THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIP FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

Covering South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and eSwatini (formerly Swaziland)

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 Southern Africa constituency, for entry in October 2027 to the University of Oxford, in the United Kingdom.

Key Dates

Applications Open: 00:01 SAST, Monday 01 June 2026
Applications Close: 23:59 SAST, Monday 03 August 2026
Reference Deadline: 23:59 SAST, Monday 17 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 to which you have the greatest connection.
- 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.

Choosing which candidate pool to apply to:

Scholarships in Southern Africa are distributed as follows:

a. South Africa-at-Large Scholarships: You should apply to the Regional Selection Committee in whose area you permanently live or in which you have received, or are currently receiving, a considerable part of your education. All successful candidates from Regional Selection Committees (except for KwaZulu-Natal as explained below) are sent to the South Africa-at-Large Selection

Committee for the final round of interviews. The South Africa-at-Large Selection Committee may select four Rhodes Scholars, annually.

For the South Africa-at-Large Scholarships, there are four regional Selection Committees, namely:

i. Eastern Cape and Free State;
ii. KwaZulu-Natal (KZN);
iii. Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North-West (GLMN); and
iv. Western Cape and Northern Cape

b. KwaZulu-Natal Scholarship: You may apply for the KwaZulu-Natal Scholarship if you live permanently in the province or have received, or are receiving, a considerable part of your education in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The KZN Selection Committee may select one successful candidate each year and award the KZN Rhodes Scholarship, and can also send two finalists to the South Africa-at-Large Selection Committee.

c. Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) Scholarship (BLMNS): You may apply to the BLMNS Selection Committee if you fulfil the citizenship or legal residence requirement in one of the mentioned countries. The BLMNS Selection Committee can select one successful candidate each year and award the BLMNS Rhodes Scholarship.

d. The SACS Scholarship: one Scholarship may be awarded to students who are matriculants of SACS (South African College School), Rustenburg Girls' High School or Sans Souci Girls' High School or who are graduates of the University of Cape Town (UCT).

e. The Paul Roos Scholarship: one Scholarship may be awarded to students who are matriculants of Paul Roos Gymnasium, Rhenish Girls' High School, Bloemhof Girls' High School or any high school in the Cape Winelands, Eden and Central Karoo, Overberg and West Coast education districts in South Africa (as listed in this document).

f. The Bishops (Diocesan College) Scholarship: one Scholarship may be awarded to students who are matriculants of any high school in the Cape Town Metro South education district in South Africa (as listed in this document), or who are matriculants of Diocesan College, Herschel Girls' School, St Cyprian's School for Girls, St George's Grammar School, and the LEAP Science and Maths School (Langa).

g. The St Andrew's Scholarship: one Scholarship may be awarded to students who have matriculated from St Andrew's College, Diocesan School for Girls (DSG), any high school in the municipality of Makana in the Eastern Cape (as listed in this document), or who are graduates of Rhodes University.

Most candidates applying through the Southern Africa constituency can apply through a maximum of **two pools** if they are eligible to do so, depending on the region in which they live and/or the school/university attended. Applicants will be required to upload proof of their eligibility and connection to the pools to which they are applying, as detailed on the application form.

The exception will be BLMNS citizens, who may only apply through one pool, i.e. the BLMNS selection committee/pool.

Please see this document for guidance on which institutions are eligible for each 'schools' pool.

In summary, applicants may apply to:

- **One** School pool/ committee **or one** regional selection pool/committee, to which they have the strongest connection; or

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- **One 'Schools' pool** (scholarships d - g above) **and one** regional pool, provided they are eligible to do so; or
- **Two regional pools (a I - iv above),** provided they are eligible to do so.

Note:

- Applicants may **NOT** apply to 2 'Schools' pools.
- KZN applicants can apply to KZN **and,** if eligible to do so, a 'Schools' pool or another regional pool.
- BLMNS applicants can only apply to the BLMNS pool.

Eligibility Criteria

- **Nationality/citizenship:** You must be a citizen or legal permanent resident of South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia or eSwatini. Applications from refugees/asylum seekers in South Africa will also be considered in this constituency.
- **Residency:** You must have been resident in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia or eSwatini for at least five of the last ten years.
- **Age:**

  (i) Upon entry to Oxford on 01 October 2027, you must be at least 19 years old and not have passed your 25th birthday (which means you must have been born after 01 October 2002 and on or before 01 October 2008).

  (ii) For older candidates who will have passed their 25th birthday on 01 October 2027 and completed their first undergraduate degree later than usual:

  - Candidates must have completed their first undergraduate degree within the last 2 years, i.e. after 1 October 2025*; and
  - may not have passed their 28th birthday on 01 October 2027 (which means they must have been born after 01 October 1999).

  (iii) For candidates who are MBBCh or an MBChB graduates, and required to complete their compulsory internship and/or community service:

  - Candidates may not have passed their 28th birthday on 01 October 2027 (which means they must have been born after 01 October 1999).
  - Candidates should apply either during their second year of internship, or during their community service year, provided that they meet the age requirement above.
  - Candidates that can apply in their community service year (without breaching the age requirement in above) are encouraged to do so.

    NOTE: For candidates that have to or choose to apply in their second year of internship, the Rhodes Scholarship National Secretariat will endeavour, as it has done in past years, to reach agreement with the National Department of Health to allow those medical doctors awarded the Rhodes Scholarship to complete their community service year requirement by September, in the year after they apply, and before going to Oxford in October 2027. While the Secretariat will strive to reach such dispensations, the granting of such cannot be guaranteed.

  (iv) Other Health Sciences graduates in order to complete any compulsory internship and/or community service:

  - Candidates who have completed the necessary Health Sciences degrees for admission to, and intend to be admitted to, any registered health profession that requires the completion of any compulsory internship and/or community service, should write to the Rhodes Scholarship National Secretariat to seek exemption to allow them to apply in their

internship or community service year, provided that they will not have passed their 28th birthday on 01 October 2027 (which means they must have been born after 01 October 1999), and if:

- they cannot be accommodated under part iii above; and
- they are in a similar position to medical students given that, even if there are no delays or breaks in or between the completion of their compulsory university studies, internship and/or community service, they would not be able to be accommodated either under the general age limit or part ii above.

* 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 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, or,
  - an Honours degree (or have taken an Honours year) from a University outside of your country OR if you have studied to Masters level within your country (with the exception of those studying in South Africa and Namibia, and for some countries, those studying medicine). Candidates may wish to consider applying to the Rhodes Trust's sister Foundation, The Mandela Rhodes Foundation, to pursue an Honour's year or a Master's degree prior to making an application for the Rhodes Scholarship.

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

- **English language proficiency**: The application, selection process, and interviews are conducted in English. If English is not your first language, you must check that you meet Oxford University's English language requirements at the higher level.

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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 SAST, 03 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

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- A CV (a PDF template is provided)
- An Academic Statement
- A Personal Statement
- A total of four referees

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.

- A copy of your birth certificate.
- A copy of a valid passport or ID document. For those candidates not born in one of the above countries, please also supply additional materials necessary to validate citizenship, legal permanent residency or refugee status.
- An official academic transcript from the college or university at which you are studying, or have studied, showing grades achieved (to date).
- You should also upload copies of your degree certificates.
- A copy of your Grade 12 school leaving certificate. i.e. your final Grade 12/ Matric results issued by UMALUSI (for IEB and NSC).
- If you are applying through pools d-g then you will need to provide evidence that you matriculated from an institution in the region. Acceptable documents include:
    - A formal letter from your high school confirming that you were a Matric student at that institution OR
    - Your final Grade 12 School academic report received from the high school attended (i.e. not the final Matric Umalusi/NSC Certificate) OR
    - A letter from the university confirming that you attended that Institution.
- You will need to complete the CV template PDF (available to download here) and upload it to your application in Embark. The template covers the following areas:

    - Academic Awards, prizes and scholarships
    - Leadership roles and experience
    - Volunteering and/or community involvement
    - Professional/research experience, publications and presentations
    - Skills, hobbies and extra-curricular activities
    - Other (any achievement that does not fall into one of the above categories)

    The template 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.

    Please note that your CV document should not exceed 2 pages and no additional pages will be read by selectors.

- 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.

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- Please do not upload documents, certificates, testimonials or links/URLs other than those required.

References

You will need to nominate **four** 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.
- **NOTE: A high school teacher or school principal does not qualify as an academic referee.**

Character Referees:

- You should also nominate one character referee 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 the letterhead of their academic institution and signed by the referee.
- **References are confidential** between the referee and the selection committee and should not be shared with applicants. Referees may be contacted for further information.
- **It is your responsibility to ensure that referees submit their references online before 23:59 SAST, 17 August 2026**.
- You can track the progress of their references **and send email reminders to them** from within the application form.

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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, kindliness, unselfishness and fellowship.

MORAL FORCE OF CHARACTER
and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in your fellow human beings.

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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, kindliness, 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

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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:

- **03 August 2026:** Deadline for applications
- **17 August 2026:** Deadline for submission of references
- **August:** Your application will be checked for eligibility and completeness
- **August-September:** applications are reviewed by our Selection Committee(s). This paper-based review determines if your application will be shortlisted and proceed to the next stage.
- **September - November**: Interviews will be held in South Africa.
- In all constituencies the final stage of selection is a social engagement (pre-selection dinner) and final interview with the relevant selection committee. Candidates shortlisted for regional interviews and/or as finalists for national interviews in Southern Africa must be available to attend both the dinner and interview, **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.
- Reasonable travel expenses to the designated Selection Committee for the purposes of interviews will be paid. The Trust will **not** be responsible for the cost of overseas flights or travel expenses. Accommodation within South Africa will be provided, where necessary and at the discretion of the National Secretariat.

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- **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 or finalists who are unsuccessful in their applications. The Selection Committees' decisions are final.

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

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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:
Ndumiso Luthuli
Email: southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com

Deputy National Secretaries
Mr Nick Ferreira, Ms Trudi Makhaya and Professor Malebogo Ngoepe

Regional Manager
Ms Bev Johnson
P O Box 41468, Craighall 2024 Johannesburg
Email: beverley.johnson@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk
Tel: +27 (0) 74 054-4300

Regional Selection Committee Secretaries:
Western Cape and Northern Cape
Dr Salih Solomon or Ms Janet Jobson
Email: southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com

Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga and North-West
Ms Lusanda Juda-Kgakololo or Dr Thomas Brennan
Email: southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com

KwaZulu-Natal
Mr Mbongeni Ndlovu
Email: southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com

Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and eSwatini
Mr Omphemetse Mooki
Email: southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com

Eastern Cape and Free State
Mr Chris McConnachie
Email: southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com

School Rhodes Scholarship Pools
Please direct all queries to: southernafrica.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.

For further information about the Rhodes Scholarship, see www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/

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

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RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

SOUTHERN AFRICA

THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIP FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA: 2027

Covering South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and eSwatini (formerly Swaziland)

GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES

References must be written in English and must be submitted before 23:59 SAST, 17 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, kindliness, 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**

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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?

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 **the letterhead of your academic institution, 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

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- 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 SAST, 17 August 2026. If you require any further support in submitting your reference, email: scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk

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