

Unofficial guide for Prospective Rhodes Scholarship Applicants

Rhodes Scholarship in partnership with Muhammad Alagil for Saudi Arabia

This guide is NOT an official communication from the Rhodes Trust. It was collaboratively prepared by some Saudi Arabia Rhodes Scholars to ensure that all applicants have equal access to sufficient guidance for preparing their application for the Rhodes Scholarships for Saudi Arabia.

General

- Just [APPLY!](#) Many current scholars didn't think they would get it.
- Take the application as a chance to reflect on your past experiences and your future goals.
- Be yourself - that is your strongest asset. Do not lose yourself and the authenticity that makes you "you" in the process.
- This can be a stressful process at times, so make sure to remind yourself of your values and your passions throughout. Who are you doing this for? Why do you want to pursue these programs? Why through this scholarship in particular? Try to think of this not as an award or an opportunity for yourself, but rather for the work and causes you've committed yourself to.
- Please feel free to reach out to previous and current Saudi Rhodes scholars :)

FAQ

1. Is the age limit strict?
 - Yes, but if you have specific circumstances you'd like considered, email scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk. They are qualified and happy to answer your questions.
2. Is the GPA cutoff strict?
 - Yes, it is. But if you meet the GPA requirement for your intended course, you may still apply. Please check the Oxford university's [website](#) for further information about courses.
 - All Rhodes Scholars are academically excellent, but if you have gone through circumstances that led to your GPA being lower than the requirement, you might be able to get away with it if you use your personal statement to explain those circumstances clearly.
3. Is the IELTS/TOEFL score cutoff strict?
 - If you meet the IELTS/TOEFL requirement for your intended course, but that is lower than the one specified for the Rhodes application, you may

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still apply. Check the Oxford university [website](#) for further information about language requirements.

4. What is the GPA cutoff?
 - The official GPA requirement is 3.7 out of 4.0 or higher. This is about 4.6 out of 5.0, but if your GPA is on a 5.0 scale, it's better to check with your [course admission office](#) that you meet the GPA requirement.
 - See Q2 for more information on the GPA cutoff.
5. What is the IELTS/TOEFL score cutoff?
 - The specific IELTS/TOEFL score cutoff will depend on your course; you can find the cutoff by navigating to the "Entry Requirements" tab on your [specific course page](#).
 - See Q3 for more information on the IELTS/TOEFL score cutoff.
6. Can I see your personal statement?
 - Maybe. Some Scholars may agree to show you their personal statements, but refusal to show it to you does not necessarily mean they think you will cheat, it's just that personal statements are quite personal.
7. Can you read my personal statement?
 - As stated in the [Information for Candidates](#) document, your personal statement remains your work. However, we may be able to provide you with some general guidance if you contact any of us on the emails below.
8. How do I strengthen my CV?
 - See section "Resume/CV" below.
9. How do I stand out?
 - Be authentic, and don't be afraid of being vulnerable. Applying for the Rhodes Scholarship can be intimidating, so you might feel like you have to present the "Rhodes Scholar" version of yourself in your application -- don't fall into this trap! Truly, the best way to stand out is by being *you*, so write candidly and honestly about that. None of us were "perfect" candidates, but we were all genuine about the dreams we have for ourselves and our communities.
10. What do you think made the committee choose you over the other applicants?
 - See Q9.
11. How many Saudi Scholars will be selected this year?
 - Up to two. Three were selected in 2020, but it is unlikely that this will happen again.
12. Does getting the Rhodes Scholarship mean I got into Oxford?

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- No. You need to apply to Oxford separately, but the Rhodes Scholarship team will help you with your application.
13. Can I pursue x degree/course using the scholarship?
- Please refer to this document to check what degrees can be pursued under the scholarship: <https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/files/conditions-of-tenure.pdf>.
 - You can apply for *any* course within the accepted degrees.
14. When do I apply for the scholarship?
- You will start at Oxford a whole year after getting the Scholarship, so plan accordingly. Apply the year before you want to start your degree at Oxford. If you're a Bachelor's degree student, this would usually mean applying a year before you graduate if you want to start your Oxford program immediately after graduating from your Bachelor's. Make sure to check the application deadlines.
15. What are the most important aspects of my application?
- Assuming you meet all the eligibility criteria, the most important aspects are your personal statement, your academic statement, and your recommendation letters.

Referees

- Start reaching out to potential referees early and have backup plans.
- Pick the referees who *know you best and who care about you*. It won't really help getting a recommendation of a pioneer in your field if they can't write you a meaningful letter.
- One to two of your recommendation letters should address your character. For those, try to choose someone who is familiar with you outside of academics. For example, your coach in a certain sport, your supervisor in an internship or a job, or someone you worked closely and extensively with on a non-academic project.
- Don't hesitate to ask your referees if they know you enough to write you a letter. Sometimes, referees ask you for a one-to-one meeting or to write an essay about yourself so they can get to know you on a deeper level. If they don't offer, you can!
- You really want these letters to be as detailed as possible (~1.5-2 pages). Your referees will need to recount scenarios and anecdotes that are *specific to you*, so don't hesitate to remind and inform them of the achievements and qualities you want them to highlight in their letter.
- You can look up sample letters of recommendation for the Rhodes Scholarship online and show them to your referees to give them an idea of what these letters

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should look like. Make sure to tell them not to copy and paste the text! These sample letters serve as a form of guidance, not a template. As stated earlier, the letters they write for you should be **specific to you**.

- Recommendation letters are submitted through the application portal *by your referees*. You cannot upload the recommendation letter yourself, so enter your referees' information in the application portal *as soon as possible* and before any other part of the application. This is to make sure your referees have plenty of time to submit your recommendation letters. You will be notified when they submit, so keep track of that, and make sure you remind them so they do not miss the deadline.

Resume/CV

- The selection committee looks thoroughly over your CV, so do pay attention to it and make sure it complements the rest of your application.
- You can also try and approach the activities list thematically. For example, instead of having general categories like "experience," you could have categories like "community service," "refugee advocacy," and "athletic participation" that are tailored specifically to your pursuits and highlight the causes you're passionate about.
- Be specific about the impact you made through your activities. Don't address your involvement in vague terms, but describe in detail the responsibilities you personally took on and the impact you made.
- Use a variety of action words when writing your resume bullet points. You can find many lists of resume action words online.
- Ask your university's career services office or any working adults you know to review your resume if possible.

750-word academic statement

- We cannot speak to this part of the application since it was only introduced this year. However, given that the prompt here is more straightforward and you are able to get feedback on your academic statement, you may find it easier to write the academic statement first before starting with the 1,000-word personal statement.

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1000-word personal statement

- **Start early.** It takes a lot of time to produce a well-written personal statement that addresses all the questions in the prompt, so start *at least* two or three months before the deadline (some people even start as early as six months before!). The earlier, the better - especially if you know you will be busy with other things while writing it. This is not a time-consuming task because of the writing itself but rather because of how much *self-reflection* is required for writing a good personal statement.
- You want to broadly address three things and present a narrative that connects them all together: *values (who you are) -> experiences (what you've done) -> fit and aspirations (why this is the right next step and what you hope to achieve)*. Ask yourself what "standing up for the world" and "fighting the world's fight" mean to you, and let your values inform the discussion on your accomplishments and experiences. In sum, you want to identify a few of your values, demonstrate how your previous experiences match these values, and elaborate on how being at Oxford for two years will enrich this path.
- This is by all means a *personal* statement, so don't be afraid to discuss experiences that are personal to you! Write a story you feel truly passionate about. You want to make the reader think "I want to meet this person."
- You can start by going through a few "reflection question" prompts and drafting short answer responses to get your feet wet - [here](#) is a document that provides plenty of prompts to experiment with.
- Another useful exercise is mind-mapping. You can have three mini mind-maps within a larger one for each of the prompt's three themes (*values, experiences, goals*). You can list all your values and interests (academic, professional, even random ones) under the first mind-map, all your activities under the second one, and all of your aspirations under the third one. This is a helpful exercise because it can enable you to find connections between your values, experiences, and goals, which in turn can help you craft a cohesive narrative that presents a common thread between all three. You can also use this exercise to come up with a detailed outline of the structure of the essay, what you want each paragraph to say, and how each paragraph can relate to the other paragraphs.
- When thinking about ways to start the essay, it might be useful to think about "what makes you tick." In an [information session](#) about the scholarship, the National Secretary for China gives the following advice: "Start with what makes you tick. Why does this make you tick? What experiences have you had in your life that have made you care about this issue? How have your past experiences

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shaped you into being the person you are today? How are you going to take those experiences and where do you want to go with them?”

- You also want to make sure that you don't end up rehashing your CV. When discussing your experiences or accomplishments, don't focus so much on *what* you did (which is already on your CV). Instead, talk about *why* you pursued those opportunities.
- Given the word limit, you will not be able to discuss every single thing you did so focus on a couple instead. Remember, quality over quantity.
- *Note: A personal statement for a scholarship is very different from a personal statement for an academic program. You're writing for completely different audiences, so do keep this in mind as you work on your personal statement.*

Interview preparation

- You will be interviewed by an international panel consisting of 6-8 people who are advanced in their area of expertise from a variety of backgrounds and professions.
- Know your application - perhaps this is the most important piece of advice. Go through each line of your personal statement, resume, and transcript. Ask yourself the hardest question you can think of about that item: can you answer it? If not, make sure to brush up on those concepts.
- Do at least one mock *panel* interview. This can be with some of your professors, or even with family members or friends. Just ask some people you respect (and who will challenge you) to read your application material and then interview you together, even if remotely.
- Practice vocalizing what you care about. Some people like to journal, record voice notes, etc. You may find it useful to just have low-stake conversations with mentors, family, and friends.
- Stay up to date with current affairs in the country and globally. Read the country's top newspapers every day. We suggest subscribing to the daily international newsletters if you haven't already. And don't just consume information passively, make sure you have an opinion on the issue you're reading about.
- Give concise and structured answers; do not ramble. One useful way to do this is by *taking a second to think before answering*, then answering the question directly and explicitly before elaborating or going into an example. You could also have others time you during mock interviews to make sure you're not rambling.

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You want your answers to be as concise as possible because this is only a 30-minute (give or take) interview, and every panelist will want to ask you a question. By giving long answers, you end up with fewer questions when you want the panel to get to know you to the greatest extent possible.

- If you don't know the answer to something, say so. Do not make stuff up on the spot because chances are you'll just give a confusing answer that will prompt many more follow up questions. By saying you don't know, the committee will probably move on to another topic, which would give you the chance to highlight how amazing you are.
- Do not over-prepare so much that you end up sounding rehearsed. The interview is supposed to be a conversation that flows organically, so you don't want to end up just reciting memorized answers.
- On that note, don't be afraid of asking the panelists questions, whether you're asking for clarification or challenging a point of view. Consider the interview a conversation with highly intelligent, skilled, and experienced people. Make use of that.
- Make your focus not to have a "winning interview," but a meaningful one. That's an experience no one can take away, and having this mindset will help bring about your most genuine self.

Resources:

- <https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/apply/saudi-arabia>
- Sample personal statements
 - <http://obsessionwithregression.blogspot.com/2015/07/advice-and-sample-essays-for-rhodes.html>
 - <https://www.education.psu.edu/writingpersonalstatementsonline/sites/www.education.psu.edu.writingpersonalstatementsonline/files/file/Rhodes.pdf>
- Info sessions with many great tips:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pfz_GXPJ3us.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpPgGqDWgxY>.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEhdoKy3oVw&t>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC3fzsX5EQQ&>
- University's career/fellowships/scholarships office (if possible)
- Saudi scholars' contact information:

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هنا تجد ترجمة للأسئلة الشائعة باللغة العربية:

1. هل حد العمر صارم؟
 - نعم، لكن إن كان لديك ظروف معينة تريد أن تؤخذ بعين الاعتبار، أرسل إيميل يشرح هذه الظروف لـ scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk. إنهم خيرا ويسعدهم الرد على أسئلة المهتمين بالمنحة.
2. هل حد المعدل الدراسي صارم؟
 - نعم، لكن إذا كان معدلك يوافق الحد الخاص بالبرنامج الدراسي الذي تريده (ولو أنه أقل من الحد الخاص بالمنحة)، فما زال يمكنك التقديم. اطلع على [صفحة جامعة أكسفورد](#) لتجد المعلومات المتعلقة بالبرنامج الدراسي الذي يهيك.
 - كل الحاصلين على المنحة متفوقون دراسياً، لكن إن كنت مررت بظروف معينة أدت إلى انخفاض معدلك تحت الحد المطلوب فقد تتمكن من التملص من شرط المعدل إذا شرحت ظروفك بوضوح في البيان الشخصي.
3. هل حد نتيجة اختبار اللغة الإنجليزية (IELTS/TOEFL) صارم؟
 - طالما نتيجتك توافي شروط البرنامج الدراسي الذي تنوي التقديم عليه، يمكن التقديم على المنحة، حتى إن كانت نتيجتك أقل من الحد المطلوب للمنحة. اطلع على [صفحة جامعة أكسفورد](#) لمزيد من المعلومات حول متطلبات اللغة.
4. ما هو حد المعدل؟
 - المعدل الرسمي الذي يؤولك للقبول في المنحة هو 3.7 من 4.0 فما فوق. هذا يعادل 4.6 من 5.0 تقريبا، لكن إذا كان معدلك من 5.0، يفضل أن تتواصل مع scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk لتتأكد أنك تستوفي شرط المعدل.
 - اطلع على السؤال رقم 2 لمزيد من المعلومات حول حد المعدل.
5. ما هو حد نتيجة اختبار اللغة الإنجليزية (IELTS/TOEFL)؟
 - اطلع على جزئية الـ "entry requirements" الخاصة بالبرنامج الدراسي الذي تنوي التقديم عليه لتعرف ما هي شروط اللغة الإنجليزية المتعلقة به. إذا كانت نتيجتك تستوفي الشروط المحددة من برنامجك الذي تنوي التقديم عليه، فيمكنك التقديم على المنحة.
 - اطلع على السؤال رقم 3 لمزيد من المعلومات حول حد نتيجة اختبار اللغة.
6. هل يمكن أن أطلع على بيانك الشخصي؟
 - ربما. بعض الحاصلين على المنحة قد يوافقوا أن يطلعوك على بيانهم الشخصي، لكن رفض ذلك لا يعني بالضرورة أنهم يظنون أنك ستغش منهم، كل مافي الأمر هو أن البيان الشخصي شخصي جدا.
7. هل يمكن أن تقرأ بياني الشخصي؟
 - يسعدنا أن نفعل ذلك، و لكن تعليقاتنا ستكون على مستوى سطحي نوعاً ما لأنه يُسَرَط أن لا تتلقى أي تعليقات مفصلة أو محددة على بيانك الشخصي. يجب أن يكون كله من كتابتك وتفكيرك.
8. كيف أقوي سيرتي الذاتية؟
 - اطلع على قسم "Resume/CV" بالأعلى.
9. كيف أتميز عن باقي المتقدمين؟

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- كن صادقاً ولا تخش أن تظهر مشاعرك وظروفك الصعبة. لا تظن أنك يجب أن تُظهر الجانب من شخصيتك الذي "يناسب" المنحة أو جامعة أكسفورد. الحقيقة هي أن أفضل طريقة للتميز عن غيرك هي أن تكون أنت، فاكذب بصراحة وصدق عن نفسك. لم يكن أي منا مرشحاً "مثاليًا" ، لكننا كلنا كنا صادقين بشأن أعلامنا لأنفسنا ومجتمعنا.
- 10. ماذا تظن جعل لجنة الاختيار تختار أنك أنت عوضاً عن باقي المتقدمين؟
 - انظر جواب سؤال رقم 9.
- 11. كم طالب سعودي سيُختار هذه السنة؟
 - اثنين كحد أقصى. أختير 3 في عام 2020، لكن هذا غالباً لن يتكرر.
- 12. هل الحصول على منحة الرودز يعني أنني قُبلت في جامعة أكسفورد؟
 - لا، يجب أن تقدم على الجامعة بشكل منفصل، لكن فريق منحة الرودز سيساعدوك في التقديم على الجامعة.
- 13. هل المنحة تغطي التخصص س؟
 - اطلع على الملف التالي لتعرف ما هي التخصصات والبرامج الدراسية التي تشملها المنحة: <https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/files/conditions-of-tenure.pdf>.
 - يمكنك أن تقدم على أي تخصص أو برنامج دراسي تشمله المنحة، بغض النظر عن تخصصك السابق.
- 14. متى أقدم على المنحة؟
 - ستبدأ الدراسة في أكسفورد بعد سنة من الحصول على المنحة، فخطط بناء على ذلك. قدّم قبل الموعد الذي تريد أن تبدأ فيه دراستك بسنة. إن كنت طالب بكالوريوس أو ماجستير، هذا يعني أن تقدم قبل تخرجك بسنة إن كنت تريد أن تكمل دراستك في أكسفورد بعد تخرجك مباشرة.
- 15. ما هي أهم الجوانب في التقديم؟
 - طالما كنت تستوفي كل شروط التأهيل، فأهم الجوانب هي بيانك الشخصي وبيانك الأكاديمي والتوصيات.

التوصيات:

- ابدأ بالتواصل مع كاتبتي التوصيات مبكراً، وليكن لديك خطط بديلة في حال رفض أو تأخر بعضهم.
- اختر الأشخاص الذين يعرفونك جيداً والذين يهتمون بمستقبلك. الدرجة العلمية ووجاهة كاتب التوصية ليست بنفس أهمية أن تكون التوصية معبرة عنك أنت، عن قدراتك وإنجازاتك وشخصيتك.
- واحد أو اثنان من التوصيات الخمس يجب أن يكون عن شخصيتك، ولذلك فالأفضل أن يكون كاتبها شخص عرفك عن قرب خارج الإطار الأكاديمي. على سبيل المثال مدربك في رياضة ما، أو المشرف عليك في تدريب مهني، أو شخص عملت معه عن كثب على مشروع غير أكاديمي.
- لا تتردد في سؤال كاتبتي التوصيات عن ما إذا كانوا يعرفونك بما فيه الكفاية. في بعض الأحيان يكون من المفيد أن تجتمع مع كاتب التوصية بشكل منفرد ليتعرف عليك أكثر، أو أن تكتب له مقالاً تعبر فيه عن نفسك بشكل أوسع.
- من المهم جداً أن تكون التوصية على أكبر قدر ممكن من التفصيل (صفحة ونصف إلى صفتين)، ومن المهم أن تحتوي على مواقف واقعية وقصص حدثت بالفعل تعبر عن شخصيتك وقدراتك كما رآها كاتب التوصية. لذلك لا تتردد في تذكير كاتب التوصية بالصفات أو القصص التي تريد منه أن يبرزها بشكل أكبر في كتابته.
- يمكنك الاطلاع على نماذج لتوصيات سابقة حصلت على منحة الرودز (موجودة على الانترنت) وإطلاع كاتب التوصية عليها حتى تكون عنده صورة عن التوصيات الجيدة. تأكد من أن كاتب التوصية لم ينسخ هذه التوصيات أو

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أي توصيات سابقة. هذه النماذج تفيد في إعطاء فكرة وانطباع عام وليس لاستخدامها بتفاصيلها. تأكد أن التوصية مميزة وأصلية وأنها عنك أنت.

- كاتب التوصية هو من سيرفع التوصية على منصة التقديم وليس أنت. من جانبك أنت عليك أن تضع اسم كاتب التوصية ومعلومات توصله حتى تصله الدعوة ويتمكن من رفع التوصية. املاً هذا القسم من التقديم مبكراً حتى تصله الدعوة ويكون عنده وقت كافٍ لرفع التوصية. ستصلك رسالة عندما يقوم كاتب التوصية برفعها وتسليمها، لذلك تأكد من تذكيره حتى لا يفوته الموعد النهائي لرفع التوصيات (نفس موعد التقديم).