



## **SYRIAN STUDENTS: HOW TO APPLY FOR EMERGENCY ACADEMIC SUPPORT (2013-2104 ACADEMIC YEAR) – 2<sup>ND</sup> CALL**

### **MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

#### **Introduction**

##### ***What is the Global Platform 4 Syrian Students?***

The **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** is a multi-stakeholders initiative launched by former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, with the support of a core-group of partners, namely the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States, the Institute of International Education (IIE) and some governments. The UfM Secretariat has also been providing assistance and advice to this initiative. Consultations are being held with the Secretariat of the UfM to develop further this initiative.

It aims at providing emergency scholarships and grants to Syrian students whose education has been interrupted by the current crisis.

This initiative is unique in that it effectively brings together the efforts of various stakeholders willing and able to back an emergency mechanism to support Syrian students: governments, international and regional organizations, donor agencies, universities, foundations, NGOs of different cultural backgrounds and faith-based organizations, the private sector and individuals.

The Global Platform 4 Syrian Students has three core components:

- A Network of Partners made up of all supporters of the initiative regardless of the nature, size and magnitude of support provided;
- An Academic Consortium made up of Universities and Higher Education institutions that participate in this effort by hosting students and granting them special conditions, notably registration and tuition fees waiver;
- An Emergency Student Fund made up of financial and in-kind donations that support the scholarships and grants that are provided to the students participating in this project;

### ***What is the purpose of the Global Platform 4 Syrian Students?***

The **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** provides, on a limited basis, scholarships and grants for Syrian students at the tertiary level in universities, polytechnic institutions and similar Higher Education Institutions.

The purpose of the **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** is to contribute to the self-reliance of young Syrians, in particular refugees, by providing them with the possibility of continuing their studies and working towards their professional qualification for future employment. This will be an important investment in the future of Syria, as students will be able to return home with an education and contribute to the reconstruction of their home country as soon as the conflict ends.

Furthermore, the **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** will implement a common programme on intercultural dialogue and cooperation, peace-building and reconciliation in which all students will have to participate. This education programme aims at helping these students to become active citizens and act as driving forces for rebuilding an inclusive society in Syria based on dialogue, pluralism and respect for others.

### ***How does this programme work?***

As a new initiative, this programme is due to evolve on the basis of traction and experience gained over the pilot phase that is launched in September for the 2013-2014 Academic year.

A Call for Applications will be announced each time there is new scholarships and grants available for Syrian students. When an Announcement of a Call for Applications is issued, eligible candidates are invited to apply. All applications should be made through electronic system. The selection process is made by a selection committee and it involves several steps. We do not acknowledge receipt of applications. If the candidate has not heard from us, she/he should assume that his/her application was unsuccessful. If the candidate is selected, he/she will be offered a Scholarship Agreement setting the terms of the sponsorship being awarded to him/her. He remains totally free to accept it or to give up.

## **Scholarships and Grants for the 2013-2014 Academic Year –**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Call for Applications**

**(DEADLINE for Submission: 15 SEPTEMBER 2013)**

#### ***Who can apply ?***

In order to be eligible, **potential participants must:**

- Be a citizen, national or permanent resident qualified to hold a valid passport issued by the State of Syria;
- Be at least 18 years old by the time the programme begins
- Hold a higher secondary certificate
- Have excellent academic performance
- Have financial need to continue his/her education
- Have a strong interest in a professional qualification
- Have strong motivation to contribute to his/her community

If you meet the above criteria and you are a refugee, you can also apply.

#### ***What are the preferences and priorities from amongst those who meet the criteria?***

The following are paramount:

- gender-balance (we aim at having up to 50% female participants, therefore we particularly encourage young women to apply);
- the student's proven academic performance;
- students who had to interrupt their studies due to the conflict, and who possess proof of previous university or college studies in their country of origin;
- students who choose shorter and inexpensive courses with high chances of employment (such as computer studies, paramedical and teaching professions, etc).

- Applicants should be able to clearly express their reasons for having chosen the particular study subject, and relate their choice to expected future employment opportunities upon repatriation.

### **Questions about application procedures**

#### ***How to apply?***

If you meet the above qualifications, you are invited to apply for one of our scholarships enabling you to continue your studies **in Lithuania or Portugal**.

All applications should be made via electronic mail to the address indicated in the Application Form with the required supporting documents.

#### ***Where can I find the application form?***

Application forms are available online, namely at one of the following websites:

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int);

[www.lasportal.org](http://www.lasportal.org);

[www.iie.org](http://www.iie.org);

[www.jorgesampaio.pt](http://www.jorgesampaio.pt);

#### ***Supporting documents required***

School and university certificates should be enclosed to the Application Form as specified. They will be verified prior to the selection of candidates. In cases where certificates are not originals, or are older than three years, or are not provided, the candidates may have to undergo a test. Accommodations may be made as needed considering the conflict situation.

#### ***When are the application deadlines?***

Application forms must be completed and sent to [aureliamartins@casadoregalo.pt](mailto:aureliamartins@casadoregalo.pt) by 15 SEPTEMBER 2013.

Applications emailed after 15 September will not be accepted.

#### ***What should I remember when applying?***

- Write clearly if you fill in the form by hand;
- Enter your full personal data
- Make sure to provide at least one e-mail address otherwise we will not be able to notify you if there are any questions concerning your application or more importantly if you are awarded the scholarship.
- Make sure that if you give academic referees who can comment on your academic ability – note that names of friends, other students or relations are not acceptable.

***What proof of language proficiency do I have to provide ?***

At the time of application, copy of certificates are not necessary. At a later stage, you may have to pass a language test or produce a language certificate.

***Will the candidate be entitled to a scholarship if he/she meets all the selection criteria?***

Due to funding constraints, only a limited number of candidates who meet the selection criteria can be selected. Qualified candidates who are not able to join the **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** programme are encouraged to take initiatives for identifying alternative sponsorships.

***What is the selection procedure?***

The selection process normally involves several steps from pre-selection to short-listing and final decision by a Selection Committee. Candidates may be interviewed by a member of the Selection Committee.

***What is the schedule ahead for this Call ?***

15 September: deadline for the submission of the applications

20 September: deadline for sending out the scholarship award notices

25 September: deadline for signature of Scholarships Agreements – List of participants available

## **Questions about courses**

### ***Selecting the courses***

Applicants must provide the names of their desired courses in the application. Therefore choose carefully. You are not permitted to make any course changes once you have submitted your application.

### ***Will I get the course of my choice?***

If there is no more space in your desired course, you may be offered another option. Please also note that some of our universities offer distance learning programmes.

### ***Can I choose my University?***

Unfortunately at this stage, options are limited and we reserve the right to place you in one of the Universities participating in this initiative.

### ***How do I register in my desired course?***

Once the award notices are set out you, will be informed in detail about next steps.

### ***What if I discontinue the course or decide not to attend after receiving the scholarship award notice?***

When you will receive the scholarship award notice, you will be provided with full details regarding our offer – you will be given a deadline to analyse our Academic Proposal and make your final decision.

If you accept it and sign the Scholarship Agreement, you are obliged to attend the course for its entire duration. If you have to discontinue the course, you must provide your reasons in writing and contact us immediately.

## Questions about funding

### ***What expenses can the scholarship cover?***

The **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** programme might cover the costs mentioned below in full or in part, depending on the specific needs of students and the country operation:

- **REGISTRATION/TUITION FEES:** The scholarship usually covers the registration and tuition fees, thanks to waiver agreements with universities participating in the programme.
- **SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE:** Students will receive a subsistence allowance. In some countries, the subsistence allowance is paid as a lump sum while in other countries it is divided into several components such as living allowance (food), boarding/housing allowance, local travel allowance and study-related allowance. Not all of the allowances are automatically applicable to each country but are rather based on local circumstances. The level of allowances should reflect real needs and actual costs of living in the given country, and permit the student to cover his/her basic needs. When applicable, boarding or housing allowance as part of subsistence covers the costs of housing on university campus, or, if the same is not available or prices are prohibitive for the students, a similar boarding outside the campus. In some cases, when students live with their parents, a boarding allowance will not be paid. Local travel allowance covers the daily travel between the university and home, if applicable. Study-related allowance should include some pocket money and/or vouchers to be used to buy items such as stationery and educational supplies.
- **STUDENTS' ANNUAL ALLOWANCES:** Note that students are not automatically entitled to all allowances as conditions in the various countries differ. In some countries, all or several allowances have been combined into a lump sum payment. Likewise, the needs of individual students within the same country may differ according to subject of study, so that benefits may vary amongst students. Costs for medical insurance or medical treatment are handled by the Global Platform for Syrian Students in accordance with local implementing arrangements and requirements.

Costs for medical treatment are generally reimbursed to the clinic or pharmacy directly and not paid out to the students themselves. In some countries, the annual payments are included and pro-rated in the subsistence allowance. Allowances for fieldwork, research and/or project work can be paid against verified receipts if funds required are reasonable and agreed beforehand.

***Can a candidate apply for a partial scholarship?***

Yes. A partial sponsorship under the **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** project is possible if the candidate has some other source of funding or for instance is able to sustain himself/herself. In this case, a selected student would only receive a grant for a well identified purpose, for instance to pay study-related costs.

***If selected, will the candidate be sponsored automatically for a full academic year ?***

Yes. Over this pilot phase, **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** scholarships are provided strictly for one academic year.

After one year, the scholarship can be renewed for another year, if a number of circumstances prevail such as the situation of conflict persists, if the student passed the annual examination for promotion to the next academic year and if funds-raised permits.

The limited **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** number of scholarships available does not justify sponsoring students with unsatisfactory academic performance, unless for a very good reason.

***What are the reasons for discontinuation of a scholarship?***

- repeated failure of examinations
- failure to submit study progress reports
- double sponsorship
- cheating at examinations
- gross personal misconduct
- lack of funds (in exceptional financial crisis situations).

Suspicion of fraud, malpractice or seeking unfair advantage will lead to suspension of benefits, pending thorough investigation. Scholarship assistance if extended, should not exceed a maximum of three years in any case. However, institutions participating in the Academic Consortium may decide on their own to continue sponsorship of the student through their entire course of study.

***Can a candidate apply for postgraduate studies?***

Yes, but postgraduate studies (M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D. and some postgraduate diploma courses) are generally not the main priority of the **Global Platform 4 Syrian Students** programme during this pilot-phase as it targets mainly 18-22 years' old students. However, special consideration could be given.

***If the candidate meets the criteria, but is not proficient in the language of instruction, what should he/she do?***

In some cases, language training courses may be provided.

***Is this programme operating in every country?***

Scholarships and grants are provided only for a limited number of countries that are part of this initiative. The first Call for Applications focus on academic opportunities in Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Call focus on academic opportunities in Lithuania and Portugal. Other Calls will follow soon focused on other countries.

***Which is the target number of scholarships and grants to be awarded within this Programme ?***

Because of its financial limitations, competition for scholarships is high and only a portion of the qualified candidates can be admitted to the programme in particular over this pilot phase. **The Global Platform 4 Syrian Students'** target for 2013 and 2014 is to have up to 1,000 students benefit from this programme in various countries.