

# How to get an EU scholarship

By Richard Wetaya

**T**wo years ago, Andrew Okwalinga was thrilled on receiving news that he had won a scholarship to study a masters degree in global health at one of Sweden's leading universities.

"When I got the news, I was not only humbled, but excited, because it had always been my dream to study in Sweden, a country distinguished for its academic excellence.

"Intellectual vibrancy and the Nobel Peace Prize," Okwalinga says. That year, Okwalinga joined thousands of other Africans who had been offered scholarships to study in Europe, a continent whose education systems are highly regarded.

But just how do the thousands of successful students get these scholarships.

## The search

For most, it all starts with an online search of scholarship opportunities.

"It is how I got to know about the Swedish scholarship," Okwalinga discloses.

"The first step in obtaining a scholarship to study abroad is to cast about them online. You can also look in scholarships for specific European countries by visiting their embassies and contacting the universities to which you apply," Charles Wabwire, an educationist with Opportunity International, says.

"There are scholarship-specific search engines that one can use to find potential African student scholarships like *opportunities for Africans.com*, *Chevening.smartimpleuk.com*, *www.topuniversities.com*, *opportunitydesk.org*, *scholars4dev.com*,



The person applying should be thorough to avoid making mistakes in their documents

*worldscholarshipforum.com*, etc," Lydia Nakaweesi, an education consultant with the East African Partnership for education in Kampala, says.

"I began applying for a masters degree scholarship in Holland, which I luckily got after a close acquaintance, told me about the opportunity," Fred Wangota, a civil servant, says.

"He had stumbled upon it online and he shared the webpage. It was competitive, however. I had to set my wits to work and be as thorough as possible as I prepared my application.

Even in my busy schedule, I had to take off time to read stories of African students, who had succeeded in getting the scholarship and some of their accounts were helpful. I also got some helpful advice from Youtube

videos."

"It is imperative to prepare your application early and apply for more than one scholarship if possible, just to better your chances.

Most people fail to get EU scholarships because they rush through the application process or because they do not thoroughly read the instructions.

"It is important to prepare your proof of eligibility documents – academic records, financial information and other details about yourself early," Nakaweesi says.

Attending "study abroad" fairs can also brighten one's chances of getting a scholarship to study in the European Union.

"There are good consultants about study opportunities abroad

in Kampala. Consultants have deep insights on how one can successfully get admission in their preferred foreign university, provided they meet the requirements," Wabwire says.

Wabwire adds that it is important to find out details of the scholarship funding agency before applying.

"Find out details about the funding agency and what they want from applicants from African countries. There are always certain attributes they look out for."

## Deadlines

"Deadlines for EU scholarship applications are always firm. The practice with many Ugandan students however is to work on their applications over a period of time. That is fine as long as one does not

go beyond the deadline.

Keep track of deadlines by using your personal calendar or sticky notes on your computer," Wabwire says.

## Proof read

Make it a point to proof read or fix errors in your application, before you send.

"European Union scholarships are many, but competitive. One should always bear in mind that, they are not the only ones applying. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to proof read or fix errors in your application before you send," Wabwire says.

"Proof reading is important. Even just a minor error in your application can ruin your chances. It is a good idea to have somebody else read through your application, before you submit. If it is possible, get somebody who has got a scholarship before.

That person can identify even the smallest of details that you may have missed.

Reading your writing out loud can help you catch missed words or small errors, as it forces you to read a little bit slower."

"To better your chances of getting a scholarship, as well, meet the referees who will write your letters of recommendation, early, so that you can bring them to terms with your work.

It will also help one find out if the prospective referee has time to write the letter.

This is a more personalised approach than an email and it will reflect positively on you.

Carry a copy of your resume to help the potential referee remember your accomplishments.

This is especially important if you are not particularly familiar with the person," Nakaweesi says.