

Program information on the scholarships offered by the
Bremen State Program for refugee and at-risk researchers

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Please note: The English text is an automatic translation provided for informational purposes only.

Whilst academic freedom is guaranteed under the constitution in Germany, this is not the case in many other countries. The State of Bremen and its universities view this social development with concern and are committed to safeguarding academic freedom worldwide. The Senator for the Environment, Climate and Science of the State of Bremen therefore supports early-career researchers whose academic work is at risk in their home country or current country of residence due to persecution and threats, through the State of Bremen's scholarship program.

The aim of the scholarship program is to enable refugee and vulnerable researchers to undertake a temporary stay at universities in the State of Bremen or, alternatively, at one of the institutes belonging to the U Bremen Research Alliance.

Up to three postdoctoral and PhD student scholarships are being advertised for 2027, each for a duration of up to one year. The funding comprises a monthly stipend of €2,300 for postdoctoral researchers and €1,700 for PhD students.

For details on the scope of the fellowship, please refer to the section 'Terms and Conditions' in this document.

Who is eligible to apply?

Researchers from all disciplines are eligible to apply if they

- a) have been forced to flee their home country due to armed conflict or politically or religiously motivated persecution, or
- b) are at risk and are still in their home country at the time of application, but who, due to this risk or their flight, are continuing their academic work in the State of Bremen, i.e. are registered as residents in the State of Bremen at the time the scholarship is taken up.

The date of escape/departure must not have been more than three years prior to the date of application.

Researchers who, by virtue of dual nationality, have access to a safe country of residence, as well as researchers who are German nationals or who were educated in Germany, are not eligible to apply.

Researchers who are already receiving corresponding funding or other benefits from another domestic body are not eligible for funding.

What are the eligibility criteria?

- ✓ A commitment to supervision from a member of academic staff at one of Bremen's state universities or an institute belonging to the U Bremen Research Alliance
- ✓ Academic suitability of the research project for integration into a research group at one of Bremen's universities
- ✓ A completed PhD or a detailed project proposal for a PhD project, plus the relevant university degree
- ✓ Letter of confirmation from the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR)
Important: If support is granted, this will be sent directly to the Academy HERE AHEAD; applicants give their consent for their data to be passed on from SAR to the Academy HERE AHEAD

Proof of eligibility for funding must be provided by:

- ✓ Doctorate or Master's degree certificate (For possible submission at a later date: If the original is not available due to having fled, other forms of proof will be accepted – copies, scans, photographs)
- ✓ A confirmation of a research place and/or supervision from a member of academic staff at a state university in the State of Bremen or from an institute within the U Bremen Research Alliance (a letter of intent is sufficient for the application).
- ✓ A description of the research project (max. 3 pages) and a timetable covering the funding period
- ✓ Confirmation from the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) regarding placement support [provided by SAR directly to the Academy HERE AHEAD]
- ✓ Documents (copies or photographs, where applicable) proving the date of flight or departure

If the above-mentioned original documents are not available in German or English, an officially certified translation into German or English must additionally be enclosed.

Application and Selection

Applications must be submitted exclusively online by the researcher at risk via the application form on: <https://scholarship.aheadbremen.de>

The application must be submitted in full and, in addition to the application form (online form), must include the required supporting documents as specified. Furthermore, all ongoing application processes in which the researcher at risk is currently involved must be disclosed (scholarships, research funding, etc.).

Application deadlines for scholarship places

By 25 October 2026: Complete the online form to request a risk assessment on the website <https://scholarship.aheadbremen.de> and submit it along with the uploaded questionnaire linked in the website.

The second application form must be submitted **by 12 November 2026** at the latest. The link will automatically be sent to the applicants in the confirmation email following the risk assessment application.

The selection panel assesses whether the applications submitted are eligible for funding. If the number of eligible applications exceeds the number of scholarships available, the scholarships will be awarded by lottery. The applications selected in the draw will receive funding. Applicants will be notified of the decision in writing no later than 6 weeks after the application deadline. The Academy HERE AHEAD is responsible for coordinating the program.

Terms and Conditions of the Scholarship

Once the application has been approved, a scholarship agreement will be drawn up between the scholarship holder, the supervising academic and the institution. The scholarship may commence no earlier than 1 January 2027, following the signing of the scholarship agreement and arrival in Bremen, and must begin within six months of approval.

Deduction of income

Any income earned by scholarship holders from non-academic activities is, as a rule, deducted from the basic grant amount, including any tax deductions where

applicable. Income from academic activities, provided it does not exceed €6,000 per year during the term of the scholarship, is disregarded, as is income from assets. Examples of academic activities include supervising PhD students or Master's graduates, giving academic lectures, and academic writing, amongst others.

Duration and requirements of the funding

Postdoctoral and PhD fellowships are awarded for a period of up to one year. An interruption to the fellowship of up to six months is only permitted in justified exceptional cases, e.g. in the event of the birth of a child. Payment of the fellowship will be suspended for the duration of the interruption. In the event of the birth of a child, the scholarship will continue to be paid to the scholarship holder for the duration of her maternity leave, and the scholarship will be extended by the duration of her maternity leave. In the event of incapacity for work due to illness, the scholarship payment may, in cases of particular hardship and upon presentation of a medical certificate, be extended for up to six months.

Obligations upon acceptance of the scholarship

The scholarship holder

- must be registered as a resident in the State of Bremen; working permanently from home whilst based elsewhere is not permitted
- must have taken out health insurance before the scholarship begins
- may be absent from their respective institution for a maximum of 14 consecutive days and must notify the Academy HERE AHEAD of this (the absence policy is based on the current guidelines of the Federal Foreign Office)
- must repay the scholarship in full or in part if he or she breaches the "Academy HERE AHEAD Guidelines for the award of Scholarships under the Bremen State Program for refugee and at-risk researchers" (as at September 2026)
- confirms that, during the term of the scholarship, he or she will not receive any further scholarships from other funding organisations or undertake full-time employment. Any other funding or employment during the term of the scholarship requires the consent of the Academy HERE AHEAD

- undertakes to notify the Academy HERE AHEAD without delay of any facts or changes in circumstances that are relevant to the calculation of the scholarship
- undertakes to observe and comply with the principles of good scientific practice as set out, for example, in the 'Regulations on Ensuring Good Scientific Practice' of the University of Bremen (Regulations on Ensuring Good Scientific Practice at the University of Bremen – Bremen Transparency Portal) and in the recommendations of the German Research Foundation (DFG)
- undertakes to inform the HERE AHEAD Academy and the supervising academic in the event of changes to the research project, in the event of illness or for any other significant reasons that prevent the research project from continuing
- undertakes to publish the research findings supported by the grant.

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