

Scholars Map

To mentor, guide and support those who, in pursuit of better education need scholarships to realise their goal.

ACING YOUR CHEVENING INTERVIEWS!!!

We congratulate you all on getting shortlisted for the interviews. It is well-deserved and now is the time for you to face the interview. The interview is usually a time for the interviewers/recruiters to corroborate the stories in your essays and to know more about you by probing you further based on what you submitted in your application. There is therefore no substitute for meticulous preparations for an interview. Ensure you have your essays in your finger-tips and be ready to defend them or explain some sections in them if asked for more clarification.

There are lots of interview preparation materials on the internet. Search them and acquaint yourself with the interview format, dos and don'ts. Search through the entire Chevening website and note anything that is important. It may be useful at the interview. Also go through our blog to read about the STAR/SAR/CAR/PAR and SMART way of answering your interviews. Of course don't forget to be TRUE!

Finally know that it's not the number of words one spews that matter but rather the content therein. Therefore, ensure every word count/has a message to convey. Speak with authority/like an informed person.

Below are some few guidelines to help you in your interview search. A nice reading and we wish you the best in your interviews!

Interview gaffes to avoid

Whilst the scholarship assessment criteria will not likely be based on any of these items, they will affect how you are perceived. How you're perceived will impact on the personal bias of your assessor and determine whether, "Accepted!" is written atop your file or otherwise.

1. Don't be late. Target arriving the venue at least 15 minutes before schedule.

2. Don't dress inappropriately. Look smart. Look neutral. Look natural. Ill-fitting dresses and shouting colours call to question your judgement.
3. Don't try to dominate the interview. Allow the interviewer to take the lead.
4. Don't come across as loquacious. Do not rumble! Be concise. Target addressing any question in two-to-three minutes. Avoid repeating yourself or trailing off the question/answer and answering your own questions. Stick to what is asked.
5. Don't use inappropriate or informal communication even if the interviewer does. No slang, no vernacular. Remember you're the one being interviewed. Some interviewers often make you feel at home, but don't be carried away. Remain poised and formal.
6. Don't appear stiff and unfriendly. Smile when appropriate. If you're a humorous person, use humour not more than once; so long as you're sure it buttresses your point and that it will really come across as funny.
7. Don't paint your country "black" (especially as you narrate the challenges, you're passionate about solving) while painting the West "white" in trying to curry the favour of your scholarship sponsors. It boomerangs. Every country has its own challenges!
8. Don't be disrespectful to anybody at the interview venue, including the cleaner and co-interviewees.
9. Don't be too forward. Avoid asking the interviewer personal questions. E.g. A female interviewee asking a male interviewer: "how about your wife and family?" Questions must always be confined to the scholarship platform.
10. Don't be too informal. Address the interviewer as Mr. or Mrs. or Ms. unless they specifically invite you to call them by directly by their names.
11. Don't extend your hand for a shake. Allow the interviewer to extend theirs if necessary.
12. Don't interrupt the interviewer. Allow them to land, even if you do not understand what he is saying or asking. You will get no bonus for antagonising, correcting or interrupting your assessor. You risk coming as cocky and uncultured!!!
13. Don't persistently keep your face down, and don't keep staring into people's eyes 2-4-7 to prove to them that you're confident. This is not the place to practice Greene's 24 laws of power or attraction. This is the interview! Vary your eye gazes.
14. Don't carry big luggage into the interview room even if you will be travelling to the next city after the interview. Leave them somewhere safe!
15. Don't communicate insecurity and lack of confidence. Maintain steady eye contact and a firm handshake; but do not grasp the interviewer's hand too strongly until it hurts, just to prove you're macho.
16. Don't enter the room with your mobile phone switched on or unsilenced.
17. Don't enter the interview room with a full bladder or feeling to use the toilet.

18. Don't appear before the interviewer with a smelling breath. Buy those fresheners. Avoid alcoholic drinks before the interview. It's very disrespectful!!!
19. Speak naturally and with your normal speed. Don't speak too fast or too slow and never fake your accent!!!
20. Try to be honest in your submissions. Don't exaggerate your achievements to the point you're lying out-rightly because this will be detected.
21. Blow your own trumpet because no one else will. Be ambitious and proud of them. But be mindful of point 20 above.
22. Vary your examples, if multiple asked. Don't be too rigid on the ones you wrote in the essays, they already know these. However, don't deviate too much from your essays and for the career plan, it's important that you stick to it, only expanding where necessary.
23. You may find that putting hands under the table is safe for you, to avoid fidgeting with your fingers or picking your nose. It can also help if your nails are not groomed though you're expected to be well-groomed at the interview.
24. Don't worry too much about the interview, especially on the D-day. Focus on being yourself. Best wishes!

Anatomy of an Interview

This interview 'proforma' is only a guide – a sign post. There's no one best way of answering interview questions. The only best way is: answering convincingly and in your own style. The responses given here are generic and any similarities to anybody's profile are purely coincidental.

- **Tell us about yourself and why did you apply for Chevening?**

These/these may be the first question(s) you're asked and it's to make you feel at home. It also gives you the opportunity to give a first impression of sorts, to hook the interviews and show them you mean business! You therefore need to get the ground running. In about 1-2 mins, give a succinct account of yourself including but not limited to: your biodata/demographics; education(just mention the highest level attained unless earlier qualifications are essential for the courses); professional experience (current job, location, position and role, also mention if you're partners with any UK funding body, especially if they fund your project or fund a co-partner – for UK interests in your country!); any awards or major milestones e.g. books or articles authored or co-authored, patents held and start-up businesses held; your special hobbies and

volunteering/recreational activities – don't underestimate these last two, they show you're an all-round person who will not only survive in the UK but also thrive!

NB: Check the second part of the question in the third question below.

I am a graduate of ABC (with distinction) I have over X years of experience in the Z sector. I currently work in the capacity of the XYZ where I lead a team of 10 people to do ABC. I leverage excellent soft interpersonal skills to influence my team to reaching set objectives. Our last project completed earned me the QRS Award. My interests are in ABC because of XYZ. Socially speaking, I maintain robust relationships with my peers and keep in touch with my varied professional networks. I am an outgoing person and also fit well in multi-culturally diverse settings evidenced by my mastery of two international languages and 4 local dialects as well as various conferences attended, locally and abroad. I enjoy travelling (and have been to A and B). I am also a dancer – I teach a group 15 youngsters weekly, the salsa dance steps

- **Describe a leader that you admire and explain what inspires you about this leader.**

You can mention a global, national, regional or local leader/person who has impacted your life or viewpoints about life. There are no hard and fast rules here. The qualities or attributes of the person should be reproducible and desirable. It is even better if the person overcame many hurdles to achieve a certain goal. Ensure you know the person in and out, especially if they're historical and global figures such as the likes of Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela, Mike Tyson, etc. Choose the one you can confidently speak about because they might ask something specific about that leader and you wouldn't want to confabulate or come stuck. So if not sure, speak about your local hero in any field – music, football, politics, journalism, medicine, education, athletics, etc. e.g.

I admire George Weah. He was undeterred by his humble beginnings and maximised his talents to reach the zenith of an illustrious footballing career. Yet again, rather than toe the easy coaching line like most of his colleagues do post-retirement, he embraced a new vision and a new challenge. He identified the steps necessary to reaching it and humbled himself. He pursued the course with an unflinching commitment through an over 10-year period and stayed focused. Today, he has the top job in Liberia, one of the youngest presidents to be so elected, in the African continent and the first footballer ever. His contributions to his country's development prior, in terms of XYZ and ABC played no small roles in increasing his influence among his people who voted him massively. His story demonstrates the power of vision, the power of determination and how a sense of individual cor-

porate social responsibility can transform lives. These are the exact same qualities replicable in my own little experiences.

- **Why did you apply for Chevening/why Chevening and no other scholarship?**

Any answer here is okay as long as it's in line with Chevening's goals and aspirations. You can talk about how you're already a leader or your aspirations to be a future leader/influencer in your sphere and how Chevening's set up is the best platform for you to showcase your leadership skills and also model you into an important mover and shaker in the not-so-distant future, especially upon returning home and in years to come. Talk about the numerous opportunities Chevening will give you to network and cross-learn from other like-minded people from other parts of the globe. (There are networking events both by Chevening but also your school and other organisations you may come across in the UK – mention at least one such event). The Chevening scholarship will support your dreams of attaining high quality education in the UK, enable you to explore the UK culture and its people and widen your global perspective. Ensure you don't dwell too much on this, briefly mention a point and move on.

- **Why do you consider yourself a suitable candidate for Chevening?**

The best way here is probably to talk **succinctly** about your leadership/influence and networking experience, and crown it with your career plan (including your objectives during your time in the UK) and how Chevening stands to benefit from investing in you. You may also talk about how you fulfil the Chevening requirements. You **may** give brief but clear statements/points/examples/themes of the above without being elaborate otherwise you risk completing the entire interview in one question. You may prefer giving them general statements without talking about specific examples, as you will be asked these later. E.g.

Firstly, my professional and academic track records prove that I both meet Chevening's two-year work experience criterion, and that I can complete with excellent evaluation, a rigorous master's program in the UK. Secondly, I have been giving back to my community in several ways leveraging/demonstrating my leadership potentials and networking potential. (For instance (then give two examples from your personal statement)). I have a clear and demonstrable post-study plan, with demonstrable returns on the resources Chevening has invested in me. My humble yet profound contributions make me an ideal Chevening Ambassador and my study and post study objectives are such that Chevening stands to benefit from me. (Lastly, the burning need to build capacities in the XYZ sector, my hands-on experiences in this same sector and my willingness to

implement ABC intervention programs to drive change, makes me the best fit for your consideration)

- **How do you plan to distinguish yourself from the rest of the Chevening scholars?**

I will remain dedicated to my studies and aim at finishing my program with honours because I want to make not only Chevening but my home country proud. Furthermore, I will actively participate in conferences, symposia and other enriching social gatherings to expand my network and gain new perspectives. I aspire to serve as one of the Chevening ambassadors as well as my university's international student representative. These engagements will equip me with invaluable soft skills outside academics.

- **Why did you choose the UK and not any other country?**

You may talk about its famed historical sites, diverse culture, music and art, natural resources (game parks, R Thames, etc), ?food ?weather.

- **What challenges do you envisage you will encounter in the UK and how do you plan to overcome them?**

Challenges– weather, home-sickness, food, new people/away from old friends, demanding academics (1-year master's compared to 2 years in your country) etc

Solutions: Talk of any prior experience of being away from your friends/family for a protracted period and how you coped e.g. academics – already shows you can easily settle in a new environment, engage oneself in co-curricular activities to keep oneself busy, travel and participate in networking events to occupy oneself, talk to peers if you encounter a challenge, seek advice from your personal tutor or counselling department if it becomes more difficult to cope up with new environment, take up new hobbies e.g. watch football, read self-help books etc

- **How do you personally define leadership?**

For me, leadership is seeing the way, going the way, showing the way, and motivating others to go the way. Leadership is seeing a problem and fixing it. Leadership is getting things done by influencing your network. Lastly, leadership is the capacity to empower individuals to pay attention to their own leadership potential. I have demonstrated all these traits in the following ways:.....

- **What does effective networking mean to you and how do you do it in your own experience?**

Beyond chatting, socialising and fun-fare on various social platforms including internet platforms, like many would see it, networking for me, means building quality symbiotic relationships and sustaining them. Networking is cooperation; a cooperation that is based on trust, respect, mutually-beneficial interests/agenda. It involves team building, caring for others and helping them, collaborating with people and departments, and staying in touch by leveraging social media and all available modes of communication. I consider helping and caring for others as well as sharing knowledge one of the most effective means for deep networking. In this regard, I was able to bring succour to XYZ community by liaising with ABC stakeholders to implement QRS outreach program in..... Give two examples.

- **What will be your contribution to Chevening global alumni network in the UK and your home country?**

During my stay in the UK, I plan to join the XYZ club of my university, and plan to invite Chevening scholars from other schools to some of the seminars. They would be contributing by sharing their experiences in their own schools, so we can gain an expansive and representative knowledge of the issues discussed. This will make other students in my school more aware about Chevening. After my award, I will come home and be a part of the local alumni, where I hope to coach new scholars and fellows beginning their Chevening experience by guiding them using my own experiences as to what it means to study and live in the UK. I also hope to mentor prospective scholars still aspiring to be a part of this elitist nexus on diverse physical and social media platforms. Furthermore, I will mentor fresh alumni, who recently have completed their programs as to how, to maximise the academic and personal experiences gained through Chevening. These will all help to extend the influence of Chevening as well as increase her popularity.

- **What are your plans? And how can Chevening help you achieve them?**

This is your defining moment, the pinnacle of your Chevening interview, the do-or-die moment, the ultimate test of a soon-to-be Chevening Scholar, and the likely determinant of whether one is conditionally selected, reserved or rejected when results start trickling in around early June. Your career plan must be very clear, and ideally follow the SMART or DOPA objectives acronyms. Of course, if you didn't do well in the other sections, don't expect to sail through based on this question only!

Probably unlike the other sections of your applications, you are expected to adhere to what you wrote in your application essay but expound where necessary. After all, a mere 500 words can never do justice to your grand 15-year plan. So, this is the moment to tell them the **process** of achieving your career plans and any other essential details as necessary. At this point, you can dream BIG. Don't fear any plan, including being your country's president or the first person from your country to lead the World Bank.

These are two questions. Ensure you answer both as you will get half the marks even if you wow them with your grand plans. Again, you may be asked a 5-year or 10-year career plan. Remember to answer accordingly. No need mentioning your 10-year career plan when asked about 5 years.

For the second question, you can talk about the leadership mentoring, networks created, the skills and knowledge acquired from the master's, the Chevening alumni connection etc...all courtesy of Chevening. Link these perks to your career plan. E.g.




My short-term goal is to finish my Master program with excellent evaluation. This will open me up to vistas of opportunities back at my home country. I plan to work as a computer analyst in XYZ for the next 3 years postgraduation. This will allow me to apply my learning in the UK in a practical way and gain hands-on experiences. I hope to also gain management skills from this position necessary to reaching my next goals. My medium-term goals will be to gain a PhD in computer informatics and programming. This will further equip me with skills to carry independent research in ABC and position me in the forefront of AI (artificial intelligence) discourse. I will then join the academia to transfer competences to the next generation of data programmers/analysts. My long-term goal is to contribute to the economic growth and technological advancement of my home country. I will do so by investing in ICT and pioneering relevant research. Through Chevening, I am set to laying the foundation by acquiring the necessary skills, starting with this master's program. The Chevening network, numbering over 50, 000 alumni will also provide me the platform for shared experiences, cross-fertilisation of ideas and collaborative work/partnerships.

- **But you can also work in those sectors with a BSc, why do you need a master's degree?**

I need a master's degree because my career aspirations require particular skills-set, which I either currently lack or needs to be sharpened. Some of these skills include XYZ, which the ABC modules in QRS will furnish me with. My career progression will also be either limited or extremely sluggish without this master's program. Finally, the master's degree is preparatory to my mid-term goals of pursuing a PhD in advanced biostatistics.

The questions are neither certain nor is the list exhaustive. They are nothing but suggestions and fluid guidelines adaptable to the given context you may meet. Best wishes!

****Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), its partner organisations or any scholarship awarding body. Whereas the authors have taken every effort to provide accurate information, they are not liable for any factual errors that may be contained in this article.***

 February 27, 2019  scholarsmap  Leave a comment

PERSONAL STATEMENT, INTERVIEWS AND CV!!!

WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT/STATEMENT OF PURPOSE/MOTIVATIONAL STATEMENT FOR UNIVERSITY ADMISSION AND GETTING READY FOR INTERVIEWS!!!

Getting admitted for postgraduate studies by most universities worldwide will require some form of a “statement” to the admission board. There are many definitions of a personal statement, but all have one thing in common: “selling yourself to the admitting authority and convincing them that you’re worthy of a place in the university and course of your choice”.

There are no hard and fast rules regarding personal statements – in most cases the universities have their own guidelines regarding the content and length of the statement – though they may restrict to usually a page or two (some have word limits). They also give guidance on what to include in the PS.

Regardless of the length and the contents of the PS, you must demonstrate in your PS that you’re the best candidate for your chosen course and university. You will generally do this by writing about your skills, experiences and ambitions that fit in the course’s and university’s overarching goal. The PS should generally contain all or some of this

information: ***a brief introduction about you, reasons for the course and university, why you are the most suitable candidate, how your current work/studies is relevant to the course, any related hobbies or interests, skills and achievements and your career goals.*** You don't need to include all of these in your PS but it's important that you include as many as you can.

It is vital that you first research the course and university of your choice – does it match your career goals? Does it provide a conducive environment for you to prosper holistically? What do past (&possibly current) students say about it? What are the profiles of some of its alumni? What does the course say about the career of most of its alumni- i.e. where do most go after graduation? In a nutshell, you want to choose a course and university you will thrive both in vivo and in vitro – during studies and after the books. Thoroughly researching your chosen course will also guide you on the likely course modules you're interested in and the potential project you will undertake as part of your studies (if this involves one). You can get all this information from the university's and course's website but feel free – in fact, I encourage you – to consult other sources including past and current students if you know any.

We will now look at some of the main points that most (some would say all) PS should contain.

Introduction

Usually, you start your PS by briefly but succinctly introducing yourself. It may contain information about where you come from, special circumstances surrounding your childhood or any other important stage in your life. It could also include your principle values, core beliefs or life goals/objectives. As a guide, it's better to link these to the course or career plan though this is not always the case. For example, if you're doing a health-related course, you could talk of a scenario in early childhood that inspired you to work in that field. The same if you're applying for teaching course, music, management, business etc.

The introduction should arouse interest in the person reading your PS – you should aim to hook him/her at all costs. Be informed that they read hundreds and possibly thousands of statements and you really don't want to cause them any unsolicited stress. Avoid trite or generic statements such “*I am a born leader*” – they might find these mildly irritating and a put off. Don't write sob stories – they are a big no! If you include one, turn into a positive – show how you overcame a difficult challenge to be where you are!

E.g. My goal has always been to help children. I developed this desire in early childhood when many of my classmates dropped out of school prematurely since their parents could not afford the exorbitant fees. This was worsened by the dangerous cultural practices that frowned upon school and viewed boys as shepherds and girls as house helps who were to be groomed as future wives. Determined to challenge and change this viewpoint, I was inspired to take up a course in teaching – for I believe Education is the best way to change society. Despite many hurdles at university, I finally graduated with a BSc in Education and immediately returned to my home and apply the new skills and knowledge learnt. Since then I have...

At this point, if the school demands high grades and you had issues in some of your subjects at university, please state why you underperformed in those areas – just be honest. You may have been a sportsperson or engaged in leadership that your academics took a hit but be quick to point out remedial steps you took. You may explain how you overcame school challenges/how you supplemented your fees or got maintenance at school. Just ensure the story is believable and importantly, you're not overfishing for sympathy. You can talk of how you sold crap items at university to make ends meet or how you helped your uncle sell his shop during the holidays – this way you're even bringing your other extra-curricular skills.

Why the Course

This has already been covered in the [Why Study in the UK Essay](#) – please read more by clicking this link.

After the introduction above, you can then talk about your academic or professional experience. Sometimes the course may require you to have some special skills or knowledge – please this is the time to briefly mention them though this will also be in the CV – but the CV is mainly in bullets and here you want to expound on those skills relevant to the course. It's not just about the skills or knowledge, also talk about how you acquired them. However, you don't want to oversell yourself that you appear overqualified – why would you need a master's if you already possess all the skills the course offers.

Next, you can talk about a challenge in your work place, region or country that needs to be addressed and that you feel the course will equip you with the requisite skills, knowledge and understanding to tackle upon returning home. State what the problem and why it is a problem. It's not just enough to say there are many children dropping out of school- so what? State why that's a challenge – you can state from socio-economic, political or cultural perspectives. Also quantify the problem. To drive home the point, you

can always compare it with another region or country or a decree/guideline from an international or regional body about the problem. E.g., *The 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey puts the maternal mortality ratio at 806 deaths per 100,000 live births, against the global average of 212 per 100,000 live births (2015 WHO estimates). In contrast, Sweden and Norway recorded no maternal deaths in 2015.* You can then highlight the causes or problems of such high maternal mortality. You can link this to the SDG 3.1 of reducing the MMR to less than 70/100,000 and no country having more than double that figure – you can even stress how much needs to be done to bridge the gap.

Another example could be a situation where you actually see and understand a problem, but you're limited by skills or knowledge – this can be a good selling point if sculpted well. E.g., *In my classes, I come across students with diverse and complex education needs that, unfortunately neither my skill nor the environment, can sufficiently address. As a result, these children are often left lagging behind in class and most of them either drop out of school altogether or unnecessarily repeat classes. This experience has inspired me to pursue a course that will equip me with the requisite skills and knowledge in order to support these types of children.* Here, you can also show how there are no such facilities in your country or region or school and how you hope you'll introduce them upon returning home.

As mentioned in the Chevening essays, you need to clearly spell out the skills, understanding and knowledge you will acquire from the course. These are usually provided as course objectives/goals in the course's and university's website. You need to simply paraphrase 2-3 of them. You can then highlight which course modules interest you and why. Mention any specific features of the way the course material is delivered that may have inspired you to apply to the school/course. Other points to potentially/possibly include here are: the lecturers that may have appealed to you, the networking opportunities, the cultural diversity of the school, the leadership opportunities, the school/subject rankings and indeed, anything you find may give you some leverage. You can also speak about school alumni, the library or the town in which the school is located (I know one school that prides itself in a local premier league team!!!).

Career Plan

This is invariably asked in nearly all motivation statements. Again, we talked about this in the Chevening essay. You can check it [here](#). However, instead of the 500 words of Chevening, you probably have a little over 100 words to summarise your career plan, so you have to parsimoniously plan what to say here.

The career plan – at least the immediate one – should resonate with your chosen course and should ideally look at tackling the challenges you mentioned earlier on why you wanted to pursue the given course. It's always good to tell them that you'll return to your country and apply the skills and knowledge gained from the master's improve the status quo. It's also nice to talk about using your new networks and collaborations to move your area forward. Finally, you can then give your long-term goals in a sentence or two. If possible, always mention the quantifiable difference you hope to achieve from your intervention and how this will be measured.

As a rule, be altruistic. Talk of what benefits society and not you as an individual – let your personal gains be occupational benefits – for a man eateth where he worketh!

Interviews

Some universities and courses require that you do interviews before being offered a place. In most cases, they just want to know that you're the one who wrote the PS, so most questions will revolve around it. You will usually be given a week's notice or so that you have been invited for interviews – the date and time will be indicated but you will usually be asked to confirm that you're comfortable with the arrangement. Please, don't rush, out of excitement, to confirm. Take your time, go through the likely schedule of the nominated time and date and see if you will be free and most importantly you will be in a clear network area since this usually involve Skype calls. You will also need to furnish them with your mobile number in case the network is tripping.

Once you have confirmed the date and time, begin the preparations. Go through the course's and school's website – note down a few important programmes, events and the persons, especially your course directors and the likely tutors. It's likely that the course director will be among those to interview you. Read about their areas of interest – you can always snowball search about them in other websites. Read about the student services they offer, e.g. counselling, career, sports and learning outside classes.

Generally, you will be asked questions such as *why have you chosen this course? Why the school? What skills do you hope to get from the school? What are your research interests? What challenges do you envisage you will meet and how will you overcome them? (I was asked on two occasions how I will overcome stress) What are your plans after the master's? what will you bring to the course? Be prepared for other questions as well – I was asked once "What do you understand by Global Health?"* I was never prepared for this and I ended up fumbling throughout the rest of the interview – because I knew I had failed the first question. Finally, after the interview, the ball will be thrown back at you and you will be asked if you have any questions to ask them. As a rule, al-

ways prepare a maximum of 2-3 questions and possibly ask 2 only. It's your opportunity to show that you've researched about the course and can earn you extra points. I remember once asking a panel a very good question that the professors took turns answering it, with each starting with "This is an excellent question". Though the waiting time was 2 weeks from the time of interviews to the results, I got a positive feedback in a week.

After getting your acts together, prepare for the interview by going through the likely answers – express yourself freely, don't cram the exact words to say!!! Just understand what you're going to say. The pressure of the interview can throw all those words through the window and if you crammed them, I am afraid you may struggle even for obvious questions. You can try to find out an alumni or current student who did/is doing the same course you've been shortlisted for interviews and let him/her guide you. If possible, hold a mock interview and go through the likely questions and answers. Preparing this way will settle your nerves and improve your confidence – bonus points for you!

Be smart on the day of the interview and speak in our usual accent!!! Don't speak too fast or too slow. If you have not understood well the question, politely ask them to repeat or explain what they mean and do this if you don't understand certain words as well – you won't be penalised for not understanding all the English words. Allow the interviewers to complete the question and you can pose for 5 seconds before answering them – make sure you have properly understood the question. Occasionally, pause when speaking to recollect yourself – just don't be under pressure rumbling through words or trying to over impress them – you may hit a snag. Be expansive in your response and show that you understand the course, the school and the life of a foreign student doing a master's in a foreign country. A good trick is to sometimes smuggle the names of the interviewers – if you had read about them into your answers. You can do this during the why the school, why the course, research interests etc.

Sometimes you will be asked a difficult question. Other than confabulating, be honest and say you don't know and move on, responding to other questions as if you had never been asked such a question.


CV/Resume

Universities also require short CVs of probably 1-2 pages. You need to summarise and include all the salient features such as academic awards (may include your position in class e.g. among top 5%) and subjects studied, relevant work experiences, co-curricular activities, additional training attended, and essential skills and interests.

There are samples of academic essays out there including a list of words you use to demonstrate relevant skills and achievements.

As a guide, always try to include all the relevant information that the course outlines as requirement for the successful candidate.

****Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of any school admission body awarding body. Whereas the authors have taken every effort to provide accurate information, they are not liable for any factual errors that may be contained in this article.***

 January 1, 2019  scholarsmap  Leave a comment

COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE COMMONWEALTH MASTER'S SCHOLARSHIP FOR CANDIDATES FROM LOW AND MIDDLE INCOME COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES.

The commonwealth scholarships commission administer various Commonwealth Master's and PhD scholarships. This guide is specifically meant for the Commonwealth

Master's Scholarships for candidates from low and middle income Commonwealth countries eligible to study for a full-time Master's course at a UK university.

Background information

The Commonwealth scholarships are the UK's oldest scholarships which started in 1959 and currently has over 35,000 scholars and fellows. The Scholarships are funded by the UK Department for International Development and are specifically meant for academically talented and motivated individuals to gain the knowledge and skills required for sustainable development. The scholarships are administered by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) and focus majorly on the following six themes:

1. Science and technology for development
2. Strengthening health systems and capacity
3. Promoting global prosperity
4. Strengthening global peace, security and governance
5. Strengthening resilience and response to crises
6. Access, inclusion and opportunity

Eligibility

There are various criteria used for one to be eligible for this specific scholarship. To be eligible, you must be a citizen of an eligible Commonwealth country or a refugee in such a country. For the 2019/20 round, 42 countries are listed on the [official website](#) as eligible. Also, you need to have a good academic grade at your undergraduate (usually first class, upper second class or second class degree, but there is a section for you to explain any short falls in this area) and must be available to commence your studies by October 2019. This means you need to have obtained admission to one eligible UK University by the time you are provisionally selected for the award (this is discussed below). If you already have a Master's degree, you are still eligible to apply. However, if you were previously sponsored by the UK government (on any of their scholarship schemes), then you may not be eligible.

Timeline

The whole timeline is not clearly provided on the website. However, from last round's experience and the little information provided on the website, the following dates are provisionally the timeline for the 2019/20 round:

1. Application opens: October/November 2018.

2. Application closes: 19th December, 2018 at exactly 16:00 GMT.
3. Deadline for supporting documents: 4th January 2019 at exactly 16:00 GMT.
4. Deadline for nominating bodies to submit nomination list: 25th January, 2019.
5. Review of eligibility by CSC: by end of May 2019.
6. Provisional award letter sent to successful applicants: June and July 2019.
7. Placement for provisionally awarded applicants: June and July 2019.
8. CSC send Notice of Award after placement: June and July 2019.
9. CSC send Confirmation of Award letters: June and July 2019.
10. Scholar start their Master's study: August/September/October 2019.

As you can see above, the process takes months. It is therefore important that you exercise some patience as you wait if you are nominated.

Application process

The first thing you should know is that the CSC does not accept applications sent to them directly. The Commission works with various organisation called nominating body/agencies. These bodies are either the ministry of higher education in an eligible country, selected higher learning institutions in some countries (mostly universities) or an eligible international organisation. All applications made for this scholarship must go through one or more of these nominating agencies. Therefore, you can apply to as many nominating agencies as you are eligible for you to get nominated. Each nominating body is responsible for its own selection process and may have additional eligibility criteria to that provided by the CSC. You must check with these nominating body for their specific advice and rules for applying, and for their own closing date for applications as they may be slightly earlier than what is provided above on the timeline. Some of the additional criteria for most national nominating agencies is that they may require you to submit a hard copy application letter, academic documents, study synopsis and conduct interviews before selecting a final nomination list. Once nominated, the agency will contact you and ask you to complete the online application system which they will endorse as your nominating body.

International organisations who act as nominating agencies may also have additional eligibility criteria. It is good practice to google them and find out how their selection criteria works. One of the advantages (if you may say so) of applying through them is that they base their nomination solely on the quality of your application in addition to the CSC eligibility. The online application system has been made simpler this year for you to know which nominating agencies are available in your country. Once you register an account and enter other details, you will be able to see all the agencies available for your country. You will need to select one nominating agency and proceed to fill

in the details. You can save your work at any time and come back to it at a later date. To apply to a second or third agency, you will need to save your work and go back to the dashboard. Under the dashboard, click on “Start New” and then select your second nominating agency and proceed through the application. You can save the application again at any time and come back to it later. You will need to log in then click on the edit tab on the dash board and proceed to update your application. It is fine to use the same information to all the nominating agencies you are applying to.

Features of the online application system

Since all applications has to be made through the CSC online application system to be accepted, we will now discuss various sections of the system based on experience. Note that some national nominating agencies who use paper based application usually give little time to nominated candidates to complete the online application and submit it to them for endorsement. Therefore, to avoid the last minute rush, you will do well to complete the online system in advance as you anticipate your nomination after interview. To make a successful application, it is important that you avoid mistakes in your EAS as any inconsistencies, will make you ineligible when the CSC review your application for eligibility as per above timeline. Therefore, before you make your online application, go through the common mistakes made by unsuccessful applicants and try to avoid them. The EAS will contain most of the following sections:

- **Registration:** you will be required to set up an account which you will use every time you want to access your application. Remember to your login details. The system has been changed from last year’s format but you can still use this link (words highlighted) to get more information on how to apply.
- **Nominating agency selection:** At this stage you will have to select the nominating body you wish to apply through. Choose the name of the agency from the drop down menu starting with your country name. You will then be allocated a number by the system which is only for this application. If you want to add another agencies, you will have to save you work, go back to the dashboard and click on “Start New”. This link provides more information on how to access nominating agencies. You may find it useful but it was meant for the old online application system.
- **Personal information:** the next two sections of the application will require you to enter all your personal information (name, date of birth, residential address etc), this is self-explanatory.
- **Academic record:** you will be required to enter your academic information in this section. Ensure that you complete this section as accurate as you can. The minimum academic record required is a 2:2 undergraduate degree. If you pursed a diploma course before your undergraduate degree, do not include it. If you obtained your un-

dergraduate outside your country, do explain this in the appropriate section. This also applies to Master's courses especially if you already obtained a masters from the UK, you will be required to justify why you need a second masters. This section is important as it is one of the primary selection criteria as you will see below. This section is followed by a section on publications and prizes. Have you made any publications? Provide as much details as you can in order of importance of any publication up to 10. You should also list any academic distinctions and prizes you have, this may set you apart from other applicants.

- **Career to date:** here you will be required to enter up to five work experiences. You must ensure that all information is entered correctly and the information must be appealing to make you outstanding. Ensure your most recent experience is on top. You can use paragraphs or points which ever suits you the best. Do not just list down your responsibilities, ensure that your skills and qualities are depicted. For example, in your previous experience you could say; managed and led a team of 10 staff in a project worth \$10,000.
- **References:** Normally you will be required to provide names and contact addresses of three referees. It is important that you select them carefully, select people who can ably lend credence to your essays and thus show the nominating agency and CSC Secretariat that you fully deserve the award. Note that references are also primary information in selecting successful applicants. The referee will be sent an email containing a link for them to fill in and submit your references which you can tract in your tray/ dashboard on the online system and remind those who have not yet submitted to submit by the deadline (4th January, 2019). Two of your referees must submit your references before the deadline for you application to be considered complete. If you wish your referees to view you application, there is a button for you to click "yes" and this will give them access to your full application except your personal information. This link provides more information on references for you to know what is expected or should be included.
- **Development impact essay:** you will first be required to select one theme from the six mentioned above and also three sustainable development goals related to your proposed study or career plan. Here, you will need to write a 500 word essay to show how your studies will benefit your country. Seven points are given in the system as a guide for this essay, ensure that your essay clearly answer them and write in paragraphs. Sentences should be no more than 30 words longer.

This section is given much attention by the CSC as they want to see how the money they are investing in you will be put to good use. It is thus important that you show commitment to developing your country in your statement rather than for your own gain. I wish to quote the CSC here: *"A mere 100 words written in this section is unlikely to be as convincing as a well-crafted argument that uses the full 500 words available"*. Any course

you will select must be in line with the six themes and all these themes address one or more sustainable development goals (SDG). It is therefore important that you link your proposed contribution to one or more of the SDGs and show how your contribution will be measured. Most applicants find it difficult to explain how the impact of their contribution could be measured. Here is an example, do not plagiarize it: “finally, the impacts of my study to the country will be measurably reflective in improved life expectancy and literacy levels (in the pharmaceutical sector). This will translate into improved matrices in global assessing indices of bodies like the World Bank, United Nations and World Health Organization reports hence will place Zambia as a better place to live in”.

- **Future career plans essay:** this section is divided in two three parts. The first one is about your objectives during the award and the last two are essays on career plan within five years and long term, each has a maximum of 250 words. In the objective section, ensure you include extra-curricular activities or goals you want to achieve aside you getting a distinction. This is also an important section and should be somehow linked to the “benefit to home country section” but without duplicating the information provided in that essay section. The main emphasis here is that your career plan should be SMART. Describe the skills you will gain and how you will put them to good use.
- **Proposed study plan essay:** you will be required to state three courses and universities you wish to study in the UK. The CSC has provided a list of Universities with part funding agreement with them which you must apply to, so ensure that your courses are within any of the six themes. Further, ensure that your 3 courses are somehow related so that it is easy for you to justify them in your study plan essay. You will further be required to apply directly to the universities for admission as soon as you can. Note that some nominating agencies may nominate only candidates with university offer(s). You may therefore wish to fast track your university application and ensure that you have an offer by the time you are submitting your application. In fact, the CSC selection panel pay particular attention to any contact that you have had with the proposed universities, an offer is a proof of such contact. If you have not made any contact yet, there is a section with a maximum of 100 words for you to explain.

In your study plan essay, ensure you answer the four points of this question provided as clear as possible. You may wish to consider including gaps in your current skills and showing how the selected courses will bridge the gap. This requires you to extensively research your courses and universities. Avoid the generic reason like this university is highly ranked worldwide, it is part of the Russel group etc as this will not set you apart. This section will also require you to think about a research topic you wish undertake. Ensure that the proposed research topic is clear as the reader of your application may

not have prior knowledge of your field. Remember, this is just a proposed topic not that you will have to do it once selected.

- **Personal statement essay:** clearly answer the question and if there are any gaps in other sections of the applications you could include them in this section so that the nominating agency and CSC are able to make a good judgement of your application. For example, if your undergraduate grades was low, explain it and further show how you have turned this into a positive achievement to registered measurable impact in your community. This could include taking up professional development courses etc which has made you contribute to the community. The second part of the statement requires you to show voluntary and leadership experience. Ensure you demonstrate the leadership opportunities you've had and the results you produced. On voluntary experiences, include professional and community voluntary activities you have been involved clearly showing the results/ impact of each.
- **Upload documents:** you will need to upload your passport, degree certificate(s), transcript (merged into one file) and a university offer. Note that you do not need to upload any documents for qualifications below an undergraduate degree e.g diploma transcripts if you hold one. Supporting documentation must be uploaded as files which are no more than 5 MB in size and must be in one of the following formats: PDF, .doc, .docx, .odt, .jpg, .jpeg. Files submitted in any other format (including Zip files and PDF Portfolios) will NOT be accepted. You can use free online software to merge your documents and reduce the size of the file. It is also important to note that the CSC do not require you to submit any English language test (e.g IELTS) but your university may require a proof for them to admit you to your preferred course.

Selection criteria

As you have noted by now, you will have to be nominated first by any nominating agency before your application is considered by the CSC. Both the nominating agencies and the CSC use the eligibility criteria to select successful applicants. These include: academic merit of the candidate, quality of the plan of study and potential impact of the work on the development of the candidate's home country (this is all part of your application as stated above). Additional selection criteria are provided on the website and it is important to ensure that you meet at least most of the criteria and clearly show them in your application if you are to be successful. Once you meet these criteria and you are nominated, you can be assured that your chances of being confirmed as a scholar are improved though this is not confirmation of the award as most agencies may nominate 3 times the number required by the CSC. It is further important to note that there are no quotas per country as all nominated candidates are in competition

with each other irrespective of the nominating agency. It is for this reason that most candidates are not nominated especially if they fail to show their quality in the application and having a first class degree is not a guarantee for this scholarship. If successful you will be contacted by the CSC by end of May or early June that you have been Provisionally selected and you will be required to submit a copy of your university admission offer from the first choice you would have indicated in the application and at least two reference letters on headed paper (this may not be a case to some applicants). Once all documents are submitted, a Notice of Award will be sent to you and once the CSC agrees placement with the university you chose, your award will be confirmed.

Value of the Scholarship

Usually all your entitlements will be listed in the advertisement and on the official website in the terms and conditions. As the scholarship is 100%, your approved tuition fees and other benefits will be provided to you in your notice of award. As a scholar, you will have an opportunity to be involved in various networking activities to support you throughout your studies and once you complete your masters, you will join the alumni network where you can contribute in various activities.

****Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC), its partner organisations or any scholarship awarding body. Whereas the authors have taken every effort to provide accurate information, they are not liable for any factual errors that may be contained in this article.***

📅 October 29, 2018 👤 certifiedbc 💬 Leave a comment

A ROAD MAP TO ACING YOUR CHEVENING CAREER PLAN ESSAY!!!

In the previous episodes we have attempted to outline all it takes to make an excellent Chevening application beginning with a road map to the application down to a detailed schematic of how to sculpt the study in the UK essay. In this article, we provide some tips to guide you in constructing your final essay which represents the creme de la creme of the Chevening essays. This means that, despite excellent leadership, network-

ing or choice of course essays, a lack-lustre finish could still portend grave ramifications for the outcome of your application.

The Chevening Reading Committee would be scrutinizing this essay in order to decide whether your goals are big, sensible and practicable enough to fit into their own reputation and profile awardees. Roughly speaking, 1 in 100 Chevening alumni end up as a State, national or world leader. So the committee will be paying keen interest to this particular essay to decipher whether your plans are likely to take you to a fairly lofty pedestal of influence tomorrow, which is good for their reputation and ego.

—*“The best way to predict the future is to create it”.*

Abraham Lincoln.

Whereas in the first two essays you articulated your arguments deriving them from your past personal and professional experiences and consequently was somewhat boxed-in imaginatively, in the career plan essay, your creativity is allowed to soar. As a colleague puts it, ‘no one can invalidate your dreams as long as you demonstrate the leadership elements, the networking opportunities, their alignment with Chevening or Department for International Development (DFID) priorities and the quantifiable impacts of those post-study plans’.

Having said this, what are the keys to writing an excellent or memorable career plan essay? We outline a few of them below whilst encouraging you to read resources online or in any other format written by scholars or authorised Chevening officials/panelists or university admission officers.

The Chevening prompt for this essay goes thus: **Chevening is looking for individuals who have a CLEAR post-study career plan. Please outline your IMMEDIATE PLANS. Upon returning home and your LONGER TERM career goals. You may wish to consider HOW THESE RELATE TO WHAT THE UK GOVERNMENT IS DOING IN YOUR COUNTRY.**

We capitalise key words and phrases here for emphasis. Now let’s take a look at some of the keys to acing the career plan essay:

1. **Be Clear:** This means be specific and logical. Don’t be generic. Write in simple language and write the specifics of what you intend to do: the time, place, name of the exact project, the envisaged beneficiaries and the quantifiable impacts. The assessor should finish reading your essay and remember exactly what you said you would do

and how you argued you would do it. Desist from the temptation to use cliché lines like: *I plan to reduce unemployment and empower youths. Or, I will contribute by working with many youths and mentoring them. Or, I will work to address gender inequalities in my country and become a youth minister in future. Or, I will institute public health programmes to address the worrisome spate of maternal and child mortality in Mozambique.*

On the surface, these sound catchy and appear to be thoughtful lines but they are not. Unless, they are further expanded. They tell the reader nothing. Just beautiful nonsense. Just about anybody can write them. They will only make sense if the writer expatiates them by going into the specifics of **How? What? Where? When? Who? and For whom?** A goal is clear if it addresses these factors. Here is an example:

“As a senior public office holder in the Health Ministry 3 to 5 years post-studies, I intend to lobby the central government as I push for the establishment of an infectious diseases research institute in Lagos State, Nigeria. This will be specifically dedicated to tuberculosis (TB), Lassa and Ebola Fever research among others given my country’s poor handling of the recent infectious diseases outbreaks. Through collaborative exchanges with world renowned laboratories and pharmacies like PathFam, GlaxoSmithKline and Mecure, I envisage developing novel vaccines and biodrugs to address the menace of emerging infectious contagions and antimicrobial resistance. I hope to secure supplemental funding for the project by seeking grants from international partners like the WHO, CDC and FAO. I will be relying on my excellent grant and proposal writing skills to accomplish this. This initiative has potential to bolster our country’s emergency preparedness thereby reducing the incidence of common community infections by 5% within 5 years.

2. **Classify:** Don’t just write blandly or in a straight format. Some very gifted writers do this without categorising their ideas and get away with it. However, that takes profound literary skills. For the great majority of applicants who may in no way be Pulitzer award winning writers, we advise you to stay traditional. It is safer to categorise your career plans.

Often, 2 broad classes, **immediate** (early post-studies) and late (**long term** post-studies) plans suffice. Some scholars have also used a third category, the **medium term/intermediate** career plans as well. For the purpose of Chevening however, whichever format you choose is absolutely optional. Chevening wants to clearly see what you would do immediately you return and what you might be doing say, 7 to 10 years afterwards.

You must show by your immediate plans that your engagements will be largely altruistic not selfish. It is best if such a plan aligns with your chosen course of study and your current professional background or job experience but not in the strictest sense. For instance, a medical doctor who has gone to study public health at LSHTM would sound absurd to say the least, if he or she states that his/her immediate post-study plan is to join politics or become an entrepreneur. Or that, it is to become a leadership coach or marriage counsellor. His immediate post-return plans would make more sense if it be in the health sector and portends measurable benefits for the health status of people in his community. On the other hand, the medium and longer term goals needn't necessarily be in the same sector. Chevening allows you to dream here. By the way, you can choose to change your career pathway at some point in the future, nobody will begrudge you. Often, scholars have talked about delving into the academia, research, politics, NGOs, private consultancies or pursuing interests markedly tangential to their course of study definition. The important thing, is to show that this present course equips you with the needed skills to be able to navigate the future career trajectories that you choose.

Immediate postgraduation plan is often classified by many scholars as 1 –2 years, medium as 3 — 5 years and long term plan as 5 years and above. What is important is not necessarily the numbers you choose in your classification but that you make the reader see clearly, which goals are your short-term, mid-term and long-term goals without he or she cracking the head. We give you examples below:

“My immediate post-return plans are to continue working with my firm XYZ, where I would have assumed a senior management position. I will leverage on the skills gained from my study to pilot a design thinking framework and the ABC business model aimed at developing user-friendly and customer-specific IT products and deliverables relying on evidence-based market research. This has potential to increasing our brand visibility and our overall market share as customer satisfaction progressively ups”.

“In the long-term, I hope to pursue doctoral studies in ONE Health through which I hope to integrate human, animal and environmental health into an ecosystem understanding of health especially in resource-constrained Sub-Saharan African communities. I will do this by designing sustainable interventions and context-relevant conservation policies under the auspices of regional and sub-regional health agencies and ministries. Furthermore, I hope to assume frontline position in global health bodies like the WHO or CDC where I hope to contribute to multi-partner programme implementation of the ONE Health Initiative. This will improve the health and well being of people and of our planet.

3. Link Up Your Plans: Very importantly, do not forget to link up your plans to Chevening priority areas or to what the British Government is doing in your country. You may also relate your career plans to the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Many people forget this vital aspect. There is no free lunch anywhere. Chevening is only awarded to those who continue to demonstrate that their future engagements are in sync with the UK's development interests or Chevening priority areas or those who show how the interests of the UK would be benefited/accomplished.

The Chevening priority areas may be found on your country's official Chevening website while DFID's activities in your home country can be retrieved by googling DFID and adding the name of your country at the end. Likewise, the SDGs are only a Google away. NB: You mustn't necessarily link all your goals to these bodies as you're constrained by word count, but you must link them up to at least one. Examples are as given below:

“Five years postgraduation, I hope to partner with DFID to actualise its developmental objectives in Ghana including achieving a steady-state economic growth pegged at 1.5% year. I will do so by linking up research evidence to policy and use that to show how Ghanaian business environment can harness the potentials of tourism and globalisation to boost her economy. More so, I will collaborate with the extensive network of professionals accorded by Chevening as well as the DFID's Business Support Initiative (DBSI) in Kumasi to harness the potentials of young entrepreneurs whom the works of Zainab et al (2018) show, can contribute up to 25% to Ghana's GDP if effectively harnessed. This action is in line with the XYZ strategy of Ghana's Ministry of Trade and Commerce and has potential for helping Ghana actualise SDGs 4 and 5 by 2030.

“I envisage a Namibia in 2025, where 30% of women have meaningful participation in policy and developmental issues in contrast to the current estimates of 3%. This goal resonates with Britain's Government support for inclusive political and economic growth in Namibia. I aim to achieve this by leveraging the support of a robust network of Chevening business alumni and international donor agencies through investment in human capital development. Specifically, I will be equipping rural women with soft and hard entrepreneurial skills thereby uplifting them from a position of economic disadvantage”.

Summarily, your career plan must be clear. It should be **SMART** (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) and demonstrate your ability to transmute your education into concrete steps for tangible benefits for your community, nation, organisation Chevening and the world at large. The focus should primarily be, benefit to others — third parties and not necessarily you, although we know that it does benefit you ultimately.

Caution: Do not plagiarize. We only provide you with guidelines and our templates ARE NOT CAST IN STONE. Best wishes!

****Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), its partner organisations or any scholarship awarding body. Whereas the authors have taken every effort to provide accurate information, they are not liable for any factual errors that may be contained in this article.***

📅 September 30, 2018 👤 scholarsmap 💬 Leave a comment

YES! YOU CAN STUDY IN THE UK!

HELPING YOU ACE YOUR “WHY STUDY IN THE UK” QUESTION.

“He who excels in Education can follow an official career” – Confucius.

You must have been wondering what happened to us at the Scholars Map! We have not forgotten because we love you guys!

This is the 4th article from us to you, giving you tips on how you too can be a Chevening Scholar or awardee next year. The first was a [brief roadmap](#), giving you general information about the Chevening scholarship including the requirements and application portal link; the second was the [leadership](#) essay; and the third was on [effective networking](#). You can read them all by clicking the links provided.

This week's essay provides guidance on how you can ace your third Chevening Question: **Studying in the UK Question**. To us, this is always the easiest and last question to write.

Important: We strongly advise that you to thoroughly research your preferred/chosen courses. Without this, you won't be able to write a good essay for this question. You

don't want leave the reader to guess what you wrote because of glaring or even subtle gaps in your essays.

By now, we know nearly all of you have your courses and schools selected. We are therefore not going to bore you with unsolicited guidance on choosing your courses or schools. Nonetheless, we want to assure you that every course/school you choose will offer you the best education you can ever dream of. No school will give you half-baked cakes. Just choose the course you want and see which university gives you the best course modules that align best with your career goals. It is not just about the reputation of the schools, it's about the skills you will acquire that will eventually make you comparatively competitive in the job market after you finish your masters. So choose your courses wisely!

After you have chosen your courses, run through the respective schools' websites and click on the course you have chosen. Read through it – course objectives, modules, format of teaching, lecturers, etc. Some useful links such as rankings by the various university ranking systems might be provided as well. This should give you an idea whether the said course fits the bill. If not, search for others. Also consult any course/school alumni you may know if possible, albeit tread here cautiously to avoid the inherent human bias/unbalanced opinions.

The other part where some of you hit a conundrum is whether to choose 3 different courses at 3 different universities or 3 courses at one universities (even possible to choose 2 courses at one university and the third at a different university). The choice is entirely yours though out of experience, however, I would prefer you choose 3 **related** courses at 3 different universities. This way, it is easier to flow in your essays and defend them. The Chevening website [course guidelines](#) also recommends selecting three similar courses from three universities. You don't want your reader to have to guess what you really want or are writing about. Let him/her just enjoy your beautifully crafted essays. There are cases of scholars getting the award but failing to take it up because they couldn't fulfil the school's offer conditions even though they met Chevening's. Also in your choices, it's advisable to choose at least one university that is likely to give you an unconditional offer without requiring fulfilling the English Language requirements. This way you will have to grapple with fulfilling only Chevening requirements. You can always look up for these universities. Ask applicants from your country, they should be knowing but if you cannot get one it is still fine as you have until 11th July, 2019.

At interview, you have the opportunity to change your courses or rearrange the order of preference. You can therefore apply to as many courses/universities as possible and

introduce them at the interview stage. Do not limit yourself to the three courses you have chosen for your Chevening Scholarship.

Note that only an MBA has a fee cap of £18,000. The rest are fully covered by Chevening. The Chevening secretariat will pay for your full tuition fee even if the course cost more than £30,000. Note also that it's Chevening's policy to have a participating university contribute at least 20% of the fees.

NB: You can practically choose any university for your courses but I would strongly advise you to choose at least one Partner University. You can always look this up in your country's Chevening website. These universities are more likely to contribute the 20% fee portion as required by Chevening and also hasten the Final Award Letter (FAL) and other documentation generation. There are instances where a partner university decides to pay full fees for a scholar thus creating an opportunity for another applicant to be awarded the scholarship. Though these are not very common, it is worth trying. It could be your turn to benefit from it this year.

Now, to the question prompt!

Studying in the UK Question

Outline why you have selected your chosen three university courses, and explain how this relates to your previous academic or professional experience and your plans for the future. *Please do not duplicate the information you have entered on the work experience and education section of this form (minimum word count: 50 words, maximum word count: 500 words)

You will be required to outline **why** you have chosen the three courses and also link this to your previous academic or professional **experience**. You will also be expected to relate your chosen courses to your **career plan**.

You can always decide on the flow or layout of your essay. For this article and based on personal experience, the first paragraph will be about highlighting/bringing to the attention of the reader a problem, a challenge, a situation etc. that you hope studying your Master's will remedy or mitigate. This can be national, regional or local. You can quote some source to back it up or show its magnitude. It may also have been a per-

sonal encounter with a difficult situation that motivated you to find a solution to. Other examples include community challenges that you seek to address through the skills acquired from the Master's.

Example: *In the recent World Health Organisation (WHO) classification of global health-care system performance, Country X ranked nth out of 190 countries assessed. Even more worryingly, according to the 2017 Demographic Survey, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is 657 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to a global average of 215/100,000 (2015 estimates).*

You can then expand further on this example, e.g. why is it so? Is it due to political, social, economic or cultural factors?

Example: *Weak health sector leadership, inadequate human resource and negative cultural tendencies or practices significantly contribute to this alarming statistics. For example, despite ratifying the Abuja Declaration that required each African country to contribute 15% of its national budget to health, in the last fiscal year's budget, only 7% of the national budget was allocated to health.*

Be mindful of the word count too. You don't want to waste a lot of valuable space with a lot of introduction and lots of discombobulating statistics. Keep these to a minimum. We discourage overuse and often misuse of stats/figures.

Next, you will need to relate this to your academic or professional experience. Here, it's best to show how in your professional capacity or experience, you have always desired to offer solutions to problems you encounter but more often than not, you are limited by skills or knowledge and you therefore see the master's as a bridge to this gap. Show them that you would do well if you had the requisite skills, knowledge and other competencies. In the same paragraph, you may link your chosen courses broadly to your career plan though this may usually come under the specific course choices. Please do not regurgitate your work experience here. Succinctly point out your encounter with the problem at hand

Example: *My daily tasks as a medical doctor at X Community Hospital puts me face-to-face with core challenges faced by women in accessing basic health care services such as long distances to access healthcare, cultural taboos and frequent essential medicines stock outs. This job has provided me with a unique insight into not only the need for medical interventions but also public health programming to address these challenges. I therefore desire to pursue a Master's that will equip me with essential skills and know-*

ledge to improve maternal and child health in low and middle income countries using a health systems strengthening approach.

As precise as that!

Finally you now go to the main course of your meal: your three courses. As earlier suggested, it is advisable that you choose 3 **related** courses at 3 different universities. In some instances, the courses may bear similar titles – this doesn't mean they are the same! More often than not, the course modules, course objectives, lecturers, and even the mode of studying are different. Kindly avoid the mistake of choosing 3 unrelated courses – it will be extremely difficult to defend them even at interview. Also, your courses **should** be related to your current professional experience or educational background. However, this is not always the case especially for MBA and Public Health courses. In this case, you can still be considered but you will have to convincingly show them that they relate to your future career goals and if you have had some experience in the said fields, loudly state in your experience section of the application.

As a general guide, we find the following format extremely useful when writing about the courses:

1. State the skills, knowledge, or understanding that the course equip you with. These are usually found on the course's directory. Kindly don't copy and paste them. Choose 1-2 strong ones (more often those aligning to your career objectives) and paraphrase them. **Example:** *The MSc X at Y University is my first choice. This programme will equip with ABC skills relevant to DEF (field) in my country/community.*
2. State any specific course modules that you find particularly interesting and, again align with your career aspirations. **Example:** *Course modules such as N will equip with essential skills to design and implement innovative and evidence-based interventions to improve maternal and child health in my country.*
- State anything special about the school that particularly appeals to you e.g. its research impact, rankings, any significant recent citations and even social events. You can include them here. **Example:** *The recent Shangai ranking placed London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine third in Public Health (behind only John Hopkins and Harvard).*
1. Any particular lecturers that you hope to mentor you. If possible, mention why, e.g. they could be renowned researches in your field. **Example:** *Studying this course will accord me the opportunity to interact and be mentored by Professor X whose research in fossil fuels aligns with issues I find most compelling in my field of practice.*

You can do the same for your second and third choices. Note that you don't have to follow the above rubric lest you run out of space but it's highly advised that you at least include i) and ii) above in each of your courses. The others are optional.

As is our wont, we will now summarise the above information into an essay format.

In the recent WHO classification of global healthcare system performance, Country X ranked nth out of 190 countries assessed. Even more worryingly, according to the 2017 Demographic Survey, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is 657 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to a global average of 215/100,000 (2015 estimates). Weak health sector leadership, inadequate human resource and negative cultural tendencies or practices significantly contribute to this alarming statistics. For example, despite ratifying the Abuja Declaration that required each African country to contribute 15% of its national budget to health, in the last fiscal year's budget, only 7% of the national budget was allocated to health.

My daily tasks as a medical doctor at X Community Hospital put me face-to-face with core challenges faced by women in accessing basic health care services such as long distances, cultural taboos and frequent essential medicines stock outs. This job has provided me with a unique insight into not only the need for medical interventions but also public health programming to address these challenges. I therefore desire to pursue a Master's that will equip me with essential skills and knowledge to improve maternal and child health in low and middle income countries using a health systems strengthening approach.

The MSc X at Y University is my first choice. This programme will equip with ABC skills relevant to DEF (field) in my country/community. Course modules such as N will equip with essential skills to design and implement innovative and evidence-based interventions to improve maternal and child health in my country. The recent Shangai ranking placed London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine third in Public Health (behind only John Hopkins and Harvard). Studying this course will accord me the opportunity to interact and be mentored by Professor X whose research in fossil fuels aligns with issues I find most compelling in my field of practice.

****Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), its***

partner organisations or any scholarship awarding body. Whereas the authors have taken every effort to provide accurate information, they are not liable for any factual errors that may be contained in this article.

📅 September 26, 2018 👤 scholarsmap 💬 Leave a comment

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE NETWORKING ESSAY FOR YOUR CHEVENING SCHOLARSHIP

“If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people” Chinese Proverb

Networking is not about just connecting people. It’s about connecting people with people, people with ideas, and people with opportunities – Michele Jennae

In the previous two articles, we comprehensively introduced Chevening Scholarship and guided you on how to ace your leadership essay.

In this article, we will briefly take you through the networking essay since the core has been covered under the leadership essay. You can find the essay here, if you have yet not yet read it

As we said earlier, Networking alongside Leadership/Influence are the two central tenets of the Chevening Scholarship. Therefore, you ought, in no uncertain terms, demonstrate this in your essays. Even in the career essay, you must show how you will use your networks to achieve your goals. Throughout this essay, focus will be on “effective networking” –what you need to demonstrate to the Chevening Scholarship Reading Committee. We also advise you to read this article alongside the leadership essay, since the two can’t be separated; in fact, effective leaders use their networking skills to influence and lead people; although we will quickly add that they are not necessarily one and the same. However, the essay format is much the same and the extra or excesses leadership essay examples can be used in the networking essay because, networking and leadership share one thing in common: influence. Simply put, you need some form of leverage to effectively network or lead people, e.g. to do business you need to convince/influence the other party to transact with you.

So what is Networking?

According to www.dictionary.com, networking is “a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest”. There are so many definitions depending on the source you visit but in all of them, the key words are still “sharing information and services amongst individuals or groups having common interest”. In effective networking, it’s not just about numbers or profiles of contacts or collaborators; it’s about “cliques”, close associations and “friends with benefits”. Networking should be a *mutual, symbiotic relationship or association, where you receive and give; a two-way relationship to create win-win situations- this is effective networking*. In networking, therefore, you must answer the “**who, why, how, what, when**” questions. In other words, you need to have clearly defined goals, mission, vision and strategy in your networking. Ask yourself, what do I stand to gain from this partnership I am entering or have been for the last 5 years? You must also have a clear networking strategy on how you hope to extract the most out of your networks. This answers the how question. Clearly define the kind or type of people you will network with. As already stated, effective networking is about creating symbiotic or win-win situations, so you must be able to state what you bring to the table. How long do you want the relationship to last? How regularly do you communicate? Remember, communication is key to effective networking. Provide regular and timely feedbacks but don’t inundate your associates with needless emails. Let each feedback serve a purposeful purpose. Effective networking goes just beyond establishing relationships or associations – it seeks to build, grow, expand and sustain them and these should clearly stated throughout your networking essay(**Please take time to read about effective networking strategies and skills**).

If you have crystal clear answers to the above questions, then you are an effective networker and by extension, an influencer; a leader.

As in the leadership essay, we will now go through a more detailed but precise approach to our networking essay. First we...

Generate Networking Examples

Use the **TRUE** approach that was clearly explained in the leadership essay article to derive and rank your examples because we will not repeat it here. When Chevening asks for professional relationship building skills or professional networks, the easiest conclusion most of us would jump to is “they are only seeking work-related networks” but this is far from it. Professional relationships are varied in nature and practically include all those you relate with in your day-to-day life. For academic purposes, there are

about 5 types of professional networks, namely; nodal, expansive, strategic, personal and operational networks. However, we won't delve into these as they are of no significance here.

First, we need to know the people who can form part of our professional networks. These include but are not limited to:

- Current and past workmates/employees/employers, including those you volunteered with
- Professional Association members: this is a strong example of networking. State what professional bodies you belong, e.g. Association of Accountants of X country, Medical Association etc.
- Former professors, tutors and lecturers
- Former classmates etc.

Having these in mind should nudge your mind to critically review any meaningful relationship you have with them. Also, know that there are various means of networking and these include:

- Periodic member association face-to-face meetings
- Social media e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, teleconferences, etc
- Feedback emails
- Impromptu meetings with important stakeholders
- Referrals/Recommendations by close associates
- Dialogue meetings e.g. with community members, etc.

After this listing, ask yourself a few questions like:

- Which professional body do I belong to? What is the composition? What values does it espouse/stand for? What impact are they creating in the community/society? What's my role there? What have I gained/gleaned from belonging to this association? Are there any special meetings, workshops, seminars, or camps organised by this organisation? Any important people you met in such meetings and have you established any impactful relationships with them? Etc
- In my current workplace, what is my role? How often do we meet? How does the organisation build rapport with both internal and external consumers? What's my greatest contribution to enhance the organisation's sphere of influence?
- Do I belong to any volunteering group or have I started one? What brings together? How often do we meet? How did we start or what compelled me to found or join it? What's my role there?

- How about any online or offline social networking groups, get-togethers etc?

The key question, that Chevening too is interested, is how do you build and maintain these associations? To aptly answer this, you must revisit your the “*what, who, why, how and when*” questions. What strategies do you use for effective networking? How regularly do you communicate with your network of collaborators? Do you provide feedback to them? What is your vision and mission of networking? Are your goals short or long term? Do you have something to offer to the association or are you interested in being the sole beneficiary without the other party gaining anything in return? How do get yourself heard or noticed in a gathering of high-ranking members of society? How regularly do you attend social gatherings and/or networking events both online and offline? Do you have business cards and do you ask the same from members you meet in networking events? How about your social media accounts, do you regularly update them to match your current jobs, interests and accomplishments? Do you listen attentively and pay undivided attention to the concerns of other members?

You may not probably answer all the above in the affirmative, but it’s difficult to establish and maintain relationships if you answer all the above questions in the negative. Note that I have used the question format in order to stimulate your thinking.

In the Leadership essay, we showed you how to generate examples. We also told you that leadership and networking essays greatly overlap and thus any excess examples can be used in the networking essay. By excess, I don’t imply those that carry less weight, if you do this, you won’t score well in your networking essay. Use the TRUE approach to derive and weigh your examples. The STAR/SAR/CAR/PAR technique clearly explained in the Leadership Essay can then be used to answer the essay.

We will look at the Networking Question

Networking Question

Chevening is looking for individuals with strong professional relationship building skills, who will engage with the Chevening community and influence and lead others in their chosen profession. Please explain how you build and maintain relationships in a professional capacity, using clear examples of how you currently do this, and outline how you hope to use these skills in the future.

(minimum word count: 100 words, maximum word count: 500 words)

In answering this essay, your chief role is to show that you have very strong networking skills (strong relationship building skills) which you use to influence others, and succinctly demonstrate how you will employ these skills in the future.

For this article, we will use an example of an applicant, a medical doctor, who belongs to Uganda Medical Association, he's an ordinary paid up member, but who from time to time organises medical camps, seminars and workshops. In such scientific conference, he meets a renowned professor from the UK (let's say) who informed him/her of the Chevening programme and scholarship opportunities available for students. Additionally the applicant has learnt, through the scientific conferences, how to write abstracts for presentation. He/she is now capable managing complex diseases in his/her community hospital due to interacting with senior colleagues during such seminars.

Before we arrange the above example into an essay type, allow me to briefly take back to the STARL technique shared here and in last week's articles. Some of the readers enquired if it was possible to win Chevening without using it to write the leadership and networking essay. My answer was that it's very much possible to clinch the award without strictly adhering to the STARL rule; in fact even last week, I told you that the technique is not cast in stone. I also explained in the leadership article the type of questions that are best responded to using the STARL rule – namely the behavioural type questions. You are at liberty to modify or totally discard it; the point is answering the essay prompt in totality, with no stone left unturned. In some of the networking examples like belonging to a professional body (as above), the method is agonisingly ineffective in guiding you to write a compelling example. We are therefore going to rewrite the above example but we will not use the standard STARL method, we will modify it.

The above example of the Networking Question will probably look like this:

I belong to Uganda Medical Association, an umbrella association of Uganda medical doctors collectively striving for better health services and working conditions in Uganda. Through its various activities such as annual scientific conferences, medical and surgical camps, seminars and workshops, I have interacted/interact with a number of leading medical professionals in the country and beyond. For example, during the 2017 Annual Scientific Conference, of which I was one of the organisers, I met Professor Lee, a renowned maternal and child health professor at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and guest speaker during the conference. His expertise on and passion for maternal and child health impressed me so much that I decided to request him to mentor me, which he happily obliged. Through regular communication with him on mail and phone, he has mentored me on my career and I have discovered my passion for maternal and child health. Thanks to my inquisitiveness and proactiveness, he informed me

of the Chevening scholarship as a source of funding my master's at LSHTM. In turn, I was able to provide for him some data regarding the malaria burden amongst pregnant and lactating mothers.Through attending numerous conferences and surgical camps, I have gained insight into writing abstracts for scientific conferences, learnt up-to-date management of various conditions, and used this knowledge and skills to improve service delivery in my precinct, which has a severe shortage of specialist doctors. Using weekly seminars, on-job training, feedback, and focussed group discussions, I currently mentor 10 junior doctors and 24 midwives in managing complicated conditions in pregnancy. This experience has taught me the value of establishing strategic stronger ties with members of the profession and being proactive.

From the above example, it is clear that STARL has little or no role to play. On the other hand, however, someone could actually use the STARL approach on the same example. In this case, it can easily be seen that the writer had little understanding of writing abstracts for publications/presentations and the dearth of specialists in his district implied he had to learn management of complex situations. This could thus be the **Situation** (no knowledge writing abstracts, lack of medical specialists) and **Task** (need to learn how to write abstract and manage complicated cases on his own), the **Action** constitutes attending the conferences and establishing a stronger bond with the professor which brought him unprecedented success (**Results**) and opened doors he had never known existed. **Lessons learnt** are on the very last sentence. The choice is thus yours; you can stick to the STARL approach or modify it provided you comprehensively answer the question fully.

Note that in the example above, I have underlined some words. When you read the question again, it asks you how you connect with people currently. The underlined words are examples of networking strategies (communication, having a goal, giving in order to receive, proactiveness, etc).

Don't also worry if your essay has some incidences in the past – networking is not a one-off event, it's a chain of focussed actions to achieve a desired goal. Note that you can use the present simple/continuous in places of present perfect if you find it uncomfortable using past tenses, e.g. “*I am using this knowledge to improve...*” can perfectly replace “*I have used this knowledge to improve...*” The point basically here is that you must show that you are **actively networking**.

Depending on how many examples you have used (I strongly suggest 2-3, for diversity), you need to answer the last part of the question: **How are you going to use these skills in the future.** There is some little trick here; go back to the question and slowly read the first sentence. It clearly requires that candidates **must have strong network-**

ing skills to engage with the Chevening community and influence and lead others in their chosen profession. You must therefore be able to demonstrate how you will engage with over 50,000 Cheveningers (both current and past) and again, what you bring on table. You could look at the various Chevening networking events, debates, sports etc and see if you can make a meaningful contribution. Just even by attending, you are bound to network. How about the global and local (your country) alumni association? What plans do you have for it/them? When you return home for the mandatory 2 year post studies, what plans do you have for your community, your country, and the Chevening alumni in your country, etc? Remember the goal of Chevening of fostering cooperation between the UK and partner countries – you should thus mention what role you can play in ensuring that the relationship between the UK and your countries are stronger than ever before, e.g. *Through my established networks, both in Uganda and the UK, I plan being the nexus between the two countries to foster cooperation and development in the area of maternal and child health through collaborative learning.*

Again we will share a few essay tips to help put up an overall an essay worthy of an interview invitation:

- Stick to the main points. Don't go into unnecessary details – you will have the opportunity to do that at interview.
- The first draft is always too wordy – i recall mine had over 5,000 words. After writing, first leave it and get engrossed in other activities. When you return, chop off all the redundant words, repetitions and incoherent statements. You will be surprised at how you can reduce them by as much as 40%.
- Let 2-3 people assess review your essays. They are more likely to notice glaring errors and also offer some useful insight e.g. seeking clarification on ambiguous words and guiding you on rewriting some sentences. The theme and the tone of the essays should, however, remain yours.
- Keep looking up at the essay question to ensure you have duly covered all the parts of the question because, if you miss a part, you will unfortunately score low and this may affect your overall mark.
- Write in clear, simple grammar. Avoid usage of complex jargon, don't leave the reader to second guess what you meant. Unless a jargon has no simplified synonym, avoid it at most costs.
- On abbreviations, unless these are universal and standard, avoid them. If you feel you need to abbreviate some words, use put them in full the first time and in brackets, put the abbreviation. You can then use the abbreviated words without worrying at all.

In subsequent articles, more tips on minimising word count and the dos and don'ts of scholarship essays will be shared.

****Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), its partner organisations or any scholarship awarding body. Whereas the authors have taken every effort to provide accurate information, they are not liable for any factual errors that may be contained in this article.***

📅 September 6, 2018 👤 scholarsmap 💬 1 Comment

BE A TRUE STAR IN YOUR LEADERSHIP ESSAY

Leadership is influence: nothing more, nothing less – John Maxwell

Every scholarship world over, has a central and often recurring theme – what it desires to achieve and as such prospective scholars ought to conform to such goals either by a crystal clear demonstration of how they fulfill that objective or how they intend to do so, or usually both as in most scholarships.

Last week, we gave you an elaborate introduction about the Chevening scholarship. I am certain you are well informed that **Leadership/Influence** alongside **Networking** is the central theme in the Chevening Scholarship. It is practically a Herculean task to win this scholarship without vividly demonstrating your leadership skills and qualities to the reading committee that will sit sometime later around late November – December to peer into your essays. Throughout the four essays, Leadership recurs; it's the heartbeat, the SA node of the Chevening scholarship.

Granted you pass through the eligibility sieve, your essays are the next most important thing – they determine how far you are likely to go in your Chevening scholarship journey. Make no mistake, your first essay, which incidentally is about Leadership/Influence, will either break or make you. Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure this essay influences/positively biases your reader to read further with as much interest as he can muster. You have heard about making a first impression –

let your leadership essay tell the reader that you mean real business and that you are the ideal candidate Chevening is looking for. Get him hooked into your essays. In other words, show your reader that you are a leader by influencing him/her to give you a favourable mark. I am not telling to write esoteric, flamboyant or expansive essays. In fact, do not even lie. You will be found out. You may be confused at this stage, asking; “He is telling us to give a first impression but not spectacular words, how is this possible?” Hold on there dear, you are on the right track. It will be to your great advantage to learn some of the skills and qualities associated with leaders and display them throughout your essays. Also in your essays, kindly use leadership vocabulary rich with words such as: led, guided, convinced, persuaded, oversaw, delegated, inspired, instituted, started, initiated, saw, overcame, etc to highlight your actions – these are the words I am talking about. Write like a leader.

A major concern a number of you have expressed to me is “When I look at sample essays of past Chevening winners, I am discouraged. I don’t think I can make it. Those people held bigger positions in much bigger international organisations, and I have never held one”. My simple advice to such people has always been, and allow me to repeat here to you that, “Chevening is looking for future/potential leaders, and your position in an organisation has nothing to do with leadership”. Most people erroneously think leadership and management are one. The two are totally different (Kindly read the differences between Management and Leadership). In a lay man’s language, leadership is about inspiring or motivating people to achieve a goal whilst management focuses on systems and processes to achieve predetermined goals. Management is static whilst leadership is kinetic or evolving from time to time. In other words, in management you operate like a robot whereas in leadership, the focus is influence, how to get people to do what you want without threats or coercion. A leader is thus beyond management. He is focused on people, getting them to develop and grow. So you may not have been a manager of an established company, you may never have been a CEO of a Tech Company etc, or even led a team of people in your organisation, or you have always been led. Do you have the nous to be an influencer, a mover and shaker in the not-so-distant-future? Do you want to influence people around you and win over friends? Are you keen on making a difference in your country? And do you believe the UK and Chevening Scholarship are the right platform for you to not only showcase your leadership skills but also enhance them. Do you want to be a global leader? If the answer to any of these questions is YES, then you are good to go and Chevening is the right stepping-stone for you.

Leadership Examples’ Generation

Now back on writing the essays. It is interesting to know that Leadership and Networking essays overlap and some of the extra leadership examples can spill over to Networking although the networking essay has been tweaked slightly this year. Depending on how long you have been working, generating good examples can be a little tricky. To me, the easiest and most effective way to do is;

- List all jobs (including volunteering) you have ever had, probably in the last 6 years
- What was your role (position) in each of the above jobs you held?
- What were your tasks (job description)?
- What can you be proud about your job (your achievements)?

Some of you may have just completed university and even for those who finished many years ago, it's always good to show your student leadership skills. If you have been a student leader at your university, kindly list this as well using the above format. The examples can be but not limited to – students' guild, associations, movements, class, discussion groups, religious movements, etc. List the workshops, debates, seminars, outreaches, meetings you ever attended and check out if you had some role in them.

Another great source of leadership examples is your community. Any community roles, initiatives, activities, projects, etc you have ever undertaken to bring about a positive change? Do you belong to a community association that aims to fight say poverty, ignorance, disease or protect people's rights to land? This may even be in form of social media groups e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram etc. E.g. *I started a "Keep Your Home Clean" campaign to fight the rampant diarrheal diseases in my community.*

Don't underestimate the power of your inherent skills or talents. Have you used your social mobilisation, speaking, football, music skills etc to help a cause? Have you organised a concert to fundraise for a cause? E.g. *using your piano and music skills to support your local church by directing the choir and organising carols to raise funding for cancer patients* etc.

In a nutshell, you can derive your leadership (&networking) essay examples from practically any **field**.

Since you are limited by word count, you are not at liberty to write everything. The list was simply to open you up, to guide you as well as enabling you to unearth your previous achievements. The list at times goes on to spur you, to chase away that mental mediocrity you had long harboured, the Pandora box that had been telling you that you can't make it, Chevening is for accomplished guys etc. Now that you have come up with

a long list of your potential examples for the leadership essay, the next step is zeroing on the one(s) you will write.

Prioritising Examples

Prioritising means choosing what to write. Using whatever criteria you use to arrive at your top examples, I advise you choose 1-3 strong examples that you feel strongly bring out the best of you. The rest can be used in the networking essay. These examples selected ought to clearly demonstrate your leadership skills, attributes, qualities as well as potential.

As-matter-of-fact, I use the TRUE approach to prioritise my examples.

T-True: Throughout your essays, you shall be expected to be honest, sincere and truthful. Avoid the fatal temptation of lying to gain unfavourable advantage over others. You will be caught and disgraced. A leader always says the truth even when telling a lie is the easier option.

R-Relevant/Recent: The examples you choose should have a bearing or connection with the central theme of your essay. I must reiterate here that your 4 essays must be interconnected smoothly. Any apparent disjoint will probably affect your overall score badly. Try as much as possible to use the most recent examples. It shows you are growing professionally and personally. Leaders evolve and develop. But don't worry if you got your current job in 2014, you can still use it but try to highlight and expound on the most recent achievements in your career/job.

U-Unique: Avoid the easy way out, stand out as a leader. Don't rehash what everyone else has done. Don't just outline your job description(JD). Go for that particular moment you went beyond your JD. In fact, don't go for the so-obvious examples that can't depict your innovativeness, resilience, persuasiveness, etc among other leadership qualities. Remember the essays are about **you**, not **we**. *Even when you were assigned a duty, what peculiar thing, outside your job description did you do that created a positive change in the organisation, group, people etc?*

E-Exciting: Use examples that are practical, highly impactful, easy to follow and thus grab the attention of the reader. If you have been a CEO of start-up business or a community based organisation, it's illogical to use an example of being a high school group leader and leave this out. You are doing yourself a disservice. It ostensibly follows the old adage that *those who have more, will have more*.

Be A STAR

Selling yourself in 500 words or less can be a daunting task even for the most accomplished writers. Luckily, the Leadership and Networking Essays belong to a category of common interview questions called “Behavioural Questions” that many of you must have come across by now. These questions often begin like “Tell me any time you accomplished a difficult task, or sailed through a difficult situation? Or you convinced a group of people to do something that was out of their routine” etc. In your leadership and networking essays, you are going to answer exactly these or similar questions. There’s thus a simplified tool or approach to help you give laser-specific answers to this type of questions to save you and the reader/interviewer a lot of unnecessary rumblings. It is called the STAR Approach, which stands for Situation, Task, Action, and Result. In other books of literature, you may find acronyms such as the CAR method for Context/Challenge, Action, Result or the PAR method, which stands for Problem, Action, Result. In the latter two, Context/Challenge and Problem are equivalent to the Situation and Task of the STAR technique.

Let’s have a glance at the Chevening Leadership and Influence Question.

Leadership & Influence Question

Chevening is looking for individuals that will be future leaders or influencers in their home countries. Explain how you meet this requirement, using clear examples of your own leadership and influencing skills to support your answer.

(Minimum word count: 100 words, maximum word count: 500 words)

The first sentence states what kind of people Chevening is looking to sponsor, namely; Future Leaders/Influencers in their home countries. The second part asks the applicant to demonstrate that he (clearly) meets this requirement. Having selected your examples, kindly choose a maximum of 3 but 1 or 2 are just fine as long as you clearly bring out your vast array of leadership qualities, skills, and attributes.

We will now look at answering the above question using the STAR approach. For purposes of the Chevening essay, I enjoin you to add L (Lessons Learnt) as well. Thus, for all your Leadership and Networking essays, we shall use the **STARL** approach. It saves time, words and helps you answer the question satisfactorily. ***A final reminder here that Chevening is looking for future potential leaders/influencer and this has nothing to do with your previous position.***

S- Situation. This is straightforward. The situation is an event, project, or challenged encountered. Use the **who, what, where, when** and **how**. **Example:** *In 2015, I joined X Company as a Team Lead, Marketing. Although the company was making profits, these were marginal and there was a high staff attrition rate because the company could not remunerate its employees according to prevailing market rates.*

T-Task: Here, briefly highlight your responsibilities and assignments for the situation above. In other words, what did you do or what did you need/want to do to change the results for better? Be specific and concise. This is a good opportunity for you to highlight the challenges faced as well. Overcoming challenges is one of the greatest hallmarks of a leader. It is an area where you can ace your essay. **Example:***After a brief sales check, I quickly realised profits could be doubled. After sharing this information with the manager, I was assigned to draft a new marketing strategy to boost the company's sales. However, some old staff were not welcoming of the idea and refused to cooperate in the drafting of the new roadmap.*

A-Action: These are steps or procedures that you undertook to remedy the problem or situation. Here, clearly describe what you did. How did you go about the task that needed to be accomplished? The focus is on what you did as an individual, not as a team or group. Highlight leadership qualities or traits that Chevening is looking for (initiative, teamwork, organisational skills, leadership, temerity etc). Describe how you overcame any challenges faced in your quest to win achieve your task. **Example:***To win them over, I organised small group meetings where I allowed everyone to express their fears or reservations about the intended changes. I then sold my vision to them, sharing my successful stints at my previous job. I also encouraged them to assign specific duties to each and every member and recognised the contribution of each one of them. They felt valued and before long, everyone embraced my idea. I then set about finding the prevailing consumer needs, aspirations and perceptions. I designed customer exit interviews and organised focused group discussions to determine their views about the products we were selling them. After compiling a list of customer needs, I persuaded the manager to let me conduct a promotion drive to boost our sales, which he willingly obliged.*

R-Result: Tell them the outcome of the situation and your specific contribution to the said outcome. What did you accomplish? Let your results be realistic, achievable, and believable. Let the reader not question your achievements. **Example:** *Within 6 months, the company's sales had more than tripled, way above our expectations. The profits improved by 300% in just over a year and this resulted in the company raising the salary of all employees by 15%. I won the "Employee of the Year" award in only my first year at the organisation. A few years later, I was promoted to the Regional Supervisor, overseeing over 100 employees.*

L-Lessons Learnt: This is an addendum to the Result part above. What did you glean from the above scenario? Can you use similar approaches in comparable future situations/problems/challenges/contexts?**Example:***This experience showed me that understanding the organisation's internal and external customer needs can boost the sales of a company.*

In summary, one of your leadership essays could look like **the one below. Disclaimer: This is just an example for learning purposes. It is my own imagination and I am not a sales person.**

In 2015, I joined X Company as a Team Lead, Marketing. Although the company was making profits, these were marginal and there was a high staff attrition rate because the company could not remunerate its employees according to prevailing market rates. After a brief sales check, I quickly realised profits could be doubled. After sharing this information with the manager, I was assigned to draft a new marketing strategy to boost the company's sales. However, some old staff were not welcoming of the idea and refused to cooperate in the drafting of the new roadmap. To win them over, I organised small group meetings where I allowed everyone to express their fears or reservations about the intended changes. I then sold my vision to them, sharing my successful stints at my previous job. I also encouraged them to assign specific duties to each and every member and recognised the contribution of each one of them. They felt valued and before long, everyone embraced my idea. I then set about finding the prevailing consumer needs, aspirations and perceptions. I designed customer exit interviews and organised focused group discussions to determine their views about the products we were selling them. After compiling a list of customer needs, I persuaded the manager to let me conduct a promotion drive to boost our sales, which he willingly obliged. Within 6 months, the company's sales had more than tripled, way above our expectations. The profits improved by 300% in just over a year and this resulted in the company raising the salary of all employees by 15%. I won the "Employee of the Year" award in only my first year at the organisation. A few years later, I was promoted to the Regional Supervisor, overseeing over 100 employees. This experience showed me that understanding the organisation's internal and external customer needs can boost the sales of a company.

In my opinion, using the SAR/CAR/PAR approach seems easier as the task is often embedded in the situation part of the technique and unless you are familiar with this technique, you can skip T. Also, this is not cast in stone that you have to follow the above format to the dot. For example, you can do away with large sections of the above imaginary example to beat the word count. They understand you can not write everything in just 500 words but there is the bare minimum they still expect of you.

Tailor your essays to your needs. Try as much as possible to use statistics as well as leadership traits.

A brief Introduction:

We advise you to always start with an introduction to your leadership essay. You can use the following tips:

- Give an overview of what leadership means to you and provide a generic encounter or experience before going on to provide focused examples. E.g. *I was born and raised in a typical rural African village. At age 6, I was crafted into tending to and fending for our animals. Therefore, I developed organisational, resilience and other leadership skills which have been honed over the years.*
- Start with a personal definition (personalised definition of what leadership is) e.g. *For me, leadership is about service – being able to, in one's own small way, restore a smile where one is lost. All my life, I have lived by this intrinsic standard. I started volunteering while in secondary school, campaigning against teen pregnancies, child marriage, gender inequality and HIV/AIDS.*
- An introduction that mirrors the question E.g. *"I have been influential in my community and my leadership skills are evident in the following examples. Having worked as a...."*
- Introducing yourself and roles g.*"I am a Doctor of Medicine, with 5 years' experience and one of the youngest leaders at district healthcare level in my country as District Medical Officer and Chair of the District Health Management Team. I supervise over 200 staff as well as one hospital and seventeen health centres covering a population of seventy-five thousand, in primary healthcare provision, promoting healthy rural households.* Note that this is not an introduction per se and the writer can ably build on this role using the STAR/TRUE approach to write a compelling leadership example. In other words, intros aren't a must, they are dispensable. They're therefore at the discretion of the writer.

A Concise Conclusion to your Essay:

After you have written your essays, it is only fitting and proper that you conclude. Briefly show cause why you want to be a Chevening Scholar, highlight how the scholarship will help you realise your and the Scholarship's vision of being a leader/influencer in your home country. Chevening has some leadership conferences and seminars that can fast track your goals of being a global leader. Mention these if you have space.

E.g. *The Chevening Scholarship will further enhance my leadership skills and prepare me for senior managerial positions upon returning home – fighting for quality sexual and reproductive services for women as I look forward to transitioning into a global leader.*

Reducing your Word Count

As you should have noticed from the imaginary example above, I wrote just over 300 words. If you wrote that example as it is, you would probably use only one example in your essay. Writing one example is not a problem in itself if you can bring out your plethora of qualities clearly and leave no stone unturned. During interviews, I was asked only one example for each of the leadership and networking essays. Chevening is about quality not quantity. However, quality without significant quantity is no quality. Just imagine someone gives you yummy morsel of bread to stimulate your taste buds and says that is all. It is why I encourage you to best use 2-3 examples. This shows the scholarship team that you are all-round person by diversifying your leadership examples. It is not always a must. After all, the instructions instruct you to ***use your own examples to convince them that you have leadership potential in you.*** Thus, the above example can be abridged by eliminating lots of unnecessary words and/or using synonyms. In fact, I would eliminate most words in that example till the word count is around or less than 200. This requires a special skill which you gain by repeated practice.

I have put forth a few tips to help you scale down your words;

- Use active verbs. These save you words and at the same time convey the message distinctly.
- Avoid adverbs: these are generally unnecessary and take up a lot of your word count yet serve no purposes. In your scholarship essays, every word counts. They are not looking at your prolific writing skills. Have you answered the questions correctly? Words such as actually, really, basically etc at times dilute your essays. So instead of saying “*I am actually very late*”, use “*I am late*”. You don’t need to quantify how late you are. Also use superlatives in place of “very” in need be e.g. instead of “very good”, say :excellent”
- Use synonyms. This helps to avoid the monotonous and often boring use of the same word throughout the essay. Also, replace phrases with single words e.g. “*At the same time*” can be written as “*Simultaneously*”.
- Minimise use of articles (“a”, “the” and “an”): Where possible do away with these.
- Use grammatically correct compound words: These words may have a hyphen, often combining two nouns e.g. *time-consuming* is one word while *consuming time* is two words. However, avoid the trap of forcing nonexistent (instead of: it is not existent)

words. They will unpack all your essays according to Standard English grammar and if you are above the set limit, your essays won't be read and you will have no one to blame.

- Avoid redundancies/pleonasms: These are words that can be done away with e.g. “*the added*” *advantage* yet *advantage* would stand on its own. Other examples include *end result*, *joined together*.
- Proofread and proofread your essays: You will be surprised to see that many words are unnecessary. After the first draft, take a few days off to engage yourself in totally unrelated activities. Come back to the essay refreshed. Strike off all that is nonessential.

Whilst you are grappling with reducing word count, please be advised to use formal English. Avoid contractions to beat the word count e.g. “I’m, I’d” etc. These will be unpacked to “I am I would /I had” etc and you will exceed the word count.

In subsequent articles, more tips on minimising word count and the dos and don'ts of scholarship essays will be shared.

****Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), its partner organisations or any scholarship awarding body. Whereas the authors have taken every effort to provide accurate information, they are not liable for any factual errors that may be contained in this article.***

📅 August 24, 2018 👤 certifiedbc 💬 1 Comment

A brief roadmap about the Chevening Scholarship

Chevening scholarship is one of the UK government's international scholarships available in over 160 countries. The scholarship started in 1983 as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Award Scheme (FCOAS). This name was changed in 1994 to Chevening Scholarship after the Chevening House in Kent. This house is currently a joint official residence of the British Foreign Secretary and the British Deputy Prime Minister. Chevening scholarships are funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

and its partners. The scheme provides fully funded awards to over 1500 highly talented people every year. The main objective of the scholarship is to build a network of friends of the UK, who will be future leaders in their countries. As such, the scheme provides vast opportunities to support and complement your academic programme, increase exposure to and understanding of the UK. as a 2019/20 scholar, you will have opportunities to network with fellow Scholars, over 50000 alumni, the FCO, high profile speakers, and select UK organizations through vast engagement events such as networking events, volunteering opportunities, talks, and other trips across UK during your studies.

Before you make your application it is very important to read through the official website for various **guidance** provided. It is very important that you answer the pre-screening questions correctly or else you will be considered ineligible and you will not have access to the application portal. The website has actually provided a section about **common errors** in the application. This is very important for you to read and avoid making the same mistake(s). The application process is pretty simple as it allows you to enter information in each provided section and also answer 4 essay questions which we will post tips for each on a later date.

The whole application process for Chevening scholarship will take about eleven months before you can conditionally be selected as a Chevening scholar. It is therefore important for you to have a look at the provided **timeline** for the scholarship and know which deadline is set for document submission and when you expect an email about the progress of your application. The advantage of applying for Chevening scholarship is that you do not need to meet all the requirements before you can apply for it unlike other scholarship.




For **course choices**, you are only required to identify three courses and universities and apply to them at your own time being mindful that you will be required to have one unconditional offer by 11th July, 2019. By unconditional here, we mean that you've fulfilled all the school's offer conditions including but not limited to English language requirements, proof of certificates for some universities etc and that the only condition left is fees. One thing to note is that Chevening will not apply for your admission at any of the universities you will indicate in the application. It is your responsibility to visit the university website and find out on the course you wish to study and how to apply for it. You will find that not all courses are eligible for the scheme, it is therefore important that you read through the guidance for courses and select three eligible courses that you will include in your application. You can search for courses using the **find a course** portal provided on the official website. While they state that you have to identify three eligible courses, you are at liberty to apply to more than three courses

even after 6th November which is the application deadline. You will be given another chance to introduce one or all three new courses at the interview stage if you progress to this stage. This is important if you feel that the courses you chose during the application stage are no longer suitable for you or if you fail to get admitted to any of the three courses you listed in the application. If you find that the course you want to study is not appearing in the find a course section, you can inform Chevening through the link provided under this section on the website for them to add the course, but first ensure that the course is eligible for a Chevening award.

On English language requirement, it is very important that you take your time and do a lot of practice before you write this test. There are a number of eligible **English language test** which you can write. Please ensure that you meeting the test scores required by Chevening and your chosen UK university. If you fail to meet the requirement even by a 0.5 mark you will loose the scholarship. Conversely, you will have to independently meet the school's language requirements, especially if these are higher than the Chevening requirements. It is therefore very important that you write this test as soon as you can and do not wait until you hear of your interview results. This is because most test centres are fully booked between April and June especially if you are considering IELTS. The deadline for the English test is 11th July, 2019 you therefore have enough time to meet this requirement. You can write the test as many times as you wish to meet the requirement. However, we do advise you that you do a lot of practice and aim to meet the University and Chevening required score in your first attempt and save yourself some monies as the test can be expensive.

On **work experience**, you are required to have 2800hrs as a minimum for you to be eligible for the scholarship. The goodness with this work experience is that you do not need to meet it in one experience and it is fine even if it is not related to your undergraduate studies or the masters course you wish to study. You are allowed to enter up to 10 work experiences for you to meet the work experience required and if you have over 15000hrs of work experience it is very fine to include everything as there is no maximum limit that you can include. On calculation of hours, ensure that you calculate them as accurate as possible. For Chevening Awards it is assumed that applicants in full-time employment work on average 40 weeks per year and 35 hours per week. You will also note that full-time work experience is set to a maximum of 59 hours per week and to 50 weeks per year. So if you indicate that your working hours per week is 62hrs then the 3 hours will be ineligible, same if you indicate that you worked for 52 weeks in a year. We understand that other profession work over 70hrs per week but for the sake of the system please limit your work hours to a maximum of 59hrs. Also, if your work experience is not full-time, you are not expected to indicate that you work more than 35hours (the minimum limit for full-time) or your hours will be not be eligible.

During the application stage, you will also be required to enter details of two referees. Once your application is successful and you have been invited to attend the interview, you will be required to log into the Online Application System and request a **reference** from your referees. The request will generate an email to the referees and they will need to submit the reference by 25 February 2019. It is therefore important that you select your referee very carefully and start reminding them by January 2019 that you will request for references. Note that you cannot upload the references in the application portal but your referee will have to do it by themselves. It is therefore important for you to maintain a good relationship with them, after all this is what is expected of an applicant with good networking skills.


 August 13, 2018  certifiedbc  1 Comment

The Journey Begins

Thanks for joining me!



Good company in a journey makes the way seem shorter. — Izaak Walton

 August 13, 2018  scholarsmap  [Leave a comment](#)

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)