

# Study Proposal

*University contact, the short outline for non-specialists, the detailed plan of study and your keywords.*

**525**

WORDS ACROSS 3 ANSWERS

**3**

COURSE CHOICES

**2**

WORKED EXAMPLES

**Free**

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## ABOUT THE EXAMPLES.

All names, universities, courses, modules, academics and statistics below are anonymised and reinvented versions of successful Commonwealth Master's applications, changed to show technique. In your application every course, module and academic must be real, current and checked against the university's own handbook.

## THE LIVE QUESTIONS (2027/28).

- **CONTACT WITH YOUR PROPOSED UNIVERSITIES (100 WORDS).**

The panel pays particular attention to any contact you have had with your proposed universities. Give details of applications submitted, acceptances obtained and contact with the institutions.

- **SHORT OUTLINE OF YOUR PROPOSED STUDY (125 WORDS).**

Write for an audience with no prior knowledge of the subject. It must not be overly technical, and any abbreviation or specialist term must be explained.

- **DETAILED PLAN OF STUDY (300 WORDS).**

Explain why you have chosen your courses and universities, and why you want to study in the UK. Say what you are looking for in a course and how your courses relate to your objectives. Include any dissertation topic you have in mind.

- **KEYWORDS.**

Three keywords that summarise your proposed study.

## WHAT IS BEING SCORED.

The CSC's primary indicators for the Master's study plan are a clear statement of what you want to learn and how it connects to your objectives, and how well the course and institution have been researched and presented, including specific options and dissertation topics. The secondary indicators are an existing offer of admission and clarity of presentation. The panel's feedback adds that vague or overly technical writing scores poorly regardless of content.

## 01 SECTION 1

### Part one: three jobs, and the three-course rule

#### Word plan.

| ANSWER                    | LIMIT | SPLIT                                                                                      |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contact with universities | 100   | Applications made 40, contact and conversations 40, status and next step 20                |
| Short outline             | 125   | The problem 40, what you will study 50, the outcome 35                                     |
| Detailed plan             | 300   | Why this course, university and the UK 110, what you want from it 100, the dissertation 90 |
| Keywords                  | 3     | Field-level terms, not slogans                                                             |

#### Three answers, three jobs

| ANSWER        | THE JOB                                     | THE READER                                               |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Contact       | Prove the plan is real and moving           | A panel that treats admission as a signal of seriousness |
| Short outline | Make the whole plan understood in 125 words | An intelligent person outside your field                 |
| Detailed plan | Prove this course closes your gap           | A well-informed reader who is not a specialist           |

#### Choose three courses that point at one career

The form asks for three universities and courses in order of preference, with reasons. The CSC will not change your university, course or order after provisional selection unless exceptional information emerges, and it may overrule your preferences on suitability and value for money. If it cannot place you at any of your three, the scholarship cannot go ahead. Three choices are therefore a safety net and a statement of strategy.

### Rules for the three choices.

1. **All three must be eligible.** One-year, full-time, taught Master's degrees. No MBAs. The CSC awards scholarships at approved UK universities with which it has a part-funding agreement for a specific programme, so check the CSC's UK universities list for your course before you commit.
2. **All three must point at the same career.** They can differ in emphasis, such as engineering, policy or enterprise, but a panel should be able to see one plan behind them. If your three courses imply three careers, the plan looks unfocused.
3. **Your first choice gets the fullest case.** Give the most detailed reasoning to your first choice, with specific modules and academics, then a shorter, specific case for the other two.
4. **Each choice must fall within your theme.** Your course area has to sit under the CSC development theme you chose.
5. **Apply to all three before the scholarship deadline.** Admission matters twice: you cannot proceed without it, and an existing offer is a listed indicator.

### The university swap test

Replace the university's name with another. Does most of your detailed plan still work? If yes, it is generic. A convincing plan could only be written about this course, because it names modules, methods and people that exist nowhere else.

## 02 SECTION 2

### Part two: contact with universities, beat by beat (100 words)

The panel pays particular attention to this answer, and an existing offer is a scored indicator. Treat it as a progress report, not a formality.

### What to include

1. **Applications made (about 40 words).** Which universities, which courses, and when you applied. Early applications show that you did not leave the plan to the last week.
2. **Contact and conversations (about 40 words).** Specific exchanges with programme directors, admissions teams or academics, with the question you asked and what you learned. A specific question shows research. "I wrote to say I am interested" shows nothing.
3. **Status and next step (about 20 words).** Offers received, decisions pending, and what you will do when they arrive.

## How to handle each situation

| SITUATION                | WHAT TO WRITE                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| You hold an offer        | State the university, the course and any condition. Name the date you expect to meet it.                                                                                           |
| Decisions are pending    | State when you applied, when you expect to hear, and that you will send any offer to your nominator. If the scholarship deadline falls first, say you asked for an early decision. |
| You applied to only some | Say which, why the others are pending, and when you will apply. Do not hide it.                                                                                                    |
| You have not yet applied | Say so honestly and give the date. The CSC expects you to apply to your chosen universities in advance, so do not be in this position if you can avoid it.                         |

**Contact an academic with a real question.** Programme directors respond to specific questions about the course's treatment of your topic, its approach to dissertations, or its fit with your plan. Keep your message short and keep the reply. A named, dated exchange is evidence.

**Do not overclaim.** If you have only had an automated acknowledgement, do not describe it as contact with the department.

### 03 SECTION 3

## Part three: the short outline, beat by beat (125 words)

This is the one place where the panel explicitly asks for an outline written for a reader who knows nothing of your subject. It is also the answer most often written for specialists.

## The structure

1. **The problem (about 40 words).** What is wrong, in plain language, with one figure.
2. **What you will study (about 50 words).** What the course covers, in your own words and in terms of what you will learn to do. Define any technical term in a few words.
3. **The outcome (about 35 words).** What you will aim to find or build, and for whom.

## The non-specialist rule

Define every abbreviation and every specialist term the first time. "Circular systems engineering, which means designing products and industries so that materials are repaired, reused and recycled rather than thrown away." Say what the thing is before you say what it is called.

**The test.** Give your outline to someone outside your field. Ask them to say, in one sentence, what you are going to do. If they cannot, rewrite it.

## Short outline versus detailed plan

The short outline is the plan in miniature. It must not repeat the detailed plan sentence by sentence. The outline says what and why. The detailed plan says which course, which modules, which people and which dissertation.

### 04 SECTION 4

## Part four: the detailed plan of study, beat by beat (300 words)

The form's three bullets map to three beats: why this course and the UK, what you want from the course, and the dissertation.

### Why this course, this university and the UK, around 110 words

The CSC's feedback is explicit that it is insufficient to say a university is excellent, or to give a ranking. It is also explicit that listing a course's options is not enough, and that text copied from a website or brochure may be treated as plagiarism. The case is built from specifics.

#### What to research and name.

- **Two or three modules**, exactly as in the current handbook, and what each teaches you.
- **A research centre or group** attached to the course, and what it studies.

- **An academic**, with one specific piece of their recent work that is relevant to your problem. Do not name anyone whose work you have not read.
- **How the course is taught and assessed**: client projects, fieldwork, a dissertation route, industry links.
- **A feature that your other options lack**. This is what makes the case about this course.

**Why the UK.** "The UK has a good education system" is not an answer. A convincing answer names something the UK has that you cannot get at home, and says what you will do with it.

**Weak:** *"The UK is renowned for its higher education, and Westmoor is a world-class university."*

**Strong:** *"The UK runs producer-responsibility rules and battery-tracking trials I can study directly, and I will compare them with my country's 2023 Rules."*

**Say why not the alternatives.** One sentence about why your second and third choices were considered shows that your first choice is a decision and not a default. "I also considered courses at two other universities, but both treat policy and engineering separately."

## What you want from the course, around 100 words

Link the course to your capability gap and to your objectives, using the module-to-objective map from the career plans guide. Say what you will be able to do at the end of the year that you cannot do now.

**The three lenses.** Many strong plans cover three: technical (what you will measure or build), policy (which rule or institution you will analyse) and social (which people or community you will work with). Use the lenses that fit your plan, and do not force all three.

## The dissertation, around 90 words

The CSC lists specific dissertation topics among its indicators, so give a title and a plan. A strong dissertation entry has four elements:

1. **A working title.** Specific and promissory. "Registering the Informal: Policy Pathways for Battery Circularity."
2. **The question it answers.** What will it find out or design?
3. **The method.** Modelling, comparison, fieldwork, data. One line.
4. **The link to your plan.** It is the first deliverable of the pilot you will lead on return.

**Be realistic.** A one-year Master's has a short dissertation window. A plan that would take three years of fieldwork reads as unrealistic. Choose a question you can answer in months, using methods you will learn on the course.

05 SECTION 5

Part five: keywords

Three keywords classify your study. They should be field-level terms that a reviewer would use to file your application, not slogans.

| WEAK        | STRONG                  |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| Change      | Circular economy        |
| Impact      | Policy analysis         |
| Development | Community-led reporting |
| Future      | Battery recovery        |

Choose one term for the field, one for the method or approach, and one for the context or population.

06 SECTION 6

Part six: two full sample sets

*Bracketed labels show structure. Do not include them. All names are invented.*

Sample set one, battery circularity

Sample one, Contact with universities

*I have applied to Westmoor University for the MSc Circular Systems Engineering and to two other universities for related courses, all well before the scholarship deadline. In August I wrote to the programme director, Dr Hannah Reid, to ask how the course treats policy and informal-sector work, and she confirmed that dissertations on emerging-economy waste systems are supervised within the Circular Economy Centre. Because the scholarship*

deadline falls before the usual decision date, I have asked Westmoor's admissions office for an early decision. I will send any offer to my nominator as soon as I receive it.

### **Sample one, Short outline**

*My country is adopting electric vehicles quickly, but almost nothing is planned for what happens when their batteries wear out. Nearly nine in ten used batteries are broken open by hand in small workshops with little safety, polluting canals and losing valuable metals. At Westmoor University I will study circular systems engineering, which means designing products and industries so that materials are repaired, reused and recycled rather than thrown away. I will examine how battery design, fair business models and better rules can connect informal workshops to licensed recyclers. I will start with electric three-wheeler batteries, the most common vehicle in my city, and look for practical ways to recover metals, cut recycling costs and include the workers already doing this work.*

### **Sample one, Detailed plan of study**

*My plan is to learn how to design a battery recycling system that is technically sound, legally workable and open to the informal workers who handle most of the waste.*

*I chose the MSc Circular Systems Engineering at Westmoor University because it treats a battery as a system, not a product. Its core modules in Life Cycle Assessment and Material Flow Analysis teach how to measure what a product contains and where it goes, and Professor Ines Calder's elective in the Business School covers the policy side that most engineering courses leave out. The Westmoor Circular Economy Centre, where Dr Tomas Wray studies battery tracking, gives me researchers to test ideas with. I also considered courses in sustainability and enterprise at two other universities, but both treat policy and engineering separately. The UK matters because it runs producer-responsibility rules and battery-tracking trials that I can study directly and compare with my country's 2023 Battery Waste Management Rules.*

*From the course I want three abilities I cannot build at home. First, to quantify how much metal informal dismantling loses, so that policy rests on numbers. Second, to simulate how rule changes affect workers, recyclers and producers. Third, to design battery packs that are easier to take apart, since my country has no standard for this. I also want to learn how to map informal recycling clusters and design training pilots, starting with 60 workers and aiming for 900.*

*My dissertation, "Registering the Informal: Policy Pathways for Battery Circularity", will combine techno-economic modelling, a comparison of the UK's producer-responsibility rules*

*with my country's, and field visits to Ashbury Yard. It is the first deliverable of the pilot I will run on return.*

**Keywords.** Circular economy. Inclusive policy. Battery recovery.

## Sample set two, child labour

| CHOICE | UNIVERSITY             | COURSE                                                      |
|--------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | Halden University      | MSc Public Policy                                           |
| 2      | Ravensworth University | MSc International Development: Public Policy and Management |
| 3      | Cairnmoor University   | MSc Public Policy                                           |

## Sample two, Contact with universities

*I have applied to all three universities on my form: Halden, Ravensworth and Cairnmoor. Halden has made me a conditional offer, subject to my final degree result, which I expect in July. I corresponded with Ravensworth's admissions team about the evidence needed to meet its English language requirement, and with Halden's programme office about the Econometric Methods module, to check that it covers matched comparison designs. I am still waiting for decisions from Ravensworth and Cairnmoor and will forward them to my nominator as they arrive.*

## Sample two, Short outline

*I will study public policy to learn how to make local government work for children at risk of labour in the district where I grew up. Brick kilns in Dunmore employ thousands of children, partly because families are in debt and officials rarely visit. My project links the yearly dividends of women's savings groups, community savings schemes run by women, to whether their children are in school, and uses digital maps to find the hamlets where children are most at risk. It also rewards villagers for reporting children who are out of school. The UK year will give me the methods to test whether this works, and the public finance and reform knowledge to persuade a provincial government to adopt it.*

## Sample two, Detailed plan of study

*At Halden, Ravensworth and Cairnmoor I would study public policy with a practical focus on implementation, because my problem is not a missing law but a law that nobody enforces.*

*At Halden's MSc Public Policy, the Policy Process module will teach me who shapes policy and who blocks it, and Dr Maya Lindqvist's research on how local power-holders capture public programmes describes the kiln-owner problem in my district. Econometric Methods for Development will teach me to test whether my model changes school attendance. At Ravensworth, the Public Sector Reform module examines why institutions resist change, and the Centre for Development Policy gives me a research base for rural service delivery. At Cairnmoor, the Policy in Action module builds on my internship drafting a briefing for a district committee, by asking students to produce a brief for a real client. I chose the UK because its policy schools pair rigorous evidence with direct contact with practitioners, and because I can compare how it protects children at risk with how my province does. The one-year format also lets me return quickly to a project that cannot wait.*

*From the course I want to be able to design and test an intervention, cost it, and present it to officials who need convincing. I also want to learn how to handle children's data ethically, since my province has no rules for it, and how to write evidence in a form a busy provincial planner will read.*

*My dissertation will design an adaptive funding rule that links savings-group loan tranches to school attendance and local risk data, and combine it with GIS mapping that identifies high-risk hamlets. It is the first piece of the pilot I will lead at the Provincial Child Protection Commission.*

**Keywords.** Policy analysis. Community-led reporting. Education access.

**What both sets do.** They say what each answer is for and keep it to that. The contact answers are dated, specific and honest about what is pending. The outlines define every technical term and could be understood by a stranger. The detailed plans name modules, a research centre and an academic with a reason, explain why the UK and why not the alternatives, and give a dissertation title and method that is the first piece of the plan.

## 07 SECTION 7

### Part seven: dos and don'ts

#### Do

- Apply to all three universities before the scholarship deadline
- Ask programme directors specific questions and report what you learned
- Be honest about what is pending

- Write the short outline for someone outside your field
- Define every abbreviation on first use
- Name modules and academics exactly as in the current handbook
- Give a reason for the UK that names something unavailable at home
- Explain why not the alternatives in one sentence
- Give a dissertation title, question and method
- Choose three courses that point at the same career

## Don't

- Say a university is "world-class" or give its ranking as a reason
- Copy text from a course page or brochure
- List every module on the course
- Name an academic whose work you have not read
- Describe an automated reply as contact with the department
- Propose a dissertation that would take three years
- Choose three courses that imply three careers
- Use technical terms in the short outline

## 08 SECTION 8

# Part eight: common mistakes, and the fix

| MISTAKE                       | WHY IT COSTS MARKS                                 | THE FIX                                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| "It is a leading university." | No substance; the CSC says ranking is not a reason | Name the module, centre or academic that closes your gap |
| A list of modules             | Merely listing options is not enough               | Choose three and say what each gives you                 |
| Text from the course website  | May be treated as plagiarism                       | Rewrite in your own words, tied to your plan             |

| MISTAKE                            | WHY IT COSTS MARKS                                          | THE FIX                                          |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Technical short outline            | Panel cannot follow it                                      | Define terms and test it on a non-specialist     |
| No dissertation topic              | The CSC lists specific dissertation topics as an indicator  | Give a title, question and method                |
| Vague contact answer               | The panel pays particular attention                         | Name dates, people and questions                 |
| No application made                | An offer is a scored indicator and a requirement to proceed | Apply to all three before the deadline           |
| Course not on the CSC partner list | The scholarship may not be tenable                          | Check the CSC's UK universities list             |
| Three unrelated courses            | The plan looks unfocused                                    | Choose three that point at one career            |
| "The UK has the best education."   | Generic                                                     | Name what the UK has that you cannot get at home |

## 09 SECTION 9

# Part nine: checklists

## While drafting

- Three eligible courses, on the CSC partner list, pointing at one career
- Applications to all three submitted, with dates
- A specific conversation with a programme director or admissions team
- A short outline that a non-specialist can summarise
- Two or three modules, a research centre and an academic, each with a reason
- A reason for the UK that names something unavailable at home
- One sentence on why not the alternatives
- A dissertation title, question, method and link to the plan
- Three field-level keywords

## **Before submitting**

- Module names and academics checked against the current handbook
- No text copied from a university website
- Every abbreviation defined on first use
- The detailed plan does not repeat the short outline
- The dissertation topic is feasible in one year
- The study plan names the same capability gap as the objectives and career plans
- Within each word limit shown in the live form
- The status of each application is accurate today