

70th year STEM  
scholarships for women

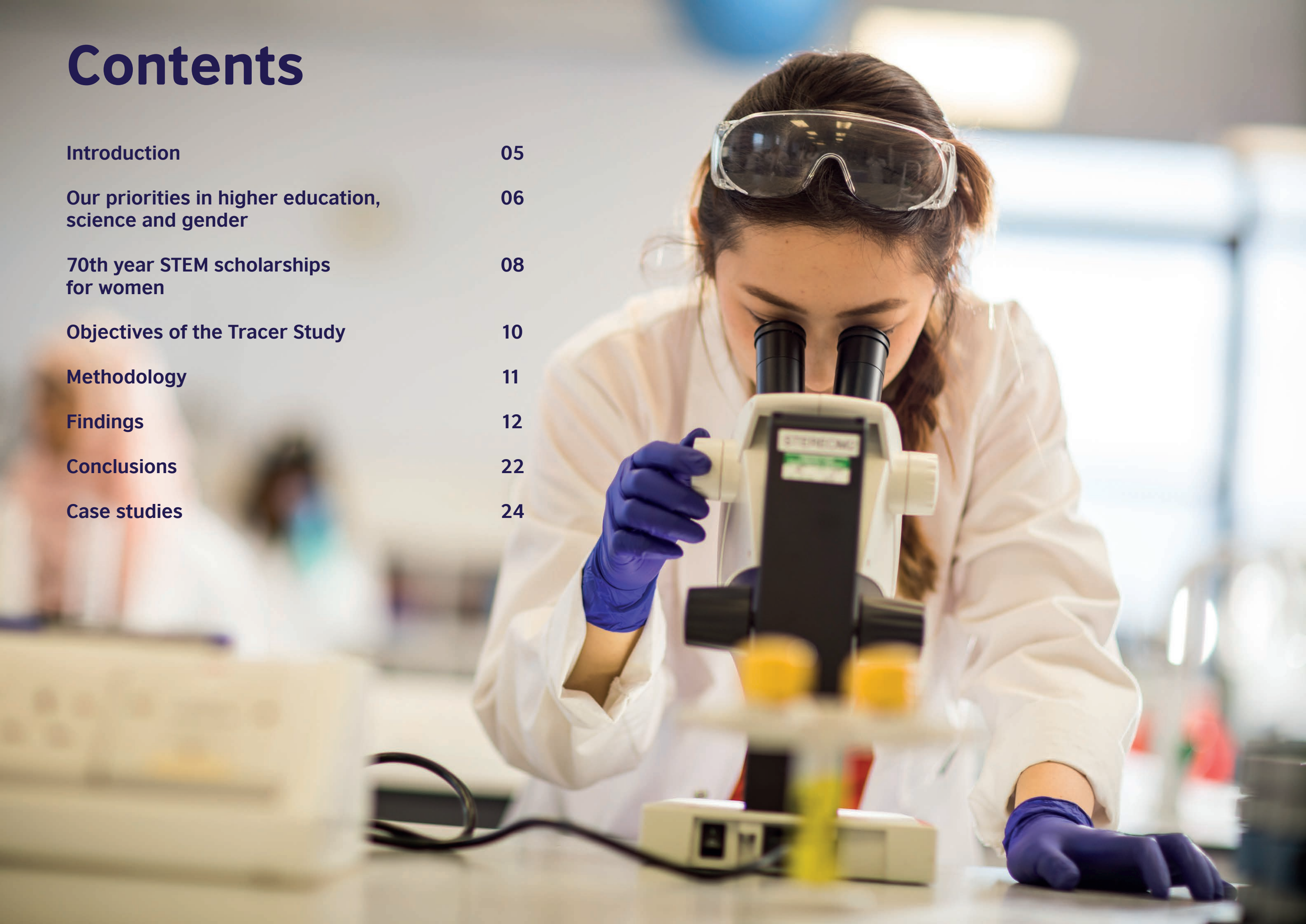
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# Tracer Study Report



# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction  | 05 |
| Our priorities in higher education,<br>science and gender | 06 |
| 70th year STEM scholarships<br>for women                  | 08 |
| Objectives of the Tracer Study                            | 10 |
| Methodology   | 11 |
| Findings  | 12 |
| Conclusions   | 22 |
| Case studies  | 24 |







# Introduction

The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report, in the past six years from 2013-14 to 2017-18, shows an increasing trend of female participation in higher education. Women's enrolment in higher education, has risen to 48.6 per cent in 2018-19. The total enrolment in higher education has grown considerably to 37.4 million, with 19.2 million male and 18.2 million female. Females per 100 male students have also increased significantly in central universities, deemed universities, and government-aided institutions .

However, there is not much change in the nature of courses that women are pursuing. These are gendered choices where more women are seeking admission in courses that have traditionally been considered women's forte, like M.A., M.Com., M.Sc.

(Nursing), Master of Library Science, Master of Physiotherapy, architecture, hospital administration and fashion management. Courses like business administration, law, financial management and computer administration still continue to have more men than women. At the undergraduate level, the stream where women have least representation is engineering and technology — they account for just 28.6 per cent of students .

Delving more into the issue of women in STEM education, long-standing biases and gender stereotypes are steering girls and women away from science related fields. According to data from the UN Scientific Education and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), fewer than 30 per cent of researchers worldwide are women and approximately 30 per cent of

all female students select STEM-related fields in higher education. Globally, female students' enrolment is particularly low in ICT (3 per cent), natural science, mathematics and statistics (5 per cent), and engineering, manufacturing and construction (8 per cent).



Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world

**Nelson Mandela**

Enhancing gender equality in India's higher education, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', Hindustan Times, 6 March, 2020  
 Number of women enrolling in higher education rises 1,350 per cent in 7 years, , KRITIKA SHARMA, The Print, 27 July, 2018  
<https://www.eqavet.eu/eu-quality-assurance/glossary/tracer-study>  
 the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.



# Our priorities in higher education, science and gender

As a cultural relations organisation, building trust within communities and providing opportunities to individuals, the British Council is playing a role in ensuring there is equal opportunity for growth and advancement for all. The British Council therefore places Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at the heart of its cultural relations ambitions. British Council's long-standing history, and experience of cultural relations work, and overseas engagement through offers in Arts, Education, Society and English, as well as the mutual trust and understanding, developed over 80 years of operations, in over 100 countries across the world, places it uniquely amongst other international organisations, to address the gender gap and improve the lives of women and girls across the globe. India, with its burgeoning young population, promising economic prospects and strategic importance from a soft power perspective presents an opportunity for gains to be made in advancing the gender equality agenda.

With specific reference to STEM and higher education, the British Council aims to influence the improvement and internationalisation of higher education systems. It also looks at supporting institutional partnerships, resulting in improvements in practice, teaching, learning and research in partner countries and the UK. Following a gender mainstreaming approach, it is expected that these interventions will

enable women and girls to have the awareness, skills, confidence and networks to improve their own and others' lives and contribute economically, socially and/or politically; and the partnerships and collaborations that we enter into will address problems faced by women and girls and direct progress towards gender equality.

The British Council's work in the area of gender equality is guided by a global Theory of Change that looks at five key outcome areas:

- **Increased awareness and agency of women and girls to help them make transformational changes in their lives** - British Council provides access to such information and opportunities via partners.
- **Fairer access to resources and opportunities to address the structural inequalities that hamper women and girls' empowerment.** The British Council works through institutions that can strengthen girls' and young women's opportunities and resources to gain skills, to access services, to build their leadership capacity and to claim their rights.
- **A supportive legal and policy environment that enables access to resources, services and opportunities.** British Council works directly with policy makers and also creates partnerships with the state, civil society and the private sector to

influence the policy and implementation process.

- **Changes in attitudes, beliefs and practices and discriminatory social norms to be facilitated by the spaces.** British Council offers for discussion of social norms and attitudes combined with its own recognition of the importance of agreed international conventions on human rights.
- **Dialogue, collaboration and collective action to support women's awareness, confidence and ability to change and improve their own lives.** This includes both working with women and women's organisations and influencing and building alliances with other stakeholders from government, the private sector, and civil society.





# 70th year STEM scholarships for women

*SDG 4, Target 4b: By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.*

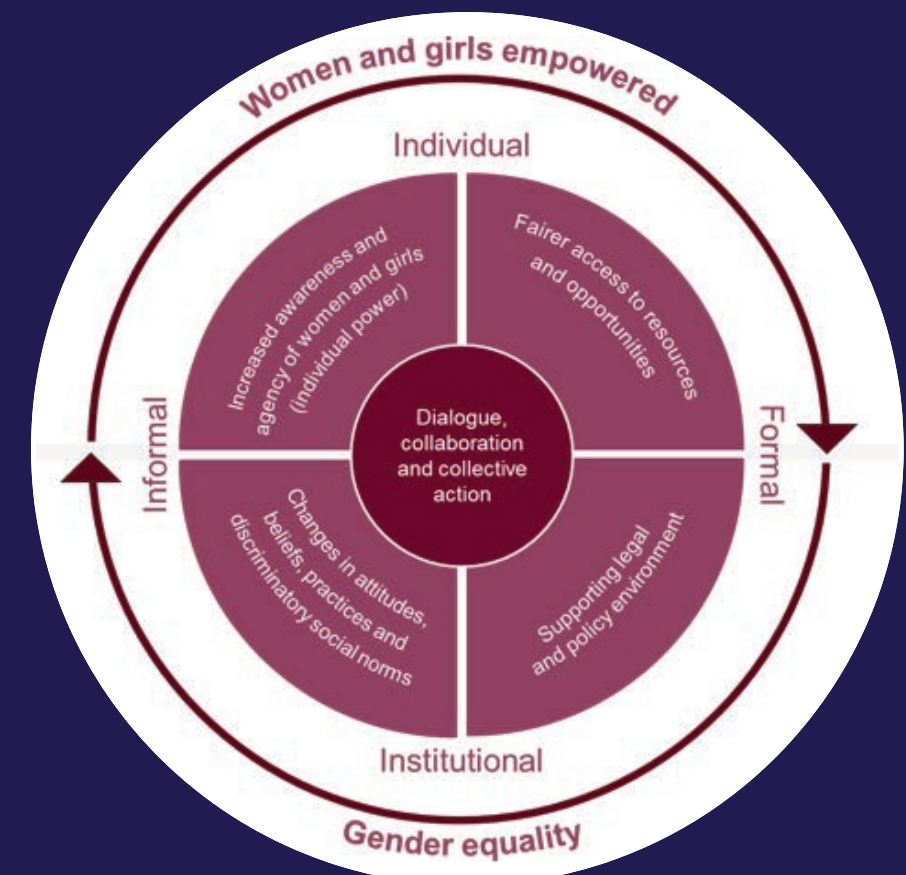
Scholarship programmes can play a vital role in providing opportunities for young people and adults who would otherwise not be able to afford to continue their education. Where developed countries offer scholarships to students from developing countries, these should be structured to build the capability of the developing countries. While the importance of scholarships is recognized, donor countries are encouraged to increase other forms of support to education. In line with the SDG 4 - Education 2030 focus on equity, inclusion and quality, scholarships should be transparently targeted at young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.



As part of its 70th anniversary in India, British Council funded **103 full tuition scholarships for Indian women to study a Master's programme in STEM subjects in the UK** for the academic year 2018-2019, **across 43 UK higher education institutions**. The success of this programme led to a second cohort of women being supported with the scholarship in 2019-2020, **bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 166**.

The investment in women scholars, supports **Prime Minister Modi's shift to women-led development**, the British Council's own focus on women and girls and Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5. It is also part of the organisation's drive to partner the economic growth and knowledge ambitions of States across India.

This initiative aligns with the British Council's global Theory of Change for women and girls with reference to **'fairer access to resources and opportunities'**. Under this, the British Council works through institutions that can strengthen girls and young women's opportunities and resources to gain skills, to access services, to build their leadership capacity and to claim their rights.



# Objectives of the Tracer Study

To understand the impact of the scholarship on the lives of the women scholars, British Council conducted a tracer study between May – August 2020. A tracer study or graduate survey is a survey (in written or oral form) of graduates from education institutions, which takes place some time after graduation or the end of the training. The subjects of a tracer study can be manifold, but common topics include questions on study progress, the transition to work, work entrance, job career, use of learned competencies, current occupation and bonds to the education institution (school, centre, university).

**The study was carried out with the scholars from the first cohort who went to the UK in 2018-2019. The study did not cover the second cohort of scholars.**

**To map the trajectory of education attained by the women scholars**

**To understand how the scholarship has impacted their lives in terms of economic status/employment**

**To understand whether the scholarship has impacted their access to social and professional networks.**

**To understand if/how this experience has given them increased voice and agency.**

# Methodology

The study focussed on recipients of the scholarship from cohort 1 (2018-2019) who have now completed their one year of study in the UK and moved on to other opportunities.

As a first step, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with five scholars from cohort 1, representing different universities where they had studied. The FGD formed a dip stick assessment of broad areas of enquiry, and included questions and probes around the objectives stated above.

Based on the feedback from the FGD, a more detailed survey questionnaire was developed centred around the study objectives mentioned above. These were circulated to the 103 scholars of cohort 1 via email and also posted on the scholarship page on Facebook.

The findings from the survey were reviewed and analysed and formed the basis for the study report.

In addition to the survey, three personal interviews were conducted with scholars from cohort 1.

## Sample size

The survey was shared with all 103 women scholars who were part of cohort 1. The focus group discussion covered five scholars. 55 scholars from cohort 1 responded to the survey and personal interviews were conducted with three scholars.

## Administration

The entire data collection for the tracer study was conducted virtually. The focus group discussion and personal interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and the survey was administered online on MS Forms. It was sent out to the scholars via email and Facebook with regular follow up over three weeks to ensure a good response rate.





# Findings

## Overview

The overall findings from this tracer study indicate an overwhelmingly positive experience and feedback from the recipients of the scholarship. The main areas of positive experience are:

- The highest value was experienced in the area of international education and being able to live and study in the UK.
- **Academic quality** was the next highest scoring area of **positive experience**.
- The only area that received a relatively lower score pertained to living in UK as a student was based on social experience of access to extra-curricular activities, which was rated 7.73 out of 10
- When asked to describe their experience in the UK in three words, it was seen that **91 per cent words used were positive words**, 9 per cent were neutral and zero negative. **'Life Changing'** was the most frequently occurring word, with Life appearing 14 times and **'Changing'** appearing 10 times. **'Challenging and Exciting'** were two other more frequently used words at eight and seven times respectively.

When asked to describe their experience in the UK in three words, it was seen that **91% words used were positive.**



## 9.18 out of 10

rated being independent and self-reliant.



## 9 out of 10

experience of safety.



## 8.67 out of 10

Social experience with other international and home students.



## 8.15 out of 10

Course load and academic experience.



## 8.25 out of 10

Teaching techniques, classroom experience and interactions.

# Detailed findings

## Objective 1: To map the trajectory of education attained by the women scholars.

Intersectionality<sup>[4]</sup> is an important consideration while addressing gender equality. Women and girls’ access to educational opportunities is often defined not just by their gender, but also by intersectionalities of caste/class, religion, disability, geography etc. which determine the extent of ease or difficulty in navigating social systems and institutions, accessing resources, and exerting personal power or agency within these systems.

Through this objective, the study sought to understand how far the scholars have travelled in their educational journey, before and after the year of study in the UK, taking into account their geographical location, linguistic profile and place of last study. From this we learned the following:

- While there was a diversity of representation in terms of the cities where the scholars had acquired their last education, a greater representation was seen from Tier 1 and metro cities:

65%

Respondents were from Tier 1 / metro cities like Ahmedabad, Bangalore Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Pune.

12%

Respondents were from Tier 3 cities like Kottayam, Neemrana, Panjim, Pithapuram, Roorkee and Siddhpur.

23%

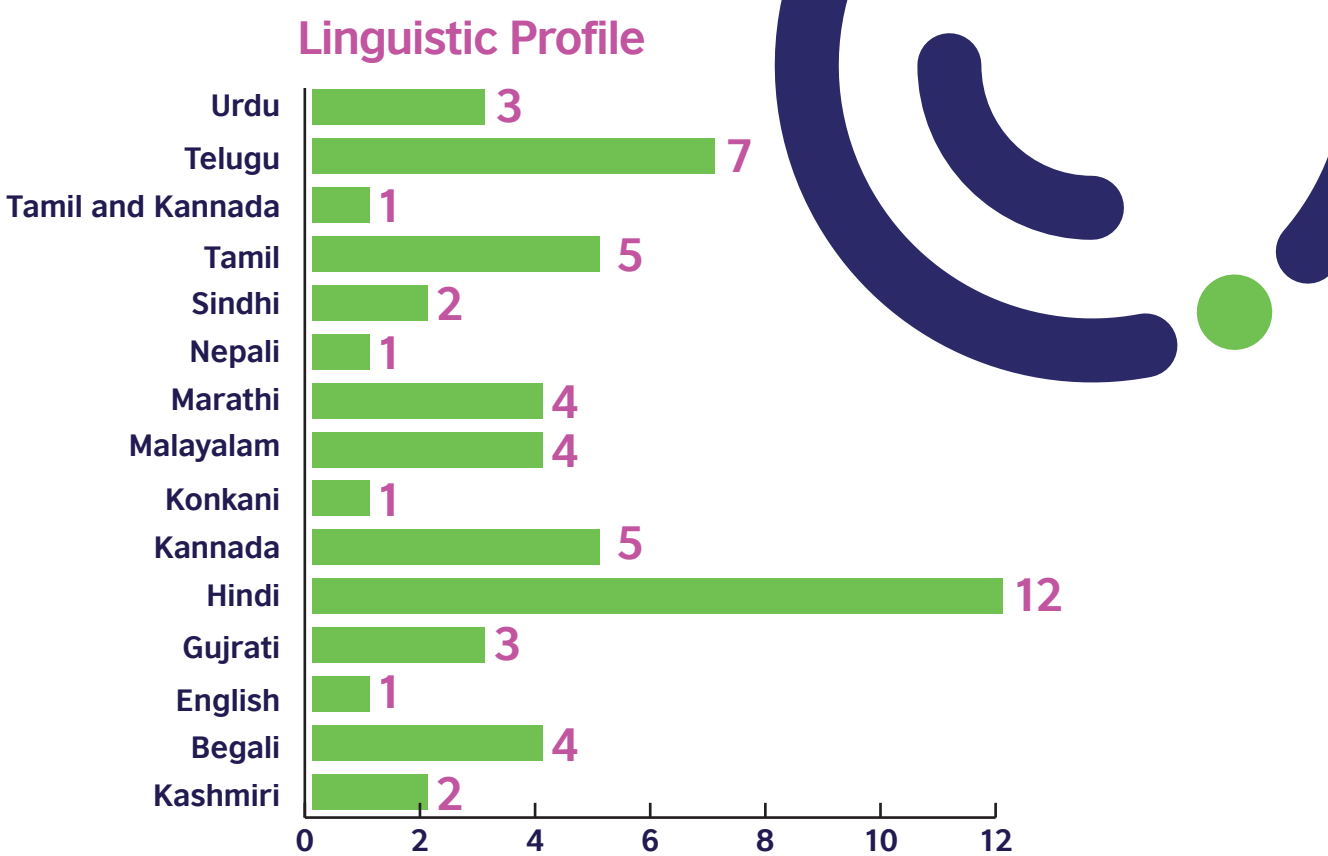
Respondents were from Tier 2 cities like Allahabad, Belgaum, Coimbatore, Faridabad, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli and Varanasi.

55%

Respondents had acquired their last education from colleges and universities that ranked among the top 100 in the NIRF 2020 overall ranking.

- The linguistic profile of respondents is quite diverse, representing 15 different Indian languages.
- All respondents were below the age of 30 years.
- The following table 1 details where the scholars are currently located and what they are currently doing.

[4] The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.



| Table 1: Current Location |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Country                   | Number |
| India                     | 34     |
| United Kingdom            | 16     |
| Czech Republic            | 1      |
| Germany                   | 1      |
| Qatar                     | 1      |
| Scotland                  | 1      |
| Singapore                 | 1      |
| Total                     | 55     |

| Table 2: Current status |       |    |
|-------------------------|-------|----|
| Current status          | India | UK |
| Looking for job         | 20    | 3  |
| Planning to study       | 6     | 2  |
| Studying                | 1     | 4  |
| Working                 | 7     | 7  |
| Total                   | 34    | 16 |



## Objective 2: To understand how the scholarship has impacted their lives in terms of economic status/employment

The road to women's economic empowerment starts by ensuring access to quality education for girls. Better educated women not only secure brighter futures for themselves, they can lift entire households out of poverty. A multitude of factors can prevent girls from acquiring quality education which in turn requires a multi-pronged approach. One approach is of creating access through conditional cash transfers, stipends or scholarships [5].

Through this objective, the study aimed to understand how the scholarship has impacted the lives of the respondents in terms of their economic/employment status. It looked at what the scholars are doing post the completion of their year of study and also at the starting point of their educational journey in terms of their economic profile.

- Based on the responses, it is seen that the scholarship has enabled respondents to acquire qualifications that could help move their careers on an upward path:

Over **90%** of respondents said that the scholarship had helped improve their future education and employment prospects.

**33%** said that, the scholarship had enabled them to pursue higher studies which they are doing now **7%** said that this opportunity had enabled them to get the job which they have now.

**18%** said that they would have applied for other scholarships if they had not received this one.

Only **6%** said that their life would not have been any different than it is now.

About **18%** reported having dependents and still opting to go for higher education in the UK.

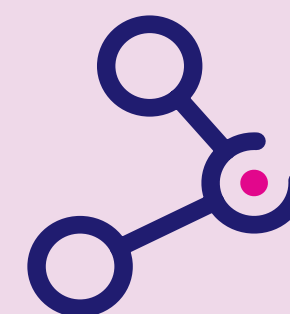
- Nearly 59 per cent of those who have returned to India are looking for jobs. This situation could be a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, of those who are still in the UK, nearly 44 per cent are working.
- A significant number of respondents belonged to middle and lower middle class in terms of financial status.



### Improvement in education and employment

**55% strongly agree**

**38% agree**



### Built strong personal networks

**46% strongly agree**

**52% agree**

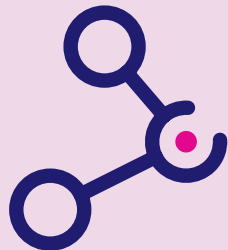
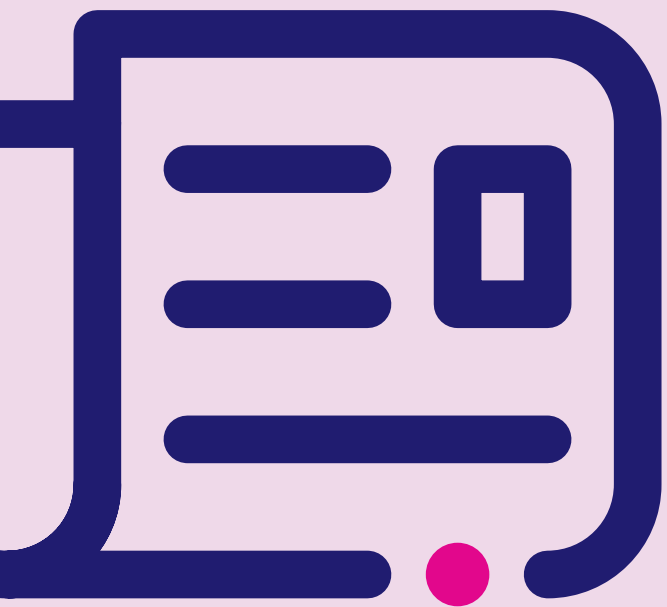


Objective 3: Impact on access to ‘social and professional networks’

Networking is essential, for getting things done in day-to-day jobs and for longer-term career progression. Networks give exposure to new ideas, provide the information and support required to give life to the ideas, expand influence, and access to opportunities. Among the different types of networks, operational networks help manage current internal responsibilities, personal networks boost professional development, and strategic networks help focus on new business directions and the stakeholders required to pursue them. However, women are often challenged by inadequate access to networks that can become barriers to their career advancement [6].

Based on the following responses, it may be surmised that the scholarship has enabled respondents to increase their personal and professional networks. At the same time, the responses seem to indicate that the scholars fared better at building personal networks as compared to professional ones.

Recognising the value of networks, an overwhelming majority of the respondents expressed their willingness to be part of an alumni community. They felt that being part of alumni networks would benefit them in several ways as follows:

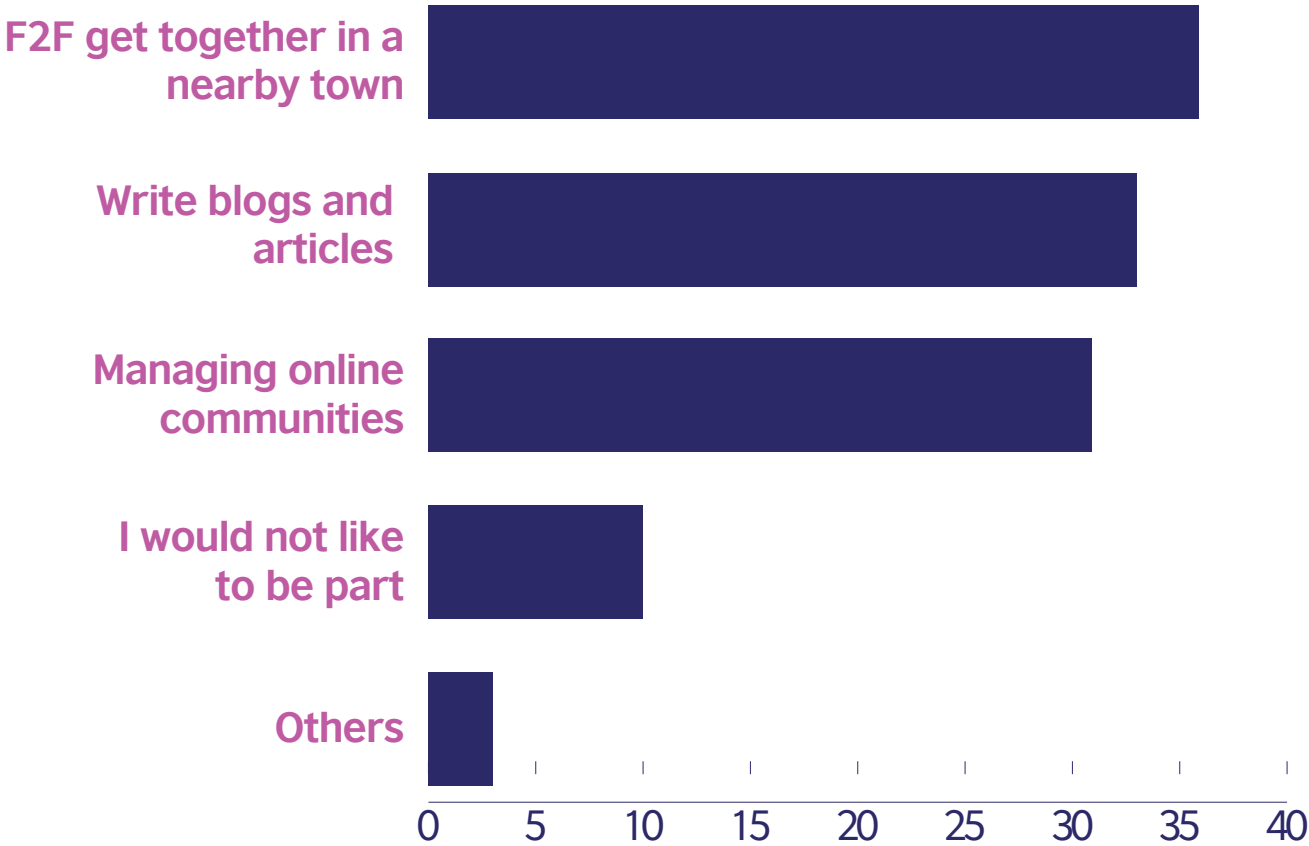


**Built strong professional networks in the UK and other countries**

**31% strongly agree**  
**53% agree**

In terms of the nature of involvement, respondents replied as follows:

How would you like to be involved in alumni community



[6] <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/04/why-strategic-networking-is-harder-for-women/>  
Why strategic networking is harder for women



**Objective 4: To understand if / how this experience has given them increased voice and agency**

Enabling women to have increased voice and agency is one of the five key outcome areas for the British Council in its global Theory of Change for women and girls. In order to be able to make transformational changes in their lives and achieve their capabilities, women and girls need to increase their knowledge, individual capabilities, sense of entitlement, self-esteem and self-belief. In addition to the stated goals and objectives, the scholarship programme also aimed to support women to access relevant knowledge and informational resources that would enable them to strengthen their self-confidence and promote agency in different spheres.

Based on the responses in this study, it may be concluded that the scholarship was successful in bringing about transformational change in the lives of the women scholars.



“It's made me more confident and has given me clarity in how I want to shape my career. Additionally, it's allowed me to try new paths as well.

**Bhavana Wuppulur**



# Conclusions

- The 70th anniversary STEM scholarship programme is clearly aligned to: SDG 4 on quality education in general and target 4.b on the provision of scholarships for higher education in particular.
- The programme will strengthen British Council's strategic priorities on education, youth and skills with regard to high-quality education, empowered people and strong and inclusive communities, while being rooted in our global Theory of Change outcome on 'fairer access to resources and opportunities'.
- All the findings point indicate that the 70th anniversary STEM scholarships programme is gender transformative, addressing strategic gender interests and challenging gender stereotypes with regard to women in STEM fields.
- While the scholarship has undoubtedly provided the women scholars with a lifetime opportunity, there is scope to strength the programme with a greater focus on diversity and intersectionality.
- The scholarship has been successful in setting up a community of women STEM scholars. The scholars reported that they found support and guidance from the group of 166 recipients of the scholarship.
- There are a large number of scholars who are back in India and looking for jobs. While this could be a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which has resulted in a global economic slowdown, it could also be considered that the talent pool in India, for STEM, has been enhanced. Potentially, these scholars can become ambassadors, spokespersons and champions for the cause of women in STEM.
- The overall score on social experience of access to extra-curricular activities was relatively lower at 7.76 out of 10. This could have been the result of demands of the academic course which would not have left the scholars sufficient time for extra-curricular activities

“

It's one of the best things that happened to me to seek new goals and reach heights that I haven't imagined.

**Madhurya Manjunath Mamulpet**



70th Scholarship celebration event in 2018



# Case Study - Malvika Mehta

Malvika Mehta, 25 is from Pune, Maharashtra. During her second year of Bachelors in Ayurvedic Medicine & Surgery (BAMS), she attended a course on forensic science and toxicology. The subject piqued her interest enough to make her decide to pursue it further. She applied to number of universities around the world to pursue further education in Forensic Science and at the same time also applied for different scholarships. She finally heard from the British Council and from her most preferred university of choice, Cranfield University at Bedfordshire. Recalling the day when she heard from the British Council, Malvika starts to laugh. As a true forensic enthusiast, she checked the authenticity of the emails and letter received from British Council to make sure it was not spam. When it all checked out satisfactorily, her mother decided to share the news with her grandparents. So thrilled and overjoyed was her mother by the news, that *".... on the way to their house on my two-wheeler scooter, my mother screamed out, on the road, to the world at large, that I have received the scholarship and I will be going to UK to study."*

For Malvika, the timing of the scholarship was apt. She completed her course from Bharti Vidyapeeth College of Ayurveda in Pune in 2018 and in the same year went to the UK to study further. Her mother had to mortgage their house to raise funds and she had already paid the deposit for the course. The scholarship from the British Council helped ease the burden of ease significantly from INR 3,200,000 (approx. GBP 33,000) to INR 1,000,000 (approx. GBP 11,000),

which she is confident she can pay off in the next couple of years. Without the scholarship, says Malvika, *"I would have studied at a cheaper place, compromising on the choice of the University or might had to wait for another year".*

Malvika enjoyed her stay in UK and the learning curve was steep. She actively built networks with other scholarship recipients like the Chevening scholars. Friends, academics and the university also helped her build good connects. But many a times she felt lonely and missed her family and friends back home.

There were not many options to engage in extra-curricular activities in the university at as it is situated in a defence site. There were also not many options in the city either. But at the same time, she was happy with the freedom and independence she got there.

Getting a job, however, proved quite challenging. From September 2018, when she started her course, following advice of the university, started applying for jobs immediately. She said, *"I applied for 388 jobs in 13 months! There is restriction in UK and US around confidentiality and security vetting for working on forensics. Without the vetting one requires three years of residency and that comes with a job. The forensics sector in India is still evolving and so getting a job there is also not easy!"* Eventually she came back to India without a job. She did manage to get an internship at the Interpol, Singapore, but had to return to India to the global pandemic and

lockdown. She is currently working as a freelancer and has some interesting assignments and contracts in hand. She worked with the Pune police and is also designing and delivering training modules on forensics.

The experience of studying and living in UK has increased her confidence and given a greater sense of agency. On her return, there was pressure on her to get married. However, she was able to negotiate with her family and defer the matrimonial plans by couple of years until she finds the right person. She says, *"I don't think I would have been able to negotiate a delayed marriage earlier – without the exposure that I got. My outlook has changed."*

She also observes a distinct change in how people view and treat her. *"People think I'm quite intelligent. Many who want to study abroad, come to me for help in filling out scholarships. I've helped about six or seven people and I don't even know who they are!"*

At the time of writing this case study, Malvika was on her way to the southern state of Kerala, on an emergency deployment for forensic investigations surrounding the crash of Air India Express Flight IX-1344 from Dubai to Kozhikode. We wish her all success in the journey that she has begun on this road 'less travelled by'.



I have transformed myself into a better personality, I have potentially increased my knowledge and exposure to areas that would have been impossible to learn if I were in India.



# Case Study - Sarah Jabeen

Sarah Jabeen, 27, hails from the historic city of Lucknow. Raised by a single parent, she learned the value of education and self-reliance quite early in her life. After completing her education at the Awadh Girls Degree College in Lucknow, Sarah set her sights on a Master's degree outside her city. However, much to her disappointment, she was unable to secure admission anywhere, forcing her to drop that year and start working. A year later, she tried again and went on to join a two-year Master's programme in Early Childhood Development at the prestigious Jama Milia Islamia in Delhi. Sarah then returned to Lucknow and took up a job as a school counsellor. But she always dreamed of studying further.

Taking a step forward towards realising her dreams, Sarah started researching courses at universities in the US and the UK. With her mother's support and encouragement, she applied to universities in the UK. However, she was adamant that she would take up any admission offer only if she received a scholarship, or if she was able to pay for it herself. So, when she received the offer of a full scholarship from the British Council, her joy knew no bounds. She was one step closer to living her dreams.

Since that joyful day in February 2018, Sarah has gone on to study in the UK at the Bangor University. A university and course that she had carefully selected based on the quality and financial accessibility that the course offered.

The one year that Sarah spent in the UK gave her exposure to a world class education and the opportunity to experience a new and diverse culture. At the university, she worked part time

as an International Student Ambassador, supporting the university in the recruitment of international students. She interacted with students and parents, from different parts of the world, supporting them in the application process, organising welcome weeks and meet and greet events. Sarah said that this helped her develop her abilities 'to lead and to be led'.

*"When something comes to you with difficulty, you value it more. One year was a short time and I wanted to make the most of the time I had",* says Sarah. In addition to her academic load and her job as an International Student Ambassador, she was part of the dissertation committee for the School of Psychology at her university. These experiences gave her the opportunity to build her self-confidence, leadership qualities, and grow as a person.

Commenting on life at the university, Sarah said that she had made wonderful friends. *"Who would have thought that I will have friends from Ghana, Egypt and Spain? We lived together and grew very close. Our shared accommodation was our home and we were a family"*

Being a recipient of this scholarship has increased Sarah's standing among her friends and family. Though her family was always supportive of women's education, the fact that she got a full scholarship from the British Council to study in the UK, made her go up in their estimation substantially. Says she, *"I was a 'good girl', and an above average student. But I didn't stand out very much. The scholarship came as a complete surprise to everyone and they began to see the potential in me. It made people take notice of me and acknowledge the importance of nurturing and*

*encouraging girls and giving them opportunities in the right way. And it will have a positive impact on my sister, other girls in my family, and the students that I come in contact with on a daily basis".*

Sarah speaks with delight of how excited her family was when they learned that she had met the then Prime Minister Teresa May, had tea at Downing Street and visited the House of Lords. Without the scholarship, Sarah says, *"I could not have experienced all this. I would still have been in Lucknow, working as a school counsellor"*

Sarah is poised at a take-off point in her personal and professional journey. She recently got married and moved to Doha, Qatar in February 2020. Covid-19 has created a road bump in her plans to work full time. She is now working for an Australian company, providing psychological services online. Sarah again attributes her success in getting this job to the scholarship and her UK experience. *"The scholarship built my credibility. Even though I did not have a face-to-face interview while being recruited for this job, being a recipient of the scholarship and my UK qualifications helped me establish my credibility successfully."*

Even after all these wonderful experiences, Sarah sometimes succumbs to the 'imposter syndrome', a phenomenon seen among women in STEM. It is a feeling that has perfectly capable women doubting their success, simply because they are too few women to be seen in their environment. At such times, she needs a little bit of reassurance and reflection on the odds that she overcame to reach where she is today.

After this incredible experience, were there any regrets? Just one, says Sarah with a smile. *"I wish I had travelled more"*. To which we say, wherever you go, go with all your heart.



This scholarship is special. Not just because I am a recipient. But the reason why it was given at all-to encourage and empower women, made it so much more special.



# Case Study - Sivaranjani

Sivaranjani, 26, describes her experience of living and studying in the UK as 'eye opening'. Hailing from the temple town of Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, this computer science graduate from the National Institute of Technology, soaked up every opportunity to learn and experience a diverse and multicultural life in King's College, London. But what struck her most was the sense of social consciousness that she observed everywhere in the UK. From something as innocuous as garbage segregation to things like the Black Lives Movement, she was amazed at the great sense of engagement she saw among students.

University life was very challenging. In addition to her core classes, Sivaranjani also embraced the King's College cultural experience, joining a ten-week long module on theatre, dance, music, and museums, learning to do critical analysis of art and relate it to her own discipline. She even joined a class to learn Spanish and took on new hobbies like playing dungeons and dragons. Something she couldn't imagine herself doing in India. **"It was all about challenging status quo",** says she, **"doing things I have not done before, seeing and responding to new experiences."**

Getting connected to professional networks was one of her goals. Despite her hectic schedule,

Sivaranjani joined the 'women who code' network – a global network, having city chapters across the world, including India. Being part of this network enabled her to meet women in her field and seek advice and mentoring, attend events where important speakers were invited. She was particularly interested in attending their annual conference, to network with leaders from her field. Ultimately, it became the channel through which she was able to find pathways to land a job in London. Sivaranjani felt so enriched by this experience, that she has started hosting meet ups for the network herself, in the past three to four months. The purpose was to help other women looking to get a new job or switch jobs, prepare for software engineering interviews. **"Course work, especially in term three is heavy because you have to do a dissertation. As a result, you tend to procrastinate looking for jobs. I wanted to bring people together, so we can support each other as a peer group, work through any stress, prepare CVs and never lose focus."**

Sivaranjani now works as a software engineer, at a tech consultancy firm called Thought Works, in London. Having been employed in India prior to her UK education, she notes cultural differences between her past and present work culture. Says she **"there is**

**an extraordinary emphasis on work-life balance and feedback. I am constantly getting feedback from peers and superiors. So, you look at this as something you can learn from and it reduces competitiveness. Women in STEM often experience the 'imposter syndrome', a feeling that you don't deserve to be here. But the feedback helps to dispel this."**

Having been in the STEM field for some years, Sivaranjani notes that women face confidence issues, especially in the early stages of their career. **"Bringing women in STEM together was an immense value add from the British Council."**

“

Studying in the UK gave me a sense of empowerment. It made me feel that I have the power to bring change. There was a great sense of social engagement among the students which was quite infectious.



# Study team

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