

# Applying for a PhD Scholarship - Victor's top tips

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**PhD Civil Engineering student Victor Rugamba writes about his top tips when applying for a scholarship at the University of Birmingham.**

## Understand why you want to pursue a PhD

This may seem obvious, but you would be surprised that even the best of us find it difficult to properly articulate what draws us to pursue doctoral studies— especially in the case of an “advertised PhD”.

The key here is to understand that a PhD is somewhat a training scheme in creative thinking,

problem-solving, self-management, and critical analysis to mention a few. These skills amalgamate to make you a better researcher and are highly sought after in the job market outside academia.

Obviously, it helps to fit the eligibility criteria and to find the project attractive enough to dedicate 3.5 years of your life to making an original contribution to the respective field. To make this decision, the next tip will be essential.

## Do your research!

It is only right that you start a research journey by researching all about the PhD project/scholarship you are applying for.

You need to know if you satisfy the entry requirements, have all the required documents to complete the application process and that you know the relevant deadlines. You also need to know if the scholarship has any conditions tied to it.

The advertisement is usually the starting point for this research, but if you still have questions after reading through the website thoroughly, you can always reach out to the contact person attached to the PhD advertisement. However, use this cautiously as these are usually busy people, and as much as they would love to help, it reflects well on you to ask only the important questions when you make contact.

## Put your best foot forward

People appreciate when you go out of the way to impress them, especially on a competitive application. Remember the saying, ‘first impressions last’.

This tip could mean ensuring your application and CV have no typing errors or that you read, summarize, and discuss some of the suggested literature attached to the PhD project when you make your application. You could have your application checked over by a friend, or even better, a colleague who understands your field of interest. It could also mean turning up 10 minutes early if you are selected for an interview, even if it is just a Zoom call.

## Submit your application on time

Potentially the most important tip is to submit your application on time. You must submit by the deadline visible on the website – this is important to ensure you will be considered. It may seem

daunting applying for a scholarship, especially where the funding is critical for your research. However, it's important to have faith in yourself as a potential researcher. The work you contribute is important, and the world will want to see it!

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