

The Lutheran World Federation

# Scholarship Implementing Guidelines

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THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

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## Background and Purpose

Through the Scholarships Program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the LWF works alongside its member churches (MCs) in strengthening holistic mission and promoting participatory leadership, good governance, women's empowerment, gender justice and youth participation. The scholarships aim to help churches develop their capacity to serve effectively in their contexts. The program reaches back to the 1950s where first records of scholarships being offered to MCs can be found in the LWF archives. While the initial focus was laid on scholarships for theological education, the focus broadened over the years towards offering scholarships for diakonia and development.

Today, the scholarships help churches to acquire qualified personnel for both spiritual care and diaconal work through:

1. Theological scholarships for study/training programs in theology, and
2. Diaconal scholarships for study/training programs relating to the diaconal or development work of the churches. Possible fields of study may include health, education, human rights, development, food security, environmental management, sustainability, gender studies, etc.

The main criteria for a candidate's approval is the church's corresponding capacity need in areas of theology or diakonia/development. The program follows the concept of «Human and Institutional Capacity Development» (HICD). HICD means to not only enhance churches' human resources capacities, but to increase churches' overall institutional performance for an improved theological and diaconal ministry. The objective is to empower churches for sustained spiritual growth and the development of the wider community. The scholarships are therefore a means for long-term capacity building within the churches.

## Values and Principles

### LWF basic ethical commitments and standards

The LWF uplifts and commits itself to basic ethical convictions and standards which are to be lived out in the work of the LWF, including the scholarships. The LWF MCs, through the LWF Council, jointly approved Code of Conduct documents<sup>1</sup>, in which the following commitments are spelled out:

- Respect for the dignity and integrity of all human beings;
- Fair and just treatment of all, without discrimination, exploitation or harassment;
- Responsible stewardship in the exercise of power and use of financial and other resources;
- Respect for diversity, inclusiveness and participation, and transparency and accountability.

All employed by the organization and all involved in LWF programs or events are expected to comply with these commitments. For the LWF Scholarships Program, this includes church leaders and staff involved in the selection and pre-screening of potential scholarship candidates within the churches, LWF staff responsible for the Geneva screening process, the LWF Scholarship Committee members responsible for the approval of new scholarship holders, and the scholarship candidates themselves.

For the LWF Scholarships Program, upholding these commitments implies the following:

- Information on scholarship opportunities should be shared widely with and within the churches, including the grassroots levels, to ensure wide participation and inclusiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> See *LWF Staff Code of Conduct regarding Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Abuse of Power, Fraud and Corruption*, and *Code of Conduct for Participants in Events Organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF)*, approved by the LWF Council in June 2015.

- The screening and selection process within the churches, possibly LWF national committees, and in Geneva should be guided by clear and objective criteria made transparent to the applicants. All scholarship applicants should be treated fairly and with respect and dignity.
- The decision on endorsement and selection of scholarship candidates within the churches and/or LWF national committees should not be taken by one person only, but by an internal Committee assigned with this responsibility.
- The jointly agreed upon LWF gender and youth quota systems must be adhered to throughout the internal pre-screening processes within the churches and/or LWF national committees and the Geneva screening process.
- Candidates should be endorsed by the churches and approved by the LWF Scholarship Committee based on merits and the capacity needs of the applying church alone.<sup>2</sup> No private, professional or any other relationships should be misused for the endorsement or approval of scholarship candidates.
- The individual scholarship applicants should be informed regularly about the status and outcome of their application. The approved scholarship holders are to be included in any correspondence concerning their scholarship between LWF Geneva and their church.

## Zero tolerance policy

The processes of the LWF Scholarships Program imply unequal power relations between scholarship candidates on the one side, and endorsing churches and LWF Geneva on the other.

Viewed positively, power is the ability to act, especially in ways that respect and empower rather than dominate and oppress others. Those in positions of authority or trust are expected to carry this out in responsible and just ways that do not take advantage of others, especially those who are more dependent or vulnerable. Abuse of power is manifested in how those with less social power are treated physically, psychologically, emotionally, and/or sexually. Unequal power relationships provide the basis for sexual exploitation and abuse. Due to their unequal status, women and girls are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. However, it is important to recognize that boys are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>3</sup>

The LWF Code of Conduct documents embody zero tolerance with regards to sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, abuse of power, fraud and corruption in all of LWF activities and programs, including the LWF Scholarships Program.

For persons involved in implementing the LWF Scholarships Program, this means that:

- No money, goods or services (such as scholarship endorsement letters) shall ever be exchanged for any kind of sexual favors.
- No acts of fraud, corruption or unethical business practice, including conflict of interest, shall ever be committed.
- No people shall ever be accused falsely for harassment or exploitation of any kind for own advantages.

## Procedure

These guidelines are made public on the LWF website and during different LWF events where the LWF Scholarships Program is introduced. They are particularly shared at the beginning of each new application phase together with other relevant information. All member churches and LWF national committees are encouraged to widely share the guidelines together with other information about the scholarships at the beginning of each new application phase.

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<sup>2</sup> See Message from the Women's Pre-Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia: *Liberated by God's Grace – Are we fully liberated when our sisters (and brothers) are not? Our liberation is bound up together and is a gift of God*, p. 3, paragraph 19.

<sup>3</sup> See LWF Staff Code of Conduct regarding Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Abuse of Power, Fraud and Corruption, pp. 9-10.

Should the values, principles and commitments outlined in these guidelines be violated in the context of the scholarship application, approval and/or implementation process, any person concerned may be guided by the following procedures:

- The person concerned may approach relevant staff within his or her church and/or the respective LWF national committee to raise the issue for investigation. In case a Code of Conduct is in place within the church and/or the LWF national committee, the respective procedures and complaints mechanism shall apply.
- In case the concerned person feels the need to raise the issue with the LWF Geneva office, he or she may inform the LWF Geneva scholarships team via [scholarships@lutheranworld.org](mailto:scholarships@lutheranworld.org). Any issues brought to the attention of LWF Geneva shall be carefully assessed in consultation with the concerned person, with relevant LWF staff, and with the leadership of the respective church and/or LWF national committee.

## Scholarship Application and Approval Process

### Scholarship categories

The following three scholarship categories exist:

- *Single scholarship*: Only the proposed candidate is supported for a study or training program. The LWF will cover tuition and other study-related fees (such as fees for examination and library), a fixed book and medical allowance, as well as an adequate living allowance.
- *Single scholarship with family policy*: The same conditions apply as for the single program. In case the candidate has children and further support is needed, an additional allowance for each child below the age of 12 is considered upon request.
- *Group scholarship*: A group consisting of 2 up to 10 persons pursues the same field and level of training together for similar or common area of engagement, and at relatively lower cost. (For instance, a group of five candidates from one church pursues a Bachelor's degree in Nursing in order to work in the church hospital afterwards.) A group scholarship is considered as one scholarship.

### Scholarship duration

There are two types of scholarship depending on the type of training program and respective duration proposed:

- *Regular scholarship*: A candidate is approved for at least 1 year of support to take up or complete his/her proposed study program. For any candidate who has already started with his/her study program, this means that the study program has to last for at least 1.5 years at the time of application, hence 1 year at the time of approval.
- *Short-term scholarship*: A candidate is approved for a short-term training which may last up to 1 year. This may include a training course, workshop, exchange program or research project which responds to the needs of the applying church. It may not include a regular study program (such as a Bachelor's or Master's degree program). An application form and selection criteria are the same as for the regular scholarship.

### Eligibility

Only candidates who fulfill the following criteria are eligible to apply for an LWF scholarship:

- *Church affiliation of the candidates:* Only applications from active members of the LWF member churches are considered. All applications must be endorsed and submitted by the churches. No applications submitted by individuals without official church endorsement will be considered.
- *Nationality of the candidates:* Only candidates from developing countries according to the OECD list of DAC recipients are eligible for the diaconal scholarships. The theological scholarships are, in principle, open to candidates from all regions and countries.
- *Age limits:* The following age limits are in place, depending on the pursued degree and with certain exceptions, particularly for female applicants\*:

Degree	Maximum age at the time of application
Bachelor degrees	35
Master degrees	40
Doctorate	45
Post-doctoral/research	50

\*Special considerations:

- For candidates who are church employees at the time of application, these age limits may be exceeded upon special request.
- Relatively higher consideration is made for female candidates who exceed the age limits due to social and cultural factors which cause them to pursue studies later.
- *Scholarship history of the candidates:* If the proposed candidate received an LWF scholarship in the past, a gap of at least 2 years since the end of the previously supported study or training program must be met.

## Overview of the application and approval process

The LWF scholarships application and approval process follows the same procedure every year:

- *June: Kick-off of the application phase.* The information about the new application phase including updated application documents are sent to all LWF member churches and LWF national committees, and are shared across the LWF networks and channels. All church leaders are requested to share the information widely within their churches and wider communities, including the grassroots level.
- *July-September: Pre-screening processes in the churches.* Each church or LWF national committee is supposed to do a pre-screening of all individual applications through its internal committee or board. At the end of this process, each church prioritizes up to 5 candidates whose applications are being endorsed to the LWF Communion Office in Geneva.
- *1 October: Deadline for applications.* A maximum of 5 applications per church may be submitted.
- *October-November: Geneva screening process.* LWF Geneva reviews, pre-screens and short-lists applications.
- *December: Approval.* The candidates are presented to the LWF Scholarship Committee for approval. The Committee consists of LWF staff from different departments and staff from related agencies which support the scholarships program. The Committee takes final decision on approval of candidates.

- *January (of the following year): Information.* The LWF informs the churches and LWF national committees of the decisions taken by the LWF Scholarship Committee. Each church is responsible for informing the individual candidates about the outcome of their application.
- *January-December (of following year): Scholarship implementation.* Implementation of approved scholarships has to start within one year. For candidates who are already on training, the scholarship will be activated for the following semester. No financial assistance can be paid retroactively for previous academic years or semesters. Each church or national committee is responsible for effective reporting, communication and follow-up with its approved candidates and LWF Geneva.

## The Geneva screening process

Following the internal selection processes within the churches and submission of applications to the LWF office in Geneva, the applications are pre-screened by the LWF scholarship team based on the selection criteria (see below).

After first checks on completeness and eligibility, as well as follow ups with churches where required, pre-screening meetings of the LWF scholarship team take place with the respective Regional Secretaries. A short-list for each region is put together based on the selection criteria and available budget, and in accordance with the LWF gender and youth quotas.

This short-list is presented to the LWF Scholarship Committee during its annual meeting in December each year, together with other relevant information about the applications, recommendations from the pre-screening and funds allocation. The Committee takes the final decision on approval of scholarships for the following year. In cases where questions cannot be clarified during the LWF Scholarship Committee meeting, a mail vote may take place after the meeting on selected applications after additional information is received from the churches and/or candidates.

The specific role and responsibilities of the LWF Scholarship Committee are laid down in its Terms of Reference which are approved by the LWF General Secretary.

## Selection criteria

The following criteria guide the short-listing and approval of scholarships:

- *Human resource needs of the church:* A proposed study field and degree has to respond well to human resource needs of the church. The requesting church must demonstrate convincingly how a given application would meet a specific and crucial personnel need in its overall ministry in church and society.
- *Current and future position of the candidate:* All candidates are expected to have been in the service of the church and/or community as employees or volunteers. There has to be a clear commitment by the church to engage the candidate as employee or volunteer in an area related to the proposed training after completion of the candidate's studies/training.
- *Quality of the application:* The candidate must demonstrate convincingly his/her commitment, ability and motivation to pursue the training and to support the church afterwards (good educational and professional qualifications, recommendations and certificates, etc.).
- *Study place:* The LWF encourages candidates to study in their home country or home region. In case a study or training program abroad is proposed, valid reasons must be given in the application.

- *Gender and youth quota:* At least 40% of the approved candidates will be female; at least 20% will be youth below the age of 30 years. These quotas will not only apply to overall approvals, but also to each church and region.
- *Regional balance:* The LWF shall ensure that candidates from different regions, countries and churches are supported. Available budget shall be fairly distributed across applying churches.

## Implementation of Approved Scholarships

### Information and validity

Churches and/or LWF national committees as well as individual candidates will be informed in January each year about the decisions taken by the LWF Scholarship Committee in December. All approvals are subject to admission of the approved candidates to an appropriate institution for the proposed study or training program.

Each approved scholarship has to be activated within the year of approval, i.e. before 31 December each year. If the study program is not implemented within this time, the respective churches and candidates will be informed that the scholarship is cancelled. Exceptions may apply in cases where circumstances out of the control of the scholarship holder or the church prolong the admission process for new students (for instance, if the University is slow in granting admission or if the start date of the study program has to be postponed due to political instability in the country).

### Activation of scholarships

Together with the information letter, instructions are shared with the approved candidates and their churches and/or LWF national committees on how to activate the scholarship. A scholarship can only be activated once the following documents are received from the church and the candidate:

- Formal acceptance letter by the church;
- Acceptance letter or email by the candidate;
- Updated admission/enrolment letter including the exact duration of the full study or training program;
- Updated contact details of the candidate including his/her email address;
- Updated official fee structure by the study institution;
- A cost breakdown with additional costs authorized by the church (if applicable);
- Study results of previous semesters (if applicable);
- Information about travel and visa preparations (if applicable);
- Details of the bank account the scholarship should be paid to (bank account holder, account number, bank name and address, SWIFT code).

A scholarship is activated once the scholarship agreement (the so-called *Terms of Award*) has been signed by the LWF scholarship desk, the church and the approved candidate. The *Terms of Award* state the details, rules and regulations related to the respective scholarship.

### Changes after approval

Different changes may be requested by member churches and/or candidates after a scholarship was approved. For each requested change, an official request letter shall be submitted to the LWF scholarship desk by the respective member church. The following regulations guide whether such requests can be granted:



### **Changes relating to the approved scholarship budget**

An approved scholarship budget may be increased upon request. Legitimate reasons for increase of scholarship amounts may include:

- Increases in tuition and/or living expenses as compared to the time of application;
- Significant changes in currency exchange rates as compared to the time of application;
- Prolonged study duration due to political instability in the concerned country;
- Prolonged study duration due to sickness or convincing personal reasons of the candidate.

An increase of up to EUR 2,000 may be approved by the LWF Departmental Director. Any increase above EUR 2,000 has to be approved by the LWF Scholarship Committee.

### **Changes relating to the approved scholarship duration**

The approved scholarship duration may be increased upon request by the LWF scholarship team in case this does not imply an increase of the scholarship budget. In case a scholarship duration increase requires a budget increase, the same rules apply as outlined above.

### **Changes relating to the approved study or training program**

A proposed study or training program of an approved scholarship candidate may be changed upon request. For such a change, the following conditions must be met:

- If the initially approved scholarship was for theology, the newly proposed study or training program must be theological as well. If the initially approved scholarship was for diakonia/development, the newly proposed study or training program as well as the newly proposed future function of the candidate in church have to have clear development relevance.
- The candidate and the church demonstrate convincingly why the change is necessary. Legitimate reasons include, inter alia, lack of admission to the initially proposed study program or changes in the HICD planning of the requesting church.
- The church demonstrates convincingly how the candidate would serve the church after completion of the newly proposed study or training program.

A change of study or training program may be approved by the LWF Departmental Director. In case a study or training program change requires a budget increase, the same rules apply as outlined above.

### **Changes relating to the approved scholarship candidates**

An approved *single scholarship* cannot be transferred to another candidate. In case the initially approved candidate is not able to take up the proposed study or training program within the given timeframe, the scholarship is cancelled. It is not possible for the church to recommend another candidate to take up the already approved scholarship.

*Group scholarships* are approved by the LWF Scholarship Committee based on the gender ratio among the group members. Upon request of the church, the members of an approved group scholarship may be replaced by other candidates of the same gender and same level of qualifications in case the initially proposed members are no longer available. In case the church cannot find candidates with the same gender, any change to the gender ratio of a group scholarship must be approved by the responsible Departmental Director. Any replacement of group members must happen before the group scholarship is activated.

## Scholarship budgets

An overall scholarship budget is put together by the LWF scholarship team during the Geneva screening process based on the information provided in the applications. Each scholarship budget includes the following items:

### Tuition and other study-related fees

The LWF scholarship covers tuition fees as listed in the official fee structure of the proposed study or training institution. Other study-related fees listed in the fee structure, such as examination or library fees, will be covered

as well. In order to take into account possible increases in study fees, a 10% annual increase will be reflected in the scholarship budget at the stage of approval.

### Living allowances

The LWF will pay a living allowance appropriate for the respective context. This includes cost of accommodation (including electricity, water etc.), food, local transportation, and personal needs. In case the scholarship holder lives on campus, the LWF covers the costs as listed in the official fee structure of the study or training institution. In case these living costs are not listed in the fee structure, the church has to provide an annual cost breakdown for the candidate. This cost breakdown has to be officially confirmed by the church to ensure that the listed costs reflect the actual living costs in the respective country. The church is furthermore requested to ensure that living costs are comparable for candidates studying in the same country and/or city.

### International travels and visa

In cases where scholarship holders study abroad, the LWF will pay an allowance for one round trip per scholarship year from the place of departure in the home country to the place of study by the most direct route. This allowance is calculated by the LWF scholarship team based on online price comparison of economy flight, train or bus tickets.

For any theological scholarship recipients from high income countries including Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, round-trip travel is expected to be paid by the requesting church and/or the scholarship holder.

The LWF also covers cost for visa where required.

### LWF allowances

*Book allowances:* Fixed annual book allowances will be included in the scholarship budget depending on the level of study degree pursued:

Degree	Annual book allowance
Bachelor degrees	EUR 100
Master degrees	EUR 200
Doctorate	EUR 300

In case a higher book allowance is indicated in the official fee structure by the study institution, the higher allowance will be paid accordingly.

*Health allowance:* A fixed allowance of EUR 150 for the scholarship holders' health insurances will be provided annually. In case the official fee structure by the study institution includes a higher insurance scheme, the allowance will be paid according to the amount indicated in the fee structure.

*Family allowance:* In case a scholarship candidate receives a *single scholarship with family policy*, an additional annual allowance of EUR 250 for each child below the age of 12 will be included in the scholarship budget.

### Scholarship payments

Scholarship payments are made annually by the LWF scholarship team, based on the overall approved scholarship amount and the scholarship budget put together during the Geneva screening process.

The scholarship payments are transferred to the scholarship holders' personal bank account. Only in cases of group scholarships or where a transfer to the scholarship holder's personal bank account is not possible, the payments are made to the church's bank account. In any case, the respective church leadership shall be included in the correspondence informing about any scholarship payments.

A receipt of acknowledgement with a related bank slip has to be submitted by the scholarship recipient after each payment. In cases where the money is transferred to the church's bank account, the church has to provide the receipt and bank slip as well as an individual confirmation by the scholarship holder(s) that the scholarship payment was forwarded to them.

The first scholarship payment can only be released after the *Terms of Award* are signed (see above). Each subsequent annual payment will be released only after the following information and documents are provided to the LWF scholarship team:

- Receipt(s) of acknowledgement of previous payments;
- Updated official fee structure for the new academic year;
- Updated cost breakdown authorized by the church (if applicable);
- Study results of the previous academic year;
- Study report by the candidate covering the study and personal progress in the previous academic year.

## Reporting and Monitoring

Reporting and regular follow up with the churches and scholarship holders happens regularly during and after the scholarship period in order to monitor the progress and impact of the LWF Scholarships Program.

Each scholarship holder is required to submit the following reports:

- *During the scholarship period:* One study progress report per year, including updated grade reports.
- *At the end of the scholarship period:* One final report including final certificate, an assessment of the whole scholarship/study period, and an update on the future plans with the church.
- *Two years after completion of the scholarship:* One report on how the study or training program has helped the candidate in his/her work with the church.

In addition, the endorsing church is required to accompany the scholarship holder throughout the scholarship period, and to report on the candidate's engagement in church and society after completion of the scholarship:

- *During the scholarship period:* Regular and effective communication and follow-up with the approved candidates and the LWF scholarships team.
- *Two years after completion of the scholarship:* One report on how the church utilizes the candidate's skills and expertise gained during the scholarship period for positive impacts in the church and society.

## Past-Scholarship Engagement: Responsibilities and Accountability

After completion of the study or training period, each scholarship candidate shall take up the position as described in the *Terms of Award* signed by the candidate, the church and the LWF. As returning professionals the previous scholarship holders shall work for the churches or related institutions for a period of at least 2 years either as volunteers or employees, depending on the joint agreement as outlined in the *Terms of Award*.

Both the churches and candidates shall be held accountable to their commitments. In case the church fails to engage the returning professional on an employment or voluntary basis, or in case the trained person fails to serve his or her church after completion of the study or training program, the concerned church and/or candidate shall take full responsibility to pay back to the LWF the total cost of the scholarship.