

Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships

2015 prospectus



Introduction

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan is one of the largest and most prestigious scholarships schemes for international study in the world. Since it was established in 1959, around 30,000 individuals have benefited – 24,000 of them have held awards funded by the United Kingdom, managed by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC).

This prospectus describes the Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships offered by the CSC in 2015-2016.

Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships provide the opportunity for individuals to study for a UK Master's degree while living and working in their home country. The scheme was established in 2002, as a direct response to the measures taken by our funder, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), to explore new methods of delivery as part of the drive for poverty reduction. To date, over 2,000 Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships have been awarded.

Distance Learning Scholarships

The application cycle for Distance Learning Scholarships has three stages:

1. UK universities are invited to submit Expressions of Interest to become a Distance Learning Scholarships course provider (June-October)
2. The CSC assesses formal proposals from shortlisted providers, deciding which courses to select and how many scholarships to allocate to each course (January)
3. The CSC selects candidates for Distance Learning Scholarships from a shortlist nominated by the provider, derived from its own recruitment processes (February-July)

The CSC has supported both courses offered in partnership with universities in developing countries, and courses delivered directly by UK institutions.

Successful proposals for Distance Learning Scholarships feature a wide variety of delivery methodologies, for example:

- Largely internet-based courses
- Largely print-based courses
- Courses which bring students together for seminars at partner institutions
- Courses which bring students together for short spells in the UK
- Courses which focus on electronic interaction

The most important consideration is that the course is fit for purpose.

Expressions of Interest

The CSC annually seeks Expressions of Interest from UK institutions for Distance Learning Scholarships.

There is one annual call for Expressions of Interest, so institutions should submit all proposals in this round, whether they involve a partner or not.

If proposals are based on existing partnership arrangements with institutions in developing Commonwealth countries, there should be clear evidence of substantive collaborative work and an equally clear exposition of the current and future role of the partner institution in course delivery. The selection committee will also require evidence of a genuine commitment to the overseas partner in terms of capacity development, for example, through enhancing its role in the areas of curriculum development, methods of delivery, or student support.

The selection committee considers all eligible Expressions of Interest at meetings held annually in October. Successful course providers are then invited to submit a formal proposal for support.

Proposals

Formal proposals from shortlisted providers are considered by the selection committee in January each year. The committee also decides on the number of scholarships to be allocated to each course.

Criteria for providers

There are three criteria against which Expressions of Interest and Proposals will be considered:

- The **quality of the course**, including whether the Expression of Interest/Proposal has institutional endorsement through a separate letter of support from the university vice-chancellor, the Quality Assurance record, and the track record for delivery of the course through the medium of distance learning.
- The **learning opportunities** provided for developing country students, including whether the course takes into account appropriate use of technology, whether course providers can identify a target audience of potential applicants and recruit them successfully, and the factors likely to affect candidates' successful completion of their studies.
- The **development impact** of the course of study, including how the course content can be applied to the Millennium Development Goals, and the subsequent career patterns of course alumni.

Please note that, where institutions are working with a partner in-country, the partner must be based in a developing Commonwealth country (see list below).

Formal agreements with providers

Successful providers will be required to enter into a formal agreement with the CSC. The agreement will detail the various obligations placed on the provider. These will include responsibility for:

- Publicising and advertising the awards
- Recruiting and nominating candidates
- Maintaining and developing the relationship with the partner institution
- Accreditation of existing course modules and any developments made to the curriculum
- Delivery of the course
- Associated quality assurance

The agreement will also detail the financial arrangements between the provider and the CSC.

Applications from candidates

Successful providers will be required to conduct their own recruitment process to shortlist a specified number of nominated candidates for Distance Learning Scholarships. A selection committee will then select Scholars from this shortlist, in July.

Eligibility criteria for candidates

To be eligible for a Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarship, candidates should:

- be citizens of a developing Commonwealth country, refugees or British protected persons AND be permanently resident in a developing Commonwealth country (see list on page 4)
- normally hold a first degree of upper second-class standard, or higher qualification. In certain cases, we will consider a lower qualification and sufficient relevant experience

Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarships may not be held concurrently for more than one course

Additional requirements

The CSC may require candidates to undertake the academic IELTS English language test as a condition of eligibility. Candidates should check with the UK institution/provider whether this requirement applies to them. If selected, candidates will be required to show the CSC a certificate confirming a total overall score of at least 6.5 on the IELTS scale with no less than 5.5 in each section. The CSC will only accept a certificate from a test taken up to one year prior to the start date of the course.

How to apply

Full information on how institutions and candidates can apply, plus copies of this prospectus, are available at <http://bit.ly/cscuk-distance-learning-scholarship>

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating the course provision, the development impact of each student, and the capacity-building potential of the course is an essential part of any agreement between the CSC and a provider.

Full annual reports are required from both the provider and the Scholars themselves. Brief interim reports are also required from the provider, to report examination results and to draw the CSC's attention to any significant developments or constraints.

Information required to facilitate evaluation will include demographic details (for example, gender, age, employment details, country of origin, future career plans), academic progress, curriculum development, and a breakdown of financial expenditure.

The CSC also sends its award holders a questionnaire at the start of their scholarship, to evaluate the impact that they hope their studies will have on a personal and developmental level. A questionnaire at the end of their award provides an opportunity for them to assess how their expectations have been met.

Eligible Commonwealth countries

Anguilla	Kenya	St Vincent and The Grenadines
Antigua and Barbuda	Kiribati	Samoa
Bangladesh	Lesotho	Seychelles
Barbados	Malawi	Sierra Leone
Belize	Malaysia	Solomon Islands
Bermuda	Maldives	South Africa
Botswana	Mauritius	Sri Lanka
British Virgin Islands	Montserrat	Swaziland
Cameroon	Mozambique	Tanzania
Cayman Islands	Namibia	Tonga
Dominica	Nauru	Trinidad and Tobago
Falkland Islands	Nigeria	Tristan da Cunha
Fiji	Pakistan	Turks and Caicos Islands
Ghana	Papua New Guinea	Tuvalu
Gibraltar	Pitcairn Islands	Uganda
Grenada	Rwanda	Vanuatu
Guyana	St Helena	Zambia
India	St Kitts and Nevis	
Jamaica	St Lucia	

Eligibility is dependent on current Commonwealth membership status. Please contact the CSC if you require any clarification of Commonwealth country status.



Commonwealth Scholarship
Commission in the UK

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