

# Going to University with a Scholarship or Bursary

Courtney Bridges

4th year in History, Politics and International Relations



GoinStudentMinds have recognised in their recent "University Mental Health: Life in a Pandemic Report" that finance remains an area requiring continued support from university.

I'm a first-generation university student and come from a low-income family in an area of low participation in higher education. University wasn't really a thought about pathway for my future education or career before studying for A levels. But as a country gal living in a small seaside town in Devon with London as their main destination when my sights became set on university, it was difficult to not wonder how finances may impact this dream.

There was travel to university, family visits, university supplies, part-time work opportunities, maintenance loans and tuition fees to consider. For many finance is at the forefront of worries when applying to university. Yet I have always been determined to not let financial constraints restrict my ability to take available opportunities. So, when I was contacted by the Admissions Officer of the home department of the course I was applying to (History, Politics and International Relations), recommending that I apply for both university-wide and department-specific scholarships I immediately felt reassured about how my university journey could look. Not only was I reassured financially, but emotionally too. I hadn't even begun studying at the university but had been assured of its belief in my ability from the outset.



I felt shocked but overjoyed and immensely proud to receive what was formerly known as the 'Future Leaders' and now 'Rising Stars' Scholarship, that provides my tuition fee funding for the duration of my degree. Finding out in the middle of a supermarket back home made the moment even more surreal, but somehow perfect.

This scholarship, alongside the reward of a yearly university bursary has been instrumental in supporting my studies. It has filled me with confidence in both my academic ability and my future plan post-academia because I know Royal Holloway shares this confidence in me. Moreover, it has allowed me to focus on my studies and the social aspect of university life to the fullest extent. I've been able to pursue opportunities that otherwise felt out of reach, such as: leading Royal Holloway's Model UN delegation to the London International Model United Nations delegation (LIMUN), a micro-placement with Surrey Police, a year abroad at the University of Toronto, Canada, and many nights out at the Packhorse and SU.

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As a member of the 'covid-cohort' who has predominantly had their university life controlled by pandemic-living, and who are now experiencing university life alongside the cost-of-living crisis I have found the scholarship and bursary's support even more pivotal to maximising my time at Royal Holloway. Not only for their monetary value, but also the smaller community you become a member of, where you are able to disclose your own experiences among others who share similar. Especially at events such as 'Scholar's Drinks Receptions' where we are lucky to meet those funding the programs. Having such a community has even led to me securing the role of 'Widening Access' ambassador where I'm privileged to work and meet young adults and broaden my understanding and awareness of varying student experiences through networking.

I hope it's clear to see, that I cannot recommend, and thank, the scholarship and bursary programs the university has to offer enough as they have significantly altered my three years at Holloway. They may not alleviate all financial worry, and I've been fortunate to fund my degree outside of their support by working two-part time jobs at the university and working my summers between the years, but they definitely provide that additional layer of financial stability. One that I count myself very fortunate to be in receipt of. I hope that if scholarships are of the same interest to you, that you'll be just as fortunate with future applications!

My advice for applying to any of the programs would be to:

- Be honest about why you want to study what it is you're going on to do,
- Demonstrate your passion for this chosen subject,
- Use the application to go beyond what the character count a UCAS personal statement allows,
- And reflect on why the scholarship would aid your academic career and future aspirations.

More about the variety of scholarship programmes available can be found here: [Undergraduate scholarships and bursaries\(royalholloway.ac.uk\)](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/undergraduate-scholarships) and [Postgraduate scholarships\(royalholloway.ac.uk\)](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/postgraduate-scholarships).

If you'd like to hear more about other's experiences who benefit from the same scholarship I do too feel free to give this video a watch: [Be a Future Leaders scholar | Royal Holloway, University of London - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be a Future Leaders scholar | Royal Holloway, University of London) (there are also plenty others to be found related to scholarships on the 'Royal Holloway' YouTube channel).



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