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REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PLAN 2006-2009

Results and recommendations from a survey of national nominating agencies

Executive summary

1. The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2009. Anticipating this, Ministers at 16CCEM proposed a series of measures both to mark the anniversary and to leave a permanent legacy for further expansion of the Plan.
2. This report demonstrates that these measures will start from a strong basis. The *Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows*, published in April 2009, confirms that over 26,000 individuals have benefited from awards, that the overwhelming majority have returned to their home countries, and that large numbers have reached the very top of their respective professions. A survey conducted amongst national agencies confirms the continuing standing of the scheme, and support for its expansion.¹ The annual numbers of awards have increased since the 2006 meeting, completing a decade of expansion which has reversed a period of decline in the late 1990s. The Plan is now more diverse than ever, reflecting implementation of the decisions of Education Ministers at their 2000 conference.
3. Some problems remain, however. Awards remain too focused on a limited number of host countries, and there is a need to reinforce the Commonwealth-wide nature of the scheme. Although the numbers of award holders are at historically high levels, they have not reached the target set by Ministers at 16CCEM. Continued attention is needed to ensure stronger leadership of the Plan, better communication between national agencies, better understanding of procedures, and awareness of administrative demands on agencies. Despite

¹ The survey and report was carried out by staff of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, in particular John Kirkland, James Ransom and Julie Stackhouse, between February and May 2009, with funding provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

continuing progress, the proportion of female award holders remains stubbornly below 50%.

4. This report makes a number of recommendations to address these issues. Most notable of these is that governments give serious consideration to making one-off contributions to the CSFP endowment fund appeal; proposed by Ministers in 2006 and being formally launched at 17CCEM, the fund has the potential to significantly expand opportunities for scholarships hosted by low and middle income Commonwealth countries. There are also proposals for stronger central coordination of, and contact between, national agencies, a suggestion for greater diversity in awards, and a request for further consideration of the use of electronic application procedures.
5. These proposals should be seen in the context of a scheme which has made very considerable progress over the past decade, and which remains one of the most substantial examples of Commonwealth collaboration. At 17CCEM, Ministers have an exceptional opportunity to set the Plan on course for still greater achievements in its second half century.

Introduction

6. The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) is about to mark its 50th anniversary, having been established at the first Commonwealth education conference in 1959. The Plan aimed to provide a practical manifestation of Commonwealth collaboration by enabling citizens to share the wide range of educational resources and experiences that existed in member countries. Since that time, other objectives have been introduced to the Plan by individual host countries, such as a desire to contribute to international development, public diplomacy or higher education objectives of participating countries. The basic aims and structures of the Plan, however, remain recognisable.
7. The Plan has several distinctive characteristics. Awards emphasise partnership between organisations in home and host countries. National governments, or their appointed agencies, help ensure that activity is linked to national priorities, and their role has historically led to a high proportion of award holders working in the public sector. Within these characteristics, the founders recognised that the Plan would need to change in order to reflect new priorities. Such diversity has been seen particularly over the past decade, with the introduction of distance learning, split-site, postdoctoral and professional awards and undergraduate visits, alongside the more conventional offer of postgraduate scholarships at Master's and doctoral level. Decisions on what to offer and the financing of awards remain the responsibility of host countries.

Historical development

8. In numerical terms, few programmes can claim to have directly benefited as many individuals as the CSFP. By the end of 2008, approximately 26,000 individuals had held awards, originating from every Commonwealth country. In

keeping with its commitment made at the 1959 conference, the United Kingdom has been the largest contributor, but Canada, India and New Zealand have also been consistent and regular contributors, and over 20 countries in total have hosted awards at some stage during the Plan's development. More recent evidence, described below, is now facilitating evaluation of the wider impact of awards, in terms of the future career progress of alumni and their role in wider society.

9. The historical development of the Plan can be categorised in three main phases. The first of these, from the start of the plan in 1959 until the early 1990s, can be regarded as a period of *growth and consolidation*. Numbers grew rapidly in the first decade of the Plan, and a revised target of 1,000 Scholars on award was met in 1967. That year also saw the largest number of countries to offer awards in a single year – 14. Although some developing countries expressed frustration that their awards did not receive the number of applications that they had hoped for – a factor generally attributed to lack of publicity – the range of countries offering awards was diverse, including countries in Africa and Asia as well as more conventional destinations. Although growth slowed in the 1970s, there was a further surge in activity during the first half of the following decade, partly in response to the decision of governments to impose full-cost overseas tuition fees. In 1984, the 9th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers set a new target level of 1,500 award holders in any year. This was reached in 1986, with a new high of 1,594, and an all-time record of 1,809 was set in 1993.
10. The 1990s, however, can generally be seen as a period of *decline* – both in number of awards and attention given to the Plan generally. The report to the Halifax CCEM, held in 2000, showed that by 1997 the number of new awards had declined to a new low of 400, whilst by 1999 the number of students on award had declined to 1,021, with only six countries hosting awards. These trends can be attributed to several factors: a reduction in donor confidence in the capacity of scholarships (and higher education in general) to make an impact on development; political factors affecting the ability of specific countries to offer awards, such as the suspension of Nigeria and departure of Hong Kong from the Commonwealth; the declining economic position of universities, particularly in Africa; withdrawal of Australia from the programme; and, more generally, a lack of central leadership for the Plan as a whole.
11. The past decade, by contrast, has been a period of gradual *renewal and increased diversity*, based initially on decisions taken by Ministers at their meetings in 2000 and 2003. The principle of diversity was extended not only to the form of awards, but also to the nomination and selection process, with greater involvement of individual universities and NGOs. The ambitious target, set in 2000, of increasing the number of new awards each year by 50% from the 1999 level of 450 was achieved, with an average of 677 being offered during the three years reported at the Cape Town conference in 2006. There was also progress in increasing the number of countries offering awards from the 1999 level of six, although this remains constantly below the historical high of 14, back in 1967.
12. By the time of the 2006 CCEM, it was clear that the expansion and internationalisation of higher education was becoming an important issue for

many states, and also that the role of higher education in international development was being increasingly recognised. Combining these trends with a desire to mark the forthcoming 50th anniversary, Ministers agreed to work towards an expansion of the number of students on award each year to 2,009 by 2009, surpassing the previous high of 1,809 in 1993. They also recommended the creation, for the first time ever, of a central fund, to leave a permanent one-off legacy of the anniversary, devoted to helping increase the number of Commonwealth awards in low and middle income countries. The conference also reinforced the need for greater coordination between participating countries, recommending that a small central facility be established to assist agencies with the general promotion and development of the Plan; that agencies should expand, and collaborate more on, alumni work; and that appropriate celebrations should take place to mark the anniversary itself.

13. Approaching the 2009 CCEM, this report will demonstrate that progress towards this agenda has been mixed. An area in which significant progress can be reported, however, is the planning and creation of the anniversary endowment fund, which it is understood will be formally launched at 17CCEM. Work undertaken to date has included the recruitment of a list of prestigious supporters and an interim management committee, and confirmation, in April 2009, that HRH Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales has agreed to act as Patron. Prior to the formal launch, commitments totalling £1.3million have been made, including £500,000 each from the governments of Malaysia and the United Kingdom, £250,000 from the Association of Commonwealth Universities, and £25,000 each from the Puri Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat. It is hoped that other member governments will also contribute, in response to a recent letter from the Commonwealth Secretary-General, while a campaign directed at alumni and other potential donors is also being planned. The formal fundraising period will run from the CCEM in June 2009, as the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the CSFP, to October 2010, the 50th anniversary of the first cohort of Commonwealth Scholars arriving in the 'north'.

Recent activity under the CSFP 2006-2009

14. Results of the 2009 survey show continued growth and support for the Plan, although this has not been sufficient to reach the ambitious target set in 2006, and there still remains a need for more countries to host awards. Particular features include the following:
15. The average number of new awards per year increased to 886 during the three-year period covered by this report. This compares with 421, 460 and 677 in the 2000, 2003 and 2006 reports. The figure is somewhat inflated, however, by the United Kingdom's decision to bring its Shared Scholarships Scheme under the auspices of Commonwealth Scholarships for the first time. Even without this, the figure would be 737, still an increase of 9% on the 2006 report, and of 75% since 2000.

Figure 1: Total number of new awards, by year

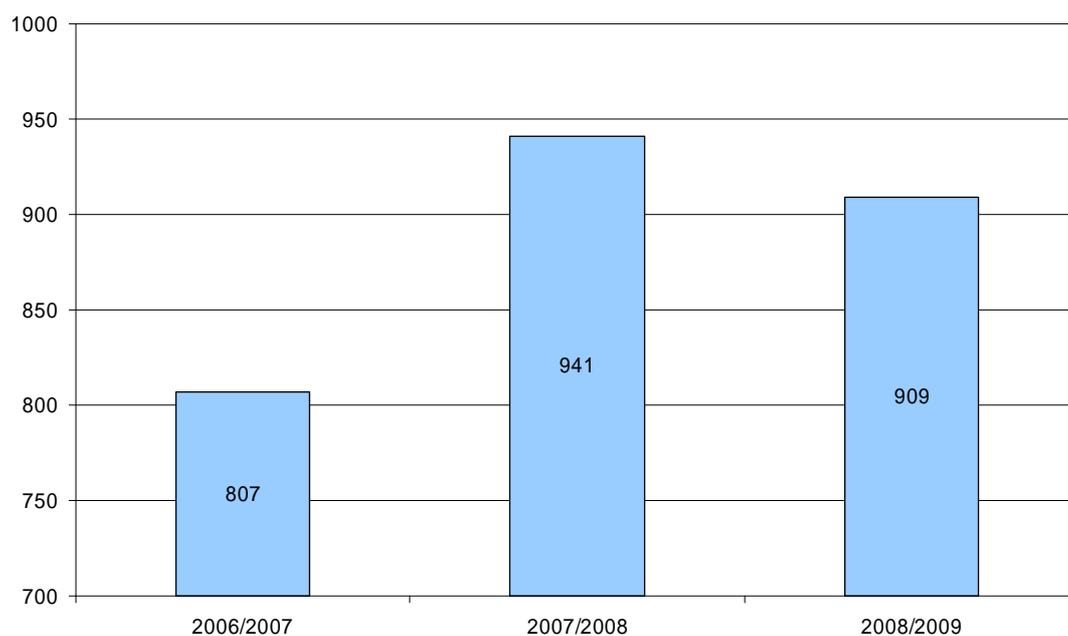


Table 1: Number of new awards by awarding country and year (includes Fellows)

Country	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	Total
Canada	67	91	126	284
Ghana	1	-	-	1
India	29	32	30	91
Jamaica	-	1	-	1
Malaysia	6	6	10	22
Malta	1	-	-	1
New Zealand	22	21	27	70
South Africa	-	4	2	6
Trinidad and Tobago	-	4	-	4
United Kingdom	681	782	714	2177
Total	807	941	909	2657

16. The average number of Scholars and Fellows on award has increased to 1,787, a 26% increase on the average figure of 1,420 reported in Cape Town. Significantly, the 2007/2008 on award figure of 1,837 surpasses the historic high of 1,809, though it falls short of the ambitious target of 2,009 set by Ministers in 2006. As with the new awards, this figure includes the United Kingdom's Shared Scholarships Scheme. Were these figures to be excluded, the average on award figure would stand at 1,614 – an increase of 14% on the 2006 report.

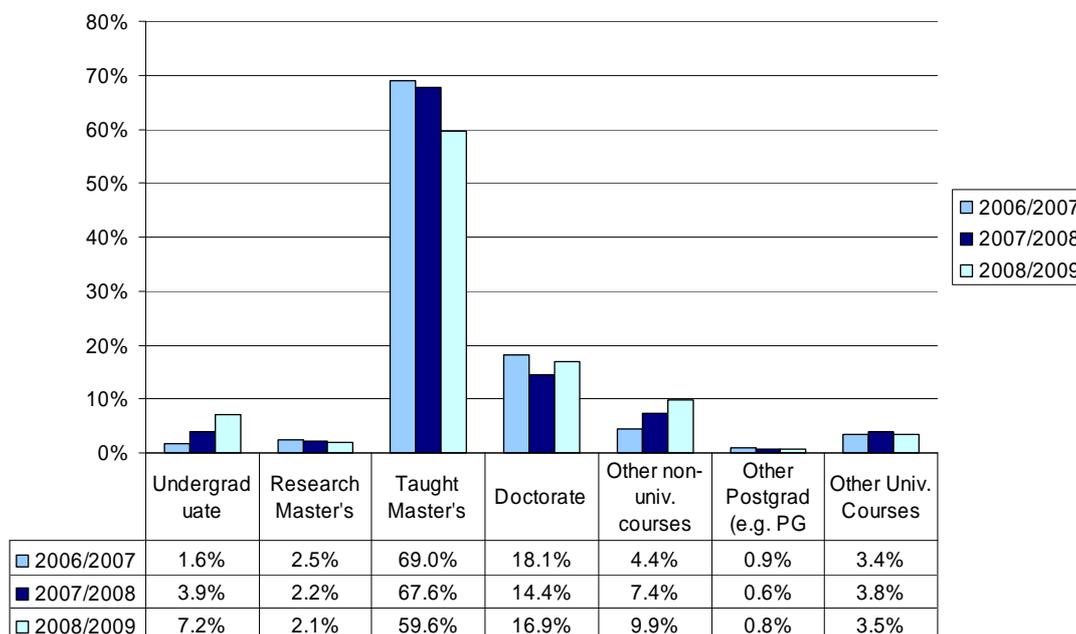
Table 2: Number of Scholars and Fellows on award by awarding country and year

Country	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	Total
Botswana	2	2	0	4
Canada	209	211	188	608
Ghana	1	0	0	1
India	78	66	50	194
Jamaica	1	1	1	3
Malaysia	20	12	17	49
Malta	1	0	0	1
New Zealand	61	62	60	183
South Africa	0	4	6	10
Trinidad and Tobago	1	4	4	9
United Kingdom	1345	1475	1479	4299
Total	1719	1837	1805	5361

17. At the time of writing, a total of ten countries are known to have instigated new awards during the period of the report. These were Canada, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom. In addition, Botswana has informally indicated that it has retained support for two award holders per year (complete details were not available at the time of writing), while a return was awaited from Brunei Darussalam, which also supported awards in the previous period, giving a potential list of up to 12 host countries. This figure compares with 14 in 2006, nine in 2003, and six in 2000.
18. While the strong emphasis on postgraduate training has continued, there has been an increasing trend within that towards awards at Master's level. The proportion of new scholarship awards at this level has reached 65% – the highest ever figure. Doctorates remain a significant, although declining, proportion of new scholarships awarded, with full doctorates accounting for 16% and split-site doctorates for 4%, compared with a combined total of 31% in 2006. There has been a small increase in undergraduate awards, to 4%. Even if Fellowships were included in this calculation, then the proportion of all new awards at taught Master's level would still be 55%.²

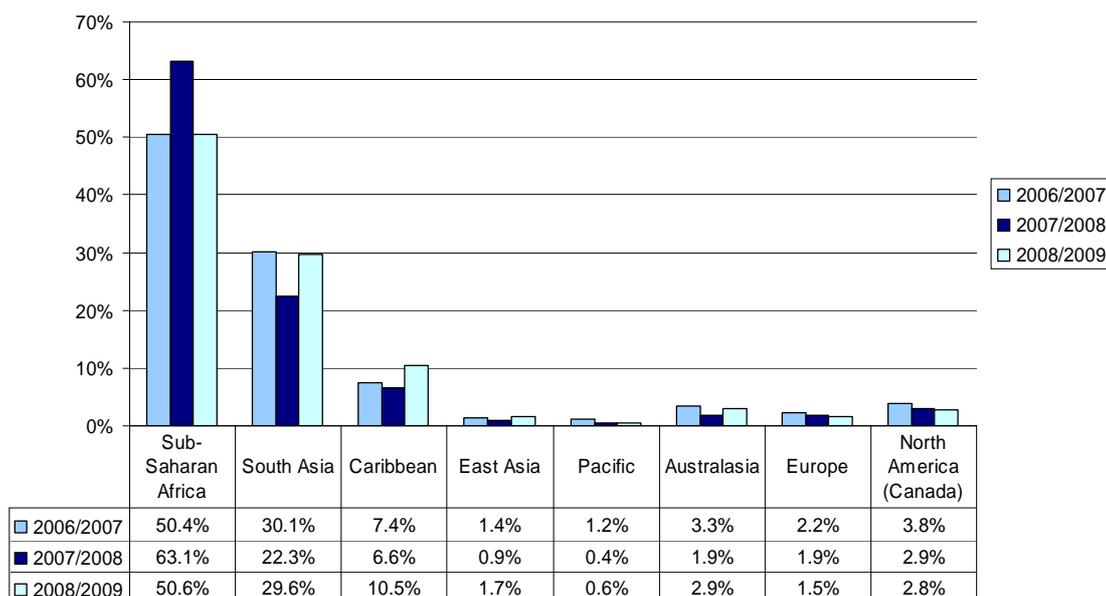
² Fellowships include 23 Canadian postdoctoral awards

Figure 2: Level/type of new scholarships, by year



19. The proportion of new awards to Africa has increased significantly. The proportion accelerated rapidly to 46% in the three years covered by the last report, and now stands at an average of 55% – constituting over half of new awards for the first time ever. This does not appear to be at the expense of South Asia, whose proportion of awards fell only slightly from 29% to 27%. Instead, it marks a decline in the relative proportion awarded to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and the Caribbean and East Asia. The changing percentage shares should, however, be seen in the context of the increasing number of awards overall.

Figure 3: Home region of new Scholars and Fellows, by year

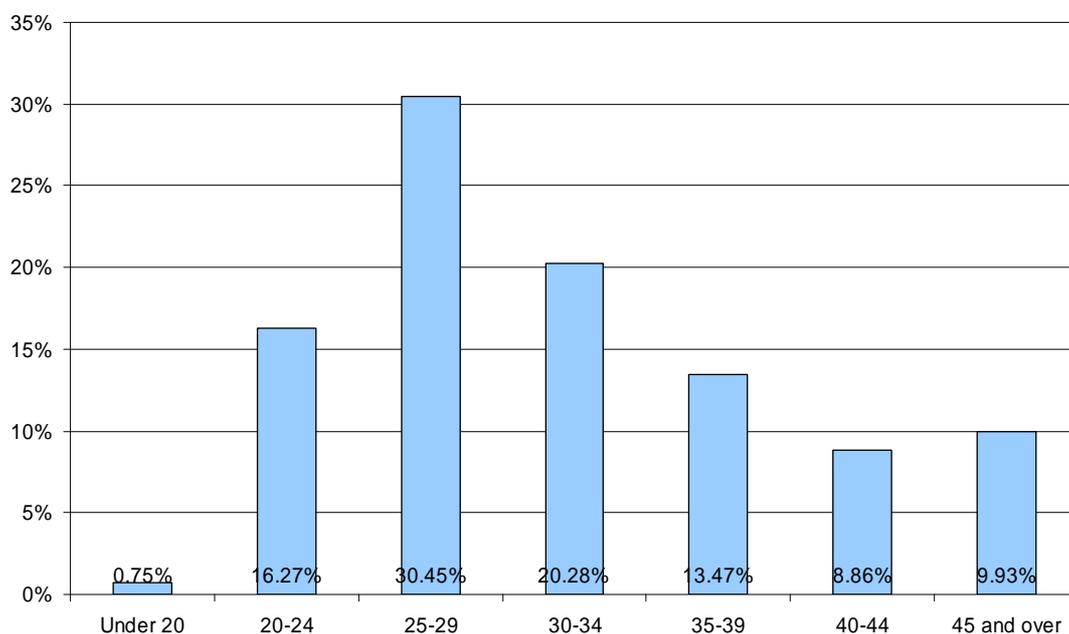


20. The trend towards older award holders reported in 2006 has reversed slightly, with a small decline in the proportion of award holders over the age of 35. There was also an increase from 14% to 17% in the proportion of award holders under the age of 24.

Table 3: Age groups of new Scholars and Fellows

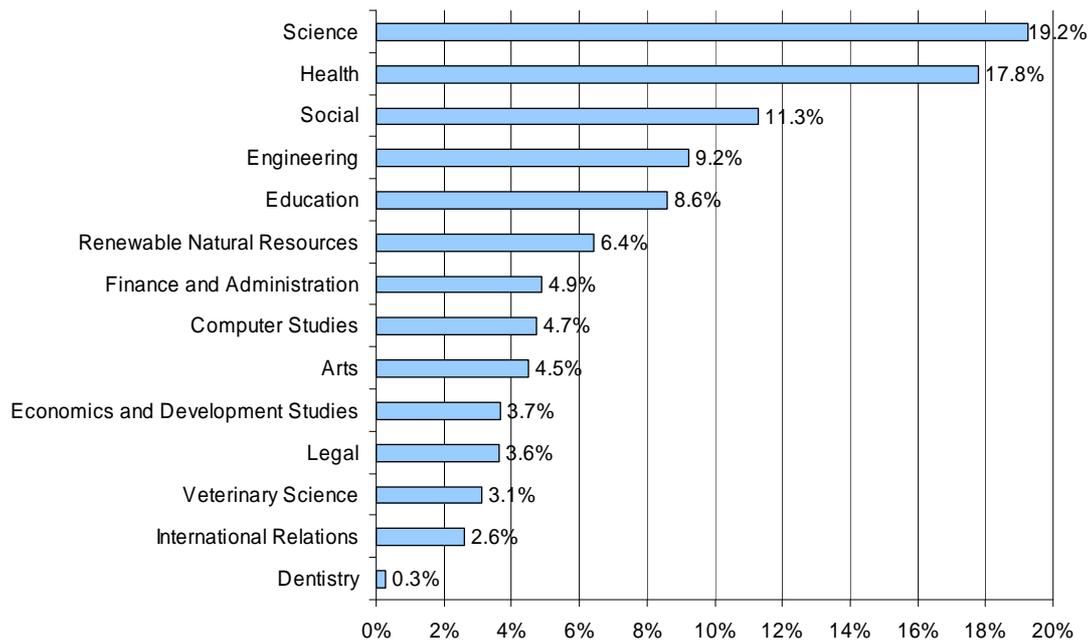
	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45 and over
Fellow	0.00%	0.00%	8.29%	10.55%	17.09%	25.63%	38.44%
Scholar	0.89%	19.29%	34.56%	22.09%	12.80%	5.74%	4.62%
Total	0.75%	16.27%	30.45%	20.28%	13.47%	8.86%	9.93%

Figure 4: Average age of new Scholars and Fellows in period under report



21. While all subjects of study remain eligible, some shift is evident towards topics that relate directly to development objectives, such as health (18%) and education (9%). About 20% of awards are in the field of science, a further 15% in the areas of engineering and renewable natural resources, and a total of 15% in social sciences, economics and development studies. Only 5% of awards are categorised as arts.

Figure 5: Disciplines of study of new awards in period under report



22. The proportion of female Scholars taking up awards remains stubbornly below 50%, averaging 44% in the years under report, the same figure as reported in 2006. There has, however, been an encouraging increase in the proportion of female Fellows, from 36% to an average of 41% – the highest ever figure in this category.

Figure 6: Gender of new Scholars

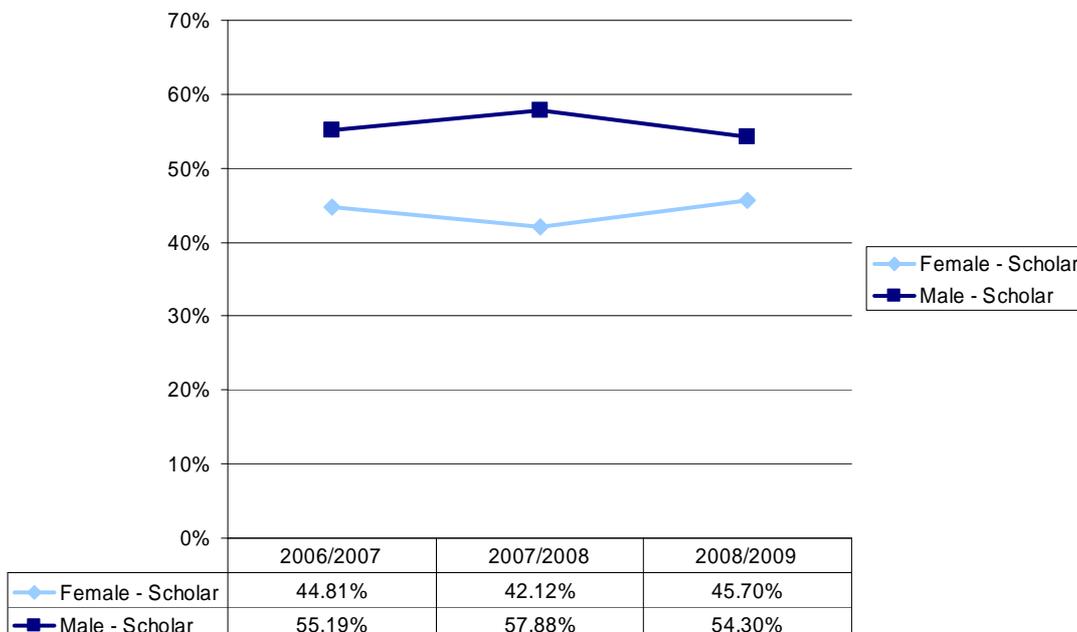


Figure 7: Gender of new Fellows

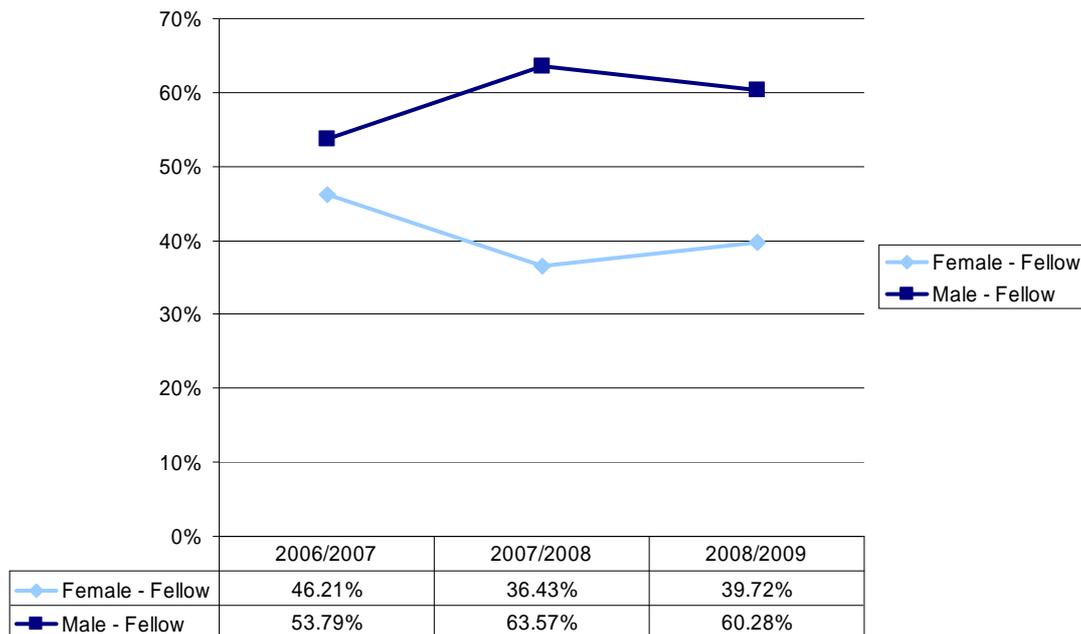
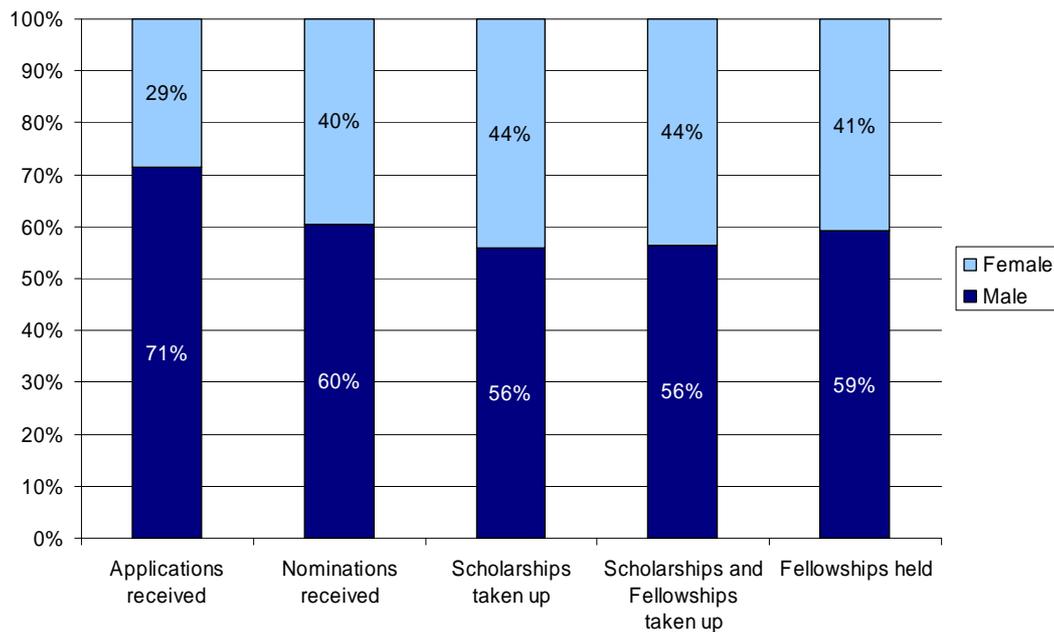


Figure 8: Gender balance across nomination and selection process



- 23.** The United Kingdom remains the largest contributor of awards, being responsible for 78% of all new awards in 2008/2009, or 74% on a ‘like for like’ comparison with the 2006 report, where the figure was also 74%. The increase in proportion partly reflects the increasingly diverse portfolio of awards offered by the United Kingdom in recent years, many of which are shorter or cost less than conventional postgraduate study. In terms of absolute numbers, however, new awards offered by countries outside the United Kingdom have grown by 23% over the three-year period of the report. The number of new non-UK awards in 2008/2009, at 195, is the highest for well over a decade.

The role and views of national agencies

- 24.** The CSFP was established as a bilateral scheme, and the role of national agencies has been critical to its operation. Each agency is appointed by its national government, and its roles typically include advertising awards for its own citizens and, in the case of those countries that host awards, administering the final selection process and looking after recipients while in country.
- 25.** Such agencies are exceptionally well placed to judge the strengths, weaknesses and impact of the Plan, and its relevance to other national priorities. As part of our survey, each was asked to describe its current procedures and to provide a statement on the strengths and weaknesses of the Plan. A total of 26 agencies responded to the survey, which was conducted between February and May 2009.
- 26.** In common with the surveys prepared for previous meetings, the overwhelming majority of comments were positive, confirming that the scheme remains one of the most popular and prestigious on offer, and that selection procedures were well integrated with national needs. Evidence for the former view included the statement that the CSFP is ‘the most attractive scholarship in Pakistan, and preferred by students to all other scholarship programmes’. In Mauritius, the scholarships were described as highly prized, with the recommendation that they should continue to be demarcated from others. Malta made the point that, ‘as education expands in all Commonwealth countries, these scholarships still serve a purpose and have gained added importance. Globalisation has highlighted the importance of mobility in the field of higher education so as to ensure cross cultural fertilisation, the maintenance of standards and the use of new expertise and technology’.
- 27.** Strong evidence of development impact included the statement from Uganda, which commented that ‘the Plan is important to our country, in that it has enabled us to train highly skilled manpower, in areas that are key to the development of our country which would not have been possible without the support of the Plan’. The distinct role that Commonwealth Scholarships play was also confirmed by Jamaica, which argued that ‘the CSFP provides an alternative source of funding for areas in keeping with national development which are not addressed by the regular training initiatives spearheaded by national government’. Ghana confirmed that the scheme has produced ‘a lot of first class scholars who have contributed immensely to the development of the nation’, while Swaziland confirmed that it ‘highlights areas that are relevant to Swaziland and is important to our country’.
- 28.** Anguilla was amongst other respondents to confirm the usefulness of alumni to national development, noting that, on completion of their awards, ‘scholars return and continue their employment within the Government of Anguilla at senior or managerial levels’. It was significant that no respondent expressed concern about brain drain from their countries as a result of the scheme, which supports the findings of the wider alumni survey conducted by the United Kingdom (paragraph 41) that recipients have a high rate of return. Some countries, including Cyprus, The Gambia, Jamaica and Mauritius, seek to reinforce this

through 'bonding' their nominees to return. Others, such as the Seychelles, seek to maintain contact through welcome activities for award holders on their return. Trinidad and Tobago also conduct an annual welcome seminar for returning Scholars, and will be launching a professional development programme for these, with the intention of building leadership capacity for the country.

- 29.** A key principle of the CSFP has always been that both home and host countries should have the ability to determine their own selection criteria. The survey comments suggest that this flexibility is utilised, with agencies looking for different balances between national needs and academic excellence. Several, including The Gambia, Gibraltar and Jamaica, cited national priorities in specific areas as critical, while Australia felt that research degrees should have 'demonstrable public benefit to Australia'. Uganda is an example of a country that seeks a balance between academic quality and national development priorities, while in Pakistan short listing is based on National Training Test scores within regional and provincial criteria. Amongst host countries, the United Kingdom has published selection criteria that award points for academic excellence, likely impact on academic development (or leadership skills for candidates from developed countries), and the quality of the study proposal itself.
- 30.** Amidst this generally positive picture, some problems were registered. The first of these is the need for more scholarships. In some cases, this issue is linked to the high standards of the scheme, the administrative burden on agencies, and the relatively small number of scholarships awarded to some countries. Samoa, for example, noted that 'the application process is very complicated and lengthy. Asking an applicant to provide six completed copies of applications is too much, especially considering how slow our mail system is'. Cyprus argued that 'competition is fierce and our graduates cannot compete effectively. Special offers are needed for small countries like Cyprus'. Trinidad and Tobago likewise reported that the number of applications received had increased by 50%, while nominations requested had increased by 10%.
- 31.** These concerns are not confined to small states. India observed that 'the number of general scholarships offered by the United Kingdom ranges from 20 to 29 per year. A large number of Indian citizens (2616) applied for these scholarships. 1252 were called for interview out of which 61 nominations were sent for 2008-09, from which only 20 awards were given. The rejection ratio of applicants is very high. It seems to be more rigorous than any other university/institute in the world'. The agency warned that this may have ramifications in future, as the 'number of people who apply might dwindle, and this may adversely affect the quality of selection'. They concluded that 'it is imperative to increase the number of scholarships'.
- 32.** The survey return from Pakistan appeared to link these issues to the need for better communication between home and host agencies, arguing for better liaison between boards at the time of selection, and that selection boards should have 'orientation to the representative of the nominating agency regarding eligibility and selection criteria'. Swaziland also sought more information on the progress of their candidates during awards.

33. Several other issues were identified by individual agencies. The Seychelles argued the case for more emphasis on undergraduate awards. Uganda called for more positive action to attract women candidates, noting that some scholarship schemes insisted on 50% female selections, and asked whether lower second-class degree results might be accepted in specific cases of disadvantaged candidates. South Africa wished to see more split-site awards, which enable students to obtain doctorates in their home countries, and also highlighted the need to increase applications from black students at South African universities, which remains a challenge for the agency.
34. Partly anticipating the significant administrative load on agencies, the survey sought responses to a proposal, recently made by the United Kingdom, to move towards a fully electronic system of applications. Advocates of such a system argue that it would reduce the workload and administrative costs for agencies, and increase accessibility for applicants. Equally, there would be a need to ensure that access requirements do not disadvantage those without good internet access, and that systems within national agencies could cope.
35. Generally, those agencies responding to the survey were positive. A wide range of countries with differing economic profiles indicated that moving to an electronic system would not be problematic, including Anguilla, Cyprus, Dominica, Falkland Islands, The Gambia, Ghana, Gibraltar, India, Jamaica, Malta and Mauritius. Others were more cautious. Samoa thought the idea worth pursuing, but pointed out the need to clarify arrangements regarding the use of original documents. Uganda thought that such a move would be problematic due to access problems, while doubts have also been expressed in discussions with the Nigerian agency.
36. Also looking to the future, agencies were asked whether they have any plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the CSFP, and whether they have any proposals to host awards. On the former question, agencies that have events planned include New Zealand, which hopes to stage a high-profile celebration in the national parliament building in November, and the United Kingdom, which is also planning an event in November. The United Kingdom and Canada have also cooperated to produce a substantial *Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows*, which was launched at a reception hosted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General in April 2009, while Malaysia will host the launch of the anniversary endowment fund at the CCEM in June 2009. India also reported that it is making plans for an event. Several other countries, including Bangladesh, The Gambia, Ghana and Mauritius expressed interest in events if approached directly. Overall, it appeared that the request of Ministers at the 2006 conference that the anniversary be marked by a series of appropriate celebrations has the potential to be met. The recommendation of the 2006 meeting that a special conference on the impact of scholarships and tertiary education in achieving the goals of the Commonwealth has not been taken forward in that form, although some of the content that such an event would have covered has been included on other agendas, most notably a conference on 50 years of education in the Commonwealth, supported by a number of Commonwealth organisations and staged in Oxford, UK, on 31 March-1 April 2009, and the meeting of

Commonwealth vice-chancellors that will accompany the CCEM in Kuala Lumpur.

37. Responses to the question about hosting awards were more qualified. In addition to the ten countries that have already hosted awards during the period of this report, Uganda reported that plans were already under way to reactivate Commonwealth Scholarships. Pakistan also expressed interest in hosting awards on a reciprocal basis. Botswana has indicated that it will host awards on a regular basis, and Kenya that it intends to contribute to the endowment fund. Others pointed out that they already host scholarships for citizens of other Commonwealth countries, which are not currently regarded as under the remit of the CSFP. Examples include reciprocal arrangements between Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Zambia, and Bangladesh reported that it is implementing a SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Chair, Fellowship and Scholarship programme for which applicants from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (among other countries) may apply. In a small number of other cases, there appeared to be some misunderstanding about the financial arrangements for hosting awards, with at least one country arguing that it had never been given the opportunity. This would appear to be based on the idea that scholarships are funded centrally, whereas in fact each host country has been responsible for supporting its own awards. Overall, answers to this section suggest that, although it is unrealistic to expect all Commonwealth countries to host awards in the immediate future, there is significant potential for the new anniversary endowment fund, discussed in paragraph 13, to lead to a considerable increase in the number of participating host countries.

Impact and alumni activity

38. An encouraging development in recent years has been the collection of much more rigorous information on the subsequent careers of alumni, which can be used to supplement the views of agencies. Both Canada and the United Kingdom now have established alumni programmes; in the latter case, contact has been established with almost 6,000 of the 16,000 alumni of the programme in that country. Other countries, including India, New Zealand and Pakistan, have expressed interest in developing such programmes.
39. This increasing activity is significantly improving the ability of the CSFP both to evaluate its own impact and to increase its influence further through effective networking. In the former category, the most significant development during the period of this report was the publication of a new report by the United Kingdom, detailing the results of a survey of some 5,600 alumni throughout the world, which was conducted in the first half of 2008.³
40. The survey, conducted by both electronic and postal methods, attracted a response rate of almost 40% (2,226), which is regarded as extremely satisfactory when compared with unsolicited questionnaire-based surveys more generally.

³ Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom, *Evaluating Commonwealth Scholarships in the United Kingdom: Assessing impact in key priority areas* (London: Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, 2009)

Analysis of the sample suggests that it was broadly representative in terms of gender, subject and home country when compared to the overall cohort of Commonwealth Scholars in the United Kingdom. The authors point out, however, that there is a significant bias towards those who have graduated within the past ten years (50% of respondents). As a result, it is likely that the results may underestimate the long-term achievements of graduates, most of who remain at a relatively early stage of their career.

41. Despite this reservation, the results of the survey are highly encouraging. 88% of respondents are working in their home, or a developing, country, with significant numbers of the remainder also working in a profession relevant to home country needs. The majority work in the public sector, with higher education being the largest single destination. Strong contact has been maintained with the host country, with 92% reporting some continuing relationship with the United Kingdom.
42. Direct impact and influence is more difficult to estimate, but here, too, the evidence of the survey suggests that Commonwealth Scholars have a strong record in rising to positions of influence. 90% of respondents reported that they had had impact in 12 key priority areas for development, with around 1,400 giving examples of their activities. Among these, 45% of respondents specifically told us that they had influenced government thinking in these areas. The next stage of the evaluation will be to investigate this in more depth. Analysis of the wider pool of contacts now held by the United Kingdom appears to confirm high levels of seniority, with, for example, over 50 alumni who have served at Cabinet level, 53 who have reached the level of Ambassador, Permanent Secretary or Supreme/High/Federal Court judge, and 75 who have served as university vice-chancellors. Taking into account the fact that the proportion of alumni traced is still below 40%, and the bias of those traced towards relatively recent award holders, the figures suggest that alumni have enjoyed exceptionally high levels of professional success.
43. Two other sources of evidence have supplemented our understanding of the impact of the CSFP. The *Directory of Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows*, published in April 2009, gives some 3,700 career profiles of alumni, who have mostly studied in the United Kingdom and Canada, and over 26,000 names of individuals who have held Commonwealth Scholarships in over 20 countries. The latter is thought to be an almost complete record. The publication is not primarily intended as an additional tool for evaluation, since the profiles largely overlap with those responding to the United Kingdom survey reported above, but it does have the potential to significantly extend networking activity, between alumni themselves and with High Commissions and other international agencies, and the Commonwealth in particular.
44. The second publication, expected to be available in September 2009, is an academic history of the scheme, funded by the Department for Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Canada, among other bodies,⁴ and written by Hilary

⁴ Funding also provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Nuffield Foundation, and the British Academy/The Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Perraton, Research Associate of the Von Hügel Institute, St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge, and Suzanne Lawrence, a DFAIT-funded research fellow.⁵ It is anticipated that, while not primarily intended as an evaluation of the Plan, the history will add significant qualitative information, including locally-produced chapters on the operation of the Plan in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

Analysis and recommendations

45. The CSFP has made mixed progress towards the recommendations made by 16CCEM in 2006. The number of new awards per year has risen significantly, although the fact that these have been shorter awards means that the number of student on award has been restricted to an average of 1,787 – a figure which is high by the historical standards of the CSFP, but short of the target of 2,009 set by Ministers in Cape Town. There has been little progress on the recommendation that the CSFP should develop a stronger mechanism for central coordination, but the proposal to establish an endowment fund to mark the anniversary has come to fruition, and a number of countries plan to implement the recommendation that the 50th anniversary be marked with suitable events. Alumni studies have also been expanded, and are starting to generate significant evidence both of the past impact of the Plan and its continuing potential for the future. Nominating agencies continue to value the Plan, and confirm its high standards and relevance, while identifying some specific problems that need to be addressed.
46. Taken together, these findings suggest that the CSFP remains one of the most significant forms of Commonwealth collaboration, and indeed that its impact and importance may well have been underestimated. There is clear potential to expand on these achievements in future. Equally, it needs to be recognised that the precise structures under which the Plan was established in 1959 may not be the optimum ones to respond to this challenge. The recommendations below combine proposals which both recognise the achievements of the scheme and modernise its procedures in response to the issues raised by nominating agencies. The 50th anniversary could be a major focus for this reform.
47. One aspect of this change is already under way. The need to reinforce the role of the CSFP as a Commonwealth-wide institution by instigating awards in a wider range of countries has been recognised at all recent CCEMs. The new endowment fund, proposed by Ministers at Cape Town and scheduled for launch in Kuala Lumpur, represents a practical way to achieve this. It is not our aim, here, to recite the discussion of the Fund in paragraphs 13 and 37 above. It is hoped, however, that, having agreed to establish the fund in 2006, Ministers will now support it with one-off donations during the formal fundraising period.
48. The issue of better communication between agencies, raised in different contexts by three countries during the survey, continues to require attention. At recent CCEMs, Ministers have approved proposals to meet this objective, and the need

⁵ Hilary Perraton, *Learning Abroad: A History of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009 (forthcoming))

for stronger awareness of the Plan, through the establishment of a small central facility. Lack of resources, however, has prevented this from being implemented. We believe that the evidence of our survey confirms a continuing need for such a unit. In case this does not prove possible in the short term, we have identified some interim measures that could be taken, which would improve communication without the necessity for a long-term commitment.

- 49.** The first of these involves the introduction of electronic application methods. The evidence of our survey, including that from low and middle income countries, suggests that these would generally be welcomed, although implementation may have to be phased. Successful implementation of the system would ease much of the administrative burden identified by some agencies, and allow for greater communication between agencies over specific applications, in response to the concern identified by India in paragraph 31. For example, since both agencies would have the capacity to look at applications at the same time, it may be possible for them to collaborate over the short-listing process, thus reducing the number of interviews required, while still allowing both agencies to play an important role in the process.
- 50.** The survey also suggests a need for further investigation into the criteria of what constitutes a Commonwealth Scholarship. At a time when the Plan is seeking to expand the numbers of countries offering awards, comments from nominating agencies demonstrate that many already offer awards to other Commonwealth countries, but not under the rubric of the CSFP. Equally, some longstanding donors have diversified the nature of their own awards. Examples of this include the introduction by Canada of short-term undergraduate programmes, and the United Kingdom of distance learning awards, in each case reducing the role traditionally played by national agencies.
- 51.** A more inclusive definition of what constitutes a Commonwealth Scholarship would almost certainly increase the numbers of awards and host countries. This, however, would not be the main purpose of the exercise or the sole benefit. At a time when many countries are increasing their scholarship provision, but often lack confidence in programme design or ability to evaluate them, it would include participating countries in a much-valued network of providers, and provide a new channel of feedback from recipients. It would also allow more scholarships to adopt the prestigious ‘Commonwealth Scholarship’ brand, and more award holders and alumni to take part in the increasing amount of networking activity.
- 52.** There are some potential drawbacks to such expansion. Some countries might offer scholarships for reasons that are incompatible with the ethos of the scheme. There would be a need to ensure that the scheme retains coherence, reflecting the view of the founders in 1959 that it should be ‘distinct and additional to any other schemes’, and that the term ‘Commonwealth Scholarship’ retains its prestige. Nor should any redefinition of the criteria be allowed to deflect members from their commitment, made in 2006 but not yet fully achieved, to increase the number of Commonwealth Scholarships under the existing CSFP.
- 53.** Further information would be needed before deciding whether the CSFP should seek to broaden its activity in this way. Although our survey reveals that several

countries offer scholarships to each other outside of the CSFP, we do not know how many, what form such awards take, or why participating governments have not thus far considered them as Commonwealth Scholarships. In order to inform such debate, we propose that a small survey be undertaken, either conducted or commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat, with a remit to report back to a meeting of national agencies, as proposed in paragraph 55.

54. A further area to emerge from the survey relates to the role of the national agencies themselves. Our survey suggests that the bilateral nature of the Plan remains important, and that agencies have much to contribute in ensuring that awards are related to national needs. Given recent trends in higher education, and the increased administration caused by expansion of the system, it may be that this role could be increasingly strategic, rather than operational in nature. It may be, for example, that new countries entering the CSFP for the first time might wish to do so through individual universities, rather than setting up national administrative structures for the processing of small numbers of awards. None of this would detract from the overall role of the national agency in monitoring policy and effectiveness.
55. The issues raised above should be seen as proposals to enhance and renew the CSFP, building on its very significant strengths, rather than representing whole-scale reform. They are, however, more far-reaching than the proposals presented to Ministers' meetings in recent years. Although they have been rooted in our survey results, their feasibility cannot be fully determined without further consideration. For this reason, and as a further contribution to the need to ensure better communication between national agencies, we recommend that a special meeting of CSFP agencies be convened during the latter half of 2010. This would have the additional advantages of being approximately halfway between Ministers' conferences, and marking the end of the formal anniversary period for the CSFP. It would also be used to review progress on the electronic application system and a wider survey of the provisions proposed above.

Summary of recommendations

56. Reflecting the analysis above, this report makes the following recommendations for consideration by Ministers at 17CCEM:
 - (a) that the formal launch of the CSFP anniversary endowment fund, reflecting the decision made by Ministers at 16CCEM, be strongly welcomed, and that member governments give serious consideration to one-off contributions during the formal fundraising period
 - (b) that, on an ongoing basis, Ministers review their commitment to directly offering Commonwealth Scholarships, with a view to the number of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships being held each year reaching the target set in Cape Town
 - (c) that further consideration be given to the possibility of a small unit being established to help promote and coordinate activity under the CSFP, as proposed at 16CCEM, and that, to further improve communication between

agencies, a meeting of national agencies be convened during the second half of 2010

- (d) that, while recognising that some phasing may be needed, Ministers support moves towards the use of electronic application procedures, as a way of modernising the application process, reducing the administrative burden on agencies, and further increasing transparency and access
- (e) that a small survey be commissioned, prior to the 2010 meeting of agencies, to identify cases in which Commonwealth countries offer scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other Commonwealth countries outside the framework of the CSFP, and consider the feasibility of these coming within the scope of the Plan
- (f) that, recognising the administrative burden that can fall on administrative agencies, consideration be given to CSFP awards being offered by a wider range of bodies, including individual universities, while preserving the wider strategic role of national agencies