

## **Guide to the scholarship program aimed at supporting the studies of expatriate Estonians in Estonia**

### **PURPOSE, SCOPE, RESPONSIBILITY**

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide the conditions for receiving and using scholarships and the procedure for payment of the scholarships of the scholarship program (hereinafter the *program*) aimed at supporting the studies of expatriate Estonians.

The Education and Youth Board is guided by Directive of the Minister of Education and Research No. 1.1-2/21/195 from the 23rd of July 2021 "Scholarship Program to Support the Studies of expatriate Estonians in Estonia: Principles and Conditions (2021–2027)"; this guide and the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Research when paying scholarships for expatriate Estonians to study in Estonia. The issuance of scholarships is financed by the Ministry of Education and Research (hereinafter the *Ministry*). The scholarship program is a continuation of the Compatriots program (2014-2020).

The Education and Youth Board (hereinafter the *Board*) organizes the implementation of the program with the following activities:

- establishing the conditions for applying for, using, and evaluating applications for scholarships;
- advising applicants, grantees, and other parties;
- setting up an application evaluation committee and laying down its rules of procedure;
- conducting application rounds, including evaluation of applications and selection of grantees;
- arranging the payment of scholarships, monitoring the fulfillment of obligations and reporting;
- processing of challenges;
- organization of scholarship program information activities.

### **PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF THE PROGRAM**

1. The purpose of the scholarship program is to support the studies of expatriate Estonians in higher education institutions and vocational education institutions in Estonia (hereinafter *educational institutions*) in order to facilitate their return to Estonia, participation in social and cultural life, and the labor market.
2. Scholarships are awarded to persons of Estonian origin living abroad:
  - 2.1. for formal studies at the level of vocational or higher education in curriculum taught in Estonian (hereinafter *formal studies*);
  - 2.2. for Estonian language studies (hereinafter *language studies*) in order to study the language and start formal studies later.

### **TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP**

#### **GENERAL CONDITIONS**

3. A scholarship is paid to study in Estonia, and if necessary, the residence permit/visa state fee and health insurance and study expenses to the Estonian educational institution are reimbursed.
4. Scholarship recipients are awarded a scholarship until the end of the nominal duration of the curriculum.
5. The scholarship is exempt from income tax on the basis of subsection 19 (4) of the Income Tax Act.

6. The formal studies scholarship can be applied for by persons of Estonian origin residing abroad with secondary and higher education and corresponding education, who
  - 6.1. have not resided permanently in Estonia for at least the last ten years, unless they have settled in Estonia for the purpose of study or military service during the calendar year preceding the submission of the application;
  - 6.2. study full-time in curriculum taught in Estonian at the time of receiving the scholarship.
7. The language studies scholarship can be applied for by persons of Estonian origin residing abroad with secondary and higher education and corresponding education, who
  - 7.1. have not resided permanently in Estonia for at least the last ten years;
  - 7.2. study in intensive Estonian language courses in the amount of at least 45 ECTS during the period of receiving the scholarship.

## SCHOLARSHIP

8. The scholarship consists of the following components:
  - 8.1. basic monthly scholarship during the study period;
  - 8.2. travel grant for two round trips per year;
  - 8.3. an extra scholarship paid once a year for good academic performance;
  - 8.4. if necessary, residence permit/visa state fee and/or reimbursement of health insurance costs.
9. Basic scholarship
  - 9.1. The basic scholarship is paid to the grantee during the nominal duration of the curriculum for twelve months of the academic year, except for the last academic year when the scholarship is paid for ten months.
  - 9.2. The basic scholarship is EUR 350 per month.
  - 9.3. The basic scholarship is transferred to the grantee's bank account as follows:
    - 9.3.1. the basic scholarship for the first five months of study (from September to January) is paid as a lump sum at the beginning of the academic year after the conclusion of the contract/annex to the contract;
    - 9.3.2. the basic scholarship for the next five months of study (from February to June) is paid after the submission of the study results of the autumn semester;
    - 9.3.3. the basic scholarship for two summer months (from July to August) is paid after the submission of the study results of the spring semester, except for the last academic year.
  - 9.4. The Board will make any subsequent payment only if the grantee's obligations have been fulfilled and progress in studies has been demonstrated. As proof of progress in studies, the grantee shall submit a statement of study results to the Board no later than 20 September and 15 February of each year.
  - 9.5. The basic scholarship is paid in the following academic years in accordance with clause 9.3, and in order to receive it in the following academic years, the grantee must complete at least 75% of the annual study volume.
  - 9.6. The basic scholarship is also paid during the period of study abroad if the grantee fulfills other conditions for receiving the scholarship (studies full-time, does not exceed the nominal duration of the curriculum, etc.).
10. Travel grant
  - 10.1. The travel grant is paid for travel from home abroad to an Estonian educational institution and back. It is not possible to receive a grant to travel in one direction only. The definition of home abroad is based on the address of home given in the application, which can be changed in agreement with the Board.

- 10.2. The travel grant is paid twice a year. The travel grant is transferred to the grantee's bank account together with the first and second installments of the basic scholarship.
- 10.3. The amount of the travel grant depends on the distance between the grantee's place of residence and the location of the Estonian educational institution. The distance is calculated using the European Commission's online calculator [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance_en.htm).
- 10.3.1. If the distance between the place of residence abroad and an Estonian educational institution is up to 99.99 km (inclusive), the costs shall be reimbursed on the basis of cost documents in the amount of up to 180 euros;
- 10.3.2. If the distance between the residence abroad and the Estonian educational institution is 100 km or more, the costs are reimbursed on the basis of the unit price, based on the rates given in the following table:

	Distance from city to city (one way) <sup>1</sup>	Travel grant round trip
1	100 - 499 km	EUR 180
2	500 - 1999 km	EUR 275
3	2000 - 2999 km	EUR 360
4	3000 - 3999 km	EUR 530
5	4000 - 7999 km	EUR 820
6	8000 km or more	EUR 1100

#### 11. Extra scholarship

- 11.1. At the end of each academic year, the Board pays a one-off extra scholarship to a grantee with an average grade of 4.0 or higher in the previous year.
- 11.2. The extra scholarship is equal to one month's basic scholarship.

#### 12. Residence permit/visa state fee and health insurance

- 12.1. If necessary, the grantee will be reimbursed the state fee for the residence permit/visa (according to the rates of the state fee) and health insurance expenses (up to 300 euros per academic year) on the basis of cost documents.
- 12.2. Health insurance costs are reimbursed on the basis of the insurer's invoice to grantees who do not have insurance from the Estonian Health Insurance Fund.

13. No scholarship is paid during academic leave, during part-time studies, and in case of studies exceeding the nominal duration of the curriculum.

### REIMBURSEMENT OF STUDY COSTS

#### 14. Study costs in higher education

- 14.1. In the first academic year, no tuition fees are paid to the educational institution; henceforth, the grantee will be reimbursed for study costs according to the volume of his/her progress and the rates of tuition fees of the Estonian educational institution.
- 14.2. The educational institution has the right to demand partial reimbursement of study costs if the grantee has not filled the study volume according to the curriculum in previous periods.

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<sup>1</sup> If the distance obtained with the calculator falls between 499-500 km, 1999-2000 km, etc., the result obtained shall be rounded to the nearest whole number before the unit price is determined.

- 14.3. The Board reimburses the cost of up to 15 ECTS per academic year for the outstanding study volume. The remaining study costs are covered by the grantee from their own resources. Tuition costs are reimbursed only for full-time studies.
15. Study costs in vocational education
- 15.1. Grantees studying in vocational training may study in a state-financed or non-state-financed study place. The Board does not pay tuition fees to educational institutions for grantees studying in the state-financed study place. Starting to study at a non-state financed study place must be indicated in the application.
- 15.2. The basic cost of a study place for a grantee studying at a non-state financed study place shall be reimbursed under the conditions and pursuant to the procedure established by the council of the educational institution. The Board reimburses the basic cost of the study place of a scholarship student studying at a non-state financed study place to the educational institution after the submission of the study results of the grantee.
16. Language learning costs
- 16.1. The Board reimburses the study expenses for the language study scholarship on the basis of the price list established by the course provider, however not more than in the amount approved in the decision to award the scholarship. The application must be accompanied by a curriculum for the language course and information on the cost.

#### APPLICATION FOR A SCHOLARSHIP

17. The application must be submitted via the electronic application system (<https://taoflused.edu.ee>) by the 11<sup>th</sup> of August (the application will be locked on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August at 23:59 Estonian time).
18. The applicant must submit to the Board by the deadline:
- 18.1. application form including motivation letter;
  - 18.2. curriculum vitae (CV);
  - 18.3. A document certifying admission to an Estonian educational institution (applicants for a formal study scholarship);
  - 18.4. language course curriculum and a document certifying the cost (applicants for a language study scholarship);
  - 18.5. a copy of the document certifying the acquired education (diploma with a results report) or an extract from the study results of the upper secondary school and a copy of the certificate of the penultimate grade;
  - 18.6. a copy of the personal datasheet of the passport;
  - 18.7. a copy of a document certifying Estonian origin (birth certificate, birth certificate of parents or grandparents, etc.);
  - 18.8. a letter of recommendation (from a representative of Estonian society, community, etc., teacher or supervisor of the Estonian language or another subject).
19. The documents must be in Estonian, English, or Russian. Documents submitted in other languages must be accompanied by an official translation.
20. Applications for study in formal studies which are not accompanied by a confirmation of admission to an Estonian educational institution by the application deadline will not be processed.
21. Documents must be uploaded in scanned form into the application system. The Board has the right to check the conformity of the submitted documents to the originals and to make inquiries to the Estonian educational institution.

22. The compliance of the application documents (technical inspection) is checked by a specialist of the Scholarship and Grants Bureau, who informs the applicants in written form within five working days and, if necessary, requests additional documents in order to check the conformity of the uploaded documents with the originals. If the application does not meet the requirements, the application will not be sent to the evaluation committee, and the specialist of the Scholarship and Grants Bureau will inform the applicant thereof within ten working days in a form that can be reproduced in writing.
23. A decision on whether or not to award a scholarship shall be made no later than within thirty days from the application deadline.

#### EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

24. The applications are evaluated, and the decision to award the scholarship and reserve candidates is made by the Steering Committee formed by the Director-General of the Board (hereinafter the Committee) as a protocol decision. The Committee consists of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, and the diaspora of Estonian expatriates.
25. When awarding a scholarship for a formal study, the applicant's previous academic success, thoughtfulness and persuasiveness of the motivation letter, social activity, and the relevance of the letter of recommendation are taken into account with equal weight.
26. When awarding a scholarship for a language year, the applicant's Estonian language skills, the thoughtfulness and persuasiveness of the applicant's letter of motivation, and the relevance of the letter of recommendation are taken into account with equal weight.
27. The Committee also takes into account the representation of different localities among the grantees and the distribution of fields of study when compiling the ranking. The number of grantees depends on the results of the ranking and the budget planned for the round.
28. The decision of the Committee to award a scholarship to the applicant is valid upon starting to study in the curriculum specified in the application. If the applicant does not start studies in the curriculum specified in the decision to award a scholarship, he/she loses the right to the scholarship. If the grantee has not confirmed his/her wish to use the scholarship by the deadline specified in the decision, the scholarship shall be awarded to the next reserve candidate in the ranking. If the grantee does not confirm, the Board will award the contract referred to in point 33 to the next reserve candidate in the ranking.

#### TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF USING THE SCHOLARSHIP

29. The grantee must confirm his/her wish to study in Estonia to the Board within ten days after the scholarship has been awarded.
30. If the grantee has confirmed his/her wish to study, he/she must take into account the following obligations:
  - 30.1. The grantee must start studies in Estonia at the beginning of the academic year following the application for the scholarship. If the grantee does not arrive in Estonia by the beginning of the academic year and does not provide good reasons for not arriving, the Committee has the right to revoke the awarding of the scholarship.
  - 30.2. The grantee must start studying at the chosen educational institution and complete it in nominal time.

- 30.3. The grantee must submit a statement of study results at the end of each semester. If the grantee has not completed at least 75% of the study volume according to the curriculum, the Board may suspend the payment of the scholarship until the debts are liquidated.
  - 30.4. The scholarship is paid for full-time studies, and in case of dropping to the part-time study, payment of the scholarship is suspended.
  - 30.5. If the grantee interrupts his/her studies, the Board may recover from the grantee the scholarship paid during the years and the tuition fee paid to the educational institution, unless the completion of the studies was hindered by health or circumstances beyond his/her control.
  - 30.6. The grantee of formal study has the right to apply for academic leave and extension of the nominal period of studies without extension of the scholarship. No scholarship is paid during academic leave and during the extended nominal period.
  - 30.7. The grantee undertakes to inform the Board about academic leave, interruption of studies, and other circumstances that prevent the completion of studies on a nominal basis.
  - 30.8. If the grantee has received a scholarship for the time when he/she has not participated in the studies, he/she must repay it.
31. During the studies, the grantee has the right to apply for a scholarship to study at the next level of education specified in clause 2.1 of these guidelines (except for doctoral studies and language studies). To that end, a timely application must be submitted to the Board in a normal manner.
  32. The grantee shall, whenever possible, refer to the program, the Ministry, and the Board as the supporter of his or her studies.

#### SIGNING THE CONTRACT AND REPORTING

33. To pay the scholarship, the host institution, the grantee, and the Board enter into a tripartite agreement.
34. The Board makes scholarship payments on the basis of extracts from study results and expense documents.
35. By 20 September and 15 February at the latest, the grantee is obliged to submit a statement of the study results of the previous period, on the basis of which the next part of the scholarship will be paid.

#### PROCEDURE FOR NOTIFYING THE USE OF A SCHOLARSHIP

36. The list of grantees will be published on the Board's website