

ASSOCIATION OF COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITIES

England & Wales · Charity number 314137

Details

Other names A C U

Status Registered

Legal form Other

Registered 1963-03-05

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

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Activities

Objects: TO PROMOTE THE INTERESTS AND WELL BEING OF THE UNIVERSITIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

Activities: Working with our members and others to promote and contribute to the provision of excellent higher education for the benefit of all people throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. Administration and funding of student scholarships.

Classification

- **How:** Makes Grants To Individuals, Makes Grants To Organisations, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body
- **What:** Education/training
- **Who:** Other Defined Groups

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** THE COMMONWEALTH.
- Camden

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-07-31	£8,069,000	£8,334,000	£34,225,000	84
2024-07-31	£7,747,000	£10,104,000	£32,855,000	85
2023-07-31	£11,130,000	£12,278,000	£32,442,000	134
2022-07-31	£10,433,000	£12,039,000	£33,807,000	130
2021-07-31	£9,869,000	£10,921,000	£35,832,000	133

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo	Chair	2024-08-01
Professor Abdul Bari Mohammad Obaidul Islam		2025-08-01
Professor Alan Clarke Shepard		2025-08-01
Professor Barnabas Nawangwe		2020-08-19
Professor Benedict Mwavu Mutua		2024-08-01
Professor Cheryl de la Rey		2020-08-19
Professor Chockalingam Raj Kumar		2024-08-01
Professor Dato' Ir. Dr Azuan Abu Osman Noor		2024-08-01
Professor Davinder Pal Singh Ahluwalia		2020-08-19
Professor Edmund Kieran Burke		2024-10-28
Professor Hina Tayyaba Khalil		2023-08-01
Professor James A Miller		2025-08-01
Professor Kabiru Aderemi Adeyemo		2023-08-01
Professor Kenneth Matengu		2025-08-01
Professor Pattinikutti Mudiyansele Chandralal Thilakarathne		2025-08-01
Professor Shearer Carroll West		2024-08-01
Professor Sibongile Muthwa		2023-08-01
Professor Sir Hilary McDonald Beckles		2022-08-01
Professor Stephen Bruce Dowton		2024-08-01

Accounts



The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities



Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024-2025



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1 Introduction from our Chair

2024-25 was a year of renewal for the ACU, as we consolidated our position as the foremost voice of higher education across the Commonwealth. At the heart of this work was the launch of our refreshed Road to 2030 strategy in June 2025, setting out a bold vision to strengthen Commonwealth universities, advance sustainable development, and connect engaged leaders through a clear framework of long-term goals and measures of success.

Our advocacy role was profiled at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa, where we were honoured to host the launch of the King's Commonwealth Fellowship Programme (KCFP). Developed by the ACU at the request of His Majesty King Charles III, this pioneering initiative will create transformative opportunities for students and professionals across Small Island Developing States, equipping them to respond to the economic, social, and environmental challenges of our age. The ceremonial launch, attended by His Majesty The King and Commonwealth leaders, was a powerful celebration of education's enduring role in shaping resilient and prosperous societies.

Throughout the year, we ensured that the sector's collective voice resonated across high-level forums and global platforms. From trade and health ministerial meetings to international dialogues on climate justice, sustainable urbanisation, skills, and employability, the ACU was at the centre of policy debate. We also commissioned important new research from London Economics, evidencing the strong correlation between higher education and long-term economic growth, a message we are taking directly to governments and policymakers across the Commonwealth.

Collaboration remained integral to our mission. The ACU Higher Education Taskforce produced actionable recommendations on employability, funding, digital access, inclusion, and research ecosystems, which are now informing preparations for CHOGM 2026, taking place in Antigua and Barbuda. Our networks and communities expanded their reach, engaging over 2,000 colleagues from member universities, while ACU Connect, our growing digital networking platform, has become a vibrant hub for Ambassadors to share knowledge and foster collaboration across borders.

Our longstanding commitment to scholarships and international mobility continued to change lives and build global connections. This year we delivered a diverse portfolio of opportunities, including the Commonwealth Scholarships, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships, the Ocean Country Partnership Programme, and provided support for the Turing Scheme. We were especially proud to launch the KCFP, generously supported by the Khalili and Sohmen-Pao Foundations, which will provide sustained capacity building across multiple sectors in Commonwealth Small Island Developing States. Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission marked its 65th anniversary, having supported over 31,000 exceptional individuals since its inception.

Partnerships with global institutions further amplified our impact. From leading work on Horizon Europe and European Commission-funded projects to co-creating RESNET with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, we connected universities, researchers, and policymakers to accelerate progress on shared challenges such as sustainable food systems, health, and climate resilience.

As of 31 July 2025, our vibrant network encompassed 406 member universities across 41 countries, strengthened by the launch of a new Membership Strategy and a programme of visits, events, and member engagement. With the continued patronage of His Majesty The King and the leadership of our Secretary General, Professor Colin Riordan CBE, the ACU enters its next chapter with renewed clarity of purpose and determination to ensure that the voice of Commonwealth higher education informs, influences, and inspires solutions to the defining challenges of our time.

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of Council



2 About us

The ACU is a global network of 400+ universities in over 41 countries with a shared commitment to working together to build a more equitable and sustainable world.

Accredited by the Commonwealth and incorporated by Royal Charter, the ACU has been fostering international collaboration in higher education since 1913.

As the voice for higher education in the Commonwealth, the ACU supports its members, individuals, and partners to collaborate and advance their contribution to sustainable development.

OUR VALUES

Collaboration

We strive to build an empowered community who share ideas and catalyse change

Creativity

We encourage curiosity, innovation and exploring new ideas, adapting to an ever-changing world

Equity

We celebrate diversity, promote inclusion, and act with respect and integrity

Excellence

We endeavour to be impact focused, delivering high standards and upholding our good reputation

OUR LONG-TERM GOALS

1 - Strengthen Commonwealth universities

In a landscape of rising demands, shrinking budgets, and rapid change, we empower our member universities to meet challenges, fulfil their missions, and widen access to higher education.

2 - Support sustainable development

Universities play a crucial role in generating solutions to complex global challenges. We enhance this contribution and leverage our multilateral role and Commonwealth connections to amplify the impact and expertise of our members.

3 - Connect engaged leaders

In a polarised and ever-changing world, international collaboration is key. From vice-chancellors to rising-star researchers and students, we support our members to develop their skills, knowledge and networks.

THE ROAD TO 2030

Our strategy is a manifesto for how the ACU works with its members and partners to strengthen higher education, support sustainable development and connect engaged leaders. It is these long-term goals that form the backbone of our strategy.

Our ambition will be delivered by deepening our membership engagement, working in strategic partnership and drawing not only on our strong brand and reputation, but, crucially, on our Commonwealth identity.

Our updated plan, 'The Road to 2030', continues to be a powerful guide and framework for our organisational vision. Our mission, vision, values and long-term goals are underpinned by a robust operational plan and key performance indicators that are reviewed annually by our governing Council.

We look forward to working with all our members and stakeholders to achieve these ambitions.



3 Review of the year

This section summarises our activities over the 2024-25 year. During this time the ACU consulted on a new strategic plan, the refreshed Road to 2030. We also continued to deliver against our existing strategic plan, which took us through to the end of July 2025.

Extensive research and consultation conducted during 2024 informed the refreshed Road to 2030. This included competitor analysis and benchmarking, qualitative focus groups and interviews with ACU members, a comprehensive membership survey and meetings with external stakeholders. A Council workshop and all staff away day further fed into the plan.

The strategic plan received approval from Council in November 2024 and was formally launched at an event at the RSA on June 18, 2025. We had 60 guests, including three High Commissioners, Education and Cultural Attachés, funders, partners and members.

The refreshed Road to 2030 sets out three long terms goals to strengthen Commonwealth universities, support sustainable development and connect engaged leaders and the measures of success that will underpin them. The strategy is supported by operational KPIs and an operating plan and the first year will be reported on in next year's Annual Report and Financial Statements.

The focus of the rest of this section is on our progress against the five objectives set out for the last year of the existing plan.

1. To champion the power of higher education to improve lives

1.1 Promote, at the highest levels, the value of universities to society, and their role in sustainable development

1.2 Present a powerful collective voice for universities on a global stage

1.3 Lead debate and dialogue around key issues in international higher education

The ACU continues to play a key role as the voice of higher education in the Commonwealth, leveraging our accredited status to represent universities and their value with Governments, funders, and other stakeholders, and across a range of high-level forums and platforms.

In October 2024, we attended the **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)** in Samoa, a summit of heads of Commonwealth nations which takes place every two years, where we took part in a series of high-level engagements with Commonwealth leaders, stakeholder forums, ministerial meetings, and side events.

The highlight of CHOGM for the ACU was the **official launch of The King's Commonwealth Fellowship Programme (KCFP)**, a new education initiative developed by the ACU at the request of His Majesty King Charles III. His Majesty attended the ceremonial launch, which was one of a small number of royal engagements attended by His Majesty and Her Majesty Queen Camilla in Samoa, and was an opportunity for the King to meet over 100 students from the National University of Samoa and the University of the South Pacific, as well as representatives from [ACU member universities](#) and stakeholders from across the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister of The Bahamas, The Hon. Philip Davis, and the then UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Rt. Hon David Lammy, also attended the event, where they met with Commonwealth students, and discussed with the ACU how its network of 400+ universities across the Commonwealth can support their government's priorities.



Speaking to the ACU's Secretary General, Professor Colin Riordan, His Majesty spoke of how proud he was to be the Patron of the ACU. Overall, the event was an exceptional celebration of education and scholarship. In addition, during the official [CHOGM opening ceremony](#), His Majesty, as Head of the Commonwealth, formally announced the King's Commonwealth Fellowship Programme in his inaugural speech, drawing attention to this important new initiative in front of an influential audience.

More details on the KCFP can be found in section 4.1.

Other highlights from the ACU's attendance at CHOGM include:

- **Co-hosting two official side events.** The first with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies on climate justice convened an eminent panel of judges and legal experts to delve into the pressing challenges and potential opportunities presented by existing national, regional, and international legal frameworks for advancing environmental and climate justice across the Commonwealth. The second side event with our partners on resilient urbanisation built on our work at the 2022 CHOGM to support the Declaration on Sustainable Urbanisation from Governments.
- **Major speaking slots across most of the forums.** At the Business Forum, ACU's Chair of Council Professor Cheryl De La Rey spoke on a plenary on regional skills whilst Professor Riordan chaired a roundtable on Lifelong Learning. At the Youth Forum, Professor Robin Mason, Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK and PVC at the University of Birmingham UK, represented the ACU on a panel on entrepreneurship and employability, whilst ACU's Director of External Affairs Beth Button co-chaired a session at the Peoples' Forum on indigenous knowledge, ably led by Associate Professor Amelia Turagebeci from our member Fiji National University.

Other **Commonwealth Ministerial meetings** we attended during 2024-25 included the **Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting and Business Summit** in Namibia (June 2025), where we took part in a fireside chat on how universities can help realise the ambition to grow intra-Commonwealth trade to \$2tn, and the **Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting** (May 2025) which afforded an opportunity to further consult on the development of the ACU's new Expert Group on health.

We also **contributed to a range of other global platforms** including an event on [The Challenges of Soft Power Strategy](#), a roundtable at the **Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council Trade and Investment Summit** on skills and employability (April 2025), a Wilton Park dialogue event on the UK Government's International Education Strategy (Feb 2025), a Wilton Park dialogue event on Sustainable Urbanisation (April 2025) and the Commonwealth Blue Charter advisory board meeting in Cyprus (March 2025).

In the course of 2024-25 we held a number of **meetings with Commonwealth High Commissioners**, or had brush-by engagements during events, including Samoa, Fiji, India, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Australia, Pakistan, Belize, Brunei, Rwanda, Antigua and Barbuda, Solomon Islands, St Vincent and Grenadines, Botswana, Maldives, and Sierra Leone.

During member visits or in the margins of Commonwealth forums we also held **bilateral meetings with Commonwealth government ministers or their teams**, including Bahamas, New Zealand, Malaysia, Rwanda, India, Canada, Ghana, Nigeria, Brunei, The Gambia, Kenya, Samoa, St Kitts and Nevis, Papa New Guinea, Singapore, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Namibia and Cyprus.

We also attended **events hosted by High Commissions in the UK and elsewhere across the Commonwealth**, including a luncheon event hosted by New Zealand Consul-General and Trade Commissioner to India & South Asia on the occasion of the visit to India by The Right Honourable Christopher Luxon, PM of New Zealand (March 2025), Australian Universities reception supported by the Australian Trade & Investment Commission at the Australian High Commission (March 2025), reception on the occasion of the 55th Independence and National Day of Bangladesh (March 2025), 52nd Independence Anniversary of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas (July 2025), CARICOM reception (July 2025).



We were invited to attend a range of **high-level events hosted by Buckingham Palace, Commonwealth Secretariat, and Commonwealth partners** including: a pre-CHOGM reception, hosted by Their Majesties The King and Queen at St. James's Palace, the Commonwealth Day Service of Celebration at Westminster Abbey and reception at Marlborough House (March 2025), the welcome reception for the Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth (June 2025), and High Commissioners banquet (November 2025) and Royal Commonwealth Society International Women's Day event with HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh (February 2025).

Our accredited status and global partnerships enable us to **influence policymaking in higher education and raise the profile of universities'** contribution to building a better world. To **support this advocacy, this year we commissioned a new report, *The impact of investment in higher education on economic growth***, from London Economics, which presents compelling new evidence linking higher education expansion with long-term national economic growth.

The report found that a 1 percentage point rise in tertiary attainment is associated with a 0.03 percentage point increase in average annual GDP per capita growth over the following five years. The returns are even more pronounced in lower-income countries, where the impact of higher education on economic growth is stronger, reflecting the transformative power of upskilling at earlier stages of development. To further illustrate the findings, the report models a scenario in which every Commonwealth country increases its tertiary attainment rate by 1 percentage point in 2025. The result is a collective GDP boost of \$28 billion by 2029.

The report calls on governments across the Commonwealth to take bold, evidence-led steps to unlock the full economic and social potential of higher education. The ACU will be taking its key recommendations to ministers and forums with asks to prioritise public investment in expanding access to tertiary education, embed higher education in national economic and development strategies, recognising universities as engines of talent, innovation, and inclusive growth, and strengthen data systems to track attainment, spending, and outcomes – enabling more effective policymaking and better targeting of investment.

We participated in a number of **major higher education events and conferences** during the 2024-25 period, speaking on a range of panels and platforms. At the Times Higher Education Impact & Innovation Conference in New Delhi (December 2024) we spoke on two separate panels, on 'Empowering future female leaders: Strategies for success' and 'Innovations in accessibility, collaboration and impact – a view from the outside'. During the Asia Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE) event (March 2025) we convened a panel focussed on 'equitable and sustainable partnerships', and had an exhibition booth, whilst the Universities Australia Solutions Summit in Canberra (February 2025) gave us an opportunity to engage with members and share our work. At the Times Higher Education Africa Summit in Kigali (March 2025) we took part in a panel discussion on entrepreneurship and employability, joined a panel at the Times Higher Education Global Sustainable Development Congress in Istanbul (June 2025) on how universities can work with governments and the public sector to drive health outcomes, and contributed insights on a panel on aligning education with emerging workforce needs at the QS Africa Forum (July 2025) in Zanzibar.

We chaired the closing plenary of University UK's International Higher Education Forum (IHEF) in June 2025, co-organised and gave the vote of thanks at the annual CEC Gladwyn Lecture at Westminster, later hosting a dinner for the speaker Professor Daniella Tilbury. We gave a keynote speech at the INBUSH Conference 2025 inaugural day for Amity Universities, spoke at Amity's Global Synergy 2025 Uniting Management and Technology for Sustainable Growth conference, a Future Skills Dialogue arranged by City, St George's University of London in Mumbai (April 2025), and attended the British Foreign Policy Group, in partnership with the Wellcome Trust: 'Science and Soft Power: In Conversation with Julia Gillard' (June 2025).

We took part in a **number of roundtables** including one hosted by the Australian/UK Chamber of Commerce and RMIT on industry-university collaboration (May 2025), another hosted by the Higher Education Policy Institute and Universities Australia on 'Shared challenges in Australian and UK higher education' (June 2025), and a roundtable on 'Sustainable Futures: Transforming HE in India through Global Collaboration' arranged by University of Reading in Delhi (March 2025).



2. To support the long-term vitality of universities

2.1 Support the development of the core human and institutional resources that underpin the university mission

2.2 Improve equity, inclusion, and access, which are critical to the future of higher education

2.3 Share learning from local and regional initiatives to deliver wider impact

The ACU continued to lead and manage a range of innovative projects and platforms that connect universities across borders to help meet demand, enable vital research, and strengthen higher education systems across the Commonwealth.

Following its formal mandate from the Commonwealth Education Ministers Action Group (CMAG), the **ACU established a Higher Education Taskforce**.

The Taskforce has developed a structured programme of engagement that spans education, health, finance, trade, and climate portfolios.

- This cross-sectoral positioning has elevated higher education as a strategic enabler of development with five thematic working groups driving progress across employability, funding, digital access, inclusion, and research ecosystems. The Taskforce's working groups have produced actionable recommendations that are now being channelled into the lead-up to CHOGM 2026 and the 22nd Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (22CCEM).
- These include proposals for sustainable financing models, inclusive innovation, healthy and inclusive research ecosystems and AI governance frameworks. The ACU Congress in November 2025 will also serve as a key policy interface, with closed-door roundtables feeding directly into CCEM and other ministerial briefings. These groups aim to strengthen policy-research translation and showcase institutional good practice, further embedding higher education in Commonwealth development strategies.

The **Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort programme**, funded by the British Council, is designed to support a pipeline of early career researchers from Commonwealth countries, with the capacities to contribute to climate action research. With a focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation, this applied training programme supports these researchers to co-create a research project with the active participation of policy and/or practice stakeholders.

- This year, the programme provided funding for four pilot research projects in the areas of climate law, water security, and urban resilience.
- Ten Fellows have participated in the four projects, which have facilitated triangular research collaborations between Ghana-Nigeria-UK, India-Nigeria-South Africa-UK, and Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-UK.
- The programme held a closing and dissemination event at the University of Lagos, Nigeria in July 25, in partnership with the University of Lagos and the University of Warwick. The hybrid event was attended by over 450 individuals.

The **Understanding African Universities Capacity for Climate Adaptation Research project** is a 24-month initiative funded by the UK's FCDO and co-funded by Canada's IDRC. It is jointly implemented by the Association of African Universities, the ACU and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. The project commenced in January 2025 and aims to strengthen institutional capacity for climate adaptation research across 20 African universities. Using a living lab approach, the project is co-developing a Climate Change Adaptation Research-Focused Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool. This participatory method engages researchers, university leaders, professional staff, and non-academic stakeholders, including NGOs, policymakers, and community members, to foster collaboration and address climate adaptation challenges. The approach will enable rapid identification of practical solutions and provides clear pathways for implementation, enhancing the effectiveness and impact of climate research in African higher education institutions. The project's innovative approach and scope was discussed in a [University World News](#) article in June 2025.



3. To engage and connect universities across borders, and promote collaboration

3.1 Strengthen and grow our international network of universities to extend our global reach

ACU member universities are a vibrant global community with a shared commitment to building a better world through international collaboration in higher education. As of 31 July 2025, the ACU 406 member universities in 41 countries.

45% of its members are based in Asia, and nearly a quarter of its membership based in Africa. Our top countries in terms of member representation are India, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, South Africa, Pakistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Kenya, Ghana and Canada.

During 2024-25 ACU developed a new **Membership Strategy** that was agreed by Council in July 2025. The aim of the strategy is to support the long-term goals of our refreshed Road to 2030 to strengthen Commonwealth universities, support sustainable development and connect engaged leaders.

In developing the strategy, a benchmarking exercise was conducted, reviewing the strategies of nine international, regional, and special interest university associations, and the networks and communities offered by 44 international, regional, and special interest university associations. This sought to position the ACU alongside competitors and comparators, and to identify unique value we could bring to our network. It found that whilst all have distinct working groups and many offer similar opportunities such as grants for staff and training and development, the ACU has a unique combination of diversity of network, programmatic offer, and multilateral role (in particular, our ability to connect experts with Commonwealth governments and funders).

This benchmarking was supported by the insights garnered from the ACU membership experience survey (March-May 2024), reported on last year, which captured and analysed the current sentiment across universities towards their membership, including which benefits were most used and suggestions for improvement. Focus groups and interviews were also held with vice-chancellors and Ambassadors.

In a smaller snapshot survey with 95 respondents carried out in June 2025, we had a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 75%. A breakdown showed that 78.9% of responders would promote or recommend us, 16.8% were passive or neutral and just 4.2% were detractors.

These consultation exercises found that members highly value the ACU's diverse network and want more ways to connect with other members. Grants, fellowships, and other funded opportunities continue to be the most sought-after member benefit, and events are most engaged with.

The new Membership Strategy will go live in August 2025, and as agreed by Council, will focus on driving high value engagement to maximise retention of members, with modest growth to offset any leavers. To support this, a range of new member benefits are being explored and expanded, including ACU Connect, our virtual networking platform for Ambassadors. Since launching the platform in September 2024, **176** ACU Ambassadors signed up (c. 50% of all ACU Ambassadors), **58** events and live streams with over **900** participants were held, **298** posts with **136** comments were shared, and **439** messages have been sent between Ambassadors. September 2025 will see the expansion of the platform to include members of the ACU's three Communities of Practice (see 3.2).

3.2 Create forums through which institutional knowledge and resources can be shared and multiplied

The **ACU's development of new Expert Groups and continued work on five thematic networks and communities of practice** has enabled universities to collaborate on joint initiatives, share best practice, and come together to influence policy agendas within and beyond the sector.



The ACU has **worked to develop new Expert Groups to better harness the expertise of ACU member universities to advance the policy priorities of Commonwealth member states**. These Expert Groups have been deliberately aligned with existing Commonwealth ministerial and policy fora in health, oceans, and climate & environment on issues collectively identified as critical by member states and which simultaneously demonstrate the collective expertise and research strengths of ACU member universities. The following outlines the work undertaken during the reporting period prior to a soft launch of Expert Groups in September 2025.

ACU has undertaken extensive conversations with Commonwealth policymaking, civil society, public and professional bodies to ensure that the focus for each Expert Group is policy relevant and supports collaboration with other Accredited Organisations – an increasingly important pre-requisite identified by the Commonwealth Secretariat itself. The precise activity focus and deliverables are still being refined but can broadly be identified as follows:

Ministerial	Theme	Activity focus (TBC)
Health	Health and Care Workforce	Equitable workforce training and recruitment
Oceans	Ocean Conservation	Coastal resilience: aligned with Blue Charter Mangroves Ecosystems and Livelihoods Action Group
Climate & Environment	Sustainable Urbanisation	Competencies, skills and curricula

In March 2025 ACU **launched a Research Engagement Survey** to identify member universities already well engaged with government and civil society to advance policy priorities in these thematic areas. With a focus on research engagement and knowledge transfer activities, the survey solicited 86 responses from 57 unique institutions in 23 countries. This work has helped to identify examples of institutional good practice that can be platformed by the ACU as conversations with Commonwealth partners develop further, as well as relevant academic contacts to engage in Expert Group related activities.

Drawing on the Research Engagement Survey and member intelligence from across the ACU's External Affairs Directorate (member visits, engagement reports, policy activities, Roster of Experts), the ACU held a series of **consultation workshops** in July 2025 with academic experts from member universities to further explore the role of universities in advancing policy commitments in the thematic areas outlined above.

The workshops engaged 32 universities from 15 countries in facilitated discussions to identify case studies of science-to-policy and community engagement alongside the institutional and policy enablers supporting this work, the typical challenges encountered, and the value add of global networks like the ACU convening members around these issues. Insights from the workshops will be used to further inform Expert Group operational design and activity focus, and to identify relevant other networks and initiatives to avoid duplication and support coordinated policy activity.

The ACU has also continued the work of the **thematic ACU Networks and Communities**, which include over 2,000 individual members, whilst also undertaking a major review of their effectiveness. The nature of the review and its results are set out at the end of this section.

Through these networks and communities, we have continued engaging members in activities and enabling universities to collaborate on joint initiatives, share best practice, and come together to influence policy agendas within and beyond the sector. 73% of all members across 38 countries are represented in ACU networks and communities.

The ACU Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network (CCRN) brings universities together to share practical expertise and experience of building resilience to climate change and natural disasters and contribute to policymaking in this area. Updates from 2024-25 include:

- As of 31 July 2025, the Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network had 535 individual members at 323 member universities.



- Applications opened for the 2024-25 cycle of the ACU Commonwealth Climate and Resilience Network Grants and the selection process is currently being conducted.

The ACU Higher Education and the SDGs Network is a forum for staff at ACU member universities who are directly engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, including integrating sustainable development into their teaching, research, operations, and strategies. Updates from 2024-25 include:

- As of 31 July 2024, the Higher Education and the SDGs Network had 660 individual members at 205 member universities.
- A member of the Network, from the University of Manchester in the UK, took part in reviewing the Commonwealth Curriculum Framework, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- On 17 June, members of the Higher Education and the SDGs Network, Dr Budd Hall and Dr Darlene Clover from the University of Victoria in Canada, delivered a hybrid talk to ACU members and staff in the ACU office and online. Professor Darlene Clover, Professor of Adult Education and the Feminist Imaginary, spoke about her work on Art, Museums and The Imagination. Professor Budd Hall, Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, spoke about the work of his Chair on knowledge democracy and their DECODE Knowledge Project.
- Once again this year, we helped select 7 judges from the ACU Higher Education and the SDGs Network for the International Green Gown Awards, from the UK, New Zealand, Namibia, Canada, and South Africa

The ACU HR in HE Community is a forum for staff working in university human resources. The Community champions the strategic importance of HR professionals in universities and their unique contribution to the university's mission. Updates from 2024-25 include:

- As of 31 July 2025, the HR in HE Community had 465 individual members at 176 member universities.
- We awarded two HR in HE Community Grants, one in December and one in January, to the University of Fiji and the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The grantee from the University of Fiji has successfully delivered their training to HR practitioners and their training was featured in a Fijivillage article entitled '[Human Resource Directors to take proactive measures to ensure growth](#)'. The Community's Steering Committee member at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, Karen Mather, spoke at the training to share her expertise and represent the ACU.
- The ACU HR in HE Community Scoping Study has been completed – with five recommendations to increase engagement and align the Community more closely with the ACU's Policy and Advocacy work.
- Applications opened for the 2024-25 cycle of the HR in HE Community's Grants and members of the Steering Committee reviewed the applications. The selection process is currently being conducted.

The ACU Supporting Research Community is a forum for all staff at ACU member universities involved in supporting the research process – including research management and administration, research impact and uptake, and library services. Updates from 2023-24 include:

- As of 31 July 2025, the Supporting Research Community had 810 individual members at 226 member universities.
- Since July 2024, the Supporting Research Community Steering Committee has served as the Fostering Sustainable and Inclusive Research Ecosystems Working Group under the ACU's Higher Education Taskforce. A Steering Committee meeting was held on 18 February to update and consult on projects under this workstream.
- Work completed to date include the ACU Measures: Malaysia Full Economic Costings (FEC) project in collaboration with the Academy of Sciences Malaysia (ASM) and endorsement of the INORMS More Than Our Rank Initiative.
- ACU Supporting Research Community Training Grantees from Kibabii University and the Technical University of Kenya invited ACU members to join their online training courses for early career researchers without cost, funded by the grants.
- In March, members of the ACU Supporting Research Community Steering Committee from OP Jindal Global University in India and University of Saskatchewan in Canada, delivered a session at the APAIE Conference in India on 'Cultivating Equitable Partnerships for Global Citizenship in Asia-Pacific and Beyond' and promoted the Supporting Research Community and the ACU Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit.



- Applications opened for the 2024-25 cycle of the Supporting Research Community Training Grants and members of the Steering Committee have reviewed the applications. The selection process is currently underway.

We announced to members of these Networks and Communities that in August 2025 we will merge the three former ACU Policy Networks to a new Community of Practice **called Higher Education for Sustainable Societies Community of Practice (HESS)** and move all three ACU Communities of Practice (**HESS, Supporting Research Community and HR in HE Community**) to our new online networking platform, ACU Connect (see section 3.3).

This merging and online migration to ACU Connect partly responds to long-standing member requests for better networking and direct peer-to-peer messaging opportunities. Importantly, it also reflects findings from the 2024 ACU Networks and Communities review which assessed their strategic, governance and operational functions (both internally and via Committee member consultation) and highlighted the need for greater standardisation and interdisciplinary knowledge sharing across member engagement platforms.

The 2024 review also provides the strategic rationale for replacing the fixed thematic policy networks with adaptive, time-limited Expert Groups aligned with Commonwealth accredited policy mechanisms, as the principal mechanism for brokering connections between ACU members and Commonwealth governments through the ACU's policy work.

Roster of Experts

The ACU regularly develops innovative programmes with academic and professional services staff from its network 400+ member universities across more than 41 countries. The Roster of Experts was launched with the aim to give academic staff in member institutions the opportunity to advance their career and contribute to new and exciting projects and programmes. Academics listed on the Roster of Experts can speak to a wide range of topics, including subject areas such as agriculture and food security, climate change, global public health, and more. Members of the roster have also been invited to join review panels for the awarding of grants and scholarships. An example of how we have engaged our roster includes members invited to work with Commonwealth Secretariat to review the **Commonwealth Curriculum Development Framework for Sustainable Development**. Five members from the roster participated either online or in person in a two-day COM SEC workshop. Currently we have around 750 academics registered.

3.3 Deepen our engagement with member universities to identify areas of shared interest and remain responsive to their needs

During 2024-25 we carried out a series of **ACU member visits** including to Canada – Ontario, Québec and British Columbia provinces (Oct/Nov 2024), Nigeria (Nov 2024), Australia, Samoa, New Zealand, Fiji, Singapore (Oct/Nov 2024), Sri Lanka (December 2024), India (December 2024), Australia (February 2025), Rwanda (March 2025), Canada – Alberta province (June 2025), India (March 2025), UK (May and ongoing 24-2025), Cyprus (March 2025), South Africa (April), and Tanzania (July 2025).

We also hosted a range of members at our offices in London, including from City University of London, University of West Indies, University of Gambia, La Trobe University, University of British Columbia, Universiti Malaya, University College London. On 22 May 2025, the ACU hosted a delegation from The Gambia, including government officials and the vice-chancellor of the University of The Gambia for a membership engagement meeting.

We were invited to join two government delegations where we had a chance to engage with a range of member universities, prospects, and other partners including a UK Government trade delegation to Nigeria, where we also attended the Going Global conference in November 2024.



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ACU Ambassadors continue to be instrumental to membership operations and engagement activities and have collaborated with ACU teams in debt chasing, campus visits, and programmes, for instance. We currently have 68% of ACU members represented by Ambassadors.

In early September 2024, the ACU launched **ACU Connect**, a new online platform designed to support direct peer-to-peer networking and sharing of good practice and knowledge, decentralising interactions between members and enhancing communications between members and the ACU.

The platform is exclusively for ACU members, with initial access granted to ACU Ambassadors. This marked a significant step in ACU's one-to-many membership engagement strategy, aimed at fostering organic interinstitutional collaboration across the Commonwealth with positive effects for all other ACU activities requiring interinstitutional collaboration. The platform will soon be rolled out to members of networks and Communities of Practice.

The platform quickly gained traction, with over 140 Ambassadors self-registered and opted-in during the first three months. By the end of January, ACU Connect had expanded its reach across all regions of the Commonwealth, with 165 Ambassadors registered, covering all regions of the Commonwealth, a number that rose to 176 by the end of the year.

ACU Connect enabled the hosting of online events directly within the platform, and the membership engagement team delivered 58 events and live streams during the year including onboarding sessions, themed office hours, and the flagship ACU Ambassadors Summit. Engagement was strong, with 44% of Ambassadors attending at least one event, and 15% attending three or more.

Ambassadors remained central to ACU's operations, contributing to member engagement and representing the organisation at higher education sector events, including a panel at APAIE 2025 in March, discussing 'Cultivating Equitable Partnerships for Global Citizenship in Asia-Pacific and Beyond'.

Through ACU Connect the team has access to a full suite of engagement analytics and are better able to track impact. For example:

- A grants information session hosted on ACU Connect led to a surge in interest and applications.
- The Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Fellowship Programme saw increased applications to host fellows.
- The Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network Grants received 100 applications for just three grants – the highest level of interest since its launch in 2021.

Ambassadors also supported **regional engagement** visits in Zambia (Clare Project Meeting); Namibia (Commonwealth Business Summit); Tanzania and Zanzibar (QS Africa Forum); Morocco (Association of African Universities Conference); Canada (member engagement visit).

They participated in member-arranged events in the UK and India, including: Amity University's Global Conference; University of Birmingham's 125th anniversary; Launch events for University of Liverpool, York, and Bristol's India branch campuses.

We have provided market insight briefings to Bournemouth University (on India and Nigeria); Coventry University (on India); City, University of London (on India and Nigeria); SOAS, University of London (on India), Royal Holloway, University of London (on India); University of Bath (on India); Manchester Metropolitan University (on India), The National University of Singapore NUS (on India).



4. To deliver educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference

4.1 Run prestigious scholarship schemes that build enduring international connections, understanding, and engagement

The ACU is committed to delivering educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference. One of the ways we do this is through the management of **world-class international scholarship schemes** that build enduring international connections and understanding between individuals, institutions, and nations.

In 2024-25, we continued to manage the UK government's Commonwealth Scholarships, as well as the ACU-led Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships and **Cefas-funded Ocean Country Partnership Programme Scholarships**. We also continued to be custodians of the **Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP)** and a lead delivery partner in the Turing Scheme. As set out in section 1, we also launched the **King's Commonwealth Fellowship Programme**.

The **CSFP** is a unique international framework through which Commonwealth countries offer university scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other member nations, forging lasting links across the Commonwealth and creating valuable opportunities for cultural and academic exchange. The new KCFP, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships – both detailed below – operate within this framework.

The **Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC)**, funded by the UK Government, has now supported over 31,000 individuals by extending life-transforming higher education opportunities, rewarding merit, and promoting equity and inclusion, especially among people from disadvantaged backgrounds. By empowering talented individuals across the Commonwealth to learn, innovate, and co-create knowledge and solutions for tackling global development challenges, the CSC helps to transform societies and build a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for all. Some of the highlights of the period include:

- The Commission funded 648 new scholarships and fellowships in the period. 1,497 scholars and fellows from 40 countries on award in total, studying or registered at 92 UK universities and 9 UK organisations.
- CSC offered Scholarships to citizens of all Commonwealth countries in the period.
- The Commission celebrated its 65th anniversary during the period with a series of events and activities to highlight the impact of Scholars and Fellows on sustainable development
- The **CSC's Alumni Community Engagement Fund (ACEF)** is an annual fund which seeks to support Commonwealth Alumni in raising awareness of key development issues at the community level. In 2024-25, alumni delivered 13 activities in 9 countries across the Commonwealth. From Kenya to India to Jamaica, activities addressed three themes: Youth for Sustainable Development, Save our Oceans and Disability Inclusion in Institutions. Activities included promoting political rights for people with disability in Nigeria, delivering a multi-school model Conference of Parties (COP) in Pakistan to strengthen climate change awareness among youth, and organising workshops to build the capacity of new researchers in utilising analytical tools to detect and mitigate micro-nanoplastic pollution in rivers and coastal areas in India.
- The theme for the **CSC's 2024-25 Time Limited Programme (TLP) was Entrepreneurship**. Its main focus was the creation of the Commonwealth Startup Fellowship, a 6-month accelerator programme for early stage businesses from across the Commonwealth. The programme, co-delivered by Imperial College London's Enterprise Lab, comprised of two cohorts of 20 businesses. Each cohort took part in a 2-week Bootcamp in Accra, Ghana, 5 months of online support drawing on a global network of experts and culminated in a Capstone week in London in September 2025.

The **Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) Scholarships**, funded through the **UK's Blue Planet Fund**, enable students to undertake a fully-funded Master's or PhD programme in marine science. The contract for the programme is due to end in March 2026.



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There are 114 OCPP Scholars in total from the Solomon Islands & Vanuatu, Ghana, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives, Mozambique, Senegal and Belize. The 13 Indian scholars who were studying at the University of Peradeniya and Cochin University of Science and Technology completed their awards in July 2025. The set-up and delivery of the scholarship programmes continues to span three languages for students at nine different universities.

Since the last reporting period, the OCPP training programme was launched as a bespoke online training to enhance the professional development of OCPP scholars, co-developed with INASP. The training programme covered 3 modules:

- Effectively engaging with policy and practice – tools and strategies for impact;
- Creating knowledge together: successfully engaging communities in marine research;
- Writing winning PhD and postdoc proposals.

A final report following the completion of the modules is in progress.

The [Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships \(QECS\)](#) offer opportunities to study for a two-year Master's degree in a low or middle income Commonwealth country. Funded by Commonwealth governments, the scholarships are aimed at students who are committed to creating change in their communities. Updates from 2024-25 include:

There are currently 26 QECS scholars studying across 16 institutions and 14 Commonwealth countries, with subject areas ranging from Public Health to Construction Management.

Current host countries include Bangladesh, Eswatini, Fiji, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Uganda. Scholar's home countries include Cameroon, Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zambia.

In partnership with the Department for Education (DfE), the ACU successfully managed the **Application Assessment Hub for the DfE managed Turing Scheme's T5 cycle from January 2025 to August 2025**. This cycle saw a record number of applications, 938 in total (up from 724 in Turing 4) across schools, further education/vocational education and training (FE/VET), and higher education (HE). ACU oversaw a rigorous double-blind assessment process using a standardised rubric, supported by enhanced assessor training and quality assurance mechanisms. The introduction of the DfE's new assessment portal significantly improved efficiency and assessor user experience. ACU also led the appeals process, conducted moderation, and provided strategic recommendations to refine future cycles. Feedback from assessors was overwhelmingly positive, with high satisfaction in training, support, and portal usability. The T5 cycle demonstrated ACU's commitment to delivering a fair, transparent, and high-quality assessment process, contributing to the equitable distribution of funding and the continued success of the Turing Scheme.

As set out in Section 1.3, in October 2024, His Majesty King Charles III attended the ceremonial launch event of the new [King's Commonwealth Fellowship Programme \(KCFP\)](#) hosted by ACU in Samoa as part of CHOGM.

Inspired by the King's commitment to create opportunity and to tackle contemporary challenges including climate change and inequality, the programme has been developed in response to urgent economic, social and environmental development challenges affecting Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

An ambitious interdisciplinary three-part initiative, it will offer fellowships for mid-career professionals, undergraduate scholarships, and PhDs. Delivered together, these three strands will enable sustained short, medium and long-term impact for Commonwealth SIDS and their communities.

SIDS are among the most vulnerable countries in the world, facing numerous economic and environmental shocks, youth out-migration and skills shortages in public services, and experiencing disproportionate and deeply damaging effects of climate change.



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Efforts to strengthen their resilience and capacity to tackle these intersecting development challenges are urgent. Inspired by The King and established with a significant personal donation from His Majesty, KCFP has been co-created in partnership with universities and stakeholders in SIDS and from across the Commonwealth.

Activities included in the programme will take place in-country, with an emphasis on local impact and retaining skills and talent in SIDS regions. The programme aims to strengthen climate resilience, build capacity in education, health and engineering, and develop resilient public services and the skills of those who support them, by:

- supporting civil servants, local government and mid-senior career professionals to further develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of climate resilience and its impact on other sectors through part-time fellowships undertaken alongside work;
- addressing significant capacity challenges in key education, healthcare and engineering sectors via undergraduate training;
- upskilling university academic staff and 'train the trainers' of future generations of researchers and workers in industries vital to SIDS resilience, through PhDs delivered in collaboration with ACU's network of universities across the Commonwealth.

This prestigious programme will fully fund, train and support multiple cohorts of undergraduate, postgraduate and mid-career King's Fellows in its first few years and seeks to engage participants from every Commonwealth SIDS. The programme will be tailored to the specific and unique needs of SIDS, but with broad thematic focus areas to facilitate knowledge sharing. Participants will have the opportunity to join a cohort of SIDS King's Fellows, with the opportunity to network and exchange learning and shared problem solving with peers across SIDS and with ACU's wider network of universities.

Launching the programme, the King said: 'I am delighted to support this important new initiative. Throughout my life I have believed in the power of education to improve lives and unite communities across the Commonwealth and beyond. There is so much we can learn from one another as we work together within the Commonwealth to tackle the major challenges of our age and, as these Fellowships do in Small Island Developing States, to address them where they are felt most acutely. It is my fervent hope that these new Fellowships will play a significant role in furthering the free exchange of knowledge and advancing the spirit of mutual support that lies at the heart of our Commonwealth - today, tomorrow and towards a brighter future for all.'

The Programme is also generously supported by its Founding Member, the [Khalili Foundation](#). Over the past three decades, the Foundation has enabled peacebuilding through art, culture and education and has become a global leader in promoting interfaith and intercultural relations. It has supported and driven a number of internationally recognised projects that use the power of art, culture and education to bring people together and to build harmonious societies.

In addition, the Sohmen-Pao Foundation donated in support of the PhD Fellowships and Undergraduate Scholarships over the next six years. The Sohmen-Pao Foundation's mission is to invest in talent for a better society and is supporting KCFP as an important initiative to improve access to education and strengthen local communities.

The PhD programme was launched in February 2025 with a closing date of 7 May. The PhD Fellowships are open to academic staff and professionals from Commonwealth SIDS with Master's level or equivalent experience, who wish to undertake a PhD in any of the following subject areas:

- Climate change/environment
- Education
- Engineering and
- Health

In total 99 eligible applications were received from 18 SIDS (out of 25 potential countries). Whilst the majority of applicants were academics or other university staff, applications were also received from government officials



(health, climate, housing), representatives from NGOs (mainly climate focused), industry including finance, HR, legal and engineering, and public services including teaching and healthcare.

Fellows will enrol in a PhD programme in their home country in the SIDS alongside working, and receive joint supervision from a dedicated partner university elsewhere across the Commonwealth (mainly Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or United Kingdom), where they will attend periods of study and/or research methods training. Candidates will join a cohort of prestigious 'King's Fellows', accessing a broad academic network of knowledge and expertise, and the opportunity to create lasting connections across the Commonwealth whilst giving back to their local community.

Applications are currently being assessed by each of the 23 committed KCFP partner universities (ACU members based in Australia, Canada, NZ and the UK), in line with the partner university's standard approach to selecting PhD candidates.

Work is also underway on the Undergraduate and Professional Fellowship Pathways, with good engagement in the needs assessment and co-creation process of these two pathways across the region.

4.2 Seek to create and expand educational opportunities

4.3 Demonstrate the impact of international educational experiences and initiatives

In addition to government-funded schemes, the **ACU's own range of grants and fellowships** continue to support the interchange of students and staff between member universities. These are specifically for members of the ACU's thematic networks and communities of practice. The grants – detailed under 3.2 – fund projects that further the networks' aims and promote collaboration between their members.

In 2024-25, 599 applications were submitted across seven grant programmes. This is an increase of 30% in applications received on average per award despite fewer awards being offered.

In addition, the ACU supports early career researchers at its member universities through two types of grants:

- **Early Career Conference Grants** are awarded to individual academics to enable them to attend international conferences in their area of expertise, helping them to share their research, learn about new developments, and build professional networks. The selection process for the 2024-25 awards is underway.
- **Supporting Research Community Training Grants** are awarded to member universities to support the delivery of training that equips emerging researchers with the skills required to succeed in their research careers. In 2024-25, five grants were available. These are currently in the selection process. These grants are attached to our Supporting Research Community, detailed under 3.2.

ACU Fellowships promote the exchange of knowledge, skills, and ideas between universities and countries of the Commonwealth. Available to both academic and professional staff, the Fellowships enable collaborative research and partnership building, as well as opportunities to observe and exchange different techniques and practice. In 2024-25 three fellowships were advertised; two for inward and outward travel to Hong Kong and one in the area of accountancy. The selection process for these awards is underway.

The Routledge/Round Table Commonwealth Studentships support PhD research projects on Commonwealth-related themes. The ACU supports the marketing of these studentships, and in 2024-25, two places were advertised.

The ACU Gender Grants are awarded annually to member universities to support initiatives that will boost gender equity and equality on campus. The selection process for 2024-25 is underway for five Gender Grants. Where the projects are linked to anti-sexual harassment and are in Africa or Asia, training will be provided by the Martha Farrell Foundation to provide effective anti-sexual harassment policies and strategies, drawing on the Foundation's expertise in anti-sexual harassment initiatives.



4.4 Create and sustain a high-performance culture by delivering efficient core services to support our people

The ACU is adapting sustainably to a rapidly changing environment. Our new hybrid working policy reflects post-pandemic practices, with staff working 80% remotely and 20% in-office. In response we have consolidated our office space.

The ACU achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation and 97.3% in the annual Health and Safety audit. In the autumn of 2024 a GDPR audit reported positively, with 60% of controls fully met, but with a number of recommendations that ACU is in the process of implementing. A Governance review was also carried out by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the ACU was found to be 'competent' in its charity governance.

Staff turnover remained low, falling to 6% in June 2025. Our Staff Engagement Survey, carried out in November 2024, showed an engagement score of 97.3%. In addition, 84% of staff responded favourably to the question 'The culture at the ACU supports the organisation's success'. This compared to 76% in the May 2024 survey.

4.5 Tell our story in compelling new ways and show evidence of our impact

In 2024-25 The ACU's communications team secured 378 pieces of positive coverage in the media, with an estimated media reach of over 2 billion (Source: Signal AI). Coverage was secured in media outlets across the Commonwealth and globally.

The PR campaign supporting the launch of the King's Commonwealth Fellowship Programme in October 2024 led to the dramatic increase in media coverage and reach in 2024-25. The campaign secured 293 pieces of positive coverage, with a reach of 1.8 billion across media outlets in UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Samoa, and Fiji.

4.6 Forge alliances with strategic partners to further our mission and achieve our objective

The ACU's belief in the value of collaboration extends to every aspect of its work. Working with organisations whose values and aspirations align with our own helps us to share knowledge and ideas, extend our reach, and achieve common goals. Highlights from 2024-25 include:

ACU continued work on the **Horizon Europe-funded CEA-FIRST Project (Consortium Europe Africa on Research and Innovation for Food Systems Transformation)**. The project brings together 22 partners from Europe and Africa, representing a broad spectrum of expertise and stakeholders – including researchers, NGOs, donors, and extension workers – working in food and nutritional security and sustainable agriculture. Over the past year, the ACU, in collaboration with the South African Agricultural Research Council (ARC), has led the development and delivery of the project's monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework. This includes a detailed Performance Measurement Plan and a draft data analysis plan incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. A series of participatory workshops and tailored surveys have been designed and delivered to support inclusive stakeholder engagement and robust data collection. These tools are enabling the International Research Consortium to monitor and evaluate the progress of the FNSSA Partnership and assess its impact on member institutions.

ACU continued work on the **StEPPFoS (Strengthening Evidence-Based Policy Practice for Sustainable Food Systems under the EU-AU Partnership)** project, alongside 17 other research institutes and organisations across Europe and Africa. Funded by the European Commission, the project aims to enhance the



evidence base for agriculture and food systems policies within the Africa-Europe partnership. Over the past year, the ACU has developed and begun implementing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for StEPPFoS, including a Performance Measurement Plan and a data analysis strategy that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Participatory workshops and survey tools have been designed to ensure inclusive input and evidence generation across diverse stakeholder groups. These efforts are supporting the project's goal of strengthening policy learning, accountability, and impact analysis across the partnership.

In January 2024, the ACU launched a one-year pilot to develop **RESNET**– a global research network focused on agri-food system transformation through South-South and Triangular Cooperation in partnership with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). RESNET aims to foster collaboration among universities, research centres, and stakeholders across the Commonwealth and beyond, supporting capacity building, knowledge exchange, and the formation of research clusters.

Key milestones included **three stakeholder consultations during spring 2024** and a high-level policy dialogue (HLPD) held in November 2024 at the ACU's London headquarters to inform activities for such a network. The first stakeholder consultation in February was a hybrid event, attended by representatives of eight UK ACU member universities in person and by six internationally based attendees online. The other two stakeholder consultations were delivered in May 2025 online and attended each by around 15 representatives of ACU member universities with an agri-food focus. The hybrid HLPD event convened leading academics from the UK, Europe, and Africa, alongside representatives from public bodies (FCDO, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), UK Research and Innovation, OCPP, European Commission, World Bank, ODI, ACU member university representatives), private (Silatech), and NGO (Association of African Universities, DirectAid and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture) organisations (16 in-person, 44 online). Discussions emphasised the role of research in advancing the agri-food systems transformation and the need for coordinated international efforts. The ACU is now in discussion with the FAO, the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam and RUFORUM (The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture) on how best to continue this work and coordinate and fund tangible activities identified via the various stakeholder consultations.

ACU joined **Crowdhelix** in April 2025, a global collaborative network that connects researchers, innovators, business leaders, and investors. Crowdhelix primarily focuses on facilitating the formation of research and innovation consortia that seek funding through Horizon Europe. Horizon Europe (HE) is the EU's flagship funding programme for research and innovation, with a budget of €93.5 billion for the period 2021–2027. Through the ACU Crowdhelix membership, ACU member universities gain access to Crowdhelix's training offer for applicants – covering both individual fellowships and collaborative proposals. This includes virtual live and recorded sessions, as well as invitations to selected networking events across various programmes.

Via the Crowdhelix network, we have begun exploring opportunities to join collaborative proposals under **Pillar II of the Horizon Europe programme**. Our profile on the platform has sparked several conversations with potential partners, and we have also participated in in-person events organised by Crowdhelix. An in-person Crowdhelix event in Greenwich in May 2025 led to ACU joining a funding proposal led by the University of Helsinki and Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in Nigeria. The project, **'Developing a 360° Approach for the EU–AU Climate Action & Sustainable Energy Partnership'** responds to a Horizon Europe Cluster 5 call for a €4 million Coordination and Support Action. If successful, ACU will deliver capacity-strengthening training and communications support for universities in Africa, with a projected budget of £200,000.

We remain committed to our partnership with the **Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative (CSCI)**, which allows us to connect ACU members with practitioners and organisations working on sustainable urbanisation, whilst advocating for governments, funders and partners to further leverage higher education's contribution. In January we joined a roundtable with CSCI partners and His Majesty The King at Dumfries House on the topic of rapid urbanisation, which informed the planning for a Wilton Park dialogue event in April 2025, an event which ACU jointly hosted with CSCI and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, attended by a number of Commonwealth government Ministers, funders and industry representatives.



4 Financial Review

Financial Performance Review

The ACU aims to generate a small surplus from its unrestricted general activities and this year achieved a surplus of £3k before actuarial gains and transfers between funds. Unrestricted reserves at 31 July 2025 stand at £5,407k.

The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year is set out on page 28. A summary of the activities and the financial results is given below.

Unrestricted Funds - General

Membership net income (after bad debt provision) has increased marginally to £1,335k. While we saw some members resign or be suspended for non-payment, we welcomed 19 new members. We continue to increase our membership offering with a refreshed member benefits package, including new partnerships that bring value to members.

External administration fee income has reduced by £227k to £4,178k. Of the reduction, £360k is attributed to the two scholarship programmes that moved to another provider at the start of the last financial year. A further reduction has been due to efficiencies in programme delivery, with the saving passed on to our partners. These reductions have been offset by additional income from our main contracts.

Total expenditure has reduced by £308kk to £6,189k. Of the reduction, £188k is attributed to the two scholarship programmes that moved to another provider at the start of the last financial year. We have seen a reduction in membership bad debt provision as we have few unengaged members. We have reduced IT support and software license costs while implementing increased security measures.

Employment costs (including temporary agency staff) at £4,236k is our largest expense. The increase in NI threshold and rate has had a significant impact on our budget. The impact of this, as well as other financial pressures, had been mitigated by not filling vacancies, removing posts and making greater use of agency staff and fixed term contracts. Overall average headcount has reduced by 2 to 83. However, the average headcount for unrestricted fund has increased by 2 to 76 due to the setup of new programmes.

	2024/25	2023/24
	£'000	£'000
Membership income	1,441	1,505
External administration	4,178	4,405
Investment income / interest	313	420
Other Income	260	243
Total Income	6,192	6,573
Total Expenditure	6,189	6,497
Net operating income as per SOFA	3	76
Gain/(Loss) on investments	(100)	546
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	-	310
Net movement in funds	(97)	932
Funds brought forward	5,766	5,396
Transfer to Designated Funds	(260)	(562)
Funds carried forward	5,409	5,766



Unrestricted Funds - Designated

The Trustees have set aside two Designated Funds:

- 1) Depreciation of the capital cost of reconfiguring the office in 2015/16. Closing balance is £38k (2024: £125k).
- 2) The Road to 2030 is an ambitious programme which builds on the ACU 2020 plan and incorporates a refreshed vision, mission and strategic priorities. Since the programme's inception in 2018, Council have approved the transfer of £6.2m from General Reserves to Designated Reserves to support the programme. Closing balance is £773k (2024: £1,264k).

Restricted Funds

The range of Restricted Funds administered by the ACU is shown in note 13. This year two new programmes have been included, Kings Commonwealth Fellowship Programme and Capacity Strengthening to Support Equitable Climate Change Adaptation in Africa. More details on these programmes can be found in the Review of the Year section.

Note 15 provides an analysis where applicable of the value and number of scholarships and grants awarded from Restricted Funds.

Endowment Funds

The Permanent and Expendable Endowment Funds along with associated Restricted Funds generated £620k (2024: £612k) of investment income. All the endowment income was credited to the relevant Restricted Funds. The market value of investments increased by £1,429k to £26,860k. Note 15 lists the amount awarded in grants.

Investment Policy and Returns

Investment objectives

The investment objective of the ACU's portfolio is to seek long term real growth without taking undue risks, consistent with a reasonable level of income. The specific investment objective of the fund invested with Newton is to maximise returns through capital growth and income. The specific investment objective of the funds invested with CCLA is to achieve an average annual total return of inflation plus 5% over the long term and control volatility to 75% of that of the UK equity market.

Investment Performance

Note 8 has an analysis of movements in investment values. The net cumulative return from the average charity (ARC Charity Indices Steady Growth) was +6.4% for the 12 months to 31 July 2025.

Fund	Permanent / Expendable	Value at 31 July 25	Actual Performance %
CSFP Anniversary	Permanent	£12,642k	+8.2%
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Restricted	£39k	+8.2%
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Expendable	£7,159k	+8.2%
Francis & Philip Turner legacy	Expendable	£720k	+8.2%
ACU Main Fund	Permanent	£6,217k	-2.0%
ACU Endowment	Permanent	£6,179k	-2.0%
Edward Boyle	Permanent	£160k	-2.0%



5 Governance and Structure

Structure

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) was founded in 1913 and is a registered charity (number 314137 in England & Wales), regulated by the Charity Commission. It is controlled by its member institutions through an elected Council.

The ACU was granted its Royal Charter on 30 May 1963 and is governed by the Royal Charter, Byelaws and Regulations dated 17 June 1963 and last amended on 13 October 2010.

Governance and management

Nominations to the Council are made by Executive Heads of member institutions in four constituencies representing all regions of the Commonwealth. There are up to 20 elected Council members who may co-opt two further members if they conclude this is desirable to ensure balanced geographical and gender representation of the Council. An additional member may be co-opted if the Honorary Treasurer is not appointed from the elected Council members.

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance and accounting, investment management and the diverse work of the ACU. The Council meets twice each year, once face-to-face and once electronically, with any additional business conducted electronically in between meetings as necessary. The Council is responsible for setting, and overseeing the implementation of, the ACU's policy and strategic direction, long-term business plans, key performance indicators, and annual budgets. It appoints the ACU's office bearers and Committee members, who report to the Council. It also holds authority to amend the Charter and Statutes and to introduce or revise Byelaws, in accordance with the Charter. Between Council meetings the other powers of Council are delegated to its Executive Committee.

The ACU's committees, which are established by Council, are the Executive Committee, the Audit and Risk Committee, the Remuneration Committee, and the Donations Advisory Committee.

The Executive Committee is elected by the Council and consists of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Honorary Treasurer, and up to five other Members of Council.

The Audit and Risk Committee met twice in 2024/25. It consists of five members, four (including the Chair) of whom are serving members of Council. The fifth place is filled by an independent member. The Honorary Treasurer is also in attendance for the finance related agenda items. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee is appointed by Council, from its members, and has the power to co-opt additional members should the need arise.

The Remuneration Committee consists of the Honorary Treasurer (Chair), two Vice-Chancellors from UK member institutions and one independent member with UK professional human resources knowledge.

The Donations Advisory Committee has been newly established to assess and advise on potential high-risk donor engagements, large unsolicited gifts, ethical concerns related to donations, and requests to repurpose major gifts, ensuring that decisions align with approved risk management strategies. It consists of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, the CEO, COO, Director of Finance, Director of External Affairs, and Head of Philanthropy.

The Trustees comply with the Charity Governance Code published in 2017 which sets out the principles and recommended practice for good governance within the sector. The Charity conducts regular reviews of its governance arrangements, with the last one having taken place in late 2024. This involved an external independent review of current governance effectiveness and considered areas where governance structures



STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

might be strengthened and developed to keep pace with a changing organisation and good practice recommendations.

The ACU had no fundraising activities requiring disclosure under S162A of the Charities Act 2011.

Risk management

The Trustees have responsibility for risk management. Risks are identified by the Executive Team and reviewed, assessed and appropriate action incorporated as part of the annual budget and planning process. Thus, risk is an integral part of the budget and plan reviewed and approved by the Trustees.

The principal risks and uncertainties facing the charity are:

- Challenging environment for income growth and diversification; mitigated by building partnership agreements with other providers in the sector
- Cybercrime; mitigated by achieving Cyber essentials plus certification; joining the FCDO's ALB Cyber Security group and regular staff training

A series of systems operate to identify and mitigate risk. These systems include:

- Audit and Risk Committee oversight
- Financial, and business continuity procedures
- Strategic plan and annual budget process (including risk assessment and monitoring)
- Handbook for staff detailing practices, policies and procedures
- A low-risk environment in terms of safeguarding, which is a standing item on Executive Team, Council and Committee agendas
- Comprehensive insurance cover (Business Interruption, Employer's Liability, Public Liability, Professional Liability and Personal Accident and Business Travel)
- Increased staff awareness and training around risk
- Regulation by the Charity Commission

Unrestricted Reserves Policy

ACU's policy is to maintain reserves equivalent to 6 months of expenditure plus 25%. This (a) provides sufficient funds to meet contractual obligations such as office rent and redundancy in the event of an unforeseen emergency, and (b) allows a margin to take account of any expansion of activities in a given year (such as the acquisition of a large contract).

Free reserves of £5.4m (2024: £5.7m) is £1.5m (2024: £1.6m) above the limit. The Trustees recognise we are holding reserves above our limit and will approve further drawdown in accordance with the ACU Reserves Policy.

Going Concern

The Trustees have reviewed the three-year budget plan. Considering the balance sheet position and the impact of market volatility, the Trustees remain of the opinion that the going concern assumption remains appropriate and the financial statements continue to be prepared on this basis.

Public Benefit

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity



STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

Commission's guidance on public benefit. In broad terms, the people of the Commonwealth (and other countries) benefit from the ACU's support for the extension, improvement, and strengthening of higher education through our member institutions and through our activities. Our charitable objects for the public benefit – as expressed in our Royal Charter – and the activities which achieve them are summarised in the Review of the Year.

With 406 members in 41 countries, we are expanding to be fully representative of the range of public and private universities throughout the Commonwealth. Our universities share Commonwealth values, including freedom of expression, a common language and many similarities in organisation and management. The ACU forms an extensive network to facilitate internationalisation and for a sharing of problems, solutions and best practice across a variety of higher education environments.

Trustee Training

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance, from the ACU and its professional advisers; including Charity Trustee responsibilities; the Charity Governance Code; safeguarding and serious incident reporting; investment management; risk management, budgets and management accounts; and the ACU's mission, vision, values and strategic priorities.

Day to day management

The Executive Team is responsible for the day-to-day running of the ACU under authority delegated to the CEO by the Trustees. The Executive Team consists of the CEO, COO and three senior staff.

ACU Trading Limited

ACU Trading Limited (Company number: 9119389) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACU Trading Limited is the provision of staff services to the ACU.

Legal and administrative details

Principal place of business:

Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF

www.acu.ac.uk

Bankers:

National Westminster Bank plc
Chancery Lane
Holborn
London WC2A 1AE

Investment Managers:

Newton Investment Management
160 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4LA

CCLA
85 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4ET

Auditors

Crowe U.K. LLP
55 Ludgate Hill
London
EC4M 7JW



STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

Council Members

Professor Edmund Burke (co-opted Honorary Treasurer)	Bangor University, UK
Professor Cheryl de la Rey (Chair of Council)	University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Professor Bruce Dowton	Macquarie University, Australia
Professor James A. Miller	The University of the West of Scotland, UK
Professor Alan Shepard	Western University, Canada
Professor Wendy Thomson (Vice-Chair of Council)	University of London, UK
Professor Shearer West	University of Leeds, UK
Professor. Dato'Seri Ir. Dr Noor Asuan Bin Abu Osman	Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Professor Ms Hina Tayyaba Khalil	Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design, Pakistan
Professor C Raj Kumar	OP Jindal Global University, India
Professor P. S. Shukla	North-Eastern Hill University, India
Professor Dr. A. B. M. Obaidul Islam	Bangladesh Open University, Bangladesh
Professor P. M. C. Thilakerathne	Open University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
Professor Kabiru Aderemi Adeyemo	Lead City University, Nigeria
Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo	University of Ghana, Ghana
Professor Barnabas Nawangwe	Makerere University, Uganda
Professor Kenneth Matengu	University of Namibia, Namibia
Professor Sibongile Muthwa	Nelson Mandela University, South Africa
Professor Benedict Mwavu Mutua	The Technical University of Kenya, Kenya
Professor Pal Ahluwalia	University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Professor Sir Hilary Beckles	The University of the West Indies, Jamaica
Professor Abiodun H. Adebayo (To July 2025)	Covenant University, Nigeria
Professor Amanda Broderick (To July 2025)	University of East London, UK
Dr Rhonda Lenton (To July 2025)	York University, Canada

Executive Committee

Chair: Professor Cheryl de la Rey	University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Vice-Chair: Professor Wendy Thomson CBE	University of London, UK
Hon. Treasurer: Professor Edmund Burke	Bangor University, UK
Professor Pal Ahluwalia	University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Professor Barnabas Nawangwe	Makerere University, Uganda
Professor Dr. A. B. M. Obaidul Islam	The Open University of Bangladesh, Bangladesh
Professor Nana Amfo	University of Ghana
Dr Rhonda L Lenton (To July 2025)	York University, Canada

Audit and Risk Committee

Chair: Professor Shearer West	University of Leeds
Professor Sir Hilary Beckles	The University of the West Indies, Jamaica
Professor P. M. C. Thilekarathne	Open University of Sri Lanka
Professor Kabiru Adeyemo	Lead City University, Nigeria
External Representative: Mr Graeme Appleby	The British Academy, UK
External Representative: Mr Jamie Isenwater (From April 2025)	Socially Spirited
Professor Amanda Broderick (To July 2025)	University of East London, UK
Professor Abiodun H Adebayo (To July 2025)	Covenant University, Nigeria

Remuneration Committee

Chair: Professor Edmund Burke	Bangor University, UK
Professor Eunice Simmons (From August 2025)	University of Chester, UK
Mrs Alison Johns	Formerly of Advance-HE, UK
Professor Shearer West (To July 2025)	University of Leeds, UK



6 Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Charity law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards) and applicable law.

Under charity law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of its net incoming resources for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue to operate.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Trustees' Confirmatory Statement

The Trustees confirm that these Accounts comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the ACU's governing document and the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

These Annual Report and Accounts were approved by the Council and are signed on their behalf by

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

13th February 2026



7 Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of the Association of Commonwealth Universities

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Association of Commonwealth Universities ('the charity') and its subsidiaries ('the group') for the year ended 31 July 2025 which comprise the Group Statement of Financial Activities, the Group and Charity Balance sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charity's affairs as at 31 July 2025 and of the group's income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustee's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's or the group's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorized for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial



AUDITOR'S REPORT

statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the trustees' report; or
- sufficient and proper accounting records have not been kept by the parent charity; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group and the parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.



We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charity and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Charities Act 2011 together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charity's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charity and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context for the UK operations were General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), employment legislation and taxation legislation.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the Trustees and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within the recognition and classification of income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, and the Audit Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Crowe U.K. LLP
Statutory Auditor
55 Ludgate Hill
London, EC4M 7JW

Date: 13 March 2026

Crowe U.K. LLP is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity by virtue of its eligibility for appointment as auditor of a company under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.



Group Statement of Financial Activities – year ended 31 July 2025

		Unrestricted Funds		Restricted	Endowment	Total	Total
	Note	General	Designated	Funds	Funds	2025	2024
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments from:							
Grants & donations	2	-	-	1,235	-	1,235	631
Membership income		1,441	-	-	-	1,441	1,505
External administration	3	4,178	-	-	-	4,178	4,405
Investment income/interest	4	313	-	642	-	955	1,276
Other		260	-	-	-	260	243
Total Income		6,192	-	1,877	-	8,069	8,060
Expenditure on charitable activities:							
Project grants	5	-	-	404	-	404	492
Membership engagement	5	1,527	575	-	-	2,102	2,306
Scholarships, grants and awards	5	58	-	757	-	815	662
External and fund administration	5	4,552	263	-	-	4,815	4,746
Expenditure on other activities:							
Investment management		52	-	146	-	198	216
Transfer out of Endowments		-	-	-	-	-	1,690
Total Expenditure		6,189	838	1,307	-	8,334	10,112
Net income / (expenditure) before gains / (losses) on investments		3	(838)	570	-	(265)	(2,052)
Gains / (Losses) on investments	8	(100)	-	-	1,429	1,329	2,460
Net (expenditure) / income		(97)	(838)	570	1,429	1,064	408
Transfers between funds	11	(260)	260	-	-	-	-
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	1(I)/ 20	-	-	-	-	-	310
Net movement in funds		(357)	(578)	570	1,429	1,064	718
Funds brought forward		5,766	1,389	575	25,431	33,161	32,443
Funds carried forward	11 – 13	5,409	811	1,145	26,860	34,225	33,161

None of the above activities were acquired or discontinued during the year.



Group and Charity Balance Sheet as at 31 July 2025

		Group		Charity	
	Note	2025 £'000	2024 £'000	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	7	42	134	42	134
Investments	8	33,116	32,788	33,116	32,788
		33,158	32,922	33,158	32,922
Current assets					
Debtors	9	970	826	970	816
Cash at bank and in hand		1,594	1,375	1,427	1,269
		2,564	2,201	2,397	2,085
Liabilities					
Creditors falling due within one year	10	(1,497)	(1,962)	(1,330)	(1,846)
Net Current Assets		1,067	239	1,067	239
Total Net assets		34,225	33,161	34,225	33,161
Funds					
Unrestricted funds: General	11	5,409	5,766	5,409	5,766
Designated	11	811	1,389	811	1,389
Endowment funds	12	26,860	25,431	26,860	25,431
Restricted funds	13	1,145	575	1,145	575
Total funds		34,225	33,161	34,225	33,161

The financial statements have been approved by the Council members and authorised for issue on 13th February 2026:

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

Professor Colin Riordan
Secretary General



Group Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31 July 2025

	Note	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities:			
Net cash used in operating activities		(1,736)	(4,235)
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Investment income and interest	4	955	1,276
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	-	(16)
Transfer out of endowments	8(a)	-	1,690
Proceeds from sale of investments	8(a)	1,000	392
Net cash provided by investing activities		1,955	3,342
Cash flows from financing activities:			
Receipt of donations		-	33
Net cash provided by financing activities		-	33
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		219	(860)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		1,375	2,235
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		1,594	1,375

Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities:

	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Net income for the reporting period	1,064	718
Adjustments for:		
Amortisation and depreciation charge	93	93
Gain on investments	(1,329)	(2,460)
Investment income received	(955)	(1,276)
Increase in debtors	(144)	(372)
Decrease in creditors	(465)	(595)
Pension changes	-	(310)
Receipt of endowment	-	(33)
Net cash used in operating activities	(1,736)	(4,235)

ANALYSIS OF CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	Opening balance £'000	Cash Flow £'000	Closing balance £'000
Cash at bank and in hand	1,375	219	1,594
	1,375	219	1,594



9 Notes to the Financial Statements year ended 31 July 2025

1. Accounting policies

(a) Accounting convention

ACU is a Public Benefit Entity registered as a charity in England and Wales on 5 March 1963 (charity number 314137). Its registered office is: Woburn House, 20-24 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HF.

The consolidated financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Accounting and Reporting applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102 ("The Charities SORP 2019").

The accounts consolidate those of the Charity and its wholly owned trading subsidiary ACU Trading Limited.

The accounts are drawn up on the historical cost basis of accounting, as modified by the revaluation of certain assets including investments.

The functional currency of the Group is GBP, the currency of the primary economic environment in which it operates.

Critical accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the Group's accounting policies, the Council is required to make judgments, estimates, and assumptions, about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and underlying assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an on-going basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects the current and future periods. The key sources of estimation uncertainty that have a significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are described in the accounting policies and are summarised below:

- bad debt provision for membership subscriptions is 100% of debt outstanding at the year end
- scholarship administration income is accounted for monthly with some exceptions for significant activity that occurs once a year
- Actuarial gains / (losses) on defined benefit pension schemes are recognised at the year end and based on information provide by the pension schemes. Further information is provided in Note 1(I) and Note 20.

(b) Income

Income is included in the SOFA once entitlement has been met, the amount can be reasonably measured, and there is probability of receipt. Specifically:

- Membership income is recognised in the subscription year which starts on 1 August. The fee is an annual subscription and therefore income is not deferred.
- External administration income is recognised in the month the service is provided, in line with the contract with the scholarship funder.

Performance related grants are recognised when the conditions under the agreement have been met for the specific milestones and requirements set by the donor.

(c) Expenditure

All expenditure has been accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings which are consistent with the activities of the ACU. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have



been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of the resource. Central overheads such as accommodation, IT, Communications, HR and Finance have been allocated on usage or staffing basis. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant grant or project, or to central overheads if not an eligible cost for a grant.

(d) Termination payments

Termination benefits are payable when employment is terminated before the normal retirement date, or whenever an employee accepts voluntary redundancy in exchange for these benefits. ACU recognises termination benefits when it is demonstrably committed to either (i) terminating the employment of current employees according to a detailed formal plan without possibility of withdrawal or (ii) providing termination benefits as a result of an offer made to encourage voluntary redundancy.

(e) Grants

ACU makes grants in line with funders' and donors' aims and wishes. This contributes to ACU's objective of facilitating the interchange of students and teachers between Commonwealth universities and between them and the universities of foreign countries.

(f) Governance costs

These represent costs incurred by the Secretary General's office and other key management which are attributable to the management of the ACU's assets, organisational administration and compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements. Governance costs have been allocated to charitable activities as a separate component of support costs on the same basis as noted in (c) above.

(g) Intangible and tangible assets – capitalisation, depreciation and amortisation

All assets costing more than £7,500 are capitalised. Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets at rates calculated to write-off the cost on a straight-line basis over their expected useful lives as follows:

Leasehold property	- Over the life of the lease.
Computer equipment	- 3 years
Office equipment	- 3 years
Furniture and fixtures	- 5 years
Computer software (intangible)	- 3 years

(h) Investments

Investment assets are valued at market value at the balance sheet date. Gains on investment assets are the net of realised gains and losses and unrealised gains and losses. Realised gains and losses on investments are arrived at by comparing the net sale proceeds with the market value at the end of the previous financial year or cost if acquired in the year; unrealised gains and losses represent the difference between the market value of investments still held at the end of the financial year with their value at the beginning of the year or with their cost if purchased subsequently.

Interest and investment income is recognised on an accruals basis.

(i) Fund accounting

Funds held by the ACU:

General Funds

Unrestricted funds comprising accumulated surpluses and deficits after transfer to or from designated funds.

Designated Funds

Unrestricted funds set aside out of general funds and designated for specific purposes by the Trustees.



Restricted Funds

Funds which are subject to donor-imposed conditions as to their use.

The Permanent Endowment Funds

Generate income which is transferred to the ACU Development Fellowship Fund, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Edward Boyle (Medical Electives) Fund and the Annenberg Foundation Scholarship Fund, which are Restricted Funds. The capital of these funds must be retained.

The Expendable Endowment Funds

Generate total returns which fund the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship, Marshall Sherfield postdoctoral fellowships. The capital of these funds will be retained until the Trustees choose to spend the capital. There is currently no such intention.

(j) Operating leases

The rents payable under operating leases, where substantially all the benefits and risk of ownership remain with the lessor, are charged to the SOFA as incurred. Where there are rent free periods, the cost is spread over the period to the first rent review.

(k) Financial instruments

ACU has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are recognised as:

- a) Financial assets measured at amortised cost comprise cash, and all debtors excluding prepayments
- b) Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost are all liabilities excluding tax and social security, estimate accruals, provisions and deferred income
- c) Financial assets at fair value include investments and gains on forward contracts open at year end.

(l) Pension schemes

The ACU participates in both the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL).

USS

Significant accounting policies

The institution participates in Universities Superannuation Scheme. The assets of the scheme are held in a separate trustee-administered fund. Because of the mutual nature of the scheme, the assets are not attributed to individual institutions and a scheme-wide contribution rate is set. The institution is therefore exposed to actuarial risks associated with other institutions' employees and is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the scheme on a consistent and reasonable basis. As required by Section 28 of FRS 102 "Employee benefits", the institution therefore accounts for the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. As a result, the amount charged to the profit and loss account represents the contributions payable to the scheme and the deficit recovery contributions payable under the scheme's Recovery Plan.

Where a scheme valuation determines that the scheme is in deficit on a technical provisions basis (as was the case following the 2020 valuation), the trustee of the scheme must agree a Recovery Plan that determines how each employer within the scheme will fund an overall deficit. The institution recognises a liability for the contributions payable that arise from such an agreement (to the extent that they relate to a deficit) with related expenses being recognised through the income statement. Further disclosures relating to the deficit recovery liability can be found in note 20.

Critical accounting judgements

FRS 102 makes the distinction between a group plan and a multi-employer scheme. A group plan consists of a



collection of entities under common control typically with a sponsoring employer. A multi-employer scheme is a scheme for entities not under common control and represents (typically) an industry-wide scheme such as Universities Superannuation Scheme. The accounting for a multi-employer scheme where the employer has entered into an agreement with the scheme that determines how the employer will fund a deficit, results in the recognition of a liability for the contributions payable that arise from the agreement (to the extent that they relate to the deficit) with the resulting expense charged through the profit or loss account in accordance with section 28 of FRS 102.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

At 31 July 2023, the institution's balance sheet included a liability of £310k for future contributions payable under the deficit recovery agreement which was concluded on 30 September 2021, following the 2020 valuation when the scheme was in deficit. No deficit recovery plan was required from the 2023 valuation, because the scheme was in surplus. Changes to contribution rates were implemented from 1 January 2024 and from that date the institution was no longer required to make deficit recovery contributions. The remaining liability of £310k was released to income and expenditure. Further disclosures relating to the deficit recovery liability can be found in note 20.

SAUL

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London ("SAUL"), which is a centralised defined benefit scheme within the United Kingdom and was contracted out of the Second State Pension (prior to April 2016).

SAUL is an independently-managed pension scheme for the non-academic staff of over 50 colleges and institutions with links to higher education.

Pension benefits accrued within SAUL currently build up on a Career Average Revalued Earnings ("CARE") basis.

The ACU is not expected to be liable to SAUL for any other current participating employer's obligations under the Rules of SAUL, but in the event of an insolvency of any participating employer within SAUL, an amount of any pension shortfall (which cannot otherwise be recovered) in respect of that employer, may be spread across the remaining participating employers and reflected in the next actuarial valuation.

Funding Policy

SAUL's statutory funding objective is to have sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the costs incurred by the Trustee in paying SAUL's benefits as they fall due (the "Technical Provisions"). The Trustee adopts assumptions which, taken as a whole, are intended to be sufficiently prudent for pensions and benefits already in payment to continue to be paid and for the commitments which arise from Members' accrued pension rights to be met.

The Technical Provisions assumptions include appropriate margins to allow for the possibility of events turning out worse than expected. However, the funding method and assumptions do not completely remove the risk that the Technical Provisions could be insufficient to provide benefits in the future.

A formal actuarial valuation of SAUL is carried out every three years by a professionally qualified and independent actuary. The last actuarial valuation was carried out with an effective date of 31 March 2023. Informal reviews of SAUL's position, reflecting changes in market conditions, cash flow information and new accrual of benefits, are carried out between formal valuations.

The funding principles were agreed by the Trustee and employers in June 2021 and are due to be reviewed at SAUL's next formal valuation in 2026.

At the 31 March 2023 valuation SAUL was 105% funded on its Technical Provisions basis. As SAUL was in surplus on its Technical Provisions basis, no deficit contributions were required. The Trustees and the Employers have agreed that the ongoing Employers' contributions will fall from a rate of 21% of CARE Salaries to 19% of CARE Salaries from 1 September 2024.



Accounting Policy

The ACU is a Participating Employer in SAUL. The actuarial valuation applies to SAUL as a whole and does not identify surpluses or deficits applicable to individual employers. As a whole, the market value of SAUL's assets at 31 March 2023 was £3,096 million representing 105% of the liabilities.

It is not possible to identify an individual Employer's share of the underlying assets and liabilities of SAUL. ACU accounts for its participation in SAUL as if it were a defined contribution scheme and pension costs are based on the amounts actually paid (i.e. cash amounts) in accordance with paragraphs 28.11 of FRS 102.

As there was a Technical Provisions surplus at 31 March 2023, no deficit contributions were required following the 2023 valuation and there is no defined benefit liability (i.e. the present value of any deficit contributions due to SAUL) to be recognised by ACU.

(m) Foreign currencies

Transactions are translated on the date of transaction and balances on the year end date with any gain or loss taken to finance support costs.

(n) Going concern

The Trustees have reviewed the three-year budget that looks at the strength of the income and expenditure statement, balance sheet and cashflow. In addition, the Trustees have considered potential challenges, including the impact of reduced income from external administration fees and a decrease in income from government grants.

While uncertainties exist regarding future funding from Commonwealth governments, the Trustees wish to emphasize that these uncertainties do not represent a material concern that would cast doubt on the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

The Trustees therefore consider that it is entirely appropriate to prepare the financial accounts on a going concern basis.



2. Grants and donations received

	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Grants from other Agencies		
Australian Government - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	-	295
European Commission – L4F	-	31
European Commission – Horizon Europe	73	41
British Council - Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort	245	200
Other	62	13
	<u>380</u>	<u>580</u>
Legacies and Grants from charitable foundations		
F&P Turner Legacy	-	33
HW Paxton Legacy	-	18
Kings Commonwealth Fellowship Programme - Individuals & Organisations	855	-
	<u>855</u>	<u>51</u>
	<u><u>1,235</u></u>	<u><u>631</u></u>

3. External administration fees

	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Scholarship administration	3,383	3,455
Other administrative services	210	220
Assessment and evaluation services	585	730
	<u>4,178</u>	<u>4,405</u>

4. Investment income and interest

	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total 2025 £'000	Total 2024 £'000
Investment income	293	642	935	1,244
Bank interest	20	-	20	32
	<u>313</u>	<u>642</u>	<u>955</u>	<u>1,276</u>



5. Analysis of total resources expended

2025	Staff costs £'000	Grants Paid £'000	Direct Costs £'000	Support costs £'000	Total £'000
<i>Charitable activities:</i>					
Project grants	154	153	97	-	404
Membership services	598	-	436	1,068	2,102
Scholarships, grants and awards	58	469	288	-	815
External and fund administration	2,154	-	250	2,411	4,815
<i>Fundraising activities:</i>					
Investment management costs	-	-	198	-	198
	2,964	622	1,269	3,479	8,334

2024	Staff costs £'000	Grants Paid £'000	Direct Costs £'000	Support costs £'000	Total £'000
<i>Charitable activities:</i>					
Project grants	177	80	235	-	492
Membership services	635	-	484	1,187	2,306
Scholarships, grants and awards	56	594	12	-	662
External and fund administration	2,155	-	293	2,298	4,746
<i>Fundraising activities:</i>					
Investment management costs	-	-	216	-	216
	3,023	674	1,240	3,485	8,422

Support Costs

	Membership services	External and fund admin	2025 Total	Membership services	External and fund admin	2024 Total
Staff Costs	551	1,244	1,795	649	1,256	1,905
Consultants	51	114	165	46	88	134
Office & Facilities	278	627	905	283	549	832
IT	139	315	454	146	282	428
Governance	9	19	28	19	36	55
Other	40	92	132	44	87	131
	1,068	2,411	3,479	1,187	2,298	3,485

Where appropriate direct expenditure, including staff costs, has been allocated to the above activities. Support costs which could not be directly allocated, have instead been allocated on the following bases:

- Membership services: basis of staff engaged on activity
- External and fund administration: basis of staff engaged on activity
- Scholarships, grants and awards: direct allocation based on staff engaged on activity



Net incoming resources for the year are stated after charging:

	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Audit fees – ACU	21	21
Audit fees – ACU Trading Ltd	4	4
Other audit work	9	9
Council Meetings	2	32
Depreciation and amortisation	92	93

6. Staff costs

a) Staff costs

	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Wages and salaries	3,767	3,710
Social security costs	437	418
Pension costs	344	402
	<u>4,548</u>	<u>4,530</u>

Termination payments totalling £88k were awarded during the year (2024: £nil). No payments remain outstanding as at 31 July 2025.

The Executive Team is regarded as the Charity's key management personnel. The total earnings, including benefits, employer pension and employer NI contributions received by SET members totalled £280k (2024: £316k).

The number of employees whose total earnings in the year (including benefits and termination payments but, excluding employer pension contributions) fell into the bands below were:

	2025* Number	2024 Number	
£60,001 to £70,000	7	5	* Includes 2 members who received termination payments
£70,001 to £80,000	2	3	
£80,001 to £90,000	2	-	
£90,001 to £100,000	1	-	
£100,001 to £110,000	-	1	
£140,001 to £150,000	-	1	
£150,001 to £160,000	1	-	
	<u>13</u>	<u>10</u>	

Of the above higher paid employees, 2 (2024: 1) were accruing benefit in respect of membership of a defined benefit pension scheme. The average headcount during the year was 83 (2024: 85).

b) Trustees remuneration and expenses

No Trustee received any remuneration in the year (2024: £nil). Trustees or their institutions were reimbursed £314 for travel expenses incurred during the year (2024: £25,331).



7. Group and Charity Assets

a) Intangible Assets

Computer software	Cost	Amortisation	Net book value
	£'000	£'000	£'000
At 31 July 2024	543	543	-
At 31 July 2025	543	543	-

b) Tangible Assets

	Computer equipment £'000	Office Re- configuration £'000	Office Equipment £'000	Total £'000
Cost				
At 31 July 2024	131	787	16	934
At 31 July 2025	131	787	16	934
Depreciation				
At 31 July 2024	131	664	5	800
Charge for year		86	6	92
At 31 July 2025	<u>131</u>	<u>750</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>892</u>
Net book value				
At 31 July 2024	-	123	11	134
At 31 July 2025	-	37	5	42

At 31 July 2025 there were no capital commitments.

8. Group Investments

a) Movements in quoted investments

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted & Endowment funds	
	2025	2024	2025	2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Market value, 1 August	7,318	6,993	25,469	25,416
Disposals at opening market value	(1,000)	(222)	-	(170)
Transfer out of Endowment	-	-	-	(1,690)
Net unrealised gains / (losses) on revaluation	<u>(100)</u>	<u>547</u>	<u>1,429</u>	<u>1,913</u>
Market value, 31 July	<u>6,218</u>	<u>7,318</u>	<u>26,898</u>	<u>25,469</u>
Cost, 31 July	4,617	5,324	17,157	17,157



b) Analysis by type

	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted funds £'000	Endowment funds £'000	Total 2025 £'000	Total 2024 £'000
Quoted investments	6,218	39	26,859	33,116	32,788

9. Debtors and prepayments

	Group		Charity	
	2025 £'000	2024 £'000	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Trade debtors	205	67	205	67
Sundry debtors	44	1	44	1
Accrued Income	572	635	572	635
Prepayments	149	123	149	113
	970	826	970	816

10. Creditors: amounts payable within one year

	Group		Charity	
	2025 £'000	2024 £'000	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Trade creditors	143	197	143	186
Deferred income	594	745	594	745
Other creditors	301	318	202	228
Funds held on behalf of third parties	239	522	239	522
Sundry creditors	41	52	14	20
Accruals	179	128	100	53
Amounts due to ACU Trading Limited	-	-	38	92
	1,497	1,962	1,330	1,846

Deferred income

	Opening Balance £'000	Released in year £'000	Deferred in year £'000	Closing Balance £'000
Membership	6	(6)	14	14
Programme Delivery	234	(254)	42	22
External administration fee	487	(487)	548	548
Other	19	(16)	7	10
	746	(763)	611	594



11. Designated and General Funds

2025	Brought Forward £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Investment Loss £'000	Transfers £'000	Carried forward £'000
ACU office	125	-	(87)	-	-	38
Road to 2030	1,264	-	(751)	-	260	773
Designated Funds	1,389	-	(838)	-	260	811
General Funds	5,766	6,192	(6,189)	(100)	(260)	5,409
	7,155	6,192	(7,027)	(100)	-	6,220

Council approved a further transfer of £260k from General Funds to Designated Funds to support income generating opportunities and an innovation fund to support business development.

2024	Brought Forward £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains £'000	Transfers £'000	Carried forward £'000
ACU office	212	-	(87)	-	-	125
Road to 2030	1,288	-	(586)	-	562	1,264
Designated Funds	1,500	-	(673)	-	562	1,389
General	5,395	6,504	(6,187)	546	(562)	5,696
Prior Year Adjustment	-	70	-	-	-	70
Total General Funds	5,395	6,574	(6,187)	546	(562)	5,766
	6,895	6,574	(6,860)	546	-	7,155

The prior year adjustment reflects a change in the accounting policy for investment income. Historically, investment income was recognised when received. From the current financial year, investment income is recognised on an accruals basis to provide a more accurate reflection of income earned.



12. Endowment funds

2025	Opening value £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing value £'000
<i>Permanent endowments</i>			
CSFP Anniversary	11,643	958	12,601
ACU	6,305	(126)	6,179
Edward Boyle	163	(3)	160
	<u>18,111</u>	<u>829</u>	<u>18,940</u>
<i>Expendable endowments</i>			
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	6,654	545	7,199
F&P Turner	666	55	721
	<u>7,320</u>	<u>600</u>	<u>7,920</u>
Total endowments	<u>25,431</u>	<u>1,429</u>	<u>26,860</u>

The CSFP Anniversary and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships endowments enable people from around the Commonwealth to study in low and middle income countries at ACU member institutions. The F&P Turner endowment is a legacy donation with no restrictions. Together, the three funds support the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship awards.

The ACU Endowment funds ACU Development Fellowships.

Income from the Edward Boyle (Memorial) Endowment funds the Medical Elective Bursaries for UK students.

2024	Opening value £'000	Income £'000	Expen- diture £'000	Transfer Out	Gains on investment £'000	Closing value £'000
<i>Permanent endowments</i>						
CSFP Anniversary	10,843	5	-		795	11,643
ACU	5,790	-	-		515	6,305
Edward Boyle	146	-	-		17	163
Annenberg Foundation	720	-	-	(718)	(2)	-
	<u>17,499</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(718)</u>	<u>1,325</u>	<u>18,111</u>
<i>Expendable endowments</i>						
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	6,206	(5)	-		453	6,654
Marshall Sherfield	976	-	-	(972)	(4)	-
F&P Turner	621	33	(33)	-	45	666
	<u>7,803</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>(33)</u>	<u>(972)</u>	<u>494</u>	<u>7,320</u>
Total endowments	<u>25,302</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>(33)</u>	<u>(1,690)</u>	<u>1,819</u>	<u>25,431</u>



13. Restricted Funds

2025	Opening Balance	Income	Expenditure	Closing Balance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
ACU Development Fellowships	317	234	(287)	264
CSFP Anniversary Fund	110	403	(436)	77
Kings Commonwealth Fellowship Programme	-	855	(180)	675
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives)	24	6	(1)	29
HW Paxton Legacy	112	-	-	112
Symons Medal	7	-	-	7
Climate Cohort	(1)	245	(238)	6
FAO Research Network	-	61	(61)	-
CEA-FIRST - Horizon Europe	-	35	(41)	(6)
StEPPFoS - Horizon Europe	-	38	(43)	(5)
CO-CAT	-	-	(20)	(20)
Ghandi Programme	5	-	-	5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	1	-	-	1
	575	1,877	(1,307)	1,145

Funds with negative balance: costs are reimbursed by the funder in arrears.

2024	Opening Balance	Income	Expenditure	Prior Year Adjustment	Closing Balance
ACU Development Fellowships	313	236	(291)	59	317
CSFP Anniversary Fund	(209)	446	(302)	175	110
Marshall Sherfield Fellowships	117	9	(126)	0	-
Annenberg	3	7	(10)	-	-
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives)	17	6	(1)	2	24
HW Paxton Legacy	94	18	-	-	112
Symons Medal	7	-	-	-	7
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa)	(34)	309	(275)	-	-
LEAP-4-FNSSA	(35)	31	4	-	-
Climate Cohort	(34)	200	(167)	-	(1)
FAO Research Network	-	13	(13)	-	-
CEA-FIRST - Horizon Europe	-	22	(22)	-	-
StEPPFoS - Horizon Europe	-	19	(19)	-	-
Ghandi Programme	5	-	-	-	5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	1	-	-	-	1
	245	1,316	(1,222)	236	575

The prior year adjustment reflects a change in the accounting policy for investment income. Historically, investment income was recognised when received. From the current financial year, investment income is recognised on an accruals basis to provide a more accurate reflection of income earned.



14. Analysis of Group assets between Funds

2025	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment funds	-	26,860	-	26,860
Restricted funds	-	39	1,106	1,145
Designated Fund	134	-	677	811
General funds	-	6,218	(809)	5,409
	134	33,117	974	34,225

2024	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment funds	-	25,432	(1)	25,431
Restricted funds	-	39	536	575
Designated Fund	211	-	1,178	1,389
General funds	-	7,317	(1,551)	5,766
	211	32,788	162	33,161

15. Grants, awards and scholarships awarded from Endowments

		Total value £'000	Number awarded
CSFP Anniversary Fund	Support the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship awards which enables people from around the Commonwealth to study in low and middle income countries at ACU member institutions.	341	38
ACU Development Fellowships	Support small scale collaboration between member universities through bursaries.	135	34
Climate Cohort	Funded by the British Council, it is a training and development programme supporting early career researchers from Commonwealth LMICs to enhance their skills and experience in research co-creation for climate adaptation.	16	14
Ocean Country Partnership Programme	Funded by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs under the auspices of the UK Government's Blue Planet Fund. It supports Master's and PhDs focused on the research themes of marine pollution, sustainable seafood and marine biodiversity.	776	84
Total		<u>1,268</u>	<u>170</u>

Grants are paid to individuals and the higher education institutions to which they are connected. As at 31 July 2025, ACU had grant commitment of £375k, payable over the next 2 year (2024: £551k).



16. Administration of External Funds

The ACU runs a number of schemes for which it receives a management fee-. The table below shows the bank balances and the value of transactions processed by ACU.

	Opening balance £'000	Incoming Resources £'000	Resources Expended £'000	Closing balance £'000
Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme	2,069	27,367	(27,480)	1,956
Staff and Educational Development Association	280	225	(261)	244
Heads of Educational Development Group	37	42	(48)	31
The International Consortium for Educational Development	65	24	(10)	79
Total held in third party bank accounts	<u>2,451</u>	<u>27,658</u>	<u>(27,799)</u>	<u>2,310</u>
The Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	522	1,035	(1,318)	239
Total held in ACU bank accounts	<u>522</u>	<u>1,035</u>	<u>(1,318)</u>	<u>239</u>
Total Third-Party Funds	<u>2,973</u>	<u>28,693</u>	<u>(29,117)</u>	<u>2,549</u>

17. Future financial commitments

At 31 July 2025 the ACU had commitments under operating leases as set out below:

	2025 Land and buildings £'000	2024 Land and buildings £'000
Within one year	144	340
After one year but within five years	-	144
Charged to SOFA during the year	340	340

18. ACU Trading Ltd

ACU Trading Limited (ACUT) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period ended 31 July 2025 have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACUT is the provision of staff services to the ACU. The results of ACUT for the period ended 31 July 2025 are as follows:

	2025 £'000	2024 £'000		2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Turnover	4,214	4,151	Debtors	38	102
Cost of sales	<u>4,019</u>	<u>3,970</u>	Cash at bank	<u>167</u>	<u>106</u>
Gross Profit	195	181	Current assets	205	208
Administration	<u>195</u>	<u>181</u>	Creditors	<u>205</u>	<u>208</u>
Net profit	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	Total Net assets	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net assets	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	Reserves	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>



19. Related Parties

	2025	2024
	£'000	£'000
Balances owed to ACU Trading Ltd	38	92
Paid to ACU Trading Ltd for services	4,214	4,151
Received from ACU Trading Ltd for services	162	136
Paid to University of London, UK	3	23

20. Pension Commitments

(a) Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)

The total cost charged to the I&E is £56k (2024: £82k).

Deficit recovery contributions due within one year for the institution are £nil (2024: £nil).

A deficit recovery plan was put in place as part of the 2020 valuation. It required payment of 6.2% of salaries over the period 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024, at which point the rate would increase to 6.3%. No deficit recovery plan was required under the 2023 valuation because the scheme was in surplus on a technical provisions basis. The institution was no longer required to make deficit recovery contributions from 1 January 2024 and accordingly released the outstanding provision to the statement of income and expenses in the prior year.

The latest available complete actuarial valuation of the Retirement Income Builder, the defined benefit part of the scheme, is as at 31 March 2023 (the valuation date), which was carried out using the projected unit method. Since the institution cannot identify its share of the Retirement Income Builder (defined benefit) assets and liabilities, the following disclosures reflect those relevant for those assets and liabilities as a whole.

The 2023 valuation was the seventh valuation for the scheme under the scheme-specific funding regime introduced by the Pensions Act 2004, which requires schemes to have sufficient and appropriate assets to cover their technical provisions (the statutory funding objective). At the valuation date, the value of the assets of the scheme was £73.1bn and the value of the scheme's technical provisions was £65.7bn indicating a surplus of £7.4bn and a funding ratio of 111%.

The key financial assumptions used in the 2023 valuation are described below. More detail is set out in the Statement of Funding Principles <https://www.uss.co.uk/about-us/valuation-and-funding/statement-of-funding-principles>.

Price inflation – Consumer Prices Index (CPI)	3.0% p.a. (based on a long-term average expected level of CPI, broadly consistent with long-term market expectations)
RPI/CPI gap	1.0% p.a. to 2030, reducing to 0.1% p.a. from 2030
Discount rate	Fixed interest gilt yield curve plus: Pre-retirement: 2.5% p.a. Post-retirement: 0.9% p.a.
Pension increases (all subject to a floor of 0%)	Benefits with no cap: CPI assumption plus 3bps Benefits subject to a 'soft cap' of 5% (providing inflationary increases up to 5%, and half of any excess inflation over 5% up to a maximum of 10%): CPI assumption minus 3bps

The main demographic assumptions used relate to the mortality assumptions. These assumptions are based on analysis of the scheme's experience carried out as part of the 2023 actuarial valuation. The mortality assumptions used in these figures are as follows:



	2023 valuation
Mortality base table	101% of S2PMA "light" for males and 95% of S3PFA for females
Future improvements to mortality	CMI 2021 with a smoothing parameter of 7.5, an initial addition of 0.4% p.a., 10% w2020 and w2021 parameters, and a long-term improvement rate of 1.8% p.a. for males and 1.6% p.a. for females

The current life expectancies on retirement at age 65 are:

	2025	2024
Males currently aged 65 (years)	23.8	23.7
Females currently aged 65 (years)	25.5	25.4
Males currently aged 45 (years)	25.7	25.6
Females currently aged 45 (years)	27.2	27.2

(b) Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL)

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London, a centralised defined benefit scheme for all qualified employees with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds.

The total SAUL pension cost charged to the Statement of Financial Activities is £5k (2024: £6k). This includes nil (2024: nil) outstanding contributions at the balance sheet date, and £nil deficit contributions (2024: nil).



21. FY 23/24 SOFA

Group Statement of Financial Activities – year ended 31 July 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024
		General £'000	Designated £'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments from:						
Grants & donations	2	-	-	598	33	631
Membership income		1,505	-	-	-	1,505
External administration	3	4,405	-	-	-	4,405
Investment income/interest	4	420	-	856	-	1,276
Other		243	-	-	-	243
Total Income		6,573	-	1,454	33	8,060
Expenditure on charitable activities:						
Project grants	5	-	-	492	-	492
Membership engagement	5	1,815	491	-	-	2,306
Scholarships, grants and awards	5	56	-	573	33	662
External and fund administration	5	4,564	182	-	-	4,746
Expenditure on other activities:						
Investment management	5	62	-	154	-	216
Transfer out of Endowments	8(a)	-	-	-	1,690	1,690
Total Expenditure		6,497	673	1,219	1,723	10,112
Net income / (expenditure) before gains / (losses) on investments		76	(673)	235	(1,690)	(2,052)
Gains / (Losses) on investments	8	546	-	95	1,819	2,460
Net income / (expenditure) before transfers		622	(673)	330	129	408
Transfers between funds	11	(562)	562	-	-	-
Net income / (expenditure) before other recognised gains and losses		60	(111)	330	129	408
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	1(l)/20	310	-	-	-	310
Net movement in funds		370	(111)	330	129	718
Funds brought forward		5,396	1,500	245	25,302	32,443
Funds carried forward	11-13	5,766	1,389	575	25,431	33,161

None of the above activities were acquired or discontinued during the year.

Accounts



The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities



Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023-2024



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1 Introduction from our Chair

2023-24 was a significant year for the ACU as we further built on our role as the voice of higher education in the Commonwealth. In February 2024, we launched the Higher Education Taskforce, formed to drive forward progress on education policy commitments made at the 21st Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEEM) in 2022. Made-up of Commonwealth university vice-chancellors, the Taskforce is focused on five thematic areas: funding and finance, access and inclusion in higher education, sustainable and inclusive research ecosystems, digital access, and developing future ready graduates.

These themes were further explored during the ACU Vice-Chancellor Summit in May 2024, hosted in the fringe of the 22nd CEEM in London. Over the course of the day, we welcomed over 100 distinguished guests from more than 20 countries across our network, including ACU member vice-chancellors, Commonwealth education ministers, and higher education stakeholders.

Outcomes from the multiple policy dialogues that ran throughout the Summit, as well as recommendations developed by the Taskforce fed directly into the 22nd CEEM meeting, where we represented the higher education sector and showcased its impact. We continued the vital discussions with policymakers and stakeholders across the Commonwealth in preparation for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa in October 2024, at which we will continue to advocate for higher education's pivotal role in the search for solutions to global challenges.

In our role as convenors and connectors, we were proud to host the Climate-U 'Transforming universities for a changing climate: the International Forum on Higher Education and the Climate Crisis' conference in October 2023, and subsequently worked closely with the government of Antigua and Barbuda and the University of the West Indies to launch the Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE) at the UN 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States in May 2024. In September 2024, we launched our new digital networking platform, ACU Connect, and the ACU Roster of Experts, which now has over 700 academics with a broad range of expertise from across the Commonwealth registered.

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do and our work with strategic partners has enabled a range of new programmes that will further benefit our members. We successfully secured funding from UK Research and Innovation via the Horizon Europe Guarantee Extension scheme to participate in the Horizon Europe funded CEA FIRST (Consortium Europe Africa on Research and Innovation for Food Systems Transformation) project and the European Commission funded StEPPFoS (Strengthening Evidence-Based Policy Practice for Sustainable Food Systems under the EU-AU Partnership) project. In May 2024, we also partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN to create a research network (RESNET) to explore global agri-food system transformation.

We take great pride in our longstanding dedication to scholarships as a means to enhance access to higher education and look forward to continuing to work with UK and Commonwealth Governments on our wider mobility portfolio which includes the Commonwealth Scholarships, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships, and the Ocean Country Partnerships Programme.

Finally, I am delighted to have welcomed Professor Colin Riordan CBE, previously vice-chancellor of Cardiff University, as new Secretary General after we farewelled Dr Joanna Newman who moved onto a new role in the sector. And in May 2024, we were honoured to welcome His Majesty King Charles III as the ACU's new Patron. His Majesty's patronage will be instrumental in raising the global profile Commonwealth universities and the innovative solutions they are contributing to overcoming the major challenges facing the world, from climate change to biodiversity loss and rapid urbanisation.

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council



2 About us

The Association of Commonwealth Universities is a global network with a shared commitment to building a better world through international collaboration in higher education.

Founded in 1913, the ACU connects institutions, people, and partners to provide educational opportunities, strengthen the capacity of universities, and advance higher education's contribution to sustainable development.

Its aim is to create a strong and connected higher education community that works across borders and boundaries to build a fairer, more sustainable world.

Our values

- Quality – We strive to excel in all we do, and continuously reflect on our work to find new ways forward
- Collaboration – We believe that cooperation and sharing ideas makes us stronger
- Innovation – We encourage people to think differently, be curious, and explore new ideas
- Respect – We treat others in the way we would like to be treated – with fairness, integrity, and generosity
- Inclusion – We value difference, and encourage and celebrate the diverse voices of our colleagues and partners

Our strategic priorities

- To champion the power of higher education to improve lives
- To support the long-term vitality of universities
- To engage and connect universities across borders, and promote collaboration among them
- To deliver educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference
- To uphold the ACU's reputation for excellence and demonstrate its impact

The road to 2030

Universities make a critical contribution to sustainable development across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Our strategic plan – 'The road to 2030' – reinforces our fundamental belief that global challenges can only be solved through international collaboration, and our collective commitment to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals through higher education.



3 Review of the year

This section summarises our performance against the five objectives outlined in our strategic plan.

1. To champion the power of higher education to improve lives

1.1 Promote, at the highest levels, the value of universities to society, and their role in sustainable development

1.2 Present a powerful collective voice for universities on a global stage

1.3 Lead debate and dialogue around key issues in international higher education

Our accredited status and global partnerships enable us to influence policymaking in higher education and raise the profile of universities' contribution to building a better world. Updates from 2023-24 include:

In November 2023, we joined the **28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28)** in Dubai to profile the vital role that universities play in delivering climate action. Highlights included:

- Hosting an [official side event](#) in the Blue Zone together with YOUNGO - the official youth constituency at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The event explored the opportunities provided by North-South university collaboration on climate change, as well as some of the challenges and potential pitfalls - including issues around equitability, fairness and protection of knowledge and innovation.
- Co-organising and moderating an [official side event](#) exploring the role of educators, institutions and policymakers in scaling youth-led entrepreneurship and innovation for achieving the SDGs. Climate action through skills development and lifelong learning, access to finance and mentorship, academic partnerships, technology and innovation, and policy frameworks were discussed.
- Our Secretary General hosted an ACU roundtable on sustainable urbanisation with university leaders and scholars at Heriot-Watt University's Dubai Campus, attended by His Majesty King Charles III, the ACU's Patron.

In February 2024, together with the Commonwealth Secretariat, we launched the [Higher Education Taskforce](#), formed to represent the voice of higher education in the Commonwealth and drive forward progress on education policy commitments. The Taskforce is a group made up of Commonwealth university vice-chancellors. It will support Commonwealth member states to realise the education policy commitments made at the 21st Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in 2022 and drive forward policy implementation.

The Taskforce is focused on five thematic areas: Funding and finance, access and inclusion in higher education, sustainable and inclusive research ecosystems, digital access, and developing future ready graduates. Focusing on these themes, the ACU will work with ministerial groups to support member states in these areas through practical action such as developing recommendations, formulating policy and research insight, sharing good practice and advocating for the adoption of policy recommendations.

The ACU continued to call attention to the importance of sustainable urbanisation in tackling climate change through the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative (CSCI), alongside partners such as the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Commonwealth Association of Planners, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The collaboration aims to raise the profile of sustainable urbanisation in the Commonwealth political agenda and to generate new initiatives to address climate-related challenges. Preparations are currently underway for a CSCI side event that ACU will be co-hosting at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in October 2024 in Samoa. The ACU will also be hosting a roundtable on sustainable urbanisation at the 2024 World Urban Forum in Egypt.

In May 2024, the ACU was honoured to welcome His Majesty King Charles III as its new Patron. As the Head of the Commonwealth, His Majesty is deeply familiar with the issues that matter to Commonwealth



universities and their 10 million students, including student access, employability and inclusion. His Majesty's patronage will be instrumental in raising the global profile of the solutions Commonwealth universities are finding to the major challenges facing the world, from climate change to biodiversity loss and rapid urbanisation.

On 15 May 2024 we hosted a successful ACU vice-chancellor summit and evening reception in the fringe of the 22nd Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in London. Over the course of the day, we welcomed over 100 distinguished guests from more than 20 countries across our network, including ACU member vice-chancellors, Commonwealth education ministers, and higher education stakeholders. Topics explored included finance and funding in higher education, graduate employability and skills, fostering excellence in research management, and artificial intelligence in higher education.

Outcomes from the multiple policy dialogues that ran throughout the ACU summit fed directly into the **22nd Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM)** meeting which took place in London on 16-17 May 2024. [The ACU attended 22CCEM](#) to address education ministers, sharing many of the insights gathered from its vice-chancellor summit and key policy recommendations developed by the Higher Education Taskforce. In addition, we were invited to present flagship initiatives highlighting higher education across the Commonwealth:

- ACU Secretary General Professor Colin Riordan CBE updated ministers on the work of the [Higher Education Taskforce](#), the [Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan \(CSFP\)](#) and called for sustainable finance and funding in higher education;
- Professor Cheryl de la Rey, Chair of the ACU Council and vice-chancellor of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, delivered a speech calling on education ministers at 22CCEM to enhance access and graduate outcomes for students through investment in the ACU [Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning \(PEBL\)](#) Programme. PEBL seeks to improve access and quality of teaching through blended learning.

In May 2024 the ACU attended [the UN 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States](#) in Antigua and Barbuda, at which the Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE), a collaboration between the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, the [University of the West Indies](#), and the Association of Commonwealth Universities was formally launched. The Centre will boost marine science and blue economy research, training, and development across the Caribbean.

ACU also attended the **Commonwealth Health Ministers** meeting, as well as the inaugural **Commonwealth Ocean Ministers Conference** in preparation for launching a set of new policy expert groups.

Universities have an important role to play in **supporting refugees and displaced people**, with many actively working to widen access to higher education for these marginalised groups. Through the ACU's unique international network, it convenes and engages the sector on this vital issue to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, ideas and best practice to continue to support and provide sanctuary for refugees and at-risk scholars. ACU's Senior Regional Engagement Lead delivered a talk at the THE Asia Universities Summit in Malaysia on the topic of expanding skills, higher education and self-reliance for refugees.

A series of **thought leadership articles** in the media and beyond continued to highlight higher education's vital contribution to society and the issues that matter to ACU members. These included:

- [Higher education should be central to the international development agenda](#) (*Higher Education Policy Institute*)
- [Higher education to play an urgent role in tackling global challenges](#) (*Higher Education Policy Institute*)
- [University leaders and education ministers: a balancing act?](#) (*The PIE news*)
- [Global perspective](#) (*Research Professional News*)



2. To support the long-term vitality of universities

2.1 Support the development of the core human and institutional resources that underpin the university mission

2.2 Improve equity, inclusion, and access, which are critical to the future of higher education

2.3 Share learning from local and regional initiatives to deliver wider impact

The ACU continued to lead and manage a range of innovative projects and platforms that connect universities across borders to help meet demand, enable vital research, and strengthen higher education systems across the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort programme, funded by the British Council, is designed to support a pipeline of early career researchers from Commonwealth countries, with the capacities to contribute to climate action research. With a focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation, an applied training programme supports these researchers to co-create a research project with the active participation of policy and/or practice stakeholders.

- This year, 18 Fellows have participated in a 12-month hybrid learning and development programme focused on research co-creation and grant writing for climate change research, involving 18 institutions, and 5 workshops.
- A total of 10 countries participated: UK, Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, and Sri Lanka.
- Four research proposals, involving 10 Fellows, have been received via the programme to be delivered in 2024-25.
- The programme has funded attendance of Fellows at 13 climate action conferences and events.

The **Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL)** is designed in response to the challenges reported by a number of African universities in meeting demand for higher education as a result of academic staff shortages and soaring student numbers. PEBL aims to rapidly and sustainably scale-up capacity in the design and use of blended learning – a combination of face-to-face and digital learning – through expert-led training, collaboration, and the development of quality assured, credit-bearing blended courses that can be shared between institutions. **PEBL West Africa** (PEBL WA) began in September 2021, with support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and is working with 12 university partners in Ghana and Nigeria to build sustainable capacity for blended learning. An external evaluation, conducted by INASP, was carried out ahead of the project coming to an end in August 2024. A number of **key findings from the report** highlight the case for investment in blended learning:

- Blended learning is better for students, teachers, and universities, enabling diversity of courses and increased student numbers without compromising quality.
- The programme significantly enhanced flexibility and quality for students.
- PEBL has led to changes in capacity, practice, and policy, making interactive and multimedia teaching standard practice at some of the participating universities.
- The PEBL-WA model is sustainable and replicable, demonstrated by increased productivity and the adoption of blended learning policies, such as at AE-FUNAI in Nigeria.

October 2023 saw the ACU host the Climate-U ‘Transforming universities for a changing climate: The International Forum on Higher Education and the Climate Crisis’ celebratory event, showcasing and discussing the findings of the four-year Global Challenges Research Fund project. 15 higher education institutions in Brazil, Fiji, Kenya, India, Indonesia, and Tanzania developed participatory action research (PAR) that brought together local communities with universities to address climate change. Over 100 international guests attended the event, among them representatives from the regional research teams.



3. To engage and connect universities across borders, and promote collaboration

3.1 Strengthen and grow our international network of universities to extend our global reach

ACU member universities are a vibrant global community with a shared commitment to building a better world through international collaboration in higher education. As of 31 July 2024, the ACU had 393 member universities in 41 countries. Half of its members are based in Asia, the top 10 countries in terms of member representation are India, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Canada and Kenya.

From March-April 2024 the ACU carried out a comprehensive membership survey, gathering over 700 individual responses, from over 230 institutions. This covered over 50% of its entire membership. 79% of respondents would highly recommend the ACU, rating it at least 8 on a scale from 1-10. 89% of respondents reported that 'Accessing ACU grants or fellowships' was 'very important' for their institutions. Moreover, 75% of those awarded the ACU grants or fellowships felt that the funding effectively supported their university's priorities 'to a great extent.' According to survey respondents, the most utilised ACU benefit is 'applying for ACU grants or fellowships.' 80% of respondents expressed significant interest in the ACU developing an exclusive online platform for members to facilitate networking among colleagues from ACU member universities.

3.2 Create forums through which institutional knowledge and resources can be shared and multiplied

Throughout the year, the **ACU's five thematic networks and communities of practice** enabled universities to collaborate on joint initiatives, share best practice, and come together to influence policy agendas within and beyond the sector. 73% of all members across 38 countries are now represented in ACU networks and communities, which are as follows:

The **ACU Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network** (CCRN) brings universities together to share practical expertise and experience of building resilience to climate change and natural disasters and contribute to policymaking in this area. Updates from 2023-24 include:

- As of 31 July 2024, the Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network has 560 individual members at 323 member universities.
4 [Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network Grants](#) were awarded to member universities in Australia, Malawi and Nigeria to fund projects that advance the aims and priorities of the network. This year's funded initiatives include a study mapping indigenous knowledge-based climate adaptation strategies in south-east Nigeria to enhance climate resilience, and an interactive national map illustrating the impacts of climate change on health in Australia.

The **ACU Higher Education and the SDGs Network** is a forum for staff at ACU member universities who are directly engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, including integrating sustainable development into their teaching, research, operations, and strategies. Updates from 2023-24 include:

- 8 network members represented the ACU on the judging panels of the International Green Gown Awards.
- A Higher Education and the SDGs Network grantee from the University of Manchester, UK hosted an [online event](#) for fellow network members to learn about and partner with them on their University Living Lab work addressing the SDGs.
- Professor Budd Hall from the University of Victoria, Canada (Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair for Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education) delivered a talk on 'Bridging Knowledge Cultures: Re-Balancing Power in the Construction of Knowledge' to Network members online.
- Dr Darlene Clover delivered a talk on 'Stories and their tellers: Museums curating living knowledge towards a gender just future' at the ACU offices to Network members online.



- As of 31 July 2024, the Higher Education and the SDGs Network has 685 individual members at 205 member universities.
- At the time of publication, the [Higher Education and the SDGs Network Grants](#) were in the selection process.

The **ACU HR in HE Community** is a forum for staff working in university human resources. The Community champions the strategic importance of HR professionals in universities and their unique contribution to the university's mission. Updates from 2023-24 include:

- As of 31 July 2024, the HR in HE Community has 483 individual members at 176 member universities.
- At the time of publication, the [HR in HE Community Grants](#) were in the selection process.

The **ACU Commonwealth Peace and Reconciliation Network** is an interdisciplinary collective of academics, researchers and professional staff working in the fields of peace, justice, truth-telling, and reconciliation. Updates from 2023-24 include:

- This year's [Commonwealth Peace and Reconciliation Network](#) grants were awarded to 4 universities to support projects across Canada, Kenya, Sri Lanka and the UK. This year's funded initiatives include preserving the Adivasi (indigenous) laws and the associated justice system of Sri Lanka by creating a publicly accessible digital data repository and developing a university teaching module.
- As of 31 July 2024, the Peace and Reconciliation Network has 228 individual members at 109 member universities.

The **ACU Supporting Research Community** is a forum for all staff at ACU member universities involved in supporting the research process – including research management and administration, research impact and uptake, and library services. Updates from 2023-24 include:

- Early Career Conference Grants were offered to 25 individuals from ACU member universities from countries including South Africa, United Kingdom, Ghana and Nigeria.
- 10 [Supporting Research Community Training Grants](#) were awarded to universities in Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, Nigeria and South Africa.
- The Community partnered with the University of Johannesburg, for their hybrid international Conference on the theme of 'Unpacking AI for teaching, learning and research'.
- As of 31 July 2024, the Supporting Research Community has 872 individual members at 226 member universities.

3.3 Deepen our engagement with member universities to identify areas of shared interest and remain responsive to their needs

ACU Ambassadors are nominated points of contact within member universities. They support to deepen the ACU's engagement with member institutions by improving the flow of communication and opportunities and by disseminating information to relevant colleagues in their institution. Updates from 2023-24 include:

- The ACU's ongoing drive to recruit and engage Ambassadors at member universities continued to be successful, with the total number increasing by 25% to 404 individuals.
- The annual ACU Ambassadors' Summit took place in November 2023, with 100 staff at member universities registered to attend, showcasing Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) (Ghana), University of Nicosia (Cyprus), and the University College London-Cape Town staff exchange collaboration.
- The ACU's member engagement team also designed and delivered a new event for Ambassadors, a dedicated induction call for new Ambassadors at ACU member institutions.
- ACU Connect, a new virtual networking platform for ACU Ambassadors went live in September 2024.



Roster of Experts

- The ACU regularly develops innovative programmes with academic and professional services staff from its network of over 400 member universities across more than 40 countries. The Roster of Experts was launched with the aim to give academic staff in member institutions the opportunity to advance their career and contribute to new and exciting projects and programmes. Academics listed on the [Roster of Experts](#) can speak to a wide range of topics, including subject areas such as agriculture and food security, climate change, global public health, and more. Currently we have 757 academics registered.

The ACU carried out a series of **ACU member visits**.

- The ACU Secretary General visited ACU member campuses in India (August 2023), Australia (September 2023), Malaysia & Singapore (April-May 2024) and Ghana (July 2024).
- The ACU's Director of External Affairs visited the east coast of Australia in March 2024. From March-June 2024, member engagement team representatives carried out in-person visits to UK members including the University of Birmingham, the University of Nottingham, Liverpool John Moores University, the University of Liverpool, and the University of London.

4. To deliver educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference

4.1 Run prestigious scholarship schemes that build enduring international connections, understanding, and engagement

The ACU is committed to delivering educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference. One of the ways we do this is through the management of world-class international scholarship schemes that build enduring international connections and understanding between individuals, institutions, and nations.

In 2023-24, we managed the UK government's Commonwealth Scholarships, as well as the ACU-led Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships and Cefas-funded Ocean Country Partnership Programme Scholarships. We continue to be custodians of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) and a lead delivery partner in the Turing Scheme.

This section provides updates on all the above.

- The [Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan \(CSFP\)](#) is a unique international framework through which Commonwealth countries offer university scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other member nations, forging lasting links across the Commonwealth and creating valuable opportunities for cultural and academic exchange. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships – both detailed below – operate within this framework.
- [The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK \(CSC\)](#) is the main UK government scholarship scheme led by international development objectives. Sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and managed by the ACU, the CSC combines sustainable development with UK national interests by supporting innovators and leaders of the future from across the Commonwealth and attracting outstanding talent to Britain's universities. Highlights from 2023-24 include:
 - The Commission funded 654 new scholarships and fellowships in the period. 1,785 scholars and fellows from 37 countries on award in total, studying or registered at 99 UK universities and 16 UK organisations.
 - CSC offered Scholarships to citizens of all Commonwealth countries in the period.
 - The CSC's Alumni Community Engagement Fund (ACEF) is an annual fund which seeks to support Commonwealth Alumni in raising awareness of key development issues at the community level. In



2023-24 11 alumni delivered activities across the Commonwealth, from Ghana to the Solomon Islands, addressing four themes: Gender and Sexuality, Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge, Small Commonwealth States, and Clean Energy, Air and Oceans. Activities included uniting indigenous knowledge and forest management expertise to safeguard Kenya's Eburru Forest; Strengthening gender equality in Ugandan schools for students, teachers and parents; and exploring the socio-economic impact of climate change in Small Island Developing States through a global conference hosted in Mauritius.

- The CSC's Time Limited Programme (TLP) for 2023-24 was focussed on LGBTQ+ Rights. This TLP supported a number of activities relating to LGBTQ+ Rights across the Commonwealth including: the Gender and Sexuality Fellowship, a new LGBTQ+ nominator; The Commonwealth Equality Network, a residential retreat at Cumberland Lodge encouraging dialogue and engagement on Gender and Sexuality across the Commonwealth; a webinar for alumni on allyship and staff and Commissioner training.
- The [Ocean Country Partnership Programme \(OCP\) Scholarships](#) were launched in September 2022. Funded through the UK's [Blue Planet Fund](#), the programme creates unique opportunities for students to undertake a fully-funded Master's or PhD programme in marine science. There are currently 118 OCP Scholars on award (with three scholars due to start later in the year). Following a successful pilot cycle, in 2023-24 Master's scholarships were extended to students from 10 different OCP priority countries: Solomon Islands & Vanuatu, Ghana, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives, Mozambique, Senegal and Belize. The set-up and delivery of the scholarship programmes spanned three languages for students at eleven different universities. In the reporting period, preparations were also underway for the launch of the OCP Training programme, a bespoke online training to enhance the professional development of OCP scholars, co-developed with INASP.
- The [Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships \(QECS\)](#) offer opportunities to study for a two-year Master's degree in a low or middle income Commonwealth country. Funded by Commonwealth governments, the scholarships are aimed at students who are committed to creating change in their communities. Updates from 2023-24 include:
 - There are currently 24 QECS scholars studying across 17 institutions and 13 Commonwealth countries, with subject areas ranging from Public Health to Youth Gender and Development.
 - Current host countries include Bangladesh, Eswatini, Fiji, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Uganda. Scholar's home countries include Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, and Tanzania.In October 2023, QECS scholars took part in the University of Manchester's 'Creating a Sustainable World' course for a third consecutive year. The course brought together students from different academic disciplines to devise practical solutions to global challenges.

The [Turing Scheme](#) is the UK's global programme for studying, working, and living abroad. In 2023-2024, the ACU continued to lead the assessment of grant applications for outward mobility funding for schools, further education/vocational education, and training and higher education. The ACU recruited a team of Assessors and Senior Assessors from across the UK education and training sectors and trained them in the Turing Scheme evaluation criteria and assessment process using a combination of self-access and live online training. The ACU assessed 724 applications from the Schools, FE/VET and HE sectors from the UK and British Overseas Territories within a six-week assessment window, scoring and providing written feedback for each application. In addition, the team assessed appeals from unsuccessful applicants and made recommendations based on evidence provided.

4.2 Seek to create and expand educational opportunities

4.3 Demonstrate the impact of international educational experiences and initiatives

In addition to government-funded schemes, the ACU's own range of grants and fellowships continue to support the interchange of students and staff between member universities. In 2023-24, 531 applications have been



submitted across the eight grant programmes running this year. The ACU works actively to increase the number of such opportunities available and promote the value of international experiences more widely. Activities in this area include:

- **The ACU's Networks and Communities Grants** (previously Challenge Grants) are specifically for members of the ACU's thematic networks and communities of practice. These networks enable universities to share best practice, collaborate on joint activities, and influence policy agendas in areas of strategic importance. The grants – detailed under 3.2 – fund projects that further the networks' aims and promote collaboration between their members.

The ACU supports **early career researchers** at its member universities through two types of grants:

- **Early Career Conference Grants** are awarded to individual academics to enable them to attend international conferences in their area of expertise, helping them to share their research, learn about new developments, and build professional networks.
- **Supporting Research Community Training Grants** are awarded to member universities to support the delivery of training that equips emerging researchers with the skills required to succeed in their research careers. These grants are attached to our Supporting Research Community, detailed under 3.2.

ACU Fellowships promote the exchange of knowledge, skills, and ideas between universities and countries of the Commonwealth. Available to both academic and professional staff, the Fellowships enable collaborative research and partnership building, as well as opportunities to observe and exchange different techniques and practice.

The Routledge/Round Table Commonwealth Studentships support PhD research projects on Commonwealth-related themes. In 2023-24, 2 studentships were advertised and are currently in the selection process.

The ACU Gender Grants are awarded annually to member universities to support initiatives that will boost gender equity and equality on campus. In 2023-24, nine Gender Grants were awarded to staff at ACU member universities.

The ACU is working in partnership with the **Martha Farrell Foundation** to provide three additional Gender Grants focused on creating effective anti-sexual harassment policies and strategies, drawing on the Foundation's expertise in anti-sexual harassment initiatives. These grants are open to staff members of ACU member universities in Africa and Asia and include online training and follow-up online support from the Martha Farrell Foundation. In 2023-24, 3 Grants were awarded.

5. To uphold the ACU's reputation for excellence and demonstrate its impact

5.1 Create and sustain a high-performance culture by delivering efficient core services to support our people

The ACU underwent an organisation-wide restructure, with the new structure being implemented from 1 September 2023. These changes will support the ACU's financial sustainability and result in a matrix way of working that will significantly contribute to achieving strategic priorities and enable the ACU to respond to the external opportunities and the challenges ahead. As a result of no longer delivering the Chevening and Marshall contracts, we managed the TUPE transfer process for those staff members who worked on these contracts. The transfer took place on 1 September 2023 to the new provider.

In 2023-24 the ACU successfully appointed our new Secretary General and CEO, Professor Colin Riordan CBE following a competitive selection process. In addition, the ACU implemented new People and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies which enhanced ACU organisational capabilities, culture and people experience. The ACU



strengthened its organisational capabilities through the introduction of a mentoring programme for all staff to enhance development and launched a line manager forum for managers to share good practise. The ACU achieved cybersecurity plus essential accreditation and achieved 98.5% in the Health & Safety audit.

Staff turnover at the ACU remained low this year at 11%. The sector comparator is 14% based on an analysis of labour turnover for UK employers in 2022, by Cendex, part of XperthR. 76% of staff from the 2024 staff survey agree with the statement: 'The culture at the ACU supports the organisation's success'.

5.2 Tell our story in compelling new ways and show evidence of our impact

In 2023-24 The ACU's communications team secured 94 pieces of positive coverage in the media, with an estimated media reach of over 1 billion (Source: Signal AI), including a series of thought leadership pieces to highlight higher education's vital contribution to society referenced in section 1.3.

Throughout the year, ACU staff were invited to give talks about the work and impact of ACU. Below is a snapshot of some of the key speaking engagements and panels we contributed to:

- In September 2023, the ACU's Senior Membership Engagement Manager joined a panel on supporting early-career researchers during the Nelson Mandela University Research Week and also delivered the keynote speech during the BMGA Fellows Programme Graduation Ceremony in November 2023.
- In January 2024, the ACU's Regional Engagement Coordinator – Africa was a speaker and panellist at the West Africa Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA) in Lagos to speak about [ACU Measures](#), the ACU's university benchmarking and data insight tool available exclusively to ACU members.
- In May 2024, ACU's Director of External Affairs spoke at the Education World Forum introducing the ACU's activities and strategic priorities.
- In June 2024, ACU's Senior Policy and Networks Manager highlighted at the World Conference on Research Integrity the importance of advancing equity in research collaborations and the value of comparative data in contextualising research integrity.

In July 2024, ACU's Secretary General delivered the keynote speech at the International E-Learning Conference held at ACU member Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi in Ghana.

5.3 Forge alliances with strategic partners to further our mission and achieve our objective

The ACU's belief in the value of collaboration extends to every aspect of its work. Working with organisations whose values and aspirations align with our own helps us to share knowledge and ideas, extend our reach, and achieve common goals. Highlights from 2023-24 include:

In December 2023, the ACU successfully secured funding from UK Research and Innovation via the Horizon Europe Guarantee Extension scheme to participate in the Horizon Europe funded **CEA FIRST Project** (Consortium Europe Africa on Research and Innovation for Food Systems Transformation). The project brings together 22 partners from Europe and Africa covering a wide range of expertise and stakeholders (research, NGOs, donors, extension workers) involved in the field of food and nutritional security and sustainable agriculture. Together with the South African Agricultural Research Council (ARC) the ACU is leading CEA-FIRST monitoring and evaluation and is tasked with establishing cascading MEL frameworks, data collection and analysis systems that enable the IRC to monitor and evaluate the progress of the FNSSA Partnership and the IRC's impact on its membership.

From January 2024-December 2027, the ACU will be involved in the **StEPPFoS** (Strengthening Evidence-Based Policy Practice for Sustainable Food Systems under the EU-AU Partnership) project, with seventeen other research institutes and organisations in Europe and Africa. The project is financed through the European Commission and aims to strengthen the evidence base of agriculture and food systems policies within the Africa-Europe partnership. The ACU will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation as well as impact analysis of the project.



In May 2024, the ACU partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN to create a research network ([RESNET](#)) to explore global agri-food system transformation.

In June 2024, we launched the [Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy \(COBE\)](#), a collaboration between the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, the University of the West Indies, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. COBE will develop regional research and innovation expertise and strengthening institutional capacity in the areas related to marine science and the blue economy and will play a vital role in the wider regional multilateral agendas; boosting cooperation regionally and globally to find solutions to challenges which transcend maritime boundaries such as marine renewable energy, coral reef restoration, and maritime policy and law. The ACU will convene university partners from across the Commonwealth to partner under COBE on activities from student and staff exchange to collaborative research bids. The ACU continued our support of the [International Green Gown Awards](#), which recognise exceptional sustainability initiatives undertaken by universities. In addition to the ACU's role as promotional partner, members of its Higher Education and the SDGs Network were judges of the awards; and also supported the inaugural [Commonwealth Universities' Debating Championship](#), held in Rwanda in May 2024 as part of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Commonwealth Year of Youth.

In August 2023, the ACU signed an MoU with the [Institute of Commonwealth Studies](#) (based at ACU member institution University of London) to collaborate on areas of shared interest including climate resilience. The MoU was accompanied by an agreement with [Senate House Library](#) at the University of London to house some of ACU's archive material in their library, alongside other Commonwealth collections. This will allow ACU's historical records, books and reports to be viewed by a wider audience and be accessed by those undertaking relevant research.



4 Financial Review

Financial Performance Review

The ACU aims to generate a small surplus from its unrestricted general activities and this year achieved a surplus of £7k before actuarial gains and transfers between funds. Unrestricted reserves at 31 July 2024 stand at £5,696k.

The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year is set out on page 23. A summary of the activities and the financial results is given below.

Unrestricted Funds - General

Membership income continues to grow with net income (after bad debt provision) growing by £286k to £1,322k. This growth is attributed to better engagement with our members resulting in more members paying the fee compared to last year. We continue to suspend members who haven't paid their membership fees for the last two years.

External administration fee income has reduced by £3,452k to £4,405k. This reduction has resulted from two scholarships programs moving to another provider. We have seen growth in other areas where we continue to work with Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) on the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP), and Department for Education on the Turing program.

Total expenditure has reduced by £3,100k to £6,497k. This is primarily due to two scholarship programs moving to another provider. As a membership organisation and charity, we regularly assess our costs to ensure we deliver value for money to our members and make the most effective use of our resources. In line with this commitment, we have reduced our office space and adjusted our staffing to better align with the evolving priorities.

Employment costs, our largest expense, have decreased by £2,788k to £3,688k. This reduction is largely attributed to the transfer of two scholarship programs to another provider and a smaller Executive team. The average headcount has decreased by 49 to 74.

	2023/24	2022/23
	£'000	£'000
Membership income	1,505	1,208
External administration	4,405	7,857
Investment income / interest	351	348
Other Income	243	194
Total Income	6,504	9,607
Total Expenditure	6,497	9,597
Net operating income as per SOFA	7	10
Gain/(Loss) on investments	546	(243)
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	310	59
Net movement in funds	863	(174)
Funds brought forward	5,395	5,994
Transfer to Designated Funds	(562)	(424)
Funds carried forward	5,696	5,396



Unrestricted Funds - Designated

The Trustees have set aside two Designated Funds:

- 1) Depreciation of the capital cost of reconfiguring the office in 2015/16. Closing balance is £125k (2023: £212k).
- 2) The Road to 2030 is an ambitious programme which builds on the ACU 2020 plan and incorporates a refreshed vision, mission and strategic priorities. Since the programmes inception in 2018, Council have approved the transfer of £5.9m from General Reserves to Designated Reserves to support the programme. Closing balance is £1,264k (2023: £1,288k).

Restricted Funds

The range of Restricted Funds administered by the ACU is shown in note 13. Note 15 provides an analysis where applicable of the value and number of scholarships and grants awarded from Restricted Funds.

Endowment Funds

The Permanent and Expendable Endowment Funds along with associated Restricted Funds generated £612k (2023: £636k) of investment income. All the endowment income was credited to the relevant Restricted Funds. During the year, two endowments linked to one of the scholarships that transferred to another provider were transferred to that provider. Excluding these two funds, market value of investments increased by £1,826k to £25,247k. Note 15 lists the amount awarded in grants.

Investment Policy and Returns

Investment objectives

The investment objective of the ACU's portfolio is to seek long term real growth without taking undue risks, consistent with a reasonable level of income. The specific investment objective of the fund invested with Newtons is to maximise returns through capital growth and income. The specific investment objective of the funds invested with CCLA is to achieve an average annual total return of inflation plus 5% over the long term and control volatility to 75% of that of the UK equity market.

Investment Performance

Note 8 has an analysis of movements in investment values. The net cumulative return from the average charity (ARC Charity Indices Steady Growth) was +10.57% for the 12 months to 31 July 2024.

Fund	Permanent / Expendable	Value at 31 July 24	Actual Performance %
CSFP Anniversary	Permanent	£11,645k	+7.4%
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Restricted	£39k	+7.4%
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Expendable	£6,653k	+7.4%
Francis & Philip Turner legacy	Expendable	£665k	+7.4%
ACU Main Fund	Permanent	£7,317k	+8.9%
ACU Endowment	Permanent	£6,306k	+8.9%
Edward Boyle	Permanent	£163k	+8.9%



5 Governance and Structure

Structure

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) was founded in 1913 and is a registered charity (number 314137 in England & Wales), regulated by the Charity Commission. It is controlled by its member institutions through an elected Council.

The ACU was granted its Royal Charter on 30 May 1963 and is governed by the Royal Charter, Byelaws and Regulations dated 17 June 1963 and last amended on 13 October 2010.

Governance and management

Nominations to the Council are made by Executive Heads of member institutions in four constituencies representing all regions of the Commonwealth. There are up to 20 elected Council members who may co-opt two further members if they conclude this is desirable to ensure balanced geographical and gender representation of the Council. An additional member may be co-opted if the Honorary Treasurer is not appointed from the elected Council members.

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance and accounting, investment management and the diverse work of the ACU. The Council meets twice each year, once face-to-face and once electronically, with any additional business conducted electronically in between meetings as necessary. The officers and committees of the ACU report to the Council. The Council is responsible for approving new members, electing the ACU's office bearers, appointing Committee members, amending the Charter and Statutes, making and amending Byelaws, setting policy and strategic direction, and overseeing their implementation. Between Council meetings the other powers of Council are delegated to its Executive Committee.

The ACU's committees, which are established by Council, are the Executive Committee, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Remuneration Committee.

The Executive Committee is elected by the Council and consists of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Honorary Treasurer, and up to five other Members of Council. The Chair of the Executive Committee has the power to co-opt an additional member should the need arise.

The Audit and Risk Committee met three times in 2023/24. It consists of five members, four (including the Chair) of whom are serving members of Council. The fifth place is filled by an independent member. The Honorary Treasurer is also in attendance for the finance related agenda items. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee is appointed by Council, from its members, and has the power to co-opt additional members should the need arise.

The Remuneration Committee consists of the Honorary Treasurer (Chair), two Vice-Chancellors from UK member institutions and one independent member with UK professional human resources knowledge.

The Trustees comply with the Charity Governance Code published in 2017 which sets out the principles and recommended practice for good governance within the sector. The Charity conducts regular reviews of its governance arrangements, with the next review planned for the second half of 2024. This will involve external expert advice in how best to apply the principles within the code. The Council will then address any issues raised where required.

The ACU had no fundraising activities requiring disclosure under S162A of the Charities Act 2011.



Risk management

The Trustees have responsibility for risk management. Risks are identified by the Executive Team and reviewed, assessed and appropriate action incorporated as part of the annual budget and planning process. Thus, risk is an integral part of the budget and plan reviewed and approved by the Trustees.

The principal risks and uncertainties facing the charity are:

- Limited opportunities for income growth and diversification in an environment where expenditure is hard to constrain; mitigated by building partnership agreements with other providers in the sector
- Cyber crime; mitigated by achieving Cyber essentials plus certification; joining the FCDO's ALB Cyber Security group and regular staff training

A series of systems operate to identify and mitigate risk. These systems include:

- regulation by the Charity Commission
- annual external audit or inspection of administration activities
- Audit and Risk Committee review
- financial procedures
- strategic plan and annual budget (including risk assessment) process
- handbook for staff detailing practices, policies and procedures
- a low-risk environment in terms of safeguarding, which is a standing item on Executive Team agendas
- comprehensive insurance cover (Business Interruption, Employer's Liability, Public Liability, Professional Liability and Personal Accident and Business Travel)
- Increased staff awareness of risk

Unrestricted Reserves Policy

ACU's policy is to maintain reserves equivalent to 6 months of expenditure plus 25%. This (a) provides sufficient funds to meet contractual obligations such as office rent and redundancy in the event of an unforeseen emergency, and (b) allows a margin to take account of any expansion of activities in a given year (such as the acquisition of a large contract).

Free reserves of £5.7m (2023: £5.2m) is £1.6m (2023 £0.4m) above the limit. The Trustees recognise we are holding reserves above our limit and will approve further drawdown in accordance with the ACU Reserves Policy.

Going Concern

The Trustees have reviewed the three-year budget plan. Taking into account the balance sheet position and the impact of market volatility, the Trustees remain of the opinion that the going concern assumption remains appropriate and the financial statements continue to be prepared on this basis.

Public Benefit

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. In broad terms, the people of the Commonwealth (and other countries) benefit from the ACU's support for the extension, improvement, and strengthening of higher education through our member institutions and through our activities. Our charitable objects for the public benefit – as expressed in our Royal Charter – and the activities which achieve them are summarised in the Review of the Year.



With around 400 members in more than 40 countries, we are expanding to be fully representative of the range of public and private universities throughout the Commonwealth. Our universities share Commonwealth values, including freedom of expression, a common language and many similarities in organisation and management. The ACU forms an extensive network to facilitate internationalisation and for a sharing of problems, solutions and best practice across a variety of higher education environments.

Trustee Training

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance, from the ACU and its professional advisers; including Charity Trustee responsibilities; the Charity Governance Code; safeguarding and serious incident reporting; investment management; risk management, budgets and management accounts; and the ACU's mission, vision, values and strategic priorities.

Day to day management

The Executive Team is responsible for the day-to-day running of the ACU under authority delegated to the CEO by the Trustees. The Executive Team consists of the CEO, COO and three Directors.

ACU Trading Limited

ACU Trading Limited (Company number: 9119389) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACU Trading Limited is the provision of staff services to the ACU.

Legal and administrative details

Principal place of business:

Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF

www.acu.ac.uk

Bankers:

National Westminster Bank plc
Chancery Lane
Holborn
London WC2A 1AE

Investment Managers:

Newton Investment Management
160 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4LA

CCLA
85 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4ET

Auditors

Crowe U.K. LLP
55 Ludgate Hill
London
EC4M 7JW



Council Members

Professor Cheryl de la Rey (Chair)	University of Canterbury, New Zealand	
Professor Wendy Thomson CBE (Vice-Chair)	University of London, UK	
Professor Abiodun H. Adebayo	Covenant University, Nigeria	
Professor Pal Ahluwalia	University of the South Pacific, Fiji	
Professor Sir Hilary Beckles	The University of the West Indies, Jamaica	
Professor Amanda Broderick	University of East London, UK	
Dr Rhonda Lenton	York University, Canada	
Professor Barnabas Nawangwe	Makerere University, Uganda	
Professor Kabiru Aderemi Adeyemo	Lead City University, Nigeria	From August 2023
Professor Simone Buitendijk	The University of Leeds, UK	August 2023 – July 2024
Professor Ms Hina Tayyaba Khalil	Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design, Pakistan	From August 2023
Professor Sibongile Muthwa	Nelson Mandela University, South Africa	From August 2023
Professor Sasmita Samanta	Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), India	August 2023 – July 2024
Professor Md. Akhturazzmaan	University of Dhaka, Bangladesh	To July 2024
Professor Barney Glover AO	Western Sydney University, Australia	To July 2024
Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor	University of Malaya, Malaysia	To July 2024
Professor Feridun Hamdullahpur	Formerly University of Waterloo, Canada	To July 2024
Snr. Professor Sudantha Liyanage	University of Sri Jayewardenpura, Sri Lanka	To July 2024
Professor Sandeep Sancheti	Marwadi University, India	To July 2024

Executive Committee

Chair: Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Professor Feridun Hamdullahpur

Professor Wendy Thomson CBE
Professor Barnabas Nawangwe
Professor Pal Ahluwalia
Dr Rhonda L Lenton

Audit and Risk Committee

Chair: Professor Amanda Broderick
Graeme Appleby – The British Academy, UK

Professor Sir Hilary Beckles
Professor Abiodun H Adebayo

Remuneration Committee

Professor Feridun Hamdullahpur
Professor Shearer West – University of Nottingham, UK
Mrs Alison Johns – Advance HE



6 Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Charity law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards) and applicable law.

Under charity law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of its net incoming resources for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue to operate.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Trustees' Confirmatory Statement

The Trustees confirm that these Accounts comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the ACU's governing document and the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

These Annual Report and Accounts were approved by the Council and are signed on their behalf by

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

28th November 2024



7 Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of the Association of Commonwealth Universities

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Association of Commonwealth Universities ('the charity') and its subsidiaries ('the group') for the year ended 31 July 2024 which comprise the Group Statement of Financial Activities, the Group and Charity Balance sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charity's affairs as at 31 July 2024 and of the group's income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustee's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's or the group's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorized for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears



to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the trustees' report; or
- sufficient and proper accounting records have not been kept by the parent charity; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group and the parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and



assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charity and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Charities Act 2011 together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charity's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charity and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context for the UK operations were General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), employment legislation and taxation legislation.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the Trustees and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within the recognition and classification of income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, and the Audit Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Crowe U.K. LLP
Statutory Auditor
55 Ludgate Hill
London, EC4M 7JW

Date 21 January 2025

Crowe U.K. LLP is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity by virtue of its eligibility for appointment as auditor of a company under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.



Group Statement of Financial Activities – year ended 31 July 2024

	Note	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
		General	Designated				
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments from:							
Grants & donations	2	-	-	598	33	631	876
Membership income		1,505	-	-	-	1,505	1,208
External administration	3	4,405	-	-	-	4,405	7,857
Investment income/interest	4	351	-	612	-	963	984
Other		243	-	-	-	243	205
Total Income		6,504	-	1,210	33	7,747	11,130
Expenditure on charitable activities:							
Project grants	5	-	-	492	-	492	851
Membership engagement	5	1,815	491	-	-	2,306	1,929
Scholarships, grants and awards	5	56	-	573	33	662	783
External and fund administration	5	4,564	182	-	-	4,746	8,486
Expenditure on other activities:	5						
Investment management	5	62	-	146	-	208	229
Transfer out of Endowments	8(a)	-	-	-	1,690	1,690	
Total Expenditure		6,497	673	1,211	1,723	10,104	12,278
Net income / (expenditure) before gains / (losses) on investments		7	(673)	(1)	(1,690)	(2,357)	(1,148)
Gains / (Losses) on investments	8	546	-	95	1,819	2,460	(276)
Net (expenditure) / income before transfers		553	(673)	94	129	103	(1,424)
Transfers between funds	11	(562)	562	-	-	-	-
Net (expenditure) / income before other recognised gains and losses		(9)	(111)	94	129	103	(1,424)
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	20	310	-	-	-	310	59
Net movement in funds		301	(111)	94	129	413	(1,365)
Funds brought forward		5,395	1,500	245	25,302	32,442	33,807
Funds carried forward	11 – 13	5,696	1,389	339	25,431	32,855	32,442

None of the above activities were acquired or discontinued during the year.



Group and Charity Balance Sheet as at 31 July 2024

		Group		Charity	
	Note	2024	2023	2024	2023
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	7	134	211	134	211
Investments	8	32,787	32,409	32,787	32,409
Total Fixed Assets		32,921	32,620	32,921	32,620
Current assets					
Debtors	9	514	454	504	454
Cash at bank and in hand		1,375	2,235	1,269	2,099
Total Current Assets		1,889	2,689	1,773	2,553
Liabilities					
Creditors amounts falling due within one year	10	(1,955)	(2,557)	(1,839)	(2,421)
Net Current (Liabilities) / Assets		(66)	132	(66)	132
Net assets excluding pension liability		32,855	32,752	32,855	32,752
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	20	-	(310)	-	(310)
Total Net assets		32,855	32,442	32,855	32,442
Funds					
Unrestricted funds: General	11	5,696	5,396	5,696	5,396
Designated	11	1,389	1,500	1,389	1,500
Endowment funds	12	25,431	25,302	25,431	25,302
Restricted funds	13	339	244	339	244
Total funds		32,855	32,442	32,855	32,442

These financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Council on 28th November 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

Professor Colin Riordan
Secretary General



Group Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31 July 2024

	Note	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities:			
Net cash used in operating activities		(3,923)	(1,626)
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Investment income and interest	4	963	984
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	7	(16)	
Transfer out of endowments	8(a)	1,690	
Proceeds from sale of investments	8(a)	393	1,250
Net cash provided by investing activities		3,030	2,234
Cash flows from financing activities:			
Receipt of donations		33	-
Net cash provided by financing activities		33	-
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		(860)	608
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		2,235	1,627
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		1,375	2,235

Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Net (expenditure) / income for the reporting period	413	(1,365)
Adjustments for:		
Amortisation and depreciation charge	92	236
Losses / (Gains) on investments	(2,460)	276
Investment income received	(963)	(984)
Decrease / (Increase) in debtors	(60)	137
(Decrease) / Increase in creditors	(602)	133
Pension changes	(310)	(59)
Receipt of endowment	(33)	-
Net cash used in operating activities	(3,923)	(1,626)

ANALYSIS OF CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	Opening balance £'000	Cash Flow £'000	Closing balance £'000
Cash at bank and in hand	2,235	(860)	1,375
	2,235	(860)	1,375



9 Notes to the Financial Statements year ended 31 July 2024

1. Accounting policies

(a) Accounting convention

ACU is a Public Benefit Entity registered as a charity in England and Wales on 5 March 1963 (charity number 314137). Its registered office is: Woburn House, 20-24 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HF.

The consolidated financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Accounting and Reporting applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102 ("The Charities SORP 2019").

The accounts consolidate those of the Charity and its wholly owned trading subsidiary ACU Trading Limited.

The accounts are drawn up on the historical cost basis of accounting, as modified by the revaluation of certain assets including investments.

The functional currency of the Group is GBP, the currency of the primary economic environment in which it operates.

Critical accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the Group's accounting policies, the Council is required to make judgments, estimates, and assumptions, about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and underlying assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an on-going basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects the current and future periods. The key sources of estimation uncertainty that have a significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are described in the accounting policies and are summarised below:

- bad debt provision for membership subscriptions is 100% of debt outstanding at the year end
- scholarship administration income is accounted for monthly with some exceptions for significant activity that occurs once a year
- Actuarial gains / (losses) on defined benefit pension schemes are recognised at the year end and based on information provide by the pension schemes. Further information is provided in Note 1(l) and Note 20.

(b) Income

Income is included in the SOFA once entitlement has been met, the amount can be reasonably measured, and there is probability of receipt. Specifically:

- Membership income is recognised in the subscription year which starts on 1 August. The fee is an annual subscription and therefore income is not deferred.
- External administration income is recognised in the month the service is provided, in line with the contract with the scholarship funder.

Performance related grants are recognised when the conditions under the agreement have been met for the specific milestones and requirements set by the donor.



(c) Expenditure

All expenditure has been accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings which are consistent with the activities of the ACU. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of the resource. Central overheads such as facilities, IT, Communications, HR and Finance have been allocated on usage or staffing basis. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant grant or project, or to central overheads if not an eligible cost for a grant.

(d) Termination payments

Termination benefits are payable when employment is terminated before the normal retirement date, or whenever an employee accepts voluntary redundancy in exchange for these benefits. ACU recognises termination benefits when it is demonstrably committed to either (i) terminating the employment of current employees according to a detailed formal plan without possibility of withdrawal or (ii) providing termination benefits as a result of an offer made to encourage voluntary redundancy.

(e) Grants

ACU makes grants in line with funders' and donors' aims and wishes. This contributes to ACU's objective of facilitating the interchange of students and teachers between Commonwealth universities and between them and the universities of foreign countries.

(f) Governance costs

These represent costs incurred by the Secretary General's office and other key management which are attributable to the management of the ACU's assets, organisational administration and compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements. Governance costs have been allocated to charitable activities as a separate component of support costs on the same basis as noted in (c) above.

(g) Intangible and tangible assets – capitalisation, depreciation and amortisation

All assets costing more than £7,500 are capitalised. Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets at rates calculated to write-off the cost on a straight-line basis over their expected useful lives as follows:

Leasehold property	- Over the life of the lease.
Computer equipment	- 3 years
Office equipment	- 3 years
Furniture and fixtures	- 5 years
Computer software (intangible)	- 3 years

(h) Investments

Investment assets are valued at market value at the balance sheet date. Gains on investment assets are the net of realised gains and losses and unrealised gains and losses. Realised gains and losses on investments are arrived at by comparing the net sale proceeds with the market value at the end of the previous financial year or cost if acquired in the year; unrealised gains and losses represent the difference between the market value of investments still held at the end of the financial year with their value at the beginning of the year or with their cost if purchased subsequently.

Investment income from cash at bank is accrued at the year end. Income generated from investments and cash held by Fund Managers is credited to income as received.



(i) Fund accounting

Funds held by the ACU:

General Funds

Unrestricted funds comprising accumulated surpluses and deficits after transfer to or from designated funds.

Designated Funds

Unrestricted funds set aside out of general funds and designated for specific purposes by the Trustees.

Restricted Funds

Funds which are subject to donor-imposed conditions as to their use.

The Permanent Endowment Funds

Generate income which is transferred to the ACU Development Fellowship Fund, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Edward Boyle (Medical Electives) Fund and the Annenberg Foundation Scholarship Fund, which are Restricted Funds. The capital of these funds must be retained.

The Expendable Endowment Funds

Generate total returns which fund the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship, Marshall Sherfield postdoctoral fellowships. The capital of these funds will be retained until the Trustees choose to spend the capital. There is currently no such intention.

(j) Operating leases

The rents payable under operating leases, where substantially all the benefits and risk of ownership remain with the lessor, are charged to the SOFA as incurred. Where there are rent free periods, the cost is spread over the period to the first rent review.

(k) Financial instruments

ACU has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are recognised as:

- a) Financial assets measured at amortised cost comprise cash, and all debtors excluding prepayments
- b) Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost are all liabilities excluding tax and social security, estimate accruals, provisions and deferred income
- c) Financial assets at fair value include investments and gains on forward contracts open at year end.

(l) Pension schemes

The ACU participates in both the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL).

USS

Significant accounting policies

The institution participates in Universities Superannuation Scheme. The assets of the scheme are held in a separate trustee-administered fund. Because of the mutual nature of the scheme, the assets are not attributed to individual institutions and a scheme-wide contribution rate is set. The institution is therefore exposed to actuarial risks associated with other institutions' employees and is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the scheme on a consistent and reasonable basis. As required by Section 28 of FRS 102 "Employee



benefits”, the institution therefore accounts for the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. As a result, the amount charged to the profit and loss account represents the contributions payable to the scheme and the deficit recovery contributions payable under the scheme’s Recovery Plan.

Where a scheme valuation determines that the scheme is in deficit on a technical provisions basis (as was the case following the 2020 valuation), the trustee of the scheme must agree a Recovery Plan that determines how each employer within the scheme will fund an overall deficit. The institution recognises a liability for the contributions payable that arise from such an agreement (to the extent that they relate to a deficit) with related expenses being recognised through the income statement. Further disclosures relating to the deficit recovery liability can be found in note 20.

Critical accounting judgements

FRS 102 makes the distinction between a group plan and a multi-employer scheme. A group plan consists of a collection of entities under common control typically with a sponsoring employer. A multi-employer scheme is a scheme for entities not under common control and represents (typically) an industry-wide scheme such as Universities Superannuation Scheme. The accounting for a multi-employer scheme where the employer has entered into an agreement with the scheme that determines how the employer will fund a deficit, results in the recognition of a liability for the contributions payable that arise from the agreement (to the extent that they relate to the deficit) with the resulting expense charged through the profit or loss account in accordance with section 28 of FRS 102.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

At 31 July 2023, the institution’s balance sheet included a liability of £310k for future contributions payable under the deficit recovery agreement which was concluded on 30 September 2021, following the 2020 valuation when the scheme was in deficit. No deficit recovery plan was required from the 2023 valuation, because the scheme was in surplus. Changes to contribution rates were implemented from 1 January 2024 and from that date the institution was no longer required to make deficit recovery contributions. The remaining liability of £310k was released to income and expenditure. Further disclosures relating to the deficit recovery liability can be found in note 20.

SAUL

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (“SAUL”), which is a centralised defined benefit scheme within the United Kingdom and was contracted out of the Second State Pension (prior to April 2016).

SAUL is an independently-managed pension scheme for the non-academic staff of over 50 colleges and institutions with links to higher education.

Pension benefits accrued within SAUL currently build up on a Career Average Revalued Earnings (“CARE”) basis.

The ACU is not expected to be liable to SAUL for any other current participating employer’s obligations under the Rules of SAUL, but in the event of an insolvency of any participating employer within SAUL, an amount of any pension shortfall (which cannot otherwise be recovered) in respect of that employer, may be spread across the remaining participating employers and reflected in the next actuarial valuation.

Funding Policy

SAUL’s statutory funding objective is to have sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the costs incurred by the Trustee in paying SAUL’s benefits as they fall due (the “Technical Provisions”). The Trustee adopts assumptions which, taken as a whole, are intended to be sufficiently prudent for pensions and benefits already in payment to continue to be paid and for the commitments which arise from Members’ accrued pension rights to be met.

The Technical Provisions assumptions include appropriate margins to allow for the possibility of events turning out worse than expected. However, the funding method and assumptions do not completely remove the risk that the



Technical Provisions could be insufficient to provide benefits in the future.

A formal actuarial valuation of SAUL is carried out every three years by a professionally qualified and independent actuary. The last actuarial valuation was carried out with an effective date of 31 March 2023. Informal reviews of SAUL's position, reflecting changes in market conditions, cash flow information and new accrual of benefits, are carried out between formal valuations.

The funding principles were agreed by the Trustee and employers in June 2021 and are due to be reviewed at SAUL's next formal valuation in 2026.

At the 31 March 2023 valuation SAUL was 105% funded on its Technical Provisions basis. As SAUL was in surplus on its Technical Provisions basis, no deficit contributions were required. The Trustees and the Employers have agreed that the ongoing Employers' contributions will fall from a rate of 21% of CARE Salaries to 19% of CARE Salaries from 1 September 2024.

Accounting Policy

The ACU is a Participating Employer in SAUL. The actuarial valuation applies to SAUL as a whole and does not identify surpluses or deficits applicable to individual employers. As a whole, the market value of SAUL's assets at 31 March 2023 was £3,096 million representing 105% of the liabilities.

It is not possible to identify an individual Employer's share of the underlying assets and liabilities of SAUL. ACU accounts for its participation in SAUL as if it were a defined contribution scheme and pension costs are based on the amounts actually paid (i.e. cash amounts) in accordance with paragraphs 28.11 of FRS 102.

As there was a Technical Provisions surplus at 31 March 2023, no deficit contributions were required following the 2023 valuation and there is no defined benefit liability (i.e. the present value of any deficit contributions due to SAUL) to be recognised by ACU.

(m) Foreign currencies

Transactions are translated on the date of transaction and balances on the year end date with any gain or loss taken to finance support costs.

(n) Going concern

The Trustees have reviewed the three-year budget that looks at the strength of the income and expenditure statement, balance sheet and cashflow. In addition, the Trustees have considered potential challenges, including the impact of reduced income from external administration fees and a decrease in income from government grants.

While uncertainties exist regarding future funding from Commonwealth governments, the Trustees wish to emphasize that these uncertainties do not represent a material concern that would cast doubt on the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

The Trustees therefore consider that it is entirely appropriate to prepare the financial accounts on a going concern basis.



2. Grants and donations received

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Grants from UK Government		
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – CIRCLE	-	160
	-	160
Grants from other Agencies		
Australian Government (DFAT) - PEBL West Africa	295	607
European Commission – LEAP4FNSSA	31	-
European Commission – Horizon Europe	41	-
British Council - Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort	200	76
Other	13	-
	580	683
Legacies and Grants from charitable foundations Marshall		
Sherfield Fellowship Foundation	-	33
F&P Turner Legacy	33	-
HW Paxton Legacy	18	0
	51	33
	631	876

3. External administration fees

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Scholarship administration	3,455	7,404
Other administrative services	220	132
Assessment and evaluation services	730	321
	4,405	7,857

4. Investment income and interest

	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total 2024 £'000	Total 2023 £'000
Investment income	322	609	931	979
Bank interest	29	3	32	5
	351	612	963	984



5. Analysis of total resources expended

	Staff costs £'000	Grants Paid £'000	Direct Costs £'000	Support costs £'000	Total £'000
Charitable activities:					
Project grants	177	80	235	-	492
Membership services	635	-	484	1,187	2,306
Scholarships, grants and awards	56	594	12	-	662
External and fund administration	2,155	-	293	2,298	4,746
Fundraising activities:					
Investment management costs	-	-	208	-	208
	3,023	674	1,232	3,485	8,414

Support Costs

	Membership Services £'000	External and fund admin £'000	Total £'000
Staff Costs	649	1,256	1,905
Consultants	46	88	134
Office and Facilities	283	549	832
IT	146	282	428
Governance	19	36	55
Other	44	87	131
	1,187	2,298	3,485

Where appropriate direct expenditure, including staff costs, has been allocated to the above activities. Support costs which could not be directly allocated, have instead been allocated on the following bases:

- Membership services: basis of staff engaged on activity
- External and fund administration: basis of staff engaged on activity
- Scholarships, grants and awards: direct allocation based on staff engaged on activity

Net incoming resources for the year are stated after charging:

	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Audit fees – ACU	21	20
Audit fees – ACU Trading Ltd	4	3
Other audit work	9	3
Council Meetings	32	75
Depreciation and amortisation	93	236



6. Staff costs

a) Staff costs

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Wages and salaries	3,710	5,744
Social security costs	418	625
Pension costs	402	646
	<u>4,530</u>	<u>7,015</u>

No termination payments were awarded during the year (2023: £93k). No payments remain outstanding as at 31 July 2024.

The Senior Executive Team (SET) are regarded as the Charity's key management personnel. The total earnings, including benefits, employer pension and employer NI contributions received by SET members totalled £316k (2023: £503k).

The number of employees whose total earnings in the year (including benefits and termination payments but, excluding employer pension contributions) fell into the bands below were:

	2024	2023*
	Number	Number
£60,001 to £70,000	5	3
£70,001 to £80,000	3	2
£80,001 to £90,000	-	-
£90,001 to £100,000	-	-
£100,001 to £110,000	1	1
£110,001 to £120,000	-	1
£130,001 to £140,000	-	1
£140,001 to £150,000	1	1
	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>

* Includes 4 members who received termination payments

Of the above higher paid employees, 1 (2023: 3) were accruing benefit in respect of membership of a defined benefit pension scheme.

The average headcount during the year was 85 (2023: 134).

b) Trustees remuneration and expenses

No Trustee received any remuneration in the year (2023: £nil). Trustees or their institutions were reimbursed £25k for travel expenses incurred during the year (2023: £34k).



7. Group and Charity Assets

a) Intangible Assets

	Computer software £'000
Cost	
At 31 July 2023	668
Disposal	(125)
At 31 July 2024	543
Amortisation	
At 31 July 2023	668
Disposal	(125)
At 31 July 2024	543
Net book value	
At 31 July 2024	-
At 31 July 2023	-

b) Tangible Assets

	Computer equipment £'000	Office Re- configuration £'000	Office Equipment £'000	Total £'000
Cost				
At 31 July 2023	131	787		918
Additions			16	16
At 31 July 2024	131	787	16	934
Depreciation				
At 31 July 2023	131	576		707
Charge for year		88	5	92
At 31 July 2024	131	664	5	799
Net book value				
At 31 July 2024	-	123	11	134
At 31 July 2023	-	211	-	211

At 31 July 2024 there were no capital commitments.



8. Group Investments

a) Movements in quoted investments

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted & Endowment funds	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Market value, 1 August	6,993	8,236	25,416	25,699
Disposals at opening market value	0	(1,000)	(392)	(250)
Transfer out of Endowment	0	0	(1,690)	0
Net unrealised gains / (losses) on revaluation	547	(243)	1,913	(33)
Market value, 31 July	7,540	6,993	25,247	25,416
Cost, 31 July	5,324	5,547	17,157	18,580

The Marshall Sherfield and Annenberg endowments were transferred to another provider as part of the transfer of the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission scholarship program.

b) Analysis by type

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total 2024	Total 2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Quoted investments	7,317	39	25,431	32,787	32,409
Cash held for investment purposes	-	-	-	-	-
	7,317	39	25,431	32,787	32,409

9. Debtors and prepayments

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade debtors	67	269	67	269
Sundry debtors	1	2	1	2
Accrued Income	323	81	323	81
Prepayments	123	102	113	102
	514	454	504	454



10. Creditors: amounts payable within one year

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade creditors	197	189	186	189
Deferred income	745	1,138	745	1,138
Other creditors	318	445	229	320
Funds held on behalf of third parties	522	404	522	404
Sundry creditors	53	91	20	40
Accruals	120	290	45	166
Amounts due to ACU Trading Limited	-	-	92	164
	<u>1,955</u>	<u>2,557</u>	<u>1,839</u>	<u>2,421</u>

Deferred income

	Opening Balance £'000	Released in year £'000	Deferred in year £'000	Closing Balance £'000
Membership	4	(4)	6	6
Programme Delivery	559	(622)	297	234
External administration fee	551	(551)	487	487
Other	24	(24)	19	19
	<u>1,138</u>	<u>(1,201)</u>	<u>809</u>	<u>746</u>

11. Designated and General Funds

2024	Brought Forward £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains £'000	Transfers £'000	Carried forward £'000
ACU office	212	-	(87)	-	-	125
Road to 2030	1,288	-	(586)	-	562	1,264
Designated Funds	<u>1,500</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(673)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>562</u>	<u>1,389</u>
General Funds	5,395	6,504	(6,187)	546	(562)	5,696
	<u>6,895</u>	<u>6,504</u>	<u>(6,860)</u>	<u>546</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,085</u>

Council approved a further transfer of £562k from General Funds to Designated Funds to support income generating opportunities and an innovation fund to support business development.



2023	Brought Forward £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains £'000	Transfers £'000	Carried forward £'000
ACU office	299	-	(87)	-	-	212
Road to 2030	1,851	-	(987)	-	424	1,288
Designated Funds	2,150	-	(1,074)	-	424	1,500
General Funds	5,994	9,607	(9,538)	(243)	(424)	5,396
	8,144	9,607	(10,612)	(243)	-	6,896

12. Endowment funds

2024	Opening value £'000	Income £'000	Expen- diture £'000	Transferred Out	Gains on investment £'000	Closing value £'000
Permanent endowments						
CSFP Anniversary	10,843	5	-		795	11,643
ACU	5,790	-	-		515	6,305
Edward Boyle	146	-	-		17	163
Annenberg Foundation	720	-	-	(718)	(3)	-
	17,499	5	-		1,325	18,111
Expendable endowments						
Queen Elizabeth						
Commonwealth Scholarships	6,206	(5)	-		453	6,654
Marshall Sherfield	976	-	-	(972)	(4)	-
F&P Turner	621	33	(33)		45	666
	7,803	28	(33)	(1,690)	494	7,320
Total endowments	25,302	33	(33)	(1,690)	1,819	25,431

The CSFP Anniversary and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships endowments enable people from around the Commonwealth to study in low and middle income countries at ACU member institutions. The F&P Turner endowment is a legacy grant with no restrictions. Together, the three funds support the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship awards.

The ACU Endowment funds ACU Development Fellowships.

Income from the Edward Boyle (Memorial) Endowment funds the Medical Elective Bursaries for UK students.

The Annenberg and Marshall Sherfield Endowments were transferred out to another provider.



2023	Opening funds £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing funds £'000
Permanent endowment			
CSFP Anniversary	10,776	67	10,843
ACU	5,943	(153)	5,790
Edward Boyle	150	(4)	146
Annenberg Foundation	739	(19)	720
	17,608	(109)	17,499
Expendable endowment			
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	6,149	57	6,206
Marshall Sherfield	1,002	(26)	976
F&P Turner	615	6	621
	7,766	37	7,803
Total endowments	25,374	(72)	25,302

13. Restricted Funds

2024	Opening Balance £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Closing Balance £'000
ACU Development Fellowships	313	236	(291)	258
CSFP Anniversary Fund	(209)	446	(302)	(65)
Marshall Sherfield Fellowships	117	9	(126)	-
Annenberg	3	7	(10)	-
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives)	17	6	(1)	22
HW Paxton Legacy	94	18	-	112
Symons Medal	7	-	-	7
Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement (CIRCLE)	6	-	-	6
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa)	(34)	309	(275)	-
LEAP4FNSSA	(35)	31	4	-
Climate Cohort	(40)	200	(167)	(7)
FAO Research Network	-	13	(13)	-
CEA-FIRST - Horizon Europe	-	22	(22)	-
StEPPFoS - Horizon Europe	-	19	(19)	-
Ghandi Programme	5	-	-	5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	1	-	-	1
	245	1,316	(1,222)	339

Funds with negative balance: costs are reimbursed by the funder in arrears.



2023	Opening Balance £'000	Total Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Closing Balance £'000
ACU Development Fellowships	251	247	(185)	313
CSFP Anniversary Fund	(90)	365	(484)	(209)
Marshall Sherfield Fellowships	97	73	(53)	117
Annenberg	3	29	(29)	3
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives)	12	6	(1)	17
HW Paxton Legacy	94	-	-	94
Symons Medal	7	-	-	7
Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement	4	160	(158)	6
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa)	(82)	606	(558)	(34)
LEAP	(9)	-	(26)	(35)
Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort	-	76	(116)	(40)
Commonwealth Futures – British Council	5	-	-	5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	1	-	-	1
	293	1,562	(1,610)	245

Funds with negative balance: costs are reimbursed by the funder in arrears.

14. Analysis of Group assets between Funds

2024	Pension and other liability £'000	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Net current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment funds	-	-	25,432	(1)	25,431
Restricted funds	-	-	39	300	339
Designated Fund	-	211	-	1,178	1,389
General funds	-	-	7,317	(1,621)	5,696
	-	211	32,788	(144)	32,855

2023	Pension and other liability £'000	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Net current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment Fund	-	-	25,287	15	25,302
Restricted Fund	-	-	129	115	244
Unrestricted Designated Fund	-	299	-	1,201	1,500
Unrestricted General Fund	(310)	-	6,993	(1,287)	5,396
	(310)	299	32,409	44	32,442



15. Gants, awards and scholarships awarded from Endowments

		Total value £'000	Number awarded
CSFP Anniversary Fund	The CSFP Anniversary, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships and F&P Turner endowments support the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship awards which enables people from around the Commonwealth to study in low and middle income countries at ACU member institutions.	246	39
ACU Development Fellowships	The ACU's own endowment income is used to support small scale collaboration between member universities through bursaries.	207	72
Endowment funded grants		453	111
Climate Cohort	Funded by the British Council, it is a training and development programme supporting early career researchers from Commonwealth LMICs to enhance their skills and experience in research co-creation for climate adaptation	26	27
Ocean Country Partnership Programme	Funded by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs under the auspices of the UK Government's Blue Planet Fund. It supports Master's and PhDs focused on the research themes of marine pollution, sustainable seafood and marine biodiversity.	1,155	108
Programme / Restricted Fund grants		1,181	135
		1,634	246

The Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa) programme funded by the Australian government completed this year. This year the programme had trained over 3,000 lecturers and 4,000 students in blended learning pedagogies, quality assurance, and the use of technological platforms.

Grants are paid to individuals and the higher education institutions to which they are connected. As at 31 July 2024, ACU had grant commitment of £551k, payable over the next 2 year (2023: £477k).



16. Administration of External Funds

The ACU runs a number of schemes for which it receives a management fee-. The table below shows the bank balances and the value of transactions processed by ACU.

	Opening bank balance £'000	Incoming Resources £'000	Resources Expended £'000	Closing bank balance £'000
Chevening Scholarship Scheme	2,582	2,500	(5,082)	0
Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme	4,804	28,455	(31,190)	2,069
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission	1,616	186	(1,802)	0
Staff and Educational Development Association	259	278	(257)	280
Heads of Educational Development Group	22	27	(12)	37
Total held in third party bank accounts	9,283	31,446	(38,343)	2,386
 The Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	 404	 1,714	 (1,596)	 522
Total held in ACU bank accounts	404	1,714	(1,596)	522
 Total Third-Party Funds	 9,687	 33,160	 (39,939)	 2,908

17. Future financial commitments

At 31 July 2024 the ACU had commitments under operating leases as set out below:

	2024 Land and buildings £'000	2023 Land and buildings £'000
Within one year	340	340
After one year but within five years	144	482
Charged to SOFA during the year	340	340



18. ACU Trading Ltd

ACU Trading Limited (ACUT) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period ended 31 July 2024 have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACUT is the provision of staff services to the ACU. The results of ACUT for the period ended 31 July 2024 are as follows:

	2024	2023		2024	2023
	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
Turnover	4,151	5,842	Debtors	102	164
Cost of sales	3,970	5,599	Cash at bank	106	136
Gross Profit	181	243	Current assets	208	300
Administration	181	243	Creditors	208	300
Net profit	-	-	Total Net assets	-	-
Net assets	-	-	Reserves	-	-

19. Related Parties

	2024	2023
	£'000	£'000
Balances owed to ACU Trading Ltd	92	164
Paid to ACU Trading Ltd for services	4,151	5,842
Received from ACU Trading Ltd for services	136	205
Paid to University of London, UK	23	-

20. Pension Commitments

(a) Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)

The total cost charged to the I&E is £82k (2023: £199k).

Deficit recovery contributions due within one year for the institution are £nil (2023: £48k).

A deficit recovery plan was put in place as part of the 2020 valuation, which required payment of 6.2% of salaries over the period 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024, at which point the rate would increase to 6.3%. As set out in Note 20, no deficit recovery plan was required under the 2023 valuation because the scheme was in surplus on a technical provisions basis. The institution was no longer required to make deficit recovery contributions from 1 January 2024 and accordingly released the outstanding provision to the profit and loss account.

The latest available complete actuarial valuation of the Retirement Income Builder is as at 31 March 2023 (the valuation date), which was carried out using the projected unit method.

Since the institution cannot identify its share of USS Retirement Income Builder (defined benefit) assets and liabilities, the following disclosures reflect those relevant for those assets and liabilities as a whole.

The 2023 valuation was the seventh valuation for the scheme under the scheme-specific funding regime introduced by the Pensions Act 2004, which requires schemes to have sufficient and appropriate assets to cover their technical provisions (the statutory funding objective). At the valuation date, the value of the assets of the scheme was



£73.1 billion and the value of the scheme's technical provisions was £65.7 billion indicating a surplus of £7.4 billion and a funding ratio of 111%.

The key financial assumptions used in the 2023 valuation are described below. More detail is set out in the Statement of Funding Principles.

Price inflation - Consumer Prices Index (CPI)	3.0% p.a. (based on a long-term average expected level of CPI, broadly consistent with long-term market expectations)
RPI/CPI gap	1.0% p.a. to 2030, reducing linearly by 0.1% p.a. from 2030
Pension increases (subject to a floor of 0%)	Benefits with no cap: CPI assumption plus 3bps Benefits subject to a "soft cap" of 5% (providing inflationary increases up to 5%, and half of any excess inflation over 5% up to a maximum of 10%): CPI assumption minus 3bps
Discount rate (forward rates)	Fixed interest gilt yield curve plus: Pre-retirement: 2.5% p.a. Post retirement: 0.9% p.a.

The main demographic assumptions used relate to the mortality assumptions. These assumptions are based on analysis of the scheme's experience carried out as part of the 2023 actuarial valuation. The mortality assumptions used in these figures are as follows:

	2023 valuation
Mortality base table	101% of S2PMA "light" for males and 95% of S3PFA for females
Future improvements to mortality	CMI 2021 with a smoothing parameter of 7.5, an initial addition of 0.4% p.a., 10% w2020 and w2021 parameters, and a long-term improvement rate of 1.8% pa for males and 1.6% pa for females

The current life expectancies on retirement at age 65 are:

	2024	2023
Males currently aged 65 (years)	23.7	24.0
Females currently aged 65 (years)	25.6	25.6
Males currently aged 45 (years)	25.4	26.0
Females currently aged 45 (years)	27.2	27.4

USS has confirmed there is no update regarding the High Court's ruling in the Virgin Media v NTL Pension Trustees II case relating to section 37 and contracted-out defined benefit (DB) scheme amendments at this time, as the legal position is still in question. USS will be carefully considering any implications of the judgment and any further developments, such as any appeal or legislative intervention by the government. The issues are detailed and technical. The legal position may also yet evolve. It will therefore take time to confirm whether there are any implications for the scheme. USS will update stakeholders as and when there are any notable developments.

(b) Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL)

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London, a centralised defined benefit scheme for all qualified employees with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds.

The total SAUL pension cost charged to the Statement of Financial Activities is £6k (2023: £5k). This includes nil (2023: nil) outstanding contributions at the balance sheet date, and £nil deficit contributions (2023: nil).

Accounts



The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities



Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022-2023



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1 Introduction from our Chair

The 12 months covered by this report saw the ACU continue to deliver on its core ambition: to build a better world through international collaboration in higher education. We delivered life-changing international opportunities to thousands of students, brought universities together to exchange knowledge and forge new partnerships, supported world-class research on global challenges, and much more.

Like everything we do, these activities reflect our fundamental belief that higher education plays a pivotal role in building a fairer, more sustainable future for the Commonwealth and beyond. But we are also acutely aware that universities often reflect the unequal world in which they operate. Tackling these inequalities – on campus, in research, and in accessing opportunities to learn – therefore remains a key priority as we convene universities around our common interest in principles of fairness, equity and social justice.

In July, we brought together higher education stakeholders at our Canada symposium to explore how universities can move beyond rhetoric to tackle systemic inequities on campus and beyond, with practical ideation on embedding approaches in university strategic action plans and curriculum development.

We continued to design and deliver transformative programmes that strengthen the capacity of individuals and institutions and unlock learning opportunities for thousands of students. The PEBL programme trained hundreds of lecturers across west Africa in the design and delivery of online learning, and our new award-nominated Commonwealth Virtual Exchange expanded the benefits of international experience to a far wider group of students than would otherwise be possible.

Meanwhile, we found new ways to equip our member universities with practical tools and resources to drive equity and fairness in global higher education partnerships. Supporting the establishment and advancement of fairer north-south and south-south research relationships was at the forefront of the Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit, which itself was a collaborative project with stakeholders across the Commonwealth.

We take great pride in our longstanding dedication to scholarships as a means to enhance access to higher education. The Chevening and Marshall programs will now transition to a new provider from 1 September 2022 following the UK Government's tender process during 2022-23. We have collaborated closely with both the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the new provider to facilitate a seamless handover of these programs.

Having secured the endorsement of Commonwealth governments for a series of far-reaching policy recommendations – including improved access to higher education, greater recognition of universities' contribution to sustainable development, and increased investment in the sector – a priority for this year has been working with stakeholders across the Commonwealth to realise and sustain these vital commitments ahead of the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2024.

We look forward to continuing to champion our members in our role as the voice of higher education in the Commonwealth while working with UK and Commonwealth Governments on our wider mobility portfolio which includes the Commonwealth Scholarship programme, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships, and others.

In September we welcomed Professor Colin Riordan CBE, previously Vice-Chancellor of the Cardiff University after we farewelled Dr Joanna Newman who moved onto a new role in the sector.



The Association
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Universities

INTRODUCTION

We look forward to another busy, dynamic and collaborative year ahead, where we will be strengthening our offer for members including launching new thematic dialogues and preparing for the re-introduction of our Vice Chancellor's conference in 2025.

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council





2 About us

The Association of Commonwealth Universities is a global network with a shared commitment to building a better world through international collaboration in higher education.

Founded in 1913, the ACU connects institutions, people, and partners to provide educational opportunities, strengthen the capacity of universities, and advance higher education's contribution to sustainable development.

Its aim is to create a strong and connected higher education community that works across borders and boundaries to build a fairer, more sustainable world.

Our values

- Quality – We strive to excel in all we do, and continuously reflect on our work to find new ways forward
- Collaboration – We believe that cooperation and sharing ideas makes us stronger
- Innovation – We encourage people to think differently, be curious, and explore new ideas
- Respect – We treat others in the way we would like to be treated – with fairness, integrity, and generosity
- Inclusion – We value difference, and encourage and celebrate the diverse voices of our colleagues and partners

Our strategic priorities

- To champion the power of higher education to improve lives
- To support the long-term vitality of universities

- To engage and connect universities across borders, and promote collaboration among them
- To deliver educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference
- To uphold the ACU's reputation for excellence and demonstrate its impact

The road to 2030

Universities make a critical contribution to sustainable development across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Our strategic plan – 'The road to 2030' – reinforces our fundamental belief that global challenges can only be solved through international collaboration, and our collective commitment to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals through higher education.





3 Review of the year

This section summarises our performance against the five objectives outlined in our strategic plan.

1. To champion the power of higher education to improve lives

1.1 *Promote, at the highest levels, the value of universities to society, and their role in sustainable development*

1.2 *Present a powerful collective voice for universities on a global stage*

1.3 *Lead debate and dialogue around key issues in international higher education*

Our accredited status and global partnerships enable us to influence policymaking in higher education and raise the profile of universities' contribution to building a better world. Updates from 2022-23 include:

In September 2022, we attended, alongside our international partners, the **UN Transforming Education Summit**, which aimed to elevate education to the top of the global political agenda.

In October 2022, we took part in a panel at the **Association for Development of Education in Africa Triennale**, alongside the Commonwealth Secretariat and representatives from the Kenyan and Mauritian ministries of education, where we discussed the delivery of a series of higher education policy recommendations made by the ACU at the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in April 2022.

In November 2022, we joined the **27th United Nations Climate Change**

Conference (COP27) to profile the vital role that universities play in delivering climate action. Highlights included:

- Supporting a group of 22 early career climate researchers from the [Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort \(see 2.1\)](#) to take part in the event and share their research with a global audience.
- An [official side event](#) exploring the role and importance of youth engagement in climate policymaking. The event enabled a solution-focused and intergenerational dialogue between law-makers and young leaders on questions such as how bridge the science-policy divide, improving access to climate finance, and the barriers to youth engagement and agency in climate issues.

In April 2023, we drew on the results of our most recent [ACU Measures](#) survey (see 3.3) to highlight stark inequalities in university research funding and other research-related support, particularly in lower income countries. Through coverage across key target media, we were able call attention to the longstanding disparities that continue to shape the research ecosystem.

In May 2023, we joined a meeting of the Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism (CADME) at the Education World Forum, where we presented our proposal for the **Commonwealth Higher Education Working Group**, a new initiative led by the ACU to build on the positive commitments made by government ministers at the 2022 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM). This group enables us to work closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Education Ministers between CCEM meetings to shape policy implementation, and will actively contribute to shaping and delivering the next CCEM in close collaboration with the host government and ACU regional committees. Our proposal for the working group was endorsed by the Commonwealth Education Ministers Action Group.

In May 2023, we also welcomed the Higher Education Minister of The Gambia to our offices to discuss governmental plans for higher education and the wide range of opportunities for collaboration afforded by the ACU network. In the same



month, we attended the Conference of Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting to highlight universities' contribution to universal health coverage.

In July 2023, we hosted a delegation from the Presidential Unit of the Government of Togo to discuss how international collaboration in higher education can contribute to their development plans.

The ACU continued to call attention to the importance of sustainable urbanisation in tackling climate change through the [Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative](#), alongside partners such as the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Commonwealth Association of Planners, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The collaboration aims to raise the profile of sustainable urbanisation in the Commonwealth political agenda and to generate new initiatives to address climate-related challenges. In July 2023, members of the initiative announced a [new partnership with UN-Habitat](#) which aims to increase capacity of urban stakeholders in Commonwealth countries to tackle the challenges raised by rapid urbanisation.

In July 2023, we attended the **UN High Level Political Forum**, where we represented the interests of higher education as part of our tripartite partnership with the International Association of Universities and Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie. This included exploring a new partnership with the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group. In a roundtable held by Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the International Science Council, UN DESI, and others, we also fed into discussions on supporting science for the SDGs, to be included in ministerial communique at September's UN SDG Summit.

Also in July 2023, we presented an award at **International Green Gown Awards**, which recognise exceptional sustainability initiatives undertaken by universities. Steering committee members from our Higher Education and the SDGs Network and Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network were also judges. A series of **thought leadership articles** in the media and beyond continued to highlight higher education's vital contribution to society and the issues that matter to ACU members. These included:

- [Universities are the perfect fora for debating the Commonwealth's future](#) (*Times Higher Education*)
- [Linking politics and research has never been more necessary](#) (*University World News*)
- [Commonwealth's diversity is made for collaboration](#) (*Research Fortnight*)
- [The clock is ticking for the SDGs](#) (*IAU Horizons Magazine*)
- [A fairer future for higher education](#) (*Commonwealth Education Report 2023*)

The ACU Review, our online and print magazine, is a meeting place for ideas and diverse perspectives from across the Commonwealth. Each issue explores a different topical theme, chosen to highlight the value of higher education to society, and to reflect the diversity and shared challenges that characterise the ACU's global network. The latest issue, published in July 2023, explored how university humanities contribute to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, featuring 12 academics in ten countries.

2. To support the long-term vitality of universities

2.1 *Support the development of the core human and institutional resources that underpin the university mission*

We continued to lead and manage a range of innovative projects and platforms that connect universities across borders to help meet demand, enable vital research, and strengthen higher education systems across the Commonwealth: **Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE)** is a UK-Canada framework research programme on climate adaptation and resilience, aiming to enable socially inclusive and sustainable action to build resilience to climate change and natural hazards in Africa and Asia-Pacific. The ACU provides consultancy-style services to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Canada's



International Development Research Centre to support the design of research capacity-strengthening activities within the programme. Projects conducted include:

- A global mapping of institutions delivering research capacity-strengthening initiatives within the CLARE priority regions
- A mapping of capacity-strengthening activities within the successful proposals of the first CLARE research cohort, including emerging trends, possible synergies, potential gaps, outstanding examples, and recommendations

The **Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort** programme, funded by the British Council, is designed to support a pipeline of early career researchers from Commonwealth countries, with the capacities to contribute to climate action research. With a focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation, an applied training programme supports these researchers to co-create a research project with the active participation of policy and/or practice stakeholders.

- In November 2022, the first iteration of this programme concluded, culminating in 22 early career researchers from 15 countries and 20 universities travelling to Egypt to take part in the 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP27).
- In May 2023, the [second ACU Climate Research Cohort](#) was launched, including:
 - Recruitment of 20 early career researchers
 - Recruitment of seven partner institutions to provide specific support
 - Delivery of the first phase of the training programme, including three virtual training workshops and associated applied learning activities
 - Dissemination of seed grants to the 20 early career researchers to conduct initial stakeholder engagement and research scoping activities

The **LEAP4FNSSA** project aims to establish a platform for research collaboration between European and African institutions to support research and innovation in

the fields of food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. Throughout this year, the ACU continued to be a task lead in monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment of the African Union and European Union [Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture](#) and contributed to the overall programme strategy.

The **Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning** (PEBL) is designed in response to the challenges reported by a number of African universities in meeting demand for higher education as a result of academic staff shortages and soaring student numbers. PEBL aims to rapidly and sustainably scale-up capacity in the design and use of blended learning – a combination of face-to-face and digital learning – through expert-led training, collaboration, and the development of quality assured, credit-bearing blended courses that can be shared between institutions. [PEBL West Africa](#) began in September 2021, with support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and is working with 12 university partners in Ghana and Nigeria to build sustainable capacity for blended learning. Multiple milestones were reached in the second year of the project, including:

- 12 high-quality blended courses were developed and made available on OER Africa. to over 100 academics in partner universities.
- Successful trainings on pedagogy, quality assurance, open education resources, and gender mainstreaming were provided by Staff and
- Successful trainings on online facilitation and the use of the Learning Management System were provided by technical partners at the National Open University of Nigeria Educational Development Association, the Commonwealth of Learning, the University of New South Wales, and INASP respectively.
- [Cascade trainings](#) are currently under way to facilitate a multiplier effect at partner universities. To date, PEBL West Africa has trained more than 1,800 academics and 3,000 students through these cascades.



2.2 *Improve equity, inclusion, and access, which are critical to the future of higher education*

2.3 *Share learning from local and regional initiatives to deliver wider impact*

April 2023 saw the launch of the [ACU Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit](#) - a collection of practical resources to assist analysis and action to address equity in research partnerships. Supporting the establishment and advancement of fairer north-south and south-south research relationships was at the forefront during its creation, which was informed by substantial research conducted with a range of ACU members from across the Commonwealth, as well as equitable research partnership stakeholders and experts. The toolkit looks to stimulate critical thinking and dialogue about what equity means, and what it might 'look like' in a research partnership, as well as suggesting practical actions to strengthen this. The toolkit was shared and explored through a series of activities including:

- A virtual [launch event](#) in April 2023, showcased the toolkit's resources.
- A virtual [interactive workshop](#) in May 2023 engaged participants in discussion and analysis on what equity is and how it might be achieved in global north-south dynamics.
- A [hybrid event in May 2023](#), held in partnership with the University of Pretoria, explored 'Imagining and understanding equitable research impact tools'.

The ACU's [Martha Farrell Memorial Fellowships](#) offer specialist training and practical support to tackle sexual harassment on campus and are hosted by the Martha Farrell Foundation in India. In 2022-23, three virtual fellowships were awarded.

3. To engage and connect universities across borders, and promote collaboration

3.1 *Strengthen and grow our international network of universities to extend our global reach*

ACU member universities are a vibrant global community with a shared commitment to building a better world through international collaboration in higher education.

As of the 31 July 2023, the ACU had 502 member universities, having welcomed 17 new members over the year. A new membership fee structure was introduced from 1 August 2023, which is based upon a formula related to the UN Human Development Index (HDI), and divided ACU members into three groups: low, medium, and high. Within these groups, the new subscription brackets are based on an individual institution's recurrent income as stated for the most recent financial year. This new model of redistributive membership subscription provides all universities in the Commonwealth with an affordable option to join the ACU. It is worth noting that the introduction of the new subscription fee model, along with more efficient debt management practices, may temporarily result in a decrease in membership numbers in early 2023/24.

3.2 *Create forums through which institutional knowledge and resources can be shared and multiplied*

In March 2023, the [ACU India Roundtable](#) series explored the future of higher education in India and across the Commonwealth. Hosted in partnership with three member universities in India, the events were a forum for universities across the Commonwealth to discuss issues of common relevance and [forge new partnerships](#) within and beyond India. More than 200 staff from 46 universities in



India, Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, and the UK took part, as well as representatives from the University Grants Commission, the Association of Indian Universities, AusTrade, and the British Council.

In May 2023, we partnered with the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, the University of Nicosia, and the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programs on a three-day conference exploring '[Digital transition and inclusion in education: an agenda for action](#)'. The event, which took place at the University of Nicosia, Cyprus, looked at how digital transformation can contribute to greener and more inclusive societies.

In July 2023, the [ACU Canada Symposium](#) explored how universities are tackling inequity: the distinct and shared challenges they face and how international collaboration can support their efforts. Hosted in partnership with York University, Canada, the event brought university leaders together to discuss issues around access and inclusion, decolonisation, and higher education's social impact.

Throughout the year, the ACU's [five thematic networks and communities of practice](#) enabled universities to collaborate on joint initiatives, share best practice, and come together to influence policy agendas within and beyond the sector. 69% of all members across 40 countries are now represented in our networks and communities, which are as follows:

The **ACU Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network** brings universities together to share practical expertise and experience of building resilience to climate change and natural disasters and contribute to policymaking in this area. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- In March 2023, two collaborative and interactive online events – titled '[Climate resilient researchers: essential skills to work with wicked problems](#)' – explored approaches to research into climate resilience and adaption. Both events were aimed at supporting early career researchers and fostering Commonwealth connections between them.

- The network ran a peer forum for early career researchers working in climate resilience, to share knowledge and build connections.
- The network sponsored staff exchanges between member institutions, to enable university staff working in climate resilience to share knowledge and experience.
- As of 31 July 2023, the Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network has 519 individual members at 196 member universities.

The **ACU Higher Education and the SDGs Network** is a forum for staff at ACU member universities who are directly engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, including integrating sustainable development into their teaching, research, operations, and strategies. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- Five [Higher Education and the SDGs Challenge Grants](#) were awarded to member universities in Australia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and the UK, to fund projects that advance the aims and priorities of the network. [This year's funded initiatives](#) include the University Living Lab project, which builds partnerships between students and organisations working on sustainable development to solve real-world challenges, and a project to integrate sustainable development into legal training in south Asia.
- A [virtual event](#), hosted by Newcastle University, UK, and the University of Pretoria, South Africa, explored the role of equitable international partnerships in meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- As of 31 July 2023, the Higher Education and the SDGs Network has 729 individual members at 273 member universities.

The **ACU HR in HE Community** is a forum for staff working in university human resources. The Community champions the strategic importance of HR professionals in universities and their unique contribution to the university's mission. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- This year's [HR in HE Community Challenge Grant](#) was awarded to the



University of Ghana to support a project to strengthen the capacity of university HR Officers in performance management systems and HR analytics, and share learnings with the wider ACU.

- [Planning for the new flexible world of work: Insights from across the Commonwealth](#) was an online workshop in September 2022, exploring how university HR practitioners continue to re-imagine the world of work in the wake of COVID-19.
- The work of members of the HR in HE Community in tackling systemic inequalities was showcased at the ACU Canada Symposium.
- As of 31 July 2023, the HR in HE Community has 518 individual members at 225 member universities.

The **ACU Peace and Reconciliation Network** is an interdisciplinary collective of academics, researchers and professional staff working in the fields of peace, justice, truth-telling, and reconciliation. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- Network members helped shape and design the content for the 2023 ACU Summer School on the theme: 'Truth and reconciliation: from apartheid to transitional justice'
- As of 31 July 2023, the Peace and Reconciliation Network has 206 individual members at 130 member universities.

The **ACU Supporting Research Community** is a forum for all staff at ACU member universities involved in supporting the research process – including research management and administration, research impact and uptake, and library services. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- Ten Early Career Researcher Training Grants were awarded to universities in Uganda, India, Ghana, Nigeria, Pakistan, New Zealand, and Mauritius.
- Three training sessions for early career researchers, funded by the ACU Early Career Researcher Training Grants, were made available to community members.

- The network funded 11 ACU members to attend the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) Congress in South Africa in May 2023, and provided reduced registration rates to two more members.
- As of 31 July 2023, the Supporting Research Community has 968 individual members at 297 member universities.

3.3 Deepen our engagement with member universities to identify areas of shared interest and remain responsive to their needs

ACU Ambassadors are nominated points of contact within member universities. They help us to deepen our engagement with member institutions by improving the flow of communication and opportunities and by disseminating information to relevant people in their institution. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- Our ongoing drive to recruit ACU Ambassadors at member universities continued to be successful, with the total number increasing to 279.
- Our annual ACU [Ambassadors' Summit](#) took place in October 2022, delivered at two different times to accommodate multiple time zones. It was attended by 86 representatives.

The **ACU's seven regional committees** continued to ensure that the ACU responds to the differing regional needs of its members. The committees oversee regional activity, give feedback on membership priorities, inform the ACU's policy work, and provide a window to broader regional developments. There is one committee for each of the following regions: East & Southern Africa, East Asia, South Asia, West Africa, Europe, the Pacific, and the Caribbean & Americas. Regional committees meet twice a year, and in 2022-23, ACU delegations met with African, European and Canadian regional committee members in person in Pretoria, Nicosia and Toronto, respectively.

ACU Measures, our flagship member benchmarking service, enables member universities across the world to compare practices and policies with their peers in



non-competitive and confidential way, promoting the exchange of expertise and good practice between members and supporting institutional planning and decision-making.

- In April 2023, we [announced the results](#) of our inaugural survey, which looked at how universities across the Commonwealth are supporting research within their institutions. 95 universities in 29 countries took part, with the results highlighting unequal access to research funding and research support mechanisms in lower income countries.
- Media coverage of the survey (see Section 1) and our own articles about its findings enabled us to draw attention to the stark inequalities in university research funding and other research-related support, evidenced by the survey findings.
- In May 2023, we shared survey findings at the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) Congress in South Africa.

4. To deliver educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference

4.1 Run prestigious scholarship schemes that build enduring international connections, understanding, and engagement

The ACU is committed to delivering educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference. One of the ways we do this is through the management of world-class international scholarship schemes that build enduring international connections and understanding between individuals, institutions, and nations.

In 2022-23, we managed the UK government's three major scholarship programmes: Chevening, Commonwealth, and Marshall Scholarships, as well as the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships. In late 2022, the UK

government opened a competitive tender for Chevening and Marshall programmes, and in March 2023, we were informed that these programmes will be moving on to another provider, which resulted in a transition programme at the ACU.

We continue to be custodians of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. In late 2021, we also became a lead delivery partner in the Turing Scheme. This section provides updates on all the above.

[Chevening](#) is the UK government's flagship international awards programme aimed at developing global leaders. Funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and partner organisations, and administered by the ACU until 31 August 2023, Chevening enables tomorrow's leaders to study in the UK and join a global community of professionals who are creating positive change. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- Over 72,000 applications were submitted for Chevening Scholarships and Fellowships.
- 1,394 scholars from over 140 countries and territories were welcomed to 105 universities in the UK.
- 311 scholars were supported by Chevening partner organisations, including UK universities, making up 22% of the cohort.
- Chevening delivered a programme of 45 cultural and academic events for scholars throughout the year, returning to in-person events in many cases and using the virtual model developed during the pandemic to allow wider access to other events.

[Marshall Scholarships](#) enable young Americans of high ability to study for a degree in the UK. As future leaders, Marshall Scholars strengthen the enduring relationship between the British and American peoples, their governments, and their institutions. Marshall Scholarships are mainly funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and overseen by the Marshall Aid



Commemoration Commission, administered by the ACU. 40 Scholarships were awarded in 2023.

The ACU continued to be custodians of the [Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan \(CSFP\)](#) – a unique international framework through which Commonwealth countries offer university scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other member nations, forging lasting links across the Commonwealth and creating valuable opportunities for cultural and academic exchange. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships – *both detailed below* – operate within this framework.

The [Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK \(CSC\)](#) is the main UK government scholarship scheme led by international development objectives. Sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and managed by the ACU, the CSC combines sustainable development with UK national interests by supporting innovators and leaders of the future from across the Commonwealth and attracting outstanding talent to Britain's universities. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- The Commission funded 671 scholarships and fellowships for the 2022-23 academic year, with around 1,700 scholars from 38 countries on award in total. This included 61 split-site scholarships, which support collaboration between UK and other Commonwealth universities.
- A full events programme was delivered, including a Development Training Programme (18 workshops in total), an in-person 'Connect and Collaborate' event (enabling our latest cohort of scholars both to meet and share how they intend advance the sustainable development goals post-award), and a networking event for departing scholars. The Regional Network Coordinators led a total of 40 events for scholars in their respective regions.
- The Commission delivered a time-limited programme in clean energy, air and oceans, offering professional development opportunities to 19 fellows working in the area.
- The CSC's ongoing alumni engagement activities included its ['Development](#)

[in Action'](#) [webinar series](#) (through which scholars and alumni can share their work) and [Research Impact Awards](#) (which recognise how research conducted by CSC scholars and alumni is supporting sustainable development). The Alumni Community Engagement Fund, which supports alumni in raising awareness of development issues at the community level, focused on clean energy, air and oceans and sports for development during 2022-23.

The [**Ocean Country Partnership Programme \(OCP\) Scholarships**](#) were [launched](#) in September 2022. Funded through the UK's [Blue Planet Fund](#), these create unique opportunities for students to undertake a fully-funded Master's or PhD programme in marine science. The pilot cycle took place in 2022-23, offering postgraduate scholarships to 14 students from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to study at the University of the South Pacific. Further scoping is underway to extend the scholarship offer to further OCPP priority countries.

The [**Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships \(QECS\)**](#) offer opportunities to study for a two-year Master's degree in a low or middle income Commonwealth country. Funded by Commonwealth governments, the scholarships are aimed at students who are committed to creating change in their communities. Updates from 2022-23 include:

- 15 scholars accepted their awards to study across 13 countries.
- There are currently 37 QECS scholars studying across 24 institutions, with subject areas ranging from Public Health to Youth Gender and Development.
- In September 2022, a further cohort of QECS scholars took part in the University of Manchester's online course on 'Creating a Sustainable World: 21st Century Challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals'. The course brought students from different academic disciplines together to devise practical solutions to global challenges.
- Scholars shared their experiences of engaging in local events, embracing the local cultures, and working on projects that benefit their host



communities. Examples include a menstrual hygiene awareness programme for secondary school students in Papua New Guinea and the formation of an international students association at a scholar's host university in Sri Lanka.

The [Turing Scheme](#) is the UK's global programme for studying, working, and living abroad. In the year covered by this report, the ACU continued to lead the assessment of grant applications for outward mobility funding for schools, further education/vocational education, and training and higher education, working with Capita as the scheme's delivery partner.

4.2 Seek to create and expand educational opportunities

4.3 Demonstrate the impact of international educational experiences and initiatives

In addition to government-funded schemes, the ACU's own range of grants and fellowships continue to support the interchange of students and staff between member universities. We also work actively to increase the number of such opportunities available and promote the value of international experiences more widely. Activities in this area include:

The ACU's **Challenge Grants** are specifically for members of the ACU's thematic networks and communities of practice. These networks enable universities to share best practice, collaborate on joint activities, and influence policy agendas in areas of strategic importance. The grants – detailed under 3.2 – fund projects that further the networks' aims and promote collaboration between their members.

The ACU supports **early career researchers** at its member universities through two types of grants:

- **Early Career Conference Grants** are awarded to individual academics to enable them to attend international conferences in their area of expertise, helping them to share their research, learn about new developments, and

build professional networks. As of 31 July, grantees are currently being selected for this year, with grants due to be awarded in October 2023.

- **Early Career Researcher Training Grants** are awarded to member universities to support the delivery of training that equips emerging researchers with the skills required to succeed in their research careers. These grants are attached to our Supporting Research Community, detailed under 3.2.

ACU Fellowships promote the exchange of knowledge, skills, and ideas between universities and countries of the Commonwealth. Available to both academic and professional staff, the Fellowships enable collaborative research and partnership-building, as well as opportunities to observe and exchange different techniques and practice. As of 31 July, the selection process for this year's awards is underway, with Fellowships due to be awarded in October 2023.

The [Commonwealth Virtual Exchange](#), launched in October 2022, is an eight-week virtual exchange programme linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The programme, designed by senior specialists at member institutions, is designed to help students develop valuable skills such as leadership, teamwork, and entrepreneurial skills. Free for students to join and delivered entirely online, the initiative aims to ensure that a wider range of students have access to the benefits that international study experiences can bring. In the period covered by this report, 40 students from ten member universities took part in the pilot programme and the initiative was nominated for a global education award – The [PIEoneer Awards 2023](#) – for promoting diversity, equity and inclusion.

The **Routledge/Round Table Commonwealth Studentships** support PhD research projects on Commonwealth-related themes. In 2022-23, two grants were awarded to students in Nigeria and Australia. Funded projects included research interrogating how voters in Nigeria respond when their elected politicians change political parties and research examining the symbiotic relationship between politics and masculinities in Fiji.



The [ACU Summer School](#) brings Commonwealth students together to explore multidisciplinary, global issues through a dynamic programme of workshops, field trips, and group work. Bursaries are offered to enable students from all parts of the Commonwealth to take part, with each year co-hosted by a different ACU member university. Locations to date have included Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Mauritius, Rwanda, and the UK. Held annually, two Summer Schools fell within the period covered by this report:

- In August 2022, the [ACU Summer School 2022](#) was held in partnership with Leeds Trinity University, UK, on the theme of 'Sports and regeneration: Driving sustainability, community and wellbeing'. 30 students from 14 countries across the Commonwealth came together to explore sport's contribution to sustainable development – from financial sustainability within the global sport sector through to the role of physical activity in supporting healthy, inclusive communities.
- In July 2023, the [ACU Summer School 2023](#) was hosted at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, on the theme: 'Truth and reconciliation: from apartheid to transitional justice'. 40 students from 18 countries came together to learn about the political, social and economic forces that shaped 20th century South African politics. As well as lectures and debate, students were immersed in South African culture and visited the Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation Exhibition to gain a deeper understanding of transitional justice.

Our [Virtual Mobility Project Grants](#) provide funding for ACU member universities to deliver a virtual mobility project – such as an online summer school – in partnership with another member university. In 2022-23, five grants were awarded to universities in Malawi, Kenya, UK, India and Nigeria for projects aimed at enhancing students' intercultural skills and global knowledge without the need for physical travel.

5. To uphold the ACU's reputation for excellence and demonstrate its impact

5.1 Create and sustain a high-performance culture by delivering efficient core services to support our people

The ACU underwent an organisation-wide restructure, with the new structure being implemented from 1 September 2023. These changes will support the ACU's financial sustainability and result in a matrix way of working that will significantly contribute to achieving strategic priorities and enable the ACU to respond to the external opportunities and the challenges ahead.

As a result of not retaining the Chevening and Marshall contracts, we have been managing the TUPE transfer process for those staff members who worked on Chevening and Marshall. The transfer took place on 1 September 2023 to the new provider.

We continued to work to enhance our standing as an employer of choice, and to attract, develop, and retain the best talent, including:

- **Strategies:** We have been developing a new People strategy and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy to enhance our organisational capabilities, culture and people experience. We will begin implementing both of these strategies towards the end of 2023.
- **Culture:** We have continued to implement our new Centres of Excellence, with a new business partnering approach now in operation across the organisation.
- **Performance management:** The ACU carried out an extensive review of our performance management framework which was completed in July with changes to strengthen our approach being implemented from September 2023.
- Our activities to **promote wellbeing and inclusivity in the workplace**



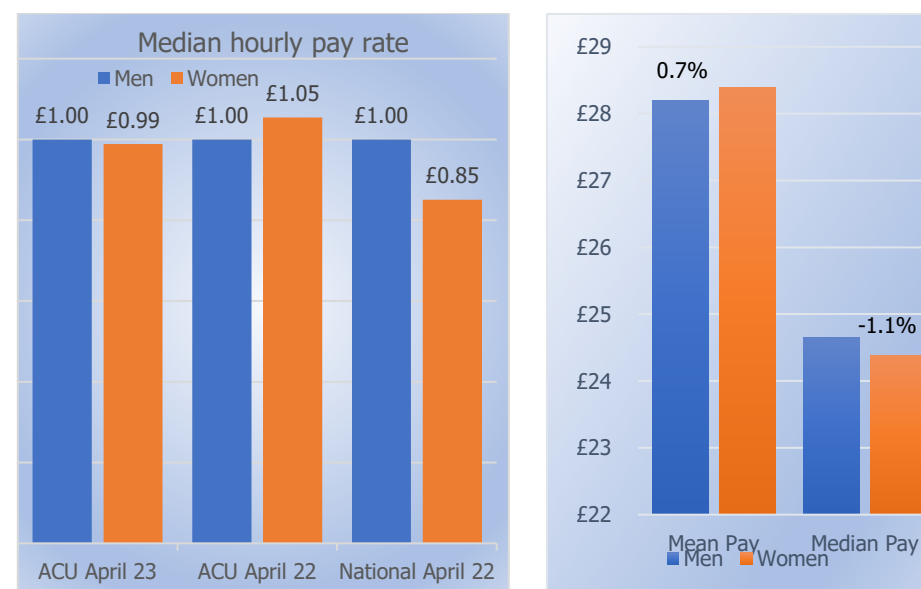
continued across the year, including menopause awareness training, neurodiversity awareness for staff and training for managers, initiatives led by the Wellbeing Committee such as mental health awareness week, and a push to improve the collection of diversity data from staff to improve policies and processes and help with monitoring purposes. We have also updated the EDI statement on our '[Work with Us](#)' web page and we are trialling using more diverse websites for advertising vacancies.

- **Compliance:** Since the implementation of this function, the ACU has developed a due diligence process to ensure the ACU only contracts with reputable third parties, therefore minimising risk especially in relation to financial crime. A compliance support network for all departments within the ACU has been established. Training in the form of e-learning has also been put in place and departments can now access a dedicated compliance page on the ACU intranet.
- **New Ways of Working framework:** We have continued to embed our New Ways of Working framework to combine office and remote working, encouraging flexibility, autonomy and trust, and promote efficient and effective working practices with a more flexible approach to where, how, and when we work.
- **Centres of Excellence:** Work has continued to embed the new approach to a shared services model of working, with 'Centres of Excellence' collectively delivering monitoring, evaluation, and learning and strategic communications activities for all scholarship and mobility programmes at the ACU (Chevening, CSC, Marshall, OCPP, QECS, and Turing), and for the ACU itself.

Gender pay gap

The ACU employs fewer than 250 staff and is therefore not required by law to publish an annual gender pay gap report. However, the ACU voluntarily provides this information.

At 5 April 2023, the mean pay gap was 0.7% with females earning more than males and the median pay gap was 1.2% with males earning more than females. National median gender pay gap among all employees was 14.9% in 2022 with males earning more than females.



5.2 Tell our story in compelling new ways and show evidence of our impact

The ACU's **Research and Insight team** continued to monitor and evaluate the full range of the ACU's work to show how it is having an impact and helping to build a better world through higher education. Highlights from 2022-23 include:

- The team undertook training in R programming, helping them to create



efficiencies in data importing/exporting, cleaning, wrangling and analysis to support the delivery of multiple areas of work across the ACU.

- The team created and circulated a series of 'dashboards' using Power BI software, which visualise data in a clear, compelling way and share insights and analysis. These enabled the team to synthesise and report on data in key areas of ACU activity – such as member engagement, prospective country penetration and membership rates, grants and networks engagement, etc – creating valuable internal analytics for enhancing member engagement.

In July 2023, we launched a [redesign of the ACU's website](#), including changes to the navigation and categorisation to improve the user experience and provide a better representation of who we are and what we do.

5.3 Forge alliances with strategic partners to further our mission and achieve our objectives

Our belief in the **value of collaboration** extends to every aspect of our work. Working with [organisations](#) whose values and aspirations align with our own helps us to share knowledge and ideas, extend our reach, and achieve common goals. Highlights from 2022-23 include:

- We became an impact and knowledge exchange partner for [Climate U](#), a three-year research study focusing on the role of universities in combating climate change, enabling us share calls for participating universities and researchers with our network of members.
- We continued to strengthen and build on our [global coalition](#) with the **International Association of Universities** (IAU) and **Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie** (AUF), launched in July 2020. The partnership brings our three global associations together to advocate for higher education and its contribution to sustainable development at the highest levels and on the widest international scale.

- We continued to work with our partners the **British Council**, building on a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) signed by our two organisations in 2018. Highlights from the past year included ongoing work with the Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort (see 2.1) and participation in the Going Global Asia Pacific 2022 conference in November 2022.
- We signed a refreshed Memorandum of Understanding with the **Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council** (CWEIC) and came together for a roundtable discussion on the future of university-industry collaboration, drawing on the results of our ACU Measures survey.
- We **signed** a Memorandum of Understanding with the **Institute of Commonwealth Studies** under the leadership of their new Director and have begun to explore areas of shared interest including climate action and developing the next generation of leaders in sustainable development. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with **United Nations Human Settlements Programme** (UN Habitat) and other partners, to further advocate for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, Goal 11 of "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".





4 Financial Review

Financial Performance Review

The ACU aims to generate a small surplus from its unrestricted general activities and this year achieved a surplus of £10k before actuarial gains and transfers between funds. Unrestricted reserves at 31 July 2023 stand at £5,396k.

The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year is set out on page 27. A summary of the activities and the financial results is given below.

Unrestricted Funds - General

During the year we took the tough decision to reinstate our policy of suspending members who hadn't paid their membership fees for the last two years. This led to a drop in our income and our provision for bad debt. On a positive note, we welcomed 16 new members. We increased the 2022/23 membership fee by 4%. The net effect of this was a £7k decrease in income to £1,208k.

Our external administration fees increased by £600k to £7,857k. This increase was primarily due to hosting events such as the Chevening farewell and orientation. We are delighted to announce our collaboration with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) on the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP). This programme, focused on the research themes of marine pollution, sustainable seafood and marine biodiversity, is part of the UK Government's Blue Planet Fund.

Investment income declined by £55k to £348k. This decline was a result of us selling £1m worth of investments to support our cashflow and a £243k drop in market value of investments.

Total resources expended increased by £652k to £9,597k. This increase was driven by several factors, including the costs associated with hosting events like

the Chevening farewell and orientation, holding an in-person Council meeting, increased travel expenses to support our membership and the Chevening selection process, and higher employment costs.

Employment costs for unrestricted activity increased by £102k to £6,476k. The average headcount charged to General Funds has increased by 1 to 117.

	2022/23 £'000	2021/22 £'000
Membership income	1,208	1,215
External administration	7,857	7,257
Investment income / interest	348	403
Other Income	194	82
Total Income	9,607	8,957
Total Expenditure	9,597	8,945
Net operating income as per SOFA	10	12
(Loss) / Gain on investments	(243)	(143)
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	59	66
Net movement in funds	(174)	(65)
Funds brought forward	5,994	6,669
Transfer to Designated Funds	(424)	(610)
Funds carried forward	5,396	5,994



Unrestricted Funds - Designated

The Trustees have set aside two Designated Funds:

- 1) Depreciation of the capital cost of reconfiguring the office in 2015/16. Closing balance is £212k (2022: £299k).
- 2) *The Road to 2030*, an ambitious programme which builds on the ACU 2020 plan and incorporates a refreshed vision, mission and strategic priorities. The ACU Council endorsed *The Road to 2030* and a budget of £4.3m for implementation over three years. Council have approved the transfer of a further £0.4m to support income generating opportunities and an innovation fund to support business development. Closing balance is £1,288k (2022: £1,851k).

Closing balance of Designated funds is £1,500k (2022: £2,150k). Note 11 shows the movements during the year in each fund.

Restricted Funds

The range of Restricted Funds administered by the ACU is shown in note 13. Note 15 provides an analysis where applicable of the value and number of scholarships and grants awarded from Restricted Funds.

Endowment Funds

The Permanent and Expendable Endowment Funds along with associated Restricted Funds generated £636k (2022: £561k) of investment income during the year. All the endowment income was credited to the relevant Restricted Funds. Investment worth £250k were sold to support cashflow relating to endowment funded activities. The market value of investments reduced by £33k to £25,417k. Note 15 lists the amount awarded in grants.

The value of the Permanent Endowments stood at £17,499k (2022: £17,608k). The value of Expendable Endowments stood at £7,803k (2022: £7,766k).

Closing balance of the endowment funds is £25,302k (2022: £25,374k).

Investment Policy and Returns

Investment objectives

The investment objective of the ACU's portfolio is to seek long term real growth without taking undue risks, consistent with a reasonable level of income. The specific investment objective of the fund invested with Newtons is to maximise returns through capital growth and income. The specific investment objective of the funds invested with CCLA is to achieve an average annual total return of inflation plus 5% over the long term and control volatility to 75% of that of the UK equity market.

Investment Performance

Note 8 has an analysis of movements in investment values. The net cumulative return from the average charity (ARC Charity Indices Steady Growth) was +0.83% for the 12 months to 31 July 2023.



The ACU has 9 investment portfolios.

Fund / Purpose of Fund	Permanent / Expendable	Investment Manager	Value at 31 July 23 £'000	Actual Performance %
CSFP Anniversary Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Permanent	Newton	10,840	+0.90%
CSFP Anniversary Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Restricted	Newton	130	+0.90%
QECS Scholarships Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Expendable	Newton	6,193	+0.90%
QECS Frances & Philip Turner Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Permanent	Newton	620	+0.90%
ACU Main Fund Investment of ACU reserves	Permanent	CCLA	6,993	(2.6%)
ACU Endowment ACU Development Fellowships	Permanent	CCLA	5,786	(2.6%)
Edward Boyle Edward Boyle medical electives	Permanent	CCLA	150	(2.6%)
Annenberg Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission scholarships	Permanent	CCLA	720	(2.6%)
Marshall Sherfield Post-doctoral fellowship for US students	Expendable	CCLA	977	(2.6%)



5 Governance and Structure

Structure

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) was founded in 1913 and is a registered charity (number 314137 in England & Wales), regulated by the Charity Commission. It is controlled by its member institutions through an elected Council.

The ACU was granted its Royal Charter on 30 May 1963 and is governed by the Royal Charter, Byelaws and Regulations dated 17 June 1963 and last amended on 13 October 2010.

Governance and management

Nominations to the Council are made by Executive Heads of member institutions in four constituencies representing all regions of the Commonwealth. There are up to 20 elected Council members who may co-opt two further members if they conclude this is desirable to ensure balanced geographical and gender representation of the Council. An additional member may be co-opted if the Honorary Treasurer is not appointed from the elected Council members.

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance and accounting, investment management and the diverse work of the ACU. The Council meets face-to-face twice each year, with any additional business conducted electronically in between meetings as necessary. During the year both meetings were held virtually. The officers and committees of the ACU report to the Council. The Council is responsible for approving new members, electing the ACU's office bearers, appointing members of the Executive Committee, amending the Charter and Statutes, making and amending Byelaws, setting policy and strategic direction, and overseeing their implementation. Between Council meetings the other powers of Council are delegated to its Executive Committee.

The ACU's committees, which are established by Council, are the Executive Committee, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Remuneration Committee.

The Executive Committee is elected by the Council and consists of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Honorary Treasurer, and up to five other Members of Council. The Chair of the Executive Committee has the power to co-opt an additional member should the need arise.

The Audit and Risk Committee met twice in 2022/23. It consists of five members, four (including the Chair) of whom are serving members of Council. The fifth place is filled by an independent member. The Honorary Treasurer is also in attendance for the finance related agenda items. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee is appointed by Council, from its members, and has the power to co-opt additional members should the need arise.

The Remuneration Committee consists of the Honorary Treasurer (Chair), two Vice-Chancellors from UK member institutions and one independent member with UK professional human resources knowledge.

The Trustees comply with the Charity Governance Code published in 2017 which sets out the principles and recommended practice for good governance within the sector. The Charity conducts regular reviews of its governance arrangements, with the next review planned for the second half of 2024. This will involve external expert advice in how best to apply the principles within the code. The Council will then address any issues raised where required.

The ACU had no fundraising activities requiring disclosure under S162A of the Charities Act 2011.

Risk management

The Trustees have responsibility for risk management. Risks are identified by the Leadership Team and reviewed, assessed and appropriate action incorporated as part of the annual budget and planning process. Thus, risk is an integral part of the budget and plan reviewed and approved by the Trustees.



The principal risks and uncertainties facing the charity are:

- Governance, given the ACU's status as a UK charity with international trustees; mitigated by comprehensive introductory Trustee training and use of independent professional advice
- Breach of legal and regulatory requirements; mitigated by regular reviews and updating of policies and procedures
- Dominance of scholarship administration income; mitigated by actively seeking new projects and partnerships, engaging with members and other funders to develop new income streams

A series of systems operate to identify and mitigate risk. These systems include:

- regulation by the Charity Commission
- annual external audit or inspection of administration activities
- Audit and Risk Committee review
- financial procedures
- strategic plan and annual budget (including risk assessment) process
- handbook for staff detailing practices, policies and procedures
- a low-risk environment in terms of health and safety, which is a standing item on Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Staff Committee agendas and is subject to annual inspection by an external expert
- comprehensive insurance cover (Business Interruption, Employer's Liability, Public Liability, Professional Liability and Personal Accident and Business Travel)
- Increased staff awareness of risk

Unrestricted Reserves Policy

The ACU's reserves policy is to hold free reserves (unrestricted general funds minus fixed assets) equivalent to 4 to 6 months unrestricted expenditure. Free reserves of £5.2m (2022: £5.7m) is £0.4m (2022: £1.2m) above the upper limit.

The Trustees recognise we are holding reserves above our upper limit. The Trustees will approve further drawdown for investment activity.

Public Benefit

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. In broad terms, the people of the Commonwealth (and other countries) benefit from the ACU's support for the extension, improvement, and strengthening of higher education through our member institutions and through our activities. Our charitable objects for the public benefit – as expressed in our Royal Charter – and the activities which achieve them are summarised in the Review of the Year.

With around 450 members in 50 countries, we are expanding to be fully representative of the range of public and private universities throughout the Commonwealth. Our universities share Commonwealth values, including freedom of expression, a common language and many similarities in organisation and management. The ACU forms an extensive network to facilitate internationalisation and for a sharing of problems, solutions and best practice across a variety of higher education environments.

ACU Trading Limited

ACU Trading Limited (Company number: 9119389) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACU Trading Limited is the provision of staff services to the ACU.



Council Members

Professor Cheryl de la Rey (Chair)	University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Professor Feridun Hamdullahpur	Formerly University of Waterloo, Canada
Professor Amanda Broderick	University of East London, UK
Dr Rhonda Lenton	York University, Canada
Professor Md. Akhturazzmaan	University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Professor Pal Ahluwalia	University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Professor Sandeep Sancheti	Marwadi University, India
Professor Barnabas Nawangwe	Makerere University, Uganda
Professor Abiodun H. Adebayo	Covenant University, Nigeria
Professor Sir Hilary Beckles	The University of the West Indies, Jamaica
Professor Barney Glover AO	Western Sydney University, Australia
Snr. Professsor Sudantha Liyanage	University of Sri Jayewardenpura, Sri Lanka
Professor Wendy Thomson CBE	University of London, UK
Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor	University of Malaya, Malaysia

New members (from 01/08/2023)

Professor Simone Buitendijk	The University of Leeds, UK
Professor Ms Hina Tayyaba Khalil	Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design, Pakistan

Professor Sasmita Samanta	Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), India
Professor Kabiru Aderemi Adeyemo	Lead City University, Nigeria
Professor Sibongile Muthwa	Nelson Mandela University, South Africa

Departing members (to 31/07/2023)

Professor Wim de Villiers	Stellenbosch University, South Africa
Professor Colin Riordan	Cardiff University, UK
Professor Shalini Bharat	Tata Institute of Science and Technology, India
Professor Francis W. O. Aduol	Technical University of Kenya, Kenya
Professor Tawana Kupe	University of Pretoria, South Africa

Audit and Risk Committee

Professor Amanda Broderick (Chair)
Mr Graeme Appleby
Professor Feridun Hamdullahpur
Professor Wendy Thomson (to 31/07/2023)
Professor Sir Hilary Beckles

Remuneration Committee

Professor Feridun Hamdullahpur
Alison Johns
Shearer West



Trustee Training

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance, from the ACU and its professional advisers; including Charity Trustee responsibilities; the Charity Governance Code; safeguarding and serious incident reporting; investment management; risk management, budgets and management accounts; and the ACU's mission, vision, values and strategic priorities.

Day to day management

The Leadership Team is responsible for the day-to-day running of the ACU under authority delegated to the CEO by the Trustees. The Leadership Team consists of the CEO, CFO and four Directors.

The Trustees have reviewed the three-year budget plan. Taking into account the balance sheet position and the impact of market volatility, the Trustees remain of the opinion that the going concern assumption remains appropriate and the financial statements continue to be prepared on this basis.

Legal and administrative details

Principal place of business:

Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF

www.acu.ac.uk

Investment Managers:

Newton Investment Management
160 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4LA

Auditors

Crowe U.K. LLP
55 Ludgate Hill
London
EC4M 7JW

Bankers:

National Westminster Bank plc
Chancery Lane
Holborn
London WC2A 1AE

CCLA
85 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4ET





6 Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Charity law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards) and applicable law.

Under charity law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of its net incoming resources for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue to operate.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Trustees' Confirmatory Statement

The Trustees confirm that these Accounts comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the ACU's governing document and the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

These Annual Report and Accounts were approved by the Council and are signed on their behalf by

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

29 November 2023





7 Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of the Association of Commonwealth Universities

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Association of Commonwealth Universities ('the charity') and its subsidiaries ('the group') for the year ended 31 July 2023 which comprise the Group Statement of Financial Activities, the Group and Charity Balance sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charity's affairs as at 31 July 2023 and of the group's income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled

our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustee's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's or the group's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorized for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to



a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the trustees' report; or
- sufficient and proper accounting records have not been kept by the parent charity; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group and the parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going

concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the



financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charity and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Charities Act 2011 together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charity's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charity and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context for the UK operations were General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), employment legislation and taxation legislation.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the Trustees and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within the recognition and classification of income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, and the Audit Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we

may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Crowe U.K. LLP
Statutory Auditor
55 Ludgate Hill
London, EC4M 7JW

Date 21 December 2023

Crowe U.K. LLP is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity by virtue of its eligibility for appointment as auditor of a company under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.



Group Statement of Financial Activities – year ended 31 July 2023

	Note	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
		General	Designated				
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments from:							
Grants & donations	2	-	-	876	-	876	923
Membership income		1,208	-	-	-	1,208	1,215
External administration	3	7,857	-	-	-	7,857	7,257
Investment income/interest	4	348	-	636	-	984	964
Other		194	-	11	-	205	74
Total Income		9,607	-	1,523	-	11,130	10,433
Expenditure on charitable activities:							
Project grants		-	-	851	-	851	899
Membership engagement		1,412	517	-	-	1,929	1,813
Scholarships, grants and awards		186	-	597	-	783	894
External and fund administration		7,929	557	-	-	8,486	8,150
Expenditure on other activities:							
Investment management		70	-	159	-	229	283
Total Expenditure	5	9,597	1,074	1,607	-	12,278	12,039
Net income / (expenditure) before gains / (losses) on investments		10	(1,074)	(84)	-	(1,148)	(1,606)
(Losses) / Gains on investments	8	(243)	-	39	(72)	(276)	(485)
Net (expenditure) / income before transfers		(233)	(1,074)	(45)	(72)	(1,424)	(2,091)
Transfers between funds	11	(424)	424	-	-	-	-
Net (expenditure) / income before other recognised gains and losses		(657)	(650)	(45)	(72)	(1,424)	(2,091)
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	20	59	-	-	-	59	66
Net movement in funds		(598)	(650)	(45)	(72)	(1,365)	(2,025)
Funds brought forward		5,994	2,150	289	25,374	33,807	35,832
Funds carried forward	11 – 13	5,396	1,500	244	25,302	32,442	33,807

None of the above activities were acquired or discontinued during the year.



Group and Charity Balance Sheet as at 31 July 2023

		Group		Charity	
	Note	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	7a	-	148	-	148
Tangible assets	7b	211	299	211	299
Investments	8	32,409	33,935	32,409	33,935
Total Fixed Assets		32,620	34,382	32,620	34,382
Current assets					
Debtors	9	454	591	454	588
Cash at bank and in hand		2,235	1,627	2,098	1,517
Total Current Assets		2,689	2,218	2,552	2,105
Liabilities					
Creditors amounts falling due within one year	10	(2,557)	(2,424)	(2,421)	(2,311)
Net Current (Liabilities) / Assets		132	(206)	131	(206)
Net assets excluding pension liability		32,752	34,176	32,751	34,176
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	20	(310)	(369)	(310)	(369)
Total Net assets		32,442	33,807	32,441	33,807
Funds					
Unrestricted funds: General	11	5,396	5,994	5,396	5,994
Designated	11	1,500	2,150	1,500	2,150
Endowment funds	12	25,302	25,374	25,302	25,374
Restricted funds	13	244	289	244	289
Total funds		32,442	33,807	32,442	33,807

These financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Council on 29th November 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

Professor Colin Riordan
Secretary General



Group Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31 July 2023

	Note	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities:			
Net cash used in operating activities		(1,626)	(2,645)
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Investment Income and Interest	4	984	964
Proceeds from sale of investments	8(a)	1,250	1,000
Net cash provided by investing activities		2,234	1,964
Cash flows from financing activities:			
Receipt of endowment		-	100
Net cash provided by financing activities		-	100
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		608	(581)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		1,627	2,208
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		2,235	1,627

Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities:

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Net (expenditure) / income for the reporting period	(1,365)	(2,025)
Adjustments for:		
Amortisation and depreciation charge	236	237
Losses / (Gains) on investments	276	485
Investment income received	(984)	(965)
Decrease / (Increase) in debtors	137	401
(Decrease) / Increase in creditors	133	(612)
Pension changes	(59)	(66)
Receipt of endowment	-	(100)
Net cash used in operating activities	(1,626)	(2,645)

ANALYSIS OF CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	Opening balance £'000	Cash Flow £'000	Closing balance £'000
Cash at bank and in hand	1,627	608	2,235
	1,627	608	2,235



9 Notes to the Financial Statements year ended 31 July 2023

1. Accounting policies

(a) Accounting convention

ACU is a Public Benefit Entity registered as a charity in England and Wales on 5 March 1963 (charity number 314137). Its registered office is: Woburn House, 20-24 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HF.

The consolidated financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Accounting and Reporting applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102 ("The Charities SORP 2019").

The accounts consolidate those of the Charity and its wholly owned trading subsidiary ACU Trading Limited.

The accounts are drawn up on the historical cost basis of accounting, as modified by the revaluation of certain assets including investments.

The functional currency of the Group is GBP, the currency of the primary economic environment in which it operates.

Critical accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the Group's accounting policies, the Council are required to make judgments, estimates, and assumptions, about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and underlying assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an on-going basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects the current and future periods. The key sources of estimation uncertainty that have a significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are described in the accounting policies and are summarised below:

- bad debt provision for membership subscriptions is 100% of debt outstanding at the year end
- scholarship administration income is accounted for monthly with some exceptions for significant activity that occurs once a year
- Actuarial gains / (losses) on defined benefit pension schemes are recognised at the year end and based on information provide by the pension schemes. Further information is provided in Note 1(I) and Note 20.

(b) Income

Income is included in the SOFA once entitlement has been met, the amount can be reasonably measured, and there is probability of receipt. Specifically:

- Membership income is recognised in the subscription year which starts on 1 August. The fee is an annual subscription and therefore income is not deferred.
- External administration income is recognised in the month the service is provided, in line with the contract with the scholarship funder.

Performance related grants are recognised when the conditions under the agreement have been met for the specific milestones and requirements set by the donor.



(c) Expenditure

All expenditure has been accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings which are consistent with the activities of the ACU. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of the resource. Central overheads such as accommodation, IT, Communications, HR and Finance have been allocated on usage or staffing basis. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant grant or project, or to central overheads if not an eligible cost for a grant.

(d) Termination payments

Termination benefits are payable when employment is terminated before the normal retirement date, or whenever an employee accepts voluntary redundancy in exchange for these benefits. ACU recognises termination benefits when it is demonstrably committed to either (i) terminating the employment of current employees according to a detailed formal plan without possibility of withdrawal or (ii) providing termination benefits as a result of an offer made to encourage voluntary redundancy.

(e) Grants

ACU makes grants in line with funders' and donors' aims and wishes. This contributes to ACU's objective of facilitating the interchange of students and teachers between Commonwealth universities and between them and the universities of foreign countries.

(f) Governance costs

These represent costs incurred by the Secretary General's office and other key management which are attributable to the management of the ACU's assets, organisational administration and compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements. Governance costs have been allocated to charitable activities as a separate component of support costs on the same basis as noted in (c) above.

(g) Intangible and tangible assets – capitalisation, depreciation and amortisation

All assets costing more than £7,500 are capitalised. Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets at rates calculated to write-off the cost on a straight-line basis over their expected useful lives as follows:

Leasehold property	- Over the life of the lease.
Computer equipment	- 3 years
Office equipment	- 3 years
Furniture and fixtures	- 5 years
Computer software (intangible)	- 3 years

(h) Investments

Investment assets are valued at market value at the balance sheet date. Gains on investment assets are the net of realised gains and losses and unrealised gains and losses. Realised gains and losses on investments are arrived at by comparing the net sale proceeds with the market value at the end of the previous financial year or cost if acquired in the year; unrealised gains and losses represent the difference between the market value of investments still held at the end of the financial year with their value at the beginning of the year or with their cost if purchased subsequently.



Investment income from cash at bank is accrued at the year end. Income generated from investments and cash held by Fund Managers is credited to income as received.

(i) Fund accounting

Funds held by the ACU:

General Funds

Unrestricted funds comprising accumulated surpluses and deficits after transfer to or from designated funds.

Designated Funds

Unrestricted funds set aside out of general funds and designated for specific purposes by the Trustees.

Restricted Funds

Funds which are subject to donor-imposed conditions as to their use.

The Permanent Endowment Funds

Generate income which is transferred to the ACU Development Fellowship Fund, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Edward Boyle (Medical Electives) Fund and the Annenberg Foundation Scholarship Fund, which are Restricted Funds. The capital of these funds must be retained.

The Expendable Endowment Funds

Generate total returns which fund the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship, Marshall Sherfield postdoctoral fellowships. The capital of these funds will be retained until the Trustees choose to spend the capital. There is currently no such intention.

(j) Operating leases

The rents payable under operating leases, where substantially all the benefits and risk of ownership remain with the lessor, are charged to the SOFA as incurred. Where there are rent free periods, the cost is spread over the period to the first rent review.

(k) Financial instruments

ACU has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are recognised as:

- a) Financial assets measured at amortised cost comprise cash, and all debtors excluding prepayments
- b) Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost are all liabilities excluding tax and social security, estimate accruals, provisions and deferred income
- c) Financial assets at fair value include investments and gains on forward contracts open at year end.

(l) Pension schemes

The ACU participates in both the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL).

USS

Significant accounting policies

The institution participates in Universities Superannuation Scheme. The assets of the scheme are held in a



separate trustee-administered fund. Because of the mutual nature of the scheme, the assets are not attributed to individual institutions and a scheme-wide contribution rate is set. The institution is therefore exposed to actuarial risks associated with other institutions' employees and is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the scheme on a consistent and reasonable basis. As required by Section 28 of FRS 102 "Employee benefits", the institution therefore accounts for the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. As a result, the amount charged to the profit and loss account represents the contributions payable to the scheme. Since the institution has entered into an agreement (the Recovery Plan) that determines how each employer within the scheme will fund the overall deficit, the institution recognises a liability for the contributions payable that arise from the agreement (to the extent that they relate to the deficit) with related expenses being recognised through the profit and loss account.

Critical accounting judgements

FRS 102 makes the distinction between a group plan and a multi-employer scheme. A group plan consists of a collection of entities under common control typically with a sponsoring employer. A multi-employer scheme is a scheme for entities not under common control and represents (typically) an industry-wide scheme such as Universities Superannuation Scheme. The accounting for a multi-employer scheme where the employer has entered into an agreement with the scheme that determines how the employer will fund a deficit results in the recognition of a liability for the contributions payable that arise from the agreement (to the extent that they relate to the deficit) and the resulting expense in profit or loss in accordance with section 28 of FRS 102. The directors are satisfied that Universities Superannuation Scheme meets the definition of a multi-employer scheme and has therefore recognised the discounted fair value of the contractual contributions under the recovery plan in existence at the date of approving these financial statements.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The USS liability is based on a deficit recovery plan to 30 April 2038, a deficit contribution rate averaging 6.3%, staff salary inflation 2.0%, and a discount rate of 3.31%.

SAUL

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London ("SAUL"), which is a centralised defined benefit scheme within the United Kingdom and was contracted out of the Second State Pension (prior to April 2016).

SAUL is an independently-managed pension scheme for the non-academic staff of over 50 colleges and institutions with links to higher education. Pension benefits accrued within SAUL currently build up on a Career Average Revalued Earnings ("CARE") basis.

The ACU is not expected to be liable to SAUL for any other current participating employer's obligations under the Rules of SAUL, but in the event of an insolvency of any participating employer within SAUL, an amount of any pension shortfall (which cannot otherwise be recovered) in respect of that employer, may be spread across the remaining participating employers and reflected in the next actuarial valuation.

Funding Policy

SAUL's statutory funding objective is to have sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the costs incurred by the Trustee in paying SAUL's benefits as they fall due (the "Technical Provisions"). The Trustee adopts assumptions which, taken as a whole, are intended to be sufficiently prudent for pensions and benefits already in payment to continue to be paid and for the commitments which arise from Members' accrued pension rights to be met.

The Technical Provisions assumptions include appropriate margins to allow for the possibility of events turning out worse than expected. However, the funding method and assumptions do not completely remove the risk that the Technical Provisions could be insufficient to provide benefits in the future.



A formal actuarial valuation of SAUL is carried out every three years by a professionally qualified and independent actuary. The last actuarial valuation was carried out with an effective date of 31 March 2020. Informal reviews of SAUL's position, reflecting changes in market conditions, cash flow information and new accrual of benefits, are carried out between formal valuations.

The funding principles were agreed by the Trustee and employers in June 2021 and are due to be reviewed at SAUL's next formal valuation in 2023.

At the 31 March 2020 valuation SAUL was 94% funded on its Technical Provisions basis. However, market movements following the valuation date were positive and the Trustee and the Employers agreed to allow for post-valuation experience up to 30 April 2021. As SAUL was in surplus on its Technical Provisions basis at that date, no deficit contributions were required. However, the Trustee and the Employers have agreed that the ongoing Employers' contributions will increase from a rate of 16% of CARE Salaries to 19% of CARE salaries from 1 April 2022 and to 21% of CARE Salaries from 1 January 2023.

Accounting Policy

The ACU is a Participating Employer in SAUL. The actuarial valuation applies to SAUL as a whole and does not identify surpluses or deficits applicable to individual employers. As a whole, the market value of SAUL's assets at 31 March 2020 was £3,612 million representing 94% of the liabilities. The market value of SAUL's assets at 30 April 2021 was £4,369 million representing 109% of the estimated liabilities.

It is not possible to identify an individual Employer's share of the underlying assets and liabilities of SAUL. The ACU accounts for its participation in SAUL as if it were a defined contribution scheme and pension costs are based on the amounts actually paid (i.e. cash amounts) in accordance with paragraphs 28.11 of FRS 102.

As there was a Technical Provisions deficit at 31 March 2020, allowing for post valuation experience to 30 April 2021, SAUL had a Technical Provisions surplus. Therefore, no deficit contributions were required following the 2020 valuation and there is no defined benefit liability (i.e. the present value of any deficit contributions due to SAUL) to be recognised by ACU.

See note 20 for more details.

(m) Foreign currencies

Transactions are translated on the date of transaction and balances on the year end date with any gain or loss taken to finance support costs.

(n) Going concern

The Trustees have reviewed the three-year budget that looks at the strength of the income and expenditure statement, balance sheet and cashflow. In addition, the Trustees have considered potential challenges, including the impact of reduced income from external administration fees and a decrease in income from government grants.

While uncertainties exist regarding future funding from Commonwealth governments, the Trustees wish to emphasize that these uncertainties do not represent a material concern that would cast doubt on the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

The Trustees therefore consider that it is entirely appropriate to prepare the financial accounts on a going concern basis.



2. Grants and donations received

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Grants from UK Government		
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – CIRCLE	160	146
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – PEBL SPHEIR Project	-	308
	160	454
Grants from other Agencies		
Australian Government - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	607	259
European Commission – L4F	-	27
Other	76	51
	683	337
Legacies and Grants from charitable foundations		
Marshall Sherfield Fellowship Foundation	33	32
F&P Turner Endowment	-	100
	33	132
	876	923

3. External administration fees

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Chevening Scholarships	4,440	4,030
Commonwealth Scholarship award schemes	2,506	2,436
Marshall Scholarship scheme	298	237
Staff & Educational Development Association	123	108
Turing Scheme	321	422
Ocean Country Partnership Programme	160	-
Other schemes	9	24
	7,857	7,257

4. Investment income and interest

	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
Investment income	343	636	979	963
Bank interest	5	-	5	1
	348	636	984	964



5. Analysis of total resources expended

	Staff costs £'000	Grants Paid £'000	Direct Costs £'000	Support costs £'000	Total £'000
Charitable activities:					
Project grants	243	83	525	-	851
Membership services	667	32	434	796	1,929
Scholarships, grants and awards	160	551	72	-	783
External and fund administration	4,532	(5)	1,057	2,902	8,486
Fundraising activities:					
Investment management costs	-	-	229	-	229
	5,602	661	2,317	3,698	12,278

Support Costs

	Membership Services £'000	External and fund admin £'000	Total £'000
Staff Costs	440	1,607	2,047
Consultants	61	222	283
Office and Facilities	190	693	883
IT	71	261	332
Governance	21	77	98
Other	12	43	55
	795	2,903	3,698

Where appropriate direct expenditure, including staff costs, has been allocated to the above activities. Support costs which could not be directly allocated, have instead been allocated on the following bases:

- Membership services: basis of staff engaged on activity
- External and fund administration: basis of staff engaged on activity
- Scholarships, grants and awards: direct allocation based on staff engaged on activity

Net incoming resources for the year are stated after charging:

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Audit fees – ACU	20	17
Audit fees – ACU Trading Ltd	3	3
Other non-audit work	3	4
Council Meetings	75	-
Depreciation and amortisation	236	238



6. Staff costs

a) Staff costs

	2023	2022
	£'000	£'000
Wages and salaries	5,744	5,417
Social security costs	625	631
Pension costs	646	669
	7,015	6,717

During the year £139k termination payment was made. A further payment of £90k is outstanding at year end (2022: £116k).

The Senior Executive Team (SET) are regarded as the Charity's key management personnel. The total earnings, including benefits, employer pension and employer NI contributions received by SET members totalled £503k (2022: £460k).

The number of employees whose total earnings in the year (including benefits and termination payments but, excluding employer pension contributions) fell into the bands below were:

	2023*	2022
	Number	Number
£60,001 to £70,000	3	2
£70,001 to £80,000	2	-
£80,001 to £90,000	-	1
£90,001 to £100,000	-	1
£100,001 to £110,000	1	2
£110,001 to £120,000	1	-
£130,001 to £140,000	1	-
£140,001 to £150,000	1	1
	9	7

* Includes 4 members who received termination payments

Of the above higher paid employees, 3 (2022: 4) were accruing benefit during the year, and 2 at the end of the year, in respect of membership of a defined benefit pension scheme.

The average headcount during the year was 134 (2022: 130).

b) Trustees remuneration and expenses

No Trustee received any remuneration in the year (2022: £nil). Trustees or their institutions were reimbursed £34k for travel expenses incurred during the year (2022: £nil).



7. Group and Charity Assets

a) Intangible Assets

	Computer software £'000
Cost	
At 31 July 2022	668
At 31 July 2023	668
Amortisation	
At 31 July 2022	520
Charge for year	148
At 31 July 2023	668
Net book value	
At 31 July 2023	-
At 31 July 2022	148

b) Tangible Assets

	Computer equipment £'000	Office Re- configuration £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At 31 July 2022	131	787	918
At 31 July 2023	131	787	918
Depreciation			
At 31 July 2022	131	488	619
Charge for year	-	88	88
At 31 July 2023	131	576	707
Net book value			
At 31 July 2023	-	211	211
At 31 July 2022	-	299	299

At 31 July 2023 there were no capital commitments.



8. Group Investments

a) Movements in quoted investments

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted & Endowment funds	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Market value, 1 August	8,236	9,379	25,699	26,040
Disposals at opening market value	(1,000)	(1,000)	(250)	0
Unrealised (losses) / gains on revaluation	(243)	(143)	(33)	(341)
Market value, 31 July	6,993	8,236	25,416	25,699
Cost, 31 July	5,547	6,371	11,049	11,250

b) Analysis by type

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Quoted investments	6,993	129	25,287	32,409	33,935
Cash held for investment purposes	-	-	-	-	-
	6,993	129	25,287	32,409	33,935

9. Debtors and prepayments

	Group		Charity	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade debtors	269	432	269	432
Sundry debtors	2	9	2	6
Accrued Income	81	15	81	15
Prepayments	102	135	102	135
	454	591	454	588



10. Creditors: amounts payable within one year

	Group		Charity	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade creditors	189	174	189	167
Deferred income	1,138	1,476	1,138	1,476
Income Tax and NI contributions	151	168	25	35
Value Added Tax	294	280	295	280
Sundry creditors	495	58	444	8
Accruals	290	268	166	134
Amounts due to ACU Trading Limited	-	-	164	211
	2,557	2,424	2,421	2,311

Deferred income

	Opening Balance £'000	Released in year £'000	Deferred in year £'000	Closing Balance £'000
Membership	7	(7)	4	4
Programme Delivery	824	(607)	342	559
External administration fee	611	(611)	551	551
Other	34	(34)	24	24
	1,476	(1,259)	921	1,138

11. Designated and General Funds

2023	Brought Forward £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains £'000	Transfers £'000	Carried forward £'000
ACU office	299	-	(87)	-	-	212
Road to 2030	1,851	-	(987)	-	424	1,288
Designated Funds	2,150	-	(1,074)	-	424	1,500
General Funds	5,994	9,607	(9,538)	(243)	(424)	5,396
	8,144	9,607	(10,612)	(243)	-	6,896

Council approved a further transfer of £0.4m from General Funds to Designated Funds to support income generating opportunities and an innovation fund to support business development.



2022	Brought Forward	Income	Expenditure	Gains	Transfers	Carried forward
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
ACU office	386	-	(87)	-	-	299
Road to 2030	2,408	-	(1,167)	-	610	1,851
Designated Funds	2,794	-	(1,254)	-	610	2,150
General Funds	6,669	8,957	(8,879)	(143)	(610)	5,994
	9,463	8,957	(10,133)	(143)	-	8,144

12. Endowment funds

2023	Opening funds £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing funds £'000
Permanent endowment			
CSFP Anniversary	10,776	67	10,843
ACU	5,943	(153)	5,790
Edward Boyle	150	(4)	146
Annenberg Foundation	739	(19)	720
	17,608	(109)	17,499
Expendable endowment			
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	6,149	57	6,206
Marshall Sherfield	1,002	(26)	976
F&P Turner	615	6	621
	7,766	37	7,803
Total endowments	25,374	(72)	25,302

The CSFP Anniversary and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships endowments enable people from around the Commonwealth to study in low and middle income countries at ACU member institutions. The F&P Turner endowment is a legacy grant with no restrictions. Together, the three funds support the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship awards.

The ACU Endowment funds ACU Development Fellowships.

Income from the Edward Boyle (Memorial) Endowment funds the Medical Elective Bursaries for UK students.

The Annenberg Endowment funds Marshall scholarships, its income being transferred to the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission.

The Marshall Sherfield Endowment funds post-doctoral fellowships for US students. Funds are drawn down from the Endowment as required, up to a maximum of 5% of the original investment per year and are supplemented by grants from the Marshall Sherfield Fellowship Foundation in the US.



2022	Opening funds £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing funds £'000
Permanent endowments					
CSFP Anniversary	10,884	-	-	(108)	10,776
ACU	6,028	-	-	(85)	5,943
Edward Boyle	152	-	-	(2)	150
Annenberg Foundation	749	-	-	(10)	739
	17,813	-	-	(205)	17,608
Expendable endowments					
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	6,228	-	-	(79)	6,149
Marshall Sherfield	1,017	-	-	(15)	1,002
F&P Turner	623	100	(100)	(8)	615
	7,868	100	(100)	(102)	7,766
Total endowments	25,681	100	(100)	(307)	25,374



NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

13. Restricted Funds

2023

	Opening Balance £'000	Total Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing Balance £'000
ACU Development Fellowships ¹	251	247	(185)	-	313
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship ¹	(106)	315	(475)	39	(227)
F&P Turner ¹	16	11	(11)	-	16
Marshall Sherfield Fellowships	97	73	(53)	-	117
Annenberg	3	29	(29)	-	3
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives)	12	6	(1)	-	17
HW Paxton Legacy	94	-	-	-	94
Symons Medal	7	-	-	-	7
Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement ²	4	160	(157)	-	7
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa) ¹	(82)	606	(558)	-	(34)
LEAP ³	(9)	-	(26)	-	(35)
Climate Cohort - COP26 ¹	(4)	-	4	-	-
Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort ⁴	-	76	(116)	-	(40)
Commonwealth Futures – British Council	5	-	-	-	5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	1	-	-	-	1
	289	1,523	(1,607)	39	244

1: See note 15 for explanation of purpose of fund.

2: Seeks to address the shortfall in the proportion of climate change research currently produced by African scientists.

3: Support implementation of EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership on (1) Food and Nutrition Security & Sustainable Agriculture; (2) Renewable Energy

4: Aims to equip rising star researchers at ACU member universities with the relevant skills needed to effectively engage non-academic audiences with research and enhance the capability of cohort members to inform policy and practice within the context of COP.

Funds with negative balance: costs are reimbursed by the funder in arrears.



NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

2022	Opening Balance £'000	Total Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing Balance £'000
ACU Development Fellowships ¹	290	242	(281)	-	251
CSFP Anniversary Fund ¹	161	151	(383)	(35)	(106)
Queen Elizabeth CSR ¹	-	83	(83)	-	-
F&P Turner ¹	16	8	(8)	-	16
Marshall Sherfield Fellowships ¹	76	72	(51)	-	97
Annenberg ¹	7	30	(34)	-	3
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives) ¹	8	6	(2)	-	12
HW Paxton Legacy	94	-	-	-	94
Symons Medal	7	-	-	-	7
Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement ²	9	146	(151)	-	4
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (East Africa) ³	(118)	309	(191)	-	-
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa) ³	-	259	(341)	-	(82)
Waitrose & Partners - Blue Charter Marine Plastic ⁴	33	-	(33)	-	-
LEAP ⁵	23	27	(59)	-	(9)
Digital Africa - British Council	(17)	-	17	-	-
Climate Cohort - COP26 ⁶	93	43	(140)	-	(4)
Commonwealth Futures – British Council	5	-	-	-	5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	1	-	-	-	1
	688	1,376	(1,740)	(35)	289

Funds with negative balance: costs are reimbursed by the funder in arrears.



14. Analysis of Group assets between Funds

2023	Pension and other liability £'000	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Net current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment Fund	-	-	25,287	15	25,302
Restricted Fund	-	-	129	115	244
Unrestricted Designated Fund	-	299	-	1,201	1,500
Unrestricted General Fund	(310)	-	6,993	(1,287)	5,396
	(310)	299	32,409	44	32,442

2022	Pension and other liability £'000	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Net current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment funds	-	-	25,359	15	25,374
Restricted funds	-	-	340	(51)	289
Unrestricted Designated Fund	-	534	-	1,616	2,150
Unrestricted General funds	(369)	2	8,236	(1,875)	5,994
	(369)	536	33,935	(295)	33,807



15. Grants, awards and scholarships awarded from Endowments

		Total value £'000	Number awarded
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship	The CSFP Anniversary, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships and F&P Turner endowments support the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship awards which enables people from around the Commonwealth to study in low and middle income countries at ACU member institutions.	402	63
ACU Development Fellowships	The ACU's own endowment income is used to support small scale collaboration between member universities through bursaries.	87	60
Marshall Sherfield Fellowship Scheme	Funds post-doctoral fellowships for US students and are supplemented by grants from the Marshall Sherfield Fellowship Foundation in the US.	37	1
Endowment funded awards		526	124
Climate Cohort- Group (COP26)	Funded by the British Council, it supports early career researchers from around the Commonwealth to enhance their skills in engaging policy makers and practitioners in their research findings.	39	26
Ocean Country Partnership Programme	Funded by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs under the auspices of the UK Government's Blue Planet Fund. It supports Master's and PhDs focused on the research themes of marine pollution, sustainable seafood and marine biodiversity.	161	19
Grant funded awards		200	45
TOTAL		726	169

In addition to the above, nearly 6,000 scholars benefitted from training provided by the Australian government funded Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa) programme. The programme is designed to address the critical academic staff shortages many universities are currently facing. It will enable universities to share scarce teaching resources through quality assured, credit-bearing degree courses, delivered through blended learning.



16. Administration of External Funds

The ACU runs a number of schemes for which it receives a management fee (Note 3). The table below shows the bank balances and the value of transactions processed by ACU.

	Opening bank balance £'000	Incoming Resources £'000	Resources Expended £'000	Closing bank balance £'000
Chevening Scholarship Scheme	1,692	56,628	(55,738)	2,582
Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme	1,730	31,526	(28,452)	4,804
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission	1,009	3,712	(3,105)	1,616
Staff and Educational Development Association	233	277	(251)	259
Heads of Educational Development Group	20	28	(26)	22
The Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	0	725	(321)	404
Total Third Party Funds	4,684	92,896	(87,893)	9,687

17. Future financial commitments

At 31 July 2022 the ACU had commitments under operating leases as set out below:

	2023 Land and buildings £'000	2023 Office equipment £'000	2022 Land and buildings £'000	2022 Office equipment £'000
Within one year	340	-	340	2
After one year but within five years	482	-	821	-
Charged to SOFA during the year	340	-	340	2

18. ACU Trading Ltd

ACU Trading Limited (ACUT) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period ended 31 July 2022 have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACUT is the provision of staff services to the ACU. The results of ACUT for the period ended 31 July 2021 are as follows:

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000		2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Turnover	5,842	5,332	Debtors	3	1
Cost of sales	5,599	5,009	Cash at bank	110	264
Gross Profit	243	323	Current assets	113	265
Administration	243	323	Creditors	113	265
Net profit	-	-	Total Net assets	-	-
Net assets	-	-	Reserves	-	-



19. Related Parties

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Balances owed to ACU Trading Ltd	164	211
Paid to ACU Trading Ltd for services	5,842	5,332
Received from ACU Trading Ltd for services	205	178

20. Pension Commitments

(a) Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)

The total cost charged to the profit and loss account is £199k (2022: £252k)

Deficit recovery contributions due within one year for the institution are £48k (2022: £56k).

The latest available complete actuarial valuation of the Retirement Income Builder is as at 31 March 2020 (the valuation date), and was carried out using the projected unit method.

Since the institution cannot identify its share of USS Retirement Income Builder (defined benefit) assets and liabilities, the following disclosures reflect those relevant for those assets and liabilities as a whole.

The 2020 valuation was the sixth valuation for the scheme under the scheme-specific funding regime introduced by the Pensions Act 2004, which requires schemes to have sufficient and appropriate assets to cover their technical provisions. At the valuation date, the value of the assets of the scheme was £66.5 billion and the value of the scheme's technical provisions was £80.6 billion indicating a shortfall of £14.1 billion and a funding ratio of 83%.

The key financial assumptions used in the 2020 valuation are described below. More detail is set out in the Statement of Funding Principles (uss.co.uk/about-us/valuation-and-funding/statement-of-funding-principles).

CPI assumption	Term dependent rates in line with the difference between the Fixed Interest and Index Linked yield curves less: 1.1% p.a. to 2030, reducing linearly by 0.1% p.a. to a long-term difference of 0.1% p.a. from 2040
Pension increases (subject to a floor of 0%)	CPI assumption plus 0.05%
Discount rate (forward rates)	Fixed interest gilt yield curve plus: Pre-retirement: 2.75% p.a. Post retirement: 1.00% p.a.

The main demographic assumptions used relate to the mortality assumptions. These assumptions are based on analysis of the scheme's experience carried out as part of the 2020 actuarial valuation. The mortality assumptions used in these figures are as follows:

	2020 valuation
Mortality base table	101% of S2PMA "light" for males and 95% of S3PFA for females



Future improvements to mortality	CMI 2019 with a smoothing parameter of 7.5, an initial addition of 0.5% p.a. and a long-term improvement rate of 1.8% pa for males and 1.6% pa for females
----------------------------------	--

The current life expectancies on retirement at age 65 are:

	2023	2022
Males currently aged 65 (years)	24.0	23.9
Females currently aged 65 (years)	25.6	25.5
Males currently aged 45 (years)	26.0	25.9
Females currently aged 45 (years)	27.4	27.3

A new deficit recovery plan was put in place as part of the 2020 valuation, which requires payment of 6.2% of salaries over the period 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024, at which point the rate will increase to 6.3%. The 2022 deficit recovery liability reflects this plan. The liability figures have been produced using the following assumptions:

	2023	2022
Discount rate	5.52%	3.31%
Pensionable salary growth	3.00%	2.00%

(b) Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL)

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London, a centralised defined benefit scheme for all qualified employees with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds.

The total SAUL pension cost charged to the Statement of Financial Activities is £5K (2022: £6K). This includes nil (2022: nil) outstanding contributions at the balance sheet date, and £nil deficit contributions (2022: nil).

Accounts



The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities

Annual Report and Financial Statements July 2022





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1 Introduction from our Chair

The year covered by this report saw the world emerge from a period defined by Covid-19. Our office doors reopened to staff and visitors, students on our scholarship programmes were able to come together in person, and cross-border travel cautiously resumed.

Particularly significant for us were a series of major international summits – from the UN Climate Change Conference in November to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in June – some of which had been postponed for several years. The gravity of the agenda for these events was a reminder that while the pandemic put the brakes on our ways of life, the challenges facing the world gathered at speed – from the accelerating climate crisis to growing gaps in wealth, opportunity, and healthcare.

Higher education's pivotal role in the search for solutions to these challenges underpinned our clarion call to world leaders, education ministers, and global stakeholders throughout the year. On behalf of our international community of members, we called for far greater recognition of universities' vital contribution to sustainable development and for improved access to – and investment in – higher education. And we are proud of what we achieved: a closing statement issued by the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, for example, directly recognised for the first time higher education's contribution to social and economic development and the urgent need to widen access to the opportunities that universities provide.

It was also a year for the ACU and our members to consolidate what we have learned from the pandemic to become more resilient and agile, including ongoing opportunities for virtual collaboration and exchange, a series of webinars exploring the ways in which university librarians can reconnect with their users, and a 'new ways of working' framework for our staff. Meanwhile, our pioneering PEBL programme for online and blended learning – which proved invaluable to many universities during the pandemic – launched a new

partnership in west Africa to improve access to higher education in regions where demand outstrips supply.

At the heart of these activities, and the many examples outlined in this report, is our belief that international cooperation elevates everything that is vital and valuable about higher education. To this end, the Commonwealth continues to provide a crucial framework for the interchange of people, knowledge, and ideas – from collaborative research to opportunities for students to live and learn in a diverse range of countries and cultures.

This belief in the Commonwealth as a force for good is one we were proud to share with our late Patron, Her Majesty The Queen, whose death in September brought with it not just expressions of sadness but of deep respect and admiration for her life of service. The ACU are proud custodians of the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships, which were named after Her Majesty in 2019 in honour of her commitment to the Commonwealth and longstanding dedication to education and youth. In Her Majesty's name, these unique scholarships will continue to bring students from all over the Commonwealth to study at universities in low and middle income countries, helping to ensure the two-way exchange of knowledge that characterises the Commonwealth's open, autonomous, and valuable network of nations.

With the modern Commonwealth and its ideals as a cornerstone of our work – and the passion and commitment of our staff, scholars, and member universities – we look forward to a new year of connections, collaboration, and opportunity.

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council



2 Who we are

The ACU is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through higher education.

We believe that international collaboration is central to this ambition. By bringing universities together from around the world – and crucially the people who study and work within them – we help to advance knowledge, promote understanding, broaden minds, and improve lives.

We champion higher education as a cornerstone of stronger societies, supporting our members, partners, and stakeholders as they adapt to a changing world.

Our Mission

**To build a
better world
through higher
education**

Our Vision

**A world in which higher
education transcends borders,
strengthens societies, fosters
innovation, and lifts the lives of
people throughout the
Commonwealth and beyond**

Our values

- **Quality** – We strive to excel in all we do, and continuously reflect on our work to find new ways forward
- **Collaboration** – We believe that cooperation and sharing ideas makes us stronger
- **Innovation** – We encourage people to think differently, be curious, and explore new ideas
- **Respect** – We treat others in the way we would like to be treated – with fairness, integrity, and generosity
- **Inclusion** – We value difference, and encourage and celebrate the diverse voices of our colleagues and partners

Our strategic priorities

- To champion the power of higher education to improve lives
- To support the long-term vitality of universities
- To engage and connect universities across borders, and promote collaboration among them
- To deliver educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference
- To uphold the ACU's reputation for excellence and demonstrate its impact

The road to 2030

Universities make a critical contribution to sustainable development across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Our strategic plan – 'The road to 2030' – reinforces our fundamental belief that global challenges can only be solved through international collaboration, and our collective commitment to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals through higher education.



3 Review of the year

This section summarises our performance against the five objectives outlined in our strategic plan.

1. To champion the power of higher education to improve lives

1.1 Promote, at the highest levels, the value of universities to society, and their role in sustainable development

1.2 Present a powerful collective voice for universities on a global stage

1.3 Lead debate and dialogue around key issues in international higher education

Our accredited status and global partnerships enable us to influence policymaking in higher education and raise the profile of universities' contribution to building a better world. Updates from 2021-22 include:

The **26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26)** in November 2021 was the focus for a [series of activities](#) profiling the vital role that universities play in delivering climate action. These included:

- An ACU delegation was the [voice for higher education in the Commonwealth](#) at a number of high-level meetings and events at COP26 in Glasgow, engaging with government representatives and civil society leaders to advocate the importance of higher education in meeting government commitments to addressing the climate crisis.
- A [panel discussion](#) at the conference highlighted how universities are contributing to Antigua and Barbuda's shift to a Blue Economy, reducing overreliance on tourism and supporting sustainable and resilient economic development.

- Members of the ACU's [Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort](#) – a group of rising-star climate researchers from across the ACU's membership – presented their research to a global audience.
- Our [#UnisForOurPlanet campaign](#) showcased the ways in which universities across the Commonwealth are spearheading efforts to tackle the climate crisis, and highlighted the work of ACU [grant recipients](#), [network members](#), and [scholars](#).
- Over 130 international alumni from three of the ACU-managed scholarship schemes came together for a [Climate Change Policy Hackathon](#), working in teams to devise a series of inventive policy proposals over 24 hours. Meanwhile the [#OurClimatePledge](#) campaign saw more than 2,000 scholars, fellows, and alumni pledge specific action to protect the planet.

In January 2022, the ACU and British Council published a [major new report](#) on the role of international higher education partnerships in contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The [report](#) showed that international higher education partnerships are highly effective both at devising and delivering solutions to global challenges and harnessing the potential of multisectoral and multidisciplinary partners, as well as adding value to donor investment. 185 attendees joined an [online launch event](#), which featured an expert panel discussion on the findings. The report's recommendations were also presented at external events, such as The PIE Live and the 'Future of Internationalisation' conference at the University of Glasgow.

In March 2022, as part of our ongoing partnership with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the University of the West Indies to support the development of a [Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy](#) in the region, the ACU and partners joined a scoping visit to Antigua. The ACU made a presentation to the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda, who endorsed the project and its progress to date. The ACU's Secretary General joined a post-Cabinet press briefing on national television and gave interviews to various media outlets on the project's development.



In April 2022, the ACU represented Commonwealth and global higher education at the [Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers](#) (CCEM) in Kenya. Highlights included:

- Following consultation with university leaders across our membership, we produced and submitted [a series of policy recommendations](#) to government education ministers, including improved and equitable access to higher education, action to address the digital divide, and greater recognition of higher education's contribution to all 17 SDGs.
- The final ministerial statement from the summit endorsed a number of these policy proposals and marked the first time that Commonwealth education ministers have directly recognised the essential role that higher education plays in sustainable development.
- We also [reported](#) to ministers on the impact of the [Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan](#) (CSFP) of which the ACU are custodians, renewing our call for Commonwealth governments to actively support the growth and continued future of the CSFP through investment and by hosting scholarships in their countries and institutions.

In May 2022, the ACU took part in the [UNESCO World Higher Education Conference](#), representing our members and advocating the key role that higher education plays in achieving sustainable development. ACU members were also able to join the event online. The ACU's [contributions](#) to the conference fed into UNESCO's resulting roadmap for higher education, and included:

- [A joint submission](#) with our partners the International Association of Universities (IAU) and Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) outlining how international university networks support the development of higher education partnerships to accelerate progress towards the SDGs
- '[International aid for higher education: global trends and future talks](#)' – a roundtable discussion with international higher education organisations and funders

- '[Transformative changemakers in higher education](#)' – a roundtable event, co-hosted with ACU member the University of Victoria
- '[Higher education's role in securing the future](#)' – a panel discussion with leaders from UNESCO, the IAU, and other global organisations

In June 2022, the ACU attended the [Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting](#) (CHOGM) in Rwanda, championing higher education's critical contribution to sustainable development, outlining policy priorities for higher education, and shaping the agenda on behalf of our members. Highlights included:

- An address to the Foreign Ministers Roundtable on policy priorities for higher education
- A high-profile joint launch event for the ACU-led [Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning West Africa](#) project (*see also 2.1*) with the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- A side event on the [Commonwealth Sustainable Cities](#) initiative, of which the ACU is a partner, leading to a formal [declaration](#) by heads of government to prioritise sustainable urbanisation
- A panel session at the Commonwealth Business Forum exploring the future of work and skills
- An interactive workshop on strengthening the contribution of university research to climate change mitigation and adaptation, featuring research and input from members of the ACU's Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort

In July 2022, we played an active part in the [UN High-Level Political Forum](#) – the main United Nations platform reviewing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Highlights included:

- An [online workshop](#), hosted with partners including the AUF and IAU, titled 'Transformative education, digital learning, and partnerships towards a more sustainable and equitable future'



- The virtual award ceremony of the International Green Gown Awards, which celebrate university sustainability initiatives, and for which the ACU was a judge and sponsor

July also saw the ACU join forces with the UK Department for International Trade to lead a high-profile event at UK House in Birmingham to coincide with the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Titled '**International collaboration for global challenges – translating university expertise into action**', the event brought Commonwealth leaders, policymakers and researchers together to explore how universities can work with governments, industry, and civil society to translate knowledge into action on food security, climate change, biodiversity loss, and more. In an opening address, the Commonwealth Secretary General, Baroness Scotland, endorsed the ACU's work and praised our programmes bridging academic expertise and policymaking.

The ACU continued to call attention to the importance of sustainable urbanisation in tackling climate change through the [Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Initiative](#), alongside partners such as the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Commonwealth Association of Planners, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The collaboration aims to raise the profile of sustainable urbanisation in the Commonwealth political agenda and to generate new initiatives to address to climate-related challenges. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- A [high-level discussion](#) with His Majesty The King (formerly The Prince of Wales) and key Commonwealth partners in November, drawing on universities' responses to the ACU's joint [Call to Action](#) on Sustainable Urbanisation across the Commonwealth
- The launch of the [Commonwealth Youth for Sustainable Urbanisation Network](#) in March
- A dedicated Commonwealth Sustainable Cities event at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in June, leading to a formal [declaration](#) by heads of government to prioritise sustainable urbanisation

A series of **thought leadership articles** in the media and beyond continued to highlight higher education's vital contribution to society and the issues that matter to ACU members. These included:

- [Bridging divides for a fairer future](#), published in '*Perspectives on the challenges to access and equity in higher Education across the world in the context of COVID*' as part of World Access to Higher Education Day
- [Why global challenges call for collaborative leadership](#) (*IAU Horizons* magazine)
- [The Turing Scheme: new horizons for international student mobility](#) (*The Pie News*)
- [International partnerships drive SDG progress – how do we support them?](#) (*Times Higher Education*)
- [How to help researchers make the connections that matter](#) (*University World News*)
- [Blended learning is the key to boosting HE participation in Africa](#) (*Times Higher Education*)

The ACU Review, our online and print magazine, is a meeting place for ideas and diverse perspectives from across the Commonwealth. Each issue explores a different topical theme, chosen to highlight the value of higher education to society, and to reflect the diversity and shared challenges that characterise the ACU's global network. In the period covered by this report:

- Two issues were published. The first, published in December 2021, was titled [\(Re\)thinking nature](#) and explored how humankind can rethink its relationship with the natural world. This was followed in July 2022 by an issue on [sport's role in promoting peace and reconciliation](#).
- The two issues featured academics from 23 universities in 12 Commonwealth countries.



The magazine's online platform received 36,839 unique page views over this financial year, with readers from over 150 countries, and attracted 28,676 new users to our website.

2. To support the long-term vitality of universities

2.1 Support the development of the core human and institutional resources that underpin the university mission

We continued to lead and manage a range of innovative projects and platforms that connect universities across borders to help meet demand, enable vital research, and strengthen higher education systems across the Commonwealth: [The Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement \(CIRCLE\)](#) programme worked to strengthen climate change research in sub-Saharan Africa through an innovative dual approach: supporting individual researchers to develop relevant local solutions, while working with universities to strengthen their capacity to support research. The programme was funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and formally ended in 2022. Updates include:

- A project report published in March highlighted a wide range of learnings and recommendations gathered over the nine years of the project. These findings will feed into proposals to strengthen climate research capacity across Africa and Asia Pacific as part of the UK Government's Climate and Resilience Framework (CLARE) programme.
- A set of indicators developed by the CIRCLE project team aim to provide a clearer picture of climate change research capacity in sub-Saharan African universities, with a view to supporting capacity strengthening initiatives in the region. A series of [focus groups](#) and an extensive survey

sought to interrogate and validate the proposed indicators with stakeholders and experts.

The [Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort](#) supported 26 rising-star researchers across ACU member universities to bring local knowledge to a global stage in the lead-up to the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26). In the period covered by this report, the ACU, alongside partners the British Council, continued to support the Cohort to share their [research and ideas](#) with governments and policymakers, including at COP26 in November, the British Council Climate Summit in March, and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in June. In addition:

- The 26 researchers finalised their five collaborative [research-to-action projects](#) and led a series of science-policy dialogues focused on nature-based solutions, food systems, youth engagement, energy access, and ocean sustainability.
- The ACU and British Council agreed to launch a new Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort programme, which will run from 2022-2025.

The [LEAP4FNSSA](#) project aims to establish a platform for research collaboration between European and African institutions to support research and innovation in the fields of food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. Throughout this financial year, the ACU continued to be a task lead in monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment of the AU (African Union) and EU (European Union) [Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture](#) and contributed to the overall programme strategy.

The [Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning](#) (PEBL) was designed in response to the challenges reported by a number of African universities in meeting demand for higher education as a result of academic staff shortages and soaring student numbers. PEBL aims to rapidly and sustainably scale-up capacity in the design and use of blended learning – a combination of face-to-face and digital learning – through expert-led training, collaboration, and the development of quality assured, credit-bearing blended courses that can be shared between institutions. Updates from 2021-22 include:



- **PEBL West Africa** began in September 2021, with support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The programme is working with 12 university partners in Ghana and Nigeria to build sustainable capacity for blended learning.
- **PEBL East Africa** drew to a close in December 2021, with at least 223 departments across participating universities developing or delivering modules and sharing teaching content with each other. Outcomes and learnings from the project were shared through an [external evaluation report](#) and public webinar (*see also 2.3*).

Physics research and innovation in sub-Saharan Africa, and the challenges affecting its growth and development, were the theme of a [new study](#) published by the ACU in partnership with the Institute of Physics. Drawing on the experiences of more than 50 universities and research facilities in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as interviews and focus groups, the report argues that investment in physics in the region – including strengthened training, research, and infrastructure – would help create the conditions for the discipline to thrive and deliver innovative solutions to global challenges.

2.2 Improve equity, inclusion, and access, which are critical to the future of higher education

ACU Gender Grants fund initiatives that boost gender equity on campus. The grants, which are awarded annually to member universities, can be used to support a range of projects, workshops, and events. In 2021-22:

- Ten grants were awarded to member institutions in Bangladesh, Canada, Eswatini, Ghana, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and Zimbabwe.
- This year's grants will support initiatives on themes such as embedding transgender policies on campus, supporting women in STEM, and promoting gender inclusive research.

The **Martha Farrell Memorial Fellowships** offer specialist training and practical support to tackle sexual harassment on campus and are hosted by the Martha Farrell Foundation in India. In 2021-22, three virtual fellowships were awarded.

Aligned with our ongoing work to promote [equitable research partnerships](#) in higher education, the ACU and International Association of Universities led a joint webinar in November 2021 on **Language-based equity in African health research**, exploring the extent to which the use of English as the dominant language of science contributes to wider structural inequalities within health science research.

On **International Women's Day** in March 2022, [a live online event](#) on our social media channels brought a group of female leaders working in higher education together to discuss how to 'break the bias' in higher education and beyond.

2.3 Share learning from local and regional initiatives to deliver wider impact

In October 2021, a **PEBL webinar**, open to all, shared achievements and lessons learned from the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (**PEBL project in East Africa**), drawing on an [external evaluation report](#) of the project's impact. Meanwhile, 26 credit-bearing [online learning modules](#) developed as part of the project remain available for universities around the world to download and use, covering topics in ICT, health and applied sciences, education, and business.

Between April and August 2022, the ACU worked with partner institutions to conduct an **impact analysis** of research projects funded by the African Union and European Union in the field of food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. The findings of this analysis – which was conducted in partnership with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and the



University of Greenwich – will support and guide the design and funding of future research and innovation programmes.

A guide to **best practice in mentorship**, produced by participants of the ACU's CIRCLE programme (see 2.1) was shared with members of the ACU's Supporting Research Community.

3. To engage and connect universities across borders, and promote collaboration

3.1 Strengthen and grow our international network of universities to extend our global reach

ACU member universities are a vibrant global community with a shared commitment to building a better world through higher education.

- As at the 31 July 2022, the ACU had 490 member universities
- The ACU welcomed 16 new members over the year

3.2 Create forums through which institutional knowledge and resources can be shared and multiplied

The ACU's five thematic networks and communities of practice enable universities to collaborate on joint initiatives, share best practice, and come together to influence policy agendas within and beyond the sector. 69% of all members across 40 countries are now represented in our networks and communities, which are as follows:

The **ACU Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network** brings universities together to share practical expertise and experience of building resilience to climate change and natural disasters and contribute to policymaking in this area. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- Four [Commonwealth Climate Resilience Challenge Grants](#) were awarded to member universities in Guyana, Malaysia, Mauritius, and South Africa, to fund projects that advance the aims and priorities of the network.
- This year's funded initiatives include a project to improve mechanisms to monitor coastlines at risk of the adverse effects of climate change and a project to promote climate action strategies co-created by and for local communities.
- Two member universities, Fiji National University and University of Canterbury, co-hosted an international webinar on 'Climate Change, Security and Sustainability of Ocean States' in May.
- As of 31 July 2022, the Commonwealth Climate Resilience Network has 364 individual members at 153 member universities.

The **ACU Higher Education and the SDGs Network** is a forum for staff at ACU member universities who are directly engaged with the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, including integrating sustainable development into their teaching, research, operations, and strategies. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- Five [Higher Education and the SDGs Challenge Grants](#) were awarded to member universities in Australia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and the UK, to fund projects that advance the aims and priorities of the network
- [This year's funded initiatives](#) include the University Living Lab project, which builds partnerships between students and organisations working on sustainable development to solve real-world challenges, and a project to integrate sustainable development into legal training in south Asia.
- The network contributed to new research on the role of international higher education partnerships in addressing the SDGs (*see section 1*).



- As of 31 July 2022, the Higher Education and the SDGs Network has 538 individual members at 207 member universities.

The **ACU HR in HE Community** is a forum for staff working in university human resources. The Community champions the strategic importance of HR professionals in universities and their unique contribution to the university's mission. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- Two HR in HE Community Challenge Grants were awarded to universities in Barbados and Mauritius to promote the sharing of best practice and international collaboration in university human resources.
- A series of online workshops will explore how university HR practitioners are re-imagining the world of work in the wake of COVID-19, bringing network members together to share ideas, compare experiences, and hear expert insights. The first event – 'Emerging from the pandemic: shaping the future world of work' – took place in July 2022.
- As of 31 July 2022, the HR in HE Community has 415 individual members at 201 member universities.

The **ACU Peace and Reconciliation Network** is an interdisciplinary collective of academics, researchers and professional staff working in the fields of peace, justice, truth-telling, and reconciliation. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- Four Commonwealth Peace and Reconciliation Challenge Grants will be offered in September 2022 to fund projects which advance the aims and priorities of the network.
- As of 31 July 2022, the Peace and Reconciliation Network has 180 individual members at 114 member universities.

The **ACU Supporting Research Community** is a forum for all staff at ACU member universities involved in supporting the research process – including research management and administration, research impact and uptake, and library services. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- A virtual international conference in September 2021 – 'Conversations about the journey of change: a new normal' – explored challenges and solutions to delivering university library services in a fast-changing and increasingly online context, held in partnership with the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Also in September, a webinar shared the findings of Wellcome Trust study on research leadership, and the pathways towards it, in India and 25 African countries.
- Members of the Supporting Research Community took part in the ACU Ambassadors Summit on Creating and assessing research impact in October.
- In May 2022, the ACU again partnered with the University of Johannesburg Library to host Reconnect: Embracing the changing shape of the world and how we work together – a virtual conference exploring how libraries can reconnect with their users post-pandemic.
- Community members helped to shape the refreshed ACU Measures benchmarking survey (*see 3.3*).
- As of 31 July 2022, the Supporting Research Community has 589 individual members at 225 member universities.

3.3 Deepen our engagement with member universities to identify areas of shared interest and remain responsive to their needs

ACU Ambassadors are nominated points of contact within member universities. They help us to deepen our engagement with member institutions by improving the flow of communication and opportunities and by disseminating information to relevant people in their institution. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- Our ongoing drive to recruit ACU Ambassadors at member universities continued to be successful, with the total number increasing to 247.



- Our annual ACU Ambassadors' Summit was attended by 85 Ambassadors and delivered at two different times to accommodate multiple time zones. The theme was 'Creating and assessing research impact'.

The **ACU's seven regional committees** continued to ensure that the ACU responds to the differing regional needs of its members. The committees oversee regional activity, give feedback on membership priorities, inform the ACU's policy work, and provide a window to broader regional developments. There is one committee for each of the following regions: East & Southern Africa, East Asia, South Asia, West Africa, Europe, the Pacific, and the Caribbean & Americas. Regional committees meet twice a year, and in 2021-22, an ACU delegation met with Pacific regional committee members in person in Canberra, with support from our regional office at the Australian National University.

ACU Measures, our flagship member benchmarking service, was relaunched in March 2022 following a wholesale review. This valuable service enables member universities across the world to compare practices and policies with their peers in non-competitive and confidential way, promoting the exchange of expertise and good practice between members and supporting institutional planning and decision-making. The first survey looked at how universities are **supporting research in their institutions, with a 20% response rate to date**. Bespoke reports using aggregated and analysed data collected from the survey will be shared with universities from September 2022.

4. To deliver educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference

4.1 Run prestigious scholarship schemes that build enduring international connections, understanding, and engagement

The ACU is committed to delivering educational opportunities that make a positive and lasting difference. One of the ways we do this is through the management of world-class international scholarship schemes that build enduring international connections and understanding between individuals, institutions, and nations. We manage the UK government's three major scholarship programmes: Chevening, Commonwealth, and Marshall Scholarships, as well as the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships, and are custodians of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. In late 2021, we also became a lead delivery partner in the Turing Scheme. This section provides updates on all the above.

Chevening is the UK government's flagship international awards programme aimed at developing global leaders. Funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and partner organisations, and administered by the ACU, Chevening enables tomorrow's leaders to study in the UK and join a global community of professionals who are creating positive change. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- 58,000 applications were submitted for Chevening Scholarships and Fellowships.
- 1,635 scholars from over 140 countries and territories were welcomed to 114 universities in the UK.
- 24 new funding partnerships were established for the academic year 2022-23, including 20 secured by British embassies and high commissions. India has made new arrangements worth over £350k with HSBC, Pearson, TATA, and Hindustan Unilever.
- Chevening hosted its first large-scale in-person event since 2019, bringing together over 1,400 scholars and fellows for a Chevening Summit in March 2022.

The ACU continued to be custodians of the **Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP)** – a unique international framework through which Commonwealth countries offer university scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other member nations, forging lasting links across the Commonwealth and creating valuable opportunities for cultural and academic exchange. The



Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships – *both detailed below* – operate within this framework. In April 2022, a [report on the CSFP](#) was presented to the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Kenya – *see 4.3*.

The [Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK](#) (CSC) is the main UK government scholarship scheme led by international development objectives. Sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and managed by the ACU, the CSC combines sustainable development with UK national interests by supporting innovators and leaders of the future from across the Commonwealth and attracting outstanding talent to Britain's universities. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- The Commission funded 714 scholarships and fellowships for the 2021-22 academic year, with over 1,700 scholars from 40 countries on award in total. This included 82 split-site scholarships, which support collaboration between UK and other Commonwealth universities.
- A full events programme was delivered, including a Development Training Programme (23 workshops in total), an in-person 'Connect and Collaborate' event (enabling our latest cohort of scholars both to meet and share how they intend advance the sustainable development goals post-award), and a networking event for departing scholars. The Regional Network Coordinators led a total of 34 events for scholars in their respective regions.
- The Commission delivered a time-limited programme in girls' education, offering professional development opportunities to 29 fellows working in the area.
- The Commission showcased how its scholars and alumni are working to tackle the climate crisis through a Climate Action Webinar series, a themed issue of its magazine *Common Knowledge*, and the launch of a new time-limited programme on the theme of 'Clean Energy, Air, and Oceans'.
- The CSC's ongoing alumni engagement activities included its ['Development in Action' webinar series](#) (through which scholars and

alumni can share their work) and [Research Impact Awards](#) (which recognise how research conducted by CSC scholars and alumni is supporting sustainable development). The Alumni Community Engagement Fund, which supports alumni in raising awareness of development issues at the community level, focused on climate action and girl's education during 2021-22.

[Marshall Scholarships](#) enable young Americans of high ability to study for a degree in the UK. As future leaders, Marshall Scholars strengthen the enduring relationship between the British and American peoples, their governments, and their institutions. Marshall Scholarships are mainly funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and overseen by the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission, administered by the ACU. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- The Commission approved the allocation of 41 awards for the 2022 application cycle. 987 endorsed applications were received, and the selection committees interviewed 154 candidates.
- Although live scholar events were still affected by COVID-19 restrictions, in-person events included a Welcome Orientation and reception, cultural activities, and a dinner for departing scholars.

The [Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships \(QECS\)](#) offer the chance to study for a two-year Master's degree in a low or middle income Commonwealth country. Funded by Commonwealth governments, the scholarships are aimed at students who are committed to creating change in their communities. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- 21 scholars were selected for study across 15 countries. For the first time, the percentage of female scholars outweighs male scholars.
- In September 2021, QECS scholars took part in an [innovative online course](#): 'Creating a Sustainable World: 21st Century Challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals'. The course, created in partnership with the University of Manchester, brought students from different academic disciplines together to devise practical solutions to global challenges.



- A group of QECS scholars travelled to Rwanda to take part in Youth Forum at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in June 2022.
- QECS scholarship certificates were signed by Her late Majesty The Queen.

The [Turing Scheme](#) is the UK's global programme for studying, working, and living abroad. In November 2021, the ACU was appointed principal partner in the scheme, leading on the assessment of applications and supporting with monitoring and evaluation. A new team was in place to deliver these activities in time for applications opening in early 2022.

4.2 Seek to create and expand educational opportunities

In addition to government-funded schemes, the ACU's own range of grants and fellowships continue to support the interchange of students and staff between member universities. We also work actively to increase the number of such opportunities available.

The ACU's **Challenge Grants**, now in their second year, are specifically for members of the ACU's five thematic networks and communities of practice. These networks enable universities to share best practice, collaborate on joint activities, and influence policy agendas in areas of strategic importance. The grants – *detailed under 3.2* – fund projects that further the networks' aims and promote collaboration between their members.

The ACU supports **early career researchers** at its member universities through two types of grant:

- **Early Career Conference Grants** are awarded to individual academics to enable them to attend international conferences in their area of expertise, helping them to share their research, learn about new developments, and build professional networks. 27 grants were awarded in 2021-22.

- **Early Career Researcher Training Grants** are awarded to member universities to support the delivery of training that equips emerging researchers with the skills required to succeed in their research careers. In 2021-22, ten grants were awarded, supporting training in areas such as proposal writing, fundraising, communicating impact, and how to engage non-academic stakeholders in research.

ACU Fellowships promote the exchange of knowledge, skills, and ideas between universities and countries of the Commonwealth. Available to both academic and professional staff, the Fellowships enable collaborative research and partnership-building, as well as opportunities to observe and exchange different techniques and practice. The 2021-22 Fellowships will be announced in October 2022.

The **Medical Student Virtual Mobility Grants** aim to widen medical students' knowledge of global health and build their intercultural skills. The grants fund virtual mobility projects delivered in partnerships between medical schools in different countries. In 2021-22, two grants were awarded to member institutions in Sri Lanka and India.

The **Routledge/Round Table Commonwealth Studentships** support PhD research projects on Commonwealth-related themes. Two successful applicants will be awarded grants in September 2022.

The **ACU Summer School** brings Commonwealth students together to discuss global challenges through a dynamic programme of workshops, field trips, and group work. Bursaries are offered to enable students from all parts of the Commonwealth to take part, with each year hosted by different country – including Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Ghana, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Mauritius, Rwanda, and the UK to date. Updates from 2021-22 include:

- The 2021 ACU Summer School was held in partnership with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India, on the theme of '[Urban disasters: vulnerability and resilience in a pandemic](#)'.
- Due to the continuing impact of Covid-19, this year's event was creatively adapted into an interactive online experience.



- Over 12 days, 50 students from 14 countries across the Commonwealth came together online to explore how socioeconomic inequality affects communities' resilience to urban disasters.
- The Summer School's expert speakers shared their research through the ACU's website, alongside the [students' group projects](#), including '[Four ways universities can drive solutions to housing problems](#)' and why disaster management calls for transdisciplinary approaches.

Our **Virtual Mobility Project Grants** provide funding for ACU member universities to deliver a virtual mobility project – such as an online summer school – in partnership with another member university. In 2021-22, four grants were awarded to universities in India, Malaysia and the UK for projects aimed at enhancing students' intercultural skills and global knowledge without the need for physical travel. This year's grants will fund projects such as a collaborative student initiative to help students develop their digital skills and a virtual event on education for sustainable development.

4.3 Demonstrate the impact of international educational experiences and initiatives

In April 2022, we presented a [report](#) to ministers at the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers on the impact of the [Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan \(CSFP\)](#) of which the ACU are custodians, renewing our call for Commonwealth governments to support the growth and continued future of the CSFP through investment and by hosting scholarships in their countries and institutions.

5. To uphold the ACU's reputation for excellence and demonstrate its impact

5.1 Create and sustain a high-performance culture by delivering efficient core services to support our people

Our work to enhance our standing as an employer of choice, and to attract, develop, and retain the best talent continued, including:

- **ACU Together**, launched in March 2021, was a change programme aimed at bringing together our wide organisational expertise to make the ACU more connected and innovative while creating more opportunities for career development. After seven months of consultation with task groups across the organisation, ACU Together became part of standard working practice from October 2021, with all former departments amalgamated into five new collaborative directorates and a new senior leadership team in place.
- Our **New Ways of Working** framework seeks to modernise working practices to align with new working norms post-pandemic. The framework, which combines the best of office and remote working, aims to encourage flexibility, autonomy and trust, and promote efficient and effective working practices with a more flexible approach to where, how, and when we work. The programme includes a focus on upgrades to our technology and office space to support this.
- Our activities to promote **wellbeing and inclusivity in the workplace** across the year included transgender awareness training, the establishment of a new Wellbeing Committee, and the upskilling of several colleagues to become mental health first aiders. The ACU also developed new guidance designed to help and inspire staff to [live our organisational values](#). The guidance aims to help colleagues translate these values into workplace behaviours.
- We implemented a new **pay, reward and recognition structure** aimed at ensuring a fair and equitable approach to pay and reward that supports the ACU's goals while continuing to be affordable. A review of the proposals took place between April and June 2022, with a new structure implemented on 1 August 2022.

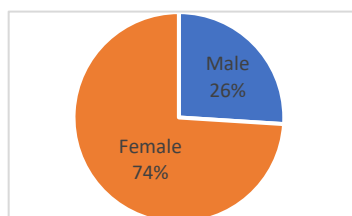
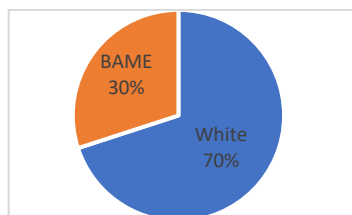


- We designed a **leadership development programme** to help support a high performing leadership team with the skills to ensure we can deliver on our strategy, create an inspiring workplace, and achieve our future ambitions. A series of masterclasses was also introduced to help staff learn more about how their behaviours and ways of working contribute to a thriving workplace.
- We created a **central compliance function**, building on strong foundations, to support teams in ensuring best practice is embedded throughout the organisation, reducing risk and promoting a positive compliance culture.

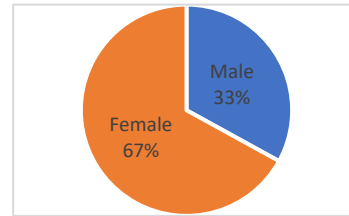
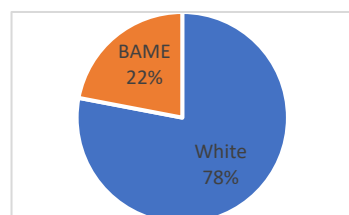
To continue to attract the most suitable candidates, we updated our recruitment processes and procedures, including streamlining recruitment and selection through digitised processes, the creation of a hiring managers guide, and updates to the ACU's ['Work with Us'](#) web page. We also launched an ACU LinkedIn page.

We remain committed to having a **diverse workforce**:

Our colleagues



Our Leadership Team

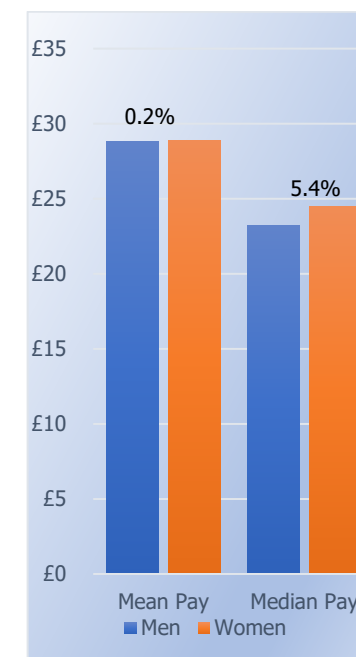


- As part of wider inclusion and organisational strategies, the ACU is committed to reviewing recruitment and retention practices as well as driving forward projects linked to flexible and agile working.

Gender pay gap

The ACU employs fewer than 250 staff and is therefore not required by law to publish an annual gender pay gap report. However, the ACU voluntarily provides this information.

At 5 April 2022, the ACU mean and median hourly pay gap was 0.2% and 5.4% respectively with females earning more than males on both measures. National gender pay gap among all employees was 15.4% in 2021.





5.2 Tell our story in compelling new ways and show evidence of our impact

Established in 2021, the ACU's new **Research and Insight** directorate monitors and evaluates the full range of the ACU's work to show how it is having an impact and helping to build a better world through higher education. Highlights from 2021-22 include:

- In autumn 2021, and as part of the ACU Together change programme, staff involved in the long-running monitoring and evaluation of ACU-managed scholarship schemes joined the Research and Insight directorate, helping the ACU to deliver a pan-programmatic view of its scholarships activities and pool skills and knowledge from across the organisation.
- Research and Insight staff were trained in the use of Power BI software, helping them to visualise data in a clear, compelling way and share insights and analysis with internal and external audiences.

5.3 Forge alliances with strategic partners to further our mission and achieve our objectives

Our belief in the **value of collaboration** extends to every aspect of our work. Working with [organisations](#) whose values and aspirations align with our own helps us to share knowledge and ideas, extend our reach, and achieve common goals. Highlights from 2021-22 include:

- In November, the ACU signed an [MOU with the Commonwealth Games Federation](#) to improve collaboration around higher education and sport in the Commonwealth, leading to a survey on how member universities are promoting equality, inclusivity, and sustainable development through sport.

- We continued to strengthen and build on our [global coalition](#) with the **International Association of Universities** (IAU) and **Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie** (AUF), launched in July 2020. The partnership brings our three global associations together to advocate for higher education and its contribution to sustainable development at the highest levels and on the widest international scale. Highlights from the past year included a strategy meeting in October to map-out the next stage of our partnership, [a joint submission](#) to the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference in May, and a joint workshop at the United Nations' annual High-Level Political Forum (*see 1.1/1.2*).
- We continued to work with our partners the **British Council**, building on a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) signed by our two organisations in 2018. Highlights from the past year included the launch of a joint study on higher education's contribution to the SDGs (*see 1.1/1.2*) and ongoing work with the Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort (*see 2.1*).



4 Financial Review

Financial Performance Review

The ACU aims to generate a small surplus from its unrestricted general activities and this year achieved a surplus of £12k before actuarial gains and transfers between funds. Unrestricted funds at 31 July 2022 stands at £5,994k.

The Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the year is set out on page 28. A summary of the activities and the financial results is given below.

Unrestricted Funds - General

Membership fee income has increased by £28k (2%) to £1,215k. In 2021/22, in recognition of the impact on COVID-19 on our members, we maintained our fee at the 2019/20 level. We welcomed 19 new members in the year with the overall membership total increasing by 2.

External administration fees increased by £565k to £7,257k. In late 2021, we also became a delivery partner in the T2 phase of the Turing Scheme and would welcome an opportunity to participate in the next phase of the program.

Investment income declined by £4k to £403k. Market value of investments declined by £360k. Growth in the early part of the year was reversed with a resulting decline due to the interest-rate increases and the war in Ukraine. This has been partly offset by a £217k realised gain on disposal.

Total resources expended increased by £603k to £8,945k, mainly relating to the new sources of income. This has been offset by the increased income from external administration.

Employment costs for unrestricted activity increased by £157k to £6,356k. The average headcount charged to General Funds has decreased by 6 to 116.

Other costs increased by £446k to £2,589k.

	2021/22 £'000	2020/21 £'000
Membership income	1,215	1,187
External administration	7,257	6,692
Investment income / interest	403	407
Other Income	82	70
Total Income	8,957	8,356
Total Expenditure	8,945	8,342
Net operating income as per SOFA	12	14
(Loss) / Gain on investments	(143)	1,408
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	66	36
Net movement in funds	(65)	1,458
Funds brought forward	6,669	6,411
Transfer to Designated Funds	(610)	(1,200)
Funds carried forward	5,994	6,669



Unrestricted Funds - Designated

The Trustees have set aside two Designated Funds:

- 1) Depreciation of the capital cost of reconfiguring the office in 2015/16. Closing balance is £299k (2021: £386k).
- 2) *The Road to 2030*, an ambitious programme which builds on the ACU 2020 plan and incorporates a refreshed vision, mission and strategic priorities. The ACU Council endorsed *The Road to 2030* and a budget of £4.3m for implementation over three years. Council have approved the transfer of a further £0.6m to this fund supporting the ACU Together Programme to deliver *The Road to 2030*. ACU Together is the ACU's change management programme consisting of restructuring leadership, strengthening our values and developing new ways of working including implementing shared services. Closing balance is £1,851k (2021: £2,408k).

Closing balance of Designated funds is £2,150k (2021: £2,794k). Note 11 shows the movements during the year in each fund.

Restricted Funds

The range of Restricted Funds administered by the ACU is shown in note 13. Note 15 provides an analysis where applicable of the value and number of scholarships and grants awarded from Restricted Funds.

Endowment Funds

The Permanent and Expendable Endowment Funds along with associated Restricted Funds generated £561k (2021: £529k) of investment income during the year. All the endowment income was credited to the relevant Restricted Funds. The market value of investments reduced by £341k to £25,699k. Note

15 lists the amount awarded in grants.

In the year £100k was received from the estate of Francis & Philip Turner. This is being used to support the CSFP Scholarships.

The value of the Permanent Endowments stood at £17,608k (2021: £17,813k). The value of Expendable Endowments stood at £7,766k (2021: £7,868k).

Closing balance of the endowment funds is £25,374k (2021: £25,681k).

Investment Policy and returns

Investment objectives

The investment objective of the ACU's portfolio is to seek long term real growth without taking undue risks, consistent with a reasonable level of income. The specific investment objective of the fund invested with Newtons is to maximise returns through capital growth and income. The specific investment objective of the funds invested with CCLA is to achieve an average annual total return of inflation plus 5% over the long term and control volatility to 75% of that of the UK equity market.

Investment Performance

Note 8 has an analysis of movements in investment values. The net cumulative return from the average charity (ARC Charity Indices Steady Growth) was (2.7%) for the 12 months to 31 July 2022.



The ACU has 9 investment portfolios.

Fund / Purpose of Fund	Permanent / Expendable	Investment Manager	Value at 31 July 22 £'000	Actual Performance %
CSFP Anniversary Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Permanent	Newton	10,742	(1.3%)
CSFP Anniversary Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Restricted	Newton	372	(1.3%)
QECS Scholarships Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Expendable	Newton	6,137	(1.3%)
QECS Frances & Philip Turner Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Permanent	Newton	614	(1.3%)
ACU Main fund Investment of ACU reserves	Permanent	CCLA	8,236	(1.6%)
ACU Endowment ACU Development Fellowships	Permanent	CCLA	5,940	(1.6%)
Edward Boyle Edward Boyle medical electives	Permanent	CCLA	154	(1.6%)
Annenberg Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission scholarships	Permanent	CCLA	739	(1.6%)
Marshall Sherfield Post-doctoral fellowship for US students	Expendable	CCLA	1,003	(1.6%)



5 Governance and Structure

Structure

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) was founded in 1913 and is a registered charity (number 314137 in England & Wales), regulated by the Charity Commission. It is controlled by its member institutions through an elected Council.

The ACU was granted its Royal Charter in 1963 and is governed by the Royal Charter, Bye-Laws and Regulations dated 17 June 1963 and last amended on 13 October 2010.

Governance and management

Nominations to the Council are made by Executive Heads of member institutions in four constituencies representing all regions of the Commonwealth. There are up to 20 elected Council members who may co-opt two further members if they conclude this is desirable to ensure balanced geographical and gender representation of the Council. An additional member may be co-opted if the Honorary Treasurer is not appointed from the elected Council members.

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance and accounting, investment management and the diverse work of the ACU. The Council meets face-to-face twice each year, with any additional business conducted electronically in between meetings as necessary. During the year both meetings were held virtually. The officers and committees of the ACU report to the Council. The Council is responsible for approving new members, electing the ACU's office bearers, appointing members of the Executive Committee, amending the Charter and Statutes, making and amending Byelaws, setting policy and strategic direction, and overseeing their implementation. Between Council meetings the other powers of Council are delegated to its Executive Committee.

The ACU's committees, which are established by Council, are the Executive Committee, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Remuneration Committee.

The Executive Committee is elected by the Council and consists of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Honorary Treasurer, and up to five other Members of Council. The Chair of the Executive Committee has the power to co-opt an additional member should the need arise.

The Audit and Risk Committee met twice in 2021/22. It consists of five members, four (including the Chair) of whom are serving members of Council. The fifth place is filled by an independent member. The Honorary Treasurer is also in attendance for the finance related agenda items. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee is appointed by Council, from its members, and has the power to co-opt additional members should the need arise.

The Remuneration Committee consists of the Honorary Treasurer (Chair), two Vice-Chancellors from UK member institutions and one independent member with UK professional human resources knowledge.

The Trustees comply with the Charity Governance Code published in 2017 which sets out the principles and recommended practice for good governance within the sector. The Charity conducts triennial reviews of its governance arrangements, with the next review planned for 2023. This will involve external expert advice in how best to apply the principles within the code. The Council will then address any issues raised where required.

The ACU had no fundraising activities requiring disclosure under S162A of the Charities Act 2011.

Risk management

The Trustees have responsibility for risk management. Risks are identified by the Senior Executive Team and reviewed, assessed and appropriate action incorporated as part of the annual budget and planning process. Thus, risk is an integral part of the budget and plan reviewed and approved by the Trustees.



The principal risks and uncertainties facing the charity are:

- Governance, given the ACU's status as a UK charity with international trustees; mitigated by comprehensive introductory Trustee training and use of independent professional advice
- Breach of legal and regulatory requirements; mitigated by regular reviews and updating of policies and procedures
- Dominance of scholarship administration income; mitigated by actively seeking new projects and partnerships, engaging with members and other funders to develop new income streams

A series of systems operate to identify and mitigate risk. These systems include:

- regulation by the Charity Commission
- annual external audit or inspection of administration activities
- Audit and Risk Committee review
- financial procedures
- strategic plan and annual budget (including risk assessment) process
- handbook for staff detailing practices, policies and procedures
- a low risk environment in terms of health and safety, which is a standing item on Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Staff Committee agendas and is subject to annual inspection by an external expert
- comprehensive insurance cover (Business Interruption, Employer's Liability, Public Liability, Professional Liability and Personal Accident and Business Travel)
- Increased staff awareness of risk

Unrestricted Reserves Policy

The ACU's reserves policy is to hold free reserves (unrestricted general funds minus fixed assets) equivalent to 4 to 6 months unrestricted expenditure. Free reserves of £5.7m (2021: £6.7m) is £1.2m (2021: £2.5m) above the upper limit.

The Trustees recognise we are holding reserves above our upper limit. The Trustees will approve further drawdown for investment activity.

Public Benefit

In shaping our objectives for the year and planning our activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. In broad terms, the people of the Commonwealth (and other countries) benefit from the ACU's support for the extension, improvement, and strengthening of higher education through our member institutions and through our activities. Our charitable objects for the public benefit – as expressed in our Royal Charter – and the activities which achieve them are summarised in the Review of the Year.

With around 500 members in 50 countries, we are expanding to be fully representative of the range of public and private universities throughout the Commonwealth. Our universities share Commonwealth values, including freedom of expression, a common language and many similarities in organisation and management. The ACU forms an extensive network to facilitate internationalisation and for a sharing of problems, solutions and best practice across a variety of higher education environments.

ACU Trading Limited

ACU Trading Limited (Company number: 9119389) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACU Trading Limited is the provision of staff services to the ACU.



Council Members

Professor Cheryl de la Rey	University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Professor Colin Riordan	Cardiff University, UK
Professor Feridun Hamdullahpur	Formerly the University of Waterloo, Canada
Professor Amanda Broderick	University of East London, UK
Dr Rhonda Lenton	York University, Canada
Professor Md. Akhturazzmaan	University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Professor Wim de Villiers	Stellenbosch University, South Africa
Professor Pal Ahluwalia	University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Professor Shalini Bharat	Tata Institute of Science and Technology, India
Professor Suhas Raghunath Pednekar	University of Mumbai, India
Professor Sandeep Sancheti	SRM University, India
Professor Francis W. O. Aduol	Technical University of Kenya, Kenya
Professor Tawana Kupe	University of Pretoria, South Africa
Professor Barnabas Nawangwe	Makerere University, Uganda

New member (from 01/08/2022)

Professor Abiodun H. Adebayo	Covenant University, Nigeria
Professor Sir Hilary Beckles	The University of the West Indies, Jamaica
Professor Barney Glover AO	Western Sydney University, Australia
Snr. Professsor Sudantha Liyanage	University of Sri Jayewardenpura, Sri Lanka

Professor Wendy Thomson	University of London, UK
Professor Dato' Ir Dr. Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor	University of Malaya, Malaysia

Departing members (to 31/07/2022)

Professor Deep Saini	Dalhousie University, Canada
Professor Ahmed Bazai	Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, Pakistan
Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng	University of Cape Town, South Africa
Professor Dhanjay Jhurry	University of Mauritius, Mauritius
Professor Gabriel Ayem Teye	The University for Development Studies, Ghana
Professor Suhas Pednekar	University of Mumbai, India

Audit and Risk Committee

Amanda Broderick
Wim de Villiers
Graeme Appleby
Engr Ahmed Farooq Bazai
Professor Dhanjay Jhurry
Professor Tawana Kupe

Remuneration Committee

Feridun Hamdullahpur
Julia Buckingham
Alison Johns
Shearer West



Trustee Training

Council members are the Trustees of the ACU under UK charity law. Trustees are introduced to the role by briefings on UK charity governance, from the ACU and its professional advisers; including Charity Trustee responsibilities; the Charity Governance Code; safeguarding and serious incident reporting; investment management; risk management, budgets and management accounts; and the ACU's mission, vision, values and strategic priorities.

Day to day management

The Senior Executive Team (SET) is responsible for the day-to-day running of the ACU under authority delegated to the CEO by the Trustees. The SET is supported by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which comprises of six Directors.

The SET members are:

Chief Executive and Secretary General	Dr Joanna Newman MBE FRSA
Chief Finance Officer	Caroline Harrison
Chief Operating Officer	Sharon Memis

COVID-19 Disclosure

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ACU's operations, which we have adapted to, in order to reduce the impact. The SET are constantly monitoring the situation and have considered the following risks and mitigation:

- Membership income – we anticipate member universities will face financial challenges for at least 2-3 years. To help our members, we have maintained the membership fee at the 2019/20 level and have expanded our membership offering online, launching *ACU Digital Now*
- External administration income – in 2020/21 we administered fewer

scholars coming to the UK with some studying remotely. Working closely with our partners at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and our scholarship teams, we will continue to support our scholars during these unprecedented times, maintaining the excellent levels of service for which the ACU is known

- Investment income – market value has recovered in 2021 to pre-COVID-19 levels. Investment income in the form of dividends has also increased year on year. In 2020, the Council approved changing our investment focus to more ethical considerations with income generation. This focus will continue to support our scholarships and grants to individuals.
- Employment costs – there was a 1% pay award in 2021/22. The ACU Together Programme was launched which is a change management programme consisting of restructuring leadership, strengthening our values and developing new ways of working including implementing shared services. This programme was embedded in 2021/22.

The Trustees have reviewed the three year budget plan. Taking into account the balance sheet position and the impact of market volatility, the Trustees remain of the opinion that the going concern assumption remains appropriate and the financial statements continue to be prepared on this basis.



Legal and administrative details

Principal place of business:

Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF

www.acu.ac.uk

Bankers

National Westminster Bank plc
PO Box 83
Tavistock House
Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9XA

Investment Managers:

Newton Investment Management
160 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4LA

CCLA
85 Queen Victoria Street
London EC4V 4ET

Auditors

Crowe U.K. LLP
55 Ludgate Hill
London
EC4M 7JW



6 Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Charity law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards) and applicable law.

Under charity law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of its net incoming resources for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue to operate.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Trustees' Confirmatory Statement

The Trustees confirm that these Accounts comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the ACU's governing document and the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

These Annual Report and Accounts were approved by the Council and are signed on their behalf by

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

23rd November 2022



7 Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of the Association of Commonwealth Universities

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Association of Commonwealth Universities ('the charity') and its subsidiaries ('the group') for the year ended 31 July 2022 which comprise the Group Statement of Financial Activities, the Group and Charity Balance sheets, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the group's and the parent charity's affairs as at 31 July 2022 and of the group's income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the group in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We

believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustee's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's or the group's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorized for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of



this other information, we are required to report that fact.
We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the financial statements is inconsistent in any material respect with the trustees' report; or
- sufficient and proper accounting records have not been kept by the parent charity; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the group and the parent charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Acts and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.



We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charity and group operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Charities Act 2011 together with the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the charity's and the group's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the charity and the group for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context for the UK operations were General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), employment legislation and taxation legislation.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the Trustees and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within the recognition and classification of income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management, and the Audit Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence with the Charity Commission and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition,

as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Crowe U.K. LLP

Crowe U.K. LLP
Statutory Auditor
55 Ludgate Hill
London,
EC4M 7JW

Date 21 February 2023

Crowe U.K. LLP is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity by virtue of its eligibility for appointment as auditor of a company under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.



Group Statement of Financial Activities – year ended 31 July 2022

	Note	Unrestricted Funds		Restricted Funds	Endowment Funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
		General	Designated				
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income and endowments from:							
Grants & donations	2	8	-	815	100	923	993
Membership income		1,215	-	-	-	1,215	1,187
External administration	3	7,257	-	-	-	7,257	6,692
Investment income/interest	4	403	-	561	-	964	936
Other		74	-	-	-	74	61
Total Income		8,957	-	1,376	100	10,433	9,869
Expenditure on charitable activities:							
Project grants		-	-	899	-	899	1,026
Membership engagement		1,202	611	-	-	1,813	2,193
Scholarships, grants and awards		127	7	660	100	894	677
External and fund administration		7,514	636	-	-	8,150	6,761
Expenditure on other activities:							
Investment management		102	-	181	-	283	264
Total Expenditure	5	8,945	1,254	1,740	100	12,039	10,921
Net income / (expenditure) before gains / (losses) on investments		12	(1,254)	(364)	-	(1,606)	(1,052)
(Losses) / Gains on investments	8	(143)	-	(35)	(307)	(485)	4,968
Net (expenditure) / income before transfers		(131)	(1,254)	(399)	(307)	(2,091)	3,916
Transfers between funds	11	(610)	610	-	-	-	-
Net income before other recognised gains and losses		(741)	(644)	(399)	(307)	(2,091)	3,916
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	20	66	-	-	-	66	36
Net movement in funds		(675)	(644)	(399)	(307)	(2,025)	3,952
Funds brought forward		6,669	2,794	688	25,681	35,832	31,880
Funds carried forward	11 – 13	5,994	2,150	289	25,374	33,807	35,832

None of the above activities were acquired or discontinued during the year.



Group and Charity Balance Sheet as at 31 July 2022

		Group		Charity	
	Note	2022	2021	2022	2021
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fixed assets					
Intangible assets	7a	148	296	148	296
Tangible assets	7b	299	388	299	388
Investments	8	33,935	35,419	33,935	35,419
Total Fixed Assets		34,382	36,103	34,382	36,103
Current assets					
Debtors	9	591	992	588	991
Cash at bank and in hand		1,627	2,208	1,517	1,944
Total Current Assets		2,218	3,200	2,105	2,935
Liabilities					
Creditors amounts falling due within one year	10	(2,424)	(3,036)	(2,311)	(2,771)
Net Current (Liabilities) / Assets		(206)	164	(206)	164
Net assets excluding pension liability		34,176	36,267	34,176	36,267
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	20	(369)	(435)	(369)	(435)
Total Net assets		33,807	35,832	33,807	35,832
Funds					
Unrestricted funds: General	11	5,994	6,669	5,994	6,669
Designated	11	2,150	2,794	2,150	2,794
Endowment funds	12	25,374	25,681	25,374	25,681
Restricted funds	13	289	688	289	688
Total funds		33,807	35,832	33,807	35,832

These financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Council on 23rd November 2022 and signed on their behalf by:

Professor Cheryl de la Rey
Chair of the Council

Dr Joanna Newman MBE
Secretary General



Group Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31 July 2022

	Note	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities:			
Net cash used in operating activities		(2,645)	(1,520)
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Investment Income and Interest	4	964	936
Purchase of tangible assets	7	-	(96)
Proceeds from sale of investments		1,000	1,021
Net cash provided by investing activities		1,964	1,861
Cash flows from financing activities:			
Receipt of endowment		100	-
Net cash provided by financing activities		100	-
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		(581)	341
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		2,208	1,867
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		1,627	2,208

Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities:

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Net (expenditure) / income for the reporting period	(2,025)	3,952
Adjustments for:		
Amortisation and depreciation charge	237	281
Losses / (Gains) on investments	485	(4,968)
Investment income received	(965)	(936)
Decrease / (Increase) in debtors	401	(598)
(Decrease) / Increase in creditors	(612)	785
Pension changes	(66)	(36)
Receipt of endowment	(100)	-
Net cash used in operating activities	(2,645)	(1,520)

ANALYSIS OF CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	Opening balance £'000	Cash Flow £'000	Closing balance £'000
Cash at bank and in hand	2,208	(581)	1,627
	2,208	(581)	1,627



9 Notes to the financial statements year ended 31 July 2022

1. Accounting policies

(a) Accounting convention

ACU is a Public Benefit Entity registered as a charity in England and Wales on 26 November 1965 (charity number 314137). Its registered office is: Woburn House, 20-24 Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9HF.

The consolidated financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standards applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Charities Act 2011 and the Statement of Recommended Practice on Accounting and Reporting applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102 ("The Charities SORP 2015").

The accounts consolidate those of the Charity and its wholly owned trading subsidiary ACU Trading Limited.

The accounts are drawn up on the historical cost basis of accounting, as modified by the revaluation of certain assets including investments.

The functional currency of the Group is GBP, the currency of the primary economic environment in which it operates.

Critical accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the Group's accounting policies, the Council are required to make judgments, estimates, and assumptions, about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and underlying assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an on-going basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects the current and future periods. The key sources of estimation uncertainty that have a significant effect on the amounts recognised in the financial statements are described in the accounting policies and are summarised below:

- bad debt provision for membership subscriptions is 100% of debt outstanding at the year end
- scholarship administration income is accounted for monthly with some exceptions for significant activity that occurs once a year
- Actuarial gains / (losses) on defined benefit pension schemes are recognised at the year end and based on information provided by the pension schemes. Further information is provided in Note 1(l) and Note 20.

(b) Income

All incoming revenues are included in the SOFA when the ACU is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be measured with reasonable certainty. Income is deferred only when the ACU has to fulfil conditions before becoming entitled to it or where the donor has specified that the income is to be expended in a future period.

(c) Expenditure

All expenditure has been accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings which are consistent with the activities of the ACU. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of the resource. Central overheads



such as accommodation, IT, Communications, HR and Finance have been allocated on usage or staffing basis. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant grant or project, or to central overheads if not an eligible cost for a grant.

(d) Termination Payments

Termination benefits are payable when employment is terminated before the normal retirement date, or whenever an employee accepts voluntary redundancy in exchange for these benefits. ACU recognises termination benefits when it is demonstrably committed to either (i) terminating the employment of current employees according to a detailed formal plan without possibility of withdrawal or (ii) providing termination benefits as a result of an offer made to encourage voluntary redundancy.

(e) Grants

ACU makes grants in line with funders' and donors' aims and wishes. This contributes to ACU's objective of facilitating the interchange of students and teachers between Commonwealth universities and between them and the universities of foreign countries.

(f) Governance costs

These represent costs incurred by the Secretary General's office and other key management which are attributable to the management of the ACU's assets, organisational administration and compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements. Governance costs have been allocated to charitable activities as a separate component of support costs on the same basis as noted in (c) above.

(g) Intangible and tangible assets – capitalisation, depreciation and amortisation

All assets costing more than £7,500 are capitalised. Depreciation is provided on all tangible fixed assets at rates calculated to write-off the cost on a straight-line basis over their expected useful lives as follows:

Leasehold property	- Over the life of the lease.
Computer equipment	- 3 years
Office equipment	- 3 years
Furniture and fixtures	- 5 years
Computer software (intangible)	- 3 years

(h) Investments

Investment assets are valued at market value at the balance sheet date. Gains on investment assets are the net of realised gains and losses and unrealised gains and losses. Realised gains and losses on investments are arrived at by comparing the net sale proceeds with the market value at the end of the previous financial year or cost if acquired in the year; unrealised gains and losses represent the difference between the market value of investments still held at the end of the financial year with their value at the beginning of the year or with their cost if purchased subsequently.

Investment income from cash at bank is accrued at the year end. Income generated from investments and cash held by Fund Managers is credited to income as received.



(i) Fund accounting

Funds held by the ACU:

General Funds

Unrestricted funds comprising accumulated surpluses and deficits after transfer to or from designated funds.

Designated Funds

Unrestricted funds set aside out of general funds and designated for specific purposes by the Trustees.

Restricted Funds

Funds which are subject to donor-imposed conditions as to their use.

The Permanent Endowment Funds

Generate income which is transferred to the ACU Development Fellowship Fund, Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, the Edward Boyle (Medical Electives) Fund and the Annenberg Foundation Scholarship Fund, which are Restricted Funds. The capital of these funds must be retained.

The Expendable Endowment Funds

Generate total returns which fund the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship, Marshall Sherfield postdoctoral fellowships. The capital of these funds will be retained until the Trustees choose to spend the capital. There is currently no such intention.

(j) Operating leases

The rents payable under operating leases, where substantially all the benefits and risk of ownership remain with the lessor, are charged to the SOFA as incurred. Where there are rent free periods, the cost is spread over the period to the first rent review.

(k) Financial Instruments

ACU has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are recognised as:

- a) Financial assets measured at amortised cost comprise cash, and all debtors excluding prepayments
- b) Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost are all liabilities excluding tax and social security, estimate accruals, provisions and deferred income
- c) Financial assets at fair value include investments and gains on forward contracts open at year end.

(l) Pension schemes

The ACU participates in both the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL).

USS

Significant accounting policies

The institution participates in Universities Superannuation Scheme. The assets of the scheme are held in a separate trustee-administered fund. Because of the mutual nature of the scheme, the assets are not attributed to individual institutions and a scheme-wide contribution rate is set. The institution is therefore exposed to actuarial risks associated with other institutions' employees and is unable to identify its share of the underlying



assets and liabilities of the scheme on a consistent and reasonable basis. As required by Section 28 of FRS 102 "Employee benefits", the institution therefore accounts for the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. As a result, the amount charged to the profit and loss account represents the contributions payable to the scheme. Since the institution has entered into an agreement (the Recovery Plan) that determines how each employer within the scheme will fund the overall deficit, the institution recognises a liability for the contributions payable that arise from the agreement (to the extent that they relate to the deficit) with related expenses being recognised through the profit and loss account.

Critical accounting judgements

FRS 102 makes the distinction between a group plan and a multi-employer scheme. A group plan consists of a collection of entities under common control typically with a sponsoring employer. A multi-employer scheme is a scheme for entities not under common control and represents (typically) an industry-wide scheme such as Universities Superannuation Scheme. The accounting for a multi-employer scheme where the employer has entered into an agreement with the scheme that determines how the employer will fund a deficit results in the recognition of a liability for the contributions payable that arise from the agreement (to the extent that they relate to the deficit) and the resulting expense in profit or loss in accordance with section 28 of FRS 102. The directors are satisfied that Universities Superannuation Scheme meets the definition of a multi-employer scheme and has therefore recognised the discounted fair value of the contractual contributions under the recovery plan in existence at the date of approving these financial statements.

Key sources of estimation uncertainty

The USS liability is based on a deficit recovery plan to 30 April 2038, a deficit contribution rate averaging 6.3%, staff salary inflation 2.0%, and a discount rate of 3.31%.

SAUL

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London ("SAUL"), which is a centralised defined benefit scheme within the United Kingdom and was contracted out of the Second State Pension (prior to April 2016).

SAUL is an independently-managed pension scheme for the non-academic staff of over 50 colleges and institutions with links to higher education. Pension benefits accrued within SAUL currently build up on a Career Average Revalued Earnings ("CARE") basis.

The ACU is not expected to be liable to SAUL for any other current participating employer's obligations under the Rules of SAUL, but in the event of an insolvency of any participating employer within SAUL, an amount of any pension shortfall (which cannot otherwise be recovered) in respect of that employer, may be spread across the remaining participating employers and reflected in the next actuarial valuation.

Funding Policy

SAUL's statutory funding objective is to have sufficient and appropriate assets to meet the costs incurred by the Trustee in paying SAUL's benefits as they fall due (the "Technical Provisions"). The Trustee adopts assumptions which, taken as a whole, are intended to be sufficiently prudent for pensions and benefits already in payment to continue to be paid and for the commitments which arise from Members' accrued pension rights to be met.

The Technical Provisions assumptions include appropriate margins to allow for the possibility of events turning out worse than expected. However, the funding method and assumptions do not completely remove the risk that the Technical Provisions could be insufficient to provide benefits in the future.

A formal actuarial valuation of SAUL is carried out every three years by a professionally qualified and independent actuary. The last actuarial valuation was carried out with an effective date of 31 March 2020. Informal reviews of SAUL's position, reflecting changes in market conditions, cash flow information and new



accrual of benefits, are carried out between formal valuations.

The funding principles were agreed by the Trustee and employers in June 2021 and are due to be reviewed at SAUL's next formal valuation in 2023.

At the 31 March 2020 valuation SAUL was 94% funded on its Technical Provisions basis. However, market movements following the valuation date were positive and the Trustee and the Employers agreed to allow for post-valuation experience up to 30 April 2021. As SAUL was in surplus on its Technical Provisions basis at that date, no deficit contributions were required. However, the Trustee and the Employers have agreed that the ongoing Employers' contributions will increase from a rate of 16% of CARE Salaries to 19% of CARE salaries from 1 April 2022 and to 21% of CARE Salaries from 1 January 2023.

Accounting Policy

The ACU is a Participating Employer in SAUL. The actuarial valuation applies to SAUL as a whole and does not identify surpluses or deficits applicable to individual employers. As a whole, the market value of SAUL's assets at 31 March 2020 was £3,612 million representing 94% of the liabilities. The market value of SAUL's assets at 30 April 2021 was £4,369 million representing 109% of the estimated liabilities.

It is not possible to identify an individual Employer's share of the underlying assets and liabilities of SAUL. The ACU accounts for its participation in SAUL as if it were a defined contribution scheme and pension costs are based on the amounts actually paid (i.e. cash amounts) in accordance with paragraphs 28.11 of FRS 102.

As there was a Technical Provisions deficit at 31 March 2020, allowing for post valuation experience to 30 April 2021, SAUL had a Technical Provisions surplus. Therefore, no deficit contributions were required following the 2020 valuation and there is no defined benefit liability (i.e. the present value of any deficit contributions due to SAUL) to be recognised by ACU.

See note 20 for more details.

(m) Foreign currencies

Transactions are translated on the date of transaction and balances on the year end date with any gain or loss taken to finance support costs.

(n) Going Concern

The ACU meets its ordinary working capital requirements through its cash held in the bank. The Senior Executive Team (SET) prepare 3 year budgets and annual forecasts in order to ensure sufficient cash balance to meet medium term requirements.

Based on ACU's 3 year budgets, reserve levels, cashflow and investment levels, the SET believe it appropriate to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.



2. Grants and donations received

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Grants from UK Government		
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – CIRCLE	146	187
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – PEBL SPHEIR Project	308	518
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – Digital Africa	-	39
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office – COP26	43	149
	497	893
Grants from other Agencies		
Australian Government - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	259	-
European Commission – L4F	27	50
Other	8	20
	294	70
Legacies and Grants from charitable foundations		
Marshall Sherfield Fellowship Foundation	32	25
F&P Turner Endowment	100	-
	132	25
Donations		
Other	-	5
	-	5
	923	993

3. External administration fees

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Chevening Scholarships	4,030	4,058
Commonwealth Scholarship award schemes	2,436	2,243
Marshall Scholarship scheme	237	240
Staff & Educational Development Association	108	128
Turing Scheme	422	-
Other schemes	24	23
	7,257	6,692

4. Investment income and interest

	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	Total 2022 £'000	Total 2021 £'000
Investment income	402	561	963	936
Bank interest	1	-	1	0
	403	561	964	936



5. Analysis of total resources expended

	Staff costs £'000	Grants Paid £'000	Direct Costs £'000	Support costs £'000	Total £'000
Charitable activities:					
Project grants	294	49	556	-	899
Membership services	617	17	350	829	1,813
Scholarships, grants and awards	127	706	61	-	894
External and fund administration	4,468	6	893	2,783	8,150
Fundraising activities:					
Investment management costs	-	-	283	-	283
	5,506	778	2,143	3,612	12,039

Support Costs

	Membership Services £'000	External and fund admin £'000	Total £'000
Staff Costs	437	1,468	1,905
Consultants	96	324	420
Office and Facilities	188	630	818
IT	89	299	388
Governance	5	15	20
Other	14	47	61
	829	2,783	3,612

Where appropriate direct expenditure, including staff costs, has been allocated to the above activities. Support costs which could not be directly allocated, have instead been allocated on the following bases:

- Membership services: basis of staff engaged on activity
- External and fund administration: basis of staff engaged on activity
- Scholarships, grants and awards: direct allocation based on staff engaged on activity

Net incoming resources for the year are stated after charging:

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Audit fees – ACU	17	16
Audit fees – ACU Trading Ltd	3	3
Other non-audit work	4	0
Council Meetings	0	0
Depreciation and amortisation	238	281



6. Staff costs

(a) Staff costs

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Wages and salaries	5,417	5,439
Social security costs	631	567
Pension costs	669	635
Agency staff	520	166
Recruitment	176	64
Training and welfare	122	81
	7,535	6,952

Realigning the ACU's staff structure to meet the requirements of the Road to 2030 strategy has resulted in termination payments funded from Designated Funds. All off the £116k (2021: £110k) expensed in the year has been paid.

The Senior Executive Team (SET) are regarded as the Charity's key management personnel. The total earnings, including benefits, employer pension and employer NI contributions received by SET members totalled £460k (2021: £453k).

The number of employees whose total earnings in the year (including benefits and termination payments but, excluding employer pension contributions) fell into the bands below were:

	2022* Number	2021 Number
£60,001 to £70,000	2	3
£70,001 to £80,000	-	-
£80,001 to £90,000	1	1
£90,001 to £100,000	1	
£100,001 to £110,000	2	2
£110,001 to £120,000	-	1
£140,001 to £150,000	1	1
	7	8

* Includes 1 members who received termination payments

Of the above higher paid employees, 4 (2021: 3) were accruing benefit during the year, and 3 at the end of the year, in respect of membership of a defined benefit pension scheme.

The average headcount during the year was 130 (2021: 133).

(b) Trustees remuneration and expenses

No Trustee received any remuneration in the year (2021: £nil). No Trustees, or their institutions, were reimbursed for travel expenses incurred during the year (2021: £nil).



7. Group and Charity Assets

In 2019-20 the majority of the computer software assets were under construction and included in Tangible Assets. On completion these assets have been transferred to Intangible Assets.

a) Intangible Assets

	Computer software £'000
Cost	
At 31 July 2021	668
At 31 July 2022	<u>668</u>
Amortisation	
At 31 July 2021	372
Charge for year	<u>148</u>
At 31 July 2022	<u>520</u>
Net book value	
At 31 July 2022	148
At 31 July 2021	296

b) Tangible Assets

	Computer equipment £'000	Office Re- configuration £'000	Total £'000
Cost			
At 31 July 2021	131	787	918
At 31 July 2022	<u>131</u>	<u>787</u>	<u>918</u>
Depreciation			
At 31 July 2021	129	401	530
Charge for year	<u>2</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>89</u>
At 31 July 2022	<u>131</u>	<u>488</u>	<u>619</u>
Net book value			
At 31 July 2022	-	299	299
At 31 July 2021	2	386	388

At 31 July 2022 there were no capital commitments.



8. Group Investments

a) Movements in quoted investments

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted & Endowment funds	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Market value, 1 August	9,379	8,971	26,040	22,501
Disposals at opening market value	(1,000)	(1,000)	-	(21)
Unrealised (losses) / gains on revaluation	(143)	1,408	(341)	3,560
Market value, 31 July	8,236	9,379	25,699	26,040
Cost, 31 July	6,371	7,154	11,250	11,250

b) Analysis by type

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total 2022	Total 2021
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Quoted investments	8,236	340	25,359	33,935	35,419
Cash held for investment purposes	-	-	-	-	-
	8,236	340	25,359	33,935	35,419

9. Debtors and prepayments

	Group		Charity	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Trade debtors	432	864	432	864
Sundry debtors	9	20	6	19
Accrued Income	15	-	15	-
Prepayments	135	108	135	108
	591	992	588	991



10. Creditors: amounts payable within one year

	Group		Charity	
	2022 £'000	2021 £'000	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Trade creditors	174	246	167	235
Deferred income	1,476	1,755	1,476	1,755
Income Tax and NI contributions	168	153	35	35
Value Added Tax	280	417	280	417
Sundry creditors	58	58	8	12
Accruals	268	407	134	273
Amounts due to ACU Trading Limited	-	-	211	44
	2,424	3,036	2,311	2,771

Deferred income

	Opening Balance £'000	Released in year £'000	Deferred in year £'000	Closing Balance £'000
Membership Income	8	(8)	7	7
DFAT	1,083	(259)	-	824
External administration fee	643	(643)	611	611
Other	21	(21)	34	34
	1,755	(931)	652	1,476

11. Designated and General Funds

2022	Brought Forward £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains £'000	Transfers £'000	Carried forward £'000
ACU office	386	-	(87)	-	-	299
Road to 2030	2,408	-	(1,167)	-	610	1,851
Designated Funds	2,794	-	(1,254)	-	610	2,150
General Funds	6,669	8,957	(8,879)	(143)	(610)	5,994
	9,463	8,957	(10,133)	(143)	-	8,144

Council approved a further transfer of £0.6m from General Funds to Designated Funds to support a minor office refurbishment and an innovation fund to support the Business Development Team.



2021	Brought Forward £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains £'000	Transfers £'000	Carried forward £'000
ACU office	463	-	(77)	-	-	386
Road to 2020	65	-	(65)	-	-	-
Road to 2030	1,870	-	(662)	-	1,200	2,408
Designated Funds	2,398	-	(804)	-	1,200	2,794
General Funds	6,411	8,356	(8,306)	1,408	(1,200)	6,669
	8,809	8,356	(9,110)	1,408	-	9,463

12. Endowment funds

2022	Opening funds £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing funds £'000
Permanent endowments					
CSFP Anniversary	10,884	-	-	(108)	10,776
ACU	6,028	-	-	(85)	5,943
Edward Boyle	152	-	-	(2)	150
Annenberg Foundation	749	-	-	(10)	739
	17,813	-	-	(205)	17,608
Expendable endowments					
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	6,228	-	-	(79)	6,149
Marshall Sherfield	1,017	-	-	(15)	1,002
F&P Turner	623	100	(100)	(8)	615
	7,868	100	(100)	(102)	7,766
Total endowments	25,681	100	(100)	(307)	25,374

The CSFP Anniversary and the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships endowments enable people from around the Commonwealth to study in low and middle income countries at ACU member institutions. The F&P Turner endowment is a legacy grant with no restrictions. Together, the three funds support the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship awards.



The ACU Endowment funds ACU Development Fellowships.

Income from the Edward Boyle (Memorial) Endowment funds the Medical Elective Bursaries for UK students.

The Annenberg Endowment funds Marshall scholarships, its income being transferred to the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission.

The Marshall Sherfield Endowment funds post-doctoral fellowships for US students. Funds are drawn down from the Endowment as required, up to a maximum of 5% of the original investment per year and are supplemented by grants from the Marshall Sherfield Fellowship Foundation in the US.

2021	Opening funds £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains on investments £'000	Closing funds £'000
Permanent endowments				
CSFP Anniversary endowment	9,434	(13)	1,463	10,884
ACU endowment	5,174	-	854	6,028
Edward Boyle endowment	130	-	22	152
Annenberg Foundation endowment	643	-	106	749
	15,381	(13)	2,445	17,813
Expendable endowments				
Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships endowment	5,392	-	836	6,228
Marshall Sherfield endowment	873	-	144	1,017
F&P Turner Endowment	539	-	84	623
	6,804	-	1,064	7,868
Total endowments	22,185	(13)	3,509	25,681



13. Restricted Funds

2022

	Opening Balance £'000	Total Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Gains on investment £'000	Closing Balance £'000
ACU Development Fellowships ¹	290	242	(281)	-	251
CSFP Anniversary Fund ¹	161	151	(383)	(35)	(106)
Queen Elizabeth CSR ¹	-	83	(83)	-	-
F&P Turner ¹	16	8	(8)	-	16
Marshall Sherfield Fellowships ¹	76	72	(51)	-	97
Annenberg ¹	7	30	(34)	-	3
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives) ¹	8	6	(2)	-	12
HW Paxton Legacy	94	-	-	-	94
Symons Medal	7	-	-	-	7
Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement ²	9	146	(151)	-	4
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (East Africa) ³	(118)	309	(191)	-	-
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning (West Africa) ³	-	259	(341)	-	(82)
Waitrose & Partners - Blue Charter Marine Plastic ⁴	33	-	(33)	-	-
LEAP ⁵	23	27	(59)	-	(9)
Digital Africa - British Council	(17)	-	17	-	-
Climate Cohort - COP26 ⁶	93	43	(140)	-	(4)
Commonwealth Futures – British Council	5	-	-	-	5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	1	-	-	-	1
	688	1,376	(1,740)	(35)	289

1: See note 15 for explanation of purpose of fund.

2: Seeks to address the shortfall in the proportion of climate change research currently produced by African scientists.

3: Designed to address the critical academic staff shortages many universities are currently facing. It will enable universities to share scarce teaching resources through quality assured, credit-bearing degree courses, delivered through blended learning. Government Funded: East Africa – UK; West Africa – Australia.

4: Aims to map the current status of research into marine plastics pollution across Commonwealth universities and funds fellowships to support research and innovation in the area of marine plastics pollution.

5: Support implementation of EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership on (1) Food and Nutrition Security & Sustainable Agriculture; (2) Renewable Energy

6: Commonwealth Futures Climate Research Cohort - work towards solutions for climate-vulnerable regions through developing skills in research leadership, international collaboration, and translating research into action.

Funds with negative balance: costs are reimbursed by the funder in arrears.



2021	Opening Balance	Total Income	Expenditure	Gains on investment	Transfer between funds	Closing Balance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000
ACU Development Fellowships ¹	228	233	(171)	-		290
CSFP Anniversary Fund ¹	169	142	(430)	51	229	161
Queen Elizabeth CSR ¹	180	78	(29)	-	(229)	-
F&P Turner	11	8	(3)	-		16
Marshall Sherfield Fellowships ¹	67	64	(55)	-		76
Annenberg ¹	11	28	(32)	-		7
Edward Boyle (Medical Electives) ¹	6	6	(4)	-		8
HW Paxton Legacy	94	-	-	-		94
Symons Medal	7	-	-	-		7
Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement ²	(1)	187	(177)	-		9
Partnership for Enhanced & Blended Learning ³	(103)	518	(533)	-		(118)
Waitrose & Partners - Blue Charter Marine Plastic ⁴	180	-	(147)	-		33
LEAP ⁵	7	61	(45)	-		23
Digital Africa - British Council	-	39	(56)	-		(17)
Climate Cohort - COP26 ⁶	-	149	(56)	-		93
Africa-UK Physics	12	-	(12)	-		-
Commonwealth Futures – British Council	13	-	(8)	-		5
Mzuzu University, Malawi	5	-	(4)	-		1
	886	1,513	(1,762)	51	-	688

Funds with negative balance: costs are reimbursed by the funder in arrears.



14. Analysis of Group assets between Funds

2022	Pension and other liability £'000	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Net current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment Fund	-	-	25,359	15	25,374
Restricted Fund	-	-	340	(51)	289
Unrestricted Designated Fund	-	534	-	1,616	2,150
Unrestricted General Fund	(369)	2	8,236	(1,875)	5,994
	(369)	536	33,935	(295)	33,807

2021	Pension and other liability £'000	Fixed assets £'000	Investments £'000	Net current assets / (liabilities) £'000	Total £'000
Endowment funds	-	-	25,700	(19)	25,681
Restricted funds	-	-	340	348	688
Unrestricted Designated Fund	-	682	-	2,112	2,794
Unrestricted General funds	(435)	2	9,379	(2,277)	6,669
	(435)	684	35,419	164	35,832

15. Grants, awards and scholarships awarded from Endowments

	£'000	Awards
CSFP Anniversary Fund	481	69
ACU Development Fellowships	160	74
Marshall Sherfield Fellowship Scheme	40	1
Funded by Endowments	681	144
Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement	19	18
Funded by Restricted Funds	19	18
	700	162

Grants are paid to individuals and the higher education institutions to which they are connected. As at 31 July 2022, ACU had grant commitments of £620k, payable over the next 2 years (2021: £184k).



16. Administration of External Funds

The ACU runs a number of schemes for which it receives a management fee (Note 3). The table below shows the bank balances and the value of transactions processed by ACU.

	Opening bank balance £'000	Incoming Resources £'000	Resources Expended £'000	Closing bank balance £'000
Chevening Scholarship Scheme	2,594	59,155	(60,057)	1,692
Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme	1,552	28,525	(28,347)	1,730
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission	1,693	2,550	(3,234)	1,009
Staff and Educational Development Association	231	289	(287)	233
Heads of Educational Development Group	4	24	(8)	20
Total Third Party Funds	6,074	90,543	(91,933)	4,684

17. Future financial commitments

At 31 July 2022 the ACU had commitments under operating leases as set out below:

	2022 Land and buildings £'000	2022 Office equipment £'000	2021 Land and buildings £'000	2021 Office equipment £'000
Within one year	340	2	340	2
After one year but within five years	821	-	1,161	-
Charged to SOFA during the year	340	2	340	2

18. ACU Trading Ltd

ACU Trading Limited (ACUT) is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACU and its results for the period ended 31 July 2022 have been consolidated into Group Financial Statements of ACU. The principal activity of ACUT is the provision of staff services to the ACU. The results of ACUT for the period ended 31 July 2021 are as follows:

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000		2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Turnover	5,332	4,990	Debtors	3	1
Cost of sales	5,009	4,813	Cash at bank	110	264
Gross Profit	323	177	Current assets	113	265
Administration	323	177	Creditors	113	265
Net profit	-	-	Total Net assets	-	-
Net assets	-	-	Reserves	-	-



19. Related Parties

	2022 £'000	2021 £'000
Balances owed to ACU Trading Ltd	211	43
Payable to ACU Trading Ltd for services	5,332	4,990
Receivable from ACU Trading Ltd for services	178	144

20. Pension Commitments

(a) Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS)

The total cost charged to the profit and loss account is £252k (2021: £280k)

Deficit recovery contributions due within one year for the institution are £56K (2021: £66K).

The latest available complete actuarial valuation of the Retirement Income Builder is as at 31 March 2020 (the valuation date), and was carried out using the projected unit method.

Since the institution cannot identify its share of USS Retirement Income Builder (defined benefit) assets and liabilities, the following disclosures reflect those relevant for those assets and liabilities as a whole.

The 2020 valuation was the sixth valuation for the scheme under the scheme-specific funding regime introduced by the Pensions Act 2004, which requires schemes to have sufficient and appropriate assets to cover their technical provisions. At the valuation date, the value of the assets of the scheme was £66.5 billion and the value of the scheme's technical provisions was £80.6 billion indicating a shortfall of £14.1 billion and a funding ratio of 83%.

The key financial assumptions used in the 2020 valuation are described below. More detail is set out in the Statement of Funding Principles (uss.co.uk/about-us/valuation-and-funding/statement-of-funding-principles).

CPI assumption	Term dependent rates in line with the difference between the Fixed Interest and Index Linked yield curves less: 1.1% p.a. to 2030, reducing linearly by 0.1% p.a. to a long-term difference of 0.1% p.a. from 2040
Pension increases (subject to a floor of 0%)	CPI assumption plus 0.05%
Discount rate (forward rates)	Fixed interest gilt yield curve plus: Pre-retirement: 2.75% p.a. Post retirement: 1.00% p.a.

The main demographic assumptions used relate to the mortality assumptions. These assumptions are based on analysis of the scheme's experience carried out as part of the 2020 actuarial valuation. The mortality assumptions used in these figures are as follows:

	2020 valuation
Mortality base table	101% of S2PMA "light" for males and 95% of S3PFA for females
Future improvements to mortality	CMI 2019 with a smoothing parameter of 7.5, an initial addition of 0.5% p.a. and a long-term improvement rate of 1.8% pa for males and 1.6% pa for females



The current life expectancies on retirement at age 65 are:

	2022	2021
Males currently aged 65 (years)	23.9	24.7
Females currently aged 65 (years)	25.5	26.1
Males currently aged 45 (years)	25.9	26.7
Females currently aged 45 (years)	27.3	27.9

A new deficit recovery plan was put in place as part of the 2020 valuation, which requires payment of 6.2% of salaries over the period 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024, at which point the rate will increase to 6.3%. The 2022 deficit recovery liability reflects this plan. The liability figures have been produced using the following assumptions:

	2022	2021
Discount rate	3.31%	0.87%
Pensionable salary growth	2.00%	2.00%

(b) Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL)

The ACU participates in the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London, a centralised defined benefit scheme for all qualified employees with the assets held in separate Trustee-administered funds.

The total SAUL pension cost charged to the Statement of Financial Activities is £6K (2021: £10K). This includes nil (2021: nil) outstanding contributions at the balance sheet date, and £nil deficit contributions (2021: nil).

21. Legacies

In 2018/19 the ACU has received £500k from the Frances Elizabeth Turner legacy and this has been invested with Newtons. In 2021/22 a further £100k was received. Income from this legacy will be used to fund scholarships along with the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarship and CSFP Anniversary Scholarships. As at July 2022 a further £76k is expected on closure of the Estate Accounts.



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