

TRANSCRIPT OF LECTURE DELIVERED ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2018

(FORUM 2)

Topic: The CHEVENING Scholarship

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Background

Chevening is an international scholarship scheme which enables students with leadership and networking skills from 144 countries and territories to study for masters' degree programme in the United Kingdom. The scholarship scheme was commissioned in 1983 to raise and train global leaders and influencers from 144 countries and territories. Over the years, The Chevening Network has become 50,000-member strong. This year, it became the strongest scholarship network in the world. It boasts of presidents, prime ministers, law makers and policy experts across the world. It is valued (financially) at about £30,000 to £40,000 per scholar. It caters for tuition, round trip to and from your country, and a monthly stipend of about £1050 to £1300 per month.

How do you get in to this vast network?

Simple! Have the right qualities. Chevening is looking for: Leadership and Networking skills, with a clear career plan.

Scholarship Application Timeline and Essays

Applications for 2019/2020 session are open from now till November 6, 2018. You would be required to write four essays revealing that you possess what Chevening is looking for. You would also need to have at least two years' work experience in and around your chosen field. The essays are the cornerstone for selection of scholars. So a lot of emphasis must be placed on the essays. Here are the essay questions and how I advise they should be answered:

- **Essay 1 Q.:** 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.

- ❖ **Essay 1 A. Hints:** What this question is simply asking you is: What does leadership mean to you, and how have you shown leadership throughout your life - academically and professionally. Here, Chevening wants to see a rising profile. How you led your class academically could count, if you transformed that into helping the class or people around you get better. But what counts more is how you have led professionally and career-wise. How have you been able to transform leadership into influence? When you are done writing this essay, go over it and ask yourself one question: Does this essay show that I can go ahead and lead my field (academics, politics, media, whatever field) if given the opportunity? So while answering this essay, show Chevening that you are a leader, who is becoming an even greater leader. Be clear. Be straightforward. Give examples.

- **Essay 2 Q.:** Chevening is looking for individuals with strong networking skills, who will engage with the Chevening community and influence and lead others in their chosen profession. Explain how you meet this requirement, using clear examples of your networking skills, and outline how you hope to use these skills in the future.

- **Essay 2 A. Hints:** For me, this was the most difficult question of all. It may not be for you. But my answer was woven around the people, platforms, and opportunities I have been exposed to and how they have helped me get to where I was before the Chevening scholarship. The better way to answer this question is to look at it as "What am I bringing to the Chevening network?" For me, I was bringing my network in the Nigerian media space, my network with the World Bank, IMF and UN Millennium Campaign, amongst others. (Your networks do not have to be big mainstream networks, but just some network with promise). So show Chevening what networks you belong to, and how this has helped you in your brief or long professional career.

- **Essay 3 Q:** 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.

- ❖ **Essay 3 A. Hints:** Better way to answer this question is to see it as: What do you have to do, immediately you return? What is your immediate plan, your five year plan and your 20-year plan or long term plan. Here, don't make the mistake of building castles in the air for the first year or the five year plan. Be specific, be sure. It is safer to link it to what you already do. That way it is easier to convince a panel but for your 20-year or long term plan, you are free to dream. You can even dream as far as saying you would have built a network with the policy space, strong enough to move into politics and run for president in 2039 in your country. Be real though.

- **Essay 4 Q.:** 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.

- ❖ **Essay 4 A. Hints:** You would need to fill three schools in your application form, while applying. Know what you want, and apply to the three schools with the same focus. I applied to Sussex, SOAS, LSE and University of East Anglia. Then dropped one along the line. My courses were: 1. Media Practice for Development and Social Change. 2. Media in Development 3. Media, Communication and Development. 4. Media and International Development. From this it is by all means clear that I was looking for how the Media drives Development. That clarity is very important. Don't apply for Media and communications here, then Politics and International relations elsewhere. The question will be this guy doesn't know what he is looking for. Be careful with course choice. Why did I choose those schools? Because they are the best for development studies in the UK. Sussex is the best for development studies in the world. So explain why you want them and the school's strengths. That should be easy.

Important Things to Note:

- ❖ Once you scale through the essays, you would be invited for an interview, very few people are invited for interviews. If you are invited, you are almost in. In Nigeria, in 2017, we were 6,043 who applied. About 200 were invited for interview, only 43 were eventually selected. Across the world over 65,000 applied, only 1600+ were chosen, less than two percent of applicants get in. But do not be intimidated by the competition. You can get in.

- ❖ You would also need to take one English proficiency test, IELTS preferably. You would need it to get in.

Questions and Answers

Q. What is the minimum IELTS score required by Chevening

A. 6.5 or 7 and above is advised. There are no fixed figures actually.

Q. I would like to know if publications could help boost someone's application.

A. It could, depending on how you carve it.

Q. How about age limit. Are there age restrictions?

A. There is no age limit. 18 to infinity, I'd say.

Q. What's the prospect of working in the country after completion of the program?

A. You have to return to your country. It is part of the terms.

Q. If my leadership experience and networking skills are not on international level, what is my chance of winning the scholarship?

A. It doesn't have to be international, local leadership and networking is enough. Just keep it authentic and measure your progress in the essays.

Q. What if experience earned so far are voluntary based?

A. Voluntary experience counts. You are even advised to make it part of your work experience.

Q. The work experience I have had so much is teaching, do I have a chance?

A. Yes, you do. Depending on how impactful your teaching has been. Chevening is looking for leaders in the teaching field too. How have you led in that regard?

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