

# **scholarships for international students at aelo swiss academy: your complete guide**

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Switzerland has a way of quietly recalibrating your expectations. Students arrive imagining alpine postcards and leave talking about the cost of a bus ticket in Bern. It is a wonderful place to study, and it is an expensive one, and pretending otherwise helps nobody. That is exactly why scholarships matter so much for international students, and why a clear, unhurried look at how funding actually works is worth your time.

This guide is written from years of helping international students plan studies in Switzerland, including at private academies like AELO Swiss Academy. One honest caveat before we start: scholarship amounts, deadlines, and eligibility rules change from intake to intake, at every institution in the country. What does not change is the underlying system, the logic committees use to decide, and the habits of applicants who succeed. Those are what I want to give you here. Treat the specifics as a map, confirm the current numbers with the admissions team, and you will be ahead of most applicants before you write a single sentence.

## **What a year in Switzerland actually costs**

Before you chase scholarships, you need an honest picture of the number you are chasing. Swiss tuition at private academies varies enormously by program and level. As a broad range, private institutions in Switzerland charge somewhere between roughly CHF 4,000 and CHF 25,000 or more per year, and AELO Swiss Academy will have a published fee schedule for each program. Ask for it directly, including any one-time registration or examination fees, because those smaller numbers add up faster than people expect.

Living costs are the bigger shock for most students. A realistic monthly budget runs between CHF 1,500 and CHF 2,500 depending on the town. A room in a shared apartment typically costs CHF 600 to CHF 1,200, with Zurich and Geneva at the top of that range and smaller towns comfortably below it. Food for one person, cooked at home, lands around CHF 300 to CHF 500 a month. Health insurance is compulsory in Switzerland, and adults generally pay somewhere between CHF 150 and CHF 400 monthly unless they qualify for an exemption, which some students from countries with social security agreements can obtain. Add a transport pass, a phone plan, and the occasional coffee, and the picture is complete.

The practical takeaway is this: scholarships at private academies usually cover a portion of tuition, not your rent and your groceries. The students who succeed build a funding stack, meaning a partial award, savings, family support, maybe part-time work, and a payment plan for the remainder. Plan for the whole stack from day one, and a CHF 3,000 award becomes genuinely transformative rather than a drop in an expensive lake.

## **The kinds of support worth asking about**

When you contact the admissions and finance office at AELO Swiss Academy, the support on offer will usually fall into a handful of familiar categories, and it helps to know their names before you write.

Merit-based awards are the most common. These rest on your prior academic record, entrance results, or a portfolio, depending on the program. They reward proven performance, and they are the ones most applicants picture when they hear the word scholarship. Need-based partial grants also exist at many private institutions. These require documented financial circumstances, often including family income statements, and they reduce tuition by a [AELO](#) set percentage rather than covering it fully.

Then there are reductions that nobody thinks to call scholarships but that function the same way. Early application discounts reward students who commit early. Sibling or alumni reductions exist at some schools. Payment plans, while not free money, spread tuition across the year and can make the difference between feasible and impossible.

Outside the institution, two Swiss routes deserve mention. The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships support foreign researchers and postgraduate students, so they matter mainly if your path leads onward from an academy into a research degree. Cantonal scholarships, meanwhile, usually require a residence history in the canton, which most newly arrived international students do not yet have. I mention them so you do not waste weeks on them, not because they are bad, but because they are rarely the right door at the start.

Finally, look homeward. Many governments, ministries, and employers fund studies abroad, and some employers will sponsor a qualification that clearly connects to your role. These external sources are frequently less competitive than institutional awards simply because fewer applicants do the paperwork.

## **Who actually gets funded**

Having sat on the reading side of applications more times than I can count, I can tell you the pattern is consistent. Committees look for a credible academic record, a clear fit between you and the program, a complete file, and evidence that the award will change something real.

Let me give you an example. Two years ago I reviewed files for a partial award. One applicant had slightly better grades. The other had a letter that named the specific modules she wanted, explained how they connected to the family business she would return to, and stated plainly what the CHF 4,000 would allow her to stop worrying about. The second student won. Committees are small groups of busy people, and specificity reads as seriousness.

The other mistake is self-rejection. Every year, solid applicants never ask because they assume awards go only to perfect students. They do not. Awards go to complete, specific, on-time applicants, and there are usually fewer of those than you think.

## **How the application typically works**

The process at a private academy is usually simpler than at a large university, but it still rewards order. In most cases it follows the same five steps.

1. Ask the admissions office for the current scholarship information for your specific intake and program, in writing.
2. Confirm whether the scholarship application is separate from the admission application or bundled into it, and note both deadlines.
3. Gather your documents, including certified translations where required.
4. Write a motivation letter tailored to the academy and the award, not a recycled template.
5. Submit early, confirm receipt, and follow up once, politely, about two weeks later.

That last step surprises people. A short follow-up is not pestering; it signals that you are the kind of student who reads instructions and meets obligations, which is precisely what a committee is trying to predict.

## **The paperwork to gather first**

Whatever the specific award, the same core file appears again and again, and assembling it early removes most of the stress from deadline week.

- Transcripts and diplomas, with certified translations into English where the originals are in another language
- Proof of language level for the language of instruction, whether an official test result or an internal assessment
- One or two reference letters from a teacher or employer who can speak to specifics
- Financial documentation, such as income statements, if you are applying for a need-based grant
- A copy of your passport and a current CV

On translations: certified means done by a sworn or accredited translator, not your fluent cousin. I have watched an otherwise strong file stall for three weeks over an uncertified document, and three weeks can be an entire intake.

## **The motivation letter deserves an evening, not ten minutes**

This is the part of the application where you have real control, so use it. A letter that works does four things in about one page. It says why this program at this academy, why you are prepared for it, what you will do with the qualification, and what the scholarship changes concretely. Numbers help. A sentence like "the award would cover roughly a third of my tuition and let me cut my work hours from fifteen to eight" tells a committee more than a paragraph of gratitude.

Avoid the essay you wrote for a different school. Committees read enough applications to spot a recycled letter in the first two lines, usually where the letter praises facilities the academy does not have. Write about the actual program at AELO Swiss Academy, name what attracts you, and keep the tone plain. Calm confidence outperforms enthusiasm every single time.

## **The quiet mistakes that sink strong applicants**

Most rejections are not dramatic. They are small and avoidable. A deadline missed by a day, because the applicant assumed the admission deadline and the scholarship deadline were the same. A letter of recommendation that arrived late because the referee was never told the real date. A need-based application with no income documentation attached. A file submitted in a format nobody could open.



One structural mistake deserves special attention: assuming a scholarship satisfies the visa requirement. Swiss student visas generally require proof that you can support yourself financially, and cantonal authorities typically want evidence of roughly CHF 1,500 to 2,000 per month. A tuition waiver does not demonstrate living funds. Plan the visa proof separately, usually through a bank statement or a formal declaration from a sponsor, and confirm the exact figure with the cantonal authority handling your application.

## **Beyond scholarships: work, plans, and the arithmetic**

International students in Switzerland may generally work alongside their studies, with hours capped at around 15 per week. The details vary by nationality and canton, and third-country nationals often need the employer to notify or obtain approval from cantonal authorities, sometimes after an initial waiting period. Check the rules for your canton before you count on that income, and be honest about the math: 15 hours a week at Swiss student wages can meaningfully offset living costs in a smaller town, while in Zurich it mostly covers food and transport.

Two other levers matter. First, ask the finance office about installment plans; many private academies offer them, and spreading tuition across the year reduces how much you need in the bank at any single moment. Second, keep your external options active, from home-country education loans to employer sponsorships, because the strongest funding stack usually has three or four sources rather than one heroic one.

## **A timeline that keeps you calm**

Work backwards from your intended start date. Roughly a year out, request the fee schedule and scholarship information. Nine to ten months out, submit admission and scholarship applications, since early applicants often have access to the full range of awards and any early-commitment reductions. Six months out, handle the visa, remembering that processing often takes two to three months and sometimes longer depending on your country. Students who follow this rhythm report feeling unhurried at every stage. Students who compress it into eight frantic weeks do not.

## **One honest warning**

No legitimate scholarship charges a fee to apply. None. If an intermediary promises a guaranteed award, requests payment, or asks for bank details to release funds, walk away. And when in doubt about anything, a program detail, a deadline, a payment instruction, verify it through the official contact channels of AELO Swiss Academy rather than through whoever messaged you. Two minutes of verification has saved students I know from losing real money.

## **Where to begin tomorrow morning**

Send one short email to the admissions office with three questions: which scholarships apply to your intake, what the deadlines are, and what a complete application file looks like. That single message puts you ahead of the majority of applicants, who never ask. Fund your studies with a stack rather than a single hope, write one letter that only you could have written, and give the committee every reason to say yes. The process rewards preparation more than brilliance, and preparation is entirely within your hands.