

COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Publication scheme under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Constitutional and legal governance

The *Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom* (CSCUK) is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) with responsibility for administering the United Kingdom's contribution to the international *Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan* (CSFP). The Commission was established by Act of Parliament in 1959. See www.cscuk.org.uk/about.asp

The CSFP is a Commonwealth-wide programme through which individuals can benefit from the educational resources of other member states. The Plan is not coordinated by any central body, and it is for each country to determine how many places it will offer and under what conditions. The role of CSCUK, therefore, is:

- a) to determine, within the finance available and guidance provided by funding government departments, the nature of awards to be offered by the United Kingdom, to select recipients for such awards, and to provide appropriate support for them whilst in the United Kingdom
- b) when asked by other Commonwealth agencies, to advertise awards available to UK citizens under the Plan, and nominate appropriate candidates for consideration

The Commission comprises up to 14 individual members and a Chair, who are selected in accordance with the Nolan procedures for appointments to public bodies. Funding for the Commission's work is provided by the Department for International Development (DFID, which is the lead department responsible for the Commission), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Information regarding the wider publication scheme of DFID can be obtained via their website at www.dfid.gov.uk.

Organisational information

The Commission's secretariat, including the administration of awards selection by the Commission and monitoring of award holders' progress, is undertaken by the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Other functions, including the student welfare and financial administration services for award holders in the United Kingdom, are carried out by the British Council. In both cases, the services to be provided and required performance targets are set out in a memorandum of understanding with DFID.

Locations and contacts

Responsibility for this publication scheme on behalf of the Commission rests with the officers responsible for the scheme:

Dr John Kirkland
Executive Secretary
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom
c/o The Association of Commonwealth Universities
Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF

Fax: +44 (0)207 387 2655
Email: john.kirkland@cscuk.org.uk

Responsibility for day-to-day publication issues rests with:

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Assistant Secretary
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20-24 Tavistock Square
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Fax: +44 (0)207 387 2655
Email: jonathan.jenkins@cscuk.org.uk

WHAT WE SPEND AND HOW WE SPEND IT

Financial information can be found published in our Annual Reports to the Secretary of State for International Development. These are published on our website at www.cscuk.org.uk/about/reports.asp

WHAT OUR PRIORITIES ARE AND HOW WE ARE DOING

Commission staff review the publicly available information on a quarterly basis, to ensure that this fully reflects the current situation. Policy towards the publication scheme is formally reviewed by the Commission annually through its Communications Committee.

Strategy and performance information

This is published as part of our Annual Report.

Assessments, inspections and reviews

The Commission publishes the results of its evaluation programme online at www.cscuk.org.uk/CSCEvaluationandMonitoringProgramme.asp

Further detail follows.

Classes of information published

In this publication scheme, the Commission is proactively publishing information of relevance to the public interest. This can be defined under the following classifications:

- The nature of awards offered and administered by the Commission
- Demographics of recipients
- Selection criteria
- Performance indicators and targets
- Financial statistics

More specifically, the classes of information routinely published under the scheme include the following:

- Details of the types of awards available in the United Kingdom, including eligibility and selection criteria, purpose and application details – updates as required.
- The terms under which award holders come to the UK, including financial provision and other requirements – updated annually.
- Details of awards available to UK citizens in other Commonwealth countries under the Plan, as notified to us by agencies in the countries concerned, together with application forms and deadline dates – updated as required.
- Details of selections made each year and award holders in the UK, classified by subject, country or origin and institution of tenure – updated annually.
- Names, subjects and institutions of those graduating as a result of Commission awards – updated annually.
- Statistics showing the success rates of students in gaining their qualifications within specified periods of time – updated annually.
- Financial statistics showing the proportion of expenditure devoted to student support, administration and other categories – updated annually.
- Details of performance targets agreed between DFID, the Commission, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and British Council, and the extent to which these have been met, together with results from an annual survey of award holders commenting on evaluating the operation of the scheme – updated annually.
- Agenda, minutes and supporting papers for meetings of the Commission, subject to the provisos below – available once the minutes of the meeting concerned have been formally ratified.
- Names and affiliations of Commission members, including a register of any interests relevant to the work of the Commission – updated as required.

It is emphasised that, in addition to the formal categories outlined above, it is the policy of the Commission to proactively publish additional information concerning current policies, in order to increase public understanding of its work and operations. Examples include major policy documents, press releases and details of events staged. Where information is required that is not included in the above categories, you are encouraged to contact the Commission using the procedure described below.

Manner of publication

The main channel of publication for the classes of information described above is the Commission website, which can be accessed at www.cscuk.org.uk

Several of the categories of information listed are published in the Commission's Annual Report, which is laid before Parliament each year by the Secretary of State for International Development. The last nine reports can be accessed from the website, and hard copies of the

last two reports are available on request from the Commission address. Copies of all Annual Reports since 1960 are available for inspection, by arrangement, at the Commission offices.

Details of the financial and other arrangements for award holders in the United Kingdom are available in separate booklets, current editions of which are available from the Commission.

Minutes of Commission meetings are available for inspection, on request, at the Commission offices. Full minutes are available from the inception of the Commission in 1959; however there may be cases in which certain items of text are removed, for example, if they are considered to hold personal data. In such cases, the Commission will give details of the exemption heading which it considers to apply.

Applying for information

Much of the information listed above is already available via our website and Annual Report. When requesting information, you may wish to consult these in the first instance. Please note that, if the information is already published, we are not obliged to provide you with your own copy. If you do place a request for any information, we will direct you to it.

If you are unable to find the information you are interested in through existing sources, then you may wish to request the information from us. The contact point is as follows:

Dr John Kirkland
Executive Secretary
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom
c/o The Association of Commonwealth Universities
Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF

Email: john.kirkland@cscuk.org.uk

You must make your request in writing – email is also acceptable. You may be asked to further define the scope of your request to help us identify the information you want. We will inform you if there is a fee applicable.

Under the Code of Practice and the FOI Act, we are obliged to respond to your request within 20 working days. If we are unable to do so, we will inform you of our reasons and work to reply substantively as soon as we can thereafter.

When we respond to your request, we will explain in a covering letter any exemptions that may apply to the relevant information, and what to do should you be unhappy with the reply.

Exemptions

The Act provides that certain information may be exempt from the right of access on certain grounds. These include (but are not limited to) cases where disclosure could prejudice international relations, any criminal investigations or procedures, national security, defence, commercial interests, law enforcement or personal information. In assessing requests for disclosure, the Commission will have regard to whether any of these apply to the information being requested.

Where requests for information are made to the Commission, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In particular, the Commission is mindful of its obligation not to publish information relating to the personal circumstances of individual applicants or award holders,

their academic progress, or decisions of the Commission relating thereto. In the event that information is not disclosed in response to your request, the Commission will give a reason for this decision, including the category of exemption that has been applied.

Charging policy

The current policy of the Commission is not to charge for information accessed via our website, single copies of our Annual Report, promotional leaflets, or other regular publications mentioned above, providing that these are for private use or study purposes. We would, however, reserve the right to charge for multiple copies, any more substantial documents produced from time to time, or for the cost of retrieving, assembling or copying information generated specifically in response to your request. In the event that any such charges are likely, we would inform you of this when responding to your enquiry.

Complaints procedure

Our aim is to provide an efficient service to the public in the UK. As with any organisation, however, things can go wrong. Please let us know as soon as possible of any problems. We undertake to respond quickly and to try to ensure that you and others do not need to complain again.

Under the terms of the FOI Act, you have the right to contact the Information Commissioner's Office if you are unhappy with our response to either your complaint or your original access request. The Information Commissioner's Office's details can found on their website at www.dataprotection.gov.uk or you can write to:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Copyright

Published materials are normally the copyright of the Commission. Our general policy, however, is to encourage the wider distribution and circulation of our published materials, providing that appropriate recognition is given. Those wishing to use materials in such ways should first contact the Executive Secretary to agree appropriate wording. Unless otherwise stated, no charge will be levied for such use.

13 July 2009

FURTHER INFORMATION

How the scheme was formulated

The present scheme has been formulated using the Model Publication Scheme issued by the Information Commissioner's Office; following advice from the Department for International Development, which was one of six authorities invited to pilot a publication scheme in 2001; and from discussions with other public bodies whose main concern is the award and administration of scholarships. It has also taken into account the nature of enquiries received by the Commission in the course of its normal activities.

The main indicators used have been designed with regard to the following:

- the need for those seeking assistance from the Commission to have fair and equal information about our awards and selection procedures
- the need to ensure accountability in the manner in which the Commission deploys its funds
- the need for effective performance indicators, through which the effectiveness of Commission policies can be judged
- the need for data to be consistent over time, so that the performance of the Commission can be seen in a historical context

Timetable for implementation

Although the Freedom of Information Act is now law, the spirit of open government promoted by the legislation was already being followed by government departments and NDBPs prior to January 2005; the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information mirrors many of the individual access rights contained in the FOI Act. In view of this, the Commission's publications policy has been operational since 30 November 2002.

Legal framework of this publication scheme

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 ('the Act') received Royal Assent in Parliament on 30 November 2000. It makes provision for the disclosure of information held by public authorities or by 'persons' providing services for those public authorities. Both the FOI Act and Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) are regulated by the Information Commissioner. The Act is being implemented in two stages: a) an individual's rights of access to information, and b) a publication scheme.

a) An individual's rights of access

From January 2005, any person has been able to make a request for information and, under the terms of the Act, is entitled to be told (in writing) whether the public authority holds the information. The public authority may be requested to disclose the information. The disclosure is not automatic, as the Act also contains certain conditions – 'exemptions' – against disclosure.

b) Publication scheme

Section 19 (1) of the Act provides that it shall be the duty of every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme, to publish information in accordance with its scheme and, from time to time, to review its publication scheme.

Section 19 (2) of the Act sets out the requirements for a publication scheme as follows:

A publication scheme must:

- a) specify classes of information that the public authority publishes or intends to publish;
- b) specify the manner in which information of each class is, or is intended to be, published; and
- c) specify whether the material is, or is intended to be, available to the public free of charge or on payment

Section 19 (3) states that 'in adopting or reviewing a publication scheme, a public authority shall have regard to the public interest in allowing public access to information held by the authority and in the publication of reasons for decisions made by the public authority'.