

The Lutheran World Federation

Scholarship Implementing Guidelines

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THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

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Purpose of the Guidelines

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Scholarship Policy and Implementing Guidelines outlines the purpose and principles of scholarships granted by the Department for Theology, Mission and Justice (DTMJ) and implemented through LWF member churches (MCs) and provides detailed information on scholarship categories, selection criteria, application and approval processes, budgeting and roles and responsibilities related to implementation and accountability. The Policy and Implementing Guidelines also establishes operational procedures for scholarship coordination within the LWF Communion Office and sets a framework for collaboration between DTMJ and LWF member churches.

LWF Scholarship Policy and Implementing Guidelines apply to all scholarships granted by the Department for Theology, Mission and Justice (DTMJ).

The LWF Scholarship Implementing Guidelines are approved by the LWF Scholarship Committee and are reviewed and updated periodically to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.

Background and Purpose of LWF Scholarships

LWF has been supporting good quality education in member churches through the scholarship program since the 1950s. More than 4,000 women and men have been trained through the program. While the program initially focused on theological education, its scope has since expanded to include scholarships for diakonia and development.

In its current form the LWF Scholarships support theological and diakonia/development-oriented education that transforms both individuals, the life of the churches and the world in which we live. The scholarships are aimed to equip individuals with the essential knowledge, skills, and competence that strengthen churches' capacities to carry out their holistic mission, to address contextual challenges and make a meaningful impact in their communities. Through good quality education LWF aims to advance responsible theology, transformative leadership, critical thinking and the role of churches in the public sphere as advocates for justice and peace across the communion.

Since 2021 LWF has introduced new activities and platforms within the scholarship program to bring scholarship holders together across the communion. These platforms provide a space for joint reflection, exchange of ideas, and the development of leadership skills. Emphasis is placed on building lasting connections among scholarship recipients and alumni, further strengthening the network of leaders equipped to drive sustainable change in both their local communities and the wider world.

The LWF collaborates with its related organizations, such as Bread for the World, German National Committee and Felm, and others to create synergies and pool resources and expertise, thereby strengthening theological, diaconal, and development education as well as scholarship opportunities to the member 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 scholarships. The LWF MCs, through the LWF Council, jointly approved Code of Conduct documents¹, 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
- Promotion of gender justice
- Responsible stewardship and integrity in the exercise of power concerning people and the use of financial and other resources; and
- Respect for diversity, inclusiveness and participation, and transparency and accountability.

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.
- 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.² 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.

Member churches are requested to make these commitments known by all involved in scholarship application and implementation processes. 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.

¹ LWF Staff Code of Conduct, LWF Staff Code of Conduct, February 2023,
<https://www.lutheranworld.org/resources/document-lutheran-world-federation-staff-code-conduct>

² 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.

Zero tolerance policy

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 LWF activities and programs, including the LWF Scholarships Program.

Persons involved in implementing LWF Scholarships must never:

- sexually exploit or abuse any individual
- exchange money, employment, goods or services (including scholarship endorsement letters) for sexual favours
- Engage in nepotism (when those with power or influence misuse their positions to favor relatives or friends), fraud, corruption or unethical practices, including conflict of interest
- falsely accuse another person of harassment or exploitation for personal gain.

Reporting misconduct

If you are subjected to misconduct or witness misconduct during scholarship application or implementation processes, we encourage you to report the breach through the following link

<https://lutheranworld.org/who-we-are/accountability/reporting-misconduct>
or by email to codeofconduct@lutheranworld.org.

Your report will be received by the LWF confidential focal point at the Geneva Office for Human Resources. It will be treated with due confidentiality and according to our Complaints Handling Mechanism.

Scholarship Categories³

Areas of study

1. **Theology:** The aim of theological scholarships is to strengthen churches' theological identity and self-understanding and advance responsible theology. Theological education, which offers tools for developing distinctive perspectives and emphasizes the relevance of holistic mission, is crucial for countering polarizing and fragmentizing forces. Moreover, leadership formation is seen as an integral part of educational formation.
2. **Diakonia and development:** The aim of diakonia and development-oriented scholarships is to strengthen churches' capacity and awareness to advocate for justice and peace, serve and empower people in need, and uphold the dignity of every human being.
. The study programs are expected to be directly related to the following areas:
 - diaconal studies
 - education and health, medicine, social studies
 - food security, sustainable rural and urban development and agriculture, basic social services
 - climate change, political science and law, peace research and non-violent conflict transformation, migration, psychosocial support, counseling
 - empowerment and women's rights: gender studies, law
 - digital transformation: Information and communication technology

³ Scholarship Categories under Hélène Ralivao Fund in appendix 1

Regular and short-term scholarships

Depending on the duration of studies, i scholarships fall into two categories:

- **Regular scholarship:** A candidate is approved for at least 1 year and maximum of 4 years of support to take up or complete his/her proposed study program (Diploma, Bachelor, Master, PhD). For any candidate who has already started his/her study program, the study program must last for at least one and a half years at the time of application. Although scholarships may be granted for up to 4 years, they are re-evaluated at the end of every study year.
- **Short-term scholarship:** A candidate is approved for short-term training, which may last up to 1 year. Short-term scholarships provide church workers with specific skills and apply to the immediate daily work of the church/church related institutions. Short-term scholarships may include a training, online course, workshop, seminar, or research project related to leadership and organizational development, project management, gender awareness or food security, etc. Areas of study for short-term scholarships are more diverse while always corresponding to the needs of applying churches. Applications for short-term scholarships should be made at local institutions, training centers and online courses from recognized institutions.

Application forms and selection criteria are the same in both categories.

Scholarship Application and Approval Process

Eligibility

Each LWF member church is eligible to apply for 7 scholarships - 5 for regular and 2 for short-term scholarships. Applications can include studies in theology and/or diakonia.

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. No applications submitted by individuals without official church endorsement will be considered (see below "Church Endorsement").
- *Nationality of the candidates:* Only candidates from developing countries are eligible for the diaconal scholarships. The theological scholarships are 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

Church endorsement

All applications must be endorsed by the church (head office) of the candidate. The official church endorsement letter must be uploaded onto the review form of the LWF Scholarship online portal (see the procedure below). In the letter, the requesting church must demonstrate convincingly how a given application responds to strategic priorities and human resource needs of the church in the area of theology and/or diakonia and how the particular scholarship will benefit the church and the local communities. There must be a clear commitment by the church to engage the candidate as an employee or a volunteer in an area related to the proposed training after completion of the candidate's studies/training. Therefore, a description of the planned future role beyond very general terms is required.

Application

Each candidate is responsible for filling out the online application form and submitting the application with the required documents (see the procedure below). The LWF will provide "The step-by-step Guidance" to help candidates go through each phase of the application.

Procedure of the LWF scholarships application and approval process

- **July: Kick-off of the application phase:** Information about the new application phase, including updated application documents, is sent to all presiding bishops/ presidents of LWF member churches, church head offices, and LWF national committees, and is shared across LWF networks and channels. Presiding bishops, presidents, and church head offices are requested to disseminate this information widely within their churches and broader communities, including at the grassroots level.

The LWF Scholarship online portal link is only shared with presiding bishops and presidents of member churches and church head offices.

- **July-September: Pre-screening processes in the churches.** Each member church is requested to do a pre-screening of all applications through its internal committee or board. At the end of this process, each church selects up to 7 candidates (5 for regular and 2 for short-term scholarships) and shares the LWF Scholarship portal link with them.
- **August-September: Submission of applications.** The candidate will fill out the LWF online application form and submit the application with required documents.
- **1 October: Deadline for applications**

- **September: Request to endorsing churches to review application.** After LWF has received the submitted application, the request is sent to the endorsing church for review, using the LWF Scholarship portal. The official church endorsement letter must be uploaded onto the review form.
- **10 October: Deadline for church endorsements and church review**
- **October-November: Geneva screening process.** LWF Geneva reviews, pre-screens and short-lists applications.
- **December: Approval.** Candidates are presented to the LWF Scholarship Committee for approval. The committee comprises LWF staff from various units as well as representatives from related agencies. The Committee takes the final decision on the candidates to be approved for scholarships.
- **January (of the following year): Information.** The LWF informs the churches and LWF national committees of the decisions of the LWF Scholarship Committee. Each church is responsible for informing the candidates about the outcome of their applications.
- **January-December (of the following year): Scholarship implementation.** Implementation of approved scholarships must start within one year. For candidates who are already in training, the scholarships will be activated for the following semester. Financial support will not be provided retroactively for any academic years or semesters preceding the award of the scholarship.

The Geneva screening process

After the internal selection processes within the churches and the submission of applications to the LWF office in Geneva, the applications undergo a pre-screening by the LWF scholarship team in consultation with the respective regional secretaries. A short-list is developed in accordance with the selection criteria, available budget, and LWF gender and youth quotas.

The short-list is presented to the LWF Scholarship Committee at its annual meeting in December, accompanied by relevant application details, pre-screening recommendations, and proposed funds allocation. The Committee then makes the final decision on scholarship approvals for the following year.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the LWF Scholarship Committee are outlined in its Terms of Reference, which are approved by the LWF General Secretary.

Selection criteria⁴

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

- *Strategic priorities and human resource needs of the church:* A proposed study field and degree must respond to strategic priorities and human resource needs of the church in the area of theology and diakonia. The requesting church must demonstrate convincingly how a given application would meet a specific need and priorities and how the particular scholarship will benefit the church and the local communities beyond very general terms.
- *Current and future position of the candidate:* All candidates are expected to be serving the church and/or community as employees or volunteers. There must be a clear commitment by the church to engage the candidate as an employee or a volunteer in an area related to the proposed training after completion of the

⁴ Selection Criteria for Scholarships Hélène Ralivao Fund in appendix 2

candidate's studies/training. All applications must be accompanied by a description of the planned future role.

- *Motivation and commitment of candidate:* The candidate must demonstrate convincingly his/her commitment, ability and motivation to pursue the training. It is also required that the candidate demonstrates how the knowledge and skills gained through the proposed studies will benefit the church and/or local communities. The candidate must show strong commitment to support the church after completion of studies and to contribute to the life of church, and local communities.
- *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 provided in the application.
- *Gender and youth quota:* For each applying church, at least 40% of the candidates both in the category of theology and diakonia must be female and at least 20% must be youth (below the age of 30). At least 40% of the approved candidates will be female; at least 20% will be youth below the age of 30 years.
- *Regional balance:* The LWF shall ensure that candidates from different regions, countries and churches are supported. The available budget shall be fairly distributed across applying churches.

Scholarship budget

The LWF Scholarship program may offer either full or partial financial support, based on the needs expressed in the application, and the funds available. The proposed budget should be well prepared and include a proof of evidence. Budget items should be included in the local currency and converted into euros using the current exchange rate provided by <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/graphs/inforeuro.html>.

The scholarship team will review and adjust the budget if necessary. The candidate is requested to download the LWF budget form from the online application and upload the completed budget. The budget is prepared according to the following instructions.

Official fee structure of the institution

The LWF will cover tuition and other fees indicated in the official fee structure of the proposed study or training institution. The candidate prepares the budget breakdown according to the official fee structure.

Study related costs

Study related costs include accommodation, food, transportation, internet access, books and health insurance. In case study related costs are not listed in the fee structure of the study institution, the candidate must include an annual cost breakdown into the proposed budget. It is required that the candidate provides proof of evidence related to these costs (e.g., official invoices, receipts). The cost breakdown must 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 study-related 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. The LWF also covers costs for visa where required.

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.

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 must be activated within the year of approval. 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 beyond the control of the scholarship holder arise.

Activation of scholarships

A scholarship is activated once the scholarship agreement - *Terms of Award (ToA)* - has been signed by the LWF, the church and the approved candidate. To prepare the ToA, the candidate or the church is requested to submit the following:

- An acceptance letter or email from the church or the candidate
- Details of the bank account to which the scholarship payments should be made (including the bank account holder's name, account number, bank name, address, and SWIFT code)

Please note: Financial support will not be provided retroactively for any academic years or semesters preceding the award of the scholarship.

If there are any changes after the submission of the application, or if some information was missing, the following documents must be submitted to finalize the agreement:

- 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 budget breakdown (including official fee structure of the study institution; updated cost breakdown with proof of evidence, authorized by the church)
- Information about travel and visa preparations (if applicable)

The *Terms of Award* states the details, rules and regulations related to the respective scholarship and includes an agreement on the position the scholarship candidate will take up after completion of the study period.

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.

Each subsequent annual payment will only be released after the following information and documents have been provided to the LWF scholarship team:

- Receipt(s) of acknowledgement of previous payments, if not submitted earlier

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- Updated budget breakdown (including official fee structure of the study institutions for the new academic year; updated cost breakdown with proof of evidence, authorized by the church)
- Study results of the previous academic year
- Narrative study report covering the study and personal progress in the previous academic year

The first scholarship payment can only be released after the *Terms of Award* are signed (see above).

The scholarship payments are transferred to the scholarship holders' personal bank account. Only in cases 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 must be submitted by the scholarship recipient after each payment. In cases where the money is transferred to the church's bank account, the church must 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.

Reporting and Monitoring

Reporting and follow up with the scholarship holders happen regularly in order to monitor the progress and impact of the LWF Scholarships Program.

Each scholarship holder is required to submit an annual report to the LWF within 30 days of the end of each academic year. If this information is not provided, the LWF can suspend continuation of the scholarship.

The annual report includes:

- Narrative study report (submitted online)
- Updated grade reports.

If the studies are delayed for any reason, the student should inform LWF Geneva immediately. Explanation for the delay is compulsory.

A final report after completion of studies/scholarship period must be submitted within 30 days after completion of studies/scholarship period. The final report includes an official certificate and assessment of the whole scholarship/study period, and an update on the future plans with the church.

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.

Scholarship holder together with endorsing church is responsible to notify the LWF Communion Office of any withdrawal from or interruption of the agreed study or training program.

Changes after approval

Neither the student nor the church is allowed to make any changes to the approved scholarship without the prior approval of LWF Scholarship Committee or DTMJ director. 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

An increase of up to EUR 2,000 may be approved by the DTMJ Director. Any increase above EUR 2,000 must 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

Any changes to the study program will be approved by the DTMJ director only in exceptional cases. 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 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.

Accompaniment of scholarship holders

The LWF will support scholarship holders throughout the entire scholarship period. Regular online “Coming Together” meetings will be held four times per year to strengthen connections between LWF and the scholarship students and to provide a networking and peer support platform for the students. These meetings help reduce the risk of dropouts while offering continuous motivational support during the course of studies. Additionally, they provide LWF with valuable insights into the students’ progress and any challenges they may be facing.

Scholarship holders are expected to participate in LWF leadership formation activities, including leadership training and workshops.

Past-Scholarship Engagement: Responsibilities and Accountability

After completing the study or training program, each scholarship candidate is expected to assume the position described in the Terms of Award, as agreed upon by the candidate, the church, and LWF. They are encouraged to serve in their churches or related institutions for a minimum of two years - whether as volunteers or as employees - according to the joint agreement outlined in the Terms of Award. Both the churches and the candidates are accountable for making every effort to meet these commitments.

In addition, the endorsing church must submit a final report at the end of the scholarship period. This report should detail how the skills and expertise gained during the scholarship will be applied, as well as describe the position that the candidate will occupy within the church and the community. The report must be completed using the LWF online tool.

Appendix 1

Scholarship categories for scholarships under Hélène Ralivao Fund

The following two scholarship categories exist:

1) **Short courses** aimed at capacitating women in existing leadership (pastors, directors, trainers, etc.) with specific skills for transformational change. These could be courses in learning languages, leadership and organizational development, project management, gender awareness or advocacy training, etc. These scholarships should be applied to local institutions (relative to the applicant), or to training centers in their local area.

2) **Master or PhD programs** in one of several targeted areas:

- a) Theological disciplines: specifically, Biblical studies/hermeneutics, homiletics, systematic theology and practical theology/ethics (for women).
- b) Gender Studies/Gender Justice, and womanist and feminist theology (for women and men)

Appendix 2

Selection Criteria for Scholarships under Hélène Ralivao Fund

The LWF Hélène Ralivao Fund primarily provides scholarships for women studying theology in the African region of the LWF, and coordinates research and resource development on issues related to the intersection between theology, gender and leadership, that will serve women and men within the region and across the communion.

The portion of the fund used for direct scholarship targets depth and long-term impact. The rewarding of direct scholarships will contribute to the overall outcome of empowering individual women as theologians and leaders to sustaining systemic change in churches and their societies towards more inclusive, safe, and just communities of women and men.