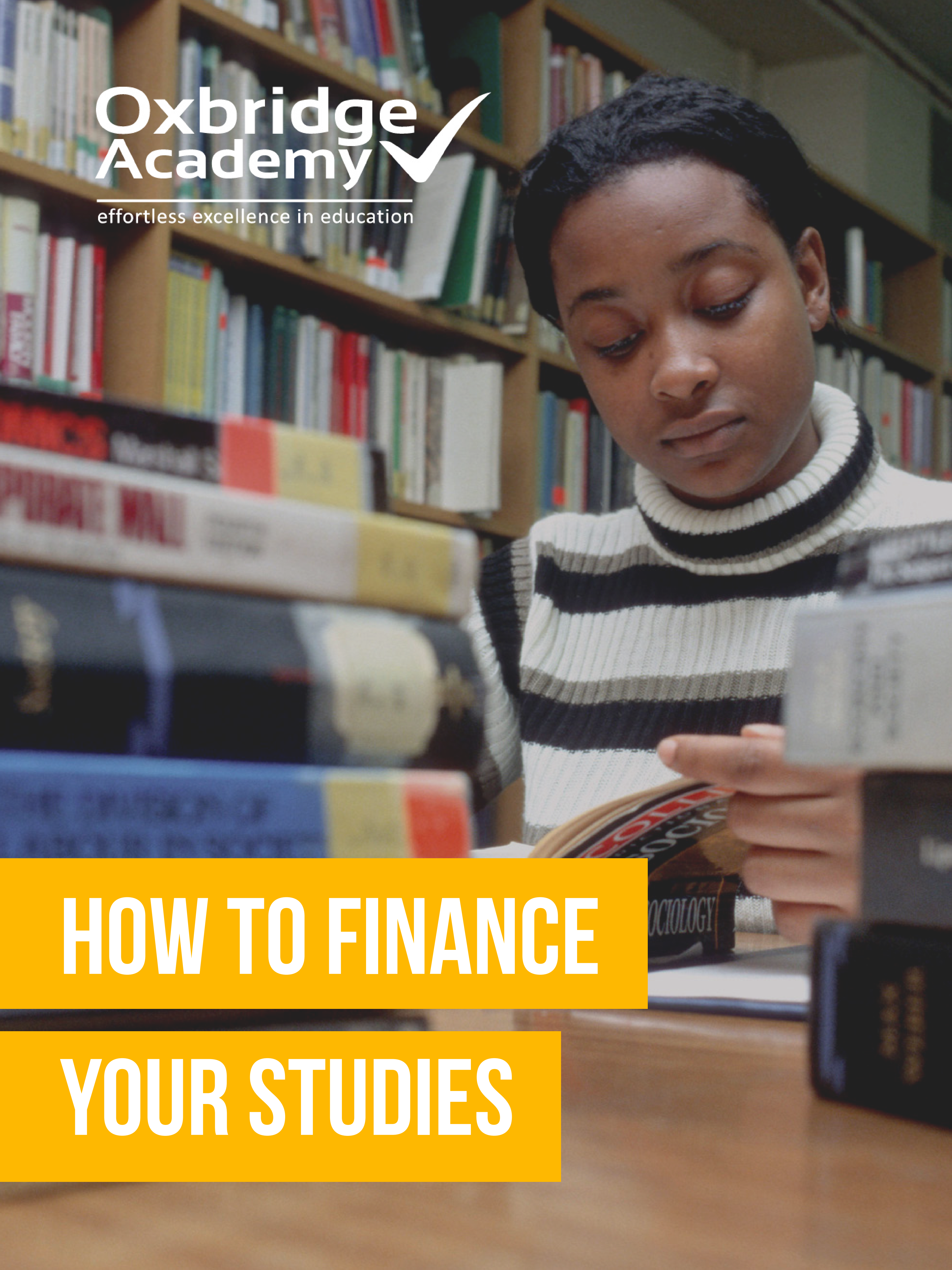


Oxbridge Academy

effortless excellence in education

HOW TO FINANCE YOUR STUDIES

CONTENTS

1. WHERE DO YOU START?

You've decided that you want to study. You might even know **what** you want to study. But you have no idea how you're going to pay for your studies.

This e-book gives you a list of options to consider when it comes to financing your studies, along with a few tips and tricks you can use along the way.

A brief overview of the current situation in South Africa:

While government is looking at options for fee-free tuition for university students, the reality is that it may be a while before any of these measures are implemented. And it's not yet clear who will benefit from these measures. Will you qualify for fee-free tuition if you've been out of school for a while, and now want to go back and further your education? While there is no clear answer yet, the most likely answer is: probably not.

As it stands, therefore, education is an expensive – yet necessary – investment in your future.

2. WHAT ARE THE FUNDING OPTIONS TO CONSIDER?

There are various options available to you, depending on your situation. These options may depend on the following:

- Where you want to study
- Whether you want to study full-time or part-time
- Whether you are currently employed
- Whether you qualify for any scholarships, bursaries, or student loans

2.1 OPTION 1: WORKING WHILE YOU STUDY

Being able to pay for your studies yourself, on your own terms, is obviously first prize. But how do you do that if you don't have a large savings account?

One of the best ways to do this is to study while you work. This will allow you to sustain your studies with a portion of your monthly income.

You could decide to:

- Study part-time by taking weekend or evening classes while you work.
- Study in your own time via distance or online learning while you work.

What is distance learning, and how does it work?

While you can study part-time at a campus-based college or university, classes will often interfere with your work schedule. Distance learning, on the other hand, allows you to have a flexible study schedule that you can fit around your workday. It also allows you to study from home, which means that you save time and money on travel expenses.

Distance learning, as offered by Oxbridge Academy, gives the following benefits to working students:

DISTANCE LEARNING

- You study in your own time.
- You can start your course any time of the year.
- You can study from home, from anywhere in South Africa.
- You can complete your course at your own pace.

Not many people can afford to take off a whole year (or more) to study full-time. Distance learning allows you to keep a job, and to keep getting paid, while furthering your education and training.

What you need to know when working while you study

Different colleges and universities have different payment structures. Certain institutions will require you to pay the full course fee upfront, while others allow you to pay in instalments. If you want to fund your course by working while you study, it's a good idea to pick an institution that gives you the option to pay your fees on a monthly basis.

Here's how **Oxbridge Academy**, for example, has designed the fees and payment structures so that the course fees are manageable for students who want to finance their studies with full-time or part-time jobs:

- You can pay for your studies in interest-free monthly instalments.
- You don't pay extra for textbooks – all your study material is provided as part of the course fee.
- Your course material is delivered to you for free.
- You save on transport and accommodation costs, because you study from home via distance learning.

And there are other benefits of working while you study, too:

Working while you study can be difficult. You will often be exhausted, and you may sometimes feel overwhelmed. But studying while you work is uniquely rewarding, and it comes with more than just financial benefits.

Work experience is arguably the most valuable attribute you can have in the labour market. When you have completed your course while working, you might be twice as qualified for a relevant position as a student who studied full-time on campus, with no experience behind their name. This student will have to start in an entry-level position, regardless of what qualification they have. You, on the other hand, will have your qualification or certificate, along with considerable work experience on which you can build your career.

What’s more, studying while you are working is a great way to show your employer – or a potential future employer – that you are proactive, eager to advance your career, and committed to achieving your goals. Many distance learning students have their study material delivered to their place of work, which rarely fails to impress an employer.

And speaking of employers:

Did you know that you can ask your employer whether they would be willing to pay for your studies?

Employee sponsorship is a big source of funding for education and training opportunities in South Africa.

It might seem awkward to ask your employer to help you pay for your studies, but most employers actively look for ways to invest in employee training. This is because South African companies must fulfil certain duties related to Skills Development Levies.

What are Skills Development Levies?

"The Skills Development Levy Act ... established a compulsory levy scheme for the purpose of funding education and training as envisaged in the Skills Development Act, No. 97 of 1998." – SARS

The Skills Development Levy is a tax that employers must pay to the South African Revenue Service (SARS) to promote skills development in South Africa. If, however, an employer invests in training their own workforce, then the employer can claim some of that money back from SARS. Employers would therefore much rather invest their Skills Development Levies in their own employees, as opposed to giving it to SARS to invest in other skills development programmes.

Businesses sponsoring employee skills development is about more than just tax breaks, however. Employers are often willing to finance their employees' studies as a form of investment in their companies, regardless of any Skills Development Levies. Any good business owner knows that the better their employees are trained for their jobs, the more the business will benefit.

Read this blog post:

How to Ask Your Employer to Help You Fund Your Education

"With the right people ... anything is possible."
– Richard Branson

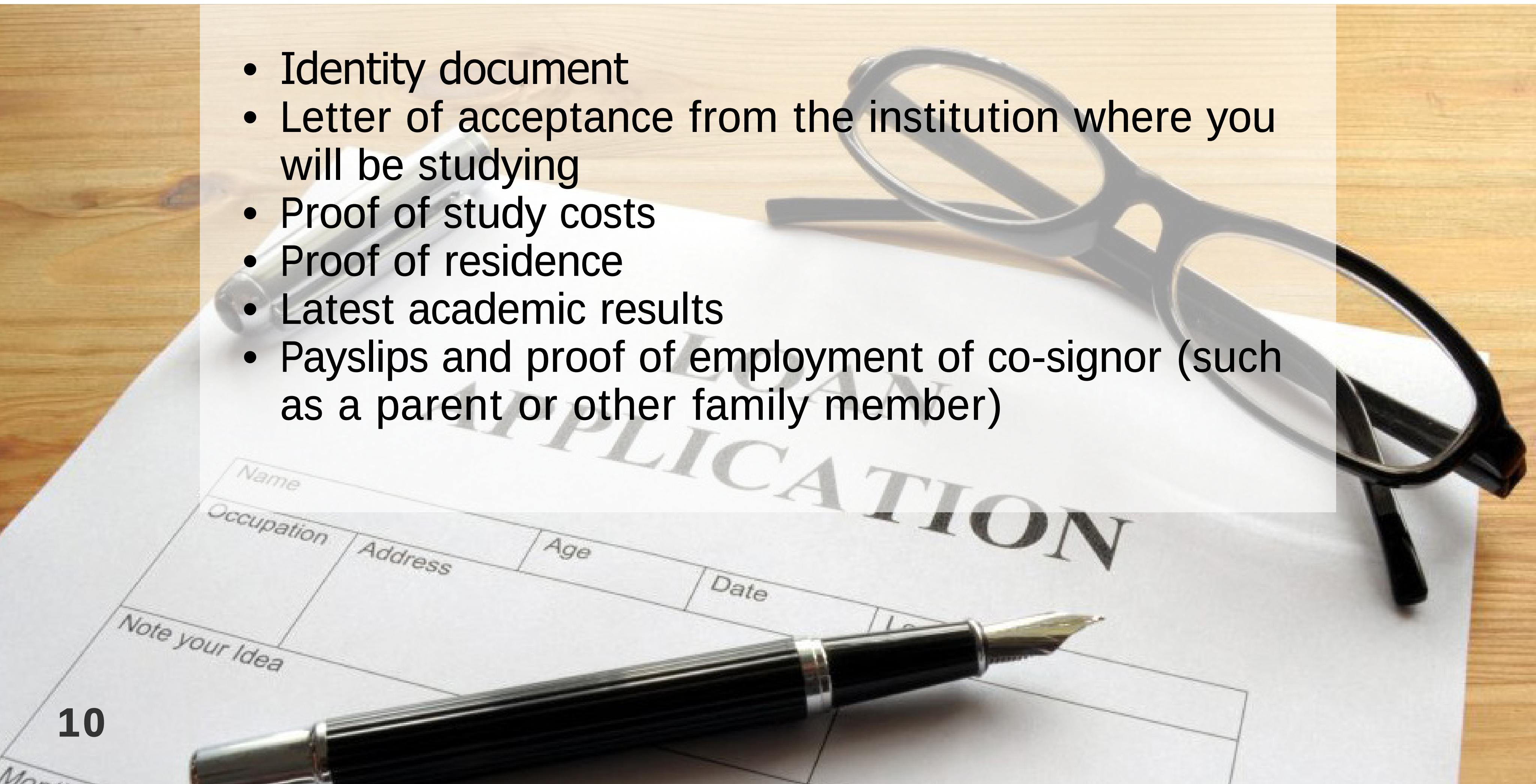
2.2 OPTION 2: TAKING OUT A STUDENT LOAN

If you cannot afford to pay for your studies yourself, but you have someone who is willing to stand surety for you, then you could consider taking out a student loan.

What makes student loans different from other types of bank loans, such as small business loans, is that **they offer lower interest rates and flexible payment terms** that suit student needs.

Securing a loan is easier than securing some other types of student funding, such as scholarships and bursaries. The reason for this is that you aren't in direct competition with other applicants. You will still need **a number of documents** to prove that you qualify for a loan, however. These may include:

- Identity document
- Letter of acceptance from the institution where you will be studying
- Proof of study costs
- Proof of residence
- Latest academic results
- Payslips and proof of employment of co-signor (such as a parent or other family member)



Where to look when you want to apply for a student loan:

Banks:

» First National Bank (FNB)
» Absa
» Standard Bank
» Nedbank

Other financial institutions:

» Fundi

If you're taking out a loan, make sure you don't fall into a debt trap

Here's what you need to consider:

- Before you take out a loan, think about all the effects it will have on your financial situation. Remember that the loan will need to be **repaid**, and that it will keep accumulating interest as long as there are still payments outstanding.
- Only take out a study loan from a reputable financial institution, and not from a small, unknown company, or from loan sharks that might exploit you.
- Remember to read the loan agreement carefully, and to make sure you **understand** everything contained in it. Ask the bank representative to explain anything you don't understand. Don't be afraid of looking stupid if you don't know something – it's important to know

what you are signing up for, and almost everyone asks questions before they sign a significant financial agreement.

- Make sure to get **answers** to the following:
  - How much will the loan cost you in total?
  - What will your monthly payment be, now and when you finish studying?
  - What is the interest rate? Is it fixed or variable?
  - What additional bank costs and fees are there?
- Borrow as little as possible. If your situation allows it, rather look for a part-time job to fund a part of your studies, instead of taking out a loan to cover the full costs.
- When working out how much your studies will cost you, remember to budget for additional expenses such as books, accommodation, transport, internet/data costs, printing costs, and any other relevant expenses.
- Compare student loan offers from different financial providers. They aren't all the same. Some might fit your needs and circumstances better than others.
- Start **paying back** the loan as soon as possible. Don't wait for your big break – start paying back, even if it's only R200 a month.
- Find out from your college or university which loans and financial institutions they recommend.
- Pass your course. If you fail your course, your debt will not vanish, and you will be stuck without the means to find employment and pay back the money. So if you study using a student loan, make sure you work hard and pass your course.

2.3 OPTION 3: APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

This is a popular funding option for many students, which means that it is also competitive. The demand for this form of student finance in South Africa is higher than the supply, which means that you are not guaranteed to succeed with an application for a scholarship or bursary. However, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't try.

Here are some things to consider when applying for a scholarship or bursary:

Scholarship vs Bursary – what's the difference?

'Scholarship' and 'bursary' are two terms that are often used interchangeably to refer to the money awarded to students to cover the costs, or partial costs, of their studies. Generally, however, scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic excellence, while bursaries are awarded on the grounds of a student's financial need.

It is also important to note that while scholarships are often awarded without any obligation for the student to repay them, bursaries often require the students either to repay the bursary once they've started working, or to work for the companies that sponsored their studies for a set period of time after graduation.

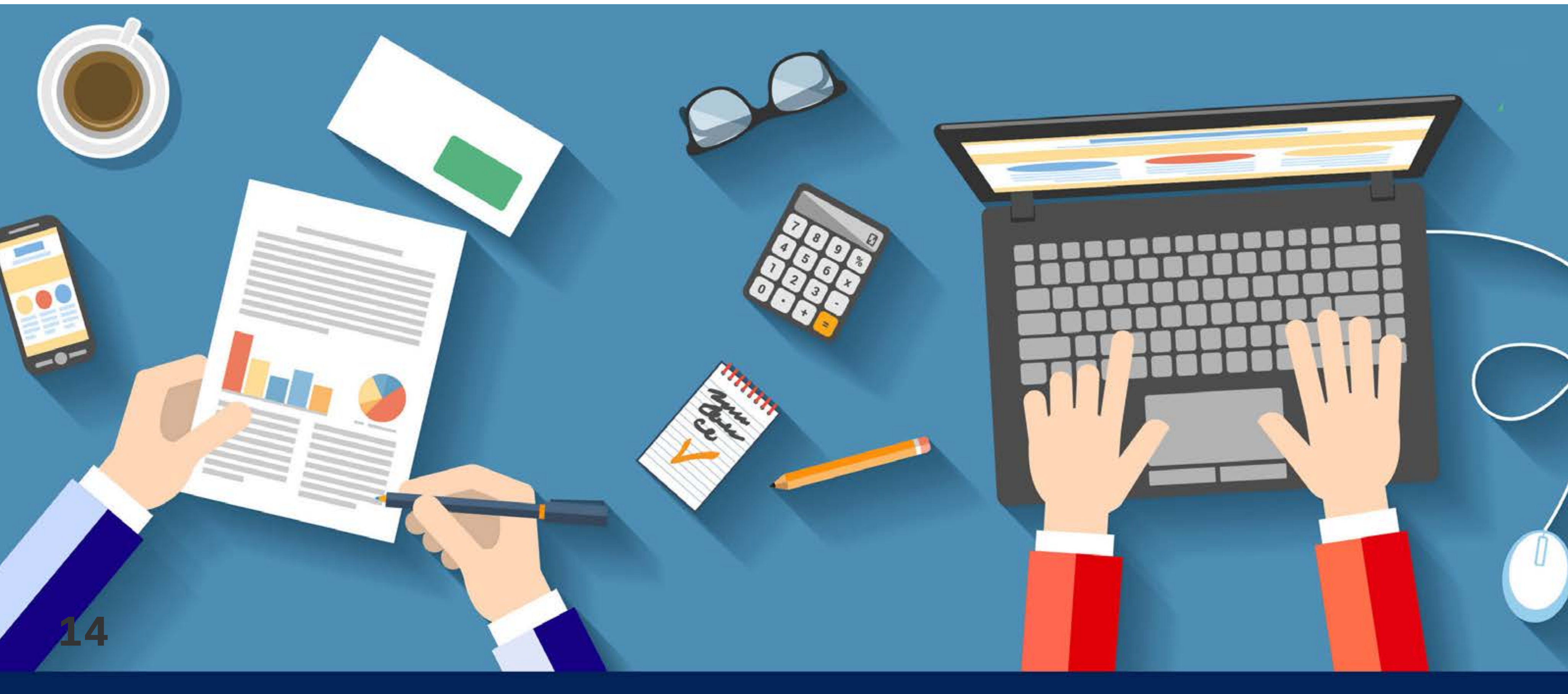
Where to look

Academic Institutions

Many colleges and universities have their own scholarship and bursary programmes, or have access to a list of scholarships and bursaries that apply to their courses.

Your first step should therefore be to contact the financial or administrative offices of the institutions where you are applying to study – to find out whether they offer any scholarships and bursaries, and whether you qualify for them.

You will also receive a **10% discount if any of your siblings** are already studying with Oxbridge Academy. This discount will apply to both you and your sibling(s).



Private Sector

Companies in the private sector often offer bursaries to students studying courses related to those companies' industries. Absa, for example, offers bursaries to students *"pursuing a course of study in a discipline that will benefit the Banking Industry."*

Programmes like this might be part of their corporate social initiatives – as Absa states: *"we are keen to ensure that talented, top-performing students get every opportunity to enter the world of business".* It might also form part of an investment strategy. Companies usually offer bursaries to promising students with the understanding that they will be required to work for that company for a certain period of time after completing their studies.

It is often the sectors with the largest skills shortages that offer the most scholarship and bursary opportunities. While you might struggle to find someone to fund your interior decorating course, you may find that there are plenty of funding opportunities if you want to study towards a National Qualification in Engineering.

Read:

List of Occupations in High Demand

(as published by the DHET)

Here are a few examples of private sector bursaries for students in the field of engineering:

- » Vodacom Bursaries
- » Square Kilometre Array Bursaries
- » Transnet Bursaries

The best way to find bursaries in a specific field is to search for them online. You can also approach companies in your chosen industry, and ask them whether they have any bursary opportunities available.

More places to look for scholarships and bursaries

These websites provide lists of funding opportunities that are available in South Africa, and include both public and private sector scholarships and bursaries:

- » www.careerhelp.org.za/main/funding-your-studies_
- » bursaries-southafrica.co.za/
- » sastudy.co.za/
- » www.gostudy.mobi/
- » www.africaeducation.org/bursaries/bursaries-and-scholarships.html

10 Tips for Securing a Bursary or Scholarship

1. **Apply as early as possible**. The closing dates sometimes require you to apply a whole semester (or more) before you start your studies.
2. Apply for as many scholarships and bursaries as possible. The wider you cast your net, the more likely you are to be successful.
3. Apply for **smaller and less competitive awards** as well. Even though they might not cover your studies in full, they may help to make a significant dent in your expenses.
4. **Don’t do too little too late.** Get good marks early on, take part in extracurricular activities, aim for leadership positions at school or at work, get good performance reviews, and do charity work if you can. Awarding committees look at these things when selecting funding recipients.
5. Know where, what, and why you want to study. **The more certain you are, the better** you’ll be able to motivate your choices. Awarding committees look for candidates who are passionate, directed, and focused on a single well-defined goal.

6. **Remember that your funding application and your course application are separate** (although you will only be awarded funding if you are accepted for your course). So make sure you put as much effort into getting accepted for your course as you do into obtaining a scholarship or bursary.
7. **Read the requirements and application procedures carefully** and double-check your application form and required documents before you submit them. Incorrect or incomplete applications are often rejected automatically.
8. Applying for funding opportunities can be overwhelming. **Mark the application deadlines** for each scholarship or bursary on a calendar, and keep track of what you still need to do for each application.
9. Tailor your motivational letter and CV to suit each unique application.
10. **Put in the effort.** Don't shy away from opportunities that require a lot of paperwork or essay writing. Nobody said that you weren't going to have to work to earn it.

Important things to remember when applying for a scholarship or bursary

Being awarded a scholarship or bursary doesn't mean that you are being handed a blank cheque. It often comes with stipulations or conditions, such as:

- You need to **repay or work back** your bursary after you graduate.
- You need to **study a certain subject or course** to qualify for the award.
- You need to pay some of your own expenses, which may include accommodation, food, transport, and other relevant expenses.
- You need to maintain a certain level of **academic performance** to keep your scholarship or bursary.

This means that you need to focus hard on your studies, and not allow the distractions of student life to get in the way of your success.

Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.

– Albert Einstein

3. CHOOSING AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

A good way to make sure you can afford your studies is to choose an academic institution that is affordable and that offers financial benefits that will make it easier for you to gain access to the career of your choice.

When looking for a college or university, remember the following:

- An academic institution can be affordable while still offering quality accredited courses and good academic service.
- An academic institution can be expensive without necessarily being better or offering higher quality courses than other institutions.

So make sure the college or university you choose is affordable, and that it maintains high standards. A great way to do this is to:

- Check the institution's accreditation status.
- See what others have to say about the institution.
- Look at the fee structures and payment options.
- Look at the content of the courses.

Affordable, quality education at Oxbridge Academy
Oxbridge Academy is a distance learning college that offers flexible, affordable education to students in South Africa and abroad. The courses that you can choose from include short learning programmes and national qualifications.

When you study with Oxbridge Academy, you get the following financial benefits:

1. You can study in your own time from home, which means that you can easily work while you study.
2. You can choose from a selection of courses that fall into varying price categories.
3. You can pay your course fees in monthly instalments, without being charged any interest.
4. You earn a Special Merit Award to cover 25% of your next course's fees if you pass your initial course with distinction.
5. You receive a 10% discount if any of your siblings are also studying with Oxbridge Academy. This discount will apply to both you and your sibling(s).
6. You receive all your textbooks/study material (via free post or courier delivery, or online) as part of your course fee. You won't be expected to spend any extra money on textbooks.

Along with these financial benefits, you will receive top-quality academic support and assistance from industry-expert tutors whenever you need it.

4. SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Studying opens doors for you. It increases your employability, your earning potential, and your chances at a better life. But enrolling for a college or university course can be an expensive undertaking.

The funding options laid out in this e-book were meant to help you figure out how to secure a future for yourself, despite the limits of your financial resources. There are always options for you to further your education. As the saying goes: "Where there is a will, there is a way."

To inspire you to keep on trying, here is a quote from Oprah Winfrey – one of the richest women in the world, who managed to overcome financial difficulties to reach great success:

"Whatever your goal, you can get there if you're willing to work"

– Oprah Winfrey

Find out more about starting your studies with Oxbridge Academy:

021 1100 200

www.oxbridgeacademy.edu.za