



# INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP FORUM

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## Transcript of Lecture:

## Theme: How to Secure Scholarship to Hamad Bin Khalifa University

Saturday, 4th April, 2020; 17:53 WAT

Lecturer: **Dr. Ahmed Sodiq**

Dr. Ahmed Sodiq works as a Research Associate at Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute (QEERI), Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Qatar.

He completed his PhD. in 2019 in Sustainable Energy at HBKU with a research focus on Energy Storage (Redox Flow Batteries). He got his MSc. in 2015 in Chemical Engineering from Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi with a research focus on Carbon Capture and Storage. He obtained his BSc. in 2012 in Chemical Engineering from Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria with a research focus on Carbon Capture and Utilization. The lecturer is a recipient of the following awards and honours:

- Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Life Award in Sports (2019)
- Best Poster Presentation Award, 8th Global Conference on Global Warming, Doha, Qatar (2019)
- Young Scientist Award, European Materials Research Society, Strasbourg, France (2018)
- Best Poster Introduction Award, International Flow Battery Forum, Lausanne, Switzerland (2018)
- Qatar Foundation Scholarship Award for a PhD in Sustainable Energy at HBKU, Doha Qatar (2015 - 2019)
- Best Thesis Award in Chemical Engineering Class of 2015, Masdar Institute of Science and Technology (2015)
- Masdar Institute of Science and Technology, Graduate Student Scholarship (2013 - 2015)\_
- Federal Government of Nigeria Presidential Scholarship (2010 - 2011)
- Petrobras Scholarship Award to Exceptionally Brilliant Nigerian Students (2007 - 2011)
- He has 13 publications, 4 Patents and 1 book chapter to his name.

Moderator: **Pasanaje Hameed.**

Transmission Crew: **Scholars Taiwo Ridwan, Ugwu Justin, Salami Hussein, AB Salako, Ismaheel Hameed, Adewale Olamiposi, Hammed Rasheed, Olatunji Paul, Etunbi**

(<https://t.me/joinchat/EHh0IEMV1ZakZ4m-4m20YA>), Hydrospecs, Obasekore Hammed, Taiwo Ridwan

Admin: Researcher Bankole & ISFM Scholar Obasekore Hameed

#### **LECTURE AGENDA:**

1. Lecturer's Opening Remarks.
2. What you need to know about Qatar.
3. What you need to know about Hamad Bin Khalifa University.
4. About the scholarship.
5. Question and answer.

#### **LECTURER'S OPENING REMARK:**

Good evening everyone.

Thank you very much for having me on this platform tonight. I really thank those behind the scene that have been helping people make admission decisions across the world easy and hassle-free. I am sure you will all reap your rewards, either on Earth or in the hereafter.

My name is Ahmed Sodiq; I currently work as a Research Associate at Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute (QEERI) under Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Qatar.

I completed my PhD. in 2019 in Sustainable Energy at HBKU with a research focus on Energy Storage (Redox Flow Batteries). I got my MSc. in 2015 in Chemical Engineering from Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi with a research focus on Carbon Capture and Storage. I obtained my BSc. in 2012 in Chemical Engineering from Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria with a research focus on Carbon Capture and Utilization.

#### **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT QATAR**

However, before I go into the heart of the discussion, I would like to introduce you to Qatar; Qatar is one of the six countries that formed the Gulf Cooperation Council, popularly known as GCC.

It is the richest per capita country on Earth and the current population is around 2 million (including the expatriates). Unlike other GCC countries that derive their riches from crude oil, Qatar is blessed with abundance of natural gas, and it is the third after Russia and Iran in proven natural gas reserves.

Qatar is very conservative as a country and does not make noise about its riches, but trust me it is stupendously rich.

Although the general cultural atmosphere in Qatar is Islamic, the country relaxes its rules to allow those who do not practice the religion of Islam to do whatever they like so far they do not break the law; in fact, they cannot even break it.

It is very hard to break the law in Qatar because of high-tech (this is a warning to those who use admission as a cover to get into a particular country, and then start fomenting trouble after).

If you are not a Muslim and you want to practice your religion, other faiths have their churches and temples to worship in a city called Religious City.

Drinking alcohol openly is forbidding, but if you must drink alcohol, then there is a provision for you to get a license to do that responsibly.

The week starts on Sunday and ends on Thursday; religious activities, as a Muslim, a Christian or an Idol worshiper are done on Fridays (i.e. Friday and Saturday are weekend days).

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HAMAD BIN KHALIFA UNIVERSITY**

Now let me introduce you to Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

HBKU is named after the father of the current Emir of Qatar (Hamad Bin Khalifa). It started as a graduate school and later incorporated bachelor's programs into its curricula.

It has different programs that can be obtained at [www.hbku.edu.qa](http://www.hbku.edu.qa).

It is one of the schools under Qatar Foundation ([www.qf.org](http://www.qf.org)) and if you get the scholarship, then you are indirectly sponsored by Qatar Foundation.

There are three national research labs under HBKU; Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute (QEERI), Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) and Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI).

If you are admitted, you may have the opportunity to work in any of the three labs, depending on the nature of your research, for example, I did my PhD under QEERI because my research is energy-related.

You may not work under any of the three labs at all, because there are also independent faculty members who have their individual labs under HBKU but not under QEERI, QCRI or QBRI.

The admission requirements can also be obtained in the university website given above.

## **How to get the admission and then scholarships?**

Let me tell you my statistics whilst seeking the PhD admission so that you know that you can also do it; GRE (Quant 159, Verbal 155), TOEFL (92), Research Experience (2 journal publications and 2 conference publications).

Therefore, if your stats are like mine, then it shows that you can also make it.

For those who are looking at MSc. These were my stats when I entered Masdar Institute in Abu Dhabi; GRE (Quant 159, Verbal 155), TOEFL (96), Research Experience (only my bachelor's final year project).

I am showing you this because the modes of admission in the two schools are similar.

Apply online early; when the admission committee sees good candidates due to their stats, they forward their names to the faculty members for an interview while the admission portal is still open.

So if you apply early, your chance is better than the late applicants.

Please write the GRE; what is stated on the website is that GRE is not required for MSc., but believe me if you have it they'll take you before they consider someone without it.

Please don't just write the GRE, make sure you have 160 and above in your quantitative; they don't usually pay attention to the verbal score in College of Science and Engineering, but I don't know about other colleges.

Another trick is to look for a faculty member or a researcher (in QEERI, QCRI and QBRI) that currently works on what you like; talk to the person through emails and then let him recommend you for admission.

Follow the number of pages or the number of words recommended for the SOP in your application materials.

And don't just write anything for the SOP, write something convincing and seek expert opinion before you make your final submission online. People are fond of editing their SOPs and then just send something not really strong across, remember, it is not about how many applications you submit, it is about how many offers you secure.

Many Nigerians don't really know so much about Middle Eastern education, especially education in the GCC.

I really don't want to beat my chest, but you get qualitative education here more than the West.

So if you're making your application and you're treating your Middle East application with contempt, then you're going to miss out on qualitative education with robust scholarships.

I am not going into so much detail because I know that questions will come up during Q&A, then I will use that opportunity to throw in some light.

## **ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP**

Let me now talk about the scholarships.

This session is getting interesting.... please, be preparing your questions in advance. UAE is bae.

Currently if you're admitted as an international student, you have 80% tuition scholarship, free housing (including family housing if you're married), free medical insurance and QAR 7,000

(equivalent to 700,000 Naira) stipend for PhD. and QAR 5,000 (equivalent to 500,000 Naira) for MSc. per month.

The remaining 20% tuition can be paid from your stipend or from working in the university.

When we came in, we were the first set and we were paid QAR 9,000 stipend for PhD and QAR 7,000 for MSc per month with full tuition and free housing. But they changed the policy later and reduced the stipend and also asked students to pay 20% tuition.

But all in all, the money is enough to take care of you and your family (if you're married), and if you're smart enough, you can still build a property in your village as a student.

I think I am open for questions now.

Thank you for your time!

### Questions & Answers

Q	What's the chance of an applicant with a very good TOEFL score, CGPA and working experience in the applied course but no GRE score yet?	A	It is very dicey. I have to be frank, for an MSc, the candidate may get in, but I don't think the application will be considered for a PhD.
Q	The admission and scholarship conditions you highlighted earlier do they also apply to Khalifa University?	A	Not really, KU is full tuition scholarship and free housing for only students, they don't take care of your family any longer. KU PhD stipend is 7000 and MSc. is 4000.
Q	What are the strong points for a PhD applicant to take note when applying?	A	GRE quantitative (160 and above), and maybe if you have publications.
Q	Haven't listened with keen interest, I can breath hope for those of us aspirers, may God bless you. My question: Please, sir, are there finance or business related courses there?	A	Yes, please check the university website that I shared early.
Q	1. For we that put in for the HBKU Scholarship in the last application, when are we going to hear from them, and when are they going to resume normally as we hope coronavirus will disappear very soon?  2. Why did you say the Quality of Education over there can't be compared to that of the West as I can't see Qatar schools in the top 50 in latest QS ranking of schools?	A	Ordinarily you should start receiving replies by the first week of May, but because COVID-19, I don't know if the university will change that.  The labs are more equipped than the West and the Professors are from top universities in the West. Of course you cannot compare a school that is less in years to beat Harvard for example in ranking.

	3. Does the scholarship cover VISA and airfare? If not, how much will VISA and airfare to Qatar cost?		Yes, I am sorry I forgot to mention ticket fares to and from your country every year till you finish your program. So at the end, only 10 - 12 students are funded from the initial 40.
Q	Please could you give the list of Universities in Qatar that offer full graduate studies scholarships for MSc and PhD?	A	For PhD, only HBKU and Qatar University offer PhD programs, but for MSc, almost all the universities under Qatar Foundation do this.
Q	Please, we were told those people prefer accepting studentS that study in the West more than Africa. How true is that?	A	For HBKU and Masdar, this is not true, because they know that Naija is far better than Oyinbo, it is not about names, it is about what you can do, and Nigerians have shown them here.
Q	After the application deadline, how long does it take to know the application outcome at HBKU and how long for MSc?	A	I think within two weeks you should get a reply.
Q	Waow, thanks for the eye opening lecture. My first question is when do they give admission in terms of the month admission is given as per scholarship?	A	They usually roll out admissions in May, and by June, they'll start rolling out scholarships.
Q	1. After the scholarship, are there job prospects in the country very accommodating for international graduates?  2. How many Nigerians were admitted while you (the lecturer) were a PhD student and how many are there right now also?	A	I need to really explain this, we were almost all taken from Masdar when we applied, but many people couldn't risk it and then stayed back in Masdar, I was the only one that came, and the year after, they also gave many Nigerians scholarships from Masdar, and many of them stayed back in Masdar. So they complained bitterly after the second year, so they started considering Nigerians elsewhere but not from Masdar again, I don't know if they have changed the policy now.
Q	Please sir, I can't find the website on the group.	A	<a href="http://www.hbku.edu.qa">www.hbku.edu.qa</a> or go to <a href="http://www.qf.orr">www.qf.orr</a> to get all the universities under Qatar Foundation.
Q	Okay thank you sir. How about the VISA. And also hope they will get back to everybody including people that get the scholarship and people that didn't get it.	A	They'll process your visa for you and they'll send a reply to everyone irrespective of the admittance or not.
Q	Thanks for your time & well detailed lecture scholar sir. My question is, does	A	Yes, check <a href="http://www.hbku.edu.qa">www.hbku.edu.qa</a>

	HBKU offer Arts/social sciences courses? Thank you.		
Q	We have learnt that few Nigerians usually get this prestigious scholarship. What can be responsible for this?. Also what is the total number of people that they usually award the scholarships to every year?	A	Nigerians would always be prioritized because of what we have done and what we are still doing, everyone wants to work with a Nigerian student because we are energetic and not lazy, so if Nigerians are not given scholarships, it is probably because they don't have good stats. The number of people is approximately 50.
Q	Is there opportunity to do a direct PhD program in any of the universities?	A	I have never seen anyone given a direct PhD from bachelor, but that doesn't mean they don't do it.
Q	Please I checked the university website and saw that the application deadline was February 1st... When is the next application opening?	A	The portal usually opens around October, please also check before that time.
Q	Thank you so very kindly for sharing your experience and helping others here to grow. Please I will love to know about academic requirements to get accepted into the program on scholarship at your prestigious institution, Sir.  Can we have the research focus for PhD students?  Is it compulsory to find a faculty member before you can apply?	A	The most important parameter in the application is the GRE quantitative (just get 160 and above), if you get this, believe it would be very difficult not to give you admission. Yeah, the PhD program is core research-based, it is not compulsory to find a faculty member but it may boost your chances.
Q	a) After schooling, what next? How long can you remain in the country?  b) Do the girls who are Christians need to wear hijab?	A	Well, you're given 6 months to look for a job and then after that if you don't have any job, you have to leave.  LOL, let's laugh small, no one cares if you are a Christian or Buddhist, they don't force anyone here to practice any religion. You may leave your hair open 24/7.
Q	I have already applied for the last two months, although not with a GRE but with	A	Please is this for MSc or PhD? if it is for MSc message me privately, but if it is for

	a very good TOEFL score. Now we heard some are already receiving mails for interviews online, albeit we've not seen anyone from science and technology, data science specifically. Does this mean they've not started getting to those that applied for data science or? Also, do you have an idea of how many slots are there for data science? Thanks!		PhD, GRE is important, without it they'll not call you.
Q	Thank you very much for the wonderful lecture. Do other universities in Qatar have similar application procedures and Ideas as the HBKU so that when we find information on other universities in Qatar, we can apply the advice you have given us to them.	A	HBKU is unique in Qatar because they pump more funds into the University, and it is the only university whose scholarship program is very nice. Others are just there but the scholarships are not that fantastic.
Q	a) What are chances that you'd get a job after schooling?  b) What's the permanent residence application like?	A	If you do your research in any of the labs that I mentioned earlier, yes, the job opportunity is brighter. It is always brighter for a PhD whether you do your research in those labs or not.  There is no permanent residence in Qatar unless you have spent 20 years in the countries (and there some conditions attached).
Q	Are there animal science related courses there?	A	I haven't heard of anything like that, but please check <a href="http://www.hbku.edu.qa">www.hbku.edu.qa</a> , it may not be called animal science directly but you may find something for yourself.
Q	Thanks for this lecture. Please what about the age limit?	A	None, you can be given admission if you're a grandfather/grandmother.
Q	Thank you for the beautiful lecture sir. I think I have once heard that getting into HBKU or Qatar university is a bit harder for Nigerians. But, the chance is high if the Nigerian already has another degree from an international institution... Please, explain this sir.	A	It is not true, that's why I shared my stats and we also have another Nigerian doing her PhD here. These people here care about your statistics, 'dem no dey look face'. There are many Nigerians that I know that have been admitted for master's programs in HBKU that were coming directly from Nigeria, but I haven't seen a Nigeria into the PhD program directly coming from Nigeria.



Q	Does the result you came out with mattered when they consider the applicants?	A	Yes, at least the first condition must be met first before considering your GRE, and that is 3.0/4 CGPA.
Q	So without GRE and TOEFL one can't be admitted?  Please can one substitute TOEFL with a certificate of English Proficiency from home institution and apply without a GRE in Life sciences?	A	For a PhD. program, no, you can't be admitted without GRE, they don't really put emphasis on TOEFL if you can demonstrate that you were taught in English by getting letter from your university that attests to that.
Q	Please is the application window presently open Sir?	A	No, please check around October.
Q	Are there universities in Qatar that offer pharmaceutical science related courses as part of their scholarship?	A	No, I haven't seen anyone yet, but please check the website.
Q	Total is 50 sir including PhD and MSc from every country?	A	Yes, both combined.
Q	This is a very detailed explanation and I'm glad I followed  I applied to the school for masters in women, development and society.. I didn't submit GRE because it wasn't part of the requirements and I submitted in December 2019, late December while the deadline was February 25 2020.  Been searching for a professor to engage in the department but unfortunately I couldn't find any, just on Thursday, I got in touch with a Pakistani lady who's also a student, doing her masters in the same course and we had a long talk. I met her on LinkedIn.  I don't have a question per say, but aside from SOP, what other criteria do they consider in giving admission and also in securing the scholarship for my course specifically?	A	This your course is a priority in Qatar now because Qatar Foundation chairperson is interested in the program, but I feel if you have a strong CGPA, it is enough for you to get a scholarship.
Q	Thank you for the lecture. I noticed one of the requirements for PhD applicants is	A	I think you can do so if you have a strong stats, like the GRE and maybe publication. But you have to have

	a Masters Degree. Can one apply with MSc in view?		finished the MSc before the admission cycle begins.
Q	Do they get back to all the applicants irrespective of the outcome, either successful or not. I haven't heard from them though. Deadline for international students was February 15?	A	Yes, from what I have gathered, they get back irrespective of the outcome.
Q	Please what is the hope of applicants that applied for the last PhD admission with a GRE quant score lower than 160?	A	The chance is slim, but my own quant was 159 and I got in, so I think the person should just be patient, if it doesn't go well, the applicant can then write a new GRE if the applicant so desires to come here.
Q	After applying for admission, do we need to apply for a scholarship again.	A	It is just for formality but you need to apply for scholarships, you're automatically in when you get the admission.
Q	1. Is it every department that will do an interview for the people they want to select before they will select? Or some won't do any interview, they will just send congratulatory messages?  2. Also when I submitted my application, I didn't receive any acknowledgement email from HBKU. Hope I am safe?	A	Yes, they usually interview those candidates with high chances of being selected. On your second question, I really need to confirm because I don't know if you're safe o!
Q	Can M.sc applicants without TOEFL apply?	A	Yes but the chances of being admitted is not guaranteed.
Q	Are applicants interviewed before admission or the other way round sir?	A	Yes, they are interviewed before admission.
Q	1) My question is, I applied without a TOEFL score nor GRE exam, for masters of Arts in Islamic Studies, what's the probability of being chosen?  2) What's HBKU admission mail?	A	Your course is unique, it doesn't even make sense to request for TOEFL or GRE because your program is in pure and unadulterated Arabic. But I will try to confirm if you really need anything apart from your bachelor's degree. admissions.cis@hbku.edu.qa.
Q	Do we have Universities in Qatar that offer Masters in Public Health?	A	Check the website, I think they were putting a program together one time like that on public health.

<b>Q</b>	What is the prospect for a postdoc program at HBKU and what are the benefits?	<b>A</b>	Very high if you finish from here, but you need to do some work if you didn't finish from here. The benefit is relative, depending on the labs you're working with, but your take home with all benefit is QAR 26,500 per month.
<b>Q</b>	It means anybody who doesn't get any notification for an interview before may now be expecting a rejection letter.	<b>A</b>	Yeah, something like that, unless a miracle happens.

Compiler: **Agboola Afees Akinola**  
For: **International Scholarship Forum [ISF]**