

Handbook for
**Commonwealth
Scholars and Fellows**
in the United Kingdom 2009



COMMONWEALTH
SCHOLARSHIPS

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Foreword

Congratulations on being awarded a Scholarship or Fellowship from the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK. You are among the very select group of applicants who have gained one of these prestigious awards, reflecting your intellectual prowess, your commitment to development and leadership, and the high quality of your research or study plans. We very much hope that your time in the UK will be both professionally successful and individually enjoyable. We hope too that you will participate fully in the wider work of the Commission, including its conferences, networks and workshops and that, on completion of your award, you will become an active alumnus. This handbook is designed to be of use to you throughout the period of your award. It contains some general information, explains the scheme's administrative arrangements, and also sets out the rules that are intended to ensure fairness and equity in the delivery of our programmes. We hope that you will find it of help.



Tim Unwin
Chair
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom

At time of going to print:

List of Commission members

Chair

Professor Tim Unwin

Deputy Chair

Sir Brian Donnelly KBE, CMG

Professor Mark Cleary

Dr Mark Collins

Dr Monica Darnbrough CBE

Professor Ann Floyd

Dr Norman Geddes

Kathy Mansfield Higgins

Professor Christine Humfrey

Dr Nyovani Madise

Richard Middleton

Professor William Stephens

Dr Rosemary Stevenson

Ros Wade

Dr Jonathan Wastling

Further details about the Commissioners can be found at www.cscuk.org.uk/about/commission_guidelines_members.asp.

Executive Secretary

Dr John Kirkland

Assistant Secretary

Dr Jonathan Jenkins

Project Manager (Contracts and Projects)

British Council

Kevin Drury

Administration

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission is the body appointed by Act of Parliament to supervise the operation of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan in the United Kingdom. The Commission gives general directions and the day-to-day administration work is undertaken by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the British Council. The Association of Commonwealth Universities provides the secretariat and is responsible for all academic aspects of the award, assisting the Commission with the selection of candidates for Commonwealth Awards, securing places for them in a university, college, or other institution of higher education, and with the supervision of their studies. The British Council looks after travel, reception, payments and advises on accommodation as well as the welfare of the award holders and their families.

This handbook explains the regulations for the administration of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships in the United Kingdom. Here you will find a list of areas and an indication of the body to which any questions should be referred. **Regulations may be changed without notice during the term of a Commonwealth Award.**

This handbook provides general guidelines only and does not cover in detail every aspect of all the awards. You and your supervisors/hosts are asked always to check with the ACU and the British Council, after consulting the handbook, about specific issues. Your Notification of Award will detail any conditions applicable specifically in your case.

The contents of this handbook can also be found on the internet at www.cscuk.org.uk/award/rules_regulations.asp. The online handbook will be updated regularly and the information online will supersede any information contained in this handbook. Please ensure you check the online handbook for any amendments before relying on information in this booklet.

ACU Awards Administrators, British Council Award Administrators and British Council regional offices

ACU Awards Administrator

Your Notification of Award names your Awards Administrator at the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) who, after your arrival in the UK, will send your supervisor or course director your welcome package including a registration form. Please complete this and return it to the Association of Commonwealth Universities. You should contact your Awards Administrator in the event of any difficulties with arrangement for your registration, supervision, or other academic issues over the course of your award.

British Council Award Administrator

You will be contacted by your Award Administrator at the British Council in Manchester, who will be your main point of contact at the British Council during your Commonwealth award. Your Award Administrator will arrange for your initial payment to be made available, and will provide you with contact details for the British Council in your home country (where relevant). You should contact your British Council Award Administrator in Manchester in the event of any queries regarding the financial aspects of your award, travel arrangements, visa issues or welfare issues.

If for any reason you are worried or in trouble at any time during your award, you can talk or write to your ACU Awards Administrator or your British Council Award Administrator.

For the following matters, you should refer to your Awards Administrator at:

The Association of Commonwealth Universities

Woburn House
20–24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF

Telephone +44 (0)20 7380 6700

Fax +44 (0)20 7387 2655

www.cscuk.org.uk

- Questions about terms of award
- Courses of study
- Reports on progress
- Applications for
 - (a) renewals and extensions of Scholarships
 - (b) study travel grants and fieldwork
 - (c) employment and official service
 - (d) deferment of homeward travel
 - (e) permission to travel abroad beyond specified limitations
- Approval of tuition and examination fees
- Medical registration and medical defence.

For the following matters, you should refer to your Award Administrator at:

British Council
Bridgewater House
58 Whitworth Street
Manchester M1 6BB

Telephone +44 (0)161 957 7000
Fax +44 (0)161 957 7488
E-mail csfp.enquiry@britishcouncil.org

- Visa issues
- Travel arrangements to and from the UK
- Arrival arrangements
- Accommodation
- Opening a bank account
- Payment of allowances
 - (a) maintenance
 - (b) marriage and child
 - (c) personal computer loan
 - (d) thesis grant
 - (e) retention of lodging
- Visa extensions
- Payment of fares and travel expenses
 - (a) to a destination in the United Kingdom
 - (b) return home
- Deposits
- Council Tax
- Notification of illness
- Welfare issues.

List of Awards Administrators at the ACU and the British Council with responsibility for Scholars and Fellows:

ACU

Fiona Groenhout	0207 380 6763	fiona.groenhout@cscuk.org.uk
Selina Hannaford	0207 380 6759	selina.hannaford@cscuk.org.uk
Anna O'Flynn	0207 380 6766	anna.oflynn@cscuk.org.uk
James Ransom	0207 380 6716	james.ransom@cscuk.org.uk
Mariken Schipper	0207 380 6734	mariken.schipper@cscuk.org.uk

British Council

Mike Bray	0161 957 7398	mike.bray@britishcouncil.org
Rosie Elwick	0161 957 7586	rosie.elwick@britishcouncil.org
Claire Farnsworth	0161 957 7570	claire.farnsworth@britishcouncil.org
Vanessa Marshall	0161 957 7518	vanessa.marshall@britishcouncil.org
Lynne Osborn	0161 957 7584	lynne.osborn@britishcouncil.org

British Council regional offices

In addition to the British Council office in Manchester, there are four other British Council offices throughout the UK where some regional events may be co-ordinated. Please note that even if you are based in one of these cities, your Award Administrator in Manchester remains your main British Council contact.

These offices are located in the following places:

London

10 Spring Gardens
London SW1A 2BN
Telephone 020 7389 4785

Northern Ireland – Belfast

Norwich Union House
2nd Floor
7 Fountain Street
Belfast BT1 5EG
Telephone 028 9024 8220

Scotland – Edinburgh

The Tun
4 Jackson's Entry
Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ
Telephone 0131 524 5750

Wales – Cardiff

28 Park Place
Cardiff CF10 3QE
Telephone 029 2039 7346

Pre-departure advice

Entry clearance

All Commonwealth award holders who are not EEC citizens are required to apply for prior entry clearance into the UK. Up-to-date details of procedures and regulations, along with a downloadable application form, can be found on the UK Border Agency website: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk.

Please note that the immigration requirements for entry into the UK have recently changed to a points-based system; you must be certain that you satisfy all the requirements for entry within your application.

The information and regulations on visa applications and requirements may be updated on a periodic basis – please be sure to check carefully the information in this document against current requirements.

Further information and guidance can also be found on the UKCISA website: www.ukcosa.org.uk/student/immigration.php.

Student visas are expected to be issued gratis (free of charge). If you are charged for your visa please query this with the entry clearance officer immediately and inform the British Council.

Fellows – as you will be issued with a Tier 5 Temporary Workers Government Authorised Exchange category visa, not a student visa, please note that you will be charged for the visa. Please retain any receipts or documentation for the charges and forward these to your British Council Award Administrator after your arrival in the UK. Should you apply for your dependants to join you at a later stage or on a separate application please note that an additional fee will be charged that will not be covered by your award.

Scholars – you must ensure that you and any accompanying dependants are aware of and meet UK immigration requirements. You are therefore advised to check carefully the requirements and procedures for obtaining visas for family members, particularly if they are planning to join or visit you later in your award. You are liable for any costs incurred in obtaining visas for your family.

The length of permission given to award holders with entry clearance should be: for Fellows, the time given in your certificate of sponsorship plus 28 days (i.e. your award dates plus 28 days); for Scholars, the full duration of your award plus four months. It is important therefore that you include evidence of your university sponsorship plus your Notification of Award, and Fellows must include the sponsor support letter provided by your British Council Award Administrator, with your application. If you are given entry clearance for a shorter period, ask to see the entry clearance manager at the British High Commission immediately (entry clearance is much harder to amend afterwards,

especially once you arrive in the UK so it should be done at the time). The entry clearance manager can correct the length of your permission to stay in the UK if a mistake has been made.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your leave to enter or remain in the UK and that of any accompanying dependants is valid throughout your time in the UK.

Scholars – Academic Technology Approval Scheme

On 1 November 2007 the UK government introduced the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS).

Having an ATAS clearance certificate is a mandatory requirement for some postgraduate students who need entry clearance to study in the UK. It will affect students who:

- plan to undertake postgraduate research in science, engineering or technology disciplines
- (or)
- plan to apply for a postgraduate taught Master's in Materials Science, Materials Technology, Aerospace Engineering, Mechanical Engineering or Physics (including Nuclear Physics).

You should check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for more information about who needs to apply, subject areas affected, and an application form: www.fco.gov.uk/en/fco-in-action/counter-terrorism/weapons/atas.

The certificate is issued free of charge and applications can be completed online.

If a student needs an ATAS certificate and he or she doesn't have one, his or her entry clearance application will be refused. Current students already in the UK wishing to extend their visa also need to apply for an ATAS clearance if they are extending in the subject areas listed.

Fellows – if you are an Academic or Professional Fellow, or a Scholar undertaking clinical training, you will be required to have a British Council sponsorship letter for the period of your award. Your Award Administrator at the British Council will supply this for you.

The sponsorship letter will be obtained by your British Council Award Administrator and forwarded to the nearest British Council office in your home country, or directly to you if there is no local office. You should submit the letter as part of your entry clearance application.

Please note that it will not be possible once you are in the UK to extend or change your visa validity dates. It is therefore your responsibility to ensure your visa has been issued correctly before departing your home country.

Banking reference

You are advised to bring with you to the UK a reference letter from your bank in your home country, plus at least three recent statements. It would also be useful to bring some proof of your address in your home country. This documentation will make it easier for you to open a bank account in the UK.

Accommodation

Arranging accommodation

Before your arrival in the United Kingdom you must contact the accommodation office at the university or institution where you are to study (contact details are provided on each institution's website), or your host organisation if you are a Professional Fellow. The Commission does not have a supply of accommodation anywhere in the United Kingdom.

If you accept university residential accommodation (e.g. college hall of residence or hostel) you will normally be required to remain there for one academic year if you are a Scholar, or for Fellows, for the duration of your Fellowship. Since such accommodation is much in demand you must be prepared to live in private rented accommodation. If your institution cannot offer you accommodation, or you wish to reside in privately rented accommodation, the accommodation office at the institution should be able to provide you with a list of private landlords or agencies.

It is strongly advised that you do not sign any contract for private accommodation without first viewing it to assess its suitability. Any signed contract is legally binding so you should always check the terms and conditions carefully before signing.

If you require temporary accommodation when you first arrive in the UK, the British Council can book this for your first few nights while you arrange long-term accommodation. This will usually be a hotel. You will be responsible for paying any short-term accommodation costs out of your arrival allowance.

Accommodation suitable for families is scarce and in high demand in most university towns. You may have to spend some time in temporary accommodation while securing suitable long-term family accommodation. It is strongly advised that your family do not join you in the UK until you have arranged suitable long-term accommodation. Any family allowances, if applicable to you, will be payable once your family are in the UK, provided this is within your award tenure. For further information please refer to the allowances section.

You must consult your academic supervisor or host, and your Award Administrators at the ACU and British Council before taking accommodation so far from your place of study that it may be considered unreasonable (e.g. in London, over 15 miles), to ensure this will not have an impact upon your attendance in your institution.

You should immediately notify your Award Administrators at the ACU and the British Council of any change of address, whether temporary or permanent.

Accommodation deposits

It will not be possible to reserve or pay a deposit for any accommodation on your behalf before your arrival in the UK. It will also not be possible for your Award Administrator, at either the British Council or the ACU to act as a referee for you in any application for accommodation. If you have been offered university accommodation that requires a deposit to secure the accommodation before arrival, your British Council Award Administrator may be able to provide a deposit deferral letter provided your institution will accept this. In these cases you will still need to pay the deposit upon, or shortly after, taking up your accommodation.

If, after arrival in the UK, you are required to make a substantial deposit or rental payment, it may be possible for the British Council to arrange an advance of your monthly allowances. You will need to contact your British Council Award Administrator to arrange this and to agree a repayment plan.

Travel to the United Kingdom

Travel arrangements

Your award covers the cost of travel from the nearest major airport in your home country to the United Kingdom, provided that your plans have been previously approved. As soon as you accept your award, therefore, you must get in touch with the appropriate British Council office in your home country, the address of which will be notified to you in a letter from your British Council Award Administrator in Manchester.

If there is no British Council office in your home country there are two options open to you. The first option is for you to book your own airfare to the UK (single flight for Scholars; return flight for Fellows) and claim the reimbursement for this once you are in the UK. You must contact your British Council Award Administrator before making any bookings to get a quote from them, which will then be the maximum amount reimbursable. Once you have made your own travel booking, you must inform your British Council Award Administrator in good time of your arrival details: date, flight number, time of arrival and which airport and terminal you will be arriving at in the United Kingdom.

The second option is for your British Council Award Administrator to arrange your travel to the UK. They will contact you with options available for booking using the British Council's travel services provider. If you choose not to accept any of these options, you must notify the British Council, as soon as possible, that you plan to make your own booking, giving details of your travel plans. If these are approved, you will be responsible for your own booking and for meeting any extra expenses involved. If you are a Scholar, please do not buy a return ticket unless it is impossible to enter the UK otherwise. If you do, the refund will be limited to half the cost initially.

If you are residing in a third country at the time of the award, you will normally be entitled to your travel expenses from the third country to the United Kingdom. If you are already in the United Kingdom when your award is confirmed, and you do not return home before your award commences, you will not be eligible for an airfare.

If you wish to travel later than the official starting date of your award you must seek approval from the Association of Commonwealth Universities, giving the reasons for the delay. You cannot assume that approval will be given.

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission cannot accept responsibility for accidents on the journey or for the loss of luggage, wherever or however these may occur.

Travel expenses

The following travel expenses will normally be paid by the British Council:

Fares

- the approved air fare from the nearest major airport in your home country to the United Kingdom airport nearest your place of study
- if applicable, reimbursement of a standard-class train or coach fare from the arrival airport or nearest city, to your place of study on submission of receipts; **please note that no reimbursement will be made for taxi, tube or local bus fares.**

Luggage expenses when travelling by air

In addition to the standard airline allowance, the cost of bringing up to 10kg/one piece of luggage from your home country to the United Kingdom. The cost will be refunded on arrival in the United Kingdom on production of receipts (which should clearly show the total weight of the luggage).

Incidental expenses

One night's hotel accommodation if your journey involves a necessary overnight stop en route to the UK. Any subsistence costs must be covered by your arrival allowance.

Itemised bills with receipts must be produced in support of claims for reimbursement. All claims must be submitted within three months of arrival.

Dependants' fares

You are personally responsible for the fares and luggage expenses of your spouse and children.

Currency

You should carry with you sufficient United Kingdom currency to meet the expenses arising immediately on arrival. If you have received an advance payment from the British Council in your home country, this should be sufficient. If you are expecting to collect a payment on arrival in the UK, you should still carry with you sufficient UK currency to cover any unforeseen circumstances. A sum of £150 should be adequate, but if you are accompanied by dependants you will require a correspondingly larger sum.

Arrival

Reception on arrival

If you would like someone to meet you upon arrival in the UK to assist you in collecting an advance payment, and if appropriate to show you the way to your onward transportation, the British Council can arrange a meeting service for you at any UK airport. The meet and greet service, if required, should be requested through your British Council contact before you leave home.

If you have requested the meet and greet service the Airport Agencies representative will be at the customs door as you exit your arrival airport terminal. They will be holding a sign with your name on so you should look out for this.

If you did not request this service and then change your mind, need some unexpected assistance upon arrival or simply miss the Airport Agencies representative at the customs barrier, please make your way to the Airport Agencies desks for assistance. The main Airport Information desk will give you assistance in locating this desk if you have difficulty. Airport Agencies are working with the British Council to offer support at UK airports.

If for any reason you are not able to make contact with our airport staff you should immediately ring our arrivals helpline on **Freephone 0800 281725**. Simply go to any public or private telephone and dial the number; the call will be free of charge and the helpline is staffed at all times.

Initial advance payment

If you have not received the initial advance payment in your home country your British Council Award Administrator can arrange for this to be paid on your arrival in the UK. Your British Council Award Administrator, or your British Council officer in your home country will inform you of the procedure for collecting a payment on arrival.

Please ensure that you inform your British Council Administrator of any changes to your e-mail contact address in order that we can send any information to you regarding payment.

You must ensure that you collect the payment as instructed. Failure to do so may lead to a significant delay in your receipt of this payment, as the time and location will need to be rearranged.

If you have difficulty finding the payment location given to you, please ask for assistance at the Airport Agencies desk at the airport. If you have any problems collecting the payment, please telephone the arrivals helpline for assistance.

General Medical Council (GMC)

If you are in the field of clinical medicine you may have to visit the GMC on arrival in the UK. Your Notification of Award will indicate whether this is necessary; you should seek specific advice from your Award Administrator at the ACU prior to your departure. GMC registration fees for the UK will be reimbursed once you have submitted the receipt to your British Council Award Administrator. Insurance is required if you are a medical or dental award holder actively involved in the care of patients.

If you are training at an institution in the London area, you can visit the GMC office at Regent's Place, 350 Euston Road, London NW1 3JN, without the need to book an appointment. If you are training at an institution outside the London area, you can visit the GMC office at the following address: Floor 5, St James' Buildings, 79 Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6FQ. However, you will first need to book an appointment. Please go to the following link to do so www.gmc-uk.org/about/contacts/manchester.asp. Please note that if you require temporary accommodation to be booked, you will have to pay for this out of your arrival allowance.

For further information please visit the GMC website (www.gmc-uk.org).

Allowances

A Commonwealth Scholarship or Fellowship covers fares, fees and personal maintenance. Similar awards may not be held concurrently. If in doubt you should seek advice from your Awards Administrator at the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Bank accounts

In order to receive your allowances, you will need to open a UK bank account. You may be able to open a sterling bank account in your home country prior to departure with a bank such as HSBC or Barclays, which have many branches in the UK. If this is not possible, you should open a bank account as soon as possible after arriving in the UK.

For Scholars and Fellows based in London, the British Council has an understanding with HSBC bank. Once you have arrived in the UK, if you wish to open an account with HSBC, you will need to complete a banking request form and either e-mail this or take it in person to one of the designated HSBC branches. For full information and a copy of the form, please contact your British Council Award Administrator.

When the British Council has received your bank account details, your allowances will be paid into this account. Bank account details must be submitted to the British Council in writing, and should include sort code, account number, the name of the account holder, and your signature. Please note that the British Council cannot accept account details provided in a name other than your own. Please note that both for audit purposes, and to protect the security of your account, bank details cannot be accepted by telephone, fax or e-mail.

It is most important that you inform your British Council Award Administrator about any changes to your account details. If you decide to change your bank account you must provide the new details to your British Council Award Administrator in writing as soon as possible. You must keep your old account open until your British Council Award Administrator confirms that the new account details have been received and processed. If you do not keep your old account open this may lead to a delay in you receiving any allowances paid during this period.

Professional Fellows – it is unlikely that you will be able to open a UK bank account owing to the short period you will be in the UK. In many cases it will be possible for payment to be made through your host institution. **Your British Council Award Administrator or British Council officer in your home country will inform you as to how your payments can be received.** Please ensure that on arrival in the UK you bring with you enough funds to cover any emergencies. A sum of around £150 should be sufficient for your circumstances.

Maintenance allowance

Maintenance allowance will be paid from the date given in your letter of award, or from the date on which you arrive, if later. The maintenance allowance ceases on the termination of your award, or the date on which you leave the United Kingdom, whichever is earlier.

You will receive a monthly maintenance allowance (called a stipend), which is calculated to cover your basic expenses only, such as accommodation, meals, personal expenses, daily travel and an element for books. This will be higher where your place of study is at an institution within the London metropolitan area as indicated in the Commission's Notification of Award. You will receive information on the allowances applicable to your award from your British Council Award Administrator when he or she sends you an initial letter. Information on any changes to allowance rates will be provided by your British Council Award Administrator as and when any changes occur.

Scholars – your stipend allowance will be the same whether you are studying for a diploma, a degree or, occasionally, for non-degree study.

Dates of payment

All regular monthly allowances will normally be paid into your bank account in advance, by the first day of each month. Although this often reaches your account a few days earlier, you are advised to arrange for all direct debits to be paid in the first week of the month. Please note that allowances cannot be paid before the due date and that after the initial payment they will be made automatically without further notification from the British Council.

Payment of allowances is initiated five working days before it clears to your bank account. If you change your bank account you should notify your British Council Award Administrator well in advance of due payments.

Please note that your final month's stipend will be suspended and will not be released until you have made contact with your British Council Award Administrator to discuss departure arrangements.

Arrival allowance

Arrival allowance covers expenses incurred on your arrival in the United Kingdom, e.g. travel from the arrival airport to the nearest city, hotel bills and meals. This also includes an element for warm clothing where applicable.

If you are already in the United Kingdom when your award is confirmed, and you do not return home before your award commences, you will not be eligible to receive an arrival allowance. However, relocation expenses may be paid if your award is tenable in a different part of the UK.

Study travel grants

If you are seeking help with the expenses of study travel you should apply to the Association of Commonwealth Universities, normally in advance, for approval of a study travel grant. Study travel claim forms will be enclosed with the Welcome Pack sent to you from the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

The sum applied for should take account of travel, conference fees, accommodation and any other expenses. The amount available to you will be stated in your Notification of Award.

Your ACU Awards Administrator will assess and authorise the sum payable, and will keep a record of your expenditure over the duration of your award.

A study travel grant cannot be paid in respect of travel to be undertaken following the expiry of your award, even if you are a Scholar and a deferment of payment of homeward fare has been agreed. Claims should be submitted promptly and during the tenure of your award.

Approval of fees

Invoices for approved fees or grants will be sent by the university, college or host institution to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission at the Association of Commonwealth Universities (for approval before payment by the British Council). If you receive a request for these fees yourself, you should forward originals of the invoice to your Awards Administrator at the ACU.

Scholars – approved fees will normally include fees for tuition, examination, use of a laboratory, and compulsory subscriptions to a university union or comparable body. You must yourself pay the subscriptions to any university or college clubs or societies that you join, including the Oxford and Cambridge Union Societies. Fees for accommodation or maintenance are your own responsibility.

Academic Fellows – the Commission pays a set support grant in respect of its Fellowship holders to host institutions. This is non-negotiable.

Professional Fellows – the Commission pays a fixed grant to the host organisation, which is non-negotiable. Additional fees, e.g. for short courses, may be negotiated with the Commission by the host organisation, prior to your award being confirmed.

Information for Medical Scholars and Fellows

Medical (or dental) registration and insurance are required by those actively involved in the care of patients. Your Notification of Award states whether registration is necessary and, if so, encloses information on the procedure and documentation required to obtain it. The Commission will be responsible for the cost of the appropriate registration and insurance in these cases.

If registration becomes necessary after the commencement of your award, you should consult your ACU Awards Administrator; fees will be paid by the Commission only if agreed in advance on the recommendation of your supervisor.

Personal computer loan

An advance of monthly stipend can be given in certain circumstances in order for you to purchase a personal computer. You should contact your British Council Award Administrator who will send you a computer loan form, which you will need to complete and return. Such advances depend on individual circumstances and are granted at the discretion of the British Council.

Scholars – before applying for a computer loan please check your tenure dates. If your award has not been extended to its maximum tenure date the loan repayments must be made by the initial tenure date.

Student discount travel

You are entitled to reimbursement for either a Young Person's Railcard or student coach card that entitles you to discounted travel. If you are a Scholar you can claim a reimbursement for each academic year of your award. Reimbursement will be made on production of receipts to your British Council Award Administrator.

Please note that no reimbursement can be made for season tickets or any other local travel passes, as day to day travel is included within stipend rates.

Further information for Scholars

Allowances relating to accompanying family

If your award is for 18 months or more you may be eligible to claim spouse and child allowances. It should be noted that these allowances are intended only as a contribution towards the cost of maintaining your family in the UK. The true costs are likely to be considerably higher, and you should bear this in mind when making decisions about bringing your family to the UK. The Commission assumes that if you are accompanied by your spouse and children, it is your spouse who will be primarily responsible for child care. If this is not the case you should contact your host organisation or institution as early as possible to determine what child care facilities may be available.

The spouse and child allowances are paid only from the date of arrival of the spouse or civil partner, and/or children in the United Kingdom. Neither spouse allowance nor child allowance will be paid if you are in receipt of a grant or allowances for the support of a spouse or family from another source. If you receive payment of spouse allowance or child allowance for any period exceeding 12 months, you will not be eligible for a mid-term visit home.

Please note that proof may be required at any time during the tenure of your award that family members are still remaining in the UK.

If you arrive before your family, and are eligible for family allowances, you can claim the cost of a return journey, by public transport, between your place of study and the airport so that you can meet your family when they reach the United Kingdom for the first time; this is paid for your travel expenses only, not your family's, and may be claimed only once during the award. Proof of travel should be sent to your British Council Award Administrator for reimbursement.

Spouse allowance

Spouse allowance is payable only in respect of a legally recognised marriage or civil partnership. Spouse allowance will be paid only when you and your spouse are residing together at the same address in the United Kingdom for a continuous period of at least three months. It is not payable if your spouse is also in receipt of a Scholarship, nor if your spouse is an EU national.

In order to claim spouse allowance, you will need to send a copy of your valid marriage/ civil partnership certificate (with certified translation in English where necessary) along with copies of your spouse's passport pages showing his or her photograph, entry stamp and leave to remain stamp to your British Council Award Administrator.

It is important to notify your British Council Award Administrator **in advance** of any expected change in your family circumstances, e.g. arrival or departure of your spouse, or marriage in the United Kingdom, as these will affect your entitlement.

Child allowance

It is important that you immediately notify your British Council Award Administrator of any change in the number of children who qualify for child allowance.

Award holders accompanied by children and spouse

If your award exceeds 18 months and you are accompanied by your spouse and children, child allowance is paid for the first, second and third child under the age of 16 years provided that they are residing with you for a continuous period of at least three months. The allowance will continue for children between the ages of 16 and 18 who remain in full-time education in the UK during the tenure of your award. In all cases proof of arrival and/or birth will be required (passport details and birth certificates or certified translations) before allowances can be paid. To continue claiming the allowance for children between the ages of 16 and 18, documentary evidence that they are still in full-time education will be required.

Award holders accompanied by children but not accompanied by another adult

Irrespective of the length of your award, if you are widowed, divorced or a single unaccompanied parent you will receive child allowance in respect of up to three of your accompanying children. Your children must be residing with you for a continuous period of at least three months, and if they are between the ages of 16 and 18, they must be enrolled in full-time education.

Documentary evidence must be provided as above. If any children join you at a later date or are born in the UK, proof of arrival/birth will be required, before child allowances can be paid.

Thesis grant

Thesis grants will be payable in instalments as follows:

£170 first year (or single-year awards)

£50 second year

£241 third year*

*subject to annual revision

You should see your Notification of Award for confirmation of the payments in your case.

No claims for thesis expenses beyond these amounts will be entertained. The payments will be made automatically in March or April of each year to your bank account. You will be notified of the payment by your British Council Award Administrator.

Retention of lodging allowance

If you undertake a Commission-funded mid-term visit you can claim an allowance towards your rent during the period you are away, up to a maximum of 28 days. This will be limited to the actual costs incurred, or a pre-determined daily rate, whichever is the lesser amount. Claims, supported by receipted bills and/or rental agreements where appropriate, must be submitted to your British Council Award Administrator within three months of your return to the UK. For further information on mid-term visits please see page 30.

Retention of lodging allowance cannot be paid during periods of study travel or fieldwork.

Further information for Fellows

Child allowance

If you are widowed, divorced or a single unaccompanied parent you will be eligible to receive child allowances for children under the age of 16 who accompany you to the UK and are residing with you for a continuous period of at least three months.

Child allowances can be paid for children between the ages of 16 and 18 who are enrolled in full-time education for the duration of your Fellowship. Documentary evidence that they are in full-time education will be required.

It is important that you immediately notify your British Council Award Administrator of any change in the number of your children who qualify for this allowance. In order to claim child allowance you will need to provide a copy of passport details plus a birth certificate or certified translation. **The allowance represents only a small part of the cost of maintaining children in the United Kingdom.**

If child allowance is paid by the British Council, it cannot be claimed from any other agency.

Academic Fellows

Report allowance

You will be paid, on arrival, a non-accountable grant of £100 to help with the cost of preparing reports and other written work.

Studies

You must observe the regulations of the institution or organisation in which you are placed. The Commission supports only full-time study.

Residence

You are expected to reside in the UK throughout the tenure of your award. The only departures from this rule are where you are undertaking study travel or holiday travel abroad, or for Doctoral Scholars where you are undertaking approved fieldwork or a mid-term visit. Please see the relevant paragraphs for further information on these.

Employment

You may not serve on the staff of the official representative of your country in the United Kingdom.

Fellows – you may not normally undertake any paid employment within universities or elsewhere in the UK during the tenure of your Fellowship.

Scholars – the Commission expects you to study full-time during the tenure of your award. The only regular departure from this rule that the Commission will readily approve is if you are employed in a role relevant to your studies for not more than six hours a week at the current approved rates. Application for such consent should be made to the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Because honorary clinical appointments generally provide adequate clinical experience, the Commission does not normally authorise Scholars in the field of medicine to take paid appointments, including locums, in the National Health Service. However, where this may be regarded as an integral part of your training, the Commission is willing to consider suspending your Scholarship for the appropriate period (usually not exceeding six months). If paid internship is a compulsory part of a course (i.e. MSc) then stipend will be suspended.

If your spouse is given leave to enter or remain in the UK for 12 months or more, he or she will be legally entitled to work without applying for permission, otherwise he or she is not allowed to obtain paid employment.

If you think there are exceptional academic circumstances in your case, you should write for prior approval to your ACU Awards Administrator. You should not take employment that is not permitted by your entry visa.

Reports of progress

Fellows – you will be required to submit to the Association of Commonwealth Universities a report on your work at the end of your Fellowship. Fellows in the field of clinical medicine may be required to make arrangements to visit the Medical Awards Administrator in London

Scholars – you will be required to submit to your ACU Awards Administrator, at the end of your first term and at the end of each academic year in duplicate, a report on your work. Report forms are sent to you for this purpose. Your supervisor or tutor will be required to report on your progress at the end of your first term (Doctoral Scholars only) and at the end of the academic year; report forms will be sent to your supervisor/ tutor for this purpose.

Duration and termination of award

Your award will commence on the date stated on your Notification of Award or on the date, if later, of your arrival in the UK. Your award may be terminated at any time for reasons of unsatisfactory conduct, progress or attendance, or of ill health.

If you have any concerns about your study or delays to your study for any reason this must be reported to your ACU Administrator as soon as possible. This will help your ACU Administrator to assist you as appropriate at the time.

Scholars – your award will continue for the initial period specified on your Notification of Award or until the date, if earlier, when you complete or discontinue your studies. When the award exceeds one year in tenure, its continuation from one year to the next is conditional on positive recommendation by your supervisor.

Fellows – your Fellowship will last for the period specified in your Notification of Award or until the date on which you complete your studies/programme, if earlier, subject to your compliance with the terms of the award. Fellowships cannot be extended under any circumstances.

Further information for Scholars

Renewals and extensions of Scholarships

If you hold a Scholarship for a taught course leading to a university qualification your award will normally be offered for the full duration of the course as specified by the academic institution. Awards for research are offered for one or two years in the first instance. Your Notification of Award will tell you the initial dates of your award, whether you are entitled to apply for an extension and the grounds on which you may do so. It is a principle of the award scheme that Scholarships are normally given for the completion of only one course of study or research and that, in any case, they are subject to a limit of 36 months.

If your award is initially tenable for more than 15 months, you should apply for an extension 12 to 14 months after the start. If your award is initially tenable for 15 months or less, you should apply for an extension six or seven months after the start of your award.

If, at the proper time of application, you have not yet met the conditions for extension, you should still submit your application and say when you hope to meet the conditions.

In order to apply for your Scholarship to be extended to its maximum tenure you will need to send the following to your ACU Awards Administrator:

- a written request from yourself
- a letter from your institution confirming you have upgraded from MPhil to DPhil/PhD status
- a letter of support for the extension from your supervisor.

Your supervisor will be consulted before any extension is approved.

It is your responsibility to apply for an extension and to do so in good time. Failure to do so may delay the extension of your award at the appropriate time and will result in the temporary suspension of payment of your stipend and other allowances.

Subject to the specific terms stated in your Notification of Award, a Scholarship extended to 36 months for a United Kingdom qualification will end after 36 months or on completion, if earlier, of the academic requirements for the qualification approved by the Commission; the date of completion is normally after the final examination written or oral (provided that any oral examination takes place on the earliest reasonable date after the written examination or the submission of the thesis). If you are required to wait for an oral examination after submitting your thesis, further stipend and allowances (if you were in receipt of them and providing your family are still in the UK) of up to one month may be made available. It is therefore essential that you inform your ACU Awards Administrator, as soon as you submit your thesis, of the date of any oral examination as soon as it has been arranged and check the specific terms of your Notification of Award.

If you need to apply for an extension of your leave to remain, you should apply, using form FLR(s) obtainable from the UK Border Agency website to:

UK Border Agency
Leave to Remain – FLR(S)
PO Box 495
Durham DH99 1WR

You should send your FLR(S) form at least four weeks before your leave to enter or remain in the UK runs out. Your British Council Award Administrator can provide you with a letter to support this application. Please note that your British Council Administrator can authorise the letter only to your current award or deferment date.

Please note that under the new visa regulations introduced by the UK government the requirements for applying for leave to remain have altered and you must satisfy the points-based requirements. Please check these details ahead of time to be sure you can satisfy the regulations.

Further details and the application forms can be found at the UK Border Agency website: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk.

Council Tax

The Council Tax is an annual charge for the services provided by local councils (authorities). This is based on the value of dwellings.

If you are a tenant in a privately rented property, please ensure that the local authority issue any Council Tax demands in your name as reimbursement will not be possible otherwise. It is fine if the bill is issued in the joint names of you and your spouse if they are accompanying you.

For reimbursement of Council Tax, please send a copy of the annual bill, together with appropriate receipts, promptly to your British Council Award Administrator. Please note that before reimbursement can be claimed, the Council Tax must, in the first instance, be paid by you. Payment can be made either in one or two lump sums, or by monthly instalments. Please contact the local authority for information on payment options. Please also note that paid bills should be presented for reimbursement within the same financial year, i.e. by the last working day in March.

If you pay the Council Tax as part of your rent, please contact your British Council Award Administrator for a Council Tax information form, which you will need to complete and return along with a copy of the Council Tax bill for the property and copies of your rent receipts for the relevant months.

For further information on Council Tax please look at the UKCISA guidance note: www.ukcosa.org.uk/student/information_sheets.php#council_tax.

Scholars – if you are a Scholar living in university halls of residence, a hostel owned by a charity or a home shared with other full-time students or with their family, then you should not have to pay Council Tax.

If you receive a demand for Council Tax and you are not living in student accommodation, you should obtain a Certificate of Student Status from your institution, which may entitle you to exemption or a reduction.

Professional Fellows – if you are required to pay Council Tax, reimbursement for this will be made with the final payment of your allowances. You must send in any receipts for Council Tax as soon as possible to ensure reimbursement.

Health and medical services

National Health Service (NHS)

You will receive emergency medical attention similar to that which a United Kingdom resident would receive under the NHS. Your spouse and children under the age of 16, if they are residing with you, are entitled to make use of emergency NHS facilities in the same way as you are.

Please check the NHS website (www.nhs.uk) for further information.

NHS regulations may vary slightly in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. You are advised to check the relevant website:

Scotland www.show.scot.nhs.uk

Wales www.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland www.hscni.net

Professional Fellows – you may try to register with an NHS doctor; however, GPs have the discretion to accept or refuse a patient on to their lists. Therefore, it is extremely difficult for Fellows on a three-month award to register with a GP. If you are attached to a university there should be a student health service that you may want to use. The NHS hospitals and walk-in centres will provide you with emergency health treatment in all circumstances.

Academic Fellows – you may try to register with an NHS doctor; however, GPs have the discretion to accept or refuse a patient on to their lists. Some Academic Fellows may be able to register with an NHS doctor but this can often depend on where you are living and when you try to register, e.g. if you try to register a month or so after your arrival in the UK many GP surgeries will not register people who will be here for less than six months. If you are attached to a university there should be a student health service that you may want to use. The NHS hospitals and walk-in centres will provide you with emergency health treatment in all circumstances.

Scholars – one of the first things you should do at your place of study is to register with a doctor. Please ensure you choose an NHS doctor. At many universities there is a student health service on campus.

The NHS runs a 24-hour, nurse-led telephone advice service free of charge called NHS Direct. It provides information on diagnosis and treatment of common conditions. NHS Direct can be contacted on 0845 4647, or you can visit the website (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

You are eligible to be given medicines on the same basis as United Kingdom residents. This means that you will have to pay a sum (around £6.85 per item) towards the cost of prescription medicines, which you must meet from your stipend. There is no charge for prescriptions if you are based in Wales.

Lists of doctors and dentists providing services under the NHS are available at public libraries or from the NHS website. In Northern Ireland, the Health Service regulations vary slightly and you should consult the British Council office in Belfast for advice. The rules governing access to the British National Health Service are complicated and are not the same for everyone. If you have any queries you can contact your British Council Award Administrator or your university student services centre where applicable.

You will always be entitled to emergency treatment. If your NHS doctor refers you to a NHS hospital for consultation for a condition that has arisen during your stay in the United Kingdom, you should not be asked to pay any charges, other than for prescriptions. The cost of private consultation and treatment will not be covered by the Commission. This applies also to any treatment or hospitalisation that you decide to have done privately in order to have the operation or treatment carried out more quickly than can be arranged under the NHS.

Dental and optical treatment

If you are registered with a NHS doctor, you are entitled to the services of a NHS dentist, although you will have to make a contribution, as dental treatment is never free. You may claim, on production of receipts, certain costs of emergency dental treatment and optician's costs of eye tests and basic spectacles up to a predetermined maximum annual allowance.

You are advised to obtain an estimate of costs and to check with your British Council Award Administrator exactly what can be reimbursed. The assessment of individual claims is at the discretion of the Commission.

Emergency dental and optical expenses can be reimbursed only if treatment is carried out in the United Kingdom. Any claims for these expenses, which are submitted towards the end of your award, may not be reimbursed if the treatment is unlikely to benefit the period of study itself.

Notification of illness

If you fall ill, please ensure that both your ACU and British Council Award Administrators are informed as soon as possible.

Scholars – the Commission will consider an extension of doctoral awards on grounds of ill-health if any award holder is off work because of illness lasting more than four weeks. If this occurs, you must immediately inform your ACU Awards Administrator (either by e-mail or letter) of the date of onset of the illness. The maximum duration of an extension on grounds of ill-health during an award is 13 weeks.

Payments while in hospital

If you are admitted to hospital you will receive maintenance allowance in full for the first 14 days. After that your maintenance allowance will cease and you will receive a special daily allowance for incidental expenses; retention of lodging allowance, if applicable; and marriage and child allowances, if applicable. If it is necessary for you to stay in hospital for more than 28 days, your allowances will be reviewed.

Doctoral Scholars

Maternity leave

You may have 17 weeks' paid maternity leave and up to a further 35 weeks' unpaid leave (subject to the agreement of your university). The maternity leave must start no earlier than 11 weeks before the expected date of delivery and no later than the date the baby is born. Before any maternity leave can be confirmed, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission must be notified in writing **by the 26th week of pregnancy of:**

- the expected date of delivery – this must be a written confirmation from your general practitioner
- the date you propose to start your maternity leave
- the amount of unpaid leave you propose to take; the unpaid leave must immediately follow the paid leave.

Paternity leave

You may have two consecutive weeks of paid paternity leave. The paternity leave must be taken either during the last 11 weeks of the pregnancy of your partner, or within 13 weeks of the birth of the baby.

More comprehensive information regarding maternity/paternity leave and notification of illness can be obtained from your ACU Administrator.

Travel abroad

Study travel or holiday travel overseas

If you are planning to travel overseas during your award we strongly recommend that you take out adequate insurance to cover your possessions, accidents and illness.

Professional Fellows – your award is for a Fellowship in the United Kingdom and it is expected that your time will be spent here, except if your programme has an element of overseas travel (e.g. attendance at a conference), which has been previously approved by the ACU, and which the study travel grant may be used towards.

If you wish to be absent from the UK for reasons not involved with your programme, such visits will be at your own expense and your stipend will be suspended unless there are special circumstances approved by the ACU.

The ACU and the British Council must be informed in advance about all absences from the UK.

Academic Fellows – your award is for a Fellowship in the United Kingdom and it is expected that your time will be spent here, except if your programme has an element of overseas travel, for example, attendance at a conference, which has been previously approved by the ACU, and which the study travel grant may be used towards.

You may spend up to two weeks abroad at your own expense during the tenure of the award. No permission is required for absence abroad within this limit but it is important that you notify in advance both your ACU Awards Administrator and your British Council Award Administrator, leaving an address at which you can be reached in an emergency.

You should ensure that your passport and residence permit are valid for a reasonable period from your expected date of return and that your Notification of Award is available to be shown, if required, on returning to the UK.

You cannot take the two weeks as leave at the end of your award and if you wish to do so your payments will be terminated.

If for any reason you wish to be absent from the United Kingdom for longer than the approved period, you must seek prior approval from your ACU Awards Administrator. It is not likely to be granted except for short absences made necessary by special circumstances. In the case of a long absence, the award and all payments under it will normally be suspended or terminated.

Scholars – your award is for study in the UK and it is expected that the major part of your time will be spent in the UK. If your Scholarship is for 18 months or more, and you wish to travel outside the UK at your own expense, you may do so for a period not exceeding four weeks during any one year. If your award is for one academic year you may spend up to two weeks abroad at your own expense. Such travel should normally take place during the university vacation and must be at a time approved by your supervisor/head of department in the UK. Permission for overseas travel should always be sought from your tutor during term time if you are following a taught course, however short the trip.

No permission is required for absence abroad within this limit, but it is important that you should notify both your ACU Awards Administrator and your British Council Award Administrator of each proposed visit, in advance, leaving an address at which you can be reached in an emergency. You should ensure that your passport and residence permit are valid for a reasonable period from your expected date of return and that your Notification of Award is available for production, if required, on returning to the UK.

If for any reason you wish to be absent from the UK for longer than the approved period, you must seek prior approval from the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

This is not likely to be granted except for short absences made necessary by special circumstances. Without such approval the award and all payments under it (including fees) may be suspended.

If your family leaves the UK for the purpose of a vacation overseas, marriage and child allowance will cease for the duration of their absence. In such circumstances you must inform your British Council Award Administrator in advance of one month or more as this will affect your entitlement to family allowances. If you cannot contact your British Council Administrator in advance you must contact him or her as soon as reasonably possible.

Fieldwork

Doctoral Scholars – your supervisor must make a positive declaration that fieldwork is essential to your plan of study. Approval must be obtained from the Commission via your ACU Awards Administrator, either in principle before the Scholarship is formally offered, or within three months of your arrival in the UK. The Commission, via your ACU Awards Administrator, must approve the actual fieldwork timing before any arrangements or flights can be confirmed.

- standard fieldwork provision will be to maintain stipend (monthly maintenance allowance) for a period of up to six months, which will continue to be paid into your UK bank account on a monthly basis; please note that all requests for advances of stipend will be considered but are not automatically approved
- beyond six months, exceptional fieldwork provision will be to maintain stipend at a lower fieldwork rate, this reduced rate is one third of the standard rate you receive, for a specified period agreed in advance by the Commission; all fieldwork requests exceeding six months should be discussed in detail with your ACU Awards Administrator.

If your family remains in the United Kingdom while you are away on fieldwork, marriage and child allowances will be maintained in addition to stipend. If stipend is suspended, marriage and child allowances cannot be paid even if your family remains in the UK. Marriage and child allowances cannot be paid when your family is not in the UK. If you have an entitlement to a mid-term visit home, you will forfeit this if you are granted a return passage for fieldwork to your home country.

Any period of fieldwork during which you draw stipend, or a reduced rate stipend, will count against the 36 months' tenure of your Scholarship.

If your stipend is suspended during fieldwork and you require an equivalent period added to the end of your award to enable you to complete your studies, you must apply to your ACU Awards Administrator.

Master's Scholars – your supervisor/tutor must confirm that fieldwork (as part of your dissertation) will give added value to your degree. The Commission via your ACU Awards Administrator must approve the actual fieldwork timing:

- standard fieldwork provision will be to maintain stipend (monthly maintenance allowance) for a period of up to two months, which will continue to be paid into your UK bank account on a monthly basis; please note that stipend cannot be paid during the final month of your award if you go home early to do fieldwork, as this month is taken as being for writing-up purposes
- the Commission will allow you to take your homeward airfare to go home on fieldwork as long as your institution has given approval for you to submit your dissertation from your home country; please note that advances of stipend are not automatically approved. For further details on homeward airfares, please see page 33.

The Commission will expect other costs to be met from the tuition fee paid to the university. It is essential that you keep the ACU informed of any changes in fieldwork timing and that you confirm your return to the UK in writing.

Please note that any excess baggage costs incurred when returning from fieldwork cannot be reimbursed.

Mid-term visit

If you are on a three-year award, and you have received written confirmation from the ACU that your award has been extended for a third year of study, you are eligible for a paid mid-term visit to your home country. This is provided you have not claimed (or do not intend to claim) spouse or child allowances for more than 12 months during your award. If you have received a return fare to your home country for fieldwork, you are not entitled to a fare-paid mid-term visit. The visit should normally take place between the 15th and 28th month of your three-year award. Requests for visits towards the end of your award will be refused.

Applications for approval of a mid-term visit must be submitted to your ACU Awards Administrator on a copy of the mid-term visit form. The form will be enclosed within the Welcome Pack you receive from the ACU. You should state the preferred dates of your outward and return journeys. The mid-term visit shall be for a period not exceeding four weeks and the form must be countersigned by your supervisor.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities will assess and, if applicable under the terms of your award, authorise the visit.

You should then contact your British Council Award Administrator to make your travel arrangements.

You should give at least eight weeks' notice of your proposed departure (12 weeks if you are planning to depart during the Christmas period). If you wish to arrange your own travel you should still complete an application, indicating your preference on the form. Your British Council Award Administrator will provide a fare quotation provided that your application is received at least eight weeks prior to departure. Remember to ensure that your passport and residence permit are valid after your return, and that your award documentation is available for production, if required, on returning to the UK.

Your British Council Award Administrator will book a return ticket to your home country using the most economical available airline to your nearest major airport and reimburse your train fare from your place of study. It is not possible to provide open-dated return air tickets, to arrange stop-overs or to provide for mid-term visits to a country other than your home country.

No excess baggage allowances will be paid, and no subsistence costs can be provided to take account of flight schedules or delays on the journey.

Your stipend will cease from the day you leave the UK for your mid-term visit home until the day you return. However, retention of lodging allowance can be paid for up to 28 days towards the cost of retained accommodation. This allowance is paid to a predetermined maximum amount. Please contact your British Council Award Administrator for the current amount reimbursable. You will need to submit documentation to show how much rent you are paying per month if you wish to receive the retention of lodging allowance in advance of your mid-term visit. If you are claiming retention of lodging allowance after your return, you will need to submit documentation to show you paid rent during the period you were out of the UK.

If required to enable you to complete your studies, your award tenure will be extended by the equivalent period of your mid-term visit. You must apply to your ACU Awards Administrator.

Eligibility for an additional fare for Scholars on a split-site award

In order to qualify for air fare to go home between periods of award, you will need to spend a minimum of six months at your home institution and be on award for a minimum of three months before leaving the UK. Qualification for the fare must be agreed on an individual basis with your ACU Administrator. Both your UK and home supervisor need also to support your timetable/study plan. The period at home should generally not be more than 12 months.

Homeward travel

Completion of tenure

The purpose of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan is to equip Scholars to serve in their own countries, and to help Fellows benefit the institutions employing them in their home countries. You are reminded of your undertaking to return to your own country as soon as possible at the end of your award tenure. As such, you are expected to have departed the UK no longer than one month after the completion of your Commonwealth Award. Failure to do so may result in your airfare entitlement being withdrawn.

Please note that you cannot remain in the UK to attend graduation ceremonies that take place more than one month after the end of your award tenure.

The ACU, British Council and your institutions or organisations must be informed of your departure date in good time so that the correct allowances are paid.

Please note that any stipend and family allowances will cease on the termination of your award, or on the date on which you leave the UK, whichever is earlier.

Travel arrangements

The expenses payable by the British Council are based on the cost of direct travel home by air. The entitlements are as follows:

Fares

- standard-class train or coach fare where appropriate
- an economy air fare on an approved carrier.

Please note that no reimbursement will be made for taxi, tube or local bus fares.

Luggage expenses when travelling by air

A fixed rate non-accountable allowance will be paid for accompanied excess baggage. This will allow you to send considerably more baggage by air freight or as unaccompanied personal effects (this excess baggage rate is non-negotiable).

For Scholars and Fellows who did not come to the UK on a return ticket, your British Council Award Administrator will book your air passage home, using the most economic and practical route possible, in accordance with airline schedules. Please note that the selection of airline is made by the British Council's travel agent. If you wish to specify a particular airline, you may be asked to pay the difference in the cost of the ticket. Deviations from the approved route are seldom agreed and are subject to limitations; any extra cost must be paid by you. Please give your British Council Award Administrator a minimum of eight weeks' notice prior to your departure. This ensures that a suitable flight can be arranged for you and any allowances owing can be paid prior to departure.

Please note that the cost of travel for your dependants is your own responsibility; the British Council can arrange for your flight reimbursement only.

If you wish to arrange your own travel home, please contact the British Council for a fare quotation at least eight weeks before your proposed departure date. Reimbursement for your airline ticket can only be made up to the maximum fare quotation given by the British Council's travel agent. Please note that the British Council cannot reimburse on return tickets so you must purchase a single airfare home. Not purchasing a single airfare may result in no reimbursement being offered to you for the airfare. In order to claim reimbursement for your homeward travel you must send copies of your receipts and tickets, or itinerary where it is an e-ticket to your British Council Administrator.

Master's Scholars – if you are undertaking Master's study, the airfare and excess baggage entitlements will be rolled up into a single allowance that will be paid approximately eight weeks prior to your award end date. Your British Council Award Administrator will write to you to inform you when the payment is made. You will then be expected to book your own homeward flight, and provide flight details to your British Council Award Administrator.

Please note that final stipend payments and the standard rail fare, where appropriate, will not be released until the British Council has received this information.

Contact after return home

At the end of your award you will be invited to become a member of the Commonwealth Scholars' Alumni Association. You should return the membership form, making sure you provide a contact home address, to your ACU Awards Administrator. You will receive the alumni magazine, Commonwealth Scholarship News, three times annually and will be given the opportunity to join the alumni professional networks and to participate in events in your home country.

See www.cscuk.org.uk/news.asp for further details or contact alumni@cscuk.org.uk.

The local British Council representative will also be glad to see you on your return and keep personal contact with you afterwards.

Scholars

Visa charges

If you need to extend your visa before the end of your award you will be able to claim the cost of a postal application fee for your own application only; payment of the charges relating to any dependants' application will be your responsibility. You will also be able to claim one reimbursement of a postal application fee to cover an agreed period of deferment. Any subsequent visa extension fees to cover any additional deferment periods are not reimbursable.

Please note that a valid deferment must be in place for the British Council to be able to provide a visa support letter.

Deferment of homeward travel

If your nominating authority (government or university) in your home country concurs, the Commission can consider allowing you to postpone your return home on academic grounds. If you are on a doctorate award, you may apply to defer your fare home (as long as you are still working for the degree for which your Scholarship was originally awarded). Permission to defer travel home will be granted only in exceptional circumstances to Scholars whose awards are for taught courses or clinical training programmes.

If you wish to apply for deferment you must write, before your award expires, to your ACU Awards Administrator saying why, and for how long, you need it. The ACU will need a supporting note from your supervisor. Permission to defer is not automatically granted.

Deferments will not be granted for you to undertake further studies beyond the scope of your award.

Deferments will not be granted for you to stay in the UK to attend graduation ceremonies if these ceremonies take place after your award expires.



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Published by the British Council/Design Department/Y008

The United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. A registered charity: 209131 (England and Wales) SC037733 (Scotland).