



ASHINAGA

AAI Applicant Handbook

Ashinaga Africa Initiative 2024

Anglophone and Francophone Application

Young Leaders for Africa

DEADLINE: 19th JANUARY 2024

Ashinaga is a Japanese foundation headquartered in Tokyo. We provide financial support and emotional care to young people around the world who have lost either one or both parents. With a history of more than 55 years, our support has enabled more than 110,000 orphaned students to gain access to higher education.

The Ashinaga Africa Initiative (AAI) is an international leadership programme that cultivates the next generation of leaders to contribute to the development of sub-Saharan Africa. AAI Scholars have lost one or both parents and are committed to returning to sub-Saharan Africa to initiate change, innovation, and development.

This handbook will provide you with a detailed explanation of the programme and the application process. Applications require preparation, and by providing you with this material, our hope is that you will have all the information necessary to submit an outstanding application and increase your chances at being accepted. While some of the recommendations are specific to the AAI, most guidelines can be applied to other circumstances where you need to undergo screening and selection. We hope you make the most of this handbook.

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Programme Overview

What is the AAI?

The Ashinaga Africa Initiative provides access to full financial support to study at a university abroad, including tuition, room, travel costs and other necessary fees. The programme has three stages.

1. Study Camp and Preparation Camp

Selected Ashinaga Africa Initiative students participate in a Study Camp in Uganda or Senegal from July to December 2024. Anglophone students will normally attend the Camp in Uganda, while Francophone students attend the Camp in Senegal. During the Study Camp, students are assisted in their academic preparation, university applications (to either Japan, the U.K., the U.S.A., or Europe), career planning and leadership development.

After completing the Study Camp, the students will progress to a second camp called Preparation Camp. This happens between April and June 2025. Students meet again to prepare for the social, cultural, and academic differences they will discover abroad. Students will then proceed to university in August or September of 2025. All the costs during both camps are fully covered by Ashinaga.

Japanese language track students who will study at university in the Japanese language will follow a similar schedule, however, they will focus on intensive Japanese language learning throughout the Study Camp. After the Study Camp, they will move to Japan to spend one or two years at a Japanese language school prior to starting their university studies.

2. During University

The AAI helps students access full financial support to study abroad. The support covers the first possible qualification that can be earned, and the costs of a foundation or preparatory course will also be covered if required. Ashinaga has regional office to support students during studies in Japan, the U.K., the U.S.A., France, and Brazil. Scholars will participate in a mandatory internship in their home country or sub-Saharan Africa and join Ashinaga's leadership development programmes. The AAI does not accept applications from students who wish to study for a second degree or master's degree.

3. After Graduation

Scholars have the responsibility to return to their home countries or sub-Saharan Africa within four years after graduating and contribute to the country/region while living there for at least one year. They will have to contact Ashinaga during this period to provide information about their activity and residency.



Can I apply?

You should meet all the criteria below if you would like to apply for the AAI.

The AAI is open to students who:

- Have lost one or both parents.
- Have citizenship and have completed/are completing high school in one of the 49 sub-Saharan African countries.
- Are less than 23 years old.
- Have completed/ are completing 3 years of high school with excellent academic record, and consistently placing in the 10% of their class.
- Do not have the means to attend university abroad without external financial support.
- Are proficient in English, French or Portuguese.
- Are able to participate in the two Ashinaga preparatory programs, over the course of one year, before attending university.
- Are committed to returning home, or to Sub-Saharan Africa, and contributing to society in Sub-Saharan Africa after graduating from university.
- Have no dependents who could interfere with academic progress.
- Have a good enough health condition to be able to study abroad.

What documents will I need to submit?

You will be required to submit the following documents at each stage of the application process:

Applicant Registration

- Photo or scan of at least one of the following documents: Passport, National ID Card or Birth Certificate.
- Photo or scan of your most recent High School Term Report/Transcript
- Photo or scan of your final High School Examination Results Certificate (if applicable)

Full Application

- Passport style photograph.
- Passport or National ID Card.
- Birth certificate of applicant.
- Death certificate of deceased parent(s), including the deceased parent's name, or an alternative official documentation proving the death of parent(s) or orphan status.
 - All term reports / secondary school transcripts from the last 2 years.
 - Final secondary school examination certificate, showing grades in each subject.*
 - A letter of recommendation from a principal or school teacher. This should be inclusive of their email address, and phone number and must contain information about your performance and character whilst at secondary school. All recommendation letters should contain an official signature or stamp.
 - Academic transcripts or other results from university (if applicable).
 - Certificates for extracurricular activities, training courses, jobs or commitments (if applicable).

**For students receiving their examination results in February 2024, we will ask you to send your examination certificate as soon as possible after you have received it.*



Application Process

How do I apply?

How does the application process work?

There are two stages to the Ashinaga Africa Initiative application process:

- 1. Applicant Registration:** you must first confirm your eligibility by registering for the programme. Only applicants who register for the programme and are deemed eligible will receive the application form by email. Each decision about an applicant's eligibility is based on the criteria outlined previously and their academic record. Our expectations for the academic record of an applicant reflect the academic level we expect students to have in order to thrive as part of our intensive academic leadership programme.
- 2. Application:** you will receive an email with a link to the application form within 1 month of your registration if they you are eligible for the programme.

The application form can be completed using an online or a paper form to be submitted via email.

We strongly recommend applying online.

The link to our online application system is:

<https://ashinaga.smapply.net/>

To access our paper application form (to be submitted by email), please visit our website, or email the AAI Selection Team.

If you apply online, you will need to first create an account for our online application system. Be mindful to use an active email address that you can easily access so that you can receive and follow all instructions throughout your application. Simply creating an account does not mean that your registration has been completed and submitted; after you create an account you will need to complete the form and upload photos or scans of the required documents.

This application process is free, and anyone asking for payment at any stage is doing so against the will of Ashinaga.

What should I be careful about when completing my application?

When completing your application, it is important to prepare well and check to make sure you are not making any mistakes. Please be careful about the following:

1. Gather your documents early and in full to avoid late submissions. Late submission or omission of any of the required documents could justify disqualification from the application process, but if you are having trouble obtaining a document then please contact the AAI Selection Team as soon as possible to explain your situation.
2. When scanning or taking pictures of your documents, ensure that the documents are captured properly, and the information is clearly and easily visible.
3. When writing your personal information (name, date of birth), ensure that it exactly matches your official documents.
4. Beyond personal information, strive to provide succinct, accurate, detailed information about you when answering the questions on the application form.

When can I apply?

Applications are open from August 1st 2023 until January 19th 2024. We recommend that you start and finalise your application as soon as possible, to avoid any last-minute inconvenience that would invalidate your application.

After registration, eligible applicants will be invited to complete the full application before the 2nd of February 2023.

If your written application is successful, you will be invited to the Ashinaga Assessment in late March/early April 2024, where we will conduct individual interviews and set an examination to better understand your academic abilities and career goals in sub-Saharan Africa. You must bring all original academic documents and identification documents to the interview. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the application process.

The key dates for this year's student selection process are listed below:

1st August 2023 - Application opens

12th January 2024 - Applicant Registration deadline

26th January 2024 - Deadline to submit complete application

March 2024 - Shortlisted applicants notified

Late March/Early April 2024 - Ashinaga Assessment (interview and exam)

Late May 2024 - Selection results announced

June 2024 - Selected applicants prepare for Study Camp in Uganda or Senegal

July 2024 - Study Camp Starts



Important Information

What do I need to understand?

1. Becoming a Scholar

Students will only officially become Scholars of the Ashinaga Africa Initiative after receiving admission from a university and a visa from the potential country of study. Please know that joining the Study and Preparation Camp does NOT guarantee admission to university or visa acceptance. University admission and visa application are the student's own responsibility, but Ashinaga will do its best to support students in both.

2. Choosing a subject / country / university

Ashinaga takes students' goals and preferences into account but has the right to make the final decision with regards to selection of major, country and university. Students are able to express their initial choice of major at the time of interview, and a final decision will be made during the course of the Study Camp through consultation with Ashinaga. Scholars will normally apply to the universities that Ashinaga has an existing relationship with and therefore it is not possible for students to choose universities themselves.

Please note Ashinaga does not support candidates for medical (doctor), dentistry, veterinary science or pharmacy degrees, although it does support three or four-year degrees in biomedicine.

In addition, candidates wishing to study engineering should be aware that we will require particularly strong and relevant high school grades for a successful application.



Assessment Criteria

What is Ashinaga looking for?

How will I be assessed?

Throughout the entire application process, we assess all applicants using three main criteria:

1. **Knowledge and Aptitude**
2. **Future Planning & Leadership**
3. **Challenges Faced**

Below is a more detailed explication of each criterion:

1. Knowledge & Aptitude

- We will assess your academic performance based on your secondary school class grades and your overall examination results. Just passing your exams is not enough for our programme; we expect students to have strong academic scores in order to pass the eligibility screening process and be invited to complete the full application form.
- During the application and the interviewing process, we will evaluate your knowledge about your field of studies and other assets such as your critical thinking and creativity. This assessment criterion is important because we expect AAI Scholars to be intellectually curious and thirsty for knowledge; you should understand and be passionate about the subject you want to study and the problems you want to solve. We believe that these assets will be the key to be successful at university and beyond.

2. Future Planning & Leadership

- We also prioritise the link between your future plans and your desired field of study at university abroad. This needs to be coherent and realistic. We ask you to explain this in as much detail as possible to see how your university education would contribute to the betterment of your country, community, and potentially sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.
- In addition to your future plans, we also care about your leadership experiences: things that you have already done that show you have leadership potential. Ashinaga has a very broad definition of leadership that goes beyond the common leadership positions such as president, principal, or CEO. We define leadership as the commitment to develop and apply a set of academic, personal, and professional skills while demonstrating Ashinaga's ethos: a warm heart, an open mind, a proactive attitude, and an international outlook. There are many ways in which you can fulfil our definition of leadership, so we invite you to take a close look at all your life experiences, your responsibilities at home or within your community, and any extra-curricular activities that reveal your leadership potential.

3. Challenges Faced

- We want to understand your personal situation and the socio-economic circumstances of your family. We care about the challenges you have

faced and might still be facing with regards to your education, and we want to understand what you are doing to overcome these challenges.

- It is important for us to understand the level of support, financial or otherwise, provided by you family, but we are also interested in how you support your own family and the wider community.
- Why do we care about this? Through our programme, we aim to empower young, talented students with the potential to become change-makers who can identify issues, find solutions and acquire the skills they need to successfully implement them. Attending university abroad will not be without its challenges and will require endurance and strong motivation. For that reason, we seek candidates who have faced and overcome challenges, showing resilience throughout their journey, and whom we believe could appropriately handle this challenge, with our support.

What is the best way to make my application stand out?

Your academic results are important, but the AAI selection process looks at much more than just your school and exam results.

As part of the application process, you will be asked to submit written answers to three short-answer questions

(200 words each), as well as two longer essays. These questions will ask you about the following topics:

- Your hobbies, interests, and activities
- Your leadership experiences
- Your desired field of study at university
- The challenges you have faced and overcome following the loss of your parent(s)
- Your plans to contribute to the development of your community.

All of the information you provide when applying is considered by the Selection Team, but the information

you provide when answering these questions is very important. If you do not answer these questions thoughtfully and in detail, then it is unlikely that you will be invited to the interview. The two long essay questions might take you some time; writing good essays can be a difficult but rewarding experience. The chosen themes should allow you to reflect on your past and present experiences and think about the future. You should start working on your essays as soon as possible, making sure you understand all parts of the questions and provide corresponding answers.

- The first essay is about the challenges have faced growing up and the actions you took to overcome them. In particular, we want you to focus on the actions you took to further and continue your education. In simple words, tell us your story. We are interested in who you are as a person, and not just your academic performance.
- The second essay is about the goals you wish to achieve after participating in the AAI and graduating from university abroad. We want you to think about a problem that your community is facing and how you could help to solve this. In your essay, you should outline how the skills and knowledge you gain from your studies and the AAI program would help you solve this problem and achieve your goals when you return to sub-Saharan Africa. The more logical and coherent your idea are, the better chances you have of convincing us.

When writing essays, it is always a good idea to get feedback from someone else. Discuss the essay topics with your friends, mentors, or teachers or have them read it and give ideas on how to improve. While you can consult others, it is important you write the essays and that your work remains original. If you do research to back up your essays, make sure you provide references or mention where you get the information from (do not copy and paste from websites).

How can I prepare for my interview if I am selected?

If you are selected for an interview, you will receive an email with a detailed explanation of the process and how you can prepare. We interview about 5 students per country, but if you have time, you can start preparing from the moment you submit your application. If you are invited to the interview, this is great news, and you will be ready to do your best. If you are not invited, then you will still be able to practice some essential interview skills that will be useful in other interviews in the future.

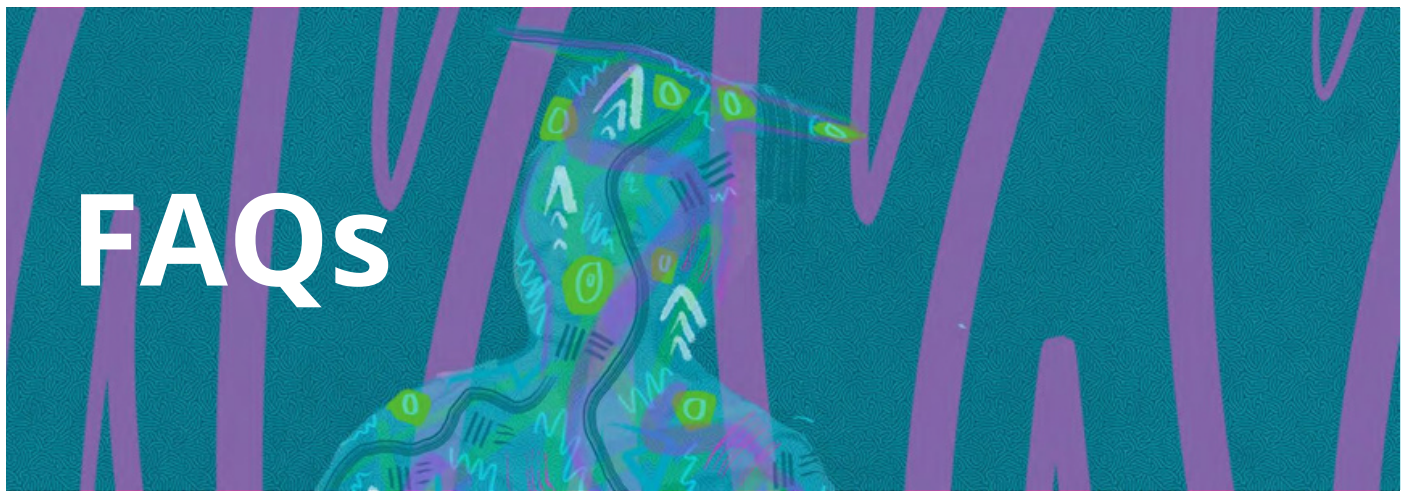
The key to the success of the interview is practice, practice, and practice!

Review what you wrote on the application form and get ready to answer any questions linked to what you wrote. Practice as much as possible by using the mirror, recording videos, or asking your family, friends, or teachers to practice your interview.

The qualities of good interviewees are:

1. Positivity and enthusiasm: show us your potential based on your experiences and future vision. We would like to know how you are capable to unlock the potential of yourself, and sub-Saharan Africa.
2. Confident: exude your confident without being arrogant.
3. Body language: most effective way to express yourself!
4. Clarity: answer all questions clearly and concisely, but not too quickly. You can pause before answering an unexpected question to give yourself thinking time or asking for clarification if you're unsure what a question means. It is important not to rush and take your time to answer properly.

An interview is your chance to let your personality shine and show us that you are a good fit for our programme. Respect the basic rules of professionalism (be punctual, dress appropriately, speak in a clear and calm voice), but do not be afraid to let your personality stand out.



Where can I find answers to my questions?

Application Information

1. What are the important dates and deadlines I should remember?

Applications will be open from the 1st of August 2023 and the deadline to submit your registration will be on 19th January 2024. You must submit your registration form before you can submit the full application for the programme.

2. What is the registration form for?

The registration form allows us to register applicants in our system, and we will use the information provided to determine if 1) the applicant fulfils all the eligibility requirements and 2) has a strong enough academic record to be considered for the programme. Only applicants who are eligible when assessed according to these criteria will be invited to complete the application.

3. What does the registration process consist of?

In the registration you will be asked to submit basic information about you such as your name, nationality, date of birth, email, status of mother and father, year of exam results, overall exam grades, desired field of study, etc. You will also be required to submit an identification document, your exam results, and your final/most recent high school transcripts.

4. What happens after I submit my registration?

Within one month of submitting your registration, you will be notified about whether you are eligible and have strong enough academic grades for the program. If you are invited to complete the full application for the programme, you will receive an email inviting you to proceed to the next round, the full application form.

5. What does the full application consist of?

Only applicants eligible for the programme will be invited to fill in the full application. The full application consists of detailed personal, family, academic and post-secondary/university information. You will also be asked about your leadership experiences and any extracurricular activities. The questions will be a mixture of multiple choice, short and long answer, including two essays. You will be required to submit a national ID card or passport, ID photo, birth certificate, death certificate for you parent(s), school transcripts, exam results (if available), letter of recommendation, university transcripts (if applicable), certificates, etc.

6. Do I have to apply online? What do I do if I am having difficulties with the online application?

We strongly recommend applying online however if for any reason you cannot apply online, please email us at **admissions.en@ashinaga.org** for support.

7. Can I apply after the deadline?

We do not accept applications after the deadline. We advise you to apply as early as possible with all the documents.

8. How will I hear about being invited to the Ashinaga Assessment (interview and exam)?

If you are selected for the Ashinaga Assessment you will receive an email with all the details in March 2024.

9. What is assessed during the final Ashinaga Assessment?

Applicants are assessed on their academic knowledge and aptitude, challenges faced and overcome, leadership experiences and future plans. You will be assessed through an examination and interview.

10. How much does it cost to apply?

All applications are free of charge.

11. If I applied last year, can I apply again?

If you still satisfy the requirements, you are welcome to apply again.

12. I have other questions; how should I contact Ashinaga?

If you have further questions, please contact us by email at admissions.en@ashinaga.org

Eligibility and Application documents

1. Can exceptions be made to the eligibility criteria?

You must meet all the eligibility criteria to apply for this programme.

2. My date of birth puts me just outside the age limit. Can I still apply?

We only accept students less than 23 years old.

3. I don't have a passport or national ID card, what should I do?

If you do not have a passport or national ID card, then another official document with your full name, age, and photo can be considered, such as a school ID card.

4. I do not have one of the required documents. What should I do?

All the required documents listed are necessary to apply, particularly proof of age and proof of the death or disappearance of a parent. If you do not have a death certificate, then any other official document can be considered including a court record, affidavit, or an official letter from a local government official.

5. I cannot receive a letter of recommendation from my teacher, what should I do?

If you cannot receive a letter of recommendation from your teacher, you can submit a letter of recommendation from a school counsellor or someone who knows you in an academic setting.

6. I am currently attending school and residing in a different African country to the one for which I hold citizenship, am I still eligible?

You are eligible if you have citizenship and have completed/are completing secondary school in one of the following countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, CAR, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, DRC, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Kingdom of Eswatini, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania, The Gambia, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Programme Information

1. **How many students do you select per country?**

Ashinaga takes great care to select and develop our students. We believe in quality over quantity and invest a significant number of resources in those who are accepted into our programme. As a result of this, to ensure sustainability, we aim to select about one student per country per year. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to select a student from each country every year.

2. **Why is the age limit 23?**

There are two reasons for this. The first is that Ashinaga wants to prioritise young people for this leadership programme, and the second is that students aged 23 or older typically have greater difficulty obtaining a student visa to study abroad.

3. **Why is the programme only for orphans?**

Ashinaga is first and foremost an organisation that supports the education of orphaned young people.

4. **What costs does the programme cover?**

The Ashinaga Africa Initiative helps students access full financial support to study abroad that cover the costs of tuition, accommodation, insurance, flights, and provides a monthly stipend which covers necessary academic costs and food. The support covers the first possible qualification that can be earned. The costs of a foundation or preparatory course will also be covered if required for the student to be admitted or properly prepared for their degree, or if the academic qualifications in the student's country are not recognised in the potential country of study. However, AAI does not select students for a second degree or master's degree.

5. **Why only undergraduate level? Can Ashinaga support me for a Masters?**

As there are many other organisations, universities, and foundations offering funding for Master's degrees, we have decided to prioritise students applying for undergraduate university studies.

6. **How will my university/country of study be decided?**

This will be decided during the Ashinaga Study Camp for students selected for this programme.

It will be decided with the student, but the final decision ultimately lies with Ashinaga. It will depend on numerous criteria, including visa requirements, language requirements, academic grades, and the availability of the student's desired course of study.

7. **What happens if I have an offer of admission to university already, should I still apply to the programme?**

You can apply for the programme, but you will need to participate in the AAI Preparation Year, and it is very unlikely you will go on to study at the university where you have already received an offer. You will instead apply to other universities with the support of Ashinaga.

8. **Can I get a partial scholarship with Ashinaga?**

We do not support individual students who have already received an offer of admission or a partial funding for their studies. We only support students who are admitted to our leadership programme, the Ashinaga Africa Initiative.

9. **What courses are not covered by the Ashinaga programme?**

Ashinaga does NOT support medicine, veterinary, dentistry, and pharmacy degrees, although we do support three-or four-year undergraduate programmes related to medicine, such as biomedicine.

10. **What language will I study in?**

We have students studying in English, French, Portuguese, and Japanese. The language each student studies in varies according to the country of study and course. Applicants accepted to study in Japan will normally study in English, except applicants accepted to the Japanese Language Track. Japanese Language Track students will first study Japanese for one to two years before studying their desired course at university in the Japanese language.

11. **I am from a French-speaking country but want to study in English. Can I still apply?**

Yes, you may still apply. Some students from Francophone countries with sufficient quality English can study in English.

Applicant Checklist - Have I completed everything correctly?

Use this list to ensure you have not forgotten anything whilst applying for the programme:

Registration

I have checked and confirmed that I am eligible for the programme. ☐

(If applying online) I have created and confirmed an account for the online application system. ☐

I have collected all necessary documents (listed below). ☐

I have answered all the questions in the registration form. ☐

I have uploaded a clear, easy to read photo or scan of the requested documents. ☐

- Photo or scan of at least one of the following documents: Passport, National ID Card or Birth Certificate.
- Photo or scan of your most recent High School Term Report/Transcript.
- Photo or scan of your final High School Examination Results Certificate (if applicable).

I have double checked and ensured all entered information is accurate. ☐

I have submitted my registration before the deadline: 12th January 2024 at midnight. ☐

Application

I have received a notification email from Ashinaga inviting me to complete the full application form. ☐

I have collected all necessary documents (listed below). ☐

I have read the FAQs and the advice on submitting a good application found in this Handbook. ☐

I have answered all the questions on the application form. ☐

I have uploaded a clear, easy to read photo or scan of the requested documents. ☐

- Passport style photograph.
- Passport or National ID Card.
- Birth certificate of applicant.
- Death certificate of deceased parent(s), including the deceased parent's name, or alternative official documentation proving death of parent(s) or orphan status.
- All term reports / secondary school transcripts from the last 2 years.
- Final secondary school examination certificate, showing grades in each subject.
- A letter of recommendation from a principal or schoolteacher. This should be inclusive of their email address, phone number and must contain information about your performance and character whilst at secondary school. All recommendation letters should contain an official signature or stamp.
- Academic transcripts or other results from university (if applicable).
- Certificates for extracurricular activities, training courses, jobs, or commitments (if applicable).

I have checked and proofread my essays. ☐

I have double checked and ensured all entered information is accurate. ☐

I have submitted my application before the deadline: 26th January 2024 at midnight. ☐



Contact Details

How can I contact the Selection Team?

Before you contact the AAI Selection Team, please make sure you check our website and read this Applicant Handbook in detail, especially the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). It can take a few days for the Selection Team to answer any questions, and often the information you might be looking for is already available from one of these resources!

Website - **<https://ashinaga.org/en/our-work/ashinaga-africa-initiative/apply-to-the-aai/>**

Facebook - **<https://www.facebook.com/ASHINAGAOfficial>**

Email (English) – **admissions.en@ashinaga.org**

Email (French) – **admissions.fr@ashinaga.org**



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