicators

The CSC agreed to use five key performance indicators to measure success against our objectives and priorities.

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

CSC Programme	Female	Male	Prefer not to say
Commonwealth PhD Scholarships	50%	50%	0%
Commonwealth PhD Scholarship (high income)	67%	0%	33%
Commonwealth Split-site Scholarships	61%	39%	0%
Commonwealth Master's Scholarships	55%	45%	0%
Commonwealth Shared Scholarships	52%	48%	0%
Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships	46%	54%	0%
Commonwealth Professional Fellowships	54%	46%	0%

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

£6m was generated in 2023-24 in matching contributions through partnerships with UK universities.

3. 35 alumni profiles of CSC women leading change and alumni impacting climate change will be published demonstrating the CSC's support of cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange throughout the Commonwealth

16 profiles of CSC women leading change and 19 profiles of alumni impacting climate change were published demonstrating the CSC's support of cutting-edge research, innovation, and knowledge exchange throughout the Commonwealth.

4. 10 alumni profiles will be published demonstrating research which promotes equity and inclusion and supports those who have been left behind.

10 alumni profiles were published demonstrating research which promotes equity and inclusion and supports those who have been left behind.

5. 10 in-depth evaluation case studies will be produced to demonstrate the CSC as an innovative world-class scholarship and fellowship scheme that delivers impact on sustainable development across the Commonwealth.

10 Evaluation case studies were produced.





Our programmes

Objective 1:

To provide a world-class scholarship scheme that contributes to sustainable development.

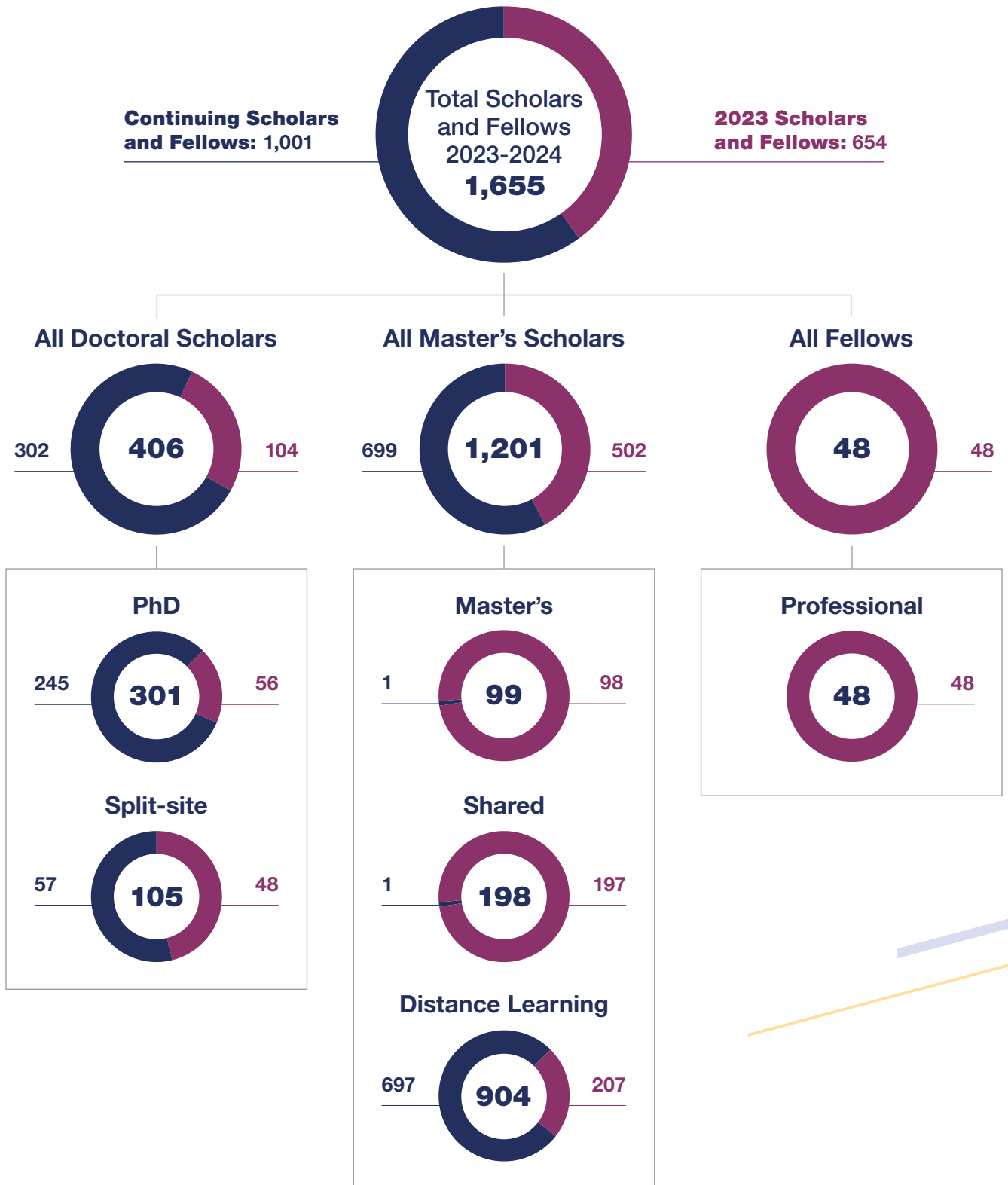
The following pages demonstrate how the range of study, research, and professional development programmes we provide, alongside the Scholar and Alumni engagement activities from the past year, helped to build an engaged community of Scholars and Alumni with the potential to make real and lasting change in the development areas they choose to focus on.

Our programmes in numbers

The CSC offers seven unique study, research, professional development programmes across the Commonwealth and to individuals of outstanding ability who are selected for their potential to make a profound developmental impact in their country.

The data below provides an overview of the number of Scholars and Fellows taking part in each of our seven programmes in the 2023-2024 academic year. This includes new continuing Scholars and Fellows.

All Scholars and Fellows



The Sustainable Development Goals and CSC Development Themes

The CSC is guided by international development objectives. As part of their application, Commonwealth Scholars select at least three UN Sustainable Development Goals that they aim to impact post-award in order to answer the UN's global call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

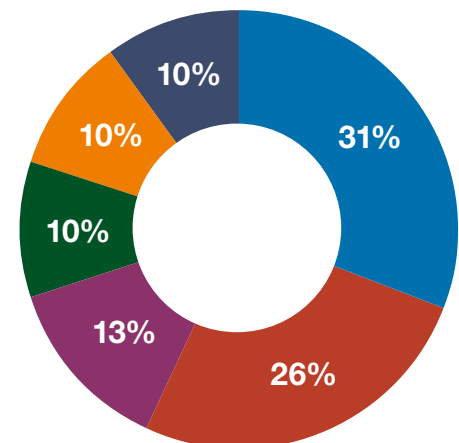
All Commonwealth Scholarships funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) are offered under six key development themes chosen specifically to align with the UK government's international development priorities.

The data below demonstrates the percentage of 2023 Scholars targeting each of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and each of the CSC Development Themes.

Percentage of 2023 Commonwealth Scholarships applicable to each SDG



Themes focused on by 2023 Scholars and Fellows



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



Building an engaged community of Scholars and Fellows

Providing a world-class scholarship scheme that contributes to sustainable development across the Commonwealth means providing Scholars and Fellows with the opportunities they need to build up the knowledge, skillset, and networks that will enable them to achieve their development goals when they return to their home countries. Below is a snapshot of the opportunities taken up by Scholars and Fellows over the past year.

The Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme

The Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme aims to deliver practical skills development and discussion-based learning to enable Scholars to respond to development challenges in their countries and communities.

The programme begins with the online training course 'Understanding Development Impact' and provides Scholars with the tools for designing and implementing development projects. This is followed by the leaders in sustainable development workshops that run between November 2023 and June 2024

Over 100 Scholars attended the Leaders in Sustainable Development online workshops between November 2023 and June 2024 to develop skills in writing for development, decision making, theory of change and much more.

'The Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme was eye-opening for me. I found the content very useful and practical, especially as I prepared for my research project proposals and development goals. Overall, engaging in learning outside the classroom and with peers was a valuable exercise.'

2024 workshop participant

Connect and Collaborate Event

The Connect and Collaborate Event is the largest event in the CSC calendar and provides an opportunity for Scholars in the UK to come together to discuss their work, exchange ideas, and forge new connections for the future. In February, 360 Scholars from 78 universities across the UK attended the Connect and Collaborate Event held at the QEII Centre in Westminster which featured panel sessions, workshops, and talks from a range of international speakers.



Professional Fellows' Welcome Event

This year's Professional Fellowship programme began in February when all 19 Professional Fellows representing six Commonwealth countries came together at the University of Edinburgh for two days of networking, cross-organisation engagement, and learning focused on the theme of clean energy, air and Oceans. This was the first in a series of events bringing the Fellows together during their 3-month stay in the UK.

Maximising your impact workshop

As part of the Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme, the CSC delivers two residential workshops each year at Cumberland Lodge to enhance Scholars' expertise in achieving impact. In March, the CSC welcomed 48 Commonwealth Scholars studying at Master's level to a residential workshop on current international development issues and how Scholars contribute to solving them. In May, the CSC hosted its second residential workshop for 44 Scholars studying at doctoral level where they explored ways to engage decision makers and wider stakeholder groups in development-focused research.



'The opportunity provided for networking was great and these networks opened the potential for future collaboration. The programme accorded me the opportunity to have a clearer intervention strategy in promoting and supporting development agendas back home by infusing acquired knowledge from my PhD research into nationwide development schemes. The event was exceptional and met all of my expectations. Before I forget, the food was also good and the Cumberland Lodge staff were very supportive, friendly and helpful.'

PhD Conference participant, 2024

Parliamentary Reception for Commonwealth Scholars

The annual Parliamentary Reception gives Scholars a unique opportunity to meet UK parliamentarians and learn about the workings of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This year's event was held in June for 35 Commonwealth Scholars who engaged in discussions on governance and democratic process in the modern Commonwealth. The event was organised by the CSC, the Council for Education in the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) Support Group with assistance from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK).



Farewell Event

In July, Commonwealth Scholars joined Chevening and Marshall Scholars for the joint scholarship Farewell Event at Alexandra Palace which celebrated Scholars' achievements during their time in the UK. This year's event featured alumni guest speakers Paballo Chauke and Khadija Amir as well as Head of Scholarships, Tertiary Education and UN Partnerships Department at the FCDO, Nicolette Stoddart, and enabled Scholars to strengthen their international networks as they prepared to return to their home countries and make a difference in their communities.

Engaging the global alumni community

Since 1959, over 31,000 Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships have been awarded to citizens of the Commonwealth. Being a Commonwealth Scholar is a lifelong commitment to realise development impact across a range of sectors and fields at a local, national and international level.

The CSC Alumni Network provides a range of opportunities to highlight and celebrate the work of Commonwealth Alumni in building a more sustainable world. Below you can read a snapshot of activities delivered over the last year.

Alumni Community Engagement Fund

The CSC's annual Alumni Community Engagement Fund (ACEF) supports Commonwealth Alumni in raising awareness of key development issues at the community level. Designed and delivered by alumni with expertise in the thematic area, the activities recognise the importance of implementing small changes at the community level to achieve long-term positive impact.

The selected themes for activities delivered in 2023-2024 were: gender and sexuality, preserving and promoting indigenous knowledge, small Commonwealth states, and clean energy, air and oceans.

11 activities
were delivered
in 8 countries.

100%
of organisers
reported their chosen
community/attendees
benefited from
their activity
'to a large extent'



'I believe my community benefited to a large extent... The best part of it was that the activities had an instant impact on the community, as the participants began practising what they had learned the day following the programme. Other local governments who did not participate are now inviting us to please come and deliver the same programme for them.'

2023-2024 ACEF organiser

Development in Action webinar series

The monthly Development in Action webinar series provides a platform for Commonwealth Alumni to present on their work and contribution to development across a range of contemporary global challenges. Open to all Commonwealth Alumni and Scholars, the series provides opportunities for real-time engagement and problem-solving through post-webinar discussion and networking.

Webinars in 2023-2024 have covered a range of topics, including tackling fungal diseases threatening global food security in Bangladesh, empowering women and youth through social entrepreneurship in Uganda, the importance of gender and development in the Pacific, and terrorism-related activism in the Caribbean.



95%
of attendees
learned
something new
'to a large' or 'to a
moderate extent'



100%
attendees would
recommend/join
future webinars

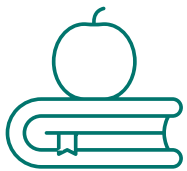
CSC Mentoring Programme

Mentorship plays an important role in personal and professional development and in developing the skills, knowledge and confidence required to succeed. The CSC Mentoring Programme connects Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni to support knowledge and skills development and a practical understanding of how these can be implemented post-scholarship to achieve development impact.

In 2023-2024, the programme is supporting 184 active mentoring pairs.



In 2022-2023,
99% of participants would recommend the programme to incoming scholars



In 2022-2023,
96% of participants reported that they would like to take part again

‘Receiving mentoring support in the final stage of my Master’s programme proved immensely valuable as I transitioned towards the post-scholarship phase. The guidance provided by my mentor in this crucial period was instrumental. My mentor offered valuable insights into navigating the job market, tailoring my CV for industry-specific roles, and effectively articulating my academic and professional achievements. Additionally, discussions with my mentor around post-Scholarship opportunities and career pathways were enlightening. My mentor shared personal experiences, providing a realistic view of the industry landscape and helping me set realistic expectations. This guidance has been pivotal in shaping my post-graduate plans, aligning them with both my academic achievements and the demands of the professional field.’

2022-2023 mentee



Alumni Advisory Panel

The Alumni Advisory Panel provides a mechanism for Commonwealth Alumni to support the future of the CSC’s programmes by sharing personal insight and expertise across a range of consultative activities.

Appointed in September 2023, the current 2021-2023 panel is comprised of 117 members representing 31 countries.

In the report year, the panel was consulted on increased support for scholars during the post-scholarship period, CSC arrival information and communications, the development of the next CSC Alumni Engagement Strategy, and the CSC’s draft contribution analysis report.

Interchange24

The fourth annual global conference for Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni, Interchange24, took place between 18-22 March 2024. The overarching theme of the conference was ‘Inclusive societies – cultural diversity, disability and gender roles’.

The five-day programme featured a mix of roundtable discussions, skills workshops, and networking sessions. The conference brought together Commonwealth Scholars, Alumni and other stakeholders to share knowledge and research related to cultural diversity in education, equality, diversity and inclusion, and challenging gender norms and stereotypes.

In-country events

Working with in-country partners, the CSC provides pre-award and alumni engagement activities in 12 countries. In the report year, 38 alumni in-country events took place covering a range of topics, including entrepreneurship, mental health and gender equality.



Our Scholars and Fellows

Objective 2:

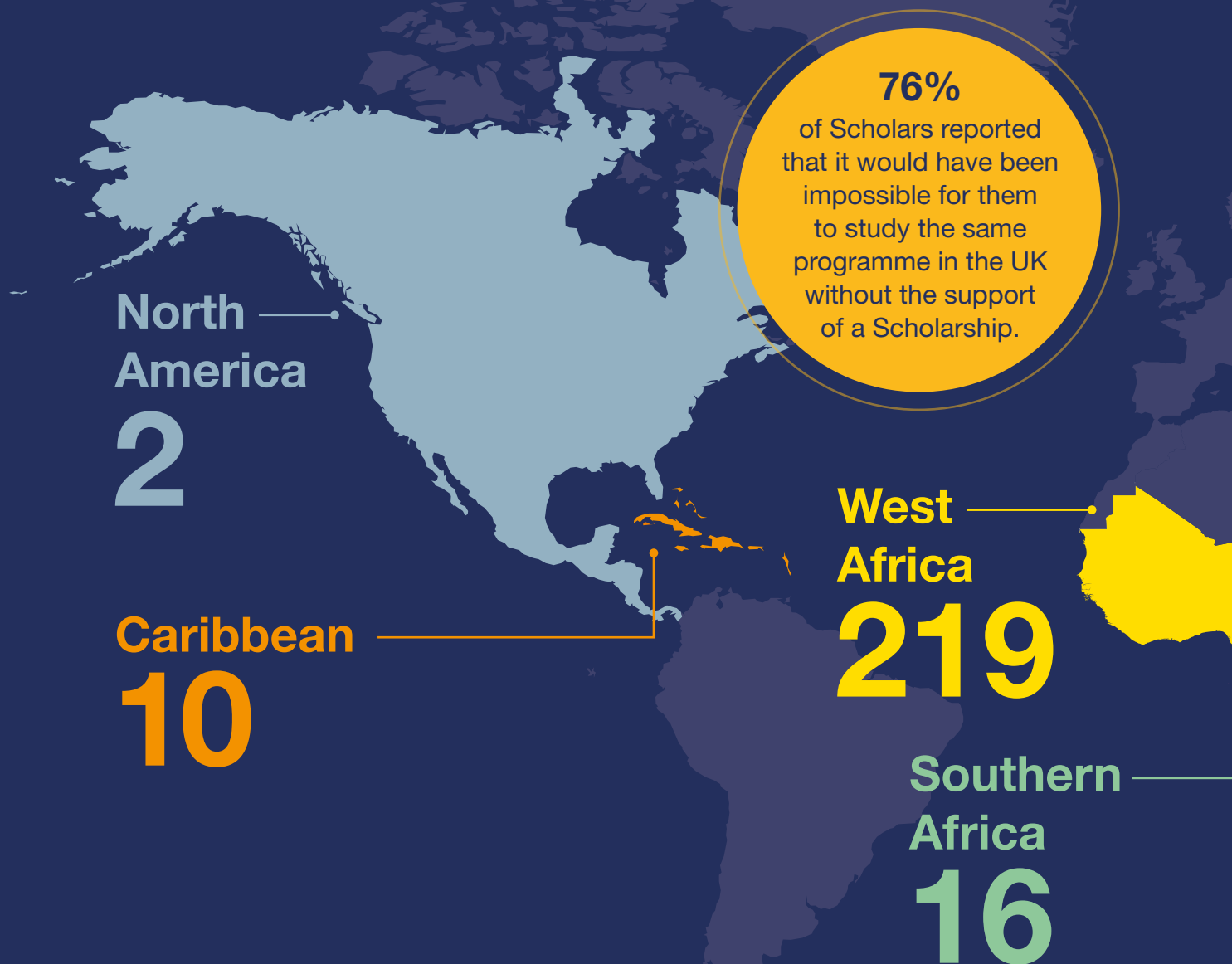
To ensure that our programmes reward merit, promote equity, and deliver widespread access, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The following pages demonstrate how the range of study, research, and professional development programmes we provide, alongside the Scholar and alumni engagement activities from the past year, help to build an engaged community of Scholars and alumni with the potential to make real and lasting change in the development areas they choose to focus on.

Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows: The 2023 cohort

We were delighted to welcome 654 new Scholars and Fellows from 32 Commonwealth countries in the 2023-2024 academic year to take part in our programmes. This cohort joined 92 universities and host organisations spread across the UK.

New awards by region, 2023



2023 new awards

By DAC list category

212

Least Developed
Countries

413

Lower Middle
Income Countries

26

Upper Middle
Income Countries

Other

3

High Income
Countries



Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of official development assistance (ODA) recipients

The DAC List of ODA recipients shows all countries and territories eligible to receive official development assistance. These consist of all low and middle income countries based on gross national income per capita as published by the World Bank, with the exception of G8 members, EU members, and countries with a firm date for entry into the EU. The list also includes all of the Least Developed Countries as defined by the United Nations.

New awards by gender, 2023



Includes all new Scholarships and Fellowships taken up in 2023-2024

New awards by UK institution region, 2023



Widening access to Commonwealth Scholarships

Higher education can have a transformative effect on individuals and wider society. However, postgraduate study can remain out of reach for many people due to the barriers they face within their community or society. To ensure that our programmes promote equity and inclusion, reward merit, and deliver widespread access, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds, we work closely with National Nominating Agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and Charitable Trust Nominating Agencies to recruit Scholars from diverse communities.

A full list of our National and NGO Nominators can be found on the CSC website.



The Commonwealth Equalities Network (TCEN)

This year we welcomed The Commonwealth Equalities Network (TCEN) as our seventh NGO Nominator. TCEN advocates for the equality and human rights of all Commonwealth citizens, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics. As a coalition of more than 70 organisations from almost 50 countries, the TCEN is well placed to offer an alternative application route for Master's and PhD applicants across the Commonwealth.

The introduction of TCEN as a nominator follows our programme on LGBT+ Rights in the Commonwealth in 2023/24. It aims to put into practice our commitment that to welcoming LGBT+ people to the CSC community and demonstrate our belief that securing equal rights and fair treatment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender LGBT+ people is essential to achieving sustainable development.

National Nominator Spotlight: South Africa

Our National Nominators also do significant work to broaden access to scholarship opportunities in participating countries. A great example of this is the Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa. Alongside their extensive marketing of international scholarship opportunities around the country and promotion, on social media and national radio, they also undertake targeted recruitment. This includes visiting universities to spend time with prospective applicants explaining the benefits of the scholarship and guiding them through the application process as well as exhibiting at prominent national events such as the South African Science Forum. They take part in an intergovernmental forum on International Scholarships to raise the profile of the CSC (alongside other scholarship opportunities) and in addition to a thorough and robust recruitment campaign, which extends to hard to reach areas and communities, the agency also run a series of online information sessions to give applicants the opportunity to ask questions and receive further information and support with their applications.

The department highlight their efforts to widen access on their website and actively encourage applications from applicants with disabilities. The application process is made as accessible as possible for all students through virtual interviews and even connectivity issues can be accommodated by using WhatsApp calls when necessary. Through careful monitoring and review of their engagement process, they have been able to adapt their marketing approaches year-on-year to continually refine their approach. This has been particularly successful in relation to gender balance which has improved every year for the last three years.



Development impact

Objective 3:

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

The following pages demonstrate some of the ways in which our programmes, Scholars and alumni have fulfilled this objective in the report year, creating development impact at the community, country, and international levels across the six CSC Development Themes and beyond.

Science and technology for development

‘Science and technology are crucial to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They empower us to address global challenges such as achieving SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being exemplified by the rapid development and production of COVID-19 vaccines. Furthermore, they foster innovative solutions to pressing issues related to climate action and the demand for affordable clean energy. Commonwealth Scholars are pivotal in this effort, contributing through their research and transferring the knowledge, training, and skills acquired during their scholarships and fellowships to lower and middle income Commonwealth countries.’

Professor Parmjit Jat, CSC Commissioner



Suame Ampana
2019 Commonwealth PhD Scholar
Papua New Guinea
Geothermal Energy Exploration
Cardiff University



Suame Ampana is advancing sustainable energy solutions in his home country of Papua New Guinea. Holding a BSc in Applied Physics from the University of Technology in Papua New Guinea and a Master’s in Volcano Monitoring from Nagoya University, Japan, he pursued a PhD in Geothermal Resources at Cardiff University through a Commonwealth Scholarship.

His research focuses on mapping and developing geothermal reservoirs in Papua New Guinea, which is rich in tectonic activity and geothermal resources. Initially, Suame’s work involved geophysical exploration to locate viable geothermal sites, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7) and Climate Action (SDG 13). Although funding was cut due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he adapted by focusing on tectonics, using publicly available earthquake and GPS data to progress his research.

The Commonwealth Scholarship has provided him with critical skills in data analysis, research methodologies, and collaborative opportunities with national organisations in Papua New Guinea. His efforts seek to expand the country’s energy infrastructure—where geothermal energy currently accounts for 8.8% of its energy mix—and reduce

reliance on less sustainable sources. Additionally, he plans to expand his work to earthquake hazard mitigation with aims to improve the resilience of civil infrastructure in tectonically active regions, contributing to SDG 9 on Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure.

Suame plans to return to Papua New Guinea to apply his research, influence government energy policies, and collaborate with the Commonwealth Scholarship alumni network, drive sustainable energy development and resilience both locally and globally.

‘Papua New Guinea is expanding economically, but there is a challenge in that it is not developing energy infrastructure at the rate at which the economy is growing. So that was the primary reason why I chose to study Geothermal Resources.’

Strengthening health systems and capacity

‘Major strides have been made in improving the health of children and adolescents but progress has been less impressive for other age groups and the under privileged. Well-functioning health systems are the key to achieving the goal of universal health care. The UK government in its integrated review of foreign policy and development entitled ‘Global Britain in a Competitive Age’, mentions five principles related to health in development including the ambition to reform the global health system. As the topics of recent Master’s and PhD dissertations and theses supported by the CSC and the examples below clearly show, our Scholars have enthusiastically taken up these development challenges.’

Professor Allan Hill, CSC Commissioner



Jacqueline N Fonkwo
2020 Commonwealth
Shared Scholar
Cameroon
MSc Global Health
Queen Margaret University



Dr Jacqueline N Fonkwo, a Commonwealth Alumnus, works as the Global Consultant of Youth Partnerships at Family Planning 2030, a global organisation focused on advancing family planning and reproductive rights. Her previous work as a medical doctor and her Master’s degree in Global Health from Queen Margaret University in Scotland have equipped her with the skills to lead FP2030’s strategy for adolescent and youth reproductive health through establishing regional hubs.

Dr Fonkwo’s role involves working directly with young people in various countries to address their sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) needs. She helps governments to develop global health commitments, strengthens partnerships with youth leaders and donors, and fosters youth leadership in global health.

One of Dr Ngong’s significant contributions is the co-founding of Youth 2 Youth, a youth-led advocacy/programming platform focused on adolescent health in Cameroon. This initiative provides healthcare information and services to young people through a mobile application and community-based programmes.

Looking back on her studies, Dr Fonkwo notes that her time studying at Queen Margaret University provided her with the opportunity to meet like-minded people from across the world. She found interactions with her peers useful in understanding public health interventions in different communities.

Dr Fonkwo’s work highlights the importance of youth engagement in addressing SRHR challenges and the potential for innovative approaches, such as digital technology, to improve access to healthcare services.

‘Growing up in a community with a population of over 35,000, I had never seen a medical doctor. We lost loved ones to common diseases. Hence, I developed an interest in studying medicine to help and prevent people from dying. Upon graduation, I had the desire to go back to my community and get into clinical practice.’

Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship

‘Impactful innovations and entrepreneurial feats typically help to alleviate many of the world’s most pressing challenges, from widespread deprivation and inequalities to scant job opportunities and the climate crisis. Talented individuals, on their own or as part of teams, are critical to driving entrepreneurship and economic development, and it is delightful to note the CSC’s continuing focus on providing Commonwealth Scholars with the platform to enhance their capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship.’

Professor Kevin Ibeh, CSC Commissioner



Iffat Zafar Aga

2017 Commonwealth
Master’s Scholar

Pakistan

MSc Global eHealth
University of Edinburgh



Dr Iffat Zafar Aga, a Commonwealth Scholar and co-founder of Sehat Kahani, is transforming healthcare access in Pakistan through telemedicine. In a country where 63% of the population resides in rural areas with limited healthcare access, Sehat Kahani connects patients to online doctors via chat, audio, and video consultations. The platform, which serves general consumers, corporates, and underserved communities, reflects Iffat’s vision of democratising healthcare using technology.

As Chief Operating Officer, Iffat oversees Sehat Kahani’s network of 63 e-clinics, providing low-cost healthcare services across Pakistan while the mobile application provides services to corporate employees and their families through their smart phones. Her Master’s in Global eHealth from the University of Edinburgh, pursued through a Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarship, equipped her with the tools to design and implement a sustainable telemedicine model. The platform now supports over 1.4 million users and 850 corporations, offering unlimited medical consultations for employees. Collectively, through the e-health clinics and the mobile app, Sehat Kahani has conducted over 3.6 million consultations to date.

Sehat Kahani addresses gender disparities in healthcare by enabling female doctors to work remotely, empowering them to maintain work-life balance and financial independence. Today, 85% of Sehat Kahani’s doctors are women, serving the platform’s 75% demand for women and children’s health services.

Under Iffat’s leadership, Sehat Kahani has raised \$2.7 million in funding and aims to expand into the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. For her pioneering work, Iffat has received numerous awards, including the Study UK Alumni Award 2024. She continues to advocate for digital health solutions, contributing to national and global efforts to enhance healthcare accessibility and quality.

‘I believe my Master’s allowed me to really think beyond different metrics and variables of telemedicine, through which we could create healthcare accessibility in a country like Pakistan, while also giving me exposure to the best practices across the globe for telemedicine and health insurance.’

Strengthening global peace, security and governance

‘Sadly, we live in an unstable age where insecurity is experienced by many, and peace remains fragile in many parts of the world. Building peace requires working in solidarity with shared values in increasingly divided contexts. Peacebuilders internationally and within conflict contexts need to construct shared meanings of what sustainable peace might mean and how it can be achieved. Education and knowledge remain critical to underpinning these approaches and our Scholars are central in working both internationally and locally to build a platform for peace through shared understanding. Commonwealth Scholars deploy academic excellence, global connectivity and local commitment in exercising leadership to make the world a more peaceful place.’

Professor Paul Jackson, CSC Commissioner



Cherisse Francis

2017 Commonwealth
Master’s Scholar

Barbados

LLM Human Rights and
Criminal Justice
University of Aberdeen



Cherisse Francis is a 2017 Commonwealth Scholar from Barbados who earned her LLM in Human Rights and Criminal Justice from the University of Aberdeen. Following her studies, she joined the Human Trafficking Institute (HTI) in Belize as a Judicial Research Assistant for the Designated Trafficking in Persons Judge. In this role, she worked to strengthen Belize’s anti-trafficking laws, which have seen minimal prosecutions since the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Prohibition Act in 2013.

Cherisse conducted a SWOT analysis to identify key stakeholders in anti-trafficking efforts and pinpoint gaps, such as insufficient funding for law enforcement and the need for cultural sensitivity in legal frameworks. This analysis has been used to train judicial officers and improve the processing of TIP cases. Additionally, she created a system to summarise case files, enhancing the efficiency of court proceedings.

Her contributions extend beyond the courtroom; she has advocated for juvenile justice reform in Belize

and has facilitated human rights programmes for at-risk youth. As a U-Reporter for UNICEF, she raised awareness of human rights issues among young people in Barbados.

Cherisse is currently pursuing a PhD in anti-trafficking in the Anglophone Caribbean at the University of Warwick. She values the global perspective gained during her Commonwealth Scholarship, which has significantly shaped her career and commitment to advancing human rights and justice in her community.

‘I have always known that my life is meant to be a life of service. Service has always been my motivation. Law was a way to use my passions and my talent to serve, to be able to make changes for people that otherwise wouldn’t have been able to make those changes’

Strengthening resilience and response to crises

‘Inequalities, lack of access to opportunity and lack of inclusion remain a disheartening feature of much of society globally. Much of the problem is structural and systemic, and action to address it requires an understanding of the fundamental issues at the heart of these inequalities and the application of new thinking to redress the balance. Commonwealth Scholarships support the education and research that provides Scholars with the knowledge, skills and approaches to interrogate and consider the issues facing their societies. Scholars’ innovative work in their own countries allows for new perspectives in addressing these enduring challenges and allows for the creation of policies and actions to secure more equity, access and inclusion.’

Dr Christine Thurania-McKeever, CSC Commissioner



Jasper Ewany

2017 Commonwealth Shared
Master’s Scholar

Zambia

MSc Agriculture for Sustainable
Development
University of Greenwich



Jasper Ewany, known as Dealrafael Jsp-E, is a Ugandan Commonwealth Scholar and indigenous hip-hop practitioner who uses music as a platform for social change. Since pioneering the Lango Indigenous Hip-Hop Movement, Jasper has promoted indigenous hip-hop as a medium to address local and global issues, including health, climate action, and community empowerment. He believes that using local languages in hip-hop enhances accessibility and cultural resonance, enabling communities to relate to messages on a personal level.

In 2022, Jasper collaborated with youth and health workers to launch a campaign promoting HIV awareness and ARV adherence in Northern Uganda. Through partnerships, he helped address barriers to treatment access, even providing bicycles to remote communities for medicine delivery. Additionally, he expanded his reach through radio contests to foster local engagement.

Jasper’s work extends to climate action, where he launched the Trees Are Not Our Commodity campaign, highlighting deforestation’s impact in Northern Uganda. At COP26 and COP27, he advocated for indigenous voices in climate discussions, underscoring the role of culture in environmental preservation.

Currently completing a PhD in Biology at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Jasper’s research focuses on sustainable pest control to address food security challenges worsened by climate change. His studies build on his MSc in Agriculture for Sustainable Development, earned through a Commonwealth Shared Scholarship at the University of Greenwich. Jasper’s blend of academic expertise and indigenous hip-hop continues to inspire change, making him a dynamic voice for sustainable development and cultural empowerment.

‘Climate change affects everybody in the world. As the hip-hop community, we are also affected. We can use the mic power to break all the science of climate change, tell the truth about it in our local languages and let people understand that climate change is here to stay and we have to do something about it.’

Access, inclusion and opportunity

'Inequalities, lack of access to opportunity and lack of inclusion remain a disheartening feature of much of society globally. Much of the problem is structural and systemic, and action to address it requires an understanding of the fundamental issues at the heart of these inequalities and the application of new thinking to redress the balance.'

Commonwealth scholarships support the education and research that provides scholars the knowledge, skills and approaches to interrogate and consider the issues facing their societies. Scholars' innovative work in their own countries allows for new perspectives in addressing these enduring challenges and allows for the creation of policies and actions to secure more equity, access and inclusion.'

Dr Christine Thurania-McKeever, CSC Commissioner



Fathima Zehba Maanjeri Puthusery
2023 Commonwealth PhD Scholar

India

Urban Planning
University College London



Fathima Zehba Maanjeri Puthusery is a Commonwealth Split-Site Scholar from India, currently working towards her PhD in Urban Planning with a focus on the mobility challenges faced by low income working women in Kochi, India. With a strong foundation in architecture and urban planning, she is committed to addressing gender inequalities through gender-inclusive urban spaces.

Fathima's journey began at the National Institute of Technology Calicut, where she was encouraged by her supervisor to apply for the Commonwealth Split-Site Scholarship to advance her research. This opportunity allowed her to work at University College London's Bartlett School of Architecture, where she gained valuable exposure to advanced GIS technologies and global best practices.

Her research contributes to increasing access, inclusion and opportunity by focusing on improving transport systems to better serve marginalised groups. While at UCL, she participated in a prestigious executive course on transport challenges at the University of Oxford and presented her findings on gendered mobility at various international conferences, including one hosted by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

Back in Kerala, Fathima has been actively involved in raising awareness about gendered mobility by engaging with local policymakers and urban planners through workshops.

Despite facing challenges due to limited gender-segregated data, she adapted her research to work effectively with available resources and local stakeholders. Looking ahead, Fathima aims to continue her work in advocating for gender-inclusive transport systems in Indian cities, building on the skills and experiences gained through her Commonwealth Scholarship.

'The scholarship has had a transformative impact on my career. Studying at UCL has exposed me to global best practices and provided me with the latest high-quality software technologies to use in my research. It has also helped me build a network of scholars and professionals whose research interests align with my work.'

LGBT+ rights 2023-2024

Human rights in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity are a pressing issue across the Commonwealth. Anti-LGBT+ legislation and discrimination against the LGBT+ community is significantly over-represented in the Commonwealth; 63% of Commonwealth countries criminalise homosexual activity compared to 35% globally. The UK government has acknowledged the legacy of these laws and expressed regret for their persistence today. It has also expressed a commitment to doing all it can to improve the situation for the future.

The CSC believes that no one should be criminalised or persecuted because of who they are, or who they love. We believe that securing equal rights and fair treatment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) people is essential to achieving the sustainable development goals and the 'leave no one behind' agenda. All LGBT+ people are welcome in the CSC community, and we are committed to ensuring all our Scholars reach their full potential. We seek to improve the experience for LGBT+ Scholars and build an open, tolerant, and understanding community of Scholars.

In 2023-2024, the CSC has delivered a year-long programme of activities focused on LGBT+ Rights which supports work in this area.

Gender and Sexuality Professional Fellowships

To support individuals working in the field of gender and sexuality, the CSC funded 10 Professional Fellows to spend three months at three UK host organisations University College London, The University of Kent and Lifegate Community Outreach Centre.

The fellowship enabled participants to gain practical experience in a variety of fields related to gender and sexuality as well as providing opportunities to pool knowledge, exchange ideas, and strengthen relationships that will advance progress on LGBT+ rights in their home countries. In addition to funding the programme itself, three Alumni Community Engagement Fund awards were ringfenced for participants of the programme to further support Fellows' ability to effect change on their return home.

Spotlight on: Princi Verma, University of Kent Fellow



‘The Commonwealth Fellowship on Gender and Sexuality was a transformative experience, deepening my understanding of how diverse contexts and voices shape developmental issues, especially for gender-diverse minorities. I learned the pivotal role of allyship in driving development movements for queer communities and how collaboration can strengthen access and inclusion.

This fellowship enhanced my ability to bridge intersectional identities, fostering solidarity that is essential to creating sustainable change in advancing equality and rights for marginalised groups. It also drove me to create an internal community at work that empowers women through collaboration and leadership. This experience has fuelled my focus on integrating gender into health programming across South Asia, ensuring inclusive approaches in all project interventions for greater impact and equity.’

Cumberland Lodge Residential Retreat

In November 2023 the CSC was pleased to host a residential retreat at Cumberland Lodge for 37 Scholars from across the Commonwealth. The retreat explored the history of LGBT+ rights in the Commonwealth, the challenges facing LGBT+ people today, and practical ways for Scholars to support LGBT+ rights. Joining the retreat was a panel of academics and activists who discussed ideas and shared powerful stories from their professional and personal experiences.

The weekend gave Scholars space to talk about these important issues and ask questions they might otherwise not had the opportunity to explore. As well as learning about the challenges experienced by LGBT+ people, Scholars also gained new skills to champion LGBT+ rights in their own communities. The retreat was the beginning of an ongoing conversation about LGBT+ rights and how Scholars can play an active role in supporting progress on LGBT+ equality.



The Commonwealth Entrepreneurship Fellowship

Youth unemployment is a major issue in many Commonwealth countries, where 60% of citizens are under the age of 30. With the population in the Commonwealth set to continue to grow significantly by an estimated 1.1bn by 2060, this issue is only set to worsen unless new jobs can be created.

As job markets have struggled to keep pace with demographic changes many young graduates are leaving university with valuable skills but increasingly fewer traditional routes to employment. To help tackle this growing issue, the CSC has committed a two-year programme to developing the Commonwealth Entrepreneurship Fellowship – a platform for skills development and effectuation for early-stage entrepreneurs to help them make their businesses a success.

The Commonwealth Entrepreneurship Fellowship

The ultimate aim of the programme is to promote job creation. As the CSC is new to this space, we will be working with a delivery partner to implement the scheme. The programme will be a combination of in-person and remote contact time, with the

in-person portion of the scheme being delivered in a low middle income Commonwealth country. Participants will be early-stage entrepreneurs from around the Commonwealth with applications from women and young people particularly encouraged. Through the programme, Fellows will be exposed to the skills, opportunities and networks they will require to make their ventures successful. We hope to be able to offer those taking part in the scheme the chance to test out their ideas for real with an opportunity to bid to investors at the end of the fellowship. There is also scope to fund particularly successful participants to come to the UK for a capstone event held by the CSC.





Our partners

Commonwealth Scholarships were founded on the principle of mutual cooperation.

The following pages list the nominating agencies, academic advisers, UK universities, UK fellowship host organisations, and overseas organisations that help make the work of the CSC possible: by helping to select outstanding Scholars and Fellows from across the Commonwealth who have the potential to advance national and international development priorities. It also lists the members of the Alumni Advisory Panel who help support the development of CSC programmes and activities by sharing personal insight and expertise.

Nominating agencies

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 our awards.

To see the full list of agencies, visit: bit.ly/40jdaxV

Academic advisers

Our selections were guided by a panel of nearly 400 academic advisers during the report year, including internationally renowned experts in all subject areas, who receive no remuneration for reviewing applications. The CSC is enormously grateful to them.

To see the full list of advisers, visit: bit.ly/3YmXtD4

UK universities

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 of £6 million. In the report year, Commonwealth Scholars studied at 95 UK universities.

To see the full list of universities, visit: bit.ly/3C18cf9

Overseas organisations

Through Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships, overseas organisations benefit from better qualified staff with increased knowledge and skills, as well as access to international collaboration and partnerships. In the report year, 102 overseas organisations either nominated candidates for or partnered with a UK university on Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships.

To see the full list of overseas organisations, visit: bit.ly/4dVkpIR

Alumni Advisory Panel

The Alumni Advisory Panel provides a platform for Commonwealth Alumni to support the future of CSC programmes and Scholars by sharing personal insights and expertise. The Alumni Advisory Panel 2023-2025 is made up of 117 members, representing 31 Commonwealth countries.

To see the list of The Alumni Advisory Panel members, visit: bit.ly/4fhs7Vp





Governance

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) is an arm's length-body set up to deliver Commonwealth scholarships to low and middle-income Commonwealth countries through Grant-in-Aid provided by the FCDO.

Governance statement

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC) was established by Act of Parliament in 1959 to manage the UK's contribution to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), launched by Commonwealth Education Ministers in 1958. Its status was subsequently reaffirmed in the International Development Act of 2002 (the Act).

The CSC is a non-departmental public body, for which the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is the lead department and main sponsor. Other financial contributions (during the period of the report) have been received from the Department for Education (DfE), for scholarships for candidates from high-income Commonwealth countries. In addition, the CSC receives contributions-in-kind from its UK university partners. The CSC is independent of Government in its decision-making and operations; the Act legislates that the Secretary of State may not give any direction for the selection or rejection of any particular person for an award or as a candidate for an award. The CSC submits an Annual Report on its work each year to the Secretary of State; this forms the basis of a report submitted by the Secretary of State to Parliament, to which (s)he is ultimately responsible for the work of the CSC to Parliament, to which they are ultimately responsible.

In addition to regulations provided in the 1959 Act (which have been confirmed in subsequent Development Acts) and subsequent Ministerial Directives, detailed governance arrangements for the CSC have been set out in a Framework Document. The Framework Document includes an associated financial memorandum and the CSC's three-year corporate and one-year business plans. The FCDO Internal Audit and Investigations Department (IAID) provides the CSC's internal audit function. The CSC's annual income and expenditure are incorporated in the overall accounts of the FCDO. The CSC account is held with the Government Banking Service.

The Commission normally comprises up to 15 members, including the Chair, who are appointed in accordance with the principles of the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies. Commissioners are appointed by the Secretary of State for an initial period of three years, with the possibility of reappointment for one further three-year period. The Chair and other relevant officers normally meet with relevant Ministers at least annually to discuss the work of the CSC. The Chair of the Commission is the Accounting Officer for the CSC, with responsibility to the Secretary of State for its conduct and performance. A separate statement from the Accounting Officer follows.

Statement of Accounting Officer's responsibilities

A) Corporate governance report

I. Commissioners' report

Organisational Structure

Professor Robin Mason ORB
(Chair and Accounting Officer)

Professor Morag McDonald (Deputy Chair)

Pages 44-47 list the membership of the CSC

The CSC's Secretariat is provided by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), whose office at Woburn House, 20-24 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HF serve as the CSC's headquarters.

Certain pre-award and post-award services are provided by the British Council under the terms of a separate MOU between the CSC and the British Council.

Register of Interests

Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioners are required to complete a declaration of interests twice a year. The Register of Interests is kept by the Secretariat.

Diversity and Inclusion

In appointing Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioners, the FCDO seeks to be open and inclusive and to recruit and develop a diverse and talented Commission that is representative of society today.

Personal Data Incidents

There were no serious personal data incidents in the period covered by this report.

II. Statement of Commission's and Accounting Officer's responsibilities

Under the Act, the Commission must make to the Secretary of State in each year a report on the discharge of its functions during the period of 12 months to 30th September. The Secretary of State will lay a copy of the report before each House of Parliament. In preparing the statement of income and expenditure included in the report, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and, in particular, to observe any Accounts Direction issued by the Secretary of State, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis and make judgments and estimates on a reasonable basis.

The CSC has regard to the Framework Document, agreed between the CSC and the FCDO, which sets out finance and accounting requirements in meeting these obligations. The Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer of the FCDO has designated the Chair as the Accounting Officer of the CSC. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the CSC's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money published by HM Treasury.

The Accounting Officer confirms that the Annual Report as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable, and that he takes personal responsibility for the Annual Report and statement of income and expenditure and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable. The CSC's accounts are inspected and reported upon by professional auditors.

The Accounting Officer has taken all reasonable steps that he ought to have taken to make himself aware of any relevant information and to establish that the staff engaged in this work are aware of that information.

III. Governance statement

The CSC was established under the 1959 Act to administer the Grant-in-Aid; select the persons to receive the Commonwealth Scholarships; place the holders of Commonwealth Scholarships at universities in the UK; and oversee the welfare of the Commonwealth Scholars throughout their awards.

The CSC consists of a Chair and not less than nine nor more than fourteen members appointed by the Secretary of State, of whom not less than four shall be appointed as holders of high academic office. Commissioners are volunteers and receive no remuneration, save for an honorarium of £300 for participation in selection meetings. The Chair receives an annual stipend of £12,000.

The CSC and its Committees consider the following matters annually:

- Government policy as it applies to the CSC and the Scholarships
- CSC's governance, membership and policies
- CSC's audit and risk management
- CSC's strategy including CSC's Corporate and Business Plans and CSC's performance against them
- Allocation of budgets to programmes, administration and programme support
- Awards policy and process
- The issues of disadvantage and safeguarding
- Selection: the mechanisms for selecting scholars, contents of the application, outreach, the selection process, management of selection committees and financial outcomes
- Scholars: policies relating to the Scholars and their activities in the UK, rules and regulations, placements and the general well-being of Scholars
- CSC's engagement and alumni strategies
- CSC's programme for the evaluation of impact of awards
- CSC's relationships and joint-funding agreements with UK universities
- Production of an Annual Report
- Other policies that may impact the administration of the Scholarships.

Governance Framework

The full Commission meets three times per year, supported by four committees: namely the Audit & Risk Management, Awards Policy, Evaluation and Monitoring, and Finance Committees. The Chairs of these Committees, with the CSC Chair and Deputy-Chair, comprise the Executive Group, which normally meets three times annually. Separate sub-committees of Commissioners are convened to handle the selection of scholarship recipients.

The CSC may appoint independent members to all committees.

Commissioner attendance at full meetings was as follows in the period of this report:

Professor Robin Mason (Chair) 100% 3/3

Professor Morag McDonald (Deputy Chair) 100% 3/3

Professor Elizabeth Baggs 100% 3/3

Aisling Conboy 66% 2/3

Professor Sarah Hawkes 0% 0/3

Professor Allan Hill 100% 3/3

Professor Kevin Ibeh 100% 3/3

Professor Paul Jackson to 30 September 2024
66% 2/3

Professor Parmjit Jat 100% 3/3

Emma Judge to 30 September 2024 66% 2/3

Dr Catherine MacKenzie 66% 2/3

Elizabeth Tanya Masiyiwa 66% 2/3

Dr Christine Thurania-McKeever 66% 2/3

Ryan Shorthouse 100% 3/3

Professor James Smith to 31 July 2024 0% 0/2

The Audit & Risk Management Committee advises the CSC and the Accounting Officer on:

- The arrangements by which the CSC accounts for its expenditure, including both internal controls and external inspection, and recommends any changes required to conform with best practice
- Its oversight of the CSC's programme of internal Audit by FCDO's IAID
- The arrangements in place to prevent conflicts of interest for Commissioners and staff
- The CSC's Risk Register and risk management procedures, and ensures that appropriate policies are in place to conform with these
- Compliance of all contractual arrangements which exist between the Commission, its sponsors and its main service suppliers with best practice in terms of risk management
- The CSC's Counter Aid Diversion Strategy (CADS) with oversight of this and regular monitoring of the CADS Action Plan
- Its oversight of Safeguarding, Anti-fraud measures and GDPR

The Awards Policy Committee advises the CSC and the Accounting Officer on:

- Allocation of budgets between programmes; policy for all Scholarship and Fellowship programmes including policy for the recruitment of award-holders and liaison with nominating bodies; proposals for new Programmes

The Evaluation and Monitoring Committee advises the CSC on:

- Evaluation of CSC's programmes by identifying their impact on individual award holders, on their home countries and on wider international activities; and on systematic data as the evidence base for Commission discussions of policy and processes

The Finance Committee advises the CSC and the Accounting Officer on:

- Budgets made available to the Commission from Government Departments and policy set by the Commission to ensure that these are appropriately allocated and properly accounted for
- Arrangements by which the Commission presents its accounts; and on approval of end-of-year expenditure reported by its service providers

- Proposals from service providers for the costs of providing the menu of agreed services in the following financial year, and recommendations to the Commission as appropriate; and on satisfaction with the internal controls in place for the management of expenditure
- Forecast award expenditure and any action taken in the event of significant forecast budgetary under- or over-spend; and a budget to meet the Commission's operating costs and any action taken in the event of significant forecast budgetary under- or over-spend
- A budget to meet the costs for the Commission's Engagement and Alumni Strategies, and for programmes of Recruitment and Outreach, and Monitoring and Evaluation; and on any action taken in the event of significant forecast budgetary under- or over-spend against these headings
- The formal record of recommendations made to selection committee chairs for the allocation of resources to new awards

Commission Performance

The Chair has individual review meetings with Commissioners each year. These meetings focus on Commission performance and individual contributions. The Chair also had review meetings with each of the Commissioners due for reappointment during the period of this report in order to make recommendations to the Minister. Commissioners also had the opportunity to relay via the FCDO any feedback on the performance of the Chair.

All Scholars are surveyed each year on the effectiveness of the Scholarship and its administration as part of the Scholar Engagement survey and the results of this survey are reviewed by the Evaluation and Monitoring Committee. In 2023/24, 88% of Scholars reported that the support they had received from the CSC had been excellent or good.

Corporate Governance Code

The CSC has considered HM Treasury's Corporate Governance Code as it applies to a small Non-Departmental Public Body, and, where the Code is materially relevant, the CSC and the Accounting Officer consider that the CSC does conform to the Code.

Risk Assessment and Audit

The following key principles outline the CSC's approach to risk management and internal control which it seeks to align with FCDO's processes:

The CSC's risk policy is that it:

- Has responsibility for overseeing risk management within the organisation as a whole
- Has an open and receptive approach to solving risk problems
- Has a generally low risk appetite and makes conservative and prudent recognition and disclosure of the financial and non-financial implications of risks

The CSC has a Risk Framework, and a Risk Register which is reviewed three times a year by the Audit and Risk Management Committee and by the full Commission once a year. The CSC faced only one risk classified as severe after mitigation in 2023/24, relating to funding of the scheme. This risk is monitored and reviewed closely at each Committee meeting.

The CSC's Risk Framework and Register incorporate this approach to risk management. The CSC seeks guidance where appropriate from the FCDO on risk management issues and are currently undertaking a review of the Risk Framework with advice from the FCDO.

The FCDO's Internal Audit and Investigations Department (IAID) undertakes an audit of CSC annually, with the audit in 2023/24 being on CSC's Alumni Programme. The outcome of this was positive, with an assurance rating of moderate, a net risk rating of moderate and controls deemed to be adequate.

Scope of responsibility

As Accounting Officer since 1 January 2022, I accept responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the CSC's policies, aims and objectives whilst safeguarding the public funds and assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Managing Public Money.

The purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of CSC policies, aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place for the year ended 31 March 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and accords with Treasury guidance.

The Secretariat regularly reports to the CSC on expenditure to date, forecast outturn and projections for future years. These projections enable the CSC to assess the potential impact of increased tuition and maintenance fees. The CSC, together with the FCDO representative, has considered the impact of any changes in entry requirements for Scholars.

Relevant administrative staff have obtained accreditation (Level 1) with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC).

The CSC works closely with the FCDO's Scholarships Unit, which is represented at meetings of the Commission and its Finance Committee.

Review of effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the CSC, particularly its system of internal control. This review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the Secretariat, within the ACU, which has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework that is separately audited, and responds to advice from the FCDO, FCDO's Internal Audit reports, comments made by the firm engaged in the inspection of CSC's accounts and other reports. I have been advised on the implications of the results of such reviews, on the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of systems of internal control by the ARM Committee.

Data Quality

All information presented to the CSC is derived from existing management information systems. The CSC is content with the quality of the data presented to it and considers it sufficient to properly inform decision making.

The CSC is assured that the Secretariat within the ACU has systems in place to ensure that all personal data are handled in compliance with GDPR and has access to professional advice in this area. The ACU offers regular training to ensure that its staff are kept up to date on Data Protection and GDPR compliance. FCDO's IAID undertook an audit of GDPR during the 2020/21 financial year which assessed the net risk to CSC as moderate, with controls adequate in design and operation to manage risk within a moderate risk appetite. All recommendations from that audit have been implemented.

B) Remuneration and staff report

The CSC has continued the arrangement under which its Secretariat and other management functions are provided by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the British Council. The CSC does not itself have any employees. The effectiveness and value for money of these arrangements are formally reviewed annually by the Finance Committee, which recommends appropriate action to the full Commission.

C) Parliamentary accountability and audit report

The CSC monitors the regularity of its expenditure through its expenditure approval process and by scrutinising expenditure against budget.

The CSC levies no fees or charges. It experienced no losses or special payments. It has no remote contingent liabilities.



Professor Robin Mason ORB
Chair
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
in the UK

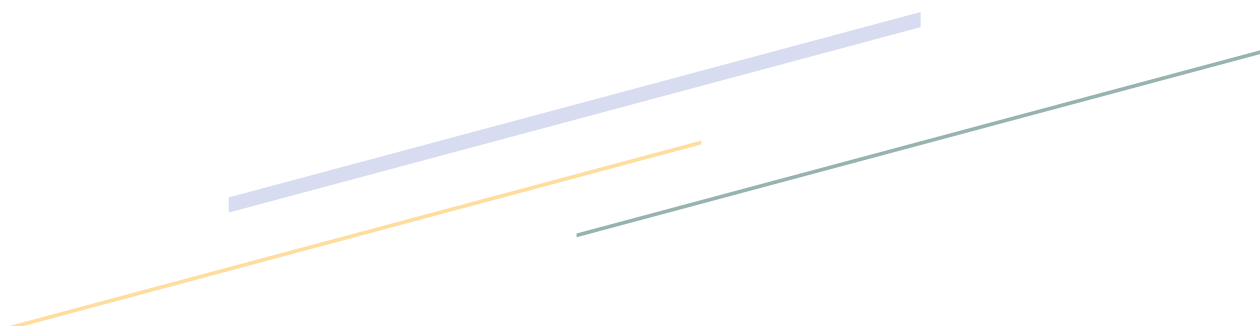
Consolidated statement of income and expenditure

	2023/2024 Actual Spend		2022/2023 Actual Spend	
	£000	% of total income/ costs	£000	% of total income/ costs
FCDO Grant-in-aid programme	27,800	98%	27,800	98%
FCDO Grant-in-aid admin	424	1%	424	2%
DFE Grant-in-aid programme	219	1%	-	0%
Total Grant-in-aid to CSC	28,443		28,224	

Scholarships and Fellowships Expenditure (FCDO)				
PhD research	8,310	29.0%	8,533	30%
Agency Master's	3,651	13.0%	3,349	12%
Split-site PhD	1,930	7.0%	2,488	9%
Shared Master's	4,396	15.0%	4,916	17%
Distance Learning Master's	3,347	12.0%	2,979	11%
Professional Fellowships	432	2.0%	-	0%
Total Direct Award Costs	22,066		22,265	
Other Scholarship Costs	1,770	6.0%	1,853	7%
Total Scholarships and Fellowships Expenditure (FCDO)	23,836		24,118	

Other Programme Expenditure (FCDO)				
Evaluation	314	1.0%	306	1%
Communications	545	2.0%	551	2%
Alumni	670	2.0%	616	2%
Recruitment and Outreach	279	1.0%	268	1%
Time Limited Programme	160	1.0%	282	1%
IT Development	252	1.0%	-	0%
VAT	329	1.0%	278	1%
Total Other Programme Expenditure (FCDO)	2,549		2,300	

	2023/2024 Actual Spend		2022/2023 Actual Spend	
	£000	% of total income/ costs	£000	% of total income/ costs
Non- ODA Programme Expenditure				
DFE Grant-in-aid (PhD research)	164	1%	-	0.0%
Total OGD Programme Expenditure	164	1.0%	-	0.0%
Total CSC Administrative Expenditure (FCDO)	424	1.0%	424	2%
Total Programme Management Costs	1,471	5.0%	1,372	5.0%
Total Expenditure	28,444		28,215	
Cash Spend				
Scholarships and Fellowships Expenditure (FCDO)	23,836	84%	24,118	84%
Other Programme Expenditure (FCDO)	2,549	9%	2,300	8%
Non-ODA Programme Expenditure	164	1%	-	0%
CSC Administrative Expenditure (FCDO)	424	1%	424	2%
Programme Management Costs	1,471	5%	1,372	5%
Total Expenditure	28,444		28,215	
(Increase)/Decrease in Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,130		(232)	
(Increase)/Decrease in Accruals and Trade Payables	(220)		9	
Total Cash Spend	29,354		27,992	
Opening bank balance	3,424		3,191	
Cash received	28,224		28,224	
Closing Balance	(2,294)		(3,424)	
Cash spend	29,354		27,992	



Expenditure breakdown

2023/2024

PhD research	30%
Agency Master's	13%
Split-site PhD	7%
Shared Scholarships	15%
Distance Learning	12%
Professional Fellowships	2%
Other Scholarship Costs	6%
Evaluation, Engagement, R&O and TLP	8%
Administration, programme management costs and irrecoverable VAT	8%



2022/2023

PhD research	30%
Agency Master's	12%
Split-site PhD	9%
Shared Scholarships	17%
Distance Learning	11%
Professional Fellowships	0%
Other Scholarship Costs	7%
Evaluation, Engagement, R&O and TLP	7%
Administration, programme management costs and irrecoverable VAT	8%



Notes

1. These figures were consolidated in FCDO's audited Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24.
2. The CSC engaged independent auditors to inspect the statement that were submitted to FCDO. No matters were brought to the attention of the Commission.
3. This activity is managed by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom.
4. The CSC holds no fixed assets.
5. The CSC employs no staff.
6. The contribution of UK Universities to CSC programmes, through maintenance payments and tuition fees, was a further £6m. Such partnership contributions increase the number of awards available.
7. Having no VATable outputs, the CSC is not registered for VAT so cannot reclaim VAT on any of its inputs.

Key:

8. TLP: Time Limited Programmes
9. R&O: Recruitment and Outreach
4. In 2021/22, funds from DfE were channelled through FCDO, in line with government practice.

Membership of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

Professor Robin Mason ORB Chair, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



I am Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) at the University of Birmingham, and I am responsible for all aspects of the university's global engagement. As Chair of the CSC, I am responsible for ensuring the CSC makes good decisions and that it develops and implements an effective strategy. I am firmly committed to the mission of the CSC — to provide opportunities for talented and motivated young people who could not otherwise afford them — having myself benefitted from scholarships throughout my education.

Professor Morag McDonald Deputy Chair, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK and Chair, Finance Committee



Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Science & Engineering at Bangor University

I am Professor of Ecology and Catchment Management at Bangor University, where I have been an active researcher in international environmental issues for over 25 years, with broad research expertise in tropical forest ecology and restoration. I have field experience in 14 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. I am also Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Diversity & Inclusion) and chair the University Athena Swan working group.

Professor Sarah Hawkes Chair, Awards Policy Committee



Co-founder and Co-CEO of Global Health 50/50

I am Co-Founder and Co-CEO of Global Health 50/50 — an NGO that promotes accountability and action for gender equality — and Co-Chair of the Lancet Commission on Gender and Global Health. I have 30 years of global research experience on evidence-to-policy processes and work with both the multilateral systems and national governments to promote accountability and action for gender-responsive policies for health equity.

Professor Paul Jackson (until September 2024)



Chair, Evaluation and Monitoring Committee and Lead Commissioner Knowledge Hubs (until September 2024)

Professor of African Politics and Director of Research, College of Social Science, University of Birmingham

I am Director of Research for the social sciences and a researcher with extensive experience across the Global South, specialising in post-conflict governance. I also sit on several international committees, including the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration, where I am responsible for monitoring SDG16 and am a member of the UK Research Excellence Framework panel for Development and Anthropology.

Emma Judge (until September 2024)



Lead Commissioner Development Impact (until September 2024)

Head of East Africa, Deaf Child Worldwide

I have over 25 years of experience living and working in Africa, Asia, and Latin America with INGOs and government agencies, supporting sustainable social and economic change for vulnerable people. My work focuses on disability, health, education, and inclusion, using an evidence-based approach to strengthen pathways to impact. Currently, I serve as Head of East Africa for Deaf Child Worldwide and have previously held roles as CEO of The Commonwealth Society for the Deaf and Interim Director of Sense International. I am a published author, including works for development professionals funded by the Department for International Development, and 'To Whom It May Concern', a book celebrating ten years of democracy in South Africa with a foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Dr Catherine MacKenzie

Chair, Audit & Risk
Management Committee



Fellow Commoner, Magdalene
College, Cambridge; Dean of
Degrees,
Green Templeton College, Oxford

As a former Commonwealth Scholar myself (UK to Australia), I have a long-term commitment to upholding the values of the Commonwealth and to ensuring that CSC continues to play an important role in the UK's development aid strategy, helping to build a safer, healthier and more prosperous world. As a barrister, I have a particular commitment to upholding the rule of law and promoting good governance. I have served as Chair of the Board of Scrutiny of Cambridge University and PVC of an Australian university. Alongside my academic posts, I hold judicial office as Chairman of the Plant Varieties and Seeds Tribunal and serve as a Governing Master of the Bench of Inner Temple (Inn of Court for barristers) and lay member of the UK Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board (a UK public appointment). Earlier in my career, I worked with the United Nations, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and in UN Peacekeeping throughout Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Dr Christine

Thuranira-McKeever

Vice-Principal, Equity, Diversity
and Inclusion and Director of
Distance Learning, Royal Veterinary
College (RVC), University of London



In my role as Vice-Principal for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) at the Royal Veterinary College, I am responsible for all aspects of EDI at the university. I have additional responsibility for distance learning programmes including professional doctorates, and I lead on the academic and strategic direction of these courses. In this role, I work with postgraduate students from around the world and have supported many cohorts of Commonwealth Scholars over the last ten years. As part of this work, I also regularly engage with institutions in the Global South to create partnerships to support students and in so doing, help strengthen their institutional capacity. My academic background is in agricultural economics, and I spent the early part of my career working in international development.

Professor Kevin Ibeh

Lead Commissioner Marketing,
Communications and Brand



Professor of Marketing and
International Business at Birkbeck,
University of London.

I have particular interest in advancing internationalisation, international entrepreneurship, and international investment activities among firms, as a route to facilitating sustainable economic development. These themes and the emergence of African multinationals have been at the heart of my consulting and advisory work with the World Bank, the OECD, African Union Commission, UNCTAD, and others. I am Lead Series Editor of the Palgrave Series of Entrepreneurship in Africa and in addition to senior leadership roles in the UK Higher Education sector, I have served and continue to serve in expert capacities for universities and organisations across Africa, Europe, and beyond.

Professor Parmjit Jat

Professor of Molecular Cellular
Biology in the UCL Institute of
Prion Diseases at UCL, MRC
Investigator within MRC Prion Unit
at UCL, Programme Leader and
Departmental Graduate Tutor



My research was initially focussed on cell growth disorders such as cancer and ageing with an emphasis on cell immortalisation. I developed the 'Immortomouse', a novel H-2Kbtsa58 strain of mice that allows for the derivation of conditionally immortal cells from various tissues. I now concentrate on prion research where I have developed in vitro cell models for propagating human prions in culture and investigate how they cause neurodegeneration.

Professor James Smith (until July 2024)

Vice Principal International
and Professor of African and
Development Studies at the
University of Edinburgh



I am responsible for shaping and implementing the university's internationalisation strategy, activities and collaborations. I am a former director of the university's Centre of African Studies and Global Development Academy. Before joining the university in 2003 as a research fellow, I worked at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and Oxfam Southern Africa. My research focuses on the role of science, technology, and innovation in poverty alleviation, with an emphasis on African trypanosomiasis control and treatment in both humans and animals across the tsetse fly belt.

Professor Liz Baggs

Dean of Research for the College
of Medicine and Veterinary
Medicine and Professor of Food
and Environmental Security at the
University of Edinburgh



As Dean of Research, I am responsible for all the research within our college. Prior to taking on this role, I was Deputy Dean of Research for Strategic Change and Deputy Director of the Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Systems. I am a previous President of the British Society of Soil Science. I have led several large international research projects, including across sub-Saharan Africa, and have supervised PhD students from Commonwealth countries.

Professor Allan Hill

Chair, Evaluation and Monitoring
Committee



Professor of Population and
International Health Emeritus in the
School of Economic, Social and Political Sciences
at the University of Southampton

My professional life has mostly been spent in higher educational institutions including appointments in Commonwealth countries (University of Ghana), in other countries (University of Kuwait, American University of Beirut; University of Jordan), as well as in the USA (Harvard University) and the UK. For four years, I served as Regional Representative of the Population Council for the Middle East and Programme Officer for the Ford Foundation. I have served as a Governing Board Member for the UK Longitudinal Study and was Deputy-Chair of an ESRC Grant Assessment Panel and a reviewer for the NIH and the NIHR. My career has involved many years of residence in lower income countries (Jordan, Mali, Senegal, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Egypt). My research and teaching have centred on improving the health and reproductive security of women and children in low income populations in the Middle East and West Africa.

Ryan Shorthouse

Founder and Executive Chair of
the independent think tank,
Bright Blue



I am a writer, thinker, and entrepreneur. I was the Chief Executive and am now the Executive Chair of the think tank Bright Blue. Bright Blue's work has been especially influential on UK educational, environmental, social, and economic policy over the past decade. I was previously a research fellow at the think tank the Social Market Foundation. Prior to 2010, I was an adviser to the Shadow Education Secretary. I am a Senior Visiting Fellow at King's College London and the University of Bath. I am also a trustee of the What Works Centre, Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO).

Aisling Conboy

Senior Programme Director,
Wilton Park



I am Senior Programme Director at Wilton Park, an executive agency of the FCDO, where I convene dialogues on trade, diplomacy, and education. Previously, I was the UK's first Higher Education Specialist at the Department for International Trade, promoting UK higher education exports and strategy, and leading UK government trade missions and participating in trade talks and global and bilateral forums. I also served as International Partnerships Director at the University of Greenwich, overseeing one of the UK's largest transnational education portfolios. I am a founding member of the Education Investor's Business Women in Education Network. I have previously led on international partnerships at Strathclyde Business School, worked as an Educational Adviser at the US-UK Fulbright Commission, and managed the fellowship programme at the John Smith Trust with a focus on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. I am a fellow of the RSA and serve on Chevening and Fulbright panels.

Elizabeth Tanya Masiyiwa

President and CEO of Delta
Philanthropies, Higherlife
Foundation and Akello



I am a social entrepreneur and smartech executive. I am President and CEO of Delta Philanthropies, Higherlife Foundation and Akello, an African company transforming education with technology-based solutions. I am also Non-Executive Director sitting on the boards of Econet Wireless Zimbabwe and EcoCash Holdings Zimbabwe, two of the largest listed companies on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange. I am a board member of the Higherlife Foundation and serve on the boards of several charities and foundations, including Harvard University's Leadership Council for the Centre of Africa Studies. I provide advice to several entrepreneurship and philanthropy networks.



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