

## I. Objectives of the Scholarship

The SBW Berlin scholarship for international students young people from abroad who are already socially committed and will use the skills they acquire during their studies and thereafter to develop social or non-profit projects at non-profit organizations or social institutions in their home countries.

SBW Berlin awards scholarships based on professional qualifications, personal suitability, and financial need<sup>1</sup> to pursue a bachelor's or master's degree program at a university or a university of applied sciences (Fachhochschule) in Berlin or Potsdam. In principle, all scientific, social, and artistic disciplines can be funded.

In special cases, the scholarship may support a vocational training in Berlin or Potsdam.

Interested applicants are required to have been working with a non-profit organization or social institution in their home countries. This is an important prerequisite for the SBW Berlin Scholarship. Highlighted here is the applicants' previous social commitment and their general motivation therefor. After the study program or the funding period ends, scholarship recipients continue their social projects within the non-profit organization or social institution and further develop their projects on site in their respective home country.

The intention to pursue their professional goals for at least 18 months after the end of the funding period or graduation in their respective home countries or to engage in non-profit work in Germany, considering however a notarized repayment plan<sup>2</sup>, and to continue participating in regular meetings with SBW Berlin and discussing their professional development (project and job) are other important requirements for the SBW Berlin scholarship for international students.

Beginning with the funding period, SBW Berlin supports all scholarship recipients to work towards their professional goals. This is done through practically implementing the study programs' content into the social projects where possible and through collaborating with the non-profit organization or social institution in the scholarship recipients' home countries.

The scholarship does not cover any funding in other German federal states or abroad.

Any funding after the regular study or vocational training period has ended is unattainable.

## II. SBW Berlin's Expectations for Applicants and Incoming Scholarship Recipients

The SBW Berlin scholarship program supports scholarship recipients during their studies in Berlin or Potsdam but there are also expectations of SBW Berlin associated with it.

Our scholarship program focuses on the scholarship recipients' social commitments and the development of non-profit/social projects in their respective home country. In cooperation with a local non-profit organization or social institution, the scholarship recipients work on their own projects, which they present during the application process by submitting a project description.<sup>3</sup> All projects aim to support people in need and the non-profit or social institution's objectives and have a greater benefit for society, in general.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on financial need and other selection criteria see point VI.

<sup>2</sup> A notarized acknowledgement allows any debt collection starting from the first due installment payment without taking further legal action. For more information on the repayment plan refer to Point XI.

<sup>3</sup> The guidelines for the project description are posted on the SBW Berlin's website.

While participating in our scholarship program, all scholarship recipients attend additional workshops at SBW Berlin, prepare project reports, and give lectures or presentations on their projects. All scholarship recipients benefit from SBW Berlin's consistent mentorship for example in form of regular discussions about the projects etc.

It is therefore expected that applicants prove their motivation for non-profit/social work and their collaboration (previous and henceforth) with a non-profit organization or social institution in their respective home countries in the form of a letter of recommendation from this non-profit organization or social institution.<sup>4</sup> To support the application for the SBW Berlin scholarship, it is necessary for the non-profit organization or social institution to explain how the applicant's chosen course of study and the social project support the non-profit or institute's general direction and objectives and outline the applicant's responsibilities within the organization/institution so far and henceforth (e.g., after graduation). The aim is therefore to ensure that there will be a lively exchange between the scholarship recipients, the non-profit organization or social institution in the scholarship recipients' home countries and SBW Berlin during and after the sponsorship or studies.

If scholarship recipients do not intend to return to their home countries after the end of the sponsorship or the end of their studies, the scholarship recipients must repay the scholarship. However, the previously enclosed and notarized repayment plan for 12 months, starting 3 months after the scholarship recipient's graduation or end of the funding period, can pose a major challenge and deep burden. It is therefore important to note that there could be cheaper alternatives if applicants and scholarship recipients intend to stay in Germany from the start.

All scholarship recipients work proactively on their projects during the funding period and can prove this at any time. It can be expected to spend between 2 and 8 hours a week working on the social project.

In addition, good academic performance is expected.<sup>5</sup>

### III. Who can apply?

- Foreign nationals, whose home countries appear to have a particular need for development assistance<sup>6</sup>
- Holders of a student visa for Germany or a residence permit with the purpose of taking up or carrying out a course of study in Germany

Students whose studies in Germany are already being funded by another scholarship are not eligible to apply.

An exception to this rule is assistance under the Federal Education Assistance Act (BAföG). In this case, the amount of the scholarship is adjusted according to the BAföG allowance.

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<sup>4</sup> The letter of recommendation should outline reasons for the chosen course of study, the connection between the organization or institute's direction/objectives and the social project, and the applicant's responsibilities within the non-profit organization or social institution (previously and henceforth, e.g., after graduation).

<sup>5</sup> It is expected to have a grade point average of at least 2.0 on the German grading scale each semester.

<sup>6</sup> We believe that this applies particularly to many countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and South America due to their current economic and/or social situation.

## IV. Application Requirements

Applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Between 18 and 30 years old
- Professional or volunteer experience in the non-profit/social sector (proven by a social institution's letter of recommendation)
- Able to prove that they have not stayed in Germany for more than 18 months before the application<sup>7</sup>
- Qualification for university entrance
- Intention to work in their country of origin for at least 18 months after graduation or to engage in non-profit work until the repayment plan has been fulfilled
- Able to prove a relatively low net income<sup>8</sup>
- Average grades corresponding to a German grade point average of at least 2.0.<sup>9</sup>
- No first-degree family members who reside permanently in Germany
- Application before the start of their university education or fully enrolled in the first, second or max. third semester at a state-recognized university (in Germany or abroad) or application for a master's degree shortly before or after obtaining a bachelor's degree

Applications which do not meet all the requirements stated above cannot be considered.

## V. Deadlines and Application Documents

**SBW Berlin does not charge any application or processing fees.**

When applying for the scholarship, proof of the applicant's social commitment in the form of a letter of recommendation from a non-profit organization or social institution is required. The non-profit organization or social institution submits the letter on behalf of the applicant as PDF to [application@sbw.berlin](mailto:application@sbw.berlin). After carefully reviewing the letter, outstanding prospects will be granted access to the application form.

Only complete applications can be considered. Applicants must submit at least the following documents:

- Letter of recommendation from a non-profit organization or social institution or one of SBW Berlin's partner organization (by email)
- Application form (A link will be shared with outstanding applicants.)
- Project description (two to five pages)

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<sup>7</sup> In this case, the financial need and the cooperation with an organization in the application's home country are especially carefully reviewed.

<sup>8</sup> The total household income of the applicants does not exceed the average income which has been officially stated for their home country. The income of all household members and all sources of income of the family and/or the applicant (e.g., from employment, business activities, property, child benefit or pensions) will be considered.

<sup>9</sup> To convert the average grade: Subtract your received grade from the highest possible grade of the foreign grading scale and divide this by the difference of highest possible grade minus the minimum grade to pass multiplied by 3 and add 1; or mostly B+ and higher; Upper Second Class; 80% or higher.

- Qualification for university entrance
- Information about the net household income<sup>10</sup>
- Copy of the last school or university certificate that shows the grade point average and a grade overview
- Copy of the highest academic degree (high school diploma or university certificate) that shows the grade point average and a grade overview.

If available, copies of the following documents should also be included:

- Admission to a university or university of applied sciences (Fachhochschule) in Berlin or Potsdam
- Internationally recognized language certificate for the language in which your studies will be taught<sup>11</sup>
- All already obtained university certificates and records of achievements (graded and ungraded)
- All previous work, training, apprenticeship and internship certificates and references

We recommend to all applicants to submit the following additional documents, which are not mandatory:

- one or two letters of recommendation from professors, schoolteachers, employers, etc.
- evidence of the net household income<sup>12</sup>

The application and all enclosed certificates and supporting documents must be submitted in German or English. If the original document was issued in another language, we also ask for a translation into German or English.

Non-certified copies and simple translations are sufficient for the application.

After the successful completion of the selection process, certified copies are sometimes required in the verification process.

## VI. Selection Criteria

In addition to a proven collaboration between the applicant and a non-profit/social organization based in the applicant's home country, the following criteria are decisive for the selection of incoming scholarship recipients:

**In need of assistance** are all applicants who meet the requirements of § 1 BAföG (German Federal Education Assistance Act). The individual amount of funding will depend on the personal circumstances of each applicant.

In need of assistance are also applicants whose total household income does not exceed the average income which has been officially stated for their home country. The income of all

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<sup>10</sup> This information is also already included in the application form and does not have to be submitted as a separate document. Please submit appropriate evidence such as pay slips, pension notices, and/or bank statements.

<sup>11</sup> If an official language certificate is not included in the application documents, the certificate must be submitted by the verification process latest.

<sup>12</sup> If the application only included information on the net household income, proof of evidence must be submitted during the verification processes.

household members and all sources of income of the family and/or the applicant (e.g., from employment, business activities, property, child benefit or pensions) will be considered.

**Eligible** are all applicants whose intellectual abilities, as substantiated by the application documents and during the interview, justify the expectation that the applicant will easily meet the performance requirements of the funded studies and degree.

**Worthy of assistance** are all applicants whose personality and social commitment suggest that they will achieve the goals of this scholarship during and after their studies in cooperation with a non-profit organization or social institution in the home country of the scholarship recipient.

In addition, the applicant's non-profit/social project will be evaluated.

The granting of any additional, financial resources to implement the project will be decided case-by-case.

## VII. Selection Process

During the first phase of the selection process, the letter of recommendation from the applicants are carefully reviewed. A decision is then made as to whether applicants will be granted access to the application portal. The link will be shared via email.

During the second phase of the selection process, the application form, the applicant's grades, and financial situation are carefully reviewed.

During the third phase of the selection process, an interview or video conference is conducted with candidates who, after examining the documents, have been deemed suitable for the scholarship program. During the interviews candidates may be assigned to solve a practical problem. In addition, the proposed social or non-profit project and its objectives can be discussed to define the first six months' timeline. The project can be either specified by SBW Berlin or applicants can present their own projects.

Then the final selection is made.

## VIII. Verification Process

If they have not already been submitted, the following documents will be required after the selection in the so-called verification process:

- Copy of your passport with a current passport picture
- Copy of your student visa for Germany or copy of a residence permit with the purpose of taking up or carrying out a course of study in Germany
- Evidence of the net household income
- Evaluation report from Uni-Assist or other evidence converting grades to the German grading system
- Copy of your latest school or university certificate with a grade overview if another certificate has been issued (since submitting the scholarship application)

- Copies of all university certificates and performance records that you have obtained so far (graded and ungraded)<sup>13</sup>
- Copies of your study-specific work, training, and internship certificates
- Legalization of your highest academic qualification (university-entrance diploma from school or university diploma like the Bachelor certificate) if this certificate is from a foreign institution
- Copy of an internationally recognized language certificate for the language in which your study program will be taught.

During the verification process, SBW Berlin and the candidate agree upon the final details of how to conduct and oversee the mentored project to become binding. The project description will be part of the scholarship contract thereafter.

## IX. Scholarship Benefits

For the duration of the scholarship (max. funding period is equivalent to the regular period of the study program), SBW Berlin covers necessary living expenses of the scholarship recipients. The scholarship includes:

- a furnished room in shared student flats in Berlin
- cost-of-living allowance currently in the amount of 480 Euro per month,<sup>14</sup>
- tuition fees<sup>15</sup>
- possibly also a travel contribution for the journey to Berlin before the start of the course of study and for the journey home after successful completion of the course<sup>16</sup>

First payments can only be made after the scholarship recipient has moved into the shared student apartment. Part-time jobs are generally not approved by SBW Berlin.

Applicants who receive benefits under the Federal Education Assistance Act (BAFöG) can only be granted benefits that are not counted as income according to §21 Para. 3 No. 2 BAFöG. The cash value of the accommodation granted must be taken into account when calculating the allowance. As a rule, these applicants only receive a “flat rate” or book allowance in the amount of maximum 100 Euro per month.

## X. Duration of our Assistance

The duration of funding is at least 30 days up to a maximum of 48 months. The respective standard period of study is decisive. Funding is granted on a periodic base, usually for the upcoming semester.

Before the end of each semester, it is determined whether further funding is justified. The

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<sup>13</sup> Candidates who apply for a scholarship to pursue a master's degree must also provide certified copies of all university certificates and performance records from their bachelor's program.

<sup>14</sup> This amount could be different in the case BAFöG was granted.

<sup>15</sup> If tuition fees exceed the national average, a deductible can be expected.

<sup>16</sup> The budget for trips within Europe is max. 500 Euro and for travel outside of Europe max. 1,000 Euro.

continuation of the selection criteria, the successful completion of most academic courses in the last sponsored semester, and proof of the social project's proactive development (e.g., in the form of a project report) are considered.

Any funding after the regular study period has ended is unattainable.

We have a total of 20 scholarship places. Each semester, only as many scholarships can be awarded as there are vacancies.

SBW Berlin can terminate any funding in the event of two failed compulsory examinations or two postponed examinations. The repeat exam must be taken in the next possible examination period, which the university or the training center must confirm. Another reason for ending the funding is the failure to meet the target agreements set for the social/non-profit project and when the funds are not used as intended. In these circumstances, there will be a repayment agreement that will be notarized. Consequently, the scholarships or the monetary benefits previously provided by SBW Berlin must then be repaid in 12 monthly instalments without interest, starting 3 months after the end of the funding period or the standard period of study.

## **XI. Return to the Home Country and Repayment Obligation**

**The SBW Berlin scholarship program usually provides for a limited stay in Germany, which is limited to the duration of your studies. After the end of the funding or the end of the course, scholarship recipients have two options:**

- a. They return to their respective home countries<sup>17</sup>, develop, and implement their projects locally for at least 18 months in cooperation with the local non-profit organization or social institution. In this case, there is no obligation to repay the grant.**
- b. They remain in Germany after the end of their studies or funding, but the financial benefits of the SBW Berlin scholarship must be repaid. The previously notarized repayment plan in 12 monthly installments begins 3 months after the end of the study or funding period.**

## **XI. Final Provisions**

Scholarship recipients must inform SBW Berlin immediately as soon as the circumstances that formed the basis of the funding change.

They also inform SBW Berlin about their graduation and submit a copy of their diploma or degree certificate.

In addition, during the courses of study, all scholarship recipients must unprompted by SBW Berlin submit their current university transcript and/or performance records (graded and nongraded) after each semester.

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<sup>17</sup> The return to the scholarship recipient's home country will be no later than the end of the month following the graduation. The costs of the return flight will be covered by SBW Berlin. Scholarship recipients will not receive any financial support after their graduation.

# Guidelines and Criteria for the SBW Berlin Scholarship for International Students



Further rights and obligations of the scholarship recipients are listed in the scholarship contracts and these contracts may differ slightly from one another.