

The Lutheran World Federation

# Scholarship Implementing Guidelines

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THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

Table of Contents

- Background and Purpose ..... 2
- Values and Principles ..... 2
  - LWF basic ethical commitments and standards ..... 2
  - Zero tolerance policy ..... 3
- Procedure ..... 4
- Scholarship Categories ..... 4
  - Areas of study ..... 4
  - Individual and group scholarships ..... 4
  - Regular and short-term scholarships ..... 5
- Scholarship Application and Approval Process ..... 5
  - Eligibility ..... 5
  - Overview of the application and approval process ..... 6
    - Church endorsement ..... 6
    - Application ..... 6
    - Procedure of the LWF scholarships application and approval process ..... 6
    - The Geneva screening process ..... 7
  - Selection criteria ..... 7
- Scholarship budget ..... 8
  - Official fee structure of the institution ..... 8
  - Study related costs ..... 8
  - International travels and visa ..... 9
- Implementation of Approved Scholarships ..... 9
  - Information and validity ..... 9
  - Activation of scholarships ..... 9
  - Scholarship payments ..... 10
  - Reporting and Monitoring ..... 10
  - Changes after approval ..... 11
  - Accompaniment of scholarship holders ..... 12
- Past-Scholarship Engagement: Responsibilities and Accountability ..... 12

## Background and Purpose

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

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

1. Theological scholarships for study/training programs in theology, and
2. Diaconal scholarships for study/training programs relating to the diaconal or development work of the churches.

The main criteria for a candidate's approval is that the proposed application responds to the strategic priorities and human capacity needs of the church in the area of theology and diakonia. All applications must be endorsed by the respective churches including a description of the applicant's planned future role beyond very general terms. A shared commitment between the church and applicant is required.

The program approach follows the concept of Human and Institutional Capacity Development. The objective of this approach is to equip individuals with knowledge, skills and confidence that strengthen churches' capacities to carry out their holistic mission and prepare the next generation of leaders in the Lutheran communion. The scholarships are therefore a means of empowering churches for sustainable growth and development within the churches and in the wider community.

## Values and Principles

### LWF basic ethical commitments and standards

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

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

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

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

screening process, the LWF Scholarship Committee members responsible for the approval of new scholarship holders, and the scholarship candidates themselves.

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

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

### Zero tolerance policy

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

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

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

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

- No money, goods or services (such as scholarship endorsement letters) shall ever be exchanged for any kind of sexual favors.
- No acts of nepotism (when those with power or influence misuse their positions to favor relatives or friends) fraud, corruption or unethical business practices, including conflict of interest, will be tolerated.
- No person shall ever be accused falsely of harassment or exploitation of any kind for one's own advantages.

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

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

## Procedure

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

Should the values, principles and commitments outlined in these guidelines be violated in the context of the scholarship application, approval and/or implementation process, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Send an email to [codeconduct@lutheranworld.org](mailto:codeconduct@lutheranworld.org) (only accessed by the LWF Human Resources Office).  
In your email briefly describe the incident or concern: State what has exactly happened, trying to follow the sequence of events from the beginning to the end. Give a description of the 'subject of complaint' (SoC) if you do not know her/his name. State what kind of response you expect from the LWF and how you wish to see the matter resolved.
2. All complaints will be carefully and promptly investigated: the complainant(s), the SoC and all key witnesses will be interviewed during the investigation process.
3. Counseling, pastoral care, accompaniment and assistance will be made available to the complainant.

## Scholarship Categories

### Areas of study

1. **Theology:** Scholarship includes Diploma, Bachelor, Master and PhD programs in theology. The aim of theological scholarships is to strengthen churches' theological identity and self-understanding, and through trained and qualified personnel to equip churches to carry out their holistic mission. Scholarships in theology aim at preparing the next generation of leaders in the Lutheran communion.
2. **Diakonia and development:** Scholarship includes Diploma, Bachelor, Master, PhD programs in development-oriented study fields, such as psychosocial support, counseling, social work, livelihood development, gender studies, food security, environmental management, climate justice, project management, peace and conflict studies, education and health care. Scholarships in diakonia and development aim at strengthening churches' diaconal work in diverse areas for the sustainable improvement of the livelihoods of local communities in developing countries.

### Individual and group scholarships

- *Individual scholarship:* Only the proposed candidate is supported for a study or training program. The LWF will cover tuition and other fees indicated in the official fee structure of the institution and study related costs (food, accommodation, transportation, internet access) according to the needs of the candidate. Proof of evidence is required for study-related costs.
- *Group scholarship:* A group consisting of 2 up to 10 persons pursuing the same field and level of training together for similar or common areas of engagement, and at a relatively lower cost. (For instance, a group of 5 candidates from one church pursues a Bachelor's degree in psychosocial support in order to help communities where people have experienced devastating crises).

A group scholarship is considered as one scholarship. The LWF will cover tuition and other fees indicated in the official fee structure of the institution and study related costs (food, accommodation, transportation, internet access) according to the needs of the candidates Proof of evidence is required for study related costs.

## Regular and short-term scholarships

Depending on the duration of studies, individual and group 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 a 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 be for individual or group scholarships and 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:

## LWF Scholarship Implementing Guidelines

- 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

- **August: Kick-off of the application phase.** The information about the new application phase including updated application documents are sent to all LWF member churches and LWF national committees, and are shared across the LWF networks and channels. All church leaders are requested to share the information widely within their churches and wider communities, including the grassroots level.

At this point the LWF Scholarship online portal link is only shared with member churches (church leadership), it should not be shared widely.

- **August-October: Pre-screening processes in the churches.** Each church or LWF national committee is supposed to do a pre-screening of all individual and group 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-October: Submission of applications.** The candidate will fill out the LWF online application form and submit the application with required documents.
- **September-October: 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 online portal. The official church endorsement letter must be uploaded onto the review form.

- **15 October: Deadline for applications**
- **October-November: Geneva screening process.** LWF Geneva reviews, pre-screens and short-lists applications.
- **December: Approval.** The candidates are presented to the LWF Scholarship Committee for approval. The Committee consists of LWF staff from different departments and staff from the related agencies that support the scholarships program. 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 individual candidates about the outcome of their application.
- **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 scholarship will be activated for the following semester. No financial assistance can be paid retroactively for previous academic years or semesters. Each church or national committee is responsible for effective reporting, communication and follow-up with its approved candidates and LWF Geneva.

### The Geneva screening process

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

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

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

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

### Selection criteria

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

- *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.

## LWF Scholarship Implementing Guidelines

- *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 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:* At least 40% of the approved candidates will be female; at least 20% will be youth below the age of 30 years. For each applying church, these quotas must be met overall for all the proposed candidates, as well as for each of the proposed area of study (theology and diakonia).
- *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 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.

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

The LWF also covers cost for visa where required.

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

### Activation of scholarships

Together with the information letter, instructions are shared with the approved candidates and their churches and/or LWF national committees on how to activate the scholarship. In order to activate the scholarship, the following documents should be submitted by the church and the candidate:

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

A scholarship is activated once the scholarship agreement (the so-called *Terms of Award*) has been signed by the LWF, the church and the approved candidate. 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.

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

A receipt of acknowledgement with a related bank slip 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.

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

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;
- 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;
- Financial report attached with proof of evidence.

## Reporting and Monitoring

Reporting and follow up with the churches and scholarship holders happens 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), including updated grade reports. (If the studies are delayed for any reason, the student should inform LWF Geneva immediately. Explanation for the delay is compulsory.);
- Financial report attached with proof of evidence.

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 official certificate (if available), an 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:

## Changes after approval

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Accompaniment of scholarship holders

The LWF will accompany scholarship holders throughout the scholarship period. Regular "Coming Together" online meetings will be conducted 4 times per year. The purpose of these online meetings is to strengthen the connection between LWF and the scholarship students and to create networking and peer support platform for students themselves. These online meetings reduce the risk of scholarship students dropping out of studies, and also create continuous and motivational support during the studies. Through the online meetings the LWF will gain important insights on the students' progress and challenges.

The scholarship holders in the area of diakonia and development are invited to at least one diaconal workshop conducted in their region during their scholarship period.

The scholarship holders in the area of theology are expected to take part in the LWF leadership development program.

## Past-Scholarship Engagement: Responsibilities and Accountability

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

The endorsing church is required to submit a final report at the end of the scholarship period. In this report the church indicates how it will utilize the skills and expertise that the candidate gained during the scholarship period and the position the candidate will occupy in the church and community. The report should be filled out on the LWF online tool.

Two years after the scholarship has been completed, both the candidate and the church are asked to submit a follow-up report to the LWF.

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