

Frequently Asked Questions

Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI)



General Information

What is DAFI?

The DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme offers refugee students the possibility to pursue an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum. Through the dedicated support of the German Government, and additional private donors, the programme has supported over 12,000 young refugees since 1992. The purpose of the DAFI Programme is to maintain and strengthen the level of capacity of refugees, enabling them to become more self-reliant and to actively contribute to the development of both refugee and host communities. More generally, the DAFI Programme aims to encourage the development of qualified human resources for the future reconstruction of refugees' home countries upon repatriation, thereby supporting greater peace and stability in the region. Undergraduate refugee students are provided with scholarships that cover a wide range of costs, from tuition fees and study materials, to food, transport, accommodation and other allowances. To support their academic achievements and skill development, DAFI scholars receive additional support through close monitoring, academic preparatory and language classes based on students' needs, as well as mentoring and networking opportunities.

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, e.g. in Africa and Asia. There are also a limited number of DAFI scholarships in some countries of Eastern Europe and Latin America. In 2017, DAFI scholarships are available in 50 countries, namely:

Sub-Sahara Africa: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia & Zimbabwe.

Middle East & Nothern Africa (MENA): Algeria, Egypt, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Syria & Yemen.

Asia & Pacific: Bangladesh, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan & Tajikistan.

The Americas: Ecuador.

Europe: Azerbaijan, Russian Federation, Turkey & Ukraine.

How many students can benefit in a given country?

The number of scholarships applications received in most of the cases far outweigh the available slots. The number of scholarships available in a country 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 the 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 programme:

Registration/Tuition Fees: The scholarship usually covers 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 to cover costs such as living allowance (food); books allowance; boarding/housing allowance; medical allowance; local travel allowances etc. 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.

Beyond, DAFI students may be provided with mentoring programmes, membership to a DAFI students' association/club, social events, or language and skills trainings, depending on the availability in the respective country.

Application Procedure

Who can apply?

In order to be eligible, a candidate must:

- be a refugee with recognised refugee status;
- have successfully completed secondary schooling to a high standard;
- 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 with maximum three to four years duration;
- not be older than 28 years at the beginning of studies;
- have no other family member receiving a DAFI scholarship.

Who cannot apply?

- Asylum seekers who have not (yet) been recognised as refugees
- Refugees seeking resettlement in a third country

What are the main selection criteria?

The following criteria are paramount:

- gender-balance
- individuals with special needs, such as physical disabilities;
- the student's proven academic performance;
- the student's commitment to community support, voluntary work etc.
- 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;
- 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 DAFI implementing partners.

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.

Selection committees can set up country specific selection criteria in accordance to [DAFI Guidelines](#). In making the final selection in a given country, every effort will be made to achieve a fair distribution of scholarships among gender, camp-based refugees and urban refugees; as well as among groups of refugees from different ethnic, religious and communal backgrounds, where appropriate.

How do I apply?

- 1) Check if you meet the above-mentioned criteria.
- 2) Check if there is a current DAFI programme in your country of asylum.
- 3) Contact the respective UNHCR country office to receive a country specific application form (Application for Educational Assistance)
- 4) Complete the application form and submit it directly to UNHCR's country office.

NOTE: Do **not** submit your application to UNHCR headquarters in Geneva/ Copenhagen.

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.

Can I apply for postgraduate studies?

No. Postgraduate studies (M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D. and some postgraduate diploma courses) are not supported under the DAFI programme.

What are the selection procedures?

Because of its financial limitations, competition for scholarships is high and only a portion of the qualified candidates meeting the criteria mentioned above can be admitted to the programme. Qualified candidates who are not able to join the DAFI programme are encouraged to take initiatives for identifying alternative sponsorships.

The selection process normally involves several steps. After a pre-selection suitable candidates are shortlisted and invited to interviews, which usually take place in the capital. Candidates who have to travel to the capital to be interviewed will not be

reimbursed for their travel expenses. The interviews are held by a Selection Committee usually consisting 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. According to the interview performance and the documents provided by the applicant the committee takes the final decision. The number of newly accepted candidates depends on the number of DAFI slots available in the respective country.

[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.

Upon selection

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

DAFI scholarships are provided strictly for four academic years. 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.

Which obligations/contributions are to be fulfilled by DAFI students?

The award of a DAFI scholarship entails strict rules and high expectations, which are specified in the Scholarship Agreement and the Support Document. All DAFI scholars must sign the Scholarship Agreement which may be adapted to the specific DAFI project situation in a country, without violating the principle obligations and rights of the student and UNHCR. DAFI scholars must submit the transcript for each academic semester promptly at the beginning of the new semester. They need to be open to monitoring procedures and are encouraged to participate in DAFI-related workshops or events.

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.

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 former 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

If you have further questions, please contact your nearest [UNHCR country office](#).