

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate use

New evidence shows Commonwealth Scholarships benefit UK society

Commonwealth Scholarships have a profound impact on the UK's international development, diplomatic and higher education objectives, according to new evidence. The findings come from an evaluation survey of some 2,200 alumni, carried out to mark the 50th cohort of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows arriving in the UK.

Results sharply contradict the 'old-fashioned' views of scholarships as primarily benefiting individuals and often being used as a route to a career in developed countries. 'In fact,' says Dr Norm Geddes, Commonwealth Scholarship Commissioner, 'some 88% are still working in their home country. Those most likely to remain in the UK are from developed, not developing countries'.

Scholarships have also had a profound impact on wider society. Over 2,000 respondents (90%) reported an impact in key development and leadership areas – 70% of these provided specific examples. 45% of respondents reported having influence on government thinking, 48% reported having a socioeconomic impact, and 81% reported involvement in specific projects in areas ranging from environment protection to governance, poverty reduction to health. The majority of alumni work in the public sector, particularly in education, with those from developing countries concentrated in areas directly related to international development goals.

The findings also show significant benefits for the UK, as well as the recipients' home countries. 92% retained links with contacts in the UK, and 71% maintained contact with universities in the UK. This figure was welcomed by Universities UK, whose spokesperson said that it confirmed the 'critical role that Commonwealth Scholarships play in ensuring that UK universities have access to world-class talent, both during and after their awards. Looking at the exceptional list of Scholars who have gone on to reach the most senior levels of their professions, it is clear that many sectors of business, public service and academia have benefited from the knowledge and expertise of Commonwealth Scholars who have studied in the UK. This is an important part of the significant contribution made by UK universities not only to the UK but also to the wider world'.

Full details of the survey findings will be presented to a special meeting of Commonwealth Scholarships alumni and other stakeholders, being held at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor on 11-13 November. The survey forms part of a long-term evaluation programme, which will go on to examine the detailed impact of Commonwealth Scholarships on individual sectors and regions, and identify ways to increase this further.

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Notes to editors:

1. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom (CSC) is responsible for managing UK Commonwealth Scholarships. Over 16,000 citizens from all over the Commonwealth have studied in the UK since 1959. More information is available on the CSC's website at www.cscuk.org.uk

2. UK Commonwealth Scholarships are funded by the Department for International Development (for developing Commonwealth countries) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in partnership with UK universities (for developed Commonwealth countries).
3. The evaluation survey was conducted in June-July 2008. 2,226 alumni responded; this sample was broadly representative of the whole alumni group.
4. Respondents were asked to provide factual data (such as career history, public offices held, awards and honours received) plus their views on how their scholarship or fellowship had benefited them and their society. Specifically, respondents were asked about their involvement in 12 key development and leadership priority areas, and asked to give details of specific roles, projects and activities.
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