

Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI)

Most Frequently Asked Questions

What is DAFI?

UNHCR provides, on a limited basis, scholarships for refugees at the tertiary level in universities and polytechnic institutions through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund (DAFI). Funding for this programme is provided by the Federal Government of Germany.

The purpose of the DAFI Programme is to contribute to the self-reliance of refugees by providing them with a professional qualification for future employment. Scholarships are granted only for studies in the country of asylum. Preferably, UNHCR would like to see the graduates return home and contribute to the reconstruction of their home country, or to the development of the country of asylum or the refugee community at large.

Are DAFI scholarships available in every country?

DAFI scholarships are provided only in developing countries or countries in transition. DAFI programmes are mostly available in developing countries with a significant refugee population, mostly in Africa and Asia. There are also a limited number of DAFI scholarships in some countries of Eastern Europe and Latin America. Each year, more than 1,000 refugee students benefit from the programme. Because of its financial limitations, competition for scholarships is high and only a portion of the qualified candidates can be admitted to the programme. Therefore, selection criteria have been established which are to be strictly followed.

Who can apply?

In order to be eligible, a candidate should:

- be a refugee with recognised refugee status;
- have successfully completed secondary schooling to a high standard in camp-based refugee schools, or in national schools of the country of origin or asylum;
- have no other means of support for university studies;
- select a course of study that is likely to lead to employment in the country of origin;
- not be older than 28 years at the beginning of studies (An exemption could be applied to health and education courses of shorter duration provided to health staff and teachers with previous working experience or employment);
- select a choice of study course with maximum three to four years duration.

What are the preferences and priorities from amongst those who meet the criteria?

The following are paramount:

- gender-balance (currently, only about 40% of DAFI students are female, therefore we particularly encourage women to apply);
- individuals with special needs, such as physical disabilities;
- the student's proven academic performance;
- students who had to interrupt their studies due to flight, and who possess proof of previous university or college studies in their country of origin;
- students who interrupted their DAFI scholarship in the country of asylum due to repatriation to the country of origin. Subject to prevailing conditions and available funds, studies may be continued by returnees in the country of origin;
- In order to allocate benefits in an equitable manner to as many refugee families as possible, no more than one scholarship should be provided within a single refugee family;
- students who choose shorter and inexpensive courses with high chances of employment (such as computer studies, paramedical and teaching professions, etc).

Applicants should be able to clearly express their reasons for having chosen the particular study subject, and relate their choice to expected future employment opportunities in the country of asylum and upon repatriation. The granting of scholarships is limited to students contemplating courses of four, or fewer years' duration, with reliable prospects and high probability of employment. As funding is limited, and the programme seeks to offer as many scholarships as possible, full length university courses in medicine and similar courses will normally not be entertained. One exception to this are refugees who had their education in their country of origin disrupted, who require assistance for four years or less to complete their education in the country of asylum, and who are able to provide credible records of their previous studies. Applicants are encouraged to seek individual counselling and guidance about their choice of study at UNHCR offices or their respective non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners implementing the DAFI programme.

Can any asylum seekers or returnees apply for a DAFI scholarship?

Asylum seekers who have not (yet) been recognised as refugees as well as refugees seeking resettlement in a third country are not normally eligible for a DAFI scholarship. In making the final selection in a given country, every effort will be made to achieve a fair distribution of scholarships among rural/camp-based refugees and urban refugees; as well as among groups of refugees from different ethnic, religious and communal backgrounds, where appropriate.

The DAFI programme does not support refugees after they return home because returnees have access to a greater number of academic scholarships.

How do I apply?

If there is a current DAFI programme in your country of asylum and you meet the above-mentioned criteria, you should complete an application form (Application for Educational Assistance) to be submitted to UNHCR directly. Forms are available at UNHCR offices. All UNHCR offices will receive your application.

NOTE: Do not submit your application to UNHCR headquarters in Geneva. If you have further questions, please contact your nearest UNHCR office. School and university certificates will be verified prior to the selection of candidates. In cases where certificates are not originals, or are older than three years, the candidates may have to undergo a test.

Will I be entitled to a DAFI scholarship if I meet all the selection criteria?

Due to funding constraints, only a limited number of candidates who meet the selection criteria can be selected. In some cases, UNHCR country offices can not take on any new applicants in a particular year for a variety of reasons. In other countries, the programme is phasing out and only continuing students receive sponsorship until graduation. Qualified candidates who are not able to join the DAFI programme are encouraged to take initiatives for identifying alternative sponsorships.

What are the selection procedures?

The selection process normally involves several steps from pre-selection to short-listing and final decision by a Selection Committee, which will take place in the capital. Candidates who have to travel to the capital to be interviewed by the committee will not be reimbursed for their travel expenses. The final Selection Committee usually consists of UNHCR staff, a member of the German Embassy, other NGOs or organisations providing scholarships, UNHCR implementing partners in the education sector and staff of universities or other academic institutions, or the Ministry of Education or other government officials.

How many students can benefit in a given country?

This depends on the funds the country is being allocated by UNHCR headquarters and the total DAFI funding available for that year. Factors such as the total number of the refugee population in that country, number of refugees completing secondary school, quality of educational facilities, costs of scholarships, support structure and employment opportunities are amongst the main criteria deciding how funds are distributed. Pending assessment of the circumstances, new DAFI scholarships may not be awarded during repatriation exercises.

What expenses can the scholarship cover?

The DAFI programme might cover the costs mentioned below in full or in part, depending on the specific needs of refugee students and the country operation:

- **REGISTRATION/TUITION FEES:** The scholarship usually covers the registration and tuition fees. In many countries, refugees pay the same fees as national students. In others, refugees have to pay the registration fees applicable to foreigners, which are considerably higher. When applying for admission to a university, refugees should clearly indicate in the application that they are refugees and negotiate for the most favourable fee. Registration and tuition fees are paid directly to the institution.
- **SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE:** Students will receive a subsistence allowance. In some countries, the subsistence allowance is paid as a lump sum

while in other countries it is divided into several components such as living allowance (food), book allowance, boarding/housing allowance, local travel allowance and pocket money (or personal allowance). Not all of the allowances are automatically applicable to each country but are rather based on local circumstances. The level of allowances should reflect real needs and actual costs of living in the given country, and permit the student to cover his/her basic needs. If a student enters into an attachment during his/her long vacation, adjustments may be made to the subsistence allowance in line with actual needs. In cases where students return home (i.e. within the host country) they may be paid a transport allowance covering their return travel. Boarding or housing allowance as part of subsistence covers the costs of housing on university campus, or, if the same is not available or prices are prohibitive for the students, a similar boarding outside the campus. In some cases, when students live with their parents, a boarding allowance will not be paid. Local travel allowance covers the daily travel between the university and home, if applicable. Pocket money should include items such as stationery and other minor expenses.

- **STUDENTS' ANNUAL ALLOWANCES:** Note that students are not automatically entitled to all allowances as conditions in the various countries differ. In some countries, all or several allowances have been combined into a lump sum payment. Likewise, the needs of individual students within the same country may differ according to subject of study, so that benefits may vary amongst students. Costs for medical insurance or medical treatment are handled by UNHCR offices in accordance with local implementing arrangements and requirements. Costs for medical treatment are generally reimbursed to the clinic or pharmacy directly and not paid out to the students themselves. Annual payments also include an allowance for books and clothes. In some countries, the annual payments are included and pro-rated in the subsistence allowance. Allowances for fieldwork, research and/or project work can be paid against verified receipts if funds required are reasonable and agreed beforehand.

Can I apply for a partial scholarship?

Yes. A partial sponsorship under the DAFI project is possible if the candidate has some other source of funding, for instance, for registration and tuition fees. In this case, a selected student would only receive a subsistence allowance. In other cases, students may be able to sustain themselves, but may only need support to pay for registration/tuition fees.

If selected, will I be sponsored automatically until I finish my studies?

DAFI scholarships are provided strictly for one academic year. After one year, the scholarship can be renewed for another year, if the student passed the annual examination for promotion to the next academic year. In cases where a student fails one course but can repeat it during the next academic year, the scholarship may be renewed. If a student fails more than one course, and is thus not promoted to the next academic year, the scholarships will be terminated, unless there are justified reasons for the student's failure, such as long absence due to certified sickness. The limited

number of scholarships available does not justify sponsoring students with unsatisfactory academic performance, unless for a very good reason.

What are the reasons for discontinuation of a scholarship?

- repeated failure of examinations
- failure to submit study progress reports
- double sponsorship
- cheating at examinations
- gross personal misconduct
- lack of funds (in exceptional financial crisis situations).

Suspicion of fraud, malpractice or seeking unfair advantage will lead to suspension of benefits, pending thorough investigation.

Scholarship assistance should not exceed four years. This rule is applied to allow as many students as possible to benefit from the programme.

Can I apply for postgraduate studies?

Postgraduate studies (M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D. and some postgraduate diploma courses) are generally not supported under the DAFI programme. However, special consideration could be given to students who enrol in postgraduate short-term teacher training courses, provided this is of immediate benefit to the refugee community. Graduates are encouraged to search for other sources of funding to sponsor the continuation of their academic studies.

Will UNHCR help me to find an attachment or employment after completion of studies?

UNHCR has very limited capacity to guide refugee students in finding an attachment or employment. Students are strongly encouraged to take their own initiatives in contacting other organisations, embassies, NGOs and private sector companies for this purpose and make use of opportunities the internet provides. Current and ex-students are encouraged to organize themselves in DAFI clubs for the purpose of networking and information sharing, particularly on internships, employment opportunities and other sponsorships for postgraduate studies. In order to justify the continuation of the DAFI programme, it is vital to report on its impact. Therefore, all former DAFI students are urged to maintain contact with UNHCR or the implementing NGO partner. There is a special form to be completed by former students at least six months after graduation and forwarded to the respective UNHCR branch office (contact your branch office for the ex-DAFI student form). If it is not possible to submit the ex-DAFI student form, information on employment status may be communicated through other means (e-mail: HQEDUC@unhcr.org).

I am a refugee in a country of asylum with a current DAFI programme and I meet the criteria, but I am not proficient in the language of instruction. What should I do?

You should ask UNHCR or the implementing NGO partner if there are language courses for refugees which you can join. In some cases, and subject to the recommendations of the UNHCR office as well as availability of funding, language-training courses may be provided.

I am a refugee in a country of asylum where there is no DAFI programme, but I meet the criteria and would like to apply. What should I do?

You should still bring your wish to the attention of UNHCR staff, either verbally or in writing. If there is a sizeable number of qualified applicants, and provided other conditions required for DAFI are being fulfilled, it may be possible to launch a DAFI programme in that country in future years. However, note that DAFI only supports refugee students in developing countries and countries in transition. Meanwhile, you should take your own initiatives in identifying alternative possibilities for scholarships with other organisations, institutions, foundations, embassies or the private sector. In some countries, it is possible to negotiate with universities for exemption from tuition fee payments.

Which countries have a current DAFI programme?

In 2006/2007, the following countries are participating in the DAFI programme:

In Africa:

Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In Asia:

India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Syria, Thailand and Yemen.

In Central- and South America:

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, and Uruguay.

In Eastern Europe:

Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Georgia, Russian Federation, and Serbia & Montenegro.

There are changes every year with so