

The Toolkit



CAMBRIDGE PRE-APPLICATION MENTORSHIP PROJECT



THE PAM PROJECT

OCTOBER 2024

The Pre-Application Mentorship Scheme Toolkit is an indispensable resource designed to guide prospective African students through the process of applying to the University of Cambridge and securing scholarships from various partners.

WHAT IS THE TOOLKIT?



○ A MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT LEAD

Nathan Odiase Osareme

This toolkit represents our commitment to educational empowerment and equal opportunity, with a focus on supporting students from economically marginalised and underrepresented regions. It provides clear, step-by-step guidance, making the often complex application process more accessible and manageable for all.

Early and thorough preparation is key to a successful application. This toolkit is designed to equip you with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to present a compelling application. By using these resources, you ensure that your journey to Cambridge is as smooth as possible, regardless of your background.

As you read through the toolkit, I encourage you to use each section thoughtfully. Follow the guidance provided, make notes where applicable, and refer back to key areas as you progress through your application. Remember, this is more than just a guide—it is your pathway to joining a more inclusive and diverse student body at Cambridge.



THE WORKING GROUP



○ THE TEAM



Nathan Odiase Osareme

**PhD in Strategy &
International Business**



**Abii-Tah
Chungong Bih**

**PhD in Politics and
International Studies**



**Belinda Korlekuor
Agbetiameh**

**PhD in
Pharmacology**



**Abel W.
Walekhwa**

**PhD in Veterinary
Medicine**



Millicenta Ampiah

**PhD in Medical
Genetics**



Patience Abugu

**PhD in Materials Science
and Metallurgy**



Ifi Favour Egoamaka

**MPhil in Industrial Systems
and Management**



Join Our Pre-Application Mentorship Online Sessions

We are excited to invite you to participate in our **Pre-Application Mentorship online sessions**, starting on 19th October. These sessions will take place over four consecutive Saturdays and will be tailored to applicants from across the five major regions of the continent.

Our mentorship sessions will run on the following dates:

- **19 October 2024**
- **26 October 2024**
- **02 November 2024**
- **09 November 2024**

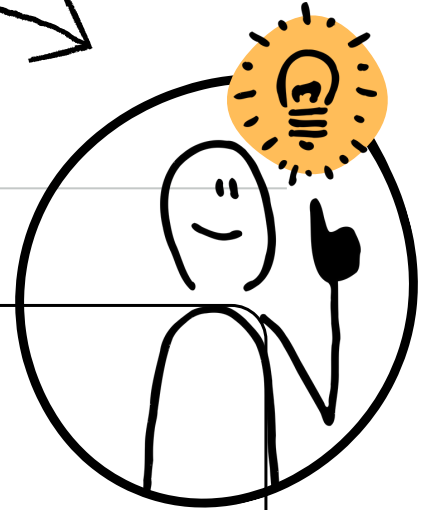
During these sessions, you will engage in a deep dive into the toolkit, guided by qualified mentors who have successfully navigated the University of Cambridge application process. Their insights and experiences will provide you with invaluable support as you prepare your own application.

To secure your spot, please visit www.thepamproject.org and register today.



START YOUR APPLICATIONS

○ THE CHECKLIST



Introduction

- Decide on the Course to apply
- Online portal - create an account or login (if already registered)
- Edit, save and return time to continue the application
- List out deadlines that need to be adhered to

Personal Information

- Name and date of birth, nationality and date of birth
- Valid Passport
- Contact Information

Academic Records

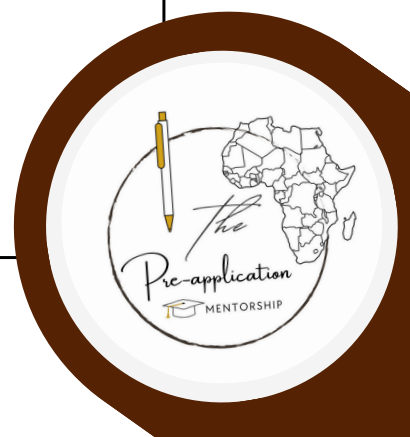
- Transcripts
- Degree Certificates
- Currently studying - most recent grade report

Other Documents

- Letters of Recommendation (at least 2-3)
- Contact Information of Referees
- Send reference reminders through the portal.
- Prepare to selected referees to receive an email alert

Personal Branding

- Personal Statement and Essays
- Resume/CV- Updated and Tailored to Highlight Relevant Experience
- Research proposals



COURSE SELECTION AND PREPARATION



**IF YOU DO NOT MEET THE ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
YOUR APPLICATION WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**



Check the Course's entry requirements to confirm that you meet the necessary qualifications. Admissions are highly competitive, so ensure you have met, or are on track to meet, the minimum academic and grade requirements before applying.

Begin by thoroughly reviewing the course directory of your intended institution. Select a program that aligns with your academic background, professional experience, personal aspirations and career goals. This decision is crucial, as your motivation for selecting the Course significantly impacts your application success.

WHY CAMBRIDGE?



1

Global Recognition & Facilities

With over 300 postgraduate courses across 21 types of qualifications, the university offers both taught and research-based programs that cater to virtually every academic interest. However, a Cambridge degree is challenging and intellectually demanding.

Cambridge's facilities reflect this commitment to academic excellence: 100 libraries that cater to a wide range of disciplines, nine specialist museums, and numerous state-of-the-art laboratories for scientific research. The environment fosters curiosity, innovation, and intellectual growth, making it an ideal setting for your postgraduate study.



2

Cambridge Colleges

There are 31 colleges in Cambridge, and you will be a member of one of them during your time here. In your college, you will be surrounded by an intellectual network that will support your academic journey and challenges and nurture you in a personalised environment.

Every Cambridge college also has a postgraduate student body known as the Middle Common Room (MCR), a social hub for postgraduate students. Here, you can meet fellow students, organise events, and enjoy the rich social life that complements your academic experience. Cambridge's famous formal dinners are a unique tradition—three-course meals served in a grand hall with your formal gown and attire, adding a special touch to life at the university.

FIRST STEP



Preparing Your Application

- **CREATE AN ACCOUNT: REGISTER USING AN EXISTING EMAIL ADDRESS AND CREATE A SECURE PASSWORD, OR LOG IN IF YOU ALREADY HAVE AN ACCOUNT.**
- Save Your Progress: You can save your application at any point and return to it later.
- Language: All applications must be completed in English, including all supporting documents.
- Multiple Deadlines: Many institutions, including the University of Cambridge, have various deadlines (e.g., general, funding-specific). Ensure you submit your application and all supporting documents before your intended deadline.
- If applying to the University of Cambridge and looking for internal scholarships, aim to submit before the funding deadline (usually on the **5 December or 5 January** of the application cycle).

Course Selection and Preparation

- Relevance to your competencies and academic history: Choose a course where you can demonstrate prior solid knowledge and expertise.
- Career alignment: The Course should match your long-term professional aspirations.

Review Entry Requirements

- Required qualifications: Ensure you have achieved or are projected to achieve the minimum grades.
- Additional prerequisites: Some programs may require specific experience, skills, or testing (e.g., GRE, GMAT). Non-native English speakers often need proof of English proficiency, such as TOEFL or IELTS scores

Passport Tips

- Although a valid passport is not required to submit a postgraduate application, it is highly recommended that you apply for and obtain a valid passport before beginning the application process.



Contact Information Tips

- You will be required to provide a current home address and, if applicable, a correspondence address where written communications can be sent. Ensure you have regular access to all communication outlets provided in the application and constantly check these, as all communications regarding applications will be sent to your primary email address.

01

Cambridge
Colleges

Follow this link to learn more about
Cambridge colleges

<https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges>

03

Courses

Consult the course directory:

<https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses>

to review the specific requirements
for your chosen course.

02

Entry
Requirements

Check if your international degree
meets Cambridge's academic entry
requirements by visiting

<https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international/international-qualifications>

04

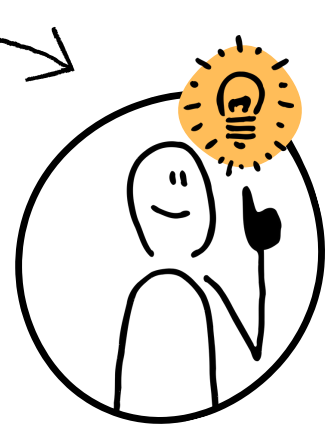
Mentorship
Sessions

CLICK
HERE!

www.thepamproject.org

Helpful

LINKS



CLICK HERE

1. Mastercard Foundation Scholarship:

<https://www.mastercardfoundation.fund.cam.ac.uk/about-us>

CLICK HERE

2. Cambridge course directory:

<https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses>

CLICK HERE

3. Cambridge Scholarship directory:

<https://www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk>

CLICK HERE

4. Cambridge Postgraduate open days (OPTIONAL)

<https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/openday>



SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Academic Records

- Request official transcripts from every institution where you have studied well before beginning the application, as the process can be lengthy for specific institutions.
- Upload copies of official transcripts and certificates for each degree you have completed or are currently studying for.
- Ensure these documents are in English. International transcripts not originally in English must be translated into English by a certified translator. Translations must be literal and complete copies of the original documents.

Professional and Personal References

- **Contact Your Referees Early:** Reach out to your referees well in advance, giving them ample time to craft thoughtful and detailed letters. Provide them with key information about the Program and your academic and professional achievements to help guide their recommendations.
- **Registering Referees:** To register referees, provide their names and institutional email addresses on the application portal.
- **Submission Process:** By the application deadline, your referees must submit their letters through the designated recommender portal. You can send reminders to your recommenders as needed through the application portal. You will receive an email notification once a letter has been submitted.
- **Application Submission:** You can submit your application before receiving all recommendation letters. However, all references must be submitted by the final application deadline.
- **Non-English Letters:** If a recommender is unable to write the letter in English, they must provide a certified English translation. The recommender should upload the original letter, the English translation, and a certification from the translator verifying the accuracy of the translation. The translation must be a literal and complete version of the original letter.



Transcript Tips

Your transcripts should include:

- A complete list of courses, seminars, and exams taken.
- Your grades and corresponding grading scale.
- Confirmation of your degree conferral and the date of graduation.



CONSOLIDATING APPLICATIONS



1

COURSE SPECIFIC ESSAYS

2

RESEARCH PROPOSAL TOPIC (WHERE NECESSARY)

OTHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Funding Application Essays

- Research & List them Out

Update Your Contact Information:

- Home
- Phone Number and Email Address

ACTION PLAN

Organisation

- Create a Folder for All Documents

Access Support

- This will be done at the mentorship session. Book a spot here: thepamproject.org



GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING WITH REFEREES

01



Contact Early and Be Polite

Reach out to referees well in advance (**Sept- Early October, as soon as you have decided the course you want to study**).

Confirm their willingness to provide a reference by the deadline and ensure their contact details, including email and institutional address, are correct.

02



Provide Relevant Information

Share key details about the program, your motivation for applying, and how it aligns with your goals. Update them on your recent achievements with a CV or a summary of your work and grades to help them write an informed reference.

03



Choose Referees Who Know You Well

Select referees based on familiarity with your work, not just their titles. A detailed reference from someone who knows your skills and contributions is far more valuable to your application.

04



Ensure Timely Submission

It's your responsibility to ensure references are submitted before funding or course deadlines. Set reminders to check in with referees periodically, and provide assistance if needed to avoid delays or errors in submission.

Academic References



The Basics

01 When asking your referees to write a letter of recommendation for your postgraduate application, guiding them on what universities typically expect in a reference is helpful.

This will ensure that your referees can give you the strongest possible endorsement.

02 They should outline your response to feedback, ability to self-reflect, and collaboration with others in an academic community.

What Referees Provide



Step 1
Academic Performance

Referees will evaluate your performance compared to your peers and mention the group size for context. If they are unable to rate you, they should explain.



Step 2
Originality and Independence

Your creativity, originality, and independence in thought and work will be assessed based on the referee's experience with you. ● Your drive to complete tasks, particularly in challenging situations.



Step 3
Suitability for Course

Referees will comment on how well your background and academic experience prepare you for the course you wish to apply.



Step 4
Reference Letter

Your referees should write a letter of 500-1,000 words highlighting your skills, experiences, and abilities relevant to the Course. Specific examples of your achievements, projects, or academic work are highly encouraged.

Character References



Basics to Cover

- The relevance of your professional experience to the Course you're applying for. Referees will be provided course details through the portal to guide their comments.
- Your potential for creativity and independent thinking in your professional work.

Reference Letter

Similar to academic references, a 500-1,000 word letter is ideal. Referees should focus on your skills, achievements, and professional experiences that align with the Course, with specific examples of tasks or projects.

Work-Based References

- Overall Recommendation: Whether the referee would want to appoint you to a project or team they are leading.

- Areas your professional referees should aim to address

Intellectual Characteristics

Your critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and technical competence.

Motivation

Your work ethic, persistence, and drive to achieve goals.

Task & Time Management

You can manage time efficiently and work independently

Professional Effectiveness

Your responsiveness to feedback, capacity for self-improvement, and collaboration in a professional environment

Personal Statements Outline



01 Hook

Start with a captivating opening that grabs attention. This could be a personal story, some statistics, a conundrum, etc.

02 Purpose & Passion

Clearly state your intention to apply for the specific program and why. Explain why you are passionate about this field of study.

03 Career Goals

Outline your long-term career aspirations and how the program will help you achieve them. Don't hold back on this. Be bold and audacious with your goals.

04 Academic Background

Summarize your academic journey, highlighting relevant coursework, achievements, and awards. Don't just tell us your grades. Explain how they relate to your passion, interest, and competence in your target program.

05 Research Experience

Detail any research projects or papers that align with the program. If you have international experience, such as field studies outside your city/country, be sure to highlight. Indicate the unique skills you developed and their relevance to the program.

06 Professional Experience

Describe any professional roles, internships, or volunteer experience pertinent to your field

07 Skills

Highlight skills gained that are relevant to the postgraduate program.

08 Program Fit

Discuss why the University of Cambridge is the ideal place to continue your journey and the work you have done. You may mention specific supervisors/modules/labs/resources at your target department that appeal to you

09 Contribution

Mention how you can contribute to the university community.

10 Closing Statement

Recap your main points. End with a strong, memorable closing that reinforces your enthusiasm.

1

Clarity and Coherence

Be clear, concise, and avoid unnecessary jargon. Every word should advance your goal of pursuing a degree at Cambridge. Tie everything back to your academic ambitions, ensuring coherence throughout the statement.

2

Authenticity and Evidence

Showcase your true self. Use personal experiences and specific examples to back up your claims. Highlight both quantitative and qualitative achievements to convey a clear picture of your journey and impact.

KEY ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

3

Research and Fit

Demonstrate that you've thoroughly researched the program, department, and university. Show how Cambridge and your potential department align with your goals by drawing on insights from websites, students, and alumni.

4

Balance and Positivity

Maintain a positive, honest tone. Avoid discrediting others, and strike a balance between confidence and humility by accurately presenting your role in achievements. Be aware of impostor syndrome, but trust in your value and contributions.





CHECKLIST FOR PERSONAL STATEMENTS

№	ACTIONS	
	Introduction	
	Have you started with a captivating hook?	
	Have you clearly stated your intention to apply for the specific program?	
	Academic Background	
	Have you summarised your academic journey?	
	Have you highlighted relevant coursework and achievements?	
	Have you detailed any research projects or papers?	
	Professional Experience	
	Have you described relevant professional roles or internships?	
	Have you highlighted key responsibilities and achievements?	
	Motivation and Goals	
	Have you explained why you are passionate about this field of study?	
	Have you outlined your long-term career aspirations?	
	Have you outlined how the program will help you achieve them?	
	Fit for Cambridge	
	Have you discussed why the University of Cambridge is the ideal place for your studies?	
	Have you mentioned how you can contribute to the university community?	
	Conclusion	
	Have you recapped your main points?	
	Have you ended with a strong, memorable closing that reinforces your enthusiasm?	

Resume Formatting Guidelines



Resume

Creating a strong resume/CV for a postgraduate application involves careful attention to detail, clear formatting, and effectively showcasing your achievements, impacts, skills, and how they qualify you for your potential program. By following the guidelines and tips below, you should be able to create a resume/CV that effectively highlights your qualifications and makes a strong impression on the admissions committee.

- 01** Length: Aim for 1-2 pages, depending on your experience. Try to make it complete pages, so there are no gaps at the bottom of your page.
- 02** Font and Size: Use a professional font like Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman, in 10-12 point size.
- 03** Margins and Spacing: Keep margins around 1 inch and use consistent spacing (e.g., single or 1.15 line spacing).
- 04** Headings and Subheadings: Use a bold or slightly larger font for headings and subheadings to improve readability.
- 05** Bullet Points: Use bullet points to list achievements and responsibilities for clarity.
- 06** Consistency: Ensure consistent formatting throughout (e.g., dates, bullet points, font sizes).



RESUME REMINDERS

Opening Section

- Contact Information: Full name, phone number, email address, website (optional), LinkedIn profile (optional)
- Personal Statement (optional): A summary (2-3 sentences) highlighting your academic and professional goals.

2. Education

- List your educational background in reverse chronological order.
- Include degree, institution, graduation date, and relevant coursework or honours.
- Include your grades, especially if they indicate a distinction, first class, or equivalent.

3. Experience

- Research Experience: Detail any research projects, including your role, methodologies, and outcomes.
- Professional Experience: Include internships, jobs, or volunteer work relevant to your field. Highlight key responsibilities and achievements using action verbs.
- Skills List technical, research, and soft skills relevant to the program.

4. Publications and Presentations

Include any published papers, articles, or conference presentations.

6. Awards and Honors

Awards and Honors: Mention any academic or professional awards.

5. Extracurricular Activities

Include relevant activities that demonstrate leadership, teamwork, or other valuable skills.

Highlighting Key Achievements and Skills

Use Action Verbs: Start bullet points with strong action verbs (e.g., "led," "developed," "analyzed", "hosted", "coordinated", "represented", "served", "executed", "implemented", "supported", "analyzed", "planned", "designed", "facilitated", "enabled" etc).

Quantify Achievements: Use numbers to quantify your achievements (e.g., "Served 50,000 students, Raised \$85,000 in funds, Increased lab efficiency by 20%").





PREPARING YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL



Research Topic and Title: Begin by clearly defining the title and topic of your research. This should reflect the core focus of your study and align with your academic interests and the broader objectives of your chosen Program.



Background and Rationale: Provide context for your research by explaining the background of your topic. Discuss the existing literature in the field, highlighting key studies and findings. This section should clarify the gap or unresolved issue in the current literature that your research intends to address, making a strong case for the significance and relevance of your study.



Research Questions or Hypotheses: Clearly state the primary research question(s) or hypotheses that will guide your investigation. These questions should be specific, measurable, and directly tied to the identified gap in the literature.



Objectives: Outline the specific objectives of your research, breaking down what you aim to achieve through your study. These should align with your research questions and demonstrate a clear understanding of the field.



Research Methodology: Describe the methods you will use to conduct your research. This section should include details on the research design, data collection techniques, and analysis methods. Be as specific as possible, indicating whether you will use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches, and justify why these methods are the most appropriate for your study.

PREPARING YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL



Feasibility and Resources: Include the resources required to complete your research, including access to data, materials, or specific facilities. Discuss the feasibility of completing the research within the time frame of your Program and any potential challenges you might face.



Expected Outcomes: Briefly explain the potential results of your research and their significance. This may include theoretical contributions, practical implications, and how your work might influence future research or policy.



Timeline: Develop a rough timeline that outlines the various stages of your research project, including data collection, analysis, and writing. This demonstrates your ability to manage the research process effectively within the Program's duration.



Bibliography: Include a list of key references and sources cited in your proposal. This shows that your proposal is grounded in existing literature and that you are familiar with important works in your field of study.



Securing a Research Supervisor

- A crucial part of writing a successful research proposal is identifying and securing a research supervisor.
- A potential supervisor can provide guidance and feedback on your research topic, helping you refine your proposal to ensure it addresses a meaningful gap in the literature.
- Establishing contact with a supervisor early in the process increases your chances of submitting a compelling proposal and helps you align your research with the supervisor's expertise.



THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM



Vision



Established in 2022, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Cambridge is a collaboration between the University and the Mastercard Foundation. Between 2023 and 2030, the program will enrol over 500 talented scholars from across the African continent to pursue a diverse range of Master's courses.

Collaboration



The program provides fully funded opportunities for bright students from underrepresented African communities to complete their Master's studies, while developing transformative leadership skills. Scholars are equipped to contribute to climate resilience and drive sustainable futures for Africa.

The mission of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is to build a transformative network of young leaders, each playing a pivotal role in driving sustainable change across the continent.

Apply Today

Applications for the 2025/2026 academic year are now open. Visit the website for details

www.mastercardfoundation.fund.cam.ac.uk/news/call-applications-mastercard-foundation-scholarship-program-university-cambridge

BENEFITS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP

01.

Full Funding Coverage

The scholarship offers a comprehensive funding package to support exceptional students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It covers the University's composition fees at the appropriate rate, full living expenses, including annual inflation adjustments, and travel costs, such as visa fees, immigration health surcharge, and flights to and from the UK.

Additionally, scholars receive educational materials, such as laptops, to support their academic journey. This financial support enables scholars to fully engage with their studies, free from financial stress, and focus on their personal and academic growth.

02.

Leadership Training and Development

The scholarship offers a strong focus on leadership training to equip scholars with the skills needed to drive change across Africa. Scholars participate in tailored leadership development programmes designed to cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration across disciplines.

These programmes ensure that scholars excel academically and also emerge as leaders capable of making a meaningful impact in their communities. With a focus on innovation and strategic thinking, scholars are prepared to influence policy, lead sustainable ventures, and tackle the continent's most pressing challenges.

03.

Contribution to Climate Resilience and Sustainability

The scholarship prioritises climate resilience and sustainability by embedding these themes into the scholar experience. Scholars receive training that empowers them to tackle environmental challenges and promotes collaboration across various disciplines to foster innovative solutions.

By focusing on sustainability, the programme nurtures a generation of leaders committed to creating long-term, environmentally conscious changes across Africa. Scholars are well-equipped to lead initiatives that contribute to Africa's future by addressing the pressing issues of climate change and environmental degradation.

Gratitude



We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported the Pre-Application Mentorship Scheme. Special thanks go to the working group, whose dedication, hard work, and commitment made this toolkit possible. To our mentors, partners, and everyone involved—thank you for believing in this vision and for helping to make a real difference in the lives of future scholars.



To all our amazing applicants, we want you to know how much we admire your courage and ambition in pursuing this opportunity. You are the future leaders of Africa, and we are here to support and guide you every step of the way. We can't wait to welcome you to the University of Cambridge and see the incredible impact you will make. Remember, this is your journey, and we are honoured to be part of it. Keep pushing forward, and we'll see you soon in Cambridge!

You've Got This!

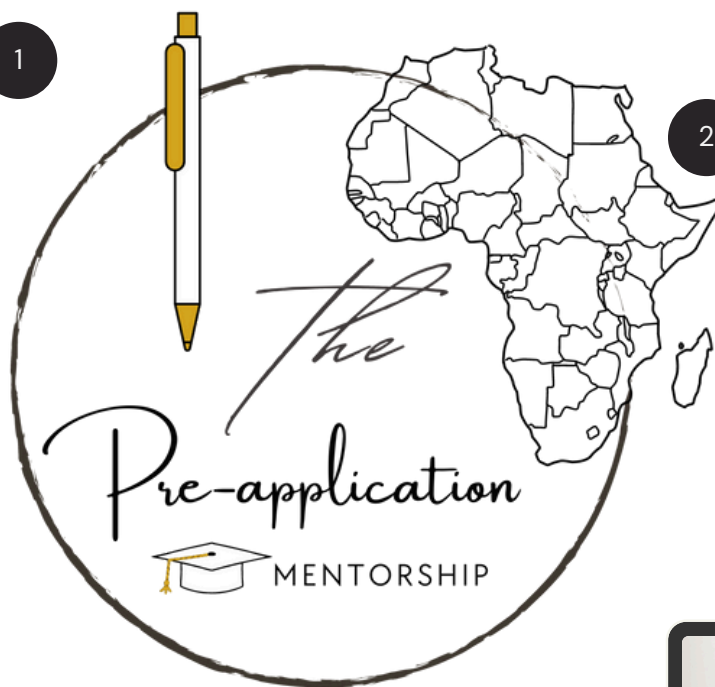


2024 Call for Mentees

LARGEST DIGITAL PRE-APPLICATION MENTORSHIP PROJECT

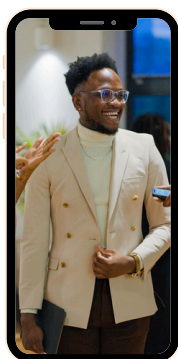
1
ENHANCING APPLICATION COMPETENCE

1



2
THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE CULTURE

2



3

3
AFRICAN REGIONAL DIVERSITY



5

Regions

24

Sessions

32

Mentors

1

1
Visit the website
www.thepamproject.org

2

2
Check out our core team,
amazing mentors and
resources

3

3
Find your region, sign up and
attend the informative &
interactive sessions

Reach Out To Us



Instagram
[thepamproject.cambridge](https://www.instagram.com/thepamproject.cambridge)



E-Mail
thepamproject@outlook.com



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The Cambridge Pre-Application
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