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## TRANSCRIPT OF LECTURE [ISF 7]:

### THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPETOWN [UCT] – A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Saturday 22nd August, 2020; 1900 WAT

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# Application Process for Admission At UCT

## Background:

University of Cape Town is undoubtedly the best in Africa and one of the best in the world. The mission of the university is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society. This drives the school to be competitive among its peers globally. Be rest assured that UCT will give you the state-of-the-art facilities and resources needed for your professional growth. The faculty members are amazing.

Now, to the application process for admission in the University of Cape Town. The following are useful links for pursuing admission the process:

<https://www.students.uct.ac.za/students/applications/key-dates>

[https://publicaccess.uct.ac.za/psp/public/EMPLOYEE/SA/c/UCT\\_PUBLIC\\_MENU.UCT\\_SS\\_APPL.GBL?](https://publicaccess.uct.ac.za/psp/public/EMPLOYEE/SA/c/UCT_PUBLIC_MENU.UCT_SS_APPL.GBL?)

<https://www.students.uct.ac.za/students/applications/apply/forms>

It is important to know which type of Master's degree to apply for. A department can have up to three options for a specialization. For instance, Structural Engineering option in the department of Civil Engineering has three options to choose from, viz:

- 120 units for coursework and 60 units for research (M.Eng.)
- 120 units for research and 60 units for coursework (M.Sc. Eng.)
- 135 units for coursework and 45 units for research (Professional Masters).

Some departments have Master's degrees in this form as well:

- 180 units for research (full dissertation).
- 90 units for coursework and 90 units for research.

Please, peruse the above websites very well to know more about your prospective departments.

I would say choosing any option depends on your future goals. You might want to consider doing full dissertation or a degree with higher research than coursework if you intend to do a PhD in the nearest future. Otherwise, you would want to consider a coursework degree if you aim to enter your professional field upon graduation.

Also, while filling the application form online, you would be asked for your 'fee payer'. Kindly fill in the appropriate details (either your parent or guardians). You don't need to fill MasterCard Foundation. The admission application is independent of the Mastercard application, the two are mutually exclusive.

Additionally, check the box for student housing while filling the online form. MCF will pay for the accommodation when you get the scholarship.

Also, you would be asked if you would like to be considered for the school postgraduate funding (it's a partial funding). Kindly check the box for that and you would be required to fill a form (form 10C) for that purpose.

## Documents:

Below are the needed documents for the admission:

- Valid ID e.g. International Passport;
- Academic Transcript;
- English Proficiency Letter;
- Curriculum Vitae;
- Research Outline (for those that are applying for a research-based degree);
- Motivation Letter (some departments do not require this);
- Degree Certificate;

### **For the Academic Transcript:**

UCT only accepts the certified copy of the transcript. Some departments accept the electronic copy of the certified transcript while some do not. The latter would require that you send the transcript down here in hard copy using a courier service.

It's worthy to say some of these departments have relaxed this requirement by accepting the certified electronic copy to accommodate the effect of the pandemic while others remain inflexible.

### **For the Motivation Letter:**

This is mostly required for a research-based degree. This generally entails: *Why you are applying for the course? Your research interests? Your aspirations for the course? Long term goals? etc.*

### **For the Research Outline:**

This is a mandatory requirement for a research-based degree. Some departments only request you to write 100 words for this outline while some require it to be 500 words. It all depends on the departmental requirements. In summary, you're expected to write the topic of your proposed research and a little abstract of it.

## Securing Supervisors:

For the research-based degree, one needs to contact a supervisor before submitting the application. You can find the names of all the faculty members in your department on the departmental website. You will also see their research interests on the website.

After securing one, discuss your research topic with him/her and come up with a proposal. Notify him/her when you have submitted your admission application so that he/she can do a follow-up. Most times, the supervisor determines the admission of a research-based-degree student. He/she will be the one to access the application on the portal.

After submitting the application for admission, you're expected to receive a confirmation email containing your student ID (this number will be needed for the MCF application).

## Application Fee:

An application fee of R300 is written on the university website. Most people will be able to submit their application without this application fee while some would not. If you're unable to submit without paying the application fee, you can email [info\\_mcfsp@uct.ac.za](mailto:info_mcfsp@uct.ac.za) for a fee waiver. They will tell you what to do.

While the criteria for determining if the application fee payment is mandatory for a department or not is not clear-cut, it's worthwhile to say that you can pay the application fee even after you successfully submit the admission application.

The application website can be complicated sometimes, please always send an email to the graduate co-ordinator of the department for clarification. It will be sad to be denied admission even with all necessary qualifications due to misinformation. An email can do a lot.

Also, do a follow-up on your admission after a while (like two months after submission if you do not receive any information from the faculty) by sending an email to the department. Some departments have started offering conditional offers for this year's admission.

Please, kindly note that some departments require a separate application to them after the general one on the school website. If you're unsure of your department's requirement, kindly send an email to the graduate co-ordinator as well.

## Mastercard Scholarship at UCT - Background and Benefits

### Background:

The vision of the MCF program is to transition promising young people from beneficiaries to benefactors, preparing them with the necessary values, knowledge, skills, and leadership to fuel economic and social progress across Africa. The program targets young, academically qualified but economically disadvantaged undergraduate and postgraduate candidates with leadership potential from Africa.

In 2021, 75 opportunities (17 Undergraduates, 10 Honours and 48 Masters) are available for students who intend to commence with their first year of registration for full-time undergraduate and postgraduate (honours and master's) study.

### Benefits:

- Full tuition fees waiver;
- Visa application fees;
- Economy class air ticket to and fro yearly;
- Accommodation in UCT residence;
- Medical cover;
- Book allowance;
- Living stipend;
- Access to internship opportunities;
- Research allowance;
- Peer-mentor support;
- Leadership engagement;
- Access to alumni network.

### Documents:

- Valid ID e.g. International Passport;
- Certified academic transcript;
- Certified copy of SSCE result;
- Two academic references;
- Curriculum Vitae;
- Proof of physical address;
- Proof of registration for current degree at UCT;
- The MCF application form;
- The MCF application essays.

**For the Academic References:**

A template has been provided on the MasterCard Foundation website: <https://www.mcfsp.uct.ac.za/guidelines-postgraduate-applicants>. Please, download the forms and send it to your recommenders. The recommenders can also write additional information on their letter-headed paper. This is optional, not compulsory.

They can send the filled forms directly to the email address provided on the forms or you collect the filled reference forms from them and send it on their behalf. The two options can also be done simultaneously.

The contents of the recommendation should entail information about your academic excellence, leadership skills and volunteerism.

**NOTE:** The *Signature of Academic Referee* section of the MCF application form can be filled electronically using any PDF editor (Nitro PDF, Adobe Acrobat Reader).

**For the Curriculum Vitae:**

The CV is an important part of the application. It must not be more than 2 pages (A4 paper) and must contain the following headings:

- Professional/ Academic experience
- Participation in extracurricular activities
- Skills and interest

Since the theme of MCF Scholarship revolves around leadership, volunteerism and academic capabilities, I would advise your CV portrays all these.

**For the Proof of Physical Address:**

Electricity bill or water bill can be used. This is just to certify that you're living in the country.

**For the Proof of Registration of Current Degree At UCT:**

Those that have gotten their conditional offers can use it while others can use an email of acknowledgement sent after the submission of the admission application can make use of that.

**For the MCF Application Form:**

The form can be downloaded at the MCF website. It should be printed and filled with ink manually. While filling the form, you will be required to declare your assets and that of your family. Kindly be reminded that you're applying as an indigent candidate. If your family have substantial assets, the scholarship might not be for you. So, fill in the amounts carefully.

Section D of the form reads "Leadership Position"; Try to fill in all details here. Do not leave any space empty. List the key leadership positions you've taken, community services and previous awards.

Also, there are some spaces on the form where the initials, signature and stamp of a commissioner of oath are required. This can be done in any court or universities that have legal department.

The second witness on the form can be anybody. I would advise you do not put in the details of your family though. An employer, lecturer, class teacher and academic mentor would be nice.

And please write legibly. Also make sure the scanned copy of the form is clear. The application reviewer can only assess what they see.

**For the MCF Application Essays:**

Undoubtedly, this is one of the most important keys in acing the scholarship. You're required to write two thousand words in all using three key points as a guide. Please, do not exceed these three points in the essays.



The first point says *"In which way do you envisage contributing to the economic growth and social development of your country and Africa on completion of your studies, using your education as leverage?"*

Here, in my opinion, you're expected to tell the reviewers about how your study will impact your home country and Africa at large. *What are the expected impactful outcomes of your research?* I will advise you back up your arguments or hypothesis here with facts and figures as these give coherence and clarity to your essay.

The second point reads *"Explain any community service activities you have been involved in."*

As the point typifies, in my opinion, you're expected to describe the community services/volunteerism you've actively engaged with in the past. *What were the aims and objectives of these services? How many lives were impacted?* These and related questions should be answered in your essay.

The third point says *"List qualities that, for you, define leadership and elaborate on leadership initiatives that you've taken."*

Here, you're expected to list leadership qualities first (10 qualities should be okay) and then elaborate on your leadership prowess. Please, do not just describe your leadership positions. Tell your reviewers how you've made impacts in those roles. As a matter of fact, the essay should typify some of the qualities you've listed ahead.

For instance, if you list "creativity and innovation" as a leadership quality: *How have you demonstrated creativity and innovation in your leadership role? Were you able to change a bad policy in your workplace as a leader? What was the difference between the productivity level in your workplace?*

And finally, do not plagiarize while writing your essay. The reviewer committee consists of professors across many faculties. They might be using a plagiarism checker to vet the essays. Who knows?

**Cheers!**

# Questions & Answers

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- Q:** 1. There is an option on the portal to select a second course choice. What are the possibilities of being considered for a second course choice if perhaps first comes out negative?
2. In a situation where neither motivation letter nor recommendation letter was requested by the department, is it wise to still upload it?
3. For academic writing in terms of a writing sample of research work done during one's undergraduate program, can a summary (paper) suffice or should the entire project be submitted?
4. Is it safe to say that once you are able to submit your application without paying the application fee, one is good to go?
- A:** 1. The possibility is as high as the first choice in as much you meet their requirements. I was offered an admission for my second choice before the first one came in.
2. I think some departments do put a place like "other" in the uploading tab. You can upload them if you're sure they are good. Otherwise, it will be better not to jettison one's chance by uploading a sub-standard.
3. If this is for pre-evaluation by the prospective supervisor, then you can send him the entire paper.
4. Let's hope it is safe. I didn't pay either. It is advisable to pay the fee to avoid delays and rejections.
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- Q:** Can one apply for admission without an English proficiency letter?
- A:** Some departments accept Credit in SSCE as a replacement while some still insist on having a proficiency letter.
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- Q:** Since the Honours program is a postgraduate program (coursework), can it serve as a requirement to register PhD program in the future?
- A:** I do not think so. In SA, you need a Master's degree before you can register for a PhD.
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- Q:** 1. What should I do when my (institutional) application had not required me to submit my resume?
2. Does it really make sense proceeding with the MCF application when one is yet to get a conditional offer?
3. Is the *username* on the application acknowledgement mail same as the *applicant's number* on the MCF form?
- A:** 1. You don't need to worry yourself since it's not a requirement in your department.
2. Yes, you can. Use your acknowledgement email as a proof of registration.
3. Yes. The number is generated from your surname and first name, something like *Twxmay003*
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- Q:** By SSCE, do you mean WAEC certificate will do for MCF application?
- A:** Yes. WAEC is inclusive. SSCE includes NECO, WAEC, NABTEB and so on.
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