



COMMONWEALTH
SCHOLARSHIPS

Scam website offers Commonwealth scholarship

Nanji Nandang 3rd August 2021

6 mins read

Claim: A viral WhatsApp message is urging Nigerians to [apply for the 2021 Commonwealth Scholarship to study for free in the UK](#) .

Verdict: Even though it is true the Commonwealth is offering fully funded scholarships, findings have revealed that the purported [website](#) open for registration is a click bait and the message is misleading.

Full Text

[Nigeria](#) is said to be the number one country of origin for international students from Africa. It sends the most students overseas of any country on the African continent, and outbound mobility numbers are growing at a rapid pace.

According to data from the [UNESCO Institute of Statistics](#) (UIS), the number of Nigerian students abroad increased by 164 percent in the decade between 2005 and 2015 alone– from 26,997 to 71,351, At least [40 percent of Nigerian overseas students](#) are said to rely on scholarships.

Recently, a viral message on WhatsApp asking Nigerians to apply for the [commonwealth fully funded scholarships](#) that “will cover full tuition, living expenses, accommodation, medical facilities, travelling allowance, stationery allowance and unlimited work permit,” caught attention. The message ended with the provision of a bit.ly link for applicants to apply.

“*APPLY FOR UNITED KINGDOM SCHOLARSHIP 2021, FULLY FUNDED SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY FOR FREE IN UK.*

It takes a few seconds to apply. Dont miss this opportunity.

Benefits of COMMONWEALTH 2021 scholarship Program.

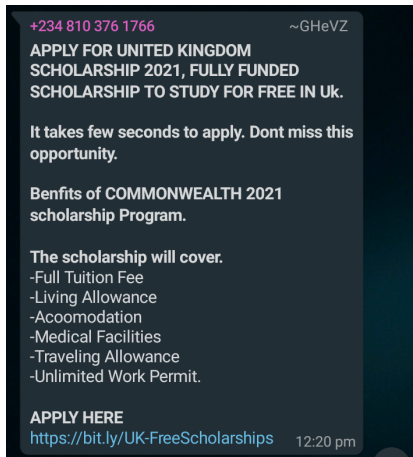
The scholarship will cover.

-Full Tuition Fee

- Living Allowance
- Accommodation
- Medical Facilities
- Traveling Allowance
- Unlimited Work Permit.

APPLY HERE

<https://bit.ly/UK-FreeScholarships>"



Screenshot of WhatsApp message

Verification

It was first noticed that the message contained several grammatical errors and irregular capitalisation of words.

Dubawa clicked on the bit.ly link and it directed this reporter to a new website with a welcome message that reads "Study in United Kingdom With Course of Your Choice For Free through-out The years program.The CommonWealth Scholarship Program Enables International Students to Study in United Kingdom Comfortably and Free. Applicants are to fill the form bellow and click on Apply

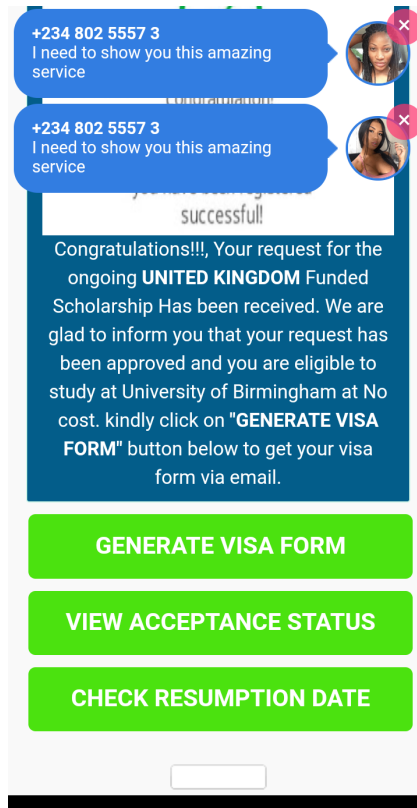


The form requested applicants to fill in their full names, course, email address, country and whether this was their first application.

Dubawa filled in fake information, and this writer was led to another website. The new website congratulates the applicant, notifying them that their applications have been received, then it went further to request answers to three questions quickly;

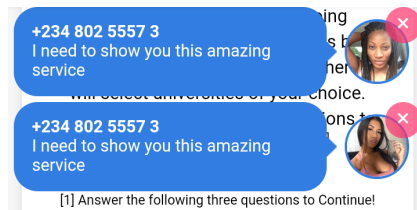
1. Current Level Of Study
2. Age Range
3. State of Interest

After answering the questions, a message popped up immediately, that the application “has been approved for free” and that the applicant should fill the visa application form below.



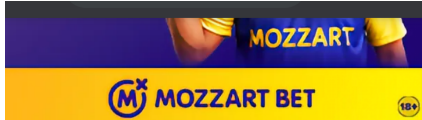
Screenshot of the approval information

Applicants are then requested to share the link with their friends and groups. Dubawa noticed irregular pop-ups while filling the application form, in addition to excessive ads.



Screenshot of pop-ups

Further analysis using [Domainbigdata](https://www.domainbigdata.com/), a web tool used to verify the authenticity of a website, showed that the website has IP geolocation of United States, California, Sun City and it has been reported several times for abuses, fraud, and attacks.



Domain	
Domain	full-scholarship.online
Words in	full scholarship
IP Address	66.45.229.61
	66.45.229.61 abuse reports
	🔗
IP	United States,
Geolocation	California, Sun City



Screenshot of Domainbigdata result

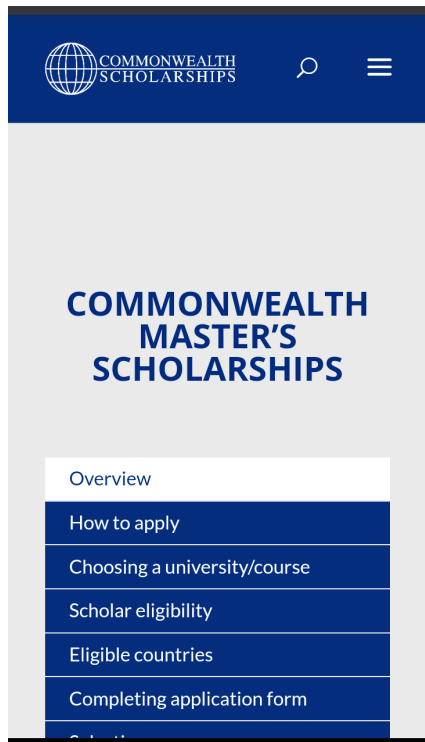
But what is a commonwealth scholarship?

It is an [agency-nominated](#) master's programme, funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) for candidates from eligible lower and upper middle income Commonwealth countries, to undertake full-time taught Master's study at a UK university.

These scholarships are offered under six development themes:

- Science and technology for development
- Strengthening health systems and capacity
- Promoting global prosperity
- Strengthening global peace, security and governance
- Strengthening resilience and response to crises
- Access, inclusion and opportunity

Dubawa discovered that the [commonwealth website](#) looks different from the [so-called](#) scholarship website.



Screenshot of commonwealth website

How to apply for commonwealth scholarship

Applicants must make their application through the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission's (CSC) online application system, in addition to any other application that they are required to complete by their nominating body. The CSC does not accept any applications that are not submitted via the online application system.

So first off, applicants must [apply](#) to one of the following nominating bodies in the first instance – the CSC does not accept direct applications for these scholarships.

- [National nominating agencies](#) – this is the main route of applications
- [Selected non-governmental](#) organisations and charitable bodies

So each nominating body is responsible for its own selection process and may have additional eligibility criteria.

Applicants must check with their nominating body for their specific advice and rules for applying, their own eligibility criteria, and their own closing date for application.

- **[Supporting documentation](#)**: Applicants must submit a list of supporting documents to ensure that their application is eligible. So applicants must have:

- Proof that they are citizens or have refugee status of an eligible Commonwealth country: a copy of a valid passport (or national ID card) showing their photograph, date of birth, and country of citizenship uploaded to the online application system
- Full transcripts detailing all their higher education qualifications including to-date transcripts for any qualifications they are currently studying (with certified translations if not in English) – uploaded to the online application system
- References from at least two individuals – submitted directly by the referees to the online application system (referees will be sent an email request to submit online)

Dubawa also observed that the [Minimum](#) qualification for the Scholarship is that applicants must be under 40 years of age as of September 1st of the current year, and applicants must hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree as of August 31st of the current year for applying for Master's degree or Doctoral degree respectively.

Dubawa also saw that the scholarship covers fees, approved fares, and personal maintenance. Other scholarships, awards, or bursaries that cover the same costs may not be held concurrently.

Conclusion

Though it is true that the Commonwealth is offering fully funded scholarships, verification has revealed that the so-called [website](#) open for registration is a click bait and the message is misleading.

The researcher produced this fact-check per the 2021 Kwame Karikari Fact-checking Fellowship partnership with JAY 101.9 FM Jos to facilitate the ethos of truth in journalism and enhance media literacy in the country