

**PASET REGIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AND INNOVATION FUND**

**2017 CALL FOR PHD APPLICATIONS**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

<b>GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS</b>	
<b>Questions and answers related to:</b>	<b>Can be found by</b>
Host Universities	Visiting the respective Host University website (see links in checklist); Host Universities tab under “About RSIF”, <a href="https://www.rsif-paset.org/">https://www.rsif-paset.org/</a>
Thematic Areas (Research focus/field of specialization)	Visiting the respective Host University website (see links in checklist)
Master’s degree requirements	Visiting the respective Host University website (see links in checklist)
Required RSIF scholarship documents	Downloading the RSIF application checklist, <a href="https://www.aau.org/subs/paset/index.php">https://www.aau.org/subs/paset/index.php</a>

**SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

**1. Who is eligible for this scholarship program?**

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the scholarship program:

- Applicants must be citizens of a sub-Saharan African country.
- Applicants must have applied to at least one of RSIF’s African Host Universities in at least one of the thematic areas. For the 2017/2018 cohort, the 3 eligible thematic areas are:
  1. Information Communications Technology (ICT)
  2. Food security
  3. Mining, materials and minerals engineering
- Applicants must hold a Master’s degree in a relevant field of study.

Applicants must be willing to enroll full-time in the PhD program. Students may take on teaching/research assistantship related to their discipline of study on the campus where they are pursuing their PhD program.

**2. Are men eligible for this scholarship?**

Yes, men are eligible and encouraged to apply for this scholarship program. In order to increase the number of women in ASET fields, qualified female candidates will be given priority.

**3. Am I eligible to apply for the scholarship program if I am completing my Master’s degree this year but after the application deadline?**

Only candidates who have received their Master’s degree and can provide a copy of their transcript by the application deadline (July 24, 2017) are eligible to apply for this round of the scholarship program.

**4. What characteristics should an ideal RSIF candidate have?**

Apart from the eligibility criteria, priority will be given to applicants who:

- Are current junior African faculty/academic staff with 1-5 years of teaching/research experience but no PhD
- Have a compelling life history and academic trajectory
- Demonstrate a commitment to pursuing an academic career beyond the scholarship period
- Demonstrate leadership potential, such as community service in areas related to PASET RSIF fields of study
- Are women or ethnic minorities; have physical disabilities

**5. Is the scholarship strictly meant for lecturers teaching in universities?**

The scholarship is not restricted to lecturers teaching in universities and all qualified applicants are eligible. However, in order to build the capacity of African universities, junior African faculty with 1-5 years of teaching/research experience will be given priority.

**6. Is there any age restriction for applicants? The information references priority for “junior” faculty/academic staff members.**

There is no age restriction for applicants for the RSIF program. Any candidate with a relevant Master’s degree but no PhD is eligible to apply. However, please check the individual requirements of the universities to which you are applying for their eligibility..

**7. Are sub-Saharan African citizens located abroad eligible to apply?**

Any citizen of a sub-Saharan African country may apply for the scholarship program.

**8. Am I eligible to apply if I am already enrolled in a doctoral program?**

For this round, only applicants who are not enrolled in any doctoral programs and do not have a PhD may apply for this scholarship.

**9. Through an earlier Call for Applications, I have just been selected into an eligible PhD program in one of the RSIF Host Universities and will enroll this year. Am I eligible for this RSIF call?**

All applicants eligible for the RSIF scholarship are required to be considered for admission to the Host Universities along with the current pool of applicants. Therefore, only applicants who apply to the Host Universities during this call and gain admission may be nominated by the Host University for the RSIF scholarship (that is, if the applicant also applied to the RSIF scholarship program in parallel).

**10. Can I apply if I am studying part-time for my doctoral degree?**

Only students who are willing to enroll in a full-time PhD program are eligible for this scholarship program. However, students may take on teaching/research assistantship related to their discipline of study on the campus where they are pursuing their PhD program, as long as they are enrolled full-time.

**11. Can I apply for a PhD in any Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology field?**

For the 2017 round of applications, we are accepting applicants only for the following three thematic areas:

- (i) Information, Communications Technology (ICT);
- (ii) Food security; and

(iii) Mining, materials and minerals engineering.

There will be opportunities to apply to other thematic areas in the future.

**12. I would like to apply for the RSIF scholarship. Can I apply to a university that is not a RSIF Host University and be sponsored by PASET?**

PASET, through RSIF, provides scholarships for selected students to study only in the selected Host Universities. In order to be eligible for the RSIF scholarship, applicants must apply to one of the four RSIF Host Universities:

- University of Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Cote d'Ivoire
- University of Gaston Berger, Senegal
- Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania
- African University of Science and Technology, Nigeria

**13. How were the Host Universities for this program chosen?**

The Host Universities for the RSIF scholarship program were selected through a rigorous, competitive selection process that evaluated the quality of the PhD programs, the institutional and center capacity, institutions' partnerships at the national, regional and international levels, and impact of the programs on Africa's development. The current set of universities were chosen from the World Bank-funded Africa Centers of Excellence.

**14. Do I need to be proficient in French and English to be eligible for the program?**

Proficiency in one of the languages is mandatory. For this round, two of the universities selected are Francophone and the other two are Anglophone. Visit the websites below to assess the language requirements and support provided by Host Centers:

- Africa Center of Excellence for Mathematics, Informatics, and ICT (MITIC)  
<http://www.ceamitic.sn/index.php>
- Africa Center of Excellence for Climate Change Biodiversity and Sustainable Agriculture (CCBAD)  
<http://www.wascal-ci.org/>
- Africa Center of Excellence for Infectious Diseases of Humans and Animals in Southern and Eastern Africa (SACIDS)  
<http://www.sacids.org/>
- Pan African Materials Institute (PAMI)  
<https://www.acepami.org/>

**15. How long is the duration of the PhD program?**

The PhD programs offered by the four African Host Institutions are between 3-4 years.

**16. Will the thesis project be developed with the supervisor of the Host University or should we already have our projects?**

Please address this and any question(s) related to research projects and thematic areas to the respective Host University.

**17. Should the subject of the thesis and the associated research be relevant exclusively to the country of the Host University or also to any other country including the student's**

**country of origin?**

Students are encouraged to focus on research that benefits the sub-Saharan Africa region and there is no restriction to focus on the host or student's home country.

**18. How flexible is the program in allowing PhD research collaborations with some European and New Zealand research institutions?**

RSIF associated research groups are free to collaborate with researchers from around the world. PASET, however, has identified and continues to identify Partner Universities for the RSIF scholarship program to complement these efforts. Any university wishing to partner with PASET formally should send an inquiry to the PASET Secretariat at [pasetafrica@worldbank.org](mailto:pasetafrica@worldbank.org). The Secretariat reviews each potential partnership on a case by case basis and RSIF Partner Universities are officially added after signing an MOU with PASET and an agreement with the RSIF Implementation Unit (RIU).

**19. For successful scholars, will the RSIF provide grants to allow scholars to travel to institutions in other countries during their research, if need be?**

During the life of the RSIF scholarship, scholars will have an opportunity to apply to partner universities (in South Korea and Netherlands for now) for a sandwich program. If selected, RSIF will support scholars to travel to the partner universities to carry out research.

**20. What are the financial benefits of the scholarship?**

The program provides financial support for up to 4 years of the PhD program with an annual support package of US\$ 24,400. Students admitted to the program will receive a stipend of \$14,400 per year (\$1,200 per month), paid directly to students, to cover expenses such as travel to/from home country, health insurance, living expenses, etc. The balance amount of the scholarship package will go towards tuition, research funding for the PhD supervisor and scholarship administration. Tuition is capped at \$3,000, which is paid directly to Host Universities.

**21. Is there any provision for other study devices such as laptop for successful applicant in course of their research?**

Scholars admitted to the RSIF scholarship program will receive a competitive student stipend that can be used to purchase laptops or any other study devices preferred by the scholar.

**22. As a RSIF scholar, would I be allowed to receive other scholarships and will the amount I receive as RSIF scholarship be reduced if I have other funding (scholarship)?**

Yes, you are allowed to receive other awards. If your existing scholarship award covers your tuition, you will only receive a stipend from RSIF. If your award covers parts of your tuition, the university will adjust your unmet financial need accordingly and RSIF will cover the remaining portion.

**23. How many scholarships will be awarded in this round?**

Up to 50 scholarships will be awarded in the first round. There is a plan to increase the number of scholarship recipients in the future.

**24. Does the scholarship provide benefits for families?**

The scholarship only provides financial support to the applicant. There is no separate dependent support. However, scholars are free to use their stipend to cover such expenses.

**25. What kind of housing is available to RSIF students?**

Each Host University offers their own individual housing arrangements. Please refer to the Host University website or contact a Host University representative for more details.

**26. How will I receive my scholarship?**

Tuition is sent directly to your school and the stipend will be sent directly to you every semester.

**27. If I am selected as a RSIF Scholar, what would be expected of me?**

Before the start of the program, RSIF Scholars are required to participate in a pre-departure orientation organized by the RSIF Implementation Unit (RIU). In addition, the RSIF expects scholars to communicate and work closely with their designated RSIF coordinator (point of contact). The RSIF also expects scholars to:

- Maintain a strong academic record
- Act with honesty and personal integrity
- Demonstrate exceptional character and leadership
- Fully participate in a sandwich program identified by the Host University
- Maintain an exceptional disciplinary record
- Work cooperatively with Host University's RSIF coordinator and provide requested information by RIU

These responsibilities are outlined in a Scholar Agreement, which each selected scholar is required to sign before the disbursement of the award.

**28. Who can I contact for more questions about the scholarship program.**

Please send any questions via email to [paset@aau.org](mailto:paset@aau.org). For questions related to the Host Universities (including the research, campus life, etc.) please refer to the Host University's Call for Application website.

**29. Where can I find additional information and get an opportunity to have my question(s) answered?**

The RIU organized an informational webinar on June 29 (English and French). Questions raised during the webinar are incorporated in this FAQ document. Additionally, you can contact RIU at [paset@aau.org](mailto:paset@aau.org) with any questions related to the RSIF scholarship.

**APPLICATION**

**30. How do I apply for the RSIF scholarship program?**

Applicants should submit an online application to the RSIF Scholarship program available at this link: <https://www.aau.org/subs/paset/>. In parallel, applicants are also required to submit a separate application to their preferred Host University and secure admission.

**31. Do I need to submit a separate application to the Host Institution and the scholarship unit?**

Yes, applicants must submit a separate application to the Host Institution and the RSIF scholarship program.

**32. Should admission to the host university be preceded by the submission of the application for the scholarship?**

RSIF applications and Host University applications must be completed in parallel. The RSIF application must be submitted by the deadline of **July 24, 2017, 5:00pm GMT**. As Host Universities have differing deadlines, applicants are required to follow the host university deadline for their admission to the university. The applicant need not be admitted in the Host University prior to the submission of the RSIF scholarship application.

**33. What documents do I need to submit with my application?**

Along with the online application, please submit a statement of purpose of 750 words maximum, your Bachelor's degree certificate and transcript, your Master's degree certificate and transcript, recommendation letters (please submit emails of the references) and your curriculum vitae (CV). These documents can be uploaded through the [online application](#). See the detailed [checklist on this page](#).

**34. Should the statement of purpose include the research proposal?**

Although the Host University applications may require this, the RSIF scholarship application does not require the research proposal to be indicated in the statement of purpose. The RSIF statement of purpose must include:

- What academic, professional and personal experiences influenced your decision to pursue your research area of interest?
- What kind of development challenge would your research area of interest address in sub-Saharan Africa?
- What are your future plans and how will the RSIF scholarship award help you achieve your goals?

Please refer to the individual Host Institution websites and Call for Applications in order to determine their specific requirements which may differ from the RSIF scholarship requirements.

**35. Do the Master's degree and transcript need to be translated into English for the application?**

The RSIF scholarship program accepts both English and French Master's degrees and transcripts – translation is not required. However, for applications to the Host Universities, applicants are required to follow each Host University's requirements and submit the necessary documents accordingly.

**36. How many references do I need for my application?**

We require you to submit the names and email addresses of two references. Once you have submitted your application, an email will be sent to the references listed to provide a recommendation. We also suggest that you follow up with your reference to ensure they submit their recommendations on time.

**37. Who should I ask to write my letters of recommendation?**

For the RSIF scholarship, only professional references (e.g. professors, managers, work colleagues) are accepted. We recommend asking someone who can articulate your strengths and accomplishments.

**38. Should all documents be submitted in PDF format?**

For the RSIF online application, documents may be uploaded in the following formats: pdf, doc, docx, txt, jpg, and jpeg. Please check the individual Host Institution websites and Call for Applications in order to determine the specific requirements for their applications.

**39. Should the RSIF scholarship application be submitted online or via email?**

The RSIF scholarship application must be submitted online at <https://www.aau.org/subs/paset/>. For the mode of submission of the individual Host Institution applications, please refer to their Call for Applications.

**40. How is my application reviewed?**



There are two major levels of review of applications. First, the application will be reviewed by the Host University to which you are applying based on the university’s admission criteria and procedures. If the application is accepted by the university, the Host University will nominate prospective scholars to the RSIF Implementation Unit (RIU) based on the RSIF program criteria.

Second, the RIU with guidance from PASET’s Executive Committee will conduct an interview and sends shortlisted candidates for a second round of review by the PASET-RSIF review committee. An applicant will be successfully accepted into the RSIF program once he/she has successfully made it through both rounds.

**41. Will the applicant interviews take place before or after the application deadline?**

Following the submission of applications to the Host Institutions and RSIF scholarship program by the application deadline of July 24, 2017, Host Institutions will nominate candidates admitted to their universities for the RSIF scholarship program. Online interviews will be conducted of the nominated candidates starting late August.

**42. When is the deadline to submit my application?**

The deadline to submit RSIF applications is **July 24, 2017, 5:00pm GMT**. As Host Universities have differing deadlines, applicants are required to follow the Host University deadline for their admission to the university.

**43. Will my published works contribute to my chances of getting selected?**

Applicants are encouraged to include the list of publications and any other accomplishments in their applications to increase their chances of receiving the RSIF scholarship.

**44. How will I be notified of my application decision?**

A PASET-RSIF representative will notify you of your application decision by email.

**45. I am having trouble with my online application. Who can I contact?**

For any technical issues, please contact the RIU at [pymireku@aau.org](mailto:pymireku@aau.org)