

## THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIP FOR KENYA

- A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE RHODES TRUST AND THE SECOND CENTURY FOUNDER, JOHN MCCALL MACBAIN O.C.

### INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

This document is a guide to the application and selection process for the Rhodes Scholarship. Please read this carefully to make sure that you are applying to the right constituency and meet all of the eligibility criteria. You will also find important information about how to apply and what you will need to submit an application.

This information is for candidates applying to the 2027 Rhodes Scholarship through the Kenya constituency, for entry in October 2027 to the University of Oxford, in the United Kingdom.

#### Key Dates

Applications Open: 00:01 East Africa Time (EAT), Monday 01 June 2026

Applications Close: 23:59 East Africa Time (EAT), Thursday 27 August 2026

Reference Deadline: 23:59 East Africa Time (EAT), Thursday 27 August 2026

#### Am I applying to the right constituency/region?

- **What is a Rhodes constituency?** A constituency is a country, a group of countries, and/or territories, regions or states, grouped together for the purposes of administering scholarships.
- Please use the [eligibility checker](#) on our website to ensure you are applying to the correct constituency. If you meet the full eligibility criteria for more than one constituency, you should apply to the constituency that you have the greatest connection to.
- If you have strong and demonstrable connections to **two or more** Rhodes Constituencies but **do not** meet all the nationality/residency eligibility criteria for any of them, you may be eligible to apply for **inter-jurisdictional consideration**. Please visit the '[Applying for Inter-Jurisdictional Consideration](#)' page for more details as you will need to follow a slightly different process. Please note that while some eligibility criteria are waived for inter-jurisdictional candidates, this does **not** include the age, English language or academic achievement criteria.

#### Eligibility Criteria

- **Nationality/citizenship:** You must be a citizen of Kenya. Applications from refugees/asylum seekers currently residing in Kenya will also be considered in this constituency.
- **Residency:** You must have been resident in Kenya for at least five of the last ten years.
- **Age:** You must meet either of the below criteria:

i. You must be aged 18-23 on 1st October 2026 (i.e. you must have been born after 1 October 2002 and before 2 October 2008).

OR (for older candidates who completed their first undergraduate degree later than usual)

ii. You must be under the age of 27 on 1st October 2026 (i.e. have been born after 1 October 1999) AND you must also have completed your first undergraduate degree on or after 1 October 2025\*.

\* A university's policy determines the date of completion of academic requirement for a degree and this may be different from when a degree is considered awarded by the university or the date of a graduation ceremony. In ambiguous cases, the decision of the National Secretary is final.

- **Academic achievement:** You must have completed, or will have completed, an undergraduate degree (usually a Bachelor's) by July 2027, and you must have an academic background and grade that - at a minimum - meets or exceeds the specific entry requirements of your [chosen course at the University of Oxford](#).

Candidates will have a higher chance of successful admission to Oxford if they have:

- A First Class Honours Degree or equivalent, or,
- A GPA of 3.70/4.0 or higher\*

\*Once you have noted the entry requirements for your chosen course(s), you can check [international grade equivalencies here](#).

Please contact the National Secretary if you require further advice about academic requirements of the Scholarship.

- **English language proficiency:** If English is not your first language, you must check that you meet [Oxford University's English language requirements at the higher level](#).

## USEFUL LINKS

To make sure you are as prepared as possible to start your application, we advise you to read the resources on the Rhodes Trust and Oxford University Graduate Admissions webpages thoroughly. Some useful links are below:

- [An A-Z list of the graduate courses at Oxford University](#)
- [An introduction to the types of graduate degrees offered by Oxford University](#)
- [University of Oxford Graduate Admissions](#)
- [The University of Oxford's English language proficiency guidance](#)
- [The Rhodes House Website](#)
- [Our Application Overview with videos to guide you through the application process](#)
- [Courses covered by the Rhodes Scholarship \(Conditions of Tenure document\)](#)
- [Privacy policy and data protection statement](#)

## How to Apply

To apply for the Rhodes Scholarship, you must complete and submit our online application form before 23:59 East Africa Time (EAT), 27 August 2026.

There is no application fee for submission of the Rhodes Scholarship application. You must submit your application online, before the deadline, and we can't accept any other form of application.

You should apply for the Rhodes Scholarship **before** applying for your proposed course at the University of Oxford. Candidates selected for the Rhodes Scholarship are then required to apply for their chosen course via the University of Oxford's graduate application form, with support from the team at Rhodes House.

**If unsuccessful in your first application to the Rhodes Scholarships, you may subsequently re-apply only once more (and this must be in the same constituency), subject to meeting the eligibility criteria. An application submitted by the deadline will be considered one submission for the purposes of this policy. Candidates may only withdraw their application following the deadline in exceptional circumstances, such as medical emergencies, war or conflict. Withdrawals must be formally approved by the National Secretary and the Rhodes Trust.**

You will be asked to declare that your application is wholly accurate and a fair representation of your achievements. You should anticipate that details will be checked for embellishments and inaccuracies. If we suspect any submitted references, transcripts, identity documents or English language test results are not genuine, or if we suspect material misrepresentation of your qualifications, experiences or achievements, the National Secretariat will investigate. This may include contacting you or third parties for further evidence. If we conclude that you have breached the terms of the applicant declaration, your application may be withdrawn, or, where appropriate, an offer of a scholarship may be rescinded.

Before starting an online Rhodes Scholarship application, we advise you to read through the [Rhodes Trust data protection policy for applicants](#).

### **The Rhodes application form requires you to provide:**

- Your details, such as contact information
- Evidence that you meet the eligibility criteria
- Your education history including your university transcripts
- The course(s) you would like to study at the University of Oxford
- A CV (a template is provided within the application form for you to fill out)
- A total of five referees
- An Academic Statement
- A Personal Statement

You can find more details about these requirements and the documents you will need below.

### **Key Documents**

You will need to upload copies of the following documents. Please note that all documents must be submitted in English. If your official documents, such as your birth certificate, passport or transcript are not in English you must also upload official English translations. Please note that you may be asked to provide the original documents at a later date.

- Your birth certificate confirming that you meet the age criterion.
- A copy of your National ID or of a valid passport (with translation, if necessary), confirming that you meet the citizenship criteria;
- An official transcript from the college or university at which you are studying, or have studied, showing grades achieved (to date).
- Certified copies of your primary and high school leaving certificates, and your KCSE (or equivalent) certificate;

- You will need to complete the CV section of the application form. This will allow you to add the details of any experience, awards, skills and activities that would usually be included in a curriculum vitae (CV). The form will provide you with further guidance about what to include and while you should include as much information as possible (within the limits of the form) we understand that not all applicants will have experience across all of these areas. The CV section covers the following areas and you may add up to 5 entries for each:
  - Professional/research experience
  - Volunteering, community involvement and leadership experience
  - Publications and presentations
  - Awards, prizes and scholarships
  - Skills, hobbies and extra-curricular activities
  - Other (any achievement that does not fit into one of the above categories)

Please note that the CV section of the form must be completed. You will not be able to upload a separate CV document.

- A head-and-shoulders colour photograph (jpg format). Please note your photo will **not** show up in the summary of your application, as it will not be available to the selection committee until **after** final shortlisting decisions have been made. If you are selected, this photograph will be used on the [Rhodes Scholar biographies webpage](#) unless or until you provide another version.
- Please do not upload documents, certificates, testimonials or links/URLs other than those required.

## References

You will need to nominate **five** referees - ensure that you seek their permission before listing their details in your application.

You should choose reliable people who are likely to respond to your request for a detailed reference, as their responses will be crucial to your application. Contact and register your referees early, to allow them sufficient time for submission. Remember, a good referee is someone who knows you well, rather than a well-known person who only knows you superficially. Please note that Rhodes Scholarship referees should not normally be personal friends, peers or relatives, or have any other conflict of interest. If a referee fits into one of these categories, they should make the connection clear within the reference.

### Academic Referees:

- Three of your referees should be academic referees. These should be academics who have **formally taught and graded you** in your undergraduate (or, if relevant, postgraduate) studies and who can comment in detail on your academic ability, motivation for your subject, and competitiveness for admission to Oxford University.
- Note that academic referees are asked to provide an estimated class ranking.
- Note that academic references can sometimes be re-used later as part of your application to study at the University of Oxford, so it is important that you and your referees bear this in mind.
- One of your academic referees can be a research supervisor if necessary. Please make sure this individual answers 'not applicable' in any questions concerning class standing/academic rank.

### Character Referees:

- You should also nominate two character referee(s) who can write in detail about your character and involvement in extra-curricular, service or leadership activities. Character referees should

be able to comment critically on whether you fulfil the non-academic [selection criteria](#) of the Scholarship.

### Submitting References:

- Share our [Guidance for Referees](#) document with all referees to help them prepare a strong, tailored reference
- After a referee agrees to help you, register their name and email address on the referees page of your application form. You should register their institutional/professional email address wherever possible.
- The referee will then receive an automated email with instructions and a unique link to their reference form, which must be completed online. This form will also allow them to upload their letter of reference, which should be on headed paper and signed by the referee.
- **References are confidential** between the referee and the selection committee, and referees may be contacted for further information.
- **It is your responsibility to ensure that referees submit their references online before 23:59 East Africa Time (EAT), 27 August 2026.**
- You can track the progress of their references **and send email reminders to them** from within the application form.

## Support with your application and generative AI: important guidance

You should carefully read our [guidance on the types of assistance you may receive](#) when putting together your personal and academic statements for the scholarship, before completing your application.

## Personal Statement

You will need to provide a **personal statement** of no more than 1000 words.

The personal statement is your chance to tell your story in your own voice: *Who are you?*

Your academic transcript and academic statement of study, your CV, and your reference letters will provide the substantive detail of your commitments and accomplishments, whereas the personal statement gives you the opportunity to make an authentic statement of who you are.

### Guiding Questions:

In your personal statement of up to 1000 words, we ask you to address each of the following guiding questions by weaving them into the narrative of your statement. Your statement should form one cohesive essay, rather than being split into sections to address each question:

1. *Which Rhodes Scholar quality do you display most strongly, and how are different contexts and people helping you to develop the other qualities?*
2. *Drawing on your past experience of community engagement, how do you hope to contribute to and learn from communities at Oxford?*
3. *From your place in the world, how will you use your energy and talents to address humanity's pressing challenges?*

**Every statement is individual; there is no single, "right" model. For over 120 years personal statements have been diverse and ever-changing. Selectors are looking for an original portrait of you as a candidate for the Rhodes Scholarship.**

**Guidance:**

The Rhodes selection criteria are powerful and have remained largely unchanged over the past 100 years, having been drawn directly from the founder's Will.


**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

specific academic requirements can be found under 'Eligibility Criteria' above.


**ENERGY TO USE YOUR TALENTS TO THE FULL**

as demonstrated by success in areas such as sports, music, debate, dance, theatre, and artistic pursuits, including where teamwork is involved.


**TRUTH, COURAGE, DEVOTION TO DUTY,**

sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship.


**MORAL FORCE OF CHARACTER**

and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in your fellow human beings.

In your personal statement we are asking you to reflect on your experiences, influences and intentions through the lens of the Rhodes Scholar qualities outlined in the three criteria: "*Energy to use one's talents to the full*"; "*Truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship*"; "*Moral force of character and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in one's fellow human beings*". (Note that the fourth selection criterion of "*Literary and scholastic attainments (academic excellence)*" is evidenced in your transcript, academic statement of study and academic reference letters.)

The three guiding questions are set within the Rhodes leadership development framework that informs the [Scholar Programme](#) at Rhodes House in Oxford. They ask you to consider your candidacy for and the opportunity of the Scholarship within three interrelated spheres in your own voice: 'self, others, and world':

Here are a few general pointers to consider when drafting your statement:

- We do not expect you to be the 'finished product' – we want to hear how you intend to evolve, and the part the Scholarship plays in that evolution
- Be personal, not generic – we want to hear from **you**; your ideas, your voice, your authentic self
- As well as telling your story, look beyond yourself and your experiences to the contributions you want to make, both to the communities at Oxford and the challenges faced by humanity today, from your own context

You can find further guidance on the personal statement on the '[Application Overview](#)' page of our website.

## Choosing your course(s)

The Rhodes Scholarship covers at least two years of study at the University of Oxford and in the application form, you will need to choose a course or combination of courses that covers this period.

You should think carefully about your trajectory and how your chosen course(s) will help you achieve your goals.

Begin by using the [University of Oxford's website](#) to find out about the different course options, their content and their entry requirements. Make sure that you research your planned course(s) thoroughly.

Whilst the choices you make within the Rhodes application form are not binding at this stage, it is not normally possible to change courses once you have begun your studies at Oxford University and this could have significant visa implications. Rhodes selectors will also be judging whether you have a clear rationale for your course choices – how they connect to your education so far, your aspirations and the impact you hope to make. It is therefore crucial to give serious thought to your desired course of study at Oxford now.

Being selected as a Rhodes Scholar does not guarantee admission to Oxford University, and admission is extremely competitive. To maximise your chances of admission, all Scholars Elect are asked to make **two** course applications (i.e. your primary choice, and a strong second choice) for the first year of the Scholarship.

## Academic Statement of Study

You will need to write an academic statement (maximum 450 words) presenting a clear and coherent academic plan for the full two years of the Rhodes Scholarship. It should demonstrate to selectors your academic goals, the logic of your course choices, and your preparedness and competitiveness for graduate study at Oxford. Researching and writing this statement will also help you prepare for your application to Oxford, if you are selected.

Your statement should address the following three areas:

- 1. Academic direction, motivation, and long-term goals:** Explain the academic direction you wish to pursue and how this connects to your long-term personal, professional, or research goals. What impact do you ultimately hope to achieve through further study? Why is graduate study at Oxford — and in your chosen field — essential to reaching your goals? This section should convey both your seriousness of intent and your motivation for undertaking this academic path.
- 2. Course plan and academic trajectory:** Discuss each course you have listed and explain:
  - Why each course is academically necessary for your goals
  - How the course(s) fit together as a coherent trajectory

You should demonstrate that you have researched your chosen course(s) carefully and understand their academic focus and structure. Where relevant, you may refer to particular subject areas, options, or departmental strengths that align with your interests.

For MPhil or DPhil candidates, briefly outline your proposed research area, the department in which you propose to work, and one or more Oxford academics you would like to work with.

- 3. Preparation and readiness:** Demonstrate that you are well prepared for the demands of your proposed course(s). You may want to think about:
  - Relevant academic background, training, or research experience
  - Skills, methods, or specific knowledge relevant to the course(s)
  - For some courses, professional or voluntary experience is expected (check the Entry Requirements tab of the course page for details).

If one of your proposed courses differs significantly from your previous field of study, explain how you are fully prepared for this transition.

## Selection Process and timeline

Once the application deadline has passed, all submitted applications will be considered as part of our selection process. This varies slightly according to which constituency you are applying for but below are the key stages:

Applications are checked for eligibility and completeness



Longlist is compiled



Early November: Final interview and social engagement event

Interviews will be held in Nairobi, in the first week of November 2026. Candidates selected as finalists must be available to attend both the final interview and social engagement event in person, as no accommodations can be made on date and time, or mode, of these events. No candidate will be selected without an interview.

**By December 2026:** All applicants will be emailed with the outcome of their application. We regret that we are unable to provide feedback to applicants who are unsuccessful in their applications.

## Selection Conditions

- Selection for the Rhodes Scholarship is made without regard to financial means.
- Selection for the Rhodes Scholarship is made without regard to marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, gender, religion, sexual orientation, social background, disability, caste or other irrelevant distinction. The provision of such information in the 'Equity and Inclusion' section of the application form is optional, but helps us to ensure that our selection processes are fair and that our outreach efforts are effective. The information you provide will not form part of your application and is only shared with those involved in selection in an anonymized format after scholarships have been awarded. However, if you disclose a disability and/or request additional accessibility support at interview stage, your answers for this section may be shared with the National Secretary, who may contact you to discuss and confirm your requested arrangements for support or suitable alternatives during the selection process. Any requests made will not affect shortlisting, or the progress of your application, in any way. If your application is successful and you become a Rhodes Scholar, this information may be shared with our student support team, who will help support you during your time at Oxford. If you prefer not to share this information within the application form, we encourage you to reach out directly to your National Secretary if shortlisted for interview, to discuss any reasonable accommodations you may need.
- Applications submitted for the Rhodes Scholarship in 2026 are for entry to the University of Oxford in **October 2027**; the scholarship cannot be brought forward or deferred to a later academic year.
- No selection will be made if a sufficiently qualified candidate cannot be found.
- The decision of the Selection Committee is final.

- The Rhodes Scholarship is confirmed only upon successful admission to the University of Oxford.
- The Rhodes Trust may contact you some time after the submission deadline to ask for feedback on the application process and any interactions you have had with the Rhodes Trust staff and volunteers.
- An offer of another scholarship does not preclude you from being considered for a Rhodes Scholarship, but you cannot hold another substantial scholarship in conjunction with a Rhodes Scholarship. You must advise the National Secretary if you have been offered another scholarship.

## Post-Selection

If you are selected for the Rhodes Scholarship you will need to apply to the University of Oxford very soon after selection and the team at Rhodes House will be on hand to support you with the application process. We advise you to prepare as much as possible in advance for your application to Oxford. Rhodes House has access to your entire Rhodes Scholarship application, and your references may be re-used, if appropriate.

Full details will be given to you upon selection, however candidates who intend to apply for the following courses should note that the graduate application deadline now usually falls in the first few days of December: the Master of Public Policy (MPP), MSc In Global Governance and Diplomacy, MSt in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, courses in the Medical Sciences, research degrees in Computer Science and/or Engineering. This is not an exhaustive list and you are advised to check the course page of your preferred course(s) carefully and to note the deadlines well in advance.

### Need to get in touch?

National Secretary:  
Dr Geoffrey Otieno  
Email: [kenya.secretary@rhodestrust.com](mailto:kenya.secretary@rhodestrust.com)

If you have any further questions, which aren't answered in this document or on our [website](#) please do get in touch at [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk).

For further information about the Rhodes Scholarship, see [www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/](http://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/)

*The Rhodes Trust reserves the right to vary these conditions at any time without notice.*

## THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIP FOR KENYA: 2027

- A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE RHODES TRUST AND THE SECOND CENTURY FOUNDER, JOHN MCCALL MACBAIN O.C.

### GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES

References must be written in English and must be submitted before 23:59 East Africa Time (EAT), 27 August 2026.

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a referee for an applicant for the Rhodes Scholarship. References form a crucial part of the selection process, and your reference could make the difference to an applicant's success. The following notes are intended to serve as a guide as you write your reference.

Rhodes Scholarship references are confidential and you should not share them with applicants. The reference should be in your own words (i.e. not drafted by anyone else). References must be written in English and your comments should not exceed two A4 or letter size pages (minimum 10 point type).

### About the Rhodes Scholarship

The Rhodes Scholarship programme is the oldest (established 1902), and perhaps the most prestigious, international scholarship in the world. For more background information on the scholarship, please see [our website](#). The [selection criteria for the scholarship](#) are as follows:

- **Academic excellence:** the University of Oxford is one of the most competitive graduate environments in the world and applicants must, at minimum, meet the entry requirements of their chosen course. Most successful applicants will exceed these minimums. (candidates will have a greater chance of successful admission if they have a First Class Honours or GPA of 3.70/4.00 or higher, or equivalent).
- **Energy to use their talents to the full:** as demonstrated by success in areas such as sports, music, debate, dance, theatre, and artistic pursuits, including where teamwork is involved
- **The Virtues:** truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship.
- **Moral force of character and instincts to lead,** and to take an interest in their fellow human beings.

Applicants are asked to seek both character and academic references – further guidance is provided below for each type. The reference form will clarify which type of reference you have been asked to submit. **Please note that Rhodes Scholarship referees should not normally be personal friends, peers or relatives, or have any other conflict of interest. If a referee fits into one of these categories, they should make the connection clear within the reference.**

### For both academic and character referees:

- Include a brief introduction to yourself, your role and your relationship to the applicant. You may also note any connection you may have to the Rhodes Trust, Rhodes Scholars, or the University of Oxford, although such connections are certainly not required.
- Rhodes Selectors are interested in how you might expect this candidate to develop. We do not expect candidates to be the 'finished product' and would like to hear how you feel they can grow.
- We are interested to hear what *you* can tell us about the candidate that we might not have seen from their CV/transcript/other application materials, which reflects the [qualities of a Rhodes Scholar](#).
- You should think about what is the most important thing you think we should know about the candidate.

### Academic referees:

If you know the candidate primarily in an academic capacity, you should concentrate on their academic quality and potential, although your assessment of their other qualities will be welcomed. **If the applicant is successful, your reference may be re-used by Oxford departments and colleges for determining the applicant's academic case for admission.** A detailed evaluation of their qualifications is therefore very important. The reference form will ask you the following questions:

- a. What is the applicant's relative academic standing in comparison with other students on the same course at the same institution – e.g. top 1%, 3%, 5%, 10%, 25%?
- b. How many students are in the applicant's year group on their programme of study, i.e. with how many students are you comparing the applicant?
- c. On what basis are you making the assessment – personal assessment/official class rank?

If you are a research supervisor who has not formally taught or graded the applicant, please answer 'not applicable' in any questions concerning class standing/academic rank.

#### **We recommend you use the following points to guide the content of the reference:**

- Proven academic excellence is the primary criterion for this scholarship. Please comment in detail on the candidate's academic qualifications, intellectual ability, attitude toward learning, and overall suitability for postgraduate study at the University of Oxford. We would appreciate any insights you can offer that might enhance the Committee's understanding of the candidate's academic transcript, CV, and academic statement.
- Describe the candidate's motivation for and interest in their chosen subject area or field. We welcome your reflections on both their general engagement with the field and, if applicable, the suitability and thoughtfulness of their specific course choices. If relevant, describe the candidate's potential for sustained, independent research (particularly for DPhil/PhD applicants), their ability to work collaboratively with peers, and any relevant professional experience that supports their application.

#### **Character referees:**

If you know the applicant through non-academic activities, your reference should focus on character and personal qualities, in the knowledge that the Committee is looking for scholars who show promise of outstanding leadership and achievement in later life. Please offer examples of how the candidate meets our [selection criteria](#), in particular:

- **Energy to use their talents to the full:** Describe how the candidate demonstrates exceptional energy and commitment in developing their talents to the highest level, particularly outside of an academic setting.
- **The virtues:** Illustrate how the candidate lives out their values in daily life. We are looking for examples of integrity, compassion, and an unselfish commitment to others. This may be demonstrated through activities such as community volunteering, mentoring, caregiving responsibilities at home, or leading charitable initiatives.
- **Moral force of character and instincts to lead:** We are looking for individuals who not only act on their convictions but also inspire and motivate others. Leadership may be demonstrated through standing up for their own or others' beliefs, or through ways they have shaped and uplifted communities around them.

#### **Submitting Your Reference:**

- When an applicant has registered your details in the application form, you will receive an auto-generated email containing a link to an online reference form to complete, including a place to upload your letter.
- Address your letter to the Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee.
- Submit your letter on **headed paper, signed, and in PDF format**. If you are unable to access an official/institutional letterhead we can accept references on a personal letterhead that clearly states your institutional affiliation and provides official contact information (email address and phone number).
- Wherever possible you should give an institutional/professional email address for further contact, this is important for reference verification
- All references should be submitted via the online reference form.
- Once you submit your form, both you and the applicant will receive an automated confirmation email. The applicant will not be able to view the contents of your reference. You may be contacted for further information during the selection process.

References must be written in English and must be uploaded before 23:59 East Africa Time (EAT), 27 August 2026. If you require any further support submitting your reference, email: [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk)