

SSSI RESOURCE · PLANNING

The 12-Month Application Timeline

A month-by-month roadmap from research to acceptance — built for South Sudanese students applying to international undergraduate and graduate programs.

How to use this timeline

Most international scholarship cycles run 9–14 months from research to decision. This timeline assumes a target start date of September 2027. Adjust every date proportionally if your target intake is different (most scholarships have one annual cycle).

If you are reading this less than 6 months before your deadline, skip ahead to Month 7 — you can still apply successfully, you simply have less time for revisions.

Month 1 — September 2026 · Self-audit and research

- List your current academic record (transcripts, grades, certificates, test scores)
- List your English language status (IELTS / TOEFL / DET — taken? Score? Date?)
- Identify your intended level (undergraduate, master's, PhD) and 2–3 fields of study
- Build a 'long list' of 15–20 scholarships using the SSSI Scholarships database
- Read the eligibility page of each long-listed scholarship and remove any you do not qualify for

Month 2 — October 2026 · Shortlist and document audit

- Narrow to 6–10 scholarships with realistic fit (academic profile, country eligibility, deadline alignment)
- Map deadlines on a single calendar (paper or digital)
- Begin collecting documents: birth certificate, passport, transcripts, certificates, ID copies
- Order translated copies of any documents not already in English
- If you do not yet have IELTS/TOEFL/DET, book your test for Month 4 or 5

Month 3 — November 2026 · Language test and CV

- Begin SSSI 60-day IELTS / TOEFL / DET preparation plan
- Build your one-page scholarship CV using the SSSI CV template

- Identify 3 potential recommenders. Have an initial conversation with each
- Begin reading model personal statements — do not start writing yet

Month 4 — December 2026 · First essay drafts

- Sit your language test by mid-month
- Draft your master personal statement (650–1000 words) using the SSSI Personal Statement Guide
- Draft any scholarship-specific essays for programs with January/February deadlines
- Send recommender briefs to your 3 recommenders

Month 5 — January 2027 · First submission window

- Submit applications with January deadlines: Common App-based US universities, MCF (most cohorts), Erasmus Mundus, several need-based aid forms
- Confirm recommenders have submitted
- Track each submission status weekly
- Begin revising essays for February/March deadlines

Month 6 — February 2027 · Second submission window

- Submit applications with February deadlines: Türkiye Burslar■, Swedish Institute, several MCF partner deadlines
- Update your scholarship tracker with status changes
- Begin preparing for interview rounds — some February submissions interview in March

Month 7 — March 2027 · Interviews begin

- Practice scholarship interview questions using the SSSI Interview Question Bank
- Sit any scheduled interviews (MCF interviews typically run March–April)
- Continue submitting for programs with March deadlines (Aga Khan Foundation)

Month 8 — April 2027 · Decisions and additional applications

- First admissions decisions arrive (most US universities decide by April 1)

- Submit April-deadline applications: Australia Awards, Mandela Rhodes, Manchester Equity & Merit
- If you have a positive decision, begin visa research immediately
- If decisions are negative, do not stop — there are still strong May–November windows

Month 9 — May 2027 · Late spring window

- Submit Fulbright (US, for following year) and MEXT (Japan) applications
- Begin visa application for confirmed offers (most student visas take 4–8 weeks)
- Confirm and accept your strongest offer; politely decline the others
- Begin pre-departure planning if you have a confirmed offer

Month 10 — June 2027 · Pre-departure

- Complete visa interviews and biometrics
- Book flights once visa is approved (never before)
- Use the SSSI Pre-Departure Budget Worksheet to plan first-month costs
- Order any required medical tests, vaccinations, and certificates

Month 11 — July 2027 · Final preparations

- Arrange accommodation if not provided by university
- Open an international-friendly bank account (Wise, Equity, KCB)
- Connect with current students at your destination (SSSI alumni network)
- Pack: clothing for the destination climate, original documents, USD/local currency

Month 12 — August 2027 · Departure

- Travel 5–7 days before orientation begins to recover from time zone change
- Carry originals of every document you submitted
- Activate your university account on arrival
- Register with the South Sudanese student association at your university (if one exists)
- Write back to your recommenders and to SSSI — your story is now part of someone else's roadmap

If your timeline does not match this exactly, that is normal. The shape matters more than the months — research, shortlist, document, draft, submit, interview, decide, prepare, depart.