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The At-Risk Programs at the University of Padova

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our motto:

Universa Universis Patavina Libertas

Freedom for all at the University of Padova

Our values promote:

- Academic freedom
- Human rights protection
- Equal access to education

👉 The At Risk programs embodies the ethical identity and historical mission of the University



Alignment with Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Key objectives:

- Social mission
- Inclusion and diversity
- Internationalization

👉 The programs translate into action
the strategic priorities



The SCHOLARS@RISK Program

ORIGINS (2017-2021)

- First hosting: Turkish scholar (2017, university co-funded a departmental initiative)
- University joins **Scholars at Risk (SAR)**
- 2019: launch of **SAR Italy section** (with Trento)
- Additional scholars hosted (Iran, Afghanistan)
- **Bottom-up phase:**
 - Department-driven
 - No central policy



FIRST STRUCTURED PROGRAM (2022)

- Trigger: war in Ukraine
- Fellowship duration: 3-12 months
- Open rolling call
- Target groups: Ukrainians, refugees

👉 First systemic institutional effort – the **Unipd Scholar Rescue Fund**

The
SCHOLARS@RISK
Program



CONSOLIDATION (2023)

- Budget: 50% co-funding by Departments
 - New eligibility: SAR recognition or equivalent
 - 21 applicants (all admitted)
 - Countries: Afghanistan, Belarus, Russia, Sudan, Turkey, Ukraine, Iran
 - Spread across 12 Departments
- 👉 Strong institutional buy-in



PROGRAM REDESIGN (2026)

- Minimum duration: 12 months
 - Fellowship amount doubled: €40,000
 - Co-funding: €25k central + €15k Departments
 - Fixed deadline (no rolling calls)
- 👉 Fewer fellowships, higher quality and stability

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Program



FROM HOSTING TO BELONGING

Three-pillars model:

- **Administrative mentoring** (visas, permits, banking)
- **Academic mentoring** (integration in departments, teaching and research)
- **Social mentoring** (community and city engagement)

👉 **From emergency hosting to full integration**

The
SCHOLARS@RISK
Program



PROGRAM EVOLUTION

Initial phase (2021-2022):

- **Crisis driven programs** (Afghanistan, Ukraine, Myanmar)

👉 **2023-2026: from country-specific initiatives to global Students@risk program**

Integrated into the **UNIPD Rescue Fund**

The
STUDENTS@RISK
Program



The STUDENTS@RISK Program

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Annual calls
- Duration typically 12 months
- Travel reimbursement
- Psychological support
- Dedicated buddy tutor
- Italian language courses
- Flexible renewable (up to full degree cycle)
- Defined risk criteria

 **Shift to structured, criteria-based system**



PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Annual calls
- Duration 3 years
- Travel reimbursement
- Health insurance
- Psychological support
- Defined risk criteria

 **Structured, criteria-based system**

**The PhD@RISK
Program**



What do we mean by "risk"?

- **Contextual risk:** war, repression, systemic discrimination
- **Individual risk:** activism, research topics, public positions

In most cases risk=combination of both



The Risk Assessment Tool

How risk is assessed?

- **Severity of risk:** threats to life, freedom or education; forced displacements
- **Aggravating factors:** gender, ethnicity, religion; political views, identity
- **Vulnerabilities:** health, economic condition; social isolation, dependents

👉 **Risk is multi-dimensional and intersectional**



The Risk Assessment Tool

Questionnaire (pre-interview)

- residency
- current status (e.g. student, worker, ...)
- financial resources

Interview

- description of the perceived risk status
- imminence of risk
- alternative opportunities/possibilities
- supporting evidence
- family status

Checklist

- type of risk
- nature/extent of risk
- risk aggravating factors
- exposure to risk
- Evidence of risk

RISK INDICATOR



INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND COMPLEMENTARY INITIATIVES

- UNICORE (UNHCR Italy)
- Scholars at risk (SAR)
- CRUI/FAMI (students already in Italy)
- IUPALS (Palestine)
- Scholar Rescue Fund (US Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor - DRL)

The
PEOPLE@RISK
Programs



The PEOPLE@RISK Programs

Key innovations

- Shift to **global-eligibility criteria** (risk-based)
- Structured funding calls
- Increasing financial investment
- Integrated support: academic, administrative, social

👉 From hosting to **inclusion model**



Challenges & future

- Shared **challenges**: scaling personalized support, administrative complexity, post-programme vulnerability
- Key **priorities**: job placement, career pathways, stronger external partnerships

👉 From protection to **long-term integration**



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