

# Unofficial Guide for Applicants

## *The Rhodes Scholarship for Israel*

**Disclaimer:** *This document is not an official communication by the Rhodes Trust. It was written by current and alumni Rhodes Scholars from the Israeli constituency with the recognition that applicants arrive at the application stage on unequal footing, thus, this document aims to somewhat equalize applicants' access to guidance as they prepare to apply for the scholarship.*

### GENERAL ADVICE

- **Do not self-exclude:** Many of the current scholars did not think they were going to be selected. If you meet the [criteria](#), we highly encourage you to take a leap of faith and just apply. Do not allow previous experiences or stereotypes to discourage you from throwing your hat in the ring.
- **Take the application process as an opportunity for self-reflection:** While the application process might seem extensive, it can be very rewarding. Use this time to reflect on your past experiences, the lessons you have learned from them, and your goals moving forward. It is an opportunity to solidify your values, passions and aspirations. It is also an opportunity to improve critical skills such as writing, requesting recommendation letters, presenting yourself, and interviewing. Regardless of the outcome, you will gain a lot throughout the application process, so enjoy it!
- **Read the “[information for candidates](#)” document very carefully:** These are the official guidelines from the Rhodes Trust. Make sure you understand all the requirements listed and all the documents you need to submit. If you have any questions regarding these, do not hesitate to send an email to: [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk)
- **Do not leave it to the last minute:** There are multiple documents you need to prepare, so it is your responsibility to ensure that you have sufficient time to submit a complete, good application. For example, your academic referees are, most probably, academics with busy schedules and might need a few reminders to send recommendation letters on your behalf (more on recommendation letters below).
- **Think about how the different components of your application form a coherent image of you:** You will be submitting various documents which all have different aims and will showcase

different dimensions of your story. Think about how you can use the limited space and time to show the assessors who you are.

- For example: if you have mentioned a research assistant position in your CV, you might not want to mention it again in your personal statement unless you are elaborating on that experience and adding value to the reader (e.g., how that experience has provided you with insight into the research world and contributed to your conviction that you want to remain in academia).
- **Ensure linguistic and grammatical accuracy**: It would be a shame for the assessors to be distracted from your main message by grammatical errors. To minimize these errors, you could use online tools such as Grammarly (not an official endorsement!), or better yet, enlist the help of a friend (but remember that the work needs to remain yours).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Is the age limit strict?**  
Yes, but if you have specific circumstances that you would like to be considered, email [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk) and they would be happy to further advise you.
- **Is the GPA cut-off strict?**  
Generally, yes, but if you have specific circumstances that you would like to be considered, email [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk) and they would be happy to further advise you.
- **Does getting the Rhodes scholarship mean I automatically get accepted to Oxford University?**  
No. You will need to apply to Oxford University separately. The Rhodes House team will help with this, but be sure to take this step seriously.

## RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

### Who?

- **Your referee should be someone who knows you well and has a high regard for you.** For example, if it is an academic referee, they should know more about you than simply the grade you received in their class. Can they speak to your strengths and weaknesses? Or to your readiness for further study? Or to your leadership skills?
- **Your referee should be well-respected in their field**, but rank is not important. It is not useful to have a recommendation letter from a pioneer in your field if it is short and impersonal, indicating that they barely know you.
- **Your referee should be a reliable person** who you can count on to submit the reference letter in a timely manner.
- **Your referees should complement each other.** Ideally, they should know you from different contexts and be able to comment on different aspects of your personality and abilities.

### How?

- **We recommend meeting with your potential referee** in person (or on Zoom) six to eight weeks before the deadline to let them know of your intention to apply for the Rhodes and gauge whether they are inclined to support your application. Ideally, they would be excited for you!
- If you feel like they would be a good referee, **follow up with an email** requesting their letter. Be direct and clear (e.g. “would you be willing to write a reference letter on my behalf?”).
- **Provide your referees with all the information they would need to write the letter.** This information might include:
  - Formal guide for referees by the Rhodes Trust found [here](#).
  - Annotated CV so that they are aware of the activities you were involved in during your undergraduate studies. Do not be overly humble! For more details, see the CV section below.
  - Your transcript.
  - Papers you had written in their class.
  - Clear instructions on how the reference letter needs to be submitted.

## CV

- According to the [guidelines](#), your CV should include “specific details about academic qualifications, prizes, scholarships, positions of leadership, employment positions, involvement in student, voluntary, community or political activities and any cultural, musical or sporting accomplishments,” and not exceed two A4 pages with a 12pt font.
- Your CV should be concise but also explains your role clearly in the activities you mention. Include details of your specific responsibilities, impact and contributions in every bullet point in your CV. Do not be overly humble, but do not exaggerate either.
- Your CV should be easy to navigate, with intuitive and clear headers for each section.
- Use different action verbs in your CV to accurately convey your involvement. You can make use of the various action verb lists that are available online, such as [this one](#).
- Ask your university’s career service or a trusted mentor to review your CV if possible.

## ACADEMIC STATEMENT

- We cannot comment in depth about this document as it was only introduced to the Rhodes application in 2022. Always refer back to the ‘Information for Candidates’ document.
- According to the [guidelines](#), the academic statement should be no longer than 350 words and should address your “reasons for wishing to study at the University of Oxford, what your chosen course(s) of study is (are), and how this fits in your academic trajectory. Further, you may wish to explain how you hope to be stretched academically at the University of Oxford, or any academic support you imagine might be helpful.” You should also demonstrate that “you are able to at a minimum meet or exceed the specific entry and other academic requirements of the course(s) you have chosen. Tell us how you are prepared for the course(s) academically and otherwise.”
- In short, this statement is supposed to help the selection committee, and you, to have a clearer idea of your academic trajectory and how postgraduate study at the University of Oxford fits into it. It also aims to ensure that you are academically able to enter and succeed in the competitive and rigorous academic environment of the University of Oxford.

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

Since 2022, the guidelines for the personal statement have changed, so we are less able to comment fully on the specifics. However, we would like to offer the following advice:

According to the guidelines, the personal statement should be no longer than 750 words and should address the following prompts:

1. Which Rhodes Scholar quality do you display most strongly, and how are different contexts and people helping you to develop other qualities?
    - These qualities are outlined fully in the [“information for candidates”](#) document, and are, briefly: (a) academic excellence; (b) energy to use your talents to the full; (c) truth, courage, devotion to duty; (d) moral force of character.
  2. What would you like to learn from and contribute to the Rhodes community in Oxford?
  3. From your place in the world, how will you use your energy and talents to address humanity’s pressing challenges?
- Remember that this is your opportunity to tell your story. Beyond your CV and transcript, what do you want the selection committee to know about you? How have your life experiences shaped who you are today and who you hope to be and do in the future? This means that the selection committee expects you to go beyond listing what you have done and instead offer reflections on your growth as a person/leader/scholar/citizen. Why did you complete that internship? Why did you volunteer at that specific organization? What have you gained from these experiences?
  - Your personal statement should showcase your values, inspirations, experiences, aspirations, goals and the potential value of the scholarship to you.
  - A good personal statement is one that is clear, concise and easy to read. Do not write long, convoluted sentences. Make sure that your statement flows well and is coherent with clear links between the ideas.
  - With that said, there is no one “right” way to write a personal statement! By definition, it is *personal* and thus as unique as the person writing it. Write authentically and from your heart. The selection committee wants to meet *you* through your application.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

- **It is normal to be nervous!** But try to think of this as an opportunity to meet interesting people who are doing interesting things.
- **You will have the chance to chat to the other candidates and the selection committee at the reception the night before the interview.** This is an informal gathering intended for you to meet everyone and enter the interview the next day with familiar faces. Be curious and enjoy the process :)
- **Know the material you have submitted VERY well** and be prepared to answer questions about any of the application's components. Think of any gaps in your CV, a low grade you received, or a pivot in direction (e.g. you completed a degree in computer science and now want to pursue biology), and sketch out an explanation for those. No need to memorize answers, but it would be good to think of main points you would like to mention.
- **Be prepared to answer some generic questions** such as:
  - Tell me about yourself
  - How have you demonstrated leadership?
  - What are your strengths?
  - What are your weaknesses?
  - Why do you want to study at Oxford?
  - What are your plans for the future?
- **Practice with trusted colleagues, mentors or friends.** This can help you think through your answers out loud in a safe environment and receive feedback on how it sounds. Remember, your answers should be concise, easy to understand, thoughtful and jargon-free.
- **In the interview, do not hesitate to take time to think of your answers.** Of course, do not take ages to reply, but it is perfectly fine to pause for a few seconds and structure your answer.
- **Once you are done answering, stop talking!** When we are nervous, we tend to ramble on and lose the point we are making. Make sure you answer the question and then stop to give the selection committee time to process what you said and ask follow up questions if needed.
- **Be genuine.** The selection committee wants to know who you are and what you think, not what you think they want to hear.

## MORE RESOURCES

- **The Rhodes Trust website:** <https://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/>
- **The Rhodes Trust email:** Do not hesitate to contact [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk) with any questions you might have about the application process.
- **The Rhodes Trust YouTube channel:**  
This channel has lots of great resources addressing various aspects of the application process, as well as scholars sharing their own experiences. We especially recommend the following videos:
  - **Applying for the Rhodes Scholarship playlist:**  
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL94wHOWgRL6B6G0XI0TK26zIOM96Vrcic>
  - **Scholar chat 2021:** <https://youtu.be/x7ODYhkiGjM>
  - **Scholar chat 2020** featuring Lian Najami and Lamma Mansour:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpPgGqDWgxY&t=621s>
- **Webinar for the students of University of Haifa** featuring Anat Peled, Lian Najami & Lamma Mansour: <https://vimeo.com/591603187/92f7e54123>
- **Webinar for Arab students organized by ScholarIL (in Arabic):**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bgkDcdMiYk>

## ADVICE FROM SCHOLARS & ALUMNI

- “One of the things I found most difficult about the application process was writing the personal statement. Looking back it was because I really did not believe in myself so it made it difficult to tell my story and what this scholarship would mean to me. PLEASE take a chance on yourself.”
- “No one thinks they’re going to get the scholarship - so do not give in to self-doubt! Take this as an opportunity to reflect on your journey so far, and enjoy the ride :) As for the interview, practice, practice, practice. Get your friends and mentors to do mock interviews with you so that you arrive at the real one having practiced talking about yourself and your application. Keep your answers short and to the point.”

- “Try to make the process useful for yourself. Beyond the anxiety it may naturally generate, it can also be a great opportunity for you to take a step back and reflect on your past, present, and future. What has been the story of your life so far? Where would you like to take it next, and why? What would you benefit from spending a few years in Oxford? Focusing on the process rather than on its outcome can alleviate some of the stress you may feel (which is, of course, completely understandable). If you are invited to attend an interview, think of it as a way to meet new, interesting people and expand your horizons. The application process in itself can be a nice (dare I say fun) adventure, regardless of its end.”