

PhD Scholarship Application Checklist

For African researchers pursuing fully-funded doctorates. Plan 18–24 months ahead.

Step-by-Step Timeline

24–18 months out

- Define research question; map 5–8 supervisors who publish in the area.
- Email supervisors with a 1-page concept note (do this first).
- Identify funding routes: school PhD studentships, Commonwealth, DAAD, MSCA, Mandela Rhodes, Wellcome.

17–12 months out

- Draft full research proposal (3,000–5,000 words) with supervisor feedback.
- Write or update peer-reviewed publication / conference paper.
- Take IELTS/TOEFL; GRE only if program requires.
- Request 3 academic referees aligned with your research area.

11–6 months out

- Submit Commonwealth PhD (mid-Oct), DAAD GSSP (varies), MSCA Doctoral Networks (rolling per call).
- Submit US PhD applications (Dec 1 – Jan 15 deadlines).
- Apply for Mandela Rhodes (April for SADC), Beit Trust, Schlumberger Faculty for the Future.
- Confirm supervisor commitment letter where required.

5–2 months out

- Attend supervisor / scholarship interviews.
- Negotiate stipend, conference budget, family allowance.
- Accept best offer; defer alternates politely.

Pre-departure

- Visa, dependant visa (if family travels), shipping of books.
- Set up ORCID, university email, library access.
- Plan first 90-day research milestones with supervisor.

Document Checklist

- Master's degree certificate + transcripts
- Bachelor's transcripts
- Research proposal (3,000–5,000 words)
- Sample of academic writing (published paper or thesis chapter)
- Detailed academic CV with publications
- Supervisor support / commitment letter
- 3 academic referees (PhD-holding)

IELTS/TOEFL; GRE if required

Ethics pre-clearance note (if applicable)

Passport + national ID

scholarshipsforafricans.com — print, tick off, win the scholarship.