

# Draft of Stipend Regulations for the University of Wittenberg (1545)

## Abstract

In 1545, Johann Friedrich I, Elector of Saxony (1503–1554), founded a scholarship program for the Lutheran University of Wittenberg. About 150 children of priests, burghers, and poor noble families were supposed to benefit from the program, which was funded through the release of religious prebends that were redirected for secular purposes, such as scholarships for poor students. The central aim of the scholarship program was to guarantee the future supply of clergymen and teachers in the secularized electorate of Saxony. In the end, however, relatively few stipends were granted; a subsequent scholarship program founded by Elector Augustus of Saxony (1526–1586) supported only four students of theology and twenty students of philosophy.

## Source

Notice of how the stipends from our gracious lord should be awarded according to the wishes of His Grace.

By the grace of God, we Johann Friedrich...., having been moved by the pure doctrine and preaching of the eternal Word of God, which alone makes holy and which God Almighty has allowed to be revealed and made public in recent times, have abandoned and abolished the papist atrocities and ungodly ceremonies in our electorate and principality, for which we are sincerely grateful to the Almighty. In accordance with our office of prince, to which the Almighty graciously appointed and ordained us, we recently considered, upon the valuable advice of a number of our councilors, how and in what form the tithes and income of the three endowed monastic institutions [*Stifte*] within our jurisdiction—i.e., Aldenburg, Gotha, and Eisenach—at which the aforementioned papist doctrine and ceremonies have been totally and completely eliminated might be put to better use for the praise and glory of God for our churches, schools, lands, and subjects, namely, for the common good, in a more Christian and useful manner than has unfortunately been the case in the recent past under the seductive papacy, and thus put to use for such Christian kindness as the endowers intended. According to the reports that have been submitted and presented to us, the total income and tithes of the three aforementioned *Stifte* should equal to approximately four thousand and twenty guilder, if the prebends and benefices, most of which have been awarded for a lifetime and some of which for a fixed number of years, are dissolved. Thus, we see fit to distribute the income of these three institutions among a number of students to study Holy Divine Scripture and also in other faculties at our university in Wittenberg, and thereby to proclaim perpetual, permanent regulations [for such distribution].

And given that, according to the calculations made, we consider such stipends sufficient to support 150<sup>[1]</sup> individuals, with none being more deserving than the poor nobles', priests', and burghers' children,<sup>[2]</sup> who live and have grown up subject to us within our electorate and principality and who are capable and competent to study [at university]; will that the nobles who are our subjects and have sons who are capable and suited for university studies, but do not have sufficient wealth to support these [sons'] studies at our university in Wittenberg, should have, according to these regulations, 38 stipends,<sup>[3]</sup> [guilder], and the others 30 guilder per year, and the subjects named here, the nobility's children, shall be taken from the following of our districts as stipulated thus: in the Electorate of Saxony two, in Thuringia three, in Meissen also three, and in Vogtland one of these, as outlined, with forty guilder; and, in addition, in the aforementioned electorate 5, in Thuringia and Meissen 8 in each place, and in the Vogtland 6 individuals, each of whom is to receive thirty guilder annually, as

---

stated above, for however many years we deem sufficient, according to their diligence and talent, and their wealth or need as determined and noted.

Furthermore, the children of our poor subjects<sup>[4]</sup> who live throughout our cities<sup>[5]</sup> and are inclined to and capable of taking up studies should have their share according to our gracious stipulations and allowance [eighty-five]<sup>[6]</sup> stipends, by which they should each receive twenty-five guilder per year, and the individuals should come from our districts as follows: namely, in the Electorate of Saxony 14, in Thuringia 34, in Meissen 21, and in Vogtland 16, taken and appointed. And in order that this should be fair, the poor and talented should be preferred over the wealthy and untalented and so many should be supported as we have considered; such persons should be drawn from among our cities, namely, from Wittenberg, our residence city, four individuals, one in law, the second in medicine, the other two [Scripture], and also from the<sup>[7]</sup> cities Belzig, Jessen, Herzberg [Elster], Liebenwerda, Bitterfeld, Brück, Niemeck, Schmiedeberg, Kemberg, Brettin, each one person allotted and appointed who should study Holy Divine Scripture.

And so from Thuringia, in Eisenach, Gotha, and Saalfeld, from each city four, two in law and the other two in medicine, and from the other cities like Jena, Weimar, Eisenberg, Roda, etc., N. and N. should be taken and appointed, who should all study Holy Scripture.

The same for Meissen and the Vogtland accordingly.<sup>[8]</sup><sup>[9]</sup>

And as the pastors, preachers, and chaplains send their children to school and thereby prevent those with the least wealth [from being able to do so], and the poor priests' children are increasing in number, needing to be helped anyway possible: we thus proclaim and desire that twenty-eight<sup>[10]</sup> additional stipends shall be established for these, each of which shall have 25 guilder a year, and which shall be distributed amongst our districts as follows: namely, to Thuringia and Meissen eight each, Saxony four, and Vogtland also four individuals, who are all to study Holy Scripture in Wittenberg and be supported thus. . .

It is our will, however, together with our heirs, to retain the right in cases in which the nobility or towns do not have anyone to nominate whom they could send to Wittenberg as outlined in these stipulations, to accept in their place children of impoverished priests<sup>[11]</sup> who are suited for studies, who should receive such stipends as we and our heirs please for as long as they need until they should be replaced by those for whom the stipends were intended.

Because the majority of the prebends and clergymen in the aforementioned *Stifte* in Aldenburg, Gotha, and Eisenach, a number of individuals, have been appointed for life and only some for a set number of years, our regulations cannot be put into effect completely and the suggestion was made for the support of 150 individuals<sup>[12]</sup>; we have devised regulations and permitted a distribution according to this situation for the initial phase.

According to the reports and information gathered, the surplus beyond that which has been allocated in the *Stifte* named for the lifetimes and limited years and which otherwise had to be spent totals approximately one thousand eight hundred seventy<sup>[13]</sup> guilder, which should prove sufficient to support up to seventy individuals at this time, which shall now be four from the nobility, of which one shall be forty [guilder], and 12,<sup>[14]</sup> of which one should receive thirty guilder per year, from our four districts, and Saxony three, the most capable forty, the others thirty guilder, in Thuringia five, in the same manner, the most capable forty, the other four thirty guilder per annum. And it shall be similarly distributed and stipulated in Meissen, albeit five, and in Vogtland as in Saxony, three, as well.

---

In addition, burgher children in the cities who are capable of studying but whose parents have insufficient means to help them do so, at this time and initially up to 39<sup>[15]</sup> individuals, each of whom should be given twenty-five guilder per annum for their maintenance at the university in Wittenberg. And some should be taken and stipulated from the cities in our four districts, as well, namely, ten from the electorate of Saxony, which are to be distributed evenly among our cities, which are to be stipulated and awarded as follows: to Wittenberg two; Belzig, Herzberg, Brettin, Jessen, Liebenwerda, Bitterfeld, Schmiedeberg, and Brück, from each town one individual; in Thuringia 12, [namely,] in Gotha [and] Eisenach each place two, and in Jena, Weimar, Saalfeld, Salzungen, Creuzburg, Eisenberg, Pößneck, and Neustadt an der Orla, each place one individual; in Meissen [a total of] eleven individuals, [namely,] in Zwickau, Torgau, and Altenburg, from each town two, and from Grimma, Colditz, Born, Eilenburg, Wißneck<sup>[16]</sup> one person; in Vogtland six individuals, [namely,] in Oelsnitz, Plauen, Adorf, Weiden, Werdau, and Schneeberg, from each town one person.

For the children of impoverished pastors, preachers, and chaplains who reside in our land and have grown up here, we have stipulated fifteen stipends in the initial phase, each of which should be granted twenty-five guilder, and which are to be distributed in our districts as follows, to those who are selected and admitted as most talented and in need, namely, in Saxony, Thuringia, and Meissen, in each place four, and in Vogtland three individuals, with their gracious permission: and those aforementioned stipends allocated by us for the nobility and citizens, should they not be claimed [by worthy candidates], then the children of impoverished priests, as outlined above, shall be preferred above others in the awarding [of these funds]. [And] these stipend recipients shall all assiduously study Holy Divine Scripture and not register in any other faculty of the university.

And so that the nomination and suggestion of individuals to whom stipends should be awarded according to our gracious declaration and will is done in a fair way, and young people from every place have the chance of being presented and supported, and can hope that they might be able to study and be of future benefit to the land and its residents, we desire that, of the nobles and knights who reside in the four districts mentioned here and have sons who are inclined and capable of studying but who have insufficient wealth to support these sons at the University of Wittenberg without the help of the stipends mentioned, that the former be sent to Wittenberg for examination, so that the rector and the teachers within the faculties can appraise their suitability and issue a report that should be shown to us and our heirs. If we decide on these grounds to assist them, they shall receive a stipend for an appointed number of years depending on their circumstances, capabilities, and financial means, as judged appropriate by us and our heirs, and a written order or document shall be issued accordingly.

Similarly, the children of poor burghers and priests should first present such documentation of their case to the pastors or superintendents in each location, and the town council and schoolmasters in these towns to go to our university in Wittenberg to be examined, but no boy from the nobility, nor any other, should be sent there until he is at least fourteen years old and has learned the fundamentals of grammar, so that it will be useful for him to be at a university and continue his studies. And if these should show themselves in such examinations to be capable and subsequently come to us [for assistance], they should be treated the same as the children of nobility according to our stipulations and wishes.

As<sup>[17]</sup> the collected reports have shown that beyond the four thousand and twenty guilder there is a surplus of approximately 150 guilder, and furthermore our *Stifte* have at present estimated the grain tax rather low, though present purchases are higher and could get better, [we declare] as a result, that in the future something more can be done: thus we reserve the right for ourselves and our heirs, as we hereby reserve the right, that we and they in the future come to the aid of our needy court attendants and, in accordance with our judgment and discretion, similarly dispense [funds] to support a number of stipend recipients.

---

We desire, however, to reserve the right for ourselves and our heirs in all cases henceforth, and also to warn that should anyone, be he a son of the nobility, the citizenry, or the clergy, be presented to us with reports that he is not suited, or that before or after sitting for his examination he is found to be careless or ill-suited, in other words, that there is no hope that by studying he might later serve the good of the people, this candidate is to be expelled as soon as possible and another, more capable [candidate] awarded [the stipend] in his place.

Furthermore, the aforementioned *Stifte* shall invest the proceeds of repurchases paid by the purchasers in the best manner possible in that location, so that this capital, together with the yearly interest, remains steady and such, in turn, remains available to help the needy and is not used for other things, completely and totally retained, loyally and without risk.

## NOTES

[1] *Beginning*: one hundred seventy-four. [Please note: this and other such notations were presumably made by Walter Friedensburg, editor of the 1926 edition in which this archival document was reprinted. See source citation at the end.]

[2] *Beginning*: noble, burgher, pastor, and other clergyman, but also children of the poor

[3] *At the beginning of the text*: forty; *marginal note (crossed out)*: 50 was previously suggested; ten were subtracted for the children of priests. *The subsequent numbers are adjusted accordingly.*

[4] *Beginning*: our burghers and impoverished priests, sextons, and other poor people.

[5] *In the text*: and on the land, *which apparently had to be dropped here.*

[6] *Beginning*: hundred (*namely, after the original appropriation: 50 nobles and 100 burghers' and priests' children*), then changed repeatedly such that it is no longer clear which number was intended in the end. *The following list, however, totals 85.*

[7] The other two, and also from those *added in marginal notation.*

[8] *Following, crossed out*: which the lords will know to do.

[9] j is not a footnote in the original.

[10] *Initially*: four (according to this only 24 priests' children will be suggested).

[11] Illegible insertion in the margin.

[12] *Beginning*: 174.

[13] *Beginning*: two thousand three hundred.

[14] *Beginning*: 16; *the individual numbers are thus reduced accordingly.*

[15] *Beginning*: 50; *the individual numbers accordingly.*

[16] The towns Hainichen, Belgern, and Buchholz have been crossed out.

[17] This paragraph was added in the margin.

Source: Weimar, Ges. Archiv Reg. Mm. Nr. 4 Bl. 2–9, Entwurf, mit Rückaufschrift: Neue verordnung mit den Stipendien 1544; reprinted in Walter Friedensburg, *Urkundenbuch der Universität Wittenberg*, part 1 (1502–1611). Magdeburg, 1926, pp. 249–53.

Translation: Ellen Yutzy Glebe

---

Recommended Citation: Draft of Stipend Regulations for the University of Wittenberg (1545), published in:  
German History Intersections,  
<<https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/knowledge-and-education/ghis:document-174>> [April 26, 2024].