



yousseffarouk.com/checklist

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Youssef's Erasmus Mundus Application Checklist

Advice marked with a ★ is advanced advice. If you are skimming, stop at the ones with the star and read carefully.

You can upload the checklist with your cv to AI so that you can identify gaps. "Review my CV and motivation letter against this Checklist: what am I missing?" but also go through it at least once because a lot of it is not just covered with AI

If you get accepted, you **HAVE TO** help other people apply and support them (and also please let me know because I would be very happy if this is useful.)

1. Mindset and strategy

- You don't need connections (no wasta). Selection is formal and scored.
- You don't need many languages to apply (I applied with English and Arabic)
- Selection is not pure merit. Nationality balance, financial need, cohort mix and more all play a part. Rejections don't necessarily mean you weren't qualified.
- ★ A rejection is not a verdict on your worth. Many factors are outside your control.
- Never lower the quality of a letter just to apply to more programmes.
- ★ Interests change. Be open about how yours grew. Growth reads as strength, not inconsistency. You can have a certain interest in the beginning of the application period and a development of that by the end.
- ★ Build one core story (who you are, what you've done, why this programme, what comes next) and keep it consistent across your letter, CV, references and interview.
- ★ Think like the committee: they are funding a person to live in several countries with classmates from many nations, not just a transcript.
- If you don't get in, reapply. I applied to the same programme twice before I got in, and my second interview was completely different from the first.
- Thousands apply and few are chosen, but someone has to be chosen. Apply with the energy that it could be you.
- Almost everyone I know who got in thought it was a long shot. Apply anyway.
- Don't underestimate yourself. Let the committee decide, not your self-doubt.
- Be honest everywhere. Anything exaggerated will be tested in the interview.
- Quality over quantity: expect to spend dozens of hours on each application.
- Still apply to a few programmes to spread your chances. I applied to too few.
- Limited experience is not a dealbreaker. Volunteering, internships and projects count.

2. Choosing programmes

- Start from the official [Erasmus Mundus Catalogue](#). It is updated every year.
- Filter by field, country and duration (12, 18 or 24 months).
- You apply to each programme directly, not to the EU. Every programme has its own website, portal, deadline and documents.
- Check the programme still offers scholarships for your intake. Some catalogue programmes no longer do.



- Keep an open mind. Your background doesn't have to match a programme perfectly. If you like it just apply.
- Look at neighbouring fields. A strong profile often fits more than one programme.
- Read the whole curriculum: modules, mobility tracks, partners, internships, thesis. Decide based on that.
- Check the cities you would live in, and whether you'd be happy moving every semester. (It is rewarding but you need to be ready because it is also a special challenge)
- Check the teaching language and whether any host-country language is expected. Sometimes just knowing English is enough, sometimes showing interest in learning other languages is a plus.
- Count the scholarships per intake, and how many go to students from which areas.
- Check the nationality limit.
- Check for extra scholarships reserved for targeted regions (for example South Mediterranean, Sub-Saharan Africa or the Middle East). Your region may have better odds.
- Look up who teaches and who selects: coordinators, core team, selection committee. They matter a lot.
- ★ Talk to current students and alumni. Ask more than one, because every experience is different.
- ★ Ask people from the exact programme you're applying to. Advice from other Erasmus Mundus programmes only partly transfers.
- Attend the programme's online info sessions. Many bring professors and current students.
- Email the coordinator only with questions the website doesn't answer.
- Look beyond Erasmus Mundus too: the [DAAD scholarship database](#) and [Mastersportal](#).
- Track every programme in one planner: deadline, documents, requirements, word limits, status, submitted or not. Whatever you want to track (this is not essential, and could be more effort than it needs, but if you are interested in a lot of programs, it's good to stay organized)

3. Myths to ignore

- ★ "You need a perfect GPA." There is no universal minimum. Each programme sets its own.
- ★ "You need connections." You don't.
- ★ "You need to speak several European languages." You don't. Multilingualism helps, and openness to learning counts.
- "Rejected once means no chance." Many people get in on their second try.
- "List every experience you've ever had." No. Curate what matters for this programme.
- "AI can write it for you." See section 7.

4. Motivation letter

The letter is usually scored and is where you stand out most. Research the programs at depth before applying

Research before writing

- Read as much of the programme website as you can (no pressure but it can give you some good tips that give you an edge over other applicants): aims, modules, mobility tracks, partners, internships, FAQ.
- ★ Research the faculty and the selection committee. Read some of their published work. This is a massive massive advantage.
- ★ Note the programme's own keywords and themes, and speak their language honestly.
- ★ Name specific professors and link your interests to a specific paper or project of theirs. This shows diligent research and real alignment. This is not just a hack, these are the people you will learn from. Explain why you chose them and why their work interests you. Link your interests to their actual publications, not just their names. Mention them and their work in the essay, it shows that you did



your research and that you are interested in the work, these are the people teaching you, so if their work doesn't interest you, then this program may not be for you.

- Attend the online info session, where you can meet professors and current students.
- ★ Name more than one person, ideally across the partner universities, not just one.
- ★ Mention the internship partner you'd target, but know what it does and who it serves so the fit is real.
- ★ Show them what you bring to the program: don't just tell them why the program is great, they already know why this program is good, tell them why you are a great fit for this program, you will be learning from your peers as much as you learn from the professors, and they will be learning from you. Use this space to show your unique views and what makes you special and the perspective you bring to the program.
- Be honest with yourself about why this programme is right for you. That answer is the core of the letter.

Structure

- Outline before writing: why this programme specifically?
- Personally I like to fully use the space I am given. If 2 pages are allowed, I use both, with substance.
- Never exceed the limit. Some portals cut off extra text.
- No fillers. Every sentence has to make an excellent point. If a sentence seems to be weak, cut it.
- Your first sentence must make them want the second: specific, personal, memorable.
- ★ Make the first paragraph a dense summary of your strongest, measurable points. Reviewers skim.

Content

- Your intro has to POP. you have to start the essay with a bang and end with a bang. The first line has to be strong and grab attention, the first paragraph should give a taste of who you are and make them interested to keep reading.
- Don't repeat your CV. Pick a few experiences and explain why they matter.
- You can reach out to current and past students of that program for help, they are often more than happy to help.
- There is at least one or even more Erasmus Mundus Association representatives for almost every Erasmus Mundus scholarship (but not all). Maybe you should reach out to them, they will be helpful.
- ★ Lead with your biggest achievements. Never bury them in the middle of a paragraph.
- ★ Start each paragraph with its strongest point.
- ★ Show impact with numbers: people served, cases handled, students taught.
- Cover both academics and experience.
- Mention strong grades and honours briefly.
- ★ Make your internationalism clear and how you deal with multiple cultural and international backgrounds they want people that can learn and adapt and grow over the two years and people that can grow and adapt with their peers
- If you have publications, or cool projects make sure to mention that.
- Mention the research methods you've used, and anything you built yourself (a tool, an initiative, a programme).
- ★ Explain why studying in several countries matters for your goals. Otherwise, why not a single-university master's?
- Give concrete plans: the kind of organisation, the role, the project you want to build.
- ★ Mention time living or working abroad, and what adapting taught you. They want to see that you will adapt well to living abroad and moving constantly and that you have international experience.
- ★ Any knowledge of a host-country language is an edge. If you have none, say you're keen to learn one during the programme. Actually mean it too



- Keep everything consistent with your CV and what you'll say in the interview.
- Don't just take that space to repeat your CV blindly
- Plain, precise language.
- Positive and future-oriented.
- Your own voice. Committees read thousands of letters that sound the same, don't make it generic
- Frame hardships and home-country problems constructively, not bitterly.
- Write one letter per programme. Rewrite the "why this programme" part completely each time.
- Use the programme's full official name and address the committee correctly.
- Proofread several times, including once out loud.
- Run a spelling and grammar check.
- what you plan to do after. You have to show initiative and long term planning
- Take feedback selectively. It's your letter, don't take advice you are not convinced with. This has to be you.

5. Scholarship need and what you bring

Committees assess both what you've achieved and who the scholarship would help most. Show both sides: what the programme does for you, and what you do for the programme.

Your need

- Committees want the scholarship to empower people, not only reward the most qualified.
- Say honestly why you need the funding. If you're applying, you have a reason. Make sure you just make it clear. If you can afford the self-funded route, take it and leave the scholarship for others. If you can't, explain why.
- Show what the scholarship would change in your life on a human level. Explain where you are now and where it would take you.
- Show what you'll do with the education afterwards, and who else benefits.
- Trace the effect in three circles: you, your cohort, and your field or community. So explain how this will make a large effect on you, how you will influence your cohort and support them with your unique POV and most importantly:
- ★ **SHOW HOW YOU WILL USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EMPOWER OTHERS.** Explain how you will make a change in your home community, or in your new community, or in your target place.
- State facts with dignity. Don't beg or dramatise and never EVER lie.
- ★ **Connect need to impact:** "this funding lets me do X, which lets me help Y". This is the best way to give them a concrete plan and reason for the scholarship

What you bring

- Show you're not just a good fit on paper, but someone who adds value to the programme. So you must name the unique perspective you bring: your region, background, languages, field experience.
- ★ **Explain how that perspective benefits your peers and the faculty.** So for example you might have a grassroots understanding of a specific problem that people in the EU maybe did not tackle before, and you can share with them how you tackled that issue. This is a goldmine most applicants skip.
- Show international exposure and ease working in multinational groups.
- Give an example of handling intercultural conflict or misunderstanding.
- Show how you'd contribute beyond class: study groups, events, community projects.
- Show a clear vision of where this leads.



6. CV

Reviewers go through thousands of CVs. Make your best points jump out in seconds instead of making them dig.

Personally I try to keep it to 1 page, maybe for some people 2 at most, and prioritise concision over detail. My worry is that a perfect but long and detailed cv will not be read fully when the reviewer has thousands of cvs to go through. They are only human. They scan, so help them find what they are looking for and make their life easy.

- ★ Prefer plain but easy to understand words instead of AI buzzwords. “Run the reception desk” is clearer than “architected intercultural service pathways”.
- ★ Don’t overclaim.
- Spell-check everything, including headings and job titles.
- Dates must match your certificates.
- Links only if useful and working.
- ★ Make your LinkedIn match your CV. Committees and interviewers might look but idk maybe they wont i just like having the option i guess..

7. Using AI

- Don’t let AI write your letter. It loses authenticity, and committees can tell when 2,000 letters open with the same energy.
- ★ Some applications may be screened for AI text, I am not sure if that happens and which programs, but AI text is very very clear, especially if you are reading 2,000 letters with the same terminology. A flagged letter might never reach a human. If AI drafted any part, rewrite it in your own words.
- Use AI for what it’s good at: researching programmes, general tips, checking structure, catching grammar mistakes.
- ★ Use it for interview drills: have it ask you likely questions then ask for feedback. I did a lot of this when prepping for my interview
- Never let it add facts, numbers or experiences that aren’t yours.
- Real and kinda imperfect is far better than polished and generic.

8. Interview preparation

- Read the invitation carefully: platform, date, time zone, length, who’s on the panel, what to have ready.
- ★ Re-read your motivation letter and CV. Stay fresh on your narrative. Anything you wrote is fair game.
- ★ the interview questions are to a large extent what other students and past students were asked. Make sure to know the questions and prepare for them. Several people post youtube videos about this. (see Resources).
- Know your 3–5 key selling points and bring them up naturally.
- Prepare your answers in advance, but don’t just memorise them. Know them.
- Know the programme inside out: modules, mobility tracks, partners, internships.
- Know your interviewers: read their profiles and some of their work. Show genuine interest.
- Rehearse out loud, record yourself, and do mock interviews with friends or with AI.
- Technical programmes may test core concepts. Revise the basics of your field.



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Know these cold, for yourself and for them

- Who you are: your story. Master “Tell me about yourself” in 1–2 minutes (past, present, future).
- Your strengths, with proof.
- Your weaknesses: a real one, plus what you’re doing about it.
- Why this programme, specifically.
- Your goals, short and long term.
- Why they should select you over other candidates.
- What you bring to the programme and the cohort, including your international experience and commitment to diversity.
- Why you need the scholarship and what it would change.

Probable questions

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why this programme? Why not another program?
- Why these universities and this mobility track?
- What will you bring to the programme and your classmates?
- How will your background and experience contribute to the programme and cohort?
- Why should we select you over other candidates?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Do you have any publications or research experience?
- Tell us about your plan for a thesis or main project. (you don't have to have it all figured out, just know your stuff. It's okay if your scope changes after you start uni and you get inspired by different lectures or real life experience)
- Describe a challenge you resolved.
- Tell us about a time you worked under pressure and how you handled it.
- Tell us about a conflict in a diverse or international team.
- How will you cope with moving to a new country every semester?
- What challenges do you expect during the programme, and how will you overcome them?
- Where do you see yourself in five to ten years?
- Which internship or partner organisation interests you, and why?
- Which languages do you speak? Are you open to learning the host-country languages?
- Why do you need this scholarship?
- Have you applied to other programmes? (Answer honestly.)
- What will you do if you aren't selected?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Questions to ask the committee

- Always have 2–3 ready. Having none looks like you haven't done your research.
- Ask things the website doesn't answer, for example how students shape their internship or thesis, or chances to work with faculty research.
- ★ Ask something tied to an interviewer's own work. It shows interest and leaves a strong last impression.

9. Interview day

Setup (online)

- Test the platform the day before and update the app.



- Use a professional display name and profile photo.
- Pick a quiet room with a plain background.
- Light in front of you, camera at eye level.
- Use a stable connection, wired if possible, with a phone hotspot as backup. Have another hotspot or internet source on backup in case that fails
- Close other apps and silence notifications.
- Tell everyone at home not to interrupt.
- Keep short talking points, your CV and your letter nearby.
- Have water, a pen and paper.
- Check the time zone twice. Join 5–10 minutes early.
- Dress as you would for a professional in-person meeting.

During

- Greet the panel, smile, and thank them for the invitation.
- Look at the camera when you speak.
- Answer the question asked, in 1–2 minutes, with a clear structure.
- It's fine to pause and think, or to ask them to repeat a question.
- If you don't know something, say so honestly. Never bluff. Honesty is very valued in every kind of interview and (i dont know but i would love to learn) is always a good answer
- Stay consistent with your letter and CV.
- Mention specific modules and faculty where it fits naturally.
- Show vision: where this programme takes you and what you'll do with it.
- Show that you're a value addition, not just a technical fit.
- Bring up financial need calmly and factually if relevant.
- Show real enthusiasm and curiosity, not just rehearsed lines.
- If the connection drops, rejoin straight away and email the coordinator if you can't.
- End by asking your questions and thanking them.

After

- Optional: send the coordinator a short thank-you email the same day.
- ★ Write down every question you were asked. It helps if you reapply, and helps people you mentor later.
- Don't chase for results before the announced date.

10. If you're selected

- Accept in writing before the deadline.
- Decline other offers quickly so people on reserve lists can move up.
- Read the scholarship agreement carefully before signing.
- If you were in your final year, send your degree certificate by the required date.
- Start the visa process immediately. It can take several months
- Look for housing early and use the programme's help where offered.
- Check exactly what the health insurance covers.
- Learn some basics of the host-country language before arriving.
- Connect with your cohort before the start.
- Join the [Erasmus Mundus Association](#) for the alumni network.
- You'll learn as much outside the classroom as inside. The programme is worth as much as you make of it.



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- ★ Being a student in a known programme opens doors: use it to meet people at places you want to work.
- Pay it forward and help the next applicants.

11. Resources and sources

Official

- [Erasmus Mundus Catalogue \(EACEA\)](#)
- [Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters for students \(European Commission\)](#)
- [Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters for organisations: scholarship amount and mobility rules](#)
- [EACEA scholarships page: FAQ, scam warning, complaints](#)
- [Essential tips for writing a great motivation letter \(European Commission\)](#)
- [6 scholarship application tips \(European Commission\)](#)

Community

- [Erasmus Mundus Association](#): country representatives, events, success stories
- [EMA](#): there is no limit on how many programmes you can apply to
- [EMA tips for a successful Erasmus Mundus application \(PDF\)](#)

Databases

- [DAAD scholarship database \(Germany\)](#)
- [Mastersportal](#)
- [Bachelorsportal](#)

My tools

- [My scholarship application planner](#) (make a copy and fill in your own)

Interview videos I watched

- [How to prepare for the Erasmus Mundus scholarship interview \(Moments with Bukola\)](#)
- [4 interview questions that won me the Erasmus Mundus scholarship](#)
- [Video 3](#)
- [Video 4](#)
- [Video 5](#)
- [Video 6](#)