

## 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 2026 Rhodes Scholarship through the Southern Africa constituency, for entry in October 2026 to the University of Oxford, in the United Kingdom.**

#### Key Dates

Applications Open: 00:01 SAST, Sunday 01 June 2025

Applications Close: 23:59 SAST, Friday 01 August 2025

Reference Deadline: 23:59 SAST, Friday 15 August 2025

#### 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.
- If you only have a connection to one [Rhodes constituency](#) and you meet the eligibility criteria below, you can apply to the Rhodes Scholarship for that constituency following the process outlined in this document.
- If you have connections to more than one [Rhodes constituency](#) and meet the eligibility criteria for more than one constituency, you should apply to the one to which you have the greatest connection. Once you have chosen your constituency you should read the Information for Candidates and then apply as usual.
- If you have strong and demonstrable connections to **two or more Rhodes Constituencies** but do not meet all of the 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 about this 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 or academic achievement criteria.
- If you cannot see your country or region listed in the list of Rhodes constituencies ([see list here](#)) *and* you are not eligible to apply for inter-jurisdictional consideration, you may be able to apply for a Global Scholarship. Please visit our [website](#) to check if you meet the Global eligibility criteria.

## Choosing which region 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, any 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 eight Rhodes Scholars.

There are four regional Selection Committees, namely:

- i. Eastern Cape and Free State;
  - ii. KwaZulu-Natal;
  - iii. Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North-West; and
  - iv. Western Cape and Northern Cape
- b. KwaZulu-Natal Scholarship: You may apply for the KwaZulu-Natal Scholarship if you live permanently 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 can also send candidates 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 may select one candidate each year.

**NOTE:** You may apply to only one region.

### IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING THE SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

Kindly note that the School Scholarships have been suspended and will not be awarded for 2026 and until further notice. Please be assured that, as ever, applicants who would ordinarily be eligible to apply for a Rhodes Scholarship through their school can also apply for a Rhodes Scholarship via the regional committees of South Africa-at-Large, the KZN Regional Committee or the BLMNS Committee (subject to meeting the relevant eligibility criteria for those regions). Therefore, candidates who want to apply for a Rhodes Scholarship for 2026 should select the appropriate region from those noted above and proceed with their online application as usual.

## 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 2026, 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 2001 and on or before 01 October 2007).
  - (ii) For older candidates who will have passed their 25th birthday on 01 October 2026, 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 2024\*; and

- may not have passed their 28th birthday on 01 October 2026 (which means they must have been born after 01 October 1998).

(iii) For candidates who are MBChB 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 2026 (which means they must have been born after 01 October 1998).
- 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 2026. 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 2026 (which means they must have been born after 01 October 1998), 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 2026, 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, please check Oxford University's [English language requirements](#) to find out if you will need to provide evidence of your English language skills when applying to Oxford.

## LINKS AND TIPS

To make sure you are as prepared as possible to start your application, you should read the information on the Scholarships tab on the Rhodes House website, the [Conditions of Tenure](#) document, and the [University of Oxford's graduate admissions pages](#).

### Useful Links:

- [An A-Z list of the graduate courses at Oxford University](#)
- [An introduction to the types of graduate degrees offered by Oxford University](#)
- [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](#)
- [The University of Oxford's English language proficiency guidance](#)
- [University of Oxford Graduate Admissions](#)

## How to Apply

To apply for the Rhodes Scholarship, you must complete and submit our online application form by 23:59 SAST, 01 August 2025.

There is no application fee for submission of the Rhodes Scholarship application form; however you must submit your application online. We cannot 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 and region), 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.

**The Rhodes application form requires you to provide:**

- Your personal details, such as contact information
- Evidence that you meet the eligibility criteria
- Your education history including your full university transcripts (to date)
- The course(s) you would like to study at the University of Oxford
- A CV (a template is provided [here](#) which you should download and fill out)
- 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.

**Please also note** – before starting an online Rhodes Scholarship application you should be aware of the [Rhodes Trust data protection policy for applications](#).

## 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 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 countries listed at the top of page one, please also supply additional materials necessary to validate citizenship, legal permanent residency, or refugee status.
- An official academic transcript from the university at which you are studying, or have studied, showing grades achieved (to date).
- Copies of your degree certificates.
- A copy of your school leaving certificate.
- You will need to complete the curriculum vitae (CV) template PDF (available to download [here](#)) and upload it into your application form. The template covers the following areas:
  - Academic awards, prizes and scholarships
  - Leadership roles and experience
  - Volunteering and/or community involvement
  - Publications and presentations
  - Skills, hobbies and extra-curricular activities

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.

**Your completed template must not exceed two A4 (12pt font size) pages in length. Please do not include a photograph in the CV.**

- A head-and-shoulders colour photograph (jpg format). Please note your photo 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.

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

## 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.

## Prompts

In your personal statement of up to 1000 words, we ask you to address each of the following prompts by weaving them into the narrative of your statement (the word allocation across the three is up to you):

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. *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?*

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, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship.



### MORAL FORCE OF CHARACTER

and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in your fellow human beings.

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, kindness, 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)*" are evidenced in your transcript, academic statement of study and academic reference letters.)

The three prompts 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':

1st "self": *Which Rhodes Scholar quality do you display most strongly, and how are different contexts and people helping you to develop the other qualities?* – engage us on which of the Rhodes selection criteria you best exemplify. We do not expect you to be the 'finished product'; we also want to hear how you intend to evolve.

2nd "others": *What would you like to learn from and contribute to the Rhodes community in Oxford?* – share with us what you want to learn from and contribute to the Rhodes community, and how you hope to grow as a person and support the growth of others while at Oxford.

3rd "world": *From your place in the world, how will you use your energies and talents to address humanity's pressing challenges?* – make this personal, not generic. We anticipate your particular reflections on what is missing in society and the world today. Considering the complexities of the challenges that we are facing as humanity, we are seeking in Rhodes Scholars people who aspire to and will take action. Tell us what you imagine might be your way of making a contribution.

You can find further guidance on the personal statement on the '[Application Overview](#)' page of our website.

## Choosing your course

The Rhodes Scholarships cover at least two years of study at the University of Oxford and in the application form, you will need to choose a course, or a combination of courses that covers this period.

You should use the University of Oxford's website to find out about the different course options, their content and their entry requirements; a good starting point is the [A-Z list of graduate courses](#). Make sure that you research your planned course(s) thoroughly. You should be aware that once you are at the University of Oxford it is very difficult to change courses, and that this has significant visa implications. **It is therefore important to give serious thought to your desired course of study at Oxford now.**

The Rhodes Scholarship covers most full-time graduate courses. However, you should check our [Conditions of Tenure](#) to find out more about the course combinations we cover, any exceptions and information about additional discretionary funding if your chosen course is longer than two years, that is if you wish to apply for a DPhil (PhD).

You should also propose a second alternative course of study. Admission to Oxford is extremely competitive and we ask all Scholars-elect to make a primary and a secondary (back-up) application.

### Second BA:

In addition to the graduate courses listed on Oxford's website, you can also choose to apply to study for a second undergraduate degree over two years. This is known as a Second BA with Senior Status. Senior Status is the only basis on which a Rhodes Scholar can study for a second undergraduate degree. You can read Oxford's page about [second undergraduate degrees](#) for more information.

For most courses, you apply to Oxford University separately after the selection process for the Rhodes Scholarship is complete, however if you intend to study for a Second BA the process is slightly different. There is a very short window in which to apply for a Second BA, should you be selected for the Rhodes Scholarship. Rhodes applicants apply using a tailored form, which you will normally be expected to return to the Registrar by 12 noon GMT on the first Friday in December. Candidates who are firm in their choice of a second BA may wish to maximise their admission chances by applying directly via [UCAS](#). If you miss both the UCAS and the Rhodes deadline for the second BA application, your chances of admission are limited. Any Scholar Elect applying for a Second BA will be expected to submit at least one application for a graduate degree.

Whilst we advise you to research & consider your choices thoroughly, we understand it is hard to be completely confident about your choice of course and the choices you make in the Rhodes application form are not binding. In some cases, the course can be altered from that proposed, once selected for the Scholarship.

DPHil or MSc by research candidates: a number of Oxford departments recommend that applicants make contact with potential research supervisor(s) before submitting an application to Oxford. Advice on contacting potential supervisors in advance of your application is course-specific and you should follow the guidance found on the individual [course pages](#), most often on the How to Apply tab.

Taught Master's candidates: please note that Oxford faculty members do not normally correspond with applicants, unless explicitly stated on the course page.

## Academic Statement of Study

You will need to write an academic statement of no more than 350 words.

One of the reasons we ask for an academic statement is that entry to the University of Oxford is becoming ever more competitive and, should you win a Rhodes Scholarship, you will have to submit your application to Oxford within a very short timeframe. Researching and writing this statement will help you prepare for that. Rhodes selectors will use the statement to assess whether you will thrive academically in one of the most competitive graduate environments in the world. The academic statement of study should, in a factual and concise manner:

- i. Tell us your reasons for wishing to study at the University of Oxford, what your chosen course(s) of study is (are), and how this fits into your academic trajectory. Furthermore, you may wish to explain how you hope to be stretched academically at the University of Oxford, and any academic support you imagine might be helpful.
- ii. 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.
- iii. If you wish to undertake a DPhil, provide a brief outline of your proposed research area, how it contributes to your future career plans, and list both the Department in which you propose to undertake your research and one or more researchers with whom you would like to work in Oxford.

It is a good idea to discuss your proposed course of study and your academic statement with your academic mentors and/or professors or lecturers in the subject area, and, if possible, with someone who has knowledge of UK universities.

## References

You will need to provide a list of **four** people (your referees) who are willing to submit references on your behalf. Please make sure that you ask their permission before listing them as referees.

- **Academic Referees**: Three of your referees 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 and how well they think you would fare at Oxford. In addition to uploading a reference, your academic referees will be asked a small number of additional questions, including a request to provide an estimated class ranking. **Please note:** for successful Rhodes Scholarship applicants, these references can later be used to form part of the 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 Referee:** You will also need one character referee who should write about your character and involvement in extra-curricular, service or leadership activities. The character referee should be able to comment critically on whether you fulfil the extra-curricular, non-academic requirements of the Scholarship and who can speak in detail to your character.
- You should forward the [Guidance for Referees](#) to your referees. This includes key instructions for your referees on what they will need to write about in their letter.
- Once your referees have agreed to provide a reference for you, you will need to register their names and email addresses in the application form. They will then receive an automatically-generated email request for a reference. This email will include a link to our reference form where they will also be asked to provide their contact details for verification purposes and be able to upload or type in their letter of reference which will remain confidential. Please note that your referees may be contacted for further information.
- You should ensure that you register your referees within the application form early, to allow them sufficient time to provide a detailed reference letter. **It is your responsibility to ensure that referees submit their references online before 23:59 SAST, 15 August 2025.** You can track the progress of their references within the application form.
- 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.
- You should choose reliable people who are likely to respond to your request for a detailed reference, as their letters will be crucial to your application. If you do not have the minimum number of required references, your application may not be considered by the Selection Committee.

## 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 in but below are the key stages:

- **01 August 2025:** Deadline for applications
- **15 August 2025:** 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 assessment determines if your application will proceed to the next stage.
- **September - November:** Interviews will be held in South Africa. All interviews will take place between 26 September and 9 November 2025. The Selection Committees for BLMNS, KZN and regions meet in September and October. The South Africa-at-Large/ national selections are held in November.

- In all constituencies the final stage of selection is a social engagement and final interview. Candidates shortlisted for regional interviews and as finalists for national interviews in Southern Africa must be available to attend both, 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 travel. Accommodation within South Africa will be provided, where necessary.
- **By December 2025:** 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. If you disclose a disability and/or request additional 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 will be shared with our student support team, who will help support you during your time at Oxford.
- Applications submitted for the Rhodes Scholarship in 2025 are for entry to the University of Oxford in October 2026; 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, to support your application to the University of Oxford.

Full details will be given to you upon selection, however candidates who intend to apply for courses in the Medical Sciences, or research degrees in Computer Science and/or Engineering should note that the graduate application **deadline now usually falls in the first few days of December**. You are advised to check the course page of your preferred course(s) carefully and to note the deadline well in advance.

### Need to get in touch?

National Secretary  
Mr Ndumiso Luthuli  
Email: [southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com](mailto:southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com)

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

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

#### Regional Selection Committee Secretaries

Western Cape and Northern Cape  
Dr Salih Solomon and Ms Janet Jobson  
Email: [southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com](mailto:southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com)

Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North-West  
Ms Lusanda Juda-Kgakololo and Dr Thomas Brennan  
Email: [southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com](mailto:southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com)

KwaZulu-Natal  
Mr Mbongeni Ndlovu  
Email: [southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com](mailto:southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com)

Eastern Cape and Free State  
Mr Chris McConnachie  
Email: [southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com](mailto:southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com)

Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and eSwatini (BLMNS)  
Justice Omphemetse Mooki  
Email: [southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com](mailto:southernafrica.secretary@rhodestrust.com)

If you have any further questions, which aren't answered in this document or on our [website](http://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk) please do get in touch at [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk).

For further information about the Rhodes Scholarship, see [www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/](http://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/)

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

## THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIP FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA: 2026

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

### GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES

References must be written in English and must be uploaded before **23:59 SAST, 15 August 2025**.

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.

#### Background Information

The Rhodes Scholarship programme is the oldest (established 1903), and perhaps the most prestigious, international scholarship in the world. Administered by the Rhodes Trust in Oxford, the programme offers over 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 and are committed to the service of others. They show promise of becoming value-driven, principled leaders for the world's future, wherever their careers might take them, and in any field. 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 meet or exceed the entry requirements of their chosen course. 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, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship.
- **Moral force of character and instincts to lead,** and to take an interest in their fellow human beings.

For further details, see: [www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/](http://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk/scholarships/the-rhodes-scholarship/)

#### Writing Your Letter of Recommendation

- The Selection Committee will have a copy of the applicant's university academic transcript, curriculum vitae, and their academic and personal statements. We would welcome any observations you have which would enhance the Committee's understanding of these documents.
- A brief introduction of yourself would be helpful, including any connections that you have with the Rhodes Trust, Rhodes Scholars and the University of Oxford (such connections are certainly not necessary).
- Where you are able, you should comment on how the applicant demonstrates the four selection criteria outlined above. While proven academic excellence is the first quality listed, the other criteria are equally important.
- It is not expected that you will be able to speak from first-hand knowledge of all of the applicant's qualifications.
- Please speak of the applicant's limitations as well as strong points. We do not expect applicants to be the 'finished product' and we are interested to learn how they intend to evolve. Committees tend naturally to be dubious of hyperbole and appraisals that imply a given individual has no limitations. Your reply will, of course, be treated as strictly confidential by the Selection Committee.

**Rhodes Scholarship reference letters are confidential and you should not share them with applicants. References must be written in English and your comments should not exceed two A4 or letter size pages (minimum 10-point type).**

Applicants for the Rhodes Scholarships are asked to seek both character and academic references. The reference form will clarify which type of reference you have been asked to submit.

### Academic referees

If you are primarily acquainted with the candidate through a teacher/student relationship, it is expected that your reference will concentrate primarily on academic quality and potential, although your assessment of other qualities will be welcomed. 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 and so please consider whether the applicant is prepared for their chosen course of study at one of the most competitive graduate environments in the world.

**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 applicant'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. You are specifically 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 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?

It can also be useful for Oxford application purposes for academic referees to comment on candidates' motivation, their ability to work in a group environment, and, for those considering research degrees, their aptitude for sustained individual and self-motivated investigation.

### Character referees

If 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. With reference to the selection criteria above, please pay particular attention to the following:

- energy to use their talents to the full;
- truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship;
- moral force of character and instincts to lead

### Submitting Your Letter of Recommendation

- When an applicant has registered your details in the application form, you will receive an auto-generated email with a link to the online reference form where you will be able to upload your reference letter. The form will also include questions about yourself and your relationship to the candidate.
- All letters of recommendation should be addressed to the Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee.
- The Selection Committee asks **that your letter of recommendation be on headed paper, signed, and uploaded in pdf format.** If you are unable to access an official/institutional letterhead we can, on an exceptional basis, accept references on a personal letterhead that clearly states your institutional affiliation and provides official contact information including an email address and phone number.
- All letters of reference should be submitted via the online reference form. **Please ensure that you press submit once you have completed the form.**

Once you submit, 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 during the selection process you may be contacted for further information.

**NOTE: 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.**

**References must be written in English and must be uploaded before 23:59 SAST, 15 August 2025.** If you require any further support with submitting your reference please email: [scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scholarship.queries@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk)