

COMMONWEALTH COMMISSION / VICE-CHANCELLOR OXFORD SCHOLARSHIPS FOR AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES

Scholarship Guidance Notes for Applicants 2013-14 Admission



1. What do the scholarships offer?

The five scholarships provide fully funded opportunities for part-time postgraduate study in international human rights law at the University of Oxford, starting September 2013. The course of study is taught over 22 months and consists of two residential sessions in Oxford and two periods of distance learning. The scholarships are funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford and are intended for human rights advocates from African Commonwealth countries (see p.4 for list of eligible countries) who would be unable, without assistance, to take up their place on this course. Subject to satisfactory progress, the scholarships lead to the award of a Master of Studies (MSt) in International Human Rights Law.

Each scholarship provides course and college fees at the University of Oxford over two years, return air travel from the scholar's home country for each residential session and a stipend to cover living costs during the residential sessions.

2. Who is eligible to apply?

We welcome applications from persons in all fields of human rights practice (e.g. from international, governmental and non-governmental agencies, private practice, academics, the armed forces, medicine, the media). Most human rights work is done within a national and local context and you need not have international experience to be eligible.

In order to meet the eligibility criteria for the course itself, applicants must:

- already hold a degree to a 'high standard'. This usually means in British terms a high 2.1 (67% or higher) and in North American terms a grade point average of 3.5 (you can compare your own degree with these scores at <http://www.ecctis.co.uk/NARIC/Default.aspx>). The degree is designed primarily for early and mid-career lawyers but non-lawyers with extensive human-rights related experience may also apply.
- demonstrate a commitment to human rights based on work experience, volunteer activities or concentration on human rights and international law at university
- have access to computing facilities sufficient to take an online course
- meet the minimum requirements for English proficiency as set out by the University for graduate study at http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/apply/internat_students.html. (please note that the level of English competence required for this course is the **higher** level).

Further information about admissions criteria for the course is available on the admissions pages of our website at <http://humanrightslaw.conted.ox.ac.uk/MStIHL/admissions/index.php>.

In addition, in order to meet the requirements of the scholarship, applicants must:

- be Commonwealth citizens of a developing African Commonwealth country, refugees or British protected persons AND be permanently resident in a developing Commonwealth country. Applicants should also be intending to remain in a developing African Commonwealth country on completion of the course.
- not already have received or be currently receiving financial benefit from a previous Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholarship.

3. How can I apply?

Before making an application, please check that you meet both the eligibility requirements for the course itself (see <http://humanrightslaw.conted.ox.ac.uk/MStIHLR/admissions/index.php#admissionscriteria>) and for the scholarship (see above). If you are satisfied that you meet the criteria for both, please follow the instructions below.

Stage 1 – making an initial application

Go to http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/apply/application_forms.html, find the heading 'Applications for Graduate Study' and, from within the orange-coloured box, download the two documents entitled: 'Application Form for Graduate Study 2013-14' and 'Reference Form for Graduate Study 2013-14'.

Please note: you should ignore the notice that paper applications are only acceptable in exceptional cases and that you should inquire whether your circumstances qualify for this exception; for these scholarships you must apply using a paper application form.

The deadline for submitting the completed application form to the University of Pretoria Centre for Human Rights, where the initial assessment of applications will take place, is **15 April 2013**. Please ensure that you leave sufficient time to complete the application form, to gather the required supporting materials (including transcripts and references) and to send the documentation to Pretoria. Late or incomplete applications cannot be considered.

Before completing the application form, please read carefully the instructions contained in the Application Guide at http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/apply/application_guide.html, ignoring the first two sections on 'how to apply' and 'when to apply' which are not relevant for applicants to this scholarship scheme. In addition to the instructions in the Application Guide, please note the following:

- **Section G/H (Language Skills/English Proficiency)**
Unless your first language is English or you meet the conditions for applying for a waiver of the language requirement, please remember to include evidence of your proficiency (i.e. a certificate showing you meet the required score from one of the tests recognized by the University). If you wish to apply for a waiver you will need to include a letter with your application outlining the reasons why you believe you should be exempted from the requirement.
- **Section I, (Programme of Study)**
Please leave subsections 1 and 3 of Section I blank and complete subsection 2 with the following details:
Course code: 000160
Qualification: MSt
Course title: MSt International Human Rights Law
- **Section J (Course Information and College Preference)**
This course is *only* available on a part-time basis so please tick the 'part-time study' box. It is not possible to start the course in Hilary or Trinity Term so please leave these boxes blank. Details of which colleges are currently accepting applicants to this programme are listed on College Search tool at <http://www2.admin.ox.ac.uk/progstudy/>. Please check this tool before completing this section of the form.
- **Section L (Funding)**
List your primary funding source as 'Commonwealth Commission/Vice Chancellor Oxford Scholarships for African Human Rights Advocates'.
- **Section M (Oxford Scholarships)**
Leave this section blank.

- **Section N (Supporting Materials)**

The materials required for the MSt in International Human Rights Law are the compulsory materials required for all graduate courses (i.e. official transcripts of previous higher education, a CV/resumé, three references and a statement of purpose). No written work is required and, if submitted, will not be considered.

With regards to references, please send your referees the 'Reference Form for Graduate Study 2012-13' and ask them to provide their reference on institutional or professional letter-headed paper in a sealed envelope, and to sign across the seal and cover their signature with clear adhesive tape. Your references should be returned to you in a sealed envelope and you should submit them, unopened, with your application. Alternatively, your referees can send their references directly to the attention of Mr Norman Taku at the address given below.

- **Section O (Application Fee):** add a note saying that you are applying for the course through the Commonwealth Oxford African scholarship scheme and that your application fee will be paid by the scheme.
- With regards to submitting your application please **do not** follow the instructions for submitting to Oxford but, instead, submit your completed application form (**in hard copy and with all supporting materials**) to the address below by **Monday 15 April 2013**.

FAO Mr Norman Taku
Commonwealth Oxford African Scholarships
Centre for Human Rights
Faculty of Law
University of Pretoria
PRETORIA 0002
South Africa

All completed applications submitted to the above address by the given deadline will be assessed by a selection panel at the University of Pretoria. Please note that where an application arrives late or is missing any of the supporting materials, it will not be considered.

Applicants who meet the course *and* scholarship requirements will be called for an interview in late April and, again, assessed by the selection panel. Applicants will be interviewed by telephone unless they live within the Gauteng Province and are able to travel to Pretoria in person.

Once interviews have taken place, the assessors will produce a shortlist and the applications of these candidates will be forwarded to Oxford University for the next stage of the process.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of this first stage of the application process in early May 2013. If you are not shortlisted, your application for both the scholarships and the course will not be taken any further. Furthermore, you will not, at this stage, be able to apply for the course directly through Oxford (i.e. without this particular source of funding) as standard admissions close in March.

Stage 2 –shortlisted applicants only

The applications of shortlisted students will be sent from Pretoria University to Oxford University in early May 2013. They will be assessed by a selection panel of academics from the Department for Continuing Education and the Law Faculty. The panel will select five candidates (plus a small number of reserves) who will then be invited to submit an application to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission for consideration.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of this second stage of the process in mid-May 2013. **Please note that successful candidates will have only a short period of two weeks (13 – 27 May) to submit their application to the Commonwealth Commission and should therefore reserve sufficient time to do this.** Candidates will be required to submit two references and their degree transcripts via the Commonwealth Commission's online application system and are therefore advised to have these documents available in advance, where possible. Further details will be provided at the time. If you are not selected, your application for both the scholarships and the course will not be taken any further and it will be too late to apply for the course directly through Oxford.

Stage 3 – Oxford’s shortlisted applicants only

The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission selection committee will consider the five candidates (and reserves) nominated by Oxford to ensure that they meet CSC requirements. This stage of the process is essentially an endorsement of the chosen candidates by the CSC and it is unlikely, though not impossible, that candidates will be rejected by the CSC.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the third and final stage of the process in July 2013. A small number of candidates may be offered reserve places for scholarships, which means that there is a **possibility** that they will be given a scholarship, if one of the successful candidates withdraws from the programme.

4. How can I find out more about the University of Oxford?

- Visit the Oxford University home page <http://www.ox.ac.uk/> and the Graduate Studies Prospectus online at http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/index.html.
- If you wish to find out more about the content of the course, or you are interested in applying directly to the programme (i.e. not through this scholarship scheme), please visit the course website at <http://humanrightslaw.conted.ox.ac.uk/MStIHRL/index.php>.

5. Who should I contact if I have any questions?

Please make use of all of the information available to you:

- the course website at <http://humanrightslaw.conted.ox.ac.uk/MStIHRL/index.php>
- the Graduate Studies Prospectus at http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/index.html,
- the application guide at http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/postgraduate_courses/apply/application_guide.html
- these guidance notes

If the above websites do not answer your questions please contact the Administrator for this course at Oxford University on iphumrts@conted.ox.ac.uk.

6. List of African Commonwealth countries

- Botswana
- Cameroon
- The Gambia
- Ghana
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa
- Swaziland
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe