

Awarding Guidelines of the Executive Board of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences for the *Deutschlandstipendium*

Dated 21 March 2024

Acting on the basis of Section 16 (1) of the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia (*HG NRW*) from 16 September 2014 (GV. NRW. 2014 p. 547), which originally entered into force on 1 October 2014, was last amended by Article 2 of the Act from 5 December 2023 (GV. NRW. P. 1278) and entered into force on 16 December 2023, and in conjunction with the National Scholarship Programme Act (*Stipendienprogrammgesetz*, or *StipG*) from 21 July 2010 (BGBl. 2010 p. 957), last amended by Article 74 of the Act from 29 March 2017 (BGBl. I p. 626), as well as with the Implementation Regulations for the Scholarship Programme Act (*StipV*) from 20 December 2010 (BGBl. I p. 2197), last amended by Article 2 of the Ordinance from 29 November 2011 (BGB. I p. 2450), the Executive Board of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences enacted the following Awarding Guidelines on 16.04.2024:

Section 1 Purpose of the *Deutschlandstipendium*

The *Deutschlandstipendium* ("Germany Scholarship", hereinafter: "Scholarship") serves to encourage and support both students of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences who have demonstrated excellent academic performance as well as incoming students for whom excellent academic performance can be expected due to their history prior to application.

Section 2 Eligibility

(1) All currently enrolled students at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences who have not exceeded the standard period of study for their degree programme as well as all incoming students enrolling at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in the semester following their scholarship application are eligible for a Scholarship. Scholarship recipients must be enrolled at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences during their scholarship period.

(2) The Scholarship has no negative impact for students receiving German federal education assistance ("BAföG"), as it is a merit-based academic allowance that neither stipulates a specific use nor exceeds the monthly limit of 300 EUR for financial assistance of this kind (see Section 21 (3) sentence 1 number 2 *BAföG*, and Section 23 of its amending act *BAföGÄndG*). It is thus excluded from income calculations for *BAföG* eligibility.

(3) Students currently receiving a merit-based scholarship consisting of more than 30 EUR per month are ineligible for a Scholarship.

Section 3

Rights and obligations

- (1) Scholarships are awarded based on available funding and in accordance with these Awarding Guidelines.
- (2) Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences reserves the right to annul Scholarships in the event of a loss of funding.
- (3) By accepting a Scholarship, recipients agree to:
1. immediately inform Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences of any changes affecting their eligibility status within the meaning of Section 2;
 2. participate in evaluations of their academic performance and of the scholarship programme itself; and
 3. provide, voluntarily and without request, all information and documentation required to verify their continued eligibility status. This includes:
 - a) A report detailing the recipient's academic progress as well as any relevant (extra)curricular activities.
 - b) Current transcripts.
 - c) Proof of any academic achievements, acquired knowledge or skills, or relevant and noteworthy circumstances.
- (4) Furthermore, by accepting a Scholarship, recipients formally declare:
1. their willingness to participate in scholarship-related events; and
 2. their agreement with these Awarding Guidelines.

Section 4

Type and amount of funding

- (1) The availability of Scholarships depends on the amount of funding secured by Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.
- (2) As a rule, Scholarships are disbursed in monthly instalments of 300 EUR.
- (3) For recipients in their first four semesters of study, Scholarships are granted for a period of one year. The funding period begins in winter semester and ends with the conclusion of the subsequent summer semester. For recipients in their fifth semester of study or later, Scholarships are granted up to the maximum period set forth in subsection (4).
- (4) The maximum scholarship period is generally limited to the standard period of study for the recipient's degree programme. However, extensions beyond this limit are possible if a recipient's studies are delayed for certain justified reasons. In general, the following situations would justify an extension:
1. Pregnancy or caring for children within the meaning of Section 25 (5) *BAföG*.
 2. A disability or debilitating illness.

3. Caring for immediate family members officially recognised as care-dependent by the German Medical Service of the Health Insurers (MDK) (a medical certificate from a doctor is also acceptable in some cases).
4. Stays abroad relevant to the recipient's studies. This applies only to semesters abroad at a university outside of Germany or other stay abroad as part of an official exchange programme.

Proof of the justifying circumstances must be provided without delay.

(5) In the case of pregnancy, scholarship funding will continue through the maternity protection period defined by Section 3 of the German Maternity Protection Act (*MuSchG*).

(6) The Scholarship does not constitute an employment relationship, nor is it subject to mandatory social insurance contributions, as it is not considered compensation within the meaning of Section 14 of the German Civil Code, Volume IV (*SGB IV*). The Scholarship is also considered tax-free by virtue of Section 3 no. 44 of the German Income Tax Law (*EStG*).

Section 5

Submitting an application

(1) Scholarships are awarded solely via an official application process. Applications must be submitted on time, in the proper form and with all required documents during an official application window that was announced on the homepage of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences. In particular, applications must be submitted via the official online portal. If an application cannot be submitted online for specific and justifiable reasons, it may instead be submitted directly to the Office of the President of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences by post or email.

(2) Application deadlines are announced on the homepage. In addition, students will be notified of application periods via their university email accounts and social media channels of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

Section 6

Application process

(1) Applicants are only eligible to apply for a Scholarship if they:

1. have met all admission requirements to study at HSRW; and
2. are currently enrolled at or will be enrolling at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences in the semester following application.

(2) Applicants must still be in their original degree programme; students who have changed degree programmes are ineligible to apply.

(3) All applications must include the following:

1. Completed and signed application form (including the consent agreement at the end of the form).
2. Current résumé/CV.
3. Letter of motivation.

4. A copy of the applicant's university entrance qualification, i.e. German "Abitur" certificate or other document confirming their eligibility to study at a German university (requirement for undergraduate applicants in the first semester or later).
5. Bachelor's degree certificate with a final grade for the degree programme (requirement for postgraduate applicants in the first semester).
6. Current transcripts from HISinONE showing the applicant's academic performance to-date (requirement for all students in their second semester of study or later).
7. Internship certificates and/or work references (if available).
8. Documentation for other relevant qualifications, (extra)curricular activities and/or unique personal, social or family-related circumstances.

(4) Incorrect or incomplete applications – whether due to missing documents, improper form or late submission – will be automatically rejected. Submitted applications will be kept at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences for a period of six months after rejection notices have been issued before being destroyed. Documents must be submitted as copies, not originals. Documents in languages other than German or English must be submitted as notarised German translations. Documents that do not comply with these requirements may be excluded from consideration during the selection process.

Section 7

Selection process

(1) Scholarships are awarded by a selection committee formed by the Executive Board of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences. This committee will include:

1. (with voting power:)
 - a) the President;
 - b) the Vice-President of Studies, Teaching and Continuing Training;
 - c) the Vice-Dean of Studies or a Link Professor from each faculty;
 - d) one member of the Student Parliament (StuPa); and
 - e) one member of the General Student Committee (AStA).
2. Acting as advisors without voting power, the committee will also include:
 - a) one representative of the Welcome Centre;
 - b) one representative of the Career Service; and
 - c) the Equal Opportunities Representative.

The members no. 1 a) to c) will be represented by their designated representatives. The members no. 1 d) and e) will be appointed by the Executive Board to represent their specific governing body.

(2) The term in office for student members of the selection committee is one year. The term in office for all other members is two years. Reappointment is permissible.

(3) The selection committee is chaired by the President. The deputy chairperson is the Vice-President of Studies, Teaching and Continuing Training; Section 7 (1) sentence 3 does not apply to the chairperson / deputy chairperson. The selection committee has a quorum when at least half of its members with voting power (Section 7 (1) no. 1) are present. Decisions are made by simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the chairperson has the casting vote.

(4) The selection committee may appoint additional members from the private donors to act as advisors.

(5) The selection committee can decide which proportion of available scholarships should go to undergraduates or to postgraduates.

(6) Scholarships are awarded based on a grading system using primary and secondary criteria.

a) Primary criteria:

aa) Applicants must have a regular and gapless study history to be eligible for a Scholarship. In particular, both undergraduate and postgraduate applicants must have earned at least 20 credits (ECTS) in each semester leading up to the application. Credits transferred from previous periods of study at other universities within the meaning of Section 63a HG NRW are excluded.

bb) The applicant's academic history thus far. Here, applicants are given an initial grade depending on their status and academic history:

- First-semester undergraduates: the final grade for the applicant's university entrance qualification.
- Second-semester undergraduates: the grade point average for all examinations in the previous semester.
- First-semester postgraduates: the final grade for the applicant's undergraduate degree programme.
- Second-semester postgraduates: the average grade for all examinations in the previous semester.
- All students in the third-semester of study or later: the grade point average for all examinations completed thus far.

Note that the average grade for completed examinations refers to the grade point average calculated in HISinOne.

b) Secondary criteria:

aa) Noteworthy achievements, awards or distinctions including, for example, achievements in conjunction with a university entrance qualification or during previous gainful employment (of at least 1 year) or a successfully completed vocational training programme (of at least 18 months); internships (of at least 6 months); academic publications; acquiring more credits (ECTS) than the recommended minimum for the applicant's curriculum.

bb) Extracurricular activities, including, for example, volunteer work for public or private organisations; a voluntary social or ecological year (*FSJ/FÖJ*); civil service; involvement in religious communities; involvement in (higher education) politics/student government (min. 1 semester); other cultural or social engagement.

cc) Special personal or family-related circumstances or hardships, including chronic illnesses, caring for/raising children and caring for immediate family members with special care needs.

For detailed information, see the annex: "Secondary criteria for the application and selection process for a *Deutschlandstipendium* at HSRW".

(7) An applicant's initial score, as derived from the relevant primary criterion, can be improved via secondary criteria:

- For circumstances relating to subsection (6b) aa): generally up to 0.2 additional points.
- For circumstances relating to subsection (6b) bb): generally up to 0.2 additional points.
- For circumstances relating to subsection (6b) cc): generally up to 0.2 additional points.

The more recent the circumstances, the more heavily they are weighted. Thus, secondary criteria can potentially improve an applicant's initial score by up to 0.6 points.

(8) The primary and secondary criteria are used to calculate an applicant's final selection grade: any points accrued from secondary criteria will be *subtracted* from the applicant's initial score in accordance with the German academic grading scale. For applicants with transcripts from HISinOne, the final selection grade will also be categorised according to the distribution of grades in their degree programme. This process produces a ranking of all eligible applicants. For first-semester applicants, i.e. those applying on the basis of a university entrance qualification or a bachelor's degree, separate ranking categories will be generated based on the final grade of the university entrance qualification or the bachelor's degree, respectively. Scholarships will be awarded according to the final ranking of applicants produced by the selection process. In the event of a tie, a detailed individual assessment will be conducted.

Section 8 Awarding of Scholarships

(1) The Executive Board is responsible for scholarship awarding decisions.

(2) Decisions will be announced via approval letters. These letters will outline the scholarship period, duration and total funding amount. Scholarship winners must formally accept their scholarships in writing before the deadline.

Section 9 Scholarship extensions

(1) Recipients who first received a Scholarship in their first or second semester of study can apply for an extension by submitting a new application via the normal procedure. These extension applications must be submitted in the recipient's second or third semester, whichever is applicable, before the deadline per Section 5 (2). Applications must include the documents specified in Section 6 (3) no. 1-3 and 6-8.

(2) Recipients in their fourth semester of study or later are eligible for an extension up to the limit set forth in Section 4 (4) if:

1. the extension application is submitted properly and on time;

2. the applicant has submitted documents verifying their academic performance in accordance with Section 3 (3) no. 3; and

3. the applicant has maintained or improved their academic performance over the scholarship year.

Academic performance is considered to have dropped if an applicant's current GPA (per HISinOne) has worsened by 0.5 grade points or more over the scholarship year. In the event of repeated drops in academic performance, extensions are only possible if the recipient's current GPA is within 0.8 grade points of their GPA at the time of initial application.

(3) If an extension is granted in accordance with subsection (2), the annual performance evaluation requirement is considered fulfilled.

Section 10

Scholarship withdrawal and revocation

(1) Scholarships awarded on the basis of false or incomplete information will be revoked and the recipient held liable for all scholarship payments disbursed thus far.

(2) Scholarships will be revoked for recipients who do not comply with the reporting obligations in Sections 3 (3) and (4) as well as Section 8, or for recipients who are already receiving an additional scholarship in violation of Section 2, or if Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences determines that the merit-based eligibility requirements within the meaning of Section 6 are no longer present. Retroactive revocations are possible, particularly in the event of double-funding violations.

(3) Repayment obligations will remain regardless of whether the recipient has fully or partially spent the disbursed funds.

Section 11

Termination

(1) Scholarships will be automatically terminated at the end of any month in which a recipient:

1. completes their final graduation requirement;
2. withdraws from Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences;
3. changes degree programme at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences; or
4. is deregistered from Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

(2) If a recipient enrolls at a different university during their scholarship period, the Scholarship will be disbursed until the end of the current semester in accordance with the existing scholarship agreement. A "semester" is defined as the academic period observed at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences (6 months).

(3) Scholarships that were terminated prematurely will be awarded to the next candidate in line based on the selection committee's ranking list and disbursed until the end of the original recipient's scholarship period. Recipients of a prematurely terminated Scholarship are not entitled to a full scholarship period within the meaning of Section 4 (3).

Section 12

Miscellaneous

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences reserves the right to:

1. adjust or amend these Awarding Guidelines of the Executive Board of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences for the *Deutschlandstipendium*; and
2. report any violations or fraudulent activities in connection with a Scholarship application to relevant authorities and recover any unduly disbursed funds using all available legal means.
3. The rules and provisions of the Scholarship Programme Act (*StipG*) and its accompanying implementation regulations (*StipV*) apply as well.

Section 13

Entry into force

(1) These Awarding Guidelines will enter into force after enactment by the Executive Board.

(2) Upon entering into force, the previous Awarding Guidelines of the Executive Board of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences for the *Deutschlandstipendium*, dated 23 November 2022, will expire.

Annex

Secondary criteria for the application and selection process for the *Deutschlandstipendium* at HSRW

The selection committee uses secondary criteria in order to produce a final ranking of scholarship applicants. These criteria are divided into three categories:

Category 1) Special achievements, awards and distinctions

Category 2) Extracurricular activities

Category 3) Special personal or family-related circumstances

Applicants' initial scores, derived from the relevant primary criterion, can be improved by up to 0.2 points for each category. The selection committee will define which criteria are worth 0.2 points, 0.1 points, or zero points. Applicants can thus improve their scores by a maximum of 0.6 points. Circumstances submitted for consideration should have occurred within the last 3 years.

The three aforementioned categories include the following criteria:

Category 1) Special achievements, awards and distinctions

Criteria:
<p>Awards and distinctions bestowed by institutions at the international, national or transregional level, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awards and distinctions earned in connection with an applicant's university entrance qualification, e.g. "Sheffelpreis", "Karl-von-Frisch-Preis", "Appolinaire-Preis", awards bestowed by the German Physical Society (DPG) etc.• Nation-wide competitions, e.g. in Germany "Jugend musiziert", "Jugend forscht" etc.• Awards and distinctions bestowed by HSRW itself are recognised by the selection committee on a case-by-case basis.
<p>Exceeding the minimum number of credits (ECTS) recommended by the applicant's curriculum at the time of application. (This usually means earning more than 31 ECTS credits per semester in the standard period of study.)</p>
<p>Academic publications</p>
<p>Previous gainful employment (min. 1 year) or previously completed career-oriented vocational training (min. 18 months with min. 19 hrs./week) or internships (combined min. length of 6 months). Internships stipulated by an applicants' degree programme are excluded.</p> <p>Part-time student jobs are also excluded.</p>

Category 2) Extracurricular activities

Criteria:
Volunteering work (in associations, clubs or societies) or social engagement (combined min. length 6 months), for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extracurricular work for public and private institutions or organisations.• Providing after-school help in a mentoring role officially recognised by the school.• Mentoring or coaching in a club or other association.
Social engagement Examples include: <i>Bundesfreiwilligendienst</i> ; voluntary social (<i>FSJ</i>) or ecological year (<i>FÖJ</i>); civil service; volunteer work countries; military service; European Solidarity Corps; German Technical Relief Association (THW), Red Cross or other emergency services; involvement in religious communities, political activism etc.
Extracurricular engagement at HSRW Minimum length of 1 semester for any: political, cultural or social engagement on campus, including AStA, StuPa, FSR, cultural activities, committee work, exchange organisations, mentoring programmes, acting as a student spokesperson etc.

Category 3) Special personal or family-related circumstances

(Judged on a case-by-case basis according to the question: “To what extent have these special circumstances affected the applicant’s studies?”)

Criteria:
Disability or chronic illness
Caring for children
Caring for immediate relatives in accordance with Section 7 (3) of the Home Care Leave Act (<i>Pflegezeitgesetz</i>)
Special family-related circumstances (first generation student)
Working for the family business (min. 6 months with min. 5 hrs./week or 20 hrs./month)
Current gainful employment (at the time of application) as part of an officially recognised dual / part-time study programme. (min. 5 hrs./week or 20 hrs./month. Part-time student jobs are excluded.)
Immigration background

Corresponding documentation is required for any secondary criteria to be considered.