

THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIP 2020: SOUTHERN AFRICA

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

GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES

References must be written in English and **must be uploaded by 23:59, SAST, 14 September 2019**.

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a referee for one of the applicants for the Rhodes Scholarship. References form a crucial part of the selection process, and therefore 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.

Background Information

The Rhodes Scholarship programme is the oldest (established 1903), and perhaps the most prestigious, international scholarship programme in the world. Administered by the Rhodes Trust in Oxford, the programme offers 100 fully-funded Scholarships each year for postgraduate study at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom - one of the world's leading universities. Rhodes Scholarships are for young leaders of outstanding intellect and character who are motivated to engage with global challenges, committed to the service of others and show promise of becoming value-driven, principled leaders for the world's future. The broad selection criteria are:

- Academic excellence (First Class Honours or GPA of minimum 3.70 out of 4.00, or equivalent).
- Energy to use their talents to the full (as demonstrated by mastery 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 their fellow human beings.

The Committees are looking for outstanding young people who are motivated to engage with the global challenges facing humankind, who are committed to the service of others, and to the promotion of international understanding and peace. In short, candidates will be young people of **outstanding intellect, character, leadership, and commitment to service**, who demonstrate a strong propensity to emerge as 'leaders for the world's future', wherever their careers might take them, and in any field. For further details, see: <http://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/>.

The Rhodes Selection Committee will be grateful, therefore, if you would supply a frank and confidential statement regarding the applicant's qualifications. Your prompt response to the auto-generated email reference request will be of great assistance to the applicant and to the selection process.

The Selection Committee will have available for consideration a copy of the applicant's university academic transcript, curriculum vitae, and personal statement of academic interests, other pursuits, extracurricular activities and reasons for wishing to study at Oxford. Observations which would enhance the Committee's understanding of these records will be especially welcomed. **Your comments should not exceed two A4 pages (minimum 10 point type).**

A brief introduction of yourself would be helpful, including any connections that you have with the Rhodes Trust, Rhodes Scholars and also the University of Oxford (such connections are certainly not essential).

Proven intellectual and academic quality of a very high standard is the first quality required of applicants. However, and just as important, applicants will also be required to demonstrate integrity of character, interest in and respect for their fellow human beings, the ability to lead, the energy to use their talents to the full and the desire to make an effective contribution to the world around them as described above.

A Rhodes Scholar will undertake postgraduate study at Oxford, a taught or research degree, or a second undergraduate degree with senior status (over two years). In all cases, entry to Oxford is very competitive indeed.

The reference form will clarify which type of reference you have been asked to submit. Whether you have been asked to provide an academic reference, or a character/extra-curricular reference, it is not expected that you will be able to speak from first-hand knowledge of *all* the applicant's qualifications.

Academic referees: If you are primarily acquainted with the candidate through a teacher/student relationship, it is expected that your appraisal will concentrate first and primarily on academic quality and potential, although your assessment of other qualities will be welcomed by the Committee. **Academic referees should note that, in the case of a successful applicant, your letter will be used by Oxford departments and colleges for determining the Rhodes Scholar-elect's academic case for admission to postgraduate study.** Consequently, a detailed assessment of the candidate's academic qualifications and suitability to undertake Master's / doctoral level study at Oxford will be very important. Since the University of Oxford requires the following information from referees writing in support of graduate applicants, you are also asked to comment on:

- a. The applicant's relative academic standing in comparison with other students on the same course at the same institution – e.g. top 5%, 10%, 25%?
- b. How many students 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?

Character referees: If, on the other hand, you are better acquainted with the applicant through non-academic interests, it is expected that you will concentrate on assessment of character and non-academic qualities, in the knowledge that the Committee is looking for scholars who show promise of outstanding achievement in later life.

Please do not hesitate to speak of the applicant's limitations as well as strong points. Committees tend naturally to be dubious of appraisals that imply a given individual has no limitations. **Your reply will, of course, be treated as strictly confidential by the Selection Committee.**

All letters of recommendation for applicants should be addressed to the *Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee*. The Selection Committee (and subsequently the University of Oxford) asks **that your letter of recommendation be on headed paper, signed, and uploaded in pdf format.** You will receive an auto-generated email requesting the reference, which will contain instructions for completing and submitting your letter. As well as uploading your reference letter, you will be asked to complete some basic information about yourself and your relationship to the applicant. All letters of reference should be received via the online application system. **Please ensure that you press submit once you have completed the form.** Once you submit the reference both you and the applicant will receive an automated email to confirm receipt; the applicant will not be able to see the submitted reference, which will remain confidential.

Please note that Rhodes Scholarship referees are not typically personal friends, contemporaries or relatives. If a referee fits into one of these categories, they should make the connection clear within the reference.

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