

Together we thrive

Annual Report

For the year ending 30 September 2025



December 2025

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**Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
in the United Kingdom**

December 2025

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Foreword

One of the many pleasures of being Chair of the CSC is to see the extraordinary impact of Commonwealth Scholarships in empowering talented individuals, strengthening global relationships, and developing solutions to some of the world's most complex challenges.

The CSC supports Commonwealth Scholars to grow their skills and contribute to their countries through research, leadership, and innovation. From accelerating healthcare technology and clean energy production, to defending human rights and protecting vulnerable communities, our Scholars are deeply committed to delivering development impact with courage and creativity. Thanks to the support of our sponsor, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, and our university partners, we can invest in Scholars who share our vision for positive change and play a leading role in fostering resilient economies and inclusive societies.

In this Annual Report, you will read about the contributions of Scholars and Alumni across the six CSC Development Themes and how they are delivering a safer, greener, fairer, and more prosperous future. You will also discover how we

at the CSC support their work and ensure that Commonwealth Scholarships deliver on the UK priorities for strategic, impactful, and long-term global development.

Together we can thrive

Collaboration is a core aspect of the CSC's mission and fundamental to delivering scholarships and fellowships that change lives. Our work would not be possible without the backing of the UK Government, the support of our nominating agencies across the Commonwealth, and the invaluable contributions of UK universities and fellowship host organisations. We continue to build on these relationships and cultivate new connections that deliver benefits to the UK and the wider Commonwealth through sustainable development.

The Commonwealth Startup Fellowship, which launched this year, is another area where we are forging partnerships to boost job creation and sustainable development innovation. In collaboration with Imperial College London, the programme supports promising Commonwealth entrepreneurs to transform their fledgling ventures into thriving businesses with a focus on sustainability and growth. By nurturing the Fellows' abilities and connecting them with industry experts and leaders, our aim is to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem that ignites business innovation and provides a foundation for stable and secure jobs across the Commonwealth.

Reflecting on this year's Commonwealth Day theme, 'Together we thrive', I am struck by the example of **Editha Mshiu** from Tanzania whose pioneering startup, Freshpack Technologies, supports smallholder farmers in storing their produce cheaply and sustainably to boost income generation and increase food security.

Together we can empower

Equity and inclusion are the twin pillars of the CSC's objective to reward merit and support underrepresented groups. We have set ambitious widening participation targets. We collaborate constructively with in-country partners to reach marginalised and underrepresented groups, empowering those with the greatest potential to lead transformational change, regardless of their circumstances. Through our collaboration with agencies such as the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum and the Forum for African Women Educationalists, we offer a dedicated application pathway for disabled candidates and women educators who are working to improve the lives of disabled people and promote girls' education in their home countries.

Our diverse community of Scholars and Alumni offers a vivid demonstration of equity and inclusion in action; in turn they make a real difference to supporting and empowering others who are marginalised by society. Through research, advocacy, and thought leadership, Scholars such as **Israel Balogun** from Nigeria, whose work you can read about in this report, are amplifying the voices and choices of people with disabilities and shaping national policies to promote digital inclusion.

Together we can innovate

As a world-class scholarship body, we know that the CSC's reputation is measured by how it responds to the demands of an ever-changing world. Throughout its history, the CSC has adapted to the needs of students from around the globe, bridging gaps between education systems, facilitating the exchange of ideas, and empowering individuals and societies to find meaningful solutions to the challenges they face. We are passionate about the benefits that internationalism brings to the UK and the Commonwealth and are committed to delivering on our aims through agile governance and innovative, future-facing programmes.

By enhancing our work with partners, including British High Commissions, and strengthening our engagement with Alumni, we are going further to embed impact and foster international co-operation. Our Alumni Advisory Panel, which consults on the CSC's work, challenges us to rethink and modernise our programmes to ensure they align with the contemporary development landscape.

We are proud to champion innovators such as Alumnus **Sibongani Kayola** from Zambia whose pioneering models of social protection financing are delivering life-saving support to communities in conflict-affected regions of Africa. Sibongani's work tangibly demonstrates that true development is about innovative, co-created solutions that build resilience and long-term prosperity.

Together we can go far

Looking back on the past year, I am reminded of the inspirational stories of Scholars and Alumni that I have heard, read, and witnessed first-hand. The impact they create in their countries and their university communities in the UK is broad-based and deep. Collectively, they are delivering progress towards a stable and sustainable world. As ambassadors of the CSC scheme, they are showcasing the UK's global leadership in international development.

I would like to extend my profound gratitude to all our partners, funders, and supporters, whose collaboration and generosity makes the CSC's work possible. I look forward to us continuing to work together to build a 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 & Development Office (FCDO) and UK university partners, the CSC offers a range of study, research, and professional development opportunities 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 2025.

2024-2025

Key performance indicators

The CSC agreed to use five key performance indicators to measure success against its 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
Commonwealth PhD Scholarships	43%	57%
Commonwealth PhD Scholarship (high income)	100%	0%
Commonwealth Split-site Scholarships	62%	38%
Commonwealth Master's Scholarships*	57%	42%
Commonwealth Shared Scholarships	49%	51%
Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships	45%	55%
Commonwealth Professional Fellowships	47%	53%
Commonwealth Startup Fellowships	25%	75%

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

£6.5m was generated in 2024-25 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.

19 profiles of CSC women leading change and 16 profiles of Alumni impacting climate change were completed 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 completed 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 Alumni case studies were completed to demonstrate the CSC as an innovative world-class scholarship and fellowship scheme that delivers impact on sustainable development across the Commonwealth.

*1% of candidates for Commonwealth Master's Scholarships indicated their gender category as 'prefer not to say'.



Our programmes

Objective 1:

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

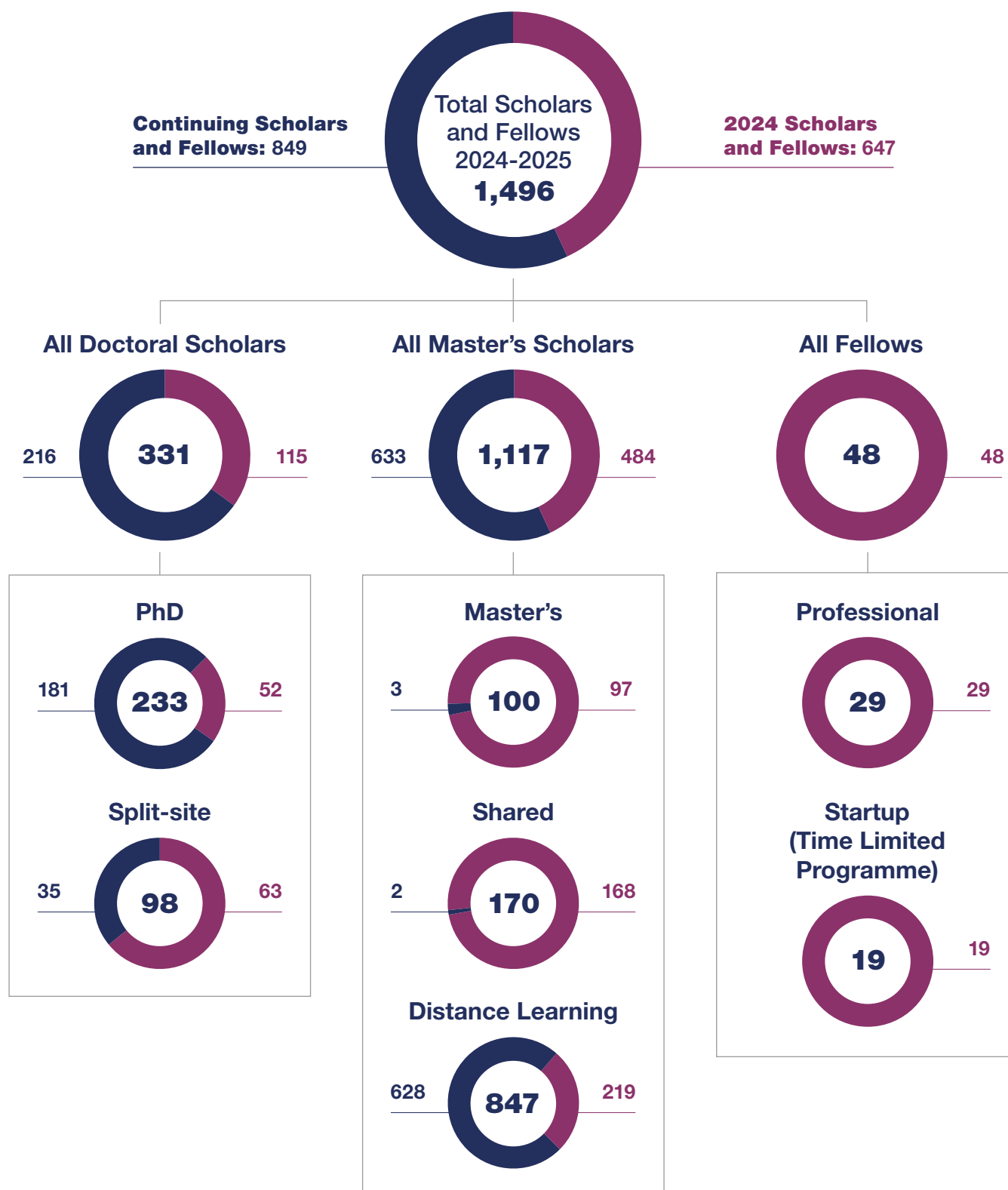
The following pages demonstrate how the range of study, research, and professional development programmes we provide, alongside the Scholar and Alumni engagement activities from the past year, have helped to build an engaged community of Scholars and Alumni with the potential to make real and lasting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

Our programmes in numbers

The CSC offers seven unique study, research, and professional development programmes across the Commonwealth 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 2024-2025 academic year. This includes new and continuing Scholars and Fellows.

New and continuing Scholars and Fellows 2024-25



The Sustainable Development Goals and CSC Development Themes

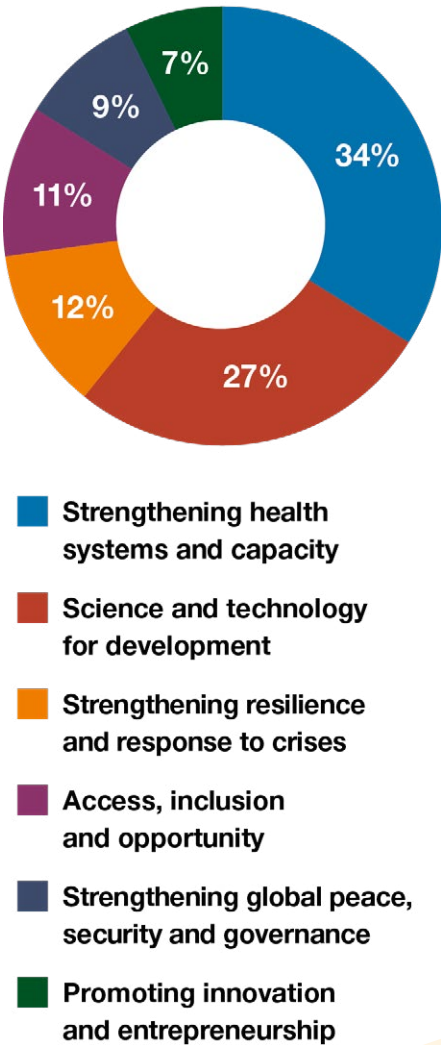
The CSC is guided by international development objectives. As part of their application, Commonwealth Scholars select at least three UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that they will aim to impact after their scholarship to answer the UN’s global call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

All Commonwealth Scholarships funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) are offered under six key development themes chosen specifically to align with the UK’s international development priorities. The data below demonstrates the percentage of 2024 Scholars targeting each of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and each of the CSC Development Themes.

Percentage of 2024 Commonwealth Scholarships applicable to each SDG



Themes addressed by 2024 Scholars and Fellows





Building an engaged community of Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni

‘I met amazing people I will stay in touch with. I learnt a lot about myself, my country and the importance of my research through seeing what other students are working on and the problems other developing countries face.’

PhD Conference
2025 participant

Through a range of events and opportunities, the CSC equips Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows with the skills and networks needed to drive positive change in their home countries. This support continues beyond the scholarship through the CSC’s dynamic Alumni Network, which fosters ongoing growth and amplifies Alumni achievements.

Together, Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni contribute to sustainable development at local, national, and global levels, applying their expertise across diverse sectors. By nurturing talent and empowering future leaders, the CSC plays a vital role in advancing Commonwealth-led development impact.

Find out how we support our world-class Scholars and Alumni to accelerate their sustainable development impact.

Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme

The Leaders in Sustainable Development Programme provides Commonwealth Scholars with practical skills to tackle development challenges in their communities. It begins with the online training ‘Understanding Development Impact’, followed by a series of online and in-person workshops focused on writing for development, fundraising, and research project management.

The programme includes two residencies held at Cumberland Lodge. In April, master’s Scholars explore how to maximise their impact through effective communication, influencing, and leadership skills. In May, doctoral Scholars join the PhD Conference which centres on engaging decision-makers and stakeholders in development research.



Mentoring Programme

The Mentoring Programme enables Commonwealth Scholars and Alumni to connect and inspire each other to create real-world impact. By matching new Scholars with experienced Alumni working in fields relevant to their studies, the programme offers a unique opportunity for one-on-one guidance and practical insight, helping Scholars turn academic knowledge into meaningful action after their scholarship.

‘Being paired with a Mentor from another Commonwealth country provided a unique opportunity to gain diverse perspectives and insights, which enriched my learning experience. It allowed me to benefit from their unique professional expertise and cultural background, enabling me to adapt new strategies and broaden my worldview. Additionally, the exchange of ideas and experiences fostered mutual cultural understanding, creating a richer and more impactful mentoring relationship.’

2024-2025 Mentee



In 2024-2025,
99% of participants would recommend the programme to incoming Scholars



In 2024-2025,
96% of participants reported that they would like to take part again

Connect and Collaborate Event

The Connect and Collaborate event supports Scholars to exchange ideas, discuss issues, and forge life-long connections for the future. Through workshops, expert panels, and talks from high-profile speakers, the event brings together the whole cohort of Scholars to focus on their unique strengths as part of a global community of changemakers.

Development in Action webinar series

The Development in Action webinar series offers a platform for Commonwealth Alumni to showcase their contribution to development across a range of global challenges. The series enables Commonwealth Alumni and Scholars to engage in real-time collaboration and problem-solving through a dedicated networking forum after each webinar.

In 2024-2025, the series covered topics ranging from shelter recovery in the aftermath of disasters to improving teaching practices in crisis settings. It also examined country and region-specific issues such as the role of Jamaica's social enterprises in achieving the SDGs and the multiple impacts of climate change on Small Island Developing States in the Pacific.



97% of webinar attendees learned something new 'to a large' or 'to a moderate' extent



99% of webinar attendees would recommend or join future webinars

Alumni Community Engagement Fund

The Alumni Community Engagement Fund champions small, locally driven actions that spark long-lasting, positive change on a wider scale.

The fund enables Commonwealth Alumni to design and implement initiatives that raise awareness of how development issues affect local people and deliver community-led solutions.

United by a vision of building a brighter, more inclusive future, this year's 15 Alumni organisers delivered activities across eight different countries to address the themes of:



Youth for sustainable development



Disability inclusion in institutions



Save our oceans

'The activity has laid a foundation for long-term institutional changes, including the formation of a disability inclusion committee and the development of a disability help desk and disability policy. Participants, especially educators and administrators, expressed intentions to implement and develop more inclusive policies and practices. The workshop has also inspired plans to scale the initiative to other institutions in Tanzania, contributing to a broader national movement for disability inclusion in higher education.'

2024-2025 Alumni Community Engagement Fund organiser



83% of organisers reported their chosen community benefited from the activity to 'a large extent'



‘Being a part of the Alumni Advisory Panel makes me remember and feel grateful for the part CSC played in my academic journey and career, and gives me the opportunity to contribute in my own way to future cohorts.’

2023-2025 Alumni Advisory Panel member

Alumni Advisory Panel

The Alumni Advisory Panel provides a forum for Commonwealth Alumni to shape the future of Commonwealth Scholarships and support the next generation of Scholars to thrive. By sharing their varied experiences and specialist knowledge, panel members play a pivotal role in enhancing CSC activities and ensuring the programme remains focused on the needs of Scholars across the Commonwealth.

In 2024-2025, the current panel, comprising 116 members from 31 different Commonwealth countries, consulted on a community giving and partnerships proposal and a review of the CSC’s networks and communities. They also provided valuable insights on the role of national associations and how to revitalise regional Alumni groups to increase Alumni engagement.



Our Scholars and Fellows

Objective 2:

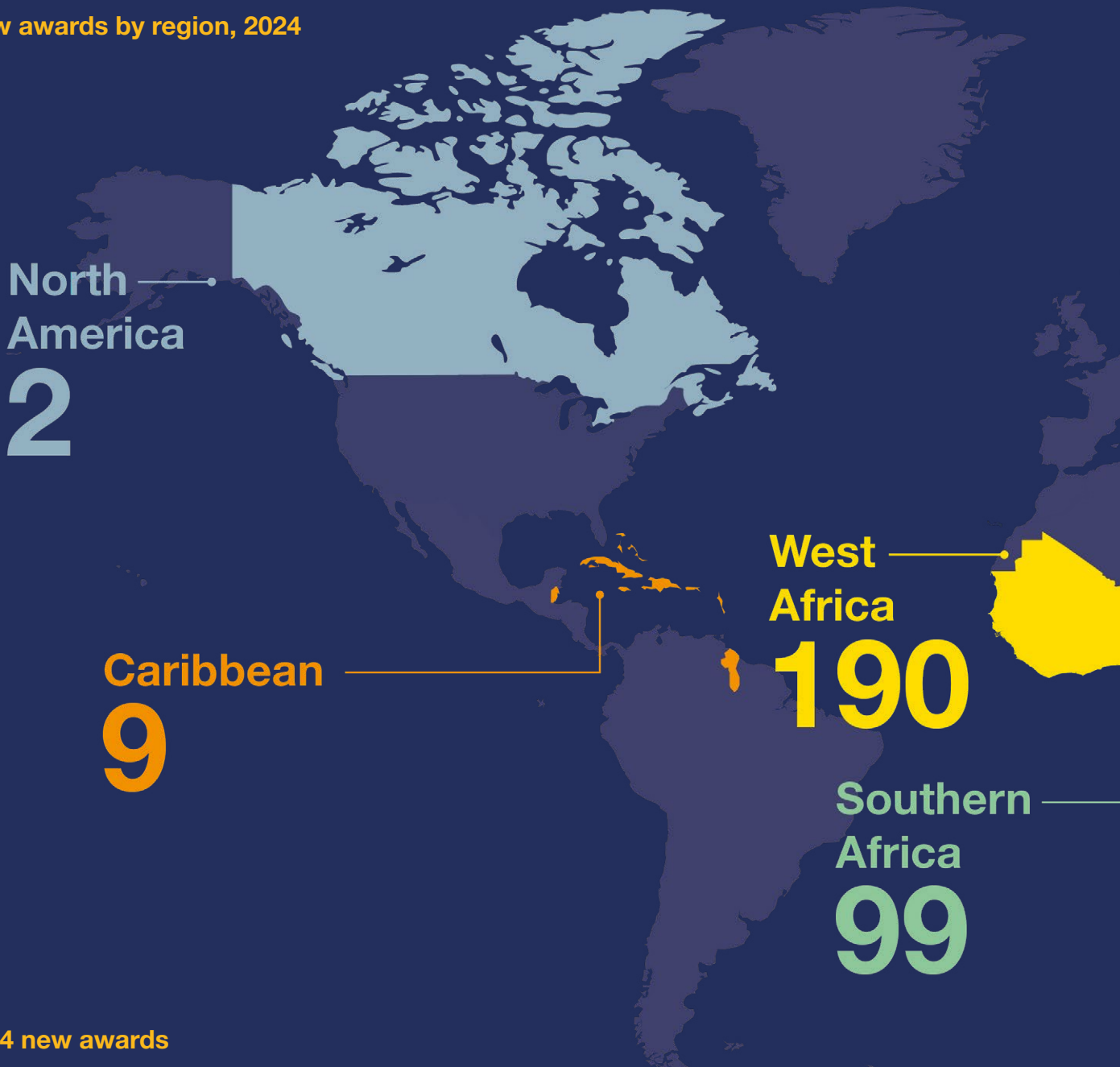
To ensure that our programmes reward merit, promote equity, and deliver widespread access, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This section of the Annual Report demonstrates how our Scholar selections reach a wide pool of applicants from across the Commonwealth, with a particular focus on low and middle income Commonwealth countries and how we work with our nominating partners to ensure, all other things being equal, candidates from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds are chosen.

Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows: The 2024 cohort

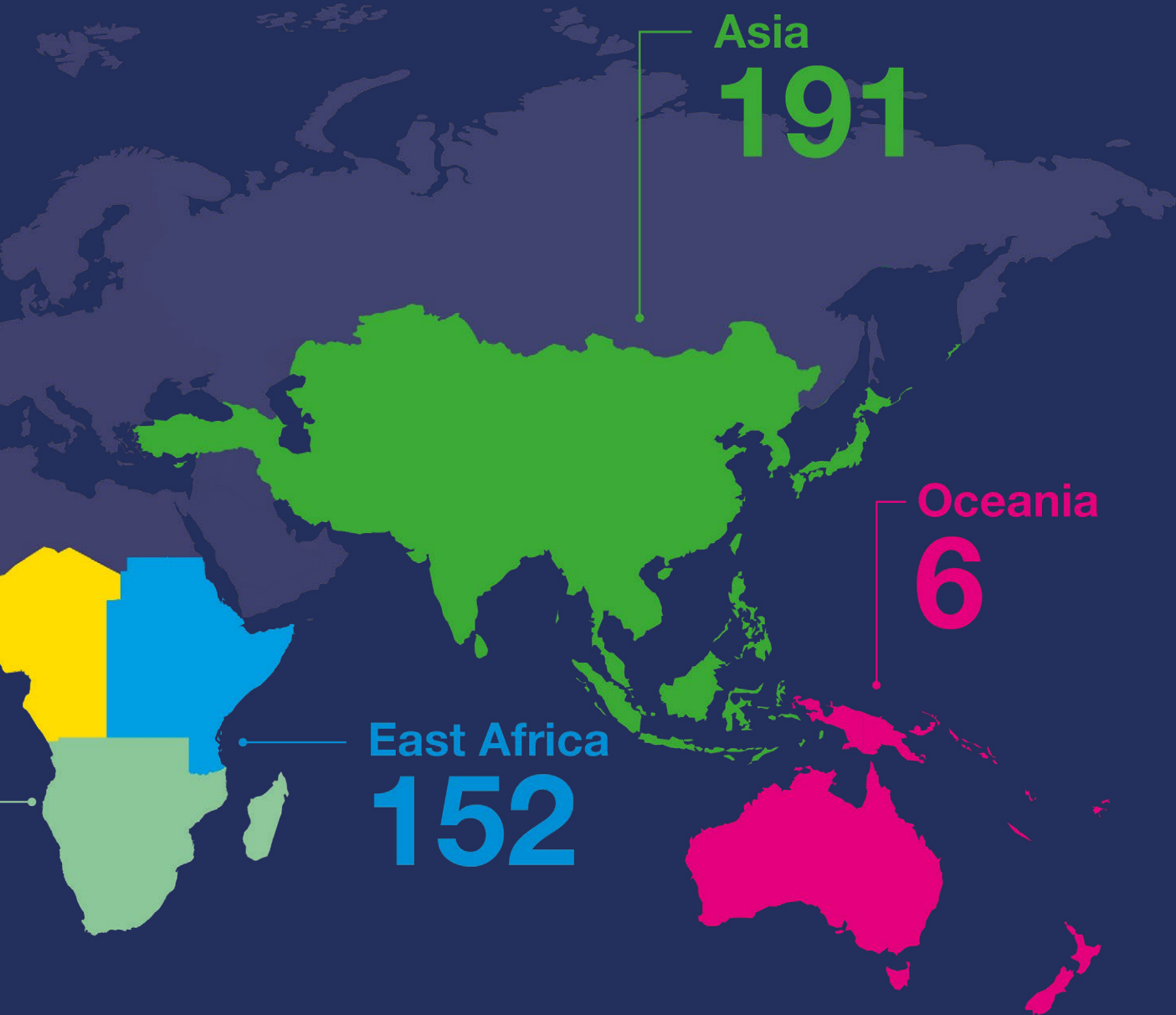
We were delighted to welcome 647 new Scholars and Fellows from 35 Commonwealth countries in the 2024-2025 academic year to take part in our programmes. This cohort joined 87 universities and host organisations spread across the UK.

New awards by region, 2024



2024 new awards

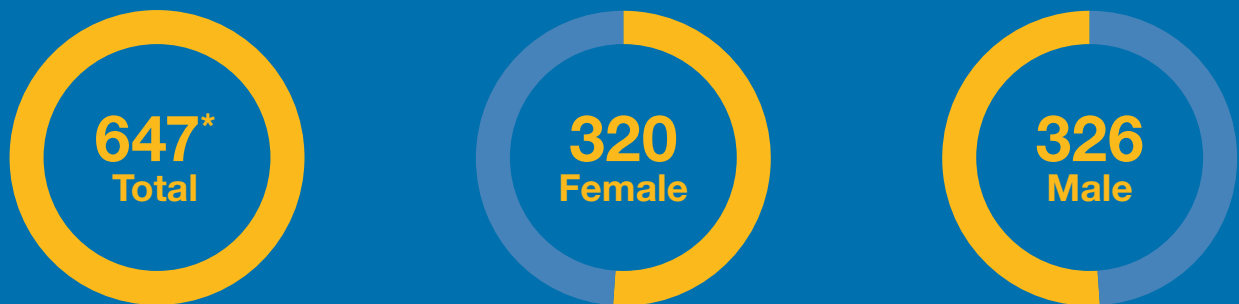




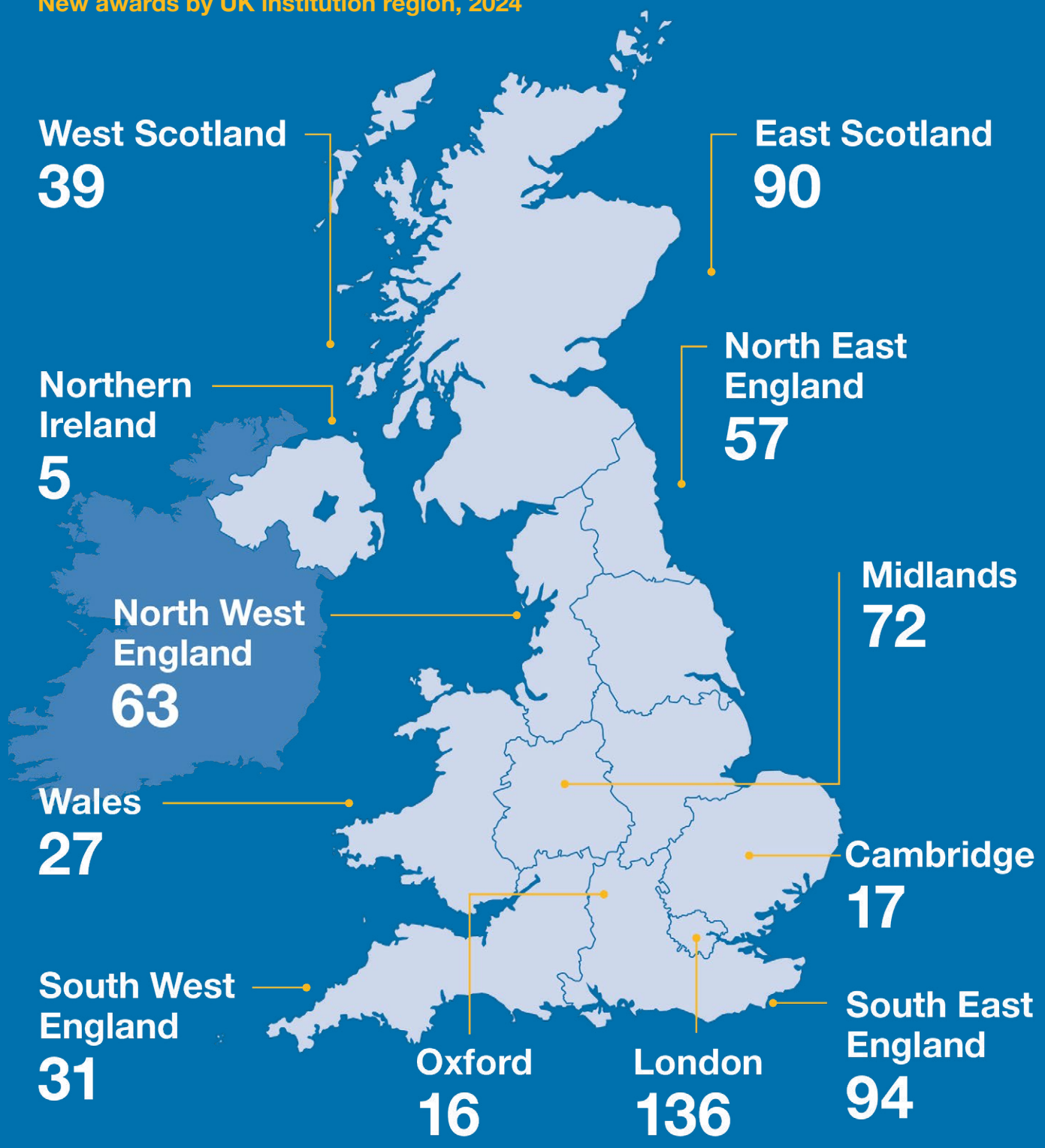
Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of official development assistance (ODA) recipients

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, 2024



New awards by UK institution region, 2024



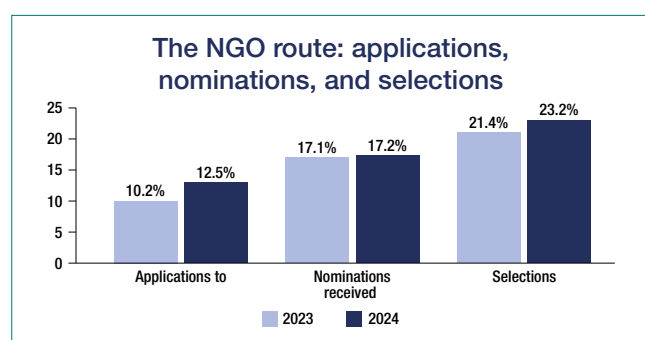
*One Scholar indicated their gender category as 'prefer not to say'.

Widening access to Commonwealth Scholarships

Higher education brings enormous benefits to individuals and communities. However, postgraduate study remains out of reach for many people due to the social, economic, and physical barriers they face.

To ensure that Commonwealth Scholarships promote equity and inclusion, reward merit, and deliver widespread access, especially to those from underrepresented groups, we work closely with national nominating agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and charitable trusts to recruit candidates from a diverse range of communities for Commonwealth Master's and PhD Scholarships.

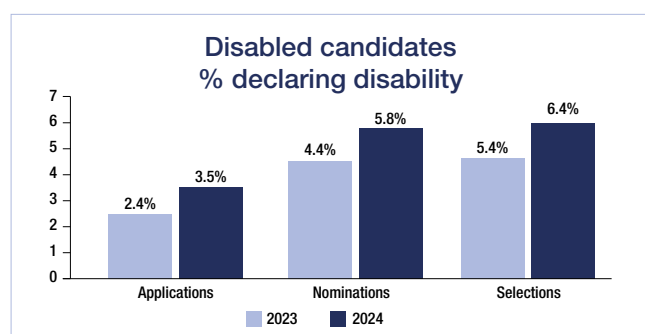
Between 2023 and 2024, we increased the proportion of candidate applications, nominations, and selections from our NGO and charitable trust nominating agencies.



The full list of nominating agencies that we work with is available on the website: cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/ngos-and-charitable-body-nominators

We collect equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data from candidates to monitor our progress towards increasing applications from and awarding scholarships to underrepresented groups.

In 2024, there was an increase in all areas of the application process for agency nominated Commonwealth Master's and PhD Scholarships from disabled candidates.



Connecting with NGO nominating agencies

Over the past 12 years, the Forum for Africa Women Educationalists (FAWE) has played a key role in ensuring the CSC meets its gender parity goal and empowers women educationalists across Africa.

In March 2024, CSC Commissioner Professor Kevin Ibeh met partners at FAWE to learn about how it reaches and supports candidates for our Master's and PhD Scholarships. Through continued engagement with FAWE, we aim to strengthen the partnership and increase the number of women applying through this route in the years to come.

'NGO nominating agencies such as FAWE fulfil an important area of work for the CSC by helping to widen access to Commonwealth Scholarships among historically underrepresented groups.'

Professor Kevin Ibeh





National nominating agency spotlight: Jamaica

Our partnerships with national nominating agencies ensure that Commonwealth Scholarships are prominent and widely accessible. We work with agency partners to actively support candidates from marginalised and underrepresented groups.

Widening access in Jamaica

In Jamaica, the Ministry of Finance and Public Service (MOFPS) has made special efforts in this area by implementing extensive advertising across local media, developing user-centred scholarship websites, and conducting digital campaigns through social media and email. These initiatives have boosted the visibility of Commonwealth Scholarships and strengthened the applicant pathway in Jamaica, where candidates also undergo a robust interview process to ensure transparency and merit-based selection.

Championing equal opportunities

In 2023, MOFPS reaffirmed its commitment to gender equity and equal opportunities in candidate selections. This commitment ensures that MOFPS empowers a broad range of individuals and helps to enrich future decision-making through the diversity of its scholarship selections.

Engaging local organisations

MOFPS engages local NGOs including Women Inc and the Combined Disabilities Association to promote scholarship opportunities to vulnerable

individuals who may not have considered applying before. Based in Kingston, Women Inc is a non-profit organisation that supports victims of gender-based violence and advocates for the rights of women and girls. The Combined Disabilities Association supports people with disabilities to have a greater voice and active participation in their affairs, and to affirm the rights of people with disabilities.

Working towards national development priorities

While MOFPS is committed to increasing inclusion and diversity in candidate selections, it is also focused on achieving the Government of Jamaica's national development priorities and enabling highly motivated candidates to fulfil their ambitions.

The pre-selection process includes an independent, expert-led panel interview and further shortlisting with recommendations to the CSC to ensure candidates can contribute to the national agenda.

The Ministry will be undertaking a new mentorship initiative in collaboration with the local CSC Alumni Association to assist candidates with the scholarship process to improve the overall scholarship experience.



Development impact

Objective 3:

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

The following section demonstrates how our programmes, Scholars, and Alumni produce high-quality research and create development impact at a community, country, and international level across the six CSC Development Themes and beyond.

Science and technology for development

'Science and technology are the backbone of modern civilisation, driving economic growth, enhancing quality of life, and addressing global challenges. They can accelerate progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals by improving water security through resilient infrastructure and improving access to clean, affordable energy with climate-responsive innovations. By reducing inequalities, promoting sustainability, and fostering inclusive development, science and technology serve as powerful enablers of progress. Commonwealth Scholars play a pivotal role by transferring the knowledge, training, and skills gained during their scholarships to support development in their low and middle income Commonwealth countries.'

Professor Parmjit Jat, CSC Commissioner



Waseem Akhtar

2015 Commonwealth
Master's Scholar

Pakistan

MSc Earthquake Engineering
Imperial College London

Waseem Akhtar is at the forefront of one of Pakistan's most ambitious infrastructure developments, the Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project. Situated in the rugged terrain of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the dam promises to deliver 800MW of renewable energy, irrigate 6,700 hectares of farmland, and store 1.5 billion m³ of water which will be vital for controlling floods and supplying clean drinking water for communities.

As Senior Geotechnical Engineer at the National Engineering Services Pakistan, Waseem designs rock support systems and conducts slope stability analyses to ensure the safety of both surface and underground structures.

Given Pakistan's frequent seismic activity, Waseem's work is essential for delivering the long-term resilience of the dam over its lifespan. His expertise in earthquake engineering – gained through his Master's degree at Imperial College London – enables him to accurately assess the dam's structural integrity and mitigate the impact of landslides and slope failures, which are common in the mountainous areas of Pakistan.

Waseem's journey from small-scale design work to on-site leadership has been transformative. Now, he contributes directly to the implementation of his designs, gaining hands-on experience of real-time construction while collaborating with a range of multinational teams, skills he acquired during his scholarship in London.

He is passionate about expanding his impact beyond hydropower and aims to apply his geotechnical and seismic expertise to future water resource and irrigation projects. For Waseem, the Mohmand Dam is more than just a project, it is a platform for advancing sustainable development, climate resilience, and engineering excellence.

'The modules at Imperial were based not only on the theoretical knowledge, but also on practical tools and skills. The software, tools, and skills that I learned during my Master's studies to design and analyse structures against earthquakes are still providing help to me during my career.'

Strengthening health systems and capacity

‘Recent consultations with Commonwealth countries have highlighted the continuing commitment to development cooperation partnerships and the need to prioritise the health and mortality rates of women, newborns, and children. Extending healthcare coverage and improving healthcare delivery systems are essential to avoid slipping back on initiatives such as the UK-backed Ending Preventable Deaths Support Programme. Across all our programmes, Commonwealth Scholars have shown how committed they are to the shared goals of improving population health, reducing inequalities in healthcare access, and delivering better health outcomes for all.’

Professor Allan Hill, CSC Commissioner



Deepa Chaturvedi

2024 Commonwealth Split-site
PhD Scholar

India

PhD in Organ-on-Chip Technology
for Engineering Artificial Tissues
for Preclinical Applications
Queen’s University Belfast and
Institute of Chemical Technology,
Mumbai

Deepa Chaturvedi is driving innovation at the intersection of biomedical engineering, public policy, and global collaboration, and reimagining the future of drug discovery and testing. Her research focuses on developing sophisticated 3D organoids and organ-on-chip platforms that replicate human physiology for advanced therapeutic and preclinical studies.

Deepa’s work integrates microfluidic device fabrication, 3D printing, and cell culture engineering to design dynamic and sustainable, non-animal alternatives to conventional testing. These organ-on-chip models enable precision studies in drug permeation, disease modelling, and safety evaluation, offering new routes to targeted, painless, and patient-specific treatments.

A key aspect of Deepa’s research is the use of non-animal origin materials to construct disease-specific models, combining innovation with ethics. By aligning her work with global regulatory frameworks such as the US FDA Modernization Act 2.0 and OECD guidelines, she aims to strengthen international

confidence in non-animal testing methods and contribute to the global shift toward humane, reproducible, and sustainable biomedical innovation.

Beyond the laboratory, Deepa actively advocates for science-based policy reform and equitable innovation. As part of the Commonwealth Scholars’ UK Parliament event, she engaged with Members of Parliament, Lords, and policymakers, and discussed the barriers to equitable healthcare access, research funding disparities, and the need for stronger UK-India partnerships in health technology translation. These dialogues deepened her understanding of how policy, innovation, and governance intersect and how evidence-based science can inform more inclusive development agendas.

Through her cross-disciplinary and transnational approach, Deepa is demonstrating how science, diplomacy, and advocacy can work together to strengthen health systems and research capacity, building pathways for ethical, affordable, and globally accessible healthcare technologies.

‘Science must not remain confined to laboratories – it must translate into policies, technologies, and compassion that strengthen health systems and serve humanity. I aspire to make organ-on-chip innovation a bridge between nations, ensuring equitable, ethical, and effective healthcare for all.’

Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship

'What really drives meaningful change is talented individuals starting and leading new initiatives and institutions in their communities. The CSC is committed to identifying and nurturing remarkably talented individuals from struggling communities in low income countries to give them educational and entrepreneurial opportunities in the UK that they can leverage to develop innovative research and companies that will transform the development of less fortunate Commonwealth countries. As people in higher income countries increasingly turn to entrepreneurialism to solve big problems and generate significant private and public prosperity, the CSC is playing its part in democratising access to entrepreneurial opportunities across the Commonwealth, including through our new flagship Commonwealth Startup Fellowship with Imperial College London.'

Ryan Shorthouse, CSC Commissioner



Sibongani Kayola
2016 Commonwealth
Master's Scholar

Zambia

MSc in Evidence-Based Social
Intervention and Policy Evaluation
University of Oxford

Sibongani Kayola is leading transformative humanitarian work as Deputy Regional Director of Operations for East and Southern Africa at Mercy Corps. Amid one of Africa's most severe crises, she led a team of 130 staff across six states in Sudan, navigating bureaucratic hurdles and conflict zones to deliver life-saving aid.

During her time in Sudan, Sibongani pioneered initiatives to adapt to volatile conditions on the ground. For example, by shifting away from long-term agricultural aid to immediate cash and voucher assistance, Sibongani ensured that displaced communities could access food quickly even as conflict lines shifted.

Her impact extends beyond Sudan. In Liberia, Sibongani transformed GiveDirectly's mobile-money pilot into the country's largest social protection programme, reaching over 160,000 people. During COVID-19, she led West Africa's largest USAID-funded cash transfer initiative and launched a groundbreaking universal basic income (UBI) pilot in Maryland, Liberia's most remote county.

Faced with challenges like poor digital infrastructure and lack of ID systems, Sibongani secured funding and partnerships to enrol eligible adults in the UBI pilot and construct 10 mobile phone towers, bringing connectivity and financial support to 21 previously isolated villages.

'My work on the UBI project in Liberia, and broader work in the country, have significantly impacted the lives of recipients by providing financial stability, improving infrastructure, and promoting financial inclusion. These efforts help lift communities out of poverty and empower individuals to build better futures.'

Through her belief in the power of possibility, Sibongani is questioning received ideas and driving innovative change in some of the world's most challenging humanitarian settings. Drawing on her Commonwealth Scholarship experience, she continues to tackle complex problems in fragile states and inspire her teams to deliver impact where it is needed most.

Strengthening global peace, security and governance

'Eighty years after the establishment of the United Nations, much has been achieved but much remains to be done. There are still large regions of the world in which the peace, stability, and the rule of law remain out of reach. To re-ignite the international understanding that inspired the peacebuilders of the post-war era, the world needs educated, confident and thoughtful leaders to define and coordinate national and international strategy in the 21st century. Commonwealth Scholars, selected through a highly competitive process, have the professional skills, international networks, and local knowledge to have a transformative impact and bring about long-term and sustainable peace, stability, and good governance.'

Dr Catherine MacKenzie, CSC Commissioner



Alfred Nyaga Musyoki
2024 Commonwealth Shared
Master's Scholar

Kenya

LLM International Human
Rights Law
Brunel University of London

Alfred Nyaga Musyoki is mobilising knowledge on digital rights, AI regulation, and data protection law to champion responsible data governance in Africa. As a researcher, educator, and lawyer, Alfred explores the complexities of data retention in an age of generative AI models to enhance transparency and accountability. His time at Brunel University has not only deepened his understanding of this fast-evolving field but also empowered him to become a powerful advocate for digital policy innovation.

Currently, Alfred is leading an initiative on data privacy, AI-powered surveillance, and predictive analytics for the Association of Privacy Lawyers in Africa (APLA). Through this initiative, he has trained more than 150 lawyers on the ethical and legal dimensions of AI technologies in different African contexts. He is also collaborating with a Nairobi-based firm, FMC Learning and Development to design and deliver an education programme that will support professionals, policymakers, and tech incubators in Kenya navigate the emerging digital landscape and address AI data compliance across a range of industries.

With his advanced legal expertise, Alfred is helping shape the national conversation around AI and data protection in Kenya. His contributions to research conferences and high-impact publications, such as the Journal of Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law (JIPIT), are influencing both academic and policy circles. Beyond the academy, he actively participates in national and regional dialogues on AI and data protection, and volunteers with Privacy Hub Africa to empower young people with knowledge about data privacy.

For Alfred, legal reforms are essential to building inclusive, transparent, and accountable digital governance in Kenya and across the region. By collaborating with regulators and civil society organisations, and expanding his educational initiatives, he is driving transformative digital innovation that is safe, secure, and sustainably managed.

'This life-changing and transformative experience has equipped me with intellectual competencies on digital rights, data protection law, and AI regulation. The scholarship has empowered me to dream big and has catapulted my career, positioning me to extensively contribute to sustainable development globally.'

Strengthening resilience and response to crises

'We live in an era of polycrisis and extreme inequalities. Climate breakdown, war and conflict, erosion of democratic rights – these challenges, and more, intersect to deepen vulnerabilities across all societies. Responding to these complex challenges requires more than technical fixes, it demands collective resilience rooted in solidarity, shared learning, and the courage to engage in meaningful dialogue across divides. Commonwealth Scholarships nurture precisely these capacities. They bring together emerging leaders from across the globe to not only gain advanced training in specialised subjects, but also to cultivate networks of trust, empathy, and cooperation. In doing so, they help build the connections needed for a more just and resilient future – one that no single actor can create alone.'

Professor Sarah Hawkes, CSC Commissioner



Komal Devi

2024 Commonwealth
Master's Scholar

Fiji

MSc Crisis and Disaster
Management
University of Portsmouth

Komal Devi is on a journey to empower local communities in the Pacific by strengthening climate resilience and disaster preparedness across the region.

As a former environmental monitor in Fiji, Komal is used to contributing to disaster recovery efforts, but studying in the UK has increased her resolve to develop climate solutions that are durable and inclusive.

Her work explores how vegetation regenerates after cyclones and uses remote sensing tools and community insights to propose inclusive resilience strategies. In Fiji, she plans to build up national disaster risk reduction frameworks by integrating geospatial and community data to support local capacity-building, especially among women and young people. Meanwhile on the international stage, Komal aims to contribute to regional dialogues on climate adaptation and resilience, championing ideas and innovation that support island nations to thrive.

'As I go back to Fiji, I do so not only as a graduate but as an ambassador of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, of my home country, and of the values of inclusive, evidence-based development. This experience has reaffirmed my belief that development impact is not only about technical expertise, but also about trust, empathy, and sustained engagement.'

Komal's scholarship has been both intellectually enriching and personally transformative. At the University of Portsmouth, Komal has increased her expertise in geospatial analysis and interdisciplinary climate adaptation. She has also expanded her research communication skills and global perspective by presenting at events and conferences.

In the face of increasing climate uncertainty, Komal is dedicated to ensuring that vulnerable communities in the Pacific are equipped, empowered, and heard. Looking forward, she hopes to contribute to national and regional priorities with purpose, and to work alongside Commonwealth Scholars and practitioners to create solutions that are locally grounded and globally informed.

Access, inclusion and opportunity

‘Across the world and within our societies, inequalities, lack of access to opportunity, and lack of inclusion remain a disheartening reality. Many of the problems are fundamentally structural and systemic, and action to address them requires an understanding of the 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, which mainly focuses on 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



Israel Balogun

2023 Commonwealth
PhD Scholar

Nigeria

PhD in Public Health and
Humanitarian Studies
University College London

Israel Balogun is a passionate advocate for disability inclusion whose work amplifies the voices and choices of people with disabilities. His work explores access to assistive technology – ranging from wheelchairs and hearing aids to laptops and mobile phones – in humanitarian settings to understand what more can be done to support people with disabilities in crisis-affected regions.

While Israel’s current research is focused on Borno State in Nigeria, his outlook extends beyond national boundaries to incorporate active humanitarian contexts across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. In Nigeria, Israel’s research has played a key role in shaping national policy on digital inclusion for people with disabilities, working alongside the government and the National Identity Management Commission. On the international front, he is actively engaging with major stakeholders, including the United Nations, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), and ATscale – a global partnership for assistive technology – to ensure that assistive technology provision is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to real-world needs.

As a contributor to the Global Disability Innovation Hub, Israel has also driven research and innovation in humanitarian tools and emergency response. His past work for the North East Nigeria Transition to Development (NENTAD) was instrumental in embedding disability inclusion into the country’s humanitarian frameworks. This research continues to inform national policy dialogue and the assistive technology ecosystem in Nigeria, with keen interest from the Northeast Development Commission and the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

Israel believes that sharing knowledge is key to building a fairer world. As a mentor to Commonwealth Scholars and speaker on influential platforms, including the World Health Summit, he is passionate about bringing others with him on the path to an inclusive future.

‘The Commonwealth Scholarship has been nothing short of transformative. It has not only deepened my knowledge and introduced me to groundbreaking concepts, but also expanded my global network and connected me with leading authorities in assistive technology, disability, and humanitarian studies.’

The Commonwealth Startup Fellowship 2024-2026

The Commonwealth has a large and growing youth population with 60% of citizens under the age of 30. As the youth population has risen, the availability of decent, stable, secure employment has not kept pace with demand, and many young people face unemployment or underemployment and fewer traditional routes into work.

To tackle this issue, the CSC, in partnership with Imperial College London, developed a new programme – the Commonwealth Startup Fellowship – to boost job creation across the Commonwealth.

In 2025, 19 high-potential startups led by entrepreneurs from 10 low and middle income Commonwealth countries became the first cohort of Commonwealth Startup Fellows. Chosen from more than 1,400 applicants, the Fellows and their startups contribute to a variety of development impact areas, from sustainable farming and renewable energy to food security and educational access.

About the programme

Through a blend of in-person training and online learning, the Commonwealth Startup Fellowship has empowered the Fellows to scale their business ventures with the aim of delivering greater social impact and productive job opportunities in the future.

Beginning with an immersive bootcamp at Imperial Global Ghana, the Fellows took part in five months of bespoke learning and business coaching. Each Fellow received tailored mentorship and guidance from a range of subject experts on fundraising, branding, go-to-market strategies, team growth, and financial planning.

The programme culminated with a series of events to celebrate and showcase the Fellows' innovative startups.

Capstone Week 2025

From 8-12 September, the Fellows came together in London for the final stage of their Commonwealth Startup Fellowship – Capstone Week 2025.

Following the period of learning and coaching, the Fellows took part in an investor showcase, hosted by Imperial College London, where they had the chance to pitch their business ventures to an audience of international investors and industry leaders. The showcase welcomed distinguished guest speakers Babatunde Soyoye, Co-Founder of Helios Investment Partners, and Professor Hugh Brady, President of Imperial.

The Fellows also took part in a high-level discussion event at Marlborough House on building an entrepreneurial ecosystem for development impact in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

We look forward to welcoming the next cohort of Commonwealth Startup Fellows in November 2025.



Spotlight on:

Editha Mshiu Freshpack Technologies Tanzania

Freshpack Technologies offer sustainable, electricity-free food storage using smart fabric technology that mimics natural cooling. Its patented boxes extend the shelf life of vegetable produce by up to five times, helping smallholder farmers and vendors reduce food waste, increase their income, and enhance food security. Freshpack provides an innovative, affordable solution to support Tanzania's agricultural sector and an eco-friendly alternative to cold chain storage.

Led by award-winning female founder, Editha Mshiu, the Freshpack team combines over 20 years of experience in horticulture, technology, and agribusiness, and is committed to delivering scalable, impactful solutions for smallholder farmers and vendors. The venture is backed by organisations including the United Nations Development Programme, Heifer International, and the Tony Elumelu Foundation.



'As a young African female founder, being a Commonwealth Startup Fellow affirms my role in driving climate-smart innovation and gives me the platform to inspire other women and youth to take bold steps in entrepreneurship.'

Nfor Carlton I-Clan: Schoolpay Cameroon



'The fellowship has been transformational for us. The bootcamp gave us the skills to secure the right partners, and within two weeks we signed a strategic deal with one of Cameroon's largest banks. That partnership alone helped us increase our market share from 45% to 65%, expand from 6,225 to 7,300 schools, and grow our full-time team from 19 to 25.'

Schoolpay is a fintech platform designed by I-Clan to tackle the issue of school fee payments in areas of limited digital infrastructure or income instability. The platform has facilitated parents and caregivers in low-resource settings to quickly and easily pay school fees and avoid disruption to their child's education. By harnessing innovative real-time mobile technology, the platform ensures seamless fee payments and financial transparency.

Schoolpay also connects parents and caregivers with donors who can provide financial support for a child's education. The platform has been shown to reduce school dropout rates and ensure educational continuity for underserved children.

Through partnerships with MTN, Africa's largest mobile network operator, Schoolpay is growing its two million users and helping to ensure that children in Cameroon are safe and in school. With over 7,000 schools onboarded so far, the platform is building trust among educators, parents, and caregivers, and enabling more cohesive learning environments for young people.

A photograph of three people smiling and looking towards the camera. On the left is a man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a patterned sweater. In the center is a woman with white hair, wearing a red top and a pearl necklace. On the right is a man with glasses, wearing a dark suit. All three are wearing blue lanyards with the Commonwealth Scholarships logo and a badge. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

Our partners

Commonwealth Scholarships were founded on the principle of mutual cooperation.

The work of the CSC is made possible through the help of nominating agencies, academic advisers, UK universities, UK fellowship host organisations, and overseas organisations. By helping to select and support outstanding Scholars and Fellows from across the Commonwealth who have the potential to advance national and international development priorities, our partners make an invaluable contribution to delivering the CSC's objectives. It also lists the members of the Alumni Advisory Panel who help support the development of CSC programmes and activities through their insights 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 to ensure that national priorities are reflected in its scholarships.

To see the full list of agencies, visit:

cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/national-nominating-agencies

Academic advisers

The CSC's selections were guided by a panel of nearly 450 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:

cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/academic-advisers

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 £6.5 million. In the report year, Commonwealth Scholars studied at 99 UK universities.

To see the full list of universities, visit:

cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/uk-universities

Fellowship host organisations

By hosting Professional Fellows, UK organisations support early and mid-career professionals to develop key skills, as well as building relationships and opening up areas for collaboration across the Commonwealth. In the report year, Commonwealth Fellows were hosted by nine UK host organisations.

To see the full list of fellowship host organisations, visit:

cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/host-organisations

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.

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 116 members representing 31 Commonwealth countries.

To see the list of Alumni Advisory Panel members, visit: cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/alumni-advisory-panel





Governance

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC) is a non-departmental public body set up to deliver Commonwealth Scholarships to low and middle income Commonwealth countries through Grant-in-Aid provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

This section provides the governance statement, the statement of the Accounting Officer's responsibilities, and the membership of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK.

Governance statement

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC) was established by an 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 & Development Office (FCDO) is the lead department and main sponsor. Other financial contributions during the period of the report have been contributions-in-kind from its UK university partners. 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.

In addition to regulations provided in the 1959 Act (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 the 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 interest 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

No personal data incidents requiring regulatory action were reported in the period covered by this Annual 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 30 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 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 the CSC's Corporate and Business Plans and the 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 wellbeing 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 and 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) 3/3

Professor Morag McDonald (Deputy Chair) 3/3

Professor Elizabeth Baggs 3/3

Aisling Conboy (to April 2025) 1/1

Professor Sarah Hawkes 2/3

Professor Allan Hill 3/3

Professor Kevin Ibeh 3/3

Professor Parmjit Jat 2/3

Dr Catherine MacKenzie 3/3

Elizabeth Tanya Masiyiwa 2/3

Dr Christine Thuranira-McKeever 1/3

Ryan Shorthouse 3/3

The Audit and 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 overspend; and a budget to meet the Commission's operating costs and any action taken in the event of significant forecast budgetary under or overspend.
- 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 overspend 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 2024-25, 95% 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 are 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 Risk 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) now undertakes an audit of the CSC every two years. No audit was carried out in 2024/25.

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 2025 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 Audit and Risk Management 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 inform proper 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 the 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

	2024/2025 Actual spend		2023/2024 Actual spend	
	£000	% of total income/ costs	£000	% of total income/ costs
FCDO Grant-in-aid programme	27,800	97%	27,800	98%
FCDO Grant-in-aid administration	424	1%	424	1%
DFE Grant-in-aid programme	352	1%	219	1%
Total Grant-in-aid to CSC	28,576		28,443	

Scholarships and fellowships expenditure (FCDO)				
PhD research	7,668	27%	8,310	29%
Agency Master's	3,589	13%	3,651	13%
Split-site PhD	2,689	9%	1,930	7%
Shared Master's	4,220	15%	4,396	15%
Distance Learning Master's	2,924	10%	3,347	12%
Professional Fellowships	394	1%	432	2%
Total direct award costs	21,484		22,066	
Other scholarship costs	1,852	7%	1,770	6%
Total scholarships and fellowships expenditure (FCDO)	23,336		23,836	

Other programme expenditure (FCDO)				
Evaluation	322	1%	314	1%
Communications	612	2%	545	2%
Alumni	651	2%	670	2%
Recruitment and outreach	267	1%	279	1%
Time Limited Programme	412	1%	160	1%
IT development	414	1%	252	1%
VAT	370	1%	329	1%
Total other programme expenditure (FCDO)	3,048		2,549	

	2024/2025 Actual spend		2023/2024 Actual spend	
	£000	% of total income/ costs	£000	% of total income/ costs
Non-ODA programme expenditure				
DFE Grant-in-aid (PhD research)	288	1%	164	1%
Total OGD programme expenditure	288	1%	164	1%
Total CSC administrative expenditure (FCDO)	432	2%	424	1%
Total programme management costs	1,530	5%	1,471	5%
Total expenditure	28,634		28,444	
Cash spend				
Scholarships and fellowships expenditure (FCDO)	23,336	82%	23,836	84%
Other programme expenditure (FCDO)	3,048	11%	2,549	9%
Non-ODA programme expenditure	288	1%	164	1%
CSC administrative expenditure (FCDO)	432	2%	424	1%
Programme management costs	1,530	5%	1,471	5%
Total Expenditure	28,634		28,444	
(Increase)/decrease in cash and cash equivalents	1,298		1,130	
(Increase)/decrease in accruals and trade payables	(179)		(220)	
Total cash spend	29,753		29,354	
Opening bank balance	2,294		3,424	
Cash received	28,455		28,224	
Closing balance	(996)		(2,294)	
Cash spend	29,753		29,354	

Expenditure breakdown

2024/2025

PhD research	28%
Agency Master's	13%
Split-site PhD	9%
Shared Scholarships	15%
Distance Learning	10%
Professional Fellowships	1%
Other scholarship costs	6%
Evaluation, engagement, R&O and TLP	9%
Administration, programme management costs and irrecoverable VAT	8%



Notes

1. These figures were consolidated in FCDO's audited Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25.
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 £6.5m. 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:

TLP: Time Limited Programmes

R&O: recruitment and outreach

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%



Membership of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

Professor Robin Mason ORB

Chair, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) and Professor of Economics at the University of Birmingham



Member of the Competition Appeal Tribunal and the Financial Conduct Authority

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 and 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 and Inclusion) and chair the university's Athena Swan working group.

Professor Sarah Hawkes

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK and 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.

Dr Catherine MacKenzie

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK and Chair, Audit and Risk Management Committee



Fellow Commoner, Magdalene College at the University of Cambridge

Research Fellow, Green Templeton College at the University of Oxford

Tribunal Chairman and Judge, Plant Variety and Seeds Tribunal

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 University of Cambridge and as a senior leader of an Australian university. Alongside my academic posts, I hold judicial office 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

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



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

In my role as Vice-Principal for Equity, Diversity and 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

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK and 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 Studies 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

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



Professor of Molecular Cellular Biology in the UCL Institute of Prion Diseases, University College London (UCL)

Medical Research Council (MRC) Investigator within MRC Prion Unit at UCL

My research was initially focused 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 Liz Baggs

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation and Professor of Food and Environmental Security at the University of Edinburgh

In my role as Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, I provide leadership in all domains of the university's research and impact. Prior to taking on this role I was Dean of Research for the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine 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

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK and 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

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



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 (until April 2025)

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



Senior Programme Director at Wilton Park

I am a 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.

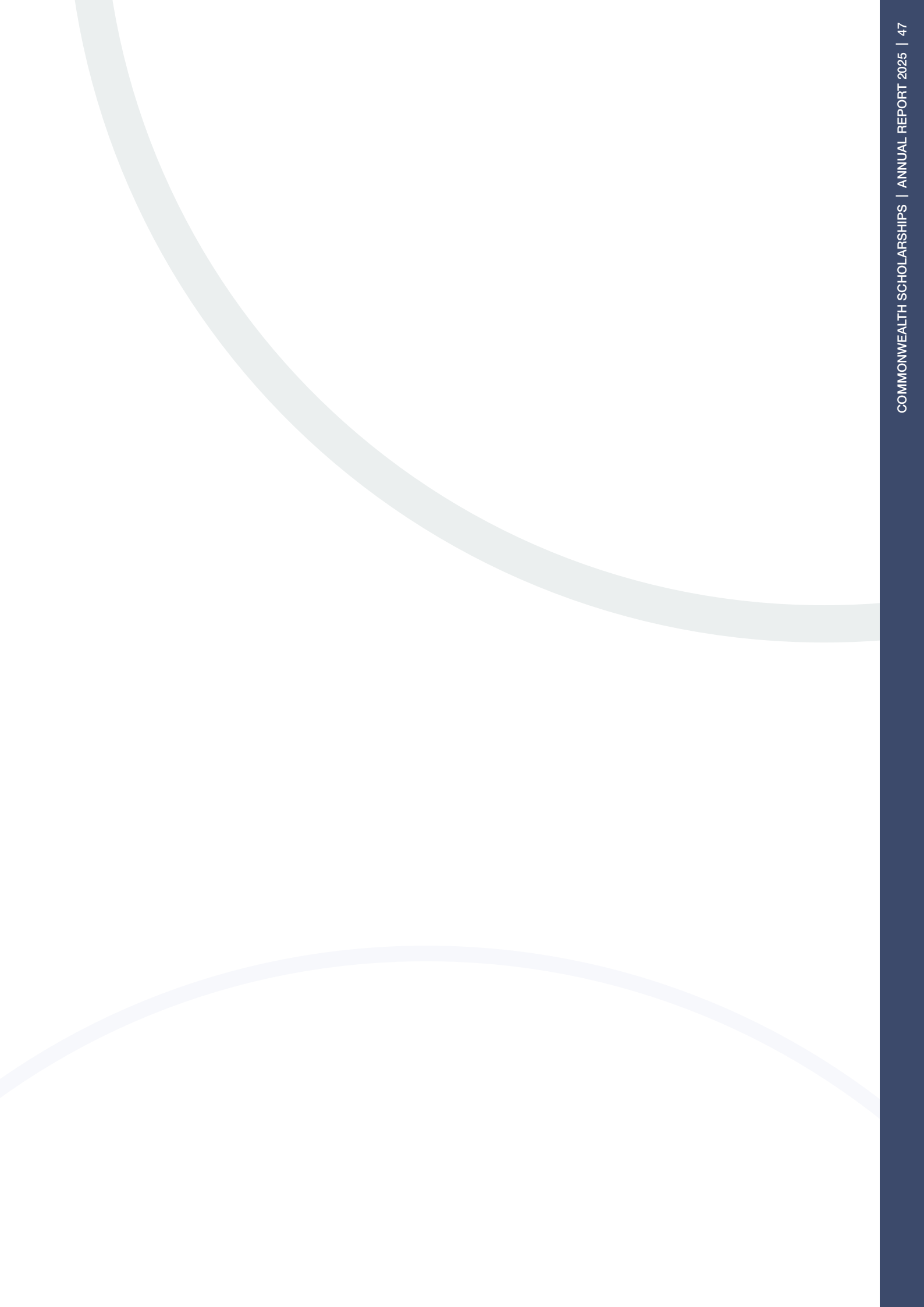
Elizabeth Tanya Masiyiwa

Commissioner, Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK



President and CEO of Delta Philanthropies, Higherlife Foundation and Akello

I am a social entrepreneur and smart technology executive. I am the 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.





Commonwealth Scholarship
Commission in the UK



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