Q&A for Applicants

48 questions on eligibility, every deadline, the university and CSC applications, offer letters and referee letters, for the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship 2027/28.

48	4	1	Free
QUESTIONS ANSWERED	PARTS COVERED	FINAL CHECKLIST	TO READ & DOWNLOAD

The 30-second picture

To study in the UK with someone else paying, you make two separate applications in two separate places, read by two separate groups of people. A third step then happens that you do not control.

1. **Application A: the university.** You apply for a seat on a Master's course. If they like you, they send an offer letter. This is only about whether the university wants you as a student. It has nothing to do with money yet.
2. **Application B: the CSC scholarship.** You apply on the CSC's own website (CSC Central), asking the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission to pay for your course. This is only about money.
3. **Nomination.** Each university has only a few scholarships to give, often between 2 and 10 across all its courses and all countries. It looks at everyone who applied, picks its favourites and sends that short list to the CSC. The CSC checks the nominees are eligible and gives the final yes.

You only win if all three are true: the university wants you as a student, the university picks you from its scholarship applicants, and the CSC confirms you are eligible. Missing any one means no scholarship.

> **The biggest mistake:** people pour everything into the CSC form and send a weak, last-minute university application. If the university does not pick you, the CSC form was wasted.

Key dates for 2027/28

WHAT	DATE
CSC Central opens	Tuesday 10 November 2026
CSC Central closes	16:00 GMT, Tuesday 8 December 2026
Universities nominate	About March 2027
CSC confirms awards	About May to July 2027
Courses start	September or October 2027

Words you must know

If you don't understand a word below, read it again before asking the group.

WORD	MEANING
CSC	The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. The UK government body that runs and pays for the scholarship together with the universities.
Commonwealth Shared Scholarship (CSS)	The exact scholarship in this document. It is for a one-year Master's degree on selected courses. "Shared" means the CSC and the university share the cost.
Commonwealth Master's Scholarship	A different scholarship, where your own country's government agency nominates you. Different route, different rules. Everything here is about Shared only.
CSC Central	The CSC's online application website. The only place you can apply for the scholarship.
Nomination	When the university tells the CSC, "We pick this student for our scholarship."
Offer letter	The university's official letter saying you have a seat on the course.
Conditional offer	A seat with a "but": you get it if you do certain things, such as pass an English test or finish your degree.
Unconditional offer	A firm seat. You have done everything they asked.

WORD	MEANING
Funding deadline	The university's last date to apply for the course if you want to be considered for scholarships.
General deadline	The date the university stops taking applications for the course at all.
Referee	The person who writes a recommendation about you.
LoR (letter of recommendation)	The reference letter your referee writes.
Application number	The number the university gives you after you submit your course application. Like a train ticket number, it identifies your application.
Stipend	The monthly living allowance paid to you while you study.

The process, step by step

Q1 What is the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship, in simple words?

It is free money from the UK government and a UK university to study a Master's degree in the UK. It pays for three big things: your flight to the UK and back, your tuition fees, and a monthly living allowance (stipend) for rent and food. It lasts one year (normally 12 months) because it only works for one-year taught Master's courses. It does not pay for a PhD or for pre-sessional English classes.

It is meant for people who could not otherwise study in the UK, from low- and middle-income Commonwealth countries. That is why the form asks about your money situation and the good you will do back home.

How much is the living allowance? The stipend is **£1,712 per month**, or **£2,000 per month for Scholars at universities in the London metropolitan area**. It must be paid for the full duration of the scholarship. Rates change from year to year, so CHECK the current figure on the CSC website and don't quote old numbers to anyone.

Q2 Am I eligible? How do I check, honestly?

Do this before you write a single essay. Open the CSC's Shared Scholarships eligibility checklist on cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk and answer each question truthfully. Each rule is yes or no. If any answer is

no, you cannot get this scholarship, however good your essays are.

RULE	WHAT IT MEANS
Citizenship and home	You are a citizen of (or have refugee status in) an eligible Commonwealth country, and you live there permanently. Only countries on the CSC's list qualify. Look at the list, don't guess.
Degree	By September of your start year you hold a first degree of at least a 2:1 (upper second class) or the equivalent. A 2:2 can work if you also have a relevant postgraduate qualification, usually a Master's. If your country uses percentages or GPA, find the equivalent or ask your university's scholarship office.
No long stays in rich countries	You have not studied or worked for one academic year or more in a high-income country.
Money	You cannot afford to study in the UK without this scholarship. You explain this in the form.
Age	The CSC says there is no age limit.

Worked example. Amina is a Nigerian citizen who lives in Lagos. She finishes a degree this summer with a 2:1 equivalent, has never studied or worked abroad for a year, and her family cannot pay UK fees. She passes all five checks. Her friend Tom lived in Germany for two years working as an engineer. He fails the third check and should not spend weeks on this scholarship.

Q3 Which course can I choose? Can I pick any UK course I like?

No. You can only choose a course on the CSC's approved list of Shared Scholarship courses. The list is made of courses that universities bid for, and it changes. Last year's list is not this year's list. Do not use it.

Universities usually find out which of their courses were approved around early November, and the CSC puts the new list on its website around then. The group has said the new list is expected before the application opens. CHECK the CSC website. If you apply for a course that is not on the list, you will not be considered.

How to choose well. The scholarship is about development: better health, education, jobs, environment and similar things in your country. Pick a course where you can honestly explain

how you will use what you learn to make a difference back home. If you can't explain this clearly, your essays will be weak.

Q4 What are all the steps, in order, from start to finish?

Tick each one off as you do it.

1. Check you are eligible (Q2). If not, stop here.
2. Wait for the approved course list and choose your courses from it (Q3).
3. Check each university's rules. Visit its Commonwealth Shared Scholarship page for your course and find its two course deadlines: the **funding deadline** (for people who want to be considered for scholarships) and the **general deadline** (Q13).
4. Book your English test now (Q9 and Q22), because the university will want the score and test dates fill up.
5. Ask your referees now (Part 4). They need weeks, not days.
6. Apply to the university for the course, before its funding deadline. You get an application number (Part 3). Save it.
7. Create your account on CSC Central and start your scholarship application. You can save and come back (CHECK that the portal lets you save). Write your essays in a separate document first and paste them in.
8. Upload your documents: ID, references, and your offer letter if you already have one.
9. Submit the CSC application before the CSC deadline. After you submit, you cannot edit it.
10. Wait. The university reviews everyone and picks its nominees (usually around March).
11. The CSC checks the nominees and confirms the final awards.
12. Meet the conditions of your offer (English test, final degree certificate, etc.) by the dates in your offer letter.
13. Prepare to travel for September or October.

Q5 Where exactly do I apply for the scholarship?

Only on CSC Central, the CSC's online application system (portal.csccentralonline.org.uk). The CSC does not accept scholarship applications or documents by email, WhatsApp or post. Documents you email to the CSC instead of uploading do not count.

There is no fee to apply. Nobody at the CSC will ever ask you to pay. If a person, website or "agent" asks for money to "guarantee" your scholarship, it is a scam.

If you cannot log in or create an account, don't post "it doesn't work" in the group and wait. Try a different browser, clear your cache, and look for the CSC's help or contact page. Last time someone had a glitch that the CSC later confirmed was a glitch, so contact CSC support if the portal misbehaves.

Q6 Do I apply to the university and to the CSC? Isn't one enough?

You need both, and they are separate. Applying for the scholarship does not apply you to the university. Getting into the university does not apply you for the scholarship. This is the most common confusion in the group.

- **University application:** "Please let me study this course." Made on the university website. The university decides.
- **CSC application:** "Please pay for it." Made on CSC Central. The university picks nominees, then the CSC confirms.

If you only do one of these, you will not get the scholarship.

Q7 Can I apply for more than one course or more than one university?

Yes. You can only accept one Shared Scholarship in the end, but you can apply to more than one course and more than one university. Each course needs its own university application and its own CSC application.

Worked example. Amina applies to three courses at three universities. That is three university applications (three application numbers) and three CSC applications on CSC Central. If two universities nominate her and the CSC confirms both, she chooses one and says no to the other.

Is it wise? Yes, because each university has few scholarships and the competition is tough. It is also three times the work, so start early.

Q8 Can I copy-paste the same essays for each course?

Each Commonwealth Shared application is for **one course at one university**. You do not list several courses on it. Whatever you write in that form is about that single course only.

So the number of CSC forms you submit equals the number of courses you choose. If you pick four eligible courses at four universities, you submit four separate CSC forms, one for each course, each with its own university application behind it.

In every form, write the exact course name, the university name, and why that particular course fits your goals. Your background, goals and impact can stay the same across forms because the questions are the same each time. Do not submit identical essays everywhere: change the course name, the university and the reasons that fit each one.

Do not reuse essays from other scholarships either (for example Chevening). The scholarship's rules for award holders say essays should be original. Write fresh answers in your own words and follow the word limits. Going over the word limit has been given as a reason for rejecting a Shared Scholarship application, so stay under it.

Do not let AI write your essays. Your answers must sound like you, with your real examples, not generic text.

Q9 Does the CSC ask for an IELTS or other English test?

No. The CSC does not ask for IELTS, TOEFL, PTE or any English test in the scholarship application. English is a university rule, not a CSC rule. The CSC trusts each university to check that you meet its English requirement for your course.

Don't relax, though. The university will almost certainly want an English score, usually as a condition of your offer. If you ignore it, you lose your seat, and then you lose the scholarship. Look up your course's English requirement, book the test and plan the date.

Q10 What documents will I need to upload?

The CSC lists exactly what you must upload. Missing a required document by the deadline makes your application ineligible, which means it is thrown away. The main items:

- **Proof of citizenship:** a valid passport, or a national ID card, showing your photo, date of birth and country of citizenship. If you don't have a passport, a national ID (like Aadhaar for India) has been accepted, but CHECK the CSC instructions for your country.
- **References:** see Part 4.
- **Anything else the form tells you to upload.** Read every upload box. If a box is marked required, you must fill it.

If you are still in your final year and don't have your degree certificate, ask your university (the Dean or Principal) for a letter saying the certificate will be issued after you complete the course. Don't leave the box empty without reading what the form says.

File types: the CSC portal accepts PDF, JPG or PNG. Make each file clear and readable. A blurry phone photo can get you in trouble.

Q11 I made a mistake. Can I fix it after I press Submit?

No. Applications cannot be edited after you submit. Check everything before you press the button:

- Is every essay finished, in your own words, and under the word limit?
- Is every file uploaded, readable, and the right one (not the wrong referee's letter)?
- Is your name spelled exactly as in your passport?
- Is the right course and university selected?
- Is your university application number correct?

Upload slow-loading files at least an hour before the deadline. Websites get slow and crash when everyone submits in the last hour.

Q12 Who actually decides whether I win?

Two groups, in two steps:

1. The university chooses its nominees from everyone who applied for its scholarships. It usually has very few places, so this is the hardest step.
2. The CSC checks that each nominee meets the eligibility rules. If everything is fine, your scholarship is confirmed.

That is why your university application deserves equal effort, or more. A great CSC form will not help if the university never picks you.

Timelines in detail

Q13 Is there one deadline or many? Why is everyone confused?

There is not one deadline. There are four kinds of dates, and people mix them up and miss them.

DATE	WHO SETS IT	WHAT IT MEANS
CSC deadline	CSC	One date, the same for everybody: **16:00 GMT on Tuesday 8 December 2026**. The last moment you can submit on CSC Central.
University funding deadline	Each university	The last date to apply for the course if you want to be considered for scholarships. Apply after it and you will not be considered for any scholarship, including the Shared Scholarship.
University general deadline	Each university	The date the university stops taking applications for the course at all. Usually later than the funding deadline.
Offer-conditions deadline	Each university	When you must have passed your English test, shown your degree certificate, and so on.

Every university has **two course deadlines**. The funding deadline is for people who want to be considered for scholarships. The general deadline is for people who are not asking for funding. If you apply between the two, the university may still admit you, but you will get no scholarship. Cambridge and Oxford both work this way.

The CSC date does not replace the university dates. Missing any one of the four can end your chances. The one that catches most people is the funding deadline, because it is earlier than the closing date shown for the course.

Do this today. Make a table like the one below for each university. Fill it in from the university's website or by asking its scholarship office. Do not trust old dates or what someone said in a group chat.

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE	FUNDING DEADLINE	GENERAL DEADLINE	CSC DEADLINE	NOMINATION	ENGLISH TEST	OFFER CONDITIONS
(write here)	DD Mon	DD Mon	8 Dec, 16:00 GMT	About March	DD Mon	DD Mon

Q14 What are the CSC dates this year?

These dates were announced to the group. Write them down exactly:

- Applications open: **Tuesday 10 November 2026**

- Applications close: **16:00 GMT on Tuesday 8 December 2026**

The CSC's own page for universities says the same in rougher terms: applications are scheduled to open in early November 2026 and close in mid-December 2026, and the list of eligible 2027/28 courses (with university contact details) will be published on the CSC website in November 2026. It also says the CSC expects to give around 180 new Shared Scholarships for 2027/28, and each university could bid for up to ten. For last year's pattern: applications opened on 12 November 2025 and closed on Tuesday 9 December 2025 at 16:00 GMT.

Do the maths now. From 10 November to 8 December you have exactly 28 days, weekends included. Your referees and your university application must be ready before the opening day, not after it.

> **Watch out.** 8 December 2026 is also the first main funding deadline for Cambridge. If you apply to Cambridge you have two deadlines on the same day. Don't leave both to the last hour.

CHECK the CSC website on opening day in case anything shifts, and always count 16:00 GMT, not your local time (Q15).

Q15 The deadline says 16:00 GMT. What time is that for me?

In December the UK is on GMT (no daylight saving), so 16:00 GMT is 16:00 UK time. Standard times in December, check yours:

REGION	OFFSET	DEADLINE IN LOCAL TIME
Nigeria, Ghana-region West Africa Time	GMT+1	17:00
Pakistan	GMT+5	21:00
India	GMT+5:30	21:30
Bangladesh	GMT+6	22:00

If your country is not listed, search "what time is 16:00 GMT in [your city]". Better still, submit at least a full day early. The portal can be slow, uploads take time, and nobody can help you after it closes.

Q16 When do I apply to the university? Before or after the CSC form?

You do both in the same period, but the university application must go in before the university's **funding deadline** (Q13). After that date the university no longer considers you for scholarships, so applying later is the same as not applying for the scholarship. Send your course application as soon as the course opens and never wait for the general deadline. The university also needs time to read your application, and some want it in before the CSC deadline.

What we know from last year's universities:

- **Imperial College London** asked applicants to have submitted their course application as soon as the Shared Scholarship competition opened (12 November 2025 last time).
- **Queen's University Belfast** said candidates must apply for admission to the course and for the scholarship by the closing date, and recommended applying for admission at least two weeks before the closing date so there is time to process it.
- Some universities only ask you to apply for the course after you are shortlisted. Check each university's rule. Do not assume.

In short: apply for your course in November, submit the CSC form by early December, and take your English test once you have the offer.

Q17 Do I need my university offer before I can submit the CSC form?

No. You can apply for the scholarship and the course at the same time. If you already have an offer when you submit on CSC Central, upload it. If you don't, that is allowed at this stage. The offer matters later, when the university decides whether it can nominate you (Part 3). Do not upload a fake or empty placeholder file just to fill a box.

Q18 When do universities choose who to nominate?

The CSC says universities send in their chosen candidates in March. Each university sets its own timetable, so some decide in February and others near the end of March. Last year's examples:

- Edinburgh expected results to be available by mid-March.
- Imperial's earlier round said selection takes place around February, and nominees (and reserves) are told by 1 April at the latest.

The real waiting period is December to March. During this time, answer every university email within 24 hours and finish your English test and any other documents.

Q19 What happens after the university nominates me?

1. The university tells you that you have been nominated (and sometimes whether you are a main nominee or a reserve).
2. The CSC checks that you meet all eligibility rules (degree, home country, past study and work, money situation).
3. If everything is fine, the CSC confirms your scholarship.
4. You finish the conditions on your offer and get ready to travel.

The carousel that started this group says final confirmation usually arrives between May and July, and the course starts in September or October of the same year. Timings can shift, so use them as a rough guide.

A **reserve** is a backup nominee. If a main nominee drops out or fails the CSC check, a reserve can be moved up. It is not a rejection.

Q20 What is a conditional offer, really?

It means: "You can have the seat if you do these things." The conditions are written in the offer letter. Typical conditions:

- Reach the English test score the course requires.
- Finish your degree and send the final certificate and transcript.
- Send any missing documents (certified copies, translations, etc.).

When you meet every condition and the university confirms it, your offer becomes unconditional, which is a firm seat. Read every line of your conditional offer. If you don't know what a line means, email the admissions team. Do not guess.

> **Important:** send these documents to the university's admissions office, the way the offer letter tells you. Don't send them to the CSC.

Q21 By which date must I meet the conditions?

By the date in your own offer letter. Every university is different, so never rely on someone else's date. Example from last year: Queen's Belfast said the English-language requirement should normally be met by the closing date and, at the latest, by the end of March.

Also remember the CSC eligibility rule: you must hold your degree at the required level (2:1 or equivalent) by September of the start year. If your final results come out in, say, June, make sure

the university and the CSC know when to expect them.

Put every condition date in your phone calendar with two reminders: one week before and one day before.

Q22 I haven't taken IELTS (or another English test) yet. Am I too late?

Not if you act now. The CSC does not need the score for its form (Q9). The university needs it, and when depends on the university. The group's guidance:

1. Book your test immediately. Dates fill up, especially before the December and March deadlines.
2. Apply to the course and to the CSC without waiting for your score, if the university allows it.
3. Ask each university two questions: "Do you need my score before you nominate me?" and "What is the very last date you will accept it?"
4. Take the test and send the score to the university's admissions office as soon as you have it.

If a university says it needs the score for nomination, you need the test done before that date, which could be as early as the application stage. Another reason to ask early.

Q23 I missed a university deadline but the CSC deadline is still open. What now?

It depends on which university deadline you missed.

1. **You missed the funding deadline but the general deadline is still open.** You can still apply for the course, but you will not be considered for scholarships at that university, so the Shared Scholarship is not available there. Email the scholarship office and ask politely if there is any exception. Don't expect one. Then move to another course whose funding deadline is still open.
2. **You missed the general deadline too.** The course is closed to you. Look for another eligible course.
3. **You are still before the funding deadline.** Apply for the course today, then submit the CSC form on CSC Central before the CSC deadline.

The CSC form on its own does not rescue a missed university deadline. This is why you should always have two or three eligible courses as options.

Q24 Give me one timeline I can follow, week by week.

Dates marked CHECK must be confirmed on official pages. Work backwards from them.

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
Right now (October)	Check eligibility, book your English test, contact your referees, start drafting essays, and find each university's funding deadline and general deadline.
Early November	The approved course list should appear. Choose courses. Prepare documents (ID, certificates, letters).
Tuesday 10 November	CSC Central opens (announced). Create your account.
Mid-November	Submit your university applications. Note each application number.
Late November	Write your CSC essays, finish references, upload documents.
Early December	Submit on CSC Central, at least one day early.
Tuesday 8 December, 16:00 GMT	CSC closes (announced). After this, nothing can be changed.
December to March	Wait, but keep acting. Take your English test. Answer university emails fast.
About March	Universities nominate their candidates.
About May to July	The CSC confirms awards.
Dates in your offer letter	Meet all conditions (English, degree certificate).
September or October 2027	The course starts.

University funding deadlines

This table shows what could be confirmed on official pages on 20 October 2026. Many Shared Scholarship university pages are not updated yet, because the CSC publishes the approved course list in November 2026. "Not yet posted" means exactly that. Do not guess. Check the university's page.

UNIVERSITY OR FUNDER	WHAT THE DEADLINE IS FOR	DEADLINE FOR 2027/28 ENTRY	WHAT YOU DO
CSC Central	The Shared Scholarship application	Opens Tue 10 Nov 2026. Closes 16:00 GMT Tue 8 Dec 2026 (announced to the group)	Apply on CSC Central for each course separately
Cambridge	Main University funding (Cambridge Trust and most central funds)	Tue 8 Dec 2026 or Wed 6 Jan 2027, depending on your course	Find your course's date in the Postgraduate Course Directory. Apply for the course by that date and tick the funding box
Oxford	Course application and most Oxford scholarships (e.g. Clarendon)	December or January, depending on your course	Open your course page and use the date it shows. Apply by the earliest deadline it lists. You can apply to a maximum of three courses, and only two can be taught courses
Imperial College London	Course application, for the Shared Scholarship	Wed 6 Jan 2027 (Round 2: opens 30 Sep 2026, decisions by Wed 3 Mar 2027)	Imperial bid for three courses (below). Its bid needs CSC approval, announced in November
Edinburgh	Shared Scholarship	Not yet posted. Its page says funding for 2027/28 has yet to be confirmed	Check again in November. Last year it offered two scholarships

UNIVERSITY OR FUNDER	WHAT THE DEADLINE IS FOR	DEADLINE FOR 2027/28 ENTRY	WHAT YOU DO
Glasgow	Shared Scholarship	Not yet posted for 2027/28. Last cycle it pointed to the CSC deadline (9 Dec 2025, 16:00 GMT)	Check again in November
Queen's University Belfast	Course admission and Shared Scholarship	Not yet posted for 2027/28. Last cycle: both by the CSC closing date (9 Dec 2025, 16:00 GMT)	Apply for admission at least two weeks before the closing date, as QUB recommended last year
UCL	Shared Scholarship	No 2027/28 dates found	Read the UCL scholarship page in November and ask its scholarships team

Cambridge

- Cambridge has two main funding dates: **8 December 2026** and **6 January 2027**. Your course is in one group or the other. If you want funding, you must apply for the course by that date.
- Shared applicants have their own page, Commonwealth Shared Cambridge Scholarship. An older version (2023/24) said you need a separate application through the CSC's electronic application system, you must apply for admission by your course's funding deadline, and you need a conditional offer. It also said Cambridge Trust decisions run from March to 31 July, with most full awards made in March. If you hear nothing by 31 July, treat it as unsuccessful. Re-read the current version before relying on any of this.
- The Cambridge Trust page says the funding deadline is the same for October, January and April starts. The term you start in does not change the date.

Oxford

- Oxford does not have one deadline for all graduate courses. Almost all have a December or January date, which is also the last day to be considered for most Oxford scholarships. Open the course page to find yours.
- Oxford's guidance says to apply by the earliest deadline stated on the course page.
- Course deadlines are at **12 noon UK time** (midday), so don't assume the end of the day.
- It could not be confirmed whether Oxford has any courses on the 2027/28 Shared Scholarship list. The CSC list comes out in November. Look for Oxford on it before you plan around it. Many

people confuse Oxford's own scholarships (like Clarendon, where you are considered automatically if you apply on time) with the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship. They are different things.

Imperial College London

Imperial has bid to host Shared scholars on three courses, all under the theme "Science and technology for development":

- MSc Human and Biological Robotics
- MSc Biomedical Engineering (all streams are eligible)
- MRes Nanomedicine and Nanodiagnostics

The bid is subject to CSC approval and will be announced in November. To be considered, submit your course application in Round 2, by **Wednesday 6 January 2027**. Last year Imperial asked applicants to apply as soon as the competition opened, so applying early is still the safer choice. `CHECK` Imperial's page again in November.

Which deadline wins if they don't match?

None of them. They are different gates, and you must pass all of them:

1. The CSC deadline (8 December, 16:00 GMT) for the scholarship form.
2. The university's **funding deadline** for the course. Apply after it and you are not considered for scholarships.
3. The university's **general deadline** for the course. After it, the course is closed.

Write all of them next to each university's name and work to the earliest one. If Cambridge's date for your course is 8 December and the CSC's is also 8 December, finish both a day before.

Funding at Cambridge and Oxford is separate from the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship. Meeting Cambridge's funding deadline puts you in the running for Cambridge funding (like the Cambridge Trust). The Shared Scholarship needs the CSC form as well. Don't assume one covers the other.

Application number and the offer letter

These two things connect your university application to your CSC application. Read this part twice.

Q25 What is a university application number? Explain like I'm ten.

When you apply to a university, its computer system gives your application a number (sometimes called an application ID, reference number or student ID). It is like the ticket number on a train ticket. The university does not remember you by your face; it finds you by this number. When you write to the university about your application, you quote it so they know who you are.

Every course application gets its own number. Apply to three courses and you get three numbers. Don't mix them up.

Q26 When do I get it and where do I find it?

Right after you submit your course application. It usually appears on the screen when you finish and in a confirmation email from the university. Universities name it differently ("application reference", "application ID", "UCAS/portal ID"), so read the email carefully.

The moment you get it:

1. Take a screenshot of the confirmation page.
2. Save the confirmation email in a folder.
3. Copy the number into a notes file, like this:

UNIVERSITY	COURSE	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE SUBMITTED	OFFER RECEIVED?
(name)	(course)	(number)	DD Mon	No / Conditional / Unconditional

If you lose the number, search your email for the university's name, or look in your application portal. If you still can't find it, email the admissions office with your full name, date of birth and the course. Never invent a number.

Q27 Why does the CSC form ask for it?

The CSC and the university are two different organisations. When the CSC receives your scholarship form, it passes your application to the university so it can read it and decide whether to nominate you. The application number is how everyone knows your scholarship form and your course application belong to the same person.

You may be asked to enter your university application number, which you get after submitting your course application. The exact box on CSC Central could not be confirmed, so **CHECK** the form when you start. If the box is there, fill it in with the real number.

Easy rule: submit your course application first (or at least early), so you have the number in hand when you do the scholarship form.

Q28 I haven't applied to the university yet. What do I type in that box?

Don't invent a number, and don't type "pending" unless the form clearly allows it. Apply to the university first, then come back and enter the real number. The order:

1. Apply to the course (get the number).
2. Open your CSC application and finish all the other sections.
3. Enter the number.
4. Submit.

If the university only opens the course application after the scholarship shortlist, follow what the CSC form allows for that situation, and ask the CSC through its official help or contact page if you're not sure. Don't guess.

Q29 I typed the wrong number. Can I fix it?

After you submit, the application cannot be edited, so you cannot fix it yourself. That is why you copy and paste the number from your saved notes instead of typing it from memory. If you realise later that the number is wrong, email the university's scholarship office and the CSC's support address at once, with your name, the correct number and the mistake. Do it the same day.

Q30 Do I have to upload an offer letter on CSC Central?

- If you already have an offer letter when you apply, upload it.
- If you don't have one yet, that is fine. You are not required to have an offer when you first submit.
- The offer matters later, when the university decides whether it can nominate you. At that point it usually needs to see at least a conditional offer.

If the CSC form has an upload box for an offer letter and you don't have one, do not upload a blank page or a random document to get past it. Read what the box says. If it is marked required and you cannot continue, ask the CSC through its official channels. The CSC does not need the offer at the first stage, but your own form is the final word. CHECK it.

Q31 What counts as an offer letter and what doesn't?

Counts: an official message from the university's admissions office (a letter, PDF or portal message) saying you have been offered a place on a named course for a named year. It will say "conditional" or "unconditional".

Does not count:

- "Thank you, we have received your application" (an acknowledgement).
- "Your application is under review" (a status message).
- A screenshot of the application page without an offer on it.
- An email from a professor saying "you look good, please apply".

If you're not sure what you have, ask the admissions office: "Is this an offer of admission?"

Q32 Is a conditional offer enough, or do I need an unconditional one?

A conditional offer is normally enough for the scholarship process. An unconditional offer is even better, but you don't need it to be nominated. What matters is that the university has said "yes, we'd give you the seat", even if you still need to pass the English test or finish your degree. The university decides for itself what it needs to see before nominating, so ask its scholarship office.

Q33 I got my offer after I submitted the CSC form. What now?

You cannot edit the CSC form, so don't panic and don't email documents to the CSC. The CSC only takes documents through its online system. Instead:

1. Save the offer letter as a PDF in your folder.
2. Email it to the university's scholarship office (or the person named on its scholarship page) with your full name, course and application number. Say: "I have now received an offer, attaching it in case it helps with nomination for the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship."
3. Ask if there is anything else they need from you.

The university's scholarship team decides who to nominate. Make it easy for them.

Q34 How can I get my offer faster?

Universities decide in their own time, and this is the bit you control least. But you can improve your chances:

- **Apply early.** One applicant who applied to Imperial on the first day the portal opened received the formal offer letter about three weeks later (for a different scholarship, same lesson).
- **Submit a complete application.** Missing documents slow everything down.
- **Email the course contact** to say you're applying for the Commonwealth Shared Scholarship and politely ask if an earlier decision is possible. Don't pester.
- **Reply to every university email within 24 hours.** A missed request for a document can add weeks.
- **Have your English test booked** so you can say when your score will arrive.

Q35 What happens if I have no offer when the university chooses nominees?

Then the university usually cannot nominate you. The CSC scholarship pays for a course, and the university must be willing to teach you on it. No offer, no nomination. This is why an early, complete university application matters so much, and why you should not leave it until you finish the CSC form.

Q36 Can you show me the whole offer-letter journey in one list?

1. Choose a course from the approved list.
2. Submit the course application. Get your application number. Screenshot it.
3. Submit the CSC application on CSC Central. Enter the number if asked. Upload your offer if you already have one.
4. Wait for the university's decision. Answer any email within 24 hours.
5. Receive an offer (conditional or unconditional). Save it as a PDF.
6. Send the offer to the university's scholarship office (if the CSC form is already submitted).
7. The university decides who to nominate (around March), looking at your scholarship application and your offer.
8. The CSC checks eligibility and confirms.
9. Meet every condition by the date in your letter (English test, degree certificate).

10. The conditional offer becomes unconditional. You have a firm seat and a scholarship.

Keep one folder with every application number, offer letter, confirmation email, your English test report, degree certificate and transcripts, and reference letters.

The letters of recommendation

A letter of recommendation is the one part of the application you cannot write yourself, so it needs the most time. Start now.

Q37 How many reference letters do I need? Two or three?

The CSC Central application form settles this: the References tab asks for **three named referees** (a fourth slot appears only if you took a degree in the UK, see below). Your application is marked ineligible unless at least two of those references actually arrive by the deadline, but the form itself expects three names, so treat three as the real target, not two.

Applications are ineligible if required documents are missing by the deadline, and references are required documents. A missing letter can end your application.

Q38 Who should my three referees be?

The form specifies the three roles directly, and they are not "two academics and one personal" as some applicants assume. They are:

- **Referee 1, your current or most recent employer.** Someone who can speak to your professional capability and your ability to benefit from the proposed study and deliver development impact afterwards, for example a line manager or project supervisor.
- **Referee 2, your most recent academic study.** A professor, lecturer or supervisor from the qualification you listed as your most recent in the Academic tab, who can speak to your academic capability.
- **Referee 3, a personal referee.** Someone who knows you in a personal rather than a professional capacity, and who is not a relative, as set out below.
- **Referee 4, only if you took a degree in the UK.** Someone from that UK study. The form only asks for this fourth referee in that specific case; otherwise you only ever submit three.

If you are not currently employed, use your most recent employer even if that role has ended, and explain the gap to the referee so their letter still speaks to the right period.

Q39 Who can be my personal referee, and who can not?

CSC guidance says a personal referee should know you personally, not only professionally, and must not be a relative.

Can be:

- A mentor who watched you work (one scholar used the consultant physician he worked under part-time in a clinic for about two years).
- A friend or peer who knows you well beyond being a classmate, for example someone you worked with on competitions, events, leadership roles or projects, who can give specific examples of your character, teamwork and commitment.
- A long-time colleague who supervised or observed you.

Cannot be: your father, mother, brother, sister, cousin, uncle, aunt, spouse or any other relative.

> **Watch out.** One nominee who was provisionally selected was later asked to send the personal reference again, because it had been written on plain paper with no letterhead or sender details. Make sure every referee, including your personal referee, uses one of the two accepted formats from the start (Q41).

Q40 What should each letter talk about?

The CSC does not give referees a fill-in form (check whether CSC Central has one). Send this list to your referees:

- How they know you and for how long ("I supervised her final-year project for 14 months").
- Specific examples of what you did, with numbers where possible ("she trained 40 volunteers", "he raised the lab's accuracy by 12 percent").
- Your strengths: leadership, commitment, ability to work with others, academic ability.
- Your potential to make a difference in your home country.
- A clear recommendation: "I strongly recommend this candidate for a Commonwealth Scholarship."
- Their name, job title, organisation and contact details, so the letter looks real and checkable.

A university reference mostly says "this student can handle the course". A CSC reference should also show why your country would benefit from you getting this scholarship. The course

reference shows you can handle the academic workload; the scholarship reference shows your country would benefit.

For your employer and academic referees, the group suggests emphasising your professional and academic strengths and your ability to handle the proposed study and deliver development impact afterwards. For the personal referee, emphasise character and commitment instead.

Q41 What must the letter look like (format)?

The CSC asks for references from at least two individuals. Each reference must be:

- In **PDF** format.
- **Signed.**
- On **institutional letterhead**, or an **email that clearly shows the sender's details**.
- Uploaded by you to CSC Central with your application.

In real life:

- **Institutional letterhead** is the official paper (or Word or PDF template) with the organisation's name, logo and address at the top. A professor uses the university letterhead. A manager uses the company letterhead.
- **No letterhead** (this option applies to any referee, not only personal ones): the CSC accepts a signed reference based on an email that clearly shows the sender's details, saved as a PDF. Save the email as a PDF so the sender's name, email address and date are visible, and make sure the letter is signed. A signature can be an image of the signature added digitally. If you are unsure whether the email body is enough, or whether you need to attach the letter as well, ask the CSC.
- **Signed** means there is a signature (handwritten and scanned, or a signature image), not just a typed name.

The two options side by side. Both must end up as a signed PDF that you upload to CSC Central.

	OPTION 1: LETTERHEAD	OPTION 2: EMAIL
Best for	Any referee, academic, professional or personal, who can use an institutional letterhead	Any referee, academic, professional or personal, who sends the reference by email instead

	OPTION 1: LETTERHEAD	OPTION 2: EMAIL
What the referee does	Writes the letter on the official template (name, logo and address at the top), signs it by hand and scans it, or adds a signature image, then sends you the PDF	Writes the reference as an email from their own account, with their name, email address and the date clearly visible, and adds a signature image at the end
What you do	Check the PDF opens, is signed and is readable, then upload it	Save the email as a PDF (for example by printing it to PDF) so the sender's name, email address and date stay visible, then upload it
Stamp	Optional	Not applicable

A letter on plain paper with no letterhead and no visible sender details fits neither option, so don't accept one. If you are unsure whether the email body is enough, or whether the referee should also attach a signed letter, ask the CSC before you upload.

Q42 Can my referee upload the letter directly to the CSC?

No. You collect the letters and you upload them to CSC Central. Referees cannot upload letters themselves, unlike in many university portals. Don't tell your referee to wait for a link. Tell them: "Please send me a signed PDF."

Q43 What heading should the letter have? Do I need the CSC's address?

Give the letter a clear heading that says what it is for, for example "Academic Reference Letter for Commonwealth Shared Scholarship 2027" (use "Personal Reference" or "Professional Reference" for the others). This shows the letter was written for the CSC and is not a generic letter repurposed from somewhere else.

You do not need the CSC's street address. "To Whom It May Concern" is fine. If someone does include an address, make sure it is the CSC's current one, as old addresses circulate online.

Q44 Can I reuse last year's letters? Can I reuse university letters?

Better not. Three reasons:

1. Old letters have an old date and may mention the wrong year.
2. A university reference proves you can do the course. A CSC reference should also explain your development impact and why you deserve scholarship funding.

3. Fresh letters written for the CSC are strongly recommended. If it is truly impossible to get new ones, ask the referee to at least update the date and the heading.

Q45 If I apply for several courses, do I need several sets of letters?

Usually no, if the letters talk about your field, strengths and potential and do not name one specific course. One scholar's referees wrote about his cardiorespiratory background and potential without naming courses, so he used the same letters for different applications. If a letter names a specific course or university, you need a new letter for each. Easy solution: tell your referees up front to write about your field and not name a course.

Q46 When do I ask? What do I send them?

Ask now. Give your referees three to four weeks, not three days. Busy professors forget, travel, and get hundreds of requests in November.

Send each referee this email (edit the brackets):

> ***Subject:*** *Reference request: Commonwealth Shared Scholarship, due [date]*
> *Dear [Name], I am applying for a Commonwealth Shared Scholarship to study [field/course] in the UK, and would be grateful if you could write a reference for me. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission requires it as a signed PDF, on institutional letterhead (or an email that clearly shows your details), with the heading "Academic Reference for Commonwealth Shared Scholarship 2027". I need it by [date, one week before the real deadline]. I have attached my CV, my draft statement, and a short list of points I'd be grateful if you could cover (how you know me, my strengths with examples, and my potential to help my country). Please send it to me as a PDF, and I will upload it myself. Thank you very much. [Your name]*

Then follow up politely one week before the date you gave them. A friendly reminder is normal and expected.

Q47 My referee is slow, said no, or is not replying. What now?

1. Remind them once, politely, a week before your date.
2. Ask a backup referee at the same time as the main one. Having four people in mind is planning, not rudeness.
3. If a referee says no, thank them and move on at once. Don't argue.

4. Do not write the letter yourself and ask them to sign it unless they tell you to, and always keep the content true. Letters that look generic or copied can hurt your application.

Q48 How do I check a letter before I upload it?

Open the PDF on your computer and check every point. It takes two minutes and prevents most problems:

- Is it a PDF and does it open properly?
- Is it signed?
- Is it on letterhead, or does it show the sender's name and email details clearly?
- Is the heading correct (Commonwealth Shared Scholarship, right year)?
- Is the date recent?
- Does it say who the referee is, how they know you, and how to contact them?
- Is it readable and not cut off?
- Is it the right person's letter in the right upload slot?

Final checklist

Tick every line before you press Submit.

Before you start

- ☐ I read the CSC eligibility checklist and passed every point (citizenship, home, degree, no long stay in a rich country, money).
- ☐ My course is on this year's approved list, not last year's.
- ☐ For each university I wrote down the funding deadline, the general deadline, the CSC deadline and the offer-conditions deadline.
- ☐ I booked my English test.

University application

- ☐ I submitted my course application early, before the funding deadline.
- ☐ I saved my application number and the confirmation email.
- ☐ I replied to every university email within 24 hours.

CSC application on CSC Central

- ☐ I am submitting one CSC form per course. Each essay is in my own words, specific to that course and university, and under the word limit.
- ☐ My passport or national ID is uploaded and readable.
- ☐ I have three reference letters (employer, most recent academic study, and a personal referee who is not a relative), each a signed PDF on letterhead or a clear sender-details email.
- ☐ Each letter has the right heading and a recent date.
- ☐ I typed or pasted the correct application number (if asked).
- ☐ I uploaded my offer letter if I already have one. I did not upload a fake placeholder.
- ☐ I opened every uploaded file to check it is the right one and not blurry.
- ☐ I submitted at least one day before the deadline, and I converted 16:00 GMT to my own time zone.

After submitting

- ☐ I saved my CSC submission confirmation.
- ☐ I sent any new offer letter to the university's scholarship office.
- ☐ My calendar has reminders for the nomination period (about March), the English test, and each offer-condition date.

The 8 mistakes people make every year

1. **Waiting for the last week.** The portal slows down, referees run late, and nothing can be fixed after submission.
2. **Using last year's course list or dates.** Always use this year's official pages.
3. **Treating the CSC form as the only application.** The university application decides whether you are even nominated.
4. **Copying the same essay for every course.** Each CSC form covers one course. Change the course name, the university and your reasons.
5. **Asking referees in December.** Ask now and give them three to four weeks.
6. **A referee letter in the wrong format.** It must be a signed PDF on letterhead or an email showing the sender's details.

7. **Uploading a fake file to get past a box.** Read what the form actually needs. Ask the CSC if you are stuck.
8. **Ignoring the offer conditions.** A conditional offer is not a seat until you meet the conditions by the date in the letter.

The CSC's own pages answer most basic questions. Read the official eligibility checklist and application guidance first, then ask the group the rest. When you ask, say which university and course, what you've already read, and what exactly you don't understand.

Official links

Bookmark these and read them before asking the group. Last checked 20 October 2026. University pages for the 2027/28 Shared round are still being updated, so re-check each one in November when the CSC publishes the approved course list.

WHO	PAGE	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
CSC	Commonwealth Shared Scholarships	What the scholarship is, who can apply, benefits
CSC	Shared Scholarships: how to apply	Application guidance and documents
CSC	Shared Scholarship university applications	University bids for 2027/28 (around 180 awards, each university can bid for up to ten) and the list of approved courses, due in November 2026. Make sure the list is the new one
CSC	CSC Central	The only place to submit the scholarship application
CSC	Shared Scholar Handbook	Rules and guidance for Shared Scholars
CSC	Contact us	How to reach the CSC with questions or portal problems
Cambridge	Postgraduate funding	Funding deadlines (8 December 2026 or 6 January 2027, depending on the course)

WHO	PAGE	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Cambridge	Commonwealth Shared Cambridge Scholarship	The Cambridge Trust page for Shared applicants. Re-read the current version before relying on it
Oxford	When to apply (graduate)	Course deadlines, which are also the funding deadlines
Imperial	The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission at Imperial	Imperial's Shared Scholarship courses and Round 2 dates. Check again in November
Edinburgh	Commonwealth Shared Scholarship Scheme	Whether 2027/28 funding is confirmed
Glasgow	Commonwealth Shared Scholarship Scheme	Whether 2027/28 dates are posted
Queen's University Belfast	Commonwealth Shared Scholarships	Admission and scholarship closing dates
UCL	Commonwealth Shared Scholarship Scheme	2027/28 dates, once posted
Group resources	The Application Lab: Commonwealth guide and resources	theapplicationlab.com