



Commonwealth Scholarship
Commission in the UK

Commission Strategy 2025 – 2028

cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk

Introduction

Since its inception in 1959, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC), funded by the United Kingdom Government, has extended life-transforming higher education opportunities, rewarded merit, and promoted equity and inclusion, especially among people from disadvantaged backgrounds. By empowering talented individuals across the Commonwealth to learn, innovate, and co-create knowledge and solutions for tackling global development challenges, the CSC helps to transform societies and build a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for all.

The CSC—a prestigious and much-respected global brand—has now supported over 31,000 individuals; this constitutes over 80% of those funded under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. In addition to providing access to the UK’s world-class universities, the CSC has advanced the UK’s interests by strengthening its international partnerships and collaborations, attracting outstanding leaders and innovators from across the Commonwealth, and supporting local economies across the UK.

The core mission of the CSC is as important as ever. Of course, the external environment and context within which we operate is always changing. The CSC is therefore committed to innovation to ensure our continued relevance. Examples of past innovations include our Split-site doctoral and Distance Learning master’s programmes, which have expanded access across the Commonwealth. In addition, all Scholars now participate in the Leaders for Sustainable Development Programme, which reinforces the CSC’s robust support for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Our distinctive Time Limited Programmes address critical contemporary challenges.

As we look ahead at our next three-year strategy, there will be more innovation. We have committed to supporting more scholarships for Small Island Developing States, following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa in 2024. As we demonstrate in the rest of this strategy document, we are committed to finding new ways to be even more agile, to ensure responsiveness to UK Government priorities. We will ensure we remain efficient to maximise our expenditure that goes towards Scholars and Fellows. We will find new ways of working in partnership to maximise opportunities for our beneficiaries. As always, we will demonstrate the impact of our work through our best-in-class evaluation work. Our Impact Report, Annual Reports, website, and issues of Common Knowledge magazine all give the stories and statistics about the difference that our Scholars and Fellows make.

In one sense, then, our strategy for 2025-28 has a degree of continuity. The CSC’s mission—to promote sustainable development and build enduring connections by supporting excellent scholars from the Commonwealth to study at UK universities—is unchanged. But as it has done throughout its history, the CSC will adapt to the changing context to ensure its continued relevance and to sustain its focus on tackling the most pressing development issues of our time.



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

Strategic Context

One of the Commonwealth's finest innovations and one of the UK's best conveyors of soft power, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) has been supporting outstanding scholars, fellows and alumni since 1960. The fundamental purpose of the CSC endures; but the strategic context in which it operates is constantly changing and will shape its priorities over the period 2025-28.



The CSC operates within a global context where education and collaboration are pivotal to addressing pressing development challenges and advancing foreign policy objectives. The CSC aims to leverage the transformative power of higher education to foster sustainable development throughout the Commonwealth. This not only enhances the UK's position as a leader in global education, but also nurtures the relationships that are critical for fostering economic co-operation, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding. By investing in scholarship and fellowship programmes that prioritise knowledge transfer, skills development, and research partnerships, the CSC supports both the UK's national interests and contributes to shared goals of economic growth, social progress, and sustainable development.

Contributing to UK development outcomes and foreign policy objectives will remain a critical focus for the 2025-2028 Strategy.



Achieving sustainable development and tackling complex challenges across the Commonwealth requires a broad range of perspectives and experiences. By providing further opportunities for outstanding scholars from disadvantaged and under-represented groups, the CSC aims to address systemic inequalities and unlock the potential of talented individuals who might otherwise be excluded from these opportunities. This commitment aligns with the UK's broader social justice agenda and contributes to creating a more equitable and inclusive global community. By empowering individuals from diverse backgrounds, the CSC strengthens its capacity to deliver impactful outcomes through its scholarship programmes, ultimately contributing to a more just and prosperous world.

Supporting candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds will continue to be a distinctive feature of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships during the 2025-2028 Strategy period.



The CSC recognises the invaluable role that alumni play as ambassadors and advocates for the transformative power of education within the Commonwealth. Our alumni, now leaders and change-makers across the Commonwealth, embody the transformative power of education and contribute significantly to their respective communities and nations. By strengthening alumni relations and expanding engagement opportunities, the CSC aims to build a vibrant and interconnected network that fosters collaboration, knowledge sharing, and impactful partnerships. This strategic approach not only deepens the CSC's impact by leveraging the expertise and experience of its alumni, but also strengthens the bonds of the Commonwealth through shared values and a collective commitment to positive change.

Broadening and deepening alumni engagement will be a top priority for the CSC during the 2025-28 strategic period.



Maximising the impact of the CSC requires a strategic approach to resource optimisation and innovative partnerships. The CSC will explore innovative ways to secure funding and drive efficiencies to ensure the sustainability and expansion of opportunities for scholars. This strategic approach involves actively forging new partnerships with organisations and institutions that share the CSC's values and objectives. By leveraging complementary resources and expertise, the CSC can create a more robust and resilient funding model while simultaneously optimising programme management processes to maximise impact. This commitment to resourcefulness will allow the Commission to continue expanding the horizons and opportunities available to its scholars, ensuring a lasting legacy of positive change within the Commonwealth.

We will ensure that we maximise opportunities for our scholars, developing new partnerships and be effective stewards of public funds.



The CSC is proud to reaffirm its commitment to development, equity, access, and relevance. This 2025-2028 Strategy sets out the CSC's priorities and pathways to deliver impact and value to the UK taxpayer, the UK government, and the modern Commonwealth.

Mission

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission promotes sustainable development and builds enduring connections by supporting excellent scholars from the Commonwealth to study at UK universities.

In doing so, we directly support UK foreign and international development priorities.

Working with the UK's world-class universities and other Commonwealth partners, we foster a community of scholars, fellows, and alumni who use their knowledge and expertise to drive sustainable development and address pressing global issues in their home countries and beyond.

We enhance the UK's influence and reputation by building a network of leaders across the Commonwealth who are shaped by their education in the UK.

By investing in the potential of individuals, particularly from low-and middle-income Commonwealth countries, we amplify the UK's contributions to a fairer, more prosperous, and sustainable world.

Key Objectives

The CSC's objectives are:



1. Contribute to UK development outcomes, foreign policy objectives, the domestic growth agenda and enhancing security

In pursuing **Objective 1**, the CSC will:

- Introduce more agile selection methods to ensure responsiveness to UK Government priorities.
- Extend engagement with British High Commissions to deliver UK priorities.
- Expand its partnerships to broaden the CSC's reach and to ensure value for money.
- Demonstrate the CSC's contribution to UK foreign and development policy objectives, through its best-in-class evaluation work.



2. Provide further opportunities for outstanding scholars from disadvantaged and under-represented groups

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

- Increase the availability of scholarships specifically targeting students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds.
- Collaborate with partners to identify and address barriers to scholarship access.
- Implement policies and practices to promote an inclusive environment for all scholars.
- Develop and implement targeted mentorship and support programmes for scholars from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.



3. Strengthen alumni relations by expanding and enhancing engagement opportunities

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

- Strengthen alumni relations by enhancing engagement opportunities.
- Extend the alumni network to connect former scholars with each other, with the CSC, and with other UK scholarship schemes.
- Engage alumni in activities and events, mentorship, career development, and fundraising to support current and future scholars.
- Use alumni expertise and networks to promote the CSC and its impact worldwide.



4. Develop new models of partnership to broaden opportunities for our Scholars and Fellows

In pursuing **Objective 4**, the CSC will:

- Create innovative funding models and revenue streams for long-term financial sustainability.
- Develop strategic partnerships and collaborations to provide scholars with unique learning and growth experiences.
- Support alternative modes of delivery to widen access.
- Optimise scholarship management processes to maximise the impact of available resources.

Strategic Enablers

For the CSC to achieve its objectives, a number of key enablers are required. These enablers describe how the CSC goes about its mission. The impact of the CSC is amplified by working with our partners. Our ability to respond to shifts in the external environment, while staying true to our mission, requires dynamism. We must also be ready and able to show the relevance and impact of the CSC, and our responsible use of public money. Most of all, we must adhere to the highest standards of responsibility required of a non-departmental public body.



Partnerships

with governments, educational institutions, and the private sectors amplify the reach and impact of our scholarships, enabling us to pool resources, share expertise, and align our programmes with global and regional development goals.



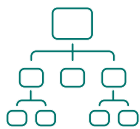
Agility and Flexibility

empower the CSC to adapt quickly to emerging challenges and opportunities, ensuring our programmes remain relevant, responsive, and capable of addressing the evolving needs of scholars, the UK government and the Commonwealth.



Monitoring and Evaluation

provides critical insights into the effectiveness and impact of our scholarships, guiding continuous improvement and ensuring accountability to our stakeholders.



Governance and Leadership

spanning strategic decision-making, operational excellence, and a strong organisational culture, enable the CSC to navigate complexities and drive its mission forward with clarity and purpose.

Key Performance Indicators 2025 - 2028

We will demonstrate the success of our strategy by achieving the following Key Performance Indicators, and will be accountable to ourselves, to our sponsor, and to our stakeholders.



We will ensure that 100% of scholarship expenditure each year supports the UK's sustainable development objectives, and at least 10% of annual expenditure is aligned with emerging UK Government priorities.



We will increase year-on-year the proportion of applications from and awards to disadvantaged and under-represented groups, while maintaining the improvements in gender balance achieved over the period 2022-2025.



We will increase the number of active and engaged alumni by 5% each year.



We will attract over £6m a year in non-government funds, including matching contributions from UK universities. The proportion of expenditure on administration will not increase over the duration of the Strategy.



We will produce a minimum of 25 in-depth evaluation case studies to demonstrate the CSC's value as an innovative world-class scholarship and fellowship scheme that delivers impact on sustainable development across the Commonwealth.