

Frequently Asked Questions

# Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI)



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## 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 who contribute to their family and host or home country communities' self-reliance, 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 largely in developing countries with a significant refugee population, e.g. in Africa and Asia. There is also a limited number of DAFI scholarships available in some countries in 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 & Northern 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 applications received in most of the countries every year clearly exceeds the number of available scholarships. The number of scholarships offered in

a country depends on a range of factors related to tertiary education opportunities for refugees and available funding for the DAFI Programme overall. Decisive factors for the allocation of scholarships across countries are: (i) the total number of the refugee population in the country, (ii) the number of refugees completing secondary school, (iii) the quality of educational facilities, (iv) the costs of scholarships, (v) the support structure available for students and (vi) employment opportunities.

### What expenses can the scholarship cover?

The DAFI Programme might cover the costs mentioned below in full or partially, 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. Registration and tuition fees are generally 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, or local travel allowances. 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. Adjustments may be made to the subsistence allowance during long vacations. Boarding or housing allowance covers the costs of housing on university campus, or a similar boarding outside the campus. In cases where 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.

Varying across countries and depending on the context and DAFI students' needs, DAFI programme includes access to mentoring support, participation in a DAFI students' association/club, social and cultural events, or language and skills trainings.

## 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 DAFI Programme is targeting socio-economically disadvantaged and academically deserving refugee students in the first country of asylum. Priority will be given to:

- students who had to interrupt their studies due to displacement, and who possess proof of previous university or college studies in their country of origin;
- qualified refugees who have no means of financial support for university studies, or who are excluded from application for scholarships available to nationals;
- refugee students who have proficiency in the language commonly taught at universities or colleges in their country of asylum;
- 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, these students may be supported to continue and/or complete their studies in their country of origin;
- students who choose shorter and inexpensive courses with high chances of employment (such as computer studies, paramedical and teaching professions, etc).

Other protection related aspects taken into account throughout the selection are:

- gender-balance
- individuals with special needs, such as physical disabilities;
- students' commitment to community support, voluntary work etc.

- fair distribution of scholarships among urban and camp-based refugees
- ethnic and religious diversity

Selection committees can agree/ prioritise p country specific selection criteria in accordance with the [DAFI Guidelines](#).

### Is the DAFI Programme limited to designated subjects of study or degrees?

The granting of scholarships is limited to students contemplating undergraduate courses of four, or fewer years' duration, with 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. On an exceptional basis, scholarships can be granted, if refugees had to interrupt their education in their country of origin, 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.

Universities selected by applicants must be accredited by the government of the host country, to assure a minimum academic standard and recognition of certificates obtained.

Applicants are encouraged to seek individual counselling and guidance about their choice of study at UNHCR offices or their respective DAFI partners. During the assessment, 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.

School and university certificates will be verified prior to the selection of candidates.

### How do I apply?

- 1) Check if there is a current DAFI Programme in your country of asylum.
- 2) Check if you meet the above-mentioned criteria.
- 3) Contact the respective UNHCR country office to receive a country specific application form.
- 4) Complete the application form and submit as indicated on the form.

NOTE: Please, 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 Programme 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?

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. Candidates who have to travel 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 partners in the education sector and staff of universities or other academic institutions, or the Ministry of Education or other government officials. Based on the interview performance and the documents provided by the applicant the Selection Committee takes the final decision. The number of newly accepted candidates depends on the number of DAFI scholarships 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 its partner organisation if language courses for refugees are offered 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 setting up a DAFI Programme are in place, a programme launch can be assessed and considered. DAFI Programme. However, note that the DAFI Programme only supports refugee students in developing countries. Meanwhile, you should take your own initiatives to identify alternative possibilities for scholarships with other organisations, institutions, foundations, embassies or the private sector.

### [I am a recent returnee who participated in an official repatriation programme led by UNHCR. Can I apply for a DAFI scholarship?](#)

In repatriation operations, and upon approval by Headquarters, returnees qualified to assume university education are eligible for a DAFI scholarship under the following conditions:

- A successful DAFI programme exists in the country of origin.
- The student has no other financial means or access to national scholarships programmes in the country of origin and can prove this.
- Living conditions in the country of origin (security, health systems, and academic institutions) must be rehabilitated and stable enough to ensure the successful completion of studies.
- Returning refugees face limited access to university education due to financial or legal restrictions.
- The student must have spent a minimum of two years in the country of asylum as registered refugee.

### [How does the DAFI Programme ensure accountability during assessment procedures?](#)

By its [policy and guidelines](#), the DAFI Programme sets principles and standards valid in all DAFI assessment procedures. The guidelines are designed in a protection-sensitive manner and take UNHCR's [Age, Gender and Diversity Policy](#) into account. Persons responsible for DAFI in UNHCR country offices or partner organisations are trained on DAFI procedures and constantly report back to UNHCR headquarter. During participatory assessments, accountability is ensured through the inclusion of various stakeholders such as the German Embassy, other NGOs or organisations providing scholarships, academic institutions, or national Ministries and the sponsored students themselves. In case applicants perceive some irregularity during their assessment, they are encouraged to report to [UNHCR headquarter](#).



## 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 scholarship 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 contributions are to be made 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 available for monitoring procedures.

Participation in DAFI-related workshops, clubs or events and activities supportive to host or refugee communities are highly appreciated. Students are strongly encouraged to pursue internships during semester breaks to improve employability.

The scholarship provides an exceptional opportunity to obtain knowledge, skills, and competencies and to create networks. The students remain their own agents: they have the responsibility to pro-actively engage in activities on campus, in the community, or in the DAFI Club. The creative and pro-active engagement of the students forms an important part of the visibility, attractiveness and dynamic of the programme.

### 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 employment after completion of studies?

UNHCR has 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 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](#).

General requests and concerns can be addressed to [UNHCR Education headquarter office](#).

Further information, including hints on **third country scholarships** (scholarships abroad), can be found in ANNEX III of the [UNHCR Education Brief](#). Please note that the information and check lists in the document are relevant to all displacement situations, not only for the crisis in Syria and Iraq.