



# Emmanuel's Journey to Birmingham

Published by Emmanuel Emole

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I am Emmanuel Emole, a Nigerian with a tale of triumph over adversity. I have just rounded up modules for MSc Development Policy and Politics; which I took on to understand the political economy of development in Africa. Join me as I reflect on my experiences, and let's explore the insights and wisdom gained along the way.



## Growing up

I grew up in the second poorest state in Nigeria. Despite my poor family background, I knew indistinctively that I wanted to be successful. And so, I embraced the nickname Elite, as a declaration of my aspirations and a reminder to strive for greatness. With this self-motivation, I completed my undergraduate studies as the best student in my cohort.

## Journey to Birmingham

Given my family's background, I needed to secure a scholarship to study in England. But I had made several scholarship applications before then and gotten rejected. From 2020 – 2023, I had already made over 60 applications. But after each rejection, my application got better.

I grew from never being shortlisted for interviews to being shortlisted for two interviews in 2022; for both interviews, however, I ended up on the waitlist and never made it to the main list. It was very devastating for me, but it taught me that failure is crucial, perseverance and persistence are

essential in achieving desired goals, and that every 'no' brings me closer to the right 'yes' – I simply saw progress in failure.

In 2023, I applied from experience, got shortlisted for six scholarships, including the highly coveted [Mo Ibrahim Foundation \(MIF\) scholarship](#), which is awarded to one person each year but attracts up to 16,000 applicants, and ended up winning it. Voila! I am in the University of Birmingham, making me the first in my family to pursue a masters degree and the first to study abroad.



## Life in Birmingham

Studying at UoB has been fulfilling, I've made friends from all over the world and engaged in intercultural activities. I particularly love that the professors have an eye for talents. Recently I was hand-picked to [represent the University in a debate with students from other Russell Group institutions](#); I gave my best and we won the debate, bringing the trophy home. I have also worked as Research Assistant to lecturers in the International Development Department, making me garner very relevant work experiences while studying.



My experiences before getting to Birmingham and now in UoB have taught me that there is no such thing as impossible. Hence, my advice to current and prospective students is to believe in themselves, their abilities, and their potential to achieve extraordinary things, just as I did when I dared to dream of studying in England and meeting the King.

I still have a year to spend at UoB, given that my scholarship is valid for two years. I look forward to continuing to make the most of this opportunity, exploring new experiences, and achieving even greater heights in the next year.

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