

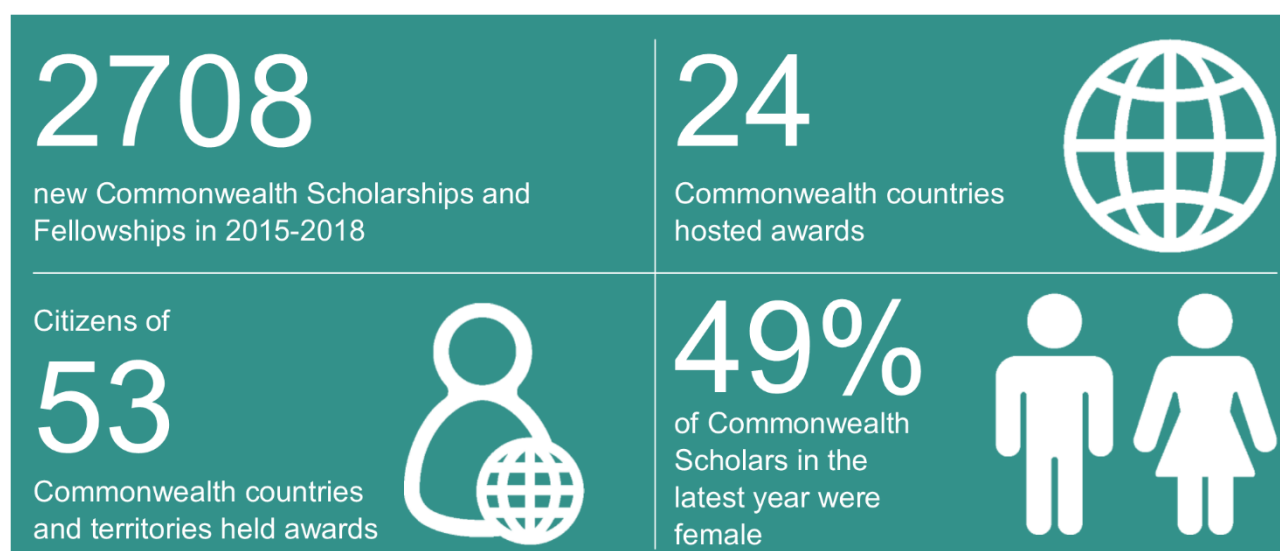
Report on the activities of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan 2015-2018

Key points

- Ministers are asked to recognise the progress made to strengthen the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) since 19CCEM, including:
 - The establishment of a central CSFP management unit at the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), as recommended by the CSFP Taskforce (which was instituted by 19CCEM). This unit will also take forward the remaining Taskforce recommendations.
 - The ACU is also working to expand the CSFP, and the CSFP endowment fund, in response to the recommendations of the CSFP Taskforce.
- Ministers are therefore asked to formally reaffirm the support of their national governments for the CSFP.
- National governments are asked to actively support the expansion of the CSFP, including the CSFP endowment fund, to mark the 60th anniversary of the Plan.

About the CSFP

- The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) is a prestigious and well-recognised brand in the Commonwealth and beyond.
- There are a range of funding mechanisms in place, including host governments, universities, and the CSFP endowment fund. This has led to a diversification in the number and type of countries that have been able to host awards in recent years.
- The CSFP supports Commonwealth countries in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 4.B ('By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries...'). The wider impact of these scholarships – on individuals, communities, and societies – contributes to all 17 SDGs.



About the CSFP Taskforce

- The 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM) recommended that an international taskforce be established to consider ways in which the potential of the CSFP could be realised.
- The CSFP Taskforce reported its recommendations to the Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG) in January 2017.
- The recommendations covered defining, managing, and promoting Commonwealth Scholarships, as well as ensuring their recognition as a prominent Commonwealth activity.
- The Taskforce recommended that a central management unit should be established for the CSFP. The ACU has set up this unit, which will now take forward the other recommendations.

My Commonwealth Scholarship will allow me to contribute towards reducing the vulnerabilities and impacts of climate change that the Belizean people and the various productive sectors of our economy are facing. The cultural exchange that I had in Fiji was a life-changing experience and has made a positive impact on my life.

Ahnivar Peralta (2015 Commonwealth Scholar from Belize to Fiji, funded by the CSFP endowment fund)



I have had the opportunity to train students, to shape the course of some of our government policies – such as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan and the first and second National Development Plans – and to work with local communities on ways to end hunger and poverty.

Daisy Ndikuno Owomugasho (1989 Commonwealth Scholar from Uganda to Canada)



My Commonwealth Scholarship will provide me with much needed knowledge and experience, both in training and research, to make my contribution towards the development of my home country.

Michael Olaniyi (2016 Commonwealth Scholar from Nigeria to South Africa, funded by the CSFP endowment fund)

My Commonwealth Scholarship opened up a lot of professional opportunities for me and has helped me to firmly establish my career in development. My expertise is contributing at national, subnational, and community levels. I look forward to being able to work in a position where I can influence policy development not just in my country, but across regions.

Luonde Cholwe (2005 Commonwealth Scholar from Zambia to Canada)

The Commonwealth Scholarship will benefit Uganda as I will be in a position to apply what I have learned; it will increase the number of skilled and experienced people in my country.

Phionah Twebaze (1989 Commonwealth Scholar from Uganda to Tanzania)



1. Introduction and historical background

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) was established at the first Commonwealth education conference in 1959. It has five main principles:

- To be distinct and additional to any other scheme in operation;
- To be based on mutual cooperation and the sharing of educational experience among all Commonwealth countries;
- To be flexible, in order to account for the diverse and changing needs of Commonwealth countries;
- To be Commonwealth-wide and based on bilateral agreements between nominating and awarding agencies; and
- To recognise the highest standards of intellectual development

The CSFP has developed in three distinct phases. Until 1993 there was a period of expansion, with overall numbers of awards reaching 1,809 for the 1993-1994 academic year. The scheme entered its second phase during the latter half of the 1990s, witnessing a period of decline in the overall number of awards. The third phase saw the scheme rebound strongly from 2000 onwards. A feature of this third phase has been an increased diversity in the type of awards offered. In addition to conventional postgraduate scholarships, the CSFP now includes distance learning study, professional development, and split-site doctorates.

To date, the CSFP has supported over 35,000 individuals. Historically, awards have been supported primarily by host countries, from their own resources. This resulted in a relatively small range of countries offering awards.

Partly in response to this, the CSFP endowment fund – which provides the first-ever central source of funding for Commonwealth Scholarships – was launched in 2009 at 17CCEM, on the 50th anniversary of the Plan. Generated by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, at the time of writing, the fund totals GBP 8.6 million. In total, 13 Commonwealth governments have contributed, along with around 200 CSFP alumni and 6 non-profit organisations. Host universities are also asked to contribute to awards through discounted tuition fees. Governance of the fund is undertaken by the ACU, a registered charity in England and Wales, whose trustees are responsible for its management to the UK Charity Commission.

The Commonwealth Scholarship was one of the best things that I ever had the opportunity to be given. I was able to devise and lead my own programme of research, which became a platform for my future interests and career. I was able to learn about other countries in the Commonwealth through direct experience. I made lifelong friendships and academic partnerships which continue to this day.

Nancy Irwin (1998 Commonwealth Scholar from the UK to Australia)

The CSFP endowment fund supports Commonwealth Scholarships in low and middle income countries which may not have the resources to fund awards of their own. As a result, the fund has developed new combinations of home and host countries, expanding collaboration across the Commonwealth. For example, the 2017-2018 cohort of Scholars includes students travelling from Malawi to Bangladesh, from Pakistan to Mauritius, and from Kenya to the University of the West Indies. However, more work can be done to address the gender and regional balance of applications.

Figure 1: Current Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) funding mechanisms



2. Recent activity under the CSFP

2,708 Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships were awarded in the three years covered by this report – an average of 903 per year, compared to 1,006 in the previous report period. While the overall number of awards dropped somewhat, in part as a result of the withdrawal of Canada as a host country, the spread of countries involved increased. As shown in Table 1, 24 countries hosted awards in 2015-2018 – the highest number ever. While the United Kingdom continues to fund the majority of awards, a wider range of countries were able to participate as hosts through the CSFP endowment fund. Outside of this, Malaysia, India, and New Zealand continue to make a significant contribution, recently joined by Malta, which established its first Commonwealth Scholarship in the latest year.

Table 1: New Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships 2015-2018, by host country and year ¹

Host country	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018 ²	Total
Bangladesh*	–	1	1	2
Botswana*	1	–	1	2
Cameroon*	1	–	–	1
Fiji*	1	1	–	2
Ghana*	1	1	3	5
India	1	17	3	21
Jamaica*	1	–	–	1
Kenya*	2	2	2	6
Lesotho*	–	1	–	1
Malawi*	–	1	–	1
Malaysia	10	2	–	12
Malta	–	–	1	1
Mauritius*	–	–	1	1
New Zealand	17	15	19	51
Pakistan*	2	2	3	7
Papua New Guinea*	–	1	–	1
Rwanda*	–	1	–	1
South Africa*	7	3	4	14
Sri Lanka*	1	3	2	6
Swaziland*	–	1	1	2
Tanzania*	–	–	1	1
Trinidad and Tobago*	–	1	1	2
Uganda*	–	–	1	1
United Kingdom	911	826	829	2566
Total	956	879	873	2708

In terms of recipients of awards, citizens of 53 Commonwealth countries and territories participated in the CSFP during the report period (Table 2). By region, Africa has the greatest share of award holders (65% in the latest year), followed by South Asia (26% in the latest year), which is consistent with previous report periods – see Figure 2.

¹ An asterisk indicates awards that were fully or partially supported by the CSFP endowment fund.

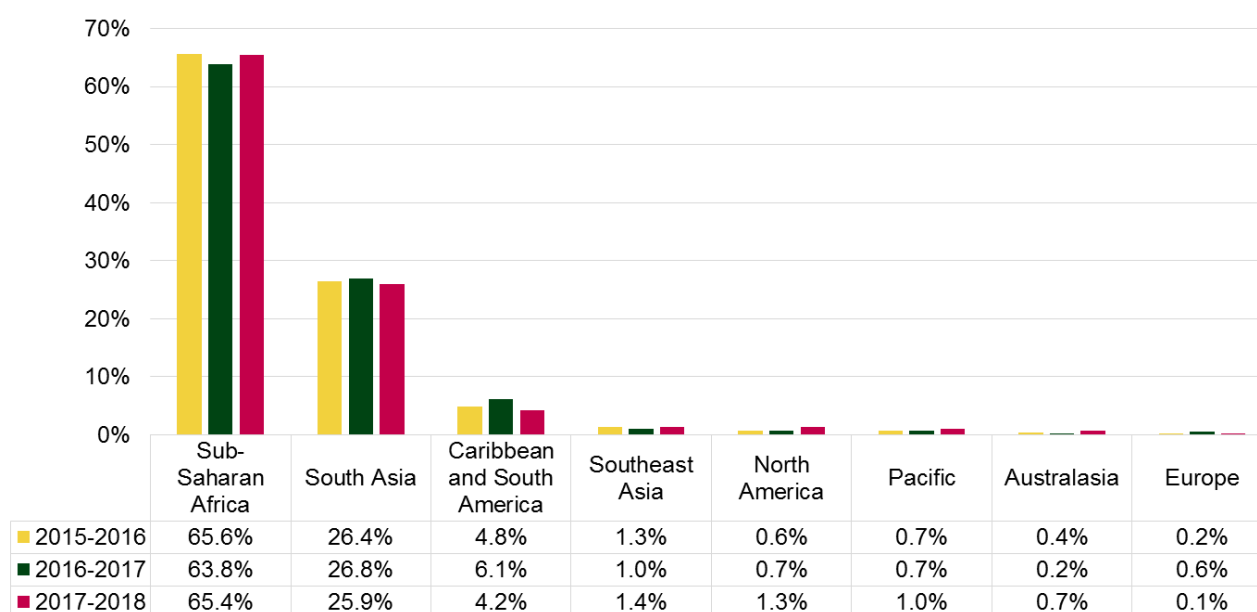
² Take-up of awards in 2017-2018 is in part projected, as some have yet to commence.

Table 2: New Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows 2015-2018, by home country and year

Home country	2015	2016	2017	Total
Anguilla	–	1	–	1
Antigua and Barbuda	1	1	2	4
Australia	4	1	6	11
Bangladesh	53	65	62	180
Barbados	–	1	1	2
Belize	3	4	3	10
Botswana	9	9	6	24
British Virgin Islands	–	–	1	1
Cameroon	15	17	11	43
Canada	5	6	10	21
Dominica	3	–	1	4
Falkland Islands	–	1	–	1
Fiji	1	4	3	8
Ghana	84	81	81	246
Grenada	1	4	–	5
Guyana	7	19	13	39
India	110	88	89	287
Jamaica	10	8	6	24
Kenya	95	66	78	239
Kiribati	1	–	1	2
Lesotho	6	4	3	13
Malawi	26	28	29	83
Malaysia	12	9	12	33
Maldives	2	4	–	6
Malta	1	–	–	1
Mauritius	6	6	8	20
Montserrat	–	1	–	1
Mozambique	1	2	2	5
Namibia	9	5	8	22
New Zealand	1	1	1	3
Nigeria	132	126	139	397
Pakistan	60	55	57	172
Papua New Guinea	1	1	2	4
Rwanda	11	4	15	30
St Helena	–	1	–	1
St Kitts and Nevis	1	–	1	2
St Lucia	3	5	2	10
St Vincent and the Grenadines	3	2	2	7
Samoa	2	1	1	4
Seychelles	1	1	–	2
Sierra Leone	21	22	9	52
Solomon Islands	1	–	–	1
South Africa	36	39	32	107
Sri Lanka	27	23	18	68
Swaziland	5	8	1	14
Tanzania	37	30	29	96
Tonga	–	–	2	2
Trinidad and Tobago	13	8	5	26
Turks and Caicos Islands	1	–	–	1
Tuvalu	1	–	–	1
Uganda	107	77	89	273
United Kingdom	1	5	2	8
Zambia	18	27	27	72
Zimbabwe ³	8	8	3	19
Total	956	879	873	2708

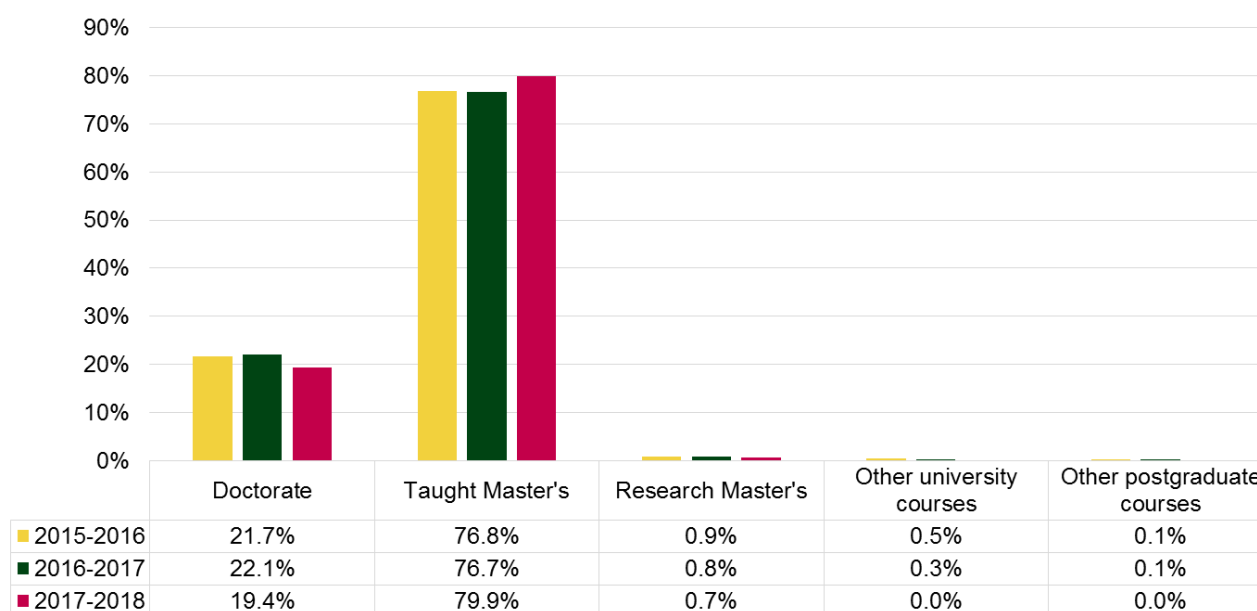
³ Up to 2017, the UK offered awards to Zimbabwean citizens to build the capacity of civil society organisations.

Figure 2: New Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows 2015-2018, by home region and year (N=2708)



Taught Master's courses continue to make up around 80% of new scholarships, with doctorates comprising just under 20% in the latest year (Figure 3). Looking at all awards, fellowships constitute 16%, down slightly from 20% in the previous report period.

Figure 3: New Commonwealth Scholarships 2015-2018, by level and year (N=2708)



Science and health are again the most popular fields of study supported (Figure 4). Table 3 shows that, for scholarships, the age distribution of award holders remained largely the same as previously; over 80% were under 35 years old. For fellowships, there was a continued increase in awards to younger recipients, 56% of whom were under 40 years old (compared to 41% in the previous report period).

Figure 4: New Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships 2015-2018, by field of study (N=2386)

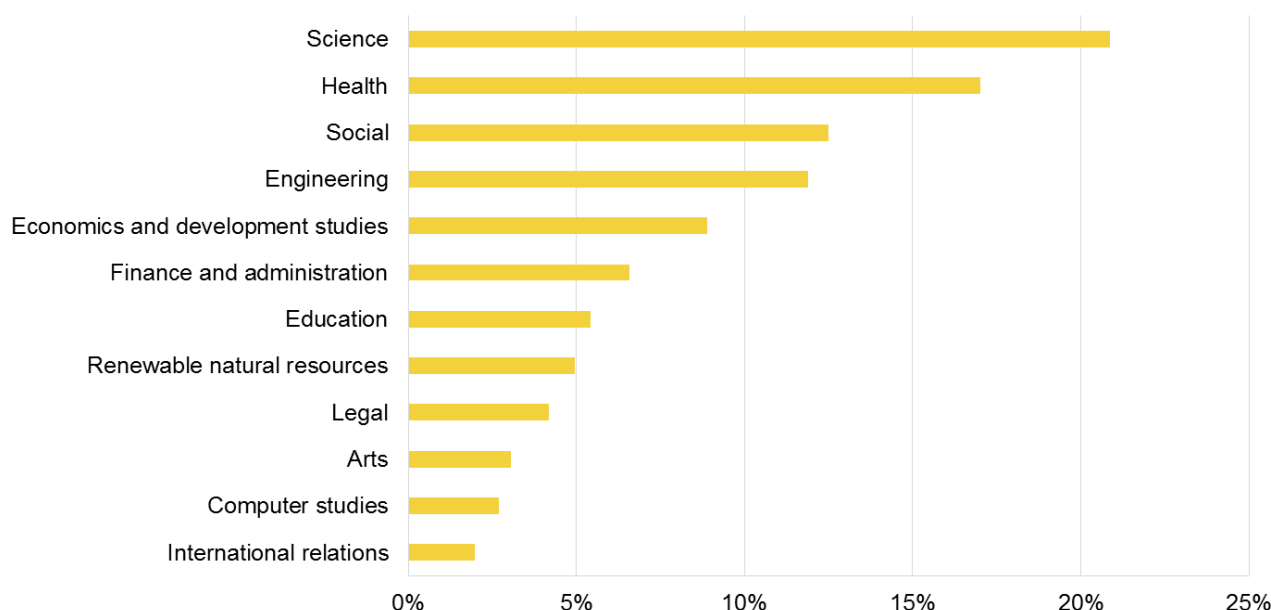


Table 3: New Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows 2015-2018, by age range (N=2619)

Level	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45+
Scholars	15%	39%	26%	11%	5%	3%
Fellow	1%	7%	25%	23%	17%	26%

I look forward to returning to my home country and contributing to improving food and nutrition security.

Chimwemwe Tembo-Phiri (2016 Commonwealth Scholar from Zambia to South Africa, funded by the CSFP endowment fund)

The gender distribution of award holders continued to improve for both scholarships and fellowships (Table 4). For scholarships, 49% of award holders in the latest year were female (48% in 2014-2015). For fellowships, this figure was 44% – a significant increase from 38% in 2014-2015. Based on data for UK-funded scholarships, there was also an increase in the percentage of applications from women: 36%, compared to 31% in the previous report period. However, this is still significantly below 50%, indicating the ongoing need to increase the number of female applicants.

Table 4: New Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows 2015-2018, by gender and year (N=2619)

	2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
	Scholars	Fellows	Scholars	Fellows	Scholars	Fellows
Female	47%	38%	49%	40%	49%	44%
Male	53%	62%	51%	60%	51%	56%

The total number of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows on award in the report period was 5,632 (Table 5). This is an increase from the previous report period (5,350 on award), with an average of 1,877 on award each year, compared to an average of 1,783 reported in 2015.

Table 5: Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows on award 2015-2018, by host country and year⁴

Host country	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018 ⁵	Total
Bangladesh*	–	1	2	3
Botswana*	1	1	1	3
Cameroon*	1	1	–	2
Fiji*	1	2	1	4
Ghana*	1	2	4	7
India	28	28	28	84
Jamaica*	1	–	–	1
Kenya*	3	4	4	11
Lesotho*	–	1	1	2
Malawi*	–	1	1	2
Malaysia	21	19	12	52
Malta	–	–	1	1
Mauritius*	–	–	1	1
New Zealand	77	74	81	232
Pakistan*	3	4	4	11
Papua New Guinea*	–	1	1	2
Rwanda*	–	1	1	2
South Africa*	9	10	7	26
Sri Lanka*	3	4	5	12
Swaziland*	–	1	2	3
Tanzania*	–	–	1	1
Trinidad and Tobago*	–	1	1	2
Uganda*	–	–	1	1
United Kingdom	1632	1746	1789	5167
Total	1781	1902	1949	5632

2.1. Views of national agencies

Given the status of the CSFP as a bilateral scheme, the national agencies that administer it in each country have a critical role. Such agencies are appointed by each national government, and are responsible for advertising awards to their citizens, administering the final selection process, and providing support to the beneficiaries while in-country.

Agencies were asked for their views on the CSFP prior to this report. Respondents represented a mix of developed and developing countries, as well as home and host countries. Agencies were asked to comment on their current participation in the CSFP, the importance of the awards to their country, the CSFP in its current state, and its future.

In general, agencies continued to recognise the CSFP as prestigious and high-quality, and noted that Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships are valued by employers in their respective countries. The agencies also indicated that Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships are largely relevant to the needs of their countries.

Equity and access was an emergent theme in the responses. When asked about their reasons for hosting awards under the CSFP, agencies indicated that providing access to study for those who would not have otherwise had the opportunity was extremely important. In addition, increasing the skills of individuals to build capacity and contribute to development in their home countries was also cited as extremely important by host countries.

⁴ An asterisk indicates awards that were fully or partially supported by the CSFP endowment fund.

⁵ Take-up of awards in 2017-2018 is in part projected, as some have yet to commence.

My 1965 Commonwealth Scholarship to Ghana was amongst the first instances of a Canadian taking up a scholarship in a newly-independent African country. It changed my life.

Because of the grounding I received at the University of Ghana – something that would not have been conceivable without the Commonwealth Scholarship – I have been able and willing to be a ‘champion’ for Africa – and for Canada in Africa – through decades of particularly significant partnership.

John R Schram (1965 Commonwealth Scholar from Canada to Ghana)

Similarly, agencies representing home countries largely agreed that Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships increase access to educational opportunities for students who would not otherwise have the opportunity. Pakistan commented that the CSFP *‘enhances exposure of the participants besides availing opportunities of exchange of experience in education and research’*.

With regard to the future of the CSFP, agencies were supportive of plans to expand and reinvigorate the scheme. Involving a greater number of countries as hosts and enabling more developing countries to host awards were both viewed as important for an expanded CSFP, as was offering greater diversity in the modes of study. Even more vital is ensuring greater access to awards, with many agencies indicating that there are far more qualified applicants than available awards. Anguilla

suggested that scholarship opportunities under the CSFP should be offered to undergraduates, as these students would benefit from outward mobility. Other agencies suggested that an expanded offering of Commonwealth Fellowships is needed. Vanuatu noted that *‘as an independent nation, [Vanuatu] still needs to improve and enlarge its human resources... We are deeply requesting that students and employees in the government and private sectors as well as NGOs be involved in the fellowship study program...for the betterment of this nation’*.

Finally, agencies were asked about the likelihood that their country would be able to host awards though the CSFP’s government funding model, under which national governments fund Commonwealth Scholarships or Fellowships hosted in their country. More than half of respondents indicated that this would not be likely at all in the future, underlining the importance of alternative funding mechanisms, such as the CSFP endowment fund, to sustaining the Commonwealth-wide nature of the Plan.

2.2. Views of alumni

The CSC runs the only significant alumni programme within the CSFP, maintaining contact with over 10,000 of its alumni as a Commonwealth-wide community with an active interest in development. These alumni are also regularly surveyed as part of its evaluation programme (see section 3). Relatively little work has been done, however, to engage the broader community of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows under the CSFP. For this report, a group of non-UK-funded alumni (for whom contact details are available) were asked for their views on the CSFP, and its future direction.

Being a Commonwealth Scholar adds to my legitimacy and reputation as a researcher.

Liz Hardie (1994 Commonwealth Scholar from Australia to Hong Kong)

Alumni almost unanimously agree that Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships are both prestigious and relevant to the needs of their home country. They were less confident of external perceptions of the scheme, and the degree to which it is valued by employers and universities. The role of the CSFP in increasing access to educational opportunities was heavily endorsed, mirroring the view of agencies that much more should be done in this area. Alumni indicated that the CSFP may not be well known in their countries, perhaps pointing to a need for better communication about the scheme.

These views were reflected in the future priorities indicated by alumni. Almost all thought that the CSFP should seek to ensure greater access to awards, targeting those who would otherwise not have the opportunity to study. Expansion of the scheme, through a greater number and variety of host countries, was also endorsed, as well as raising its profile through increased publicity.

3. Evaluation and impact

While there has to date been no international study examining the impact of the CSFP as a whole, there is increasing evidence of the value of international scholarships in general, and several host countries have looked at the impact of awards within their own contexts. Over the past decade, the United Kingdom in particular has developed a dedicated evaluation and monitoring programme aimed at identifying and analysing the outcomes and impact of the awards it has offered under the CSFP. The research generated by this programme demonstrates strong outcomes for Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, not only in terms of their personal careers, but also for their impact on their workplaces and wider communities.

3.1. Evidence from the UK

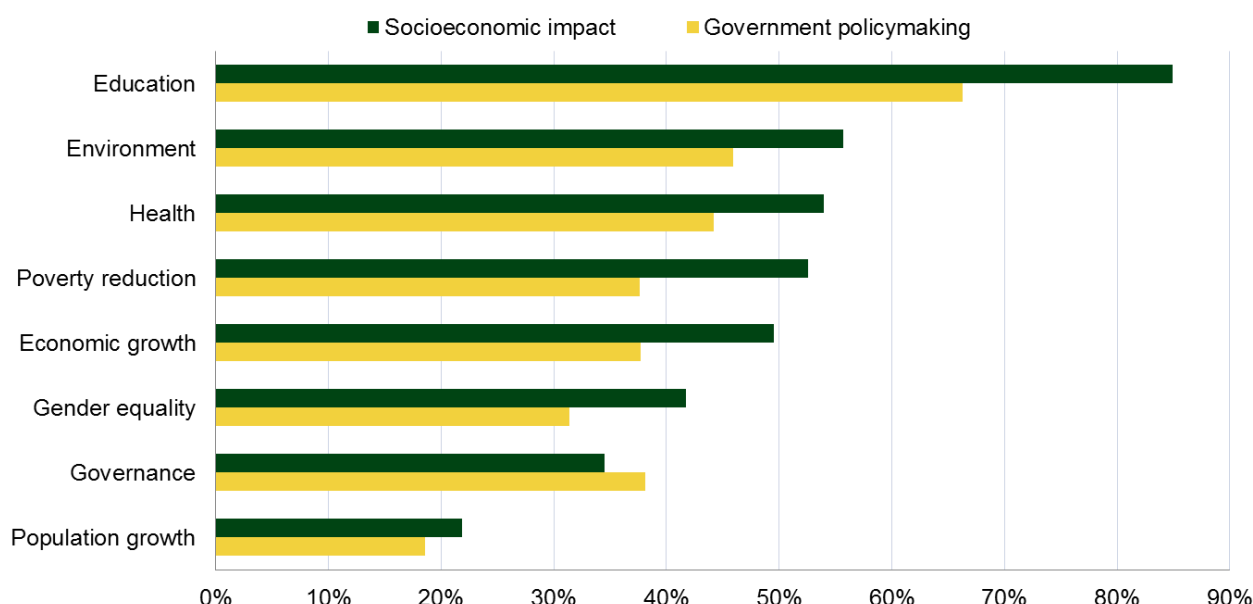
The main evaluation approach used by the CSC prior to this report period was the distribution of retrospective alumni surveys supplemented with interviews and focus groups. In 2016, a summary analysis of the second such survey exercise was published.¹ The survey was distributed between 2012 and 2015 and generated almost 2,100 responses, with alumni from every year since 1960 represented. Analysis of the data revealed that:

I led the design and implementation of a youth entrepreneurship and graduate employability skills training programme. My team trained almost 4,000 graduates and 600 entrepreneurs across the country.

Bridget Konadu Gyamfi, 2011 Commonwealth Scholar from Ghana to the UK)

- The perceived gains from UK Commonwealth Scholarships were high across a range of important outcomes, from increased technical knowledge and access to equipment or expertise unavailable in Scholars' home countries, to the subsequent application of skills in the workplace.
- Involvement in development activities was widespread: two-thirds of survey respondents reported that their activities had socioeconomic impact across a range of development priority areas, while just over one-third reported that they had influenced government policymaking.

Figure 5: Socioeconomic and government policymaking impact by development sector



- Scholars had worked across a spectrum of fields, but education was the field in which the highest proportion of respondents reported impact, and also in which activities were perceived to have the greatest

¹ Mawer, M., Quraishi, S., and Day, R. (2016). *Successes and complexities: the outcomes of UK Commonwealth Scholarships 1960-2012*. London: Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

impact. Support for the notion that Commonwealth Scholarships exert an impact wider than upon individual recipients was thus relatively strong.

- Respondents reported impact at various levels: 71% at institutional level, 58% at local level, 45% at national level, and 25% at international level. In the context of the programme's longevity, even the lower of these proportions could potentially translate into large numbers of individuals; the programme in the United Kingdom has funded over 27,500 individuals across its duration.
- Almost all former Scholars were currently employed full-time, with the remainder predominately having retired. Scholars found that their employers, especially in academic institutions, were very supportive of them applying for a Commonwealth Scholarship, and a majority returned to their previous employers after completing their studies.
- A net effect of Commonwealth Scholarships has been to sustain and modestly increase participation in the academic sector – an important outcome given the challenges to the vibrancy and sustainability of the higher education sector within many Commonwealth states.
- At the most general level, our data indicated that 18% of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows were currently living outside of their home region. However, this figure concealed variation at different periods of time after the end of an award, suggesting that traditional concepts of straightforward 'return' or 'non-return' post-scholarship may well be outdated. For example, survey respondents who had finished their scholarship 1-2 years or 5-6 years previously were more likely to be living at home, whereas a higher proportion of those who had finished 3-4 years previously were abroad.

The impact activities reported by Scholars could largely be classified into one or more of the following areas:

-  Analytic research
-  Teaching and training
-  Design, invention, and development
-  Implementation and coordination
-  Policy development and technical assistance
-  Advocacy
-  Publication and dissemination

Among other key government initiatives, I led the development of Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking, which secured up to Can\$72 million in investment, in order to expand access to services for diverse groups of victims of human trafficking, and to improve detection of the crime and prosecution of offenders.

Olena Bykova (2005 Commonwealth Scholar from Canada to the UK)

3.2. The future of CSC evaluation

Following the conclusion of the 2012-2015 exercise, the CSC introduced a new longitudinal evaluation framework, incorporating baseline surveys distributed at the start of awards and periodic post-award follow-up surveys. This structure enables longer-term tracking of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows and the outcomes of their awards, and will be complemented by an expansion of the CSC's qualitative methodology. Combined, this will give the CSC a much greater understanding of both the intended and unintended outcomes of its awards. The collaborative ethos of the CSFP means that tools designed and employed by the CSC for the evaluation of its own awards could be adapted for a more formal evaluation of the wider Plan.

4. The CSFP Taskforce

4.1. Activity

The importance of the CSFP was recognised during a ministerial debate at the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM) in 2015. Ministers from around 20 countries participated, with several citing personal experience with the CSFP. However, there was also a view that the CSFP could be more effectively utilised by the Commonwealth, that it could be made more accessible, and that a greater understanding of its detailed operation was needed. It was recommended that an international taskforce be established to consider ways in which the potential of the CSFP could be realised. The CSFP Taskforce reported its recommendations to the Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG) in January 2017.

The Commonwealth Scholarship has allowed me to work with a great team of researchers from diverse backgrounds, and this will give me future opportunities for collaborative research and links between my home and host universities, which will be mutually beneficial.

Tolulope Saliu (2015 Commonwealth Scholar from Nigeria to Sri Lanka, funded by the CSFP endowment fund)

The CSFP Taskforce comprised senior university leaders and government representatives, in addition to representatives from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the ACU. Reports on the operation of the CSFP from the countries represented on the Taskforce, the results of a survey of CSFP nominating agencies conducted by the CSC, and the findings of the CSC's evaluation and monitoring programme were considered. A submission from the CSFP Support Group, a sub-committee of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, was also considered.

The findings of the Taskforce confirm that the Commonwealth Scholarships brand is well recognised throughout the Commonwealth. It was noted that there is universal agreement that Commonwealth Scholarships are prestigious and relevant to the national needs of Scholars' home countries. Similarly, the Taskforce noted that the creation of the CSFP endowment fund in 2009 has reinforced the Commonwealth-wide basis of the awards and created study opportunities in low and middle income countries that did not previously exist.

In light of the positive view of the CSFP held by Commonwealth Education Ministers, and indeed the wider Commonwealth as a whole, the Taskforce endorsed the expansion of the CSFP. It also argued that several constraints exist that must be addressed before any expansion can move forward. These included:

- A lack of understanding about the detailed operation and procedures of Commonwealth Scholarships
- A lack of active promotion and management of the CSFP
- A perceived lack of official recognition of the CSFP by the Commonwealth itself
- A lack of diversification in funding
- A lack of awards to and between developing countries

Based on these constraints, the Taskforce set out recommendations aimed at defining, managing, and promoting Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowships, in addition to ensuring their recognition as a prominent Commonwealth activity.

4.2. Recommendations and responses

Table 6: CSFP Taskforce recommendations and responses

Recommendations	Responses
<i>1. Defining Commonwealth Scholarships</i>	
1.1. The five founding principles of the CSFP should be reviewed	The CSFP management unit, now established at the ACU (see recommendation 2.1), will undertake a review of the founding principles
1.2. The ability to offer Commonwealth Scholarships should be extended to individual universities, as well as governments	The CSFP management unit will undertake a feasibility assessment of the scalability of this approach (based on the experience of existing host universities) and possible partnership opportunities
1.3. Consideration should be given to a clear set of defining characteristics to establish what constitutes a Commonwealth Scholarship	The CSFP management unit will develop a proposal for the defining characteristics (in consultation with key stakeholders)
1.4. Particular attention should be given to preserving awards for citizens of developed, as well as developing, countries	Proposals are under development for an expansion of the CSFP endowment fund, designed to preserve and expand outward mobility opportunities for citizens of developed Commonwealth countries to undertake study in low and middle income Commonwealth countries
<i>2. Managing Commonwealth Scholarships</i>	
2.1. A small management unit should be established to oversee future management and promotion of the CSFP, and the Association of Commonwealth Universities should be invited to host this	The ACU has recruited a new post (effective March 2018), in addition to its current provision of management of the CSFP endowment fund and administration of the United Kingdom scheme (CSC)
2.2. A new role description should be devised for national nominating agencies	The CSFP management unit will consult with national nominating agencies on establishing the appropriate working relationships
2.3. Consideration should be given to a relaunch of the Commonwealth Fellowships brand	The CSFP management unit will undertake further scoping work on the distinctive objectives and benefits of Commonwealth Fellowships
<i>3. Promoting Commonwealth Scholarships</i>	
3.1. Commonwealth Scholarships should be listed and marketed in a single place	The CSFP management unit will take forward the implementation of this recommendation
3.2. The CSFP should adopt a clear strategy to mark its 60th anniversary	The ACU is actively developing plans for an expansion and renewal of the CSFP endowment fund to enable a substantial increase in awards in the 60th anniversary year
<i>4. Official recognition of the CSFP</i>	
4.1. The Commonwealth Secretary-General should be asked to make a clear statement emphasising the support of the 'official' Commonwealth for the CSFP, and the practical ways in which engagement with take place	The ACU has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth Secretariat, which covers strengthened cooperation on the CSFP
4.2. Time should be found at 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers for a debate on the future of the CSFP, at which national governments are asked to formally reaffirm their support for the Plan	Ministers are invited to reaffirm their support for the CSFP. The CSFP management unit will communicate options for active support to the CSFP
4.3. The reinvigoration of the CSFP should be marked with a special conference on 'Scholarships and the Commonwealth', possibly to take place alongside the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in February 2018	The CSFP management unit will explore the options for holding a special conference on "Scholarships and the Commonwealth" in the future

Future activities of the CSFP management unit

The ACU has established a CSFP management unit to oversee the central coordination and promotion of the plan, on the basis of the recommendation of the CSFP Taskforce (recommendation 2.1 – see Table 5). This follows Ministers' approval 'that a small central unit be created' and welcoming of 'an offer from the Association of Commonwealth Universities to support the new unit' at 16CCEM in 2006.

Given that the administration of the United Kingdom scheme (CSC) and the CSFP endowment fund are both managed by the ACU, the Taskforce suggested that a unit based at the ACU would provide strong synergies across these different elements of the Plan. It also noted that the Commonwealth-wide nature of the CSFP would be reinforced, through access to the ACU's network of over 500 Commonwealth universities. This was seen as increasingly important given that Commonwealth universities are likely to become more prominent in supporting the CSFP. Finally, the Taskforce suggested that ACU management of the scheme would provide charitable status to the CSFP, which currently has no legal status.

The governing Council of the ACU has agreed to host the management and promotion of the CSFP. To that end, the ACU has created and staffed a CSFP management unit, supplementing its existing investment in the management and administration of the CSFP endowment fund. The ACU has begun work on carrying forward the recommendations of the Taskforce, and this will now be progressed by the CSFP management unit. Specifically, this unit will address recommendations 1.1, 1.3, and 3.1, with the aim of advancing the Plan's commitment to equity, access, and transparency. The unit will, in due course, be in contact with national agencies to establish appropriate working arrangements in light of recommendation 2.2.

The ACU signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth Secretariat in September 2017 to strengthen cooperation across a range of activities. The CSFP is explicitly identified as an area for closer working in line with recommendation 4.1, and the CSFP management unit will work with the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop practical means of engagement.

Over the course of its deliberations, the Taskforce ascertained that leading universities would be interested in working alongside Commonwealth governments to enhance the CSFP. The United Kingdom scheme already operates one such model, where universities share the cost of Commonwealth Scholarships with the UK government. The Taskforce noted significant potential to expand such arrangements, and recommended that the ability to offer Commonwealth Scholarships should be extended to individual universities, as well as governments (recommendation 1.2). The ACU is currently exploring the feasibility of adopting this approach at scale and the possible opportunities for partnership with universities on Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships as part of an expanded CSFP.

The CSFP has a long tradition of fellowships, with significant potential both as a source of mobility and as a means to enhance the vocational aspects of the Plan. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth Fellowships brand is not as widely recognised as the scholarships strand. In light of their potential, the Taskforce recommended that consideration should be given to a relaunch of the Commonwealth Fellowships brand (recommendation 2.3). The ACU is currently undertaking further scoping work on the distinctive objectives and benefits of Commonwealth Fellowships, and exploring how an expanded CSFP could incorporate more Commonwealth Fellowships.

Expansion of the CSFP

The ACU is working to expand the CSFP, and the CSFP endowment fund, in response to the recommendations of the CSFP Taskforce, and is seeking the active support of Commonwealth governments. The Taskforce endorsed expansion of the CSFP, noting that, despite its constraints, the Plan is viewed positively by

After the Commonwealth Scholarship, I will be able to have a more positive impact on my country as a doctor, researcher, and perhaps in the future a policymaker, which will enable me to contribute to improvements in the health of the general population.

Steven Mitini Nkhoma (2016 Commonwealth Scholar from Malawi to Sri Lanka, funded by the CSFP endowment fund)

Commonwealth Education Ministers and their governments, and that it is a prestigious and well-recognised brand in the Commonwealth and beyond. The Taskforce recommended that national governments formally affirm their support of the plan at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20CCEM) in

I had an amazing experience during my two years of study both academically and socially. The new skills gained will go a long way in guiding my career progression so I can serve my country better

Paul Wanyama (2015 Commonwealth Scholar from Kenya to South Africa, funded by the CSFP endowment fund)

2018 (recommendation 4.2). In addition, the Taskforce further recommended that a clear strategy should be adopted to mark the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the CSFP in 2019 (recommendation 3.2). This follows from the successful launch of the CSFP endowment fund at time of the 50th anniversary of the Plan in 2009. The Taskforce recommended that the ACU, as the central management body of the scheme, develop proposals for fundraising and other activity with the intention of expanding the CSFP.

In light of the latter recommendation, the ACU is working to substantially grow the size of the CSFP endowment fund with a view to offering a greater number of scholarships for study in low and middle income countries from 2019. As well as preserving outward mobility opportunities for students from developed countries, an enlarged fund would provide an efficient and cost-effective mechanism for a greater number of countries to host Commonwealth Scholarships, offering economies of scale and avoiding onerous administrative burdens for individual countries. This would be a fitting legacy for the CSFP on its 60th anniversary.

Conclusion

In light of the recommendations of the CSFP Taskforce, Ministers are asked to:

- Formally reaffirm the support of their national governments for the CSFP; and
- Actively support the expansion of the CSFP, including the CSFP endowment fund, to mark the 60th anniversary of the Plan