



Frequent Misconceptions

THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIPS ARE ELITIST

YOU HAVE TO BE SPORTY

IT IS ONLY FOR TOP UNIVERSITIES

FREQUENT MISCONCEPTIONS

1) “YOU HAVE TO BE SPORTY”

This is not true. The selection criteria mentions: “energy to use one’s talents to the full” but this can be demonstrated through a wide variety of extra-curricular pursuits and leadership opportunities.

2) “YOU MUST BE TOP OF YOUR CLASS”

Whilst excellent academic ability is important, and you will need to be able to thrive at the University of Oxford, the will of Cecil Rhodes made explicit reference to ‘not mere bookworms’. You have to be clever and able to think quickly, but even more important is your commitment to serve others.

3) “YOU HAVE TO HAVE DONE MONTHS OF VOLUNTEER WORK ABROAD / STARTED YOUR OWN NGO”

As long as you can demonstrate you have worked to improve the lives of others, that is what counts. It can be done in a multitude of ways, in your own neighbourhood. You will also need to be able to talk in the interview about what you hope to do in the future.

4) “THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIPS ARE ELITIST”

No, the Rhodes Trust actively encourages applicants from all backgrounds. The learning which happens in a community is much greater if there is genuine diversity amongst the group. Forty percent of the Scholars in Oxford are black or minority ethnic, many from first or second generation migrant families. There is no single political ideology, but there is a common ethic of service to others and bettering the planet.

5) “IT IS ONLY FOR IVY LEAGUE STUDENTS (OR EQUIVALENT IN OTHER COUNTRIES)”

Scholars come from all types of universities. Frequently students win the Scholarship who are studying at an institution which has never had a winner before.

6) “I CAN’T APPLY BECAUSE OF MY BACKGROUND / DISABILITY / SUBJECT I WANT TO STUDY”

Such fears should not stand in your way. We clearly state: The Rhodes Trust warmly welcomes applications from talented young women and men of diverse backgrounds. Selection of Rhodes Scholars is made without regard to gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, colour, religion, social background, caste, or disability. These are not mere words on a page, they are the lived experience of the Rhodes Scholars in Oxford which is an incredibly diverse group. There is a strong network of support both from the Rhodes Trust and from the University of Oxford for anyone with a disability. Finally, you can study almost any course offered by the University of Oxford.

7) “MOST RHODES SCHOLARS END UP AS POLITICAL LEADERS”

The public’s most immediate associations with the Rhodes Scholarships are often western world political leaders such as Bill Clinton, Bob Hawke and Malcolm Turnbull. Today’s Rhodes Scholars include Presidents and Prime Ministers, but also medical researchers, social workers, teachers and activists.