

PRESS RELEASE

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Universities welcome scholarships restoration

Commonwealth Scholarships will be available to citizens of all Commonwealth countries to study in the United Kingdom in 2009, thanks to a new partnership between the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and individual universities.

Although the scholarships for developing countries will continue to be supported by the Department for International Development, those for eight more developed countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Singapore, appeared to be in danger following a withdrawal of funding by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in March. The new arrangement, to be jointly funded between government and host universities, will ensure that at least sixteen doctoral scholarships will be available in 2009.

'I am delighted to announce that the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills will fund Commonwealth Scholarships from 2009, enabling the strongest PhD students from the developed Commonwealth countries to study in the UK,' said DIUS Minister of State David Lammy. 'I know from experience that these scholarships are important for helping our universities remain competitive in attracting the best international research talent, ensuring the continued excellence of UK higher education.'

Professor John Tarrant, Secretary General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities which helped to broker the new arrangement, agreed that the new scholarships would be seen throughout the Commonwealth as an indication of Britain's continuing commitment to quality in higher education. In a statement issued today, Universities UK, which has expressed concern about the wider cuts to scholarship budgets imposed by the FCO, also welcomes the initiative as 'good news'. Chief Executive Diana Warwick commented that 'many scholarship students go on to be leaders in their field, and retain long links with the UK'.

Dr Heather Bell, Director of International Strategy at the University of Oxford, described the DIUS decision as 'an important step forward in preserving this excellent programme. Given scarce resources, we think the focus on doctorates is exactly the right one. It's at this level that the UK has the most important funding gap relative to its top US peers'.

Dr John Kirkland, Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, which will administer the awards, confirmed that all UK universities would be eligible to host the scholarships. 'Only a small number were approached initially, until it was clear that government were supportive, but we have now issued invitations to all,' he said. The Universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, Nottingham and Oxford are amongst those who have already confirmed their involvement.

Full details of the new scholarships, and the selection timetable, can be found on the Commission's website at www.cscuk.org.uk

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Notes to editors:

1. Commonwealth Scholarships were established by Commonwealth Education Ministers at their first conference in 1959. Since then, they have become one of the largest and most prestigious scholarship schemes in the world. Over 26,000 individuals have held awards, including almost 17,000 from the United Kingdom.
2. The UK's presence in the scheme is managed by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, a non-departmental public body established by Parliament in 1959.
3. Countries affected by the new initiative are Australia, the Bahamas, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Cyprus, Malta, New Zealand and Singapore. In each case, applicants should apply directly to an appointed national agency in the first instance. Details of the agencies can be found on the CSC website at www.cscuk.org.uk
4. Alumni of the scheme fully reflect its prestigious nature. Examples from the countries concerned include Germaine Greer (writer and broadcaster, Australia), Michael Cullen (Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand), Walter Woon (Attorney-General of Singapore), Kevin Lynch (Secretary of the Privy Council, Canada), and Mark Carney (Governor of the Bank of Canada). A list of alumni is available on request from the Commission.
5. Commonwealth Scholarships for developing country citizens to study in the UK will still be funded by the Department for International Development, which is increasing its support from £15.93 million to £17.43 million in 2009-2010.
6. The full text of the Universities UK statement regarding the scholarships can be found at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Newsroom
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