

Council for Education in the Commonwealth

UK Commonwealth Scholarships for more developed countries: the DIUS 'Rescue package'

We understand that the following arrangements have been agreed for the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in partnership with UK universities, to continue to offer Commonwealth Scholarships to Commonwealth 'developed' countries for the period immediately ahead:

- DIUS will contribute £400,000 p.a. for each of the next two years for Commonwealth Scholarships to support PhD study for eligible students from the eight more developed Commonwealth countries affected by the FCO suspension of Scholarships. The funds will actually be drawn from funding that would otherwise have been allocated by DIUS to support Chevening awards offered by the FCO.
- The DIUS funds are only available for the next two years 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. Any funds thereafter will be subject to Public Sector Expenditure Review decisions for 2011-2014.
- Universities participating in the scheme and accepting a Scholar will provide a matching amount, so that in all a sum of £1.6m. is being found. DIUS funds will be used up in the first two years, and university contributions will be used from 2010/2011 onwards, until expected graduation in 2012/2013 by those taking three years from 2010/2011.
- It is expected that 16-18 awards will be offered in 2009/2010, which is about the same number of new PhD awards for the eight countries concerned as the FCO is providing in 2008/2009. Funds already committed at November 2008 will cover no more than 6-8 new awards in 2010/2011.
- Countries wanting master's degree awards will have to seek these under the FCO's Chevening programme – but this cannot accommodate EU countries (i.e. Malta, Cyprus), which received their final allocation of Chevening awards in 2007/08.
- The offer of co-funding from universities, which will apply only to students that each one actually admits under this CSFP programme, was made initially by four universities – Cambridge, Edinburgh, Nottingham and Oxford – and these have historically been major hosts to PhD award-holders from the eight countries affected. But participation in the arrangements has been opened up to other universities and several have replied positively. At November 12, 64 more universities had expressed a readiness to participate.
- Scholars will be recruited in the regular way through the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and will meet the normal CSFP eligibility criteria. DIUS is particularly anxious that students of very high academic ability should be recruited: their motive in co-funding the programme is to attract high calibre students to the UK.
- All the agencies involved in selection will strive to accelerate the process of recruitment for 2009/ 2010 even though they are starting the cycle two months behind the normal schedule. The deadline for applications to UK for 2009 awards will be 31 January (2009), not 31 December as in normal years.
- Although it is hoped that a spread of countries will secure awards, candidates will be judged on their individual merit.