

## Guidance

# Early years initial teacher training: 2026 to 2027 funding guidance

Funding guidance for early years initial teacher training (EYITT) providers for 2026 to 2027.

From:  
[Department for Education](#)

Published  
18 February 2026

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**Applies to England**

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The Department for Education (DfE) allocates and funds early years initial teacher training (EYITT) places each academic year. EYITT leads to the award of early years teacher status (EYTS).

We provide training bursaries, training grants and employer incentives to attract high-quality graduates to become early years teachers.

This funding can only be used to offer training programmes that help trainees to meet the [teachers' standards \(early years\)](#). The training grant includes the costs of assessment to meet these standards.

Trainees and potential applicants should visit the [Get Into Teaching](#) website and our list of [EYITT training providers](#) for more information. Employers should visit [EYITT: a guide for employers](#).

## Training routes

DfE offers funding for 2 out of the 4 EYITT training routes.

### Graduate entry route

This is for graduates studying full time. Training is typically over a 1 year period.

EYITT providers will receive training grant funding of £9,535 to cover course fees.

Dependant on the level of degree the trainee already holds, they may be eligible to receive a training bursary as detailed below. This will be paid to EYITT providers to forward to trainees.

### Graduate employment-based route

This is for graduates typically working part time over a 1 year period:

- in paid employment
- in an early years setting
- who need training and further experience to demonstrate the [teachers' standards \(early years\)](#)
- who have the right to work in the UK for the duration of the training

£16,535 is available for this route, made up of a:

- £9,535 training grant for providers
- £7,000 employer incentive for the trainee's employer

## Undergraduate entry

Funding is not available from DfE for this route. Trainees should contact [Student Finance England](#) to see if they can receive a tuition fee or maintenance loan.

This route is for undergraduates who want to take a level 6 degree in an early childhood-related subject along with EYTS.

This route is full-time and takes 3 or 4 years.

## Assessment only

Funding is not available from DfE for this route. This is a self-funded route for graduates who:

- are very experienced at working with children from birth to 5 years old
- can demonstrate the [teachers' standards \(early years\)](#) without any further training

This could be an early years teacher who:

- practiced overseas
- understands the early years foundation stage

## Training bursaries

Training bursaries are only available to trainees registered on the graduate entry route. Providers should use the trainee's highest qualification to determine how much they will get, for example:

- tier 1, £5,000: first-class honours degree, doctoral degree
- tier 2, £4,000: 2.1 honours degree, master's degree
- tier 3, £2,000: 2.2 honours degree
- no bursary: third-class honours degree, third honours degree, ordinary degree, aegrotat, no first degree

If a trainee is ineligible for a bursary award but feels there are extenuating circumstances that impacted their final result, this must be raised with the awarding body of the qualification. Providers must not apply any discretion in these cases.

If the outcome of a qualification, for example a masters or doctoral degree, is not yet known, bursary eligibility must be determined by the highest relevant academic award on the date the training course started. If the trainee is subsequently awarded a higher qualification, their bursary

eligibility may be reassessed provided the award of this qualification was made on or before the date the course started.

Contact [eyitt.GENERALENQUIRIES@education.gov.uk](mailto:eyitt.GENERALENQUIRIES@education.gov.uk) for further guidance in these circumstances.

## **Qualifications record keeping**

Providers must keep accurate records of trainees' qualifications and how they obtained them, especially for overseas qualifications.

Providers should record:

- names of all trainees granted a bursary
- details of how they assessed the trainees' qualifications

We may ask to see these records at any time. Providers should keep copies of:

- original trainee documentation or qualification certificates
- correspondence between them and trainees
- other documentation relating to the decision process

## **Eligibility**

To receive a training bursary, trainees must:

- meet the [entry requirements](#)
- take a qualifying postgraduate graduate entry course
- hold a UK first degree with at least second-class honours (or equivalent)
- not already hold EYTS or early years professional status (EYPS)
- not do any type of paid teaching work which contributes to their training while undertaking a graduate entry course, for which the provider received early years funding
- not be registered on another EYITT course

Providers must also:

- notify trainees in writing that they are eligible
- ensure that trainees continue to meet the criteria throughout the course

## **Training bursary payments**

Providers should pay bursaries in 10 monthly instalments. This table shows providers how to calculate trainees' monthly bursary instalments.

<b>Bursary award</b>	<b>Monthly instalment</b>
£5,000	£500
£4,000	£400
£2,000	£200

### **Payment eligibility**

Trainees will be entitled to receive the first bursary payment if they are actively engaged on the EYITT programme on the first day of the month following their start date.

### **Example**

A trainee commencing their course in September 2026 will be entitled to their first payment if they are on the programme on 1 October. They will be entitled to the second payment if they are on the programme on 1 November respectively. This is regardless of the provider's individual payment date.

### **Payments for part-time or modular courses**

Trainees on part-time or modular courses may agree a flexible monthly payment plan, which covers the duration of the part-time programme to avoid financial hardship for the trainee. However, providers must make sure that the bursary payments reflect the proportion of the course that the trainee has completed at any point.

As part-time courses will span more than one academic year, providers may award the bursary beyond the academic year 2026 to 2027. Providers are reminded that any bursary payments made after 31 July of the academic year will be included as expenditure for the following academic year, for example 2027 to 2028.

### **Training grant**

Providers must use the training grant funding to meet all training costs for each trainee.

Providers must not:

- charge any additional fees
- switch allocated funding to other trainees

## Full-time equivalence (FTE)

We calculate funding using the FTE principle.

FTE equivalence	Trainee status
0.5 or less	part-time
Over 0.5	full-time

## Employer incentive

The employer incentive is paid directly to the trainee's employer. It's a contribution towards costs that employers incur, such as:

- supply cover while the trainee is attending EYITT training
- salary enhancements
- employment costs
- National Insurance
- additional training costs and other overheads

You cannot use the employer incentive for:

- sick pay
- maternity or paternity pay
- assets, for example, books, toys and equipment
- internal training costs that do not relate directly to EYITT training, such as additional continuing professional development
- staff costs that are not related to supply cover
- costs that have occurred outside of a trainee's training period
- costs the trainee may incur outside of training, such as travelling to work or placements
- employment costs and cover for other members of staff

If there are any claims for employer incentives that are not covered by this list, contact [ITT.Funding@education.gov.uk](mailto:ITT.Funding@education.gov.uk) for further advice.

Under no circumstances should EYITT training costs be deducted from the trainee's salary.

Providers should make sure they pass all employer incentive funding on to the trainee's employer to support their trainees' costs.

Make sure you keep clear records of how you're using the employer incentive in case of a financial audit.

## **Types of company**

The trainee must be an employee of the early years business. Sole traders and business partners are not eligible for an employer incentive as they are classed as self-employed by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

If the sole trader employs their staff on PAYE then the employed member of staff would be eligible for the employer incentive. The employee of a sole trader may be required to provide their contract of employment to confirm their eligibility for the employer incentive.

## **Withdrawals and deferrals**

If a trainee withdraws or defers, providers must stop any further payments and update their records immediately in [Register](#).

Providers can keep some funding if a trainee withdraws or defers. The amount retained should be proportional to how long the trainee attended the course before leaving.

Graduate employment based EYITT providers can keep 1/12th of the total training grant, and employers can keep 1/12th of the employer incentive funding, for each month or part month the trainee remained in training.

### **Example**

(Graduate employment based)

If a full-time trainee is employed from September 2026 and leaves in March 2027, you can retain 7/12ths of the training grant and employer incentive funding.

Graduate entry trainees who withdraw or defer from a course will be entitled to be paid the training bursary for each month up to, and including, the month in which they formally withdraw. EYITT providers can also retain 1/10th of the total training grant for each month or part month the trainee remained in training.

### **Example**

(Graduate entry)

If a full-time trainee starts in September 2026 and withdraws or defers in January 2027, they will be entitled to 4 payments in total as they were active on the course on:

- 1 October 2026
- 1 November 2026
- 1 December 2026
- 1 January 2027

Providers can also retain 4/10ths of the training grant funding.

In the event that a graduate entry trainee is absent through sickness, providers may only make one further bursary payment following the first day of absence. Providers may also retain an additional 1/10th of the training grant.

For graduate employment-based trainees, providers may retain an additional 1/12th of the training grant and Employer Incentive in this instance.

After this, the absence should be treated as a period of deferral and payments must stop with immediate effect.

## **Overpayments**

We will recover any overpayments if a trainee withdraws or defers and will not reimburse providers for any payments they make in error. Any overpayments made to trainees or employers will then be an internal matter between providers and the trainee or employer.

## **Returning trainees**

Returning trainees who defer and then re-join their original course, or take any advanced standing or credit to a new EYITT course, will only be eligible to receive the remaining EYITT funding (training grant or bursary) up to the value that was available in the year they started their original course. A bespoke payment schedule may be agreed for the remaining amount between providers and the trainee.

Where the length of the course is increased, the bursary and training grant instalments can be amended to reflect the longer timeframe. The total amounts, however, are fixed and cannot be increased.

If a trainee leaves one EYITT course and joins a new one with no transfer of standing or credit from their previous course, this is viewed as a separate route to EYTS. They will be entitled to receive a new

bursary and training grant, subject to the eligibility criteria and rates set in this guidance.

If the trainee received their full bursary or training grant entitlement during a previous EYITT programme, this may impact their eligibility to receive further EYITT funding while completing a new programme.

Contact [eyitt.GENERALENQUIRIES@education.gov.uk](mailto:eyitt.GENERALENQUIRIES@education.gov.uk) for further advice.

## **International students**

International students can be offered funded EYITT places as long as the applicant meets:

- all the academic entry criteria for the EYITT course
- the relevant immigration permissions

### **Academic entry criteria**

These criteria are that they have achieved:

- a standard equivalent to a grade C or 4 in the GCSE examinations in English, mathematics and a science subject
- a first degree of a UK higher education institution or equivalent qualification

A first degree comprises 300 higher education (HE) credit points of which 60 must be at level 6 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Applicants with a foundation degree will need to supplement this qualification with at least 60 credits at level 6 (HE level 3) in order to attain an equivalent single qualification.

International students can be awarded EYTS in the usual way on completion.

### **Immigration permissions**

Every international EYITT student must have the right to study or work in the UK and must hold the relevant visa before they start their EYITT course. This is in line with the standard process for all international students undertaking any course in an English university.

EYITT providers can find support on [recruiting international students and the requirements needed](#). Note that the further support section at the bottom of this guidance is not applicable to EYITT.

Potential international students can check visa eligibility at [check if you](#)

[need a UK visa.](#)

## How providers will receive their funding

Providers will be sent a remittance advice from DfE when they have been paid, and providers can use [Register](#) to review their payment profile.

Providers will be paid in:

- 11 monthly BACS instalments from September to July
- on the 3rd working day of the month

Providers will be paid different amounts until we have collected all their data, as set out in this table.

Month	Rate
September to November 2026	Provisional rate based upon a proportion of providers' allocation
December 2026 to July 2027	Actual rate based upon the trainee data providers submit to DfE

We will recover any overpayments by sending providers an invoice or deducting any future payments.

## Data management

Grant funding agreement terms and conditions are included in the grant offer letter that DfE sends to providers.

Providers must share data about trainee applications, recruitment and employment outcomes with us if we request it.

We may contact providers or visit their premises if we need to clarify any potential discrepancies, especially in relation to unclassified degrees.

### Trainee data

Providers submit their EYITT trainee data via [Register](#).

This is a condition of providers funding. We will use this data to calculate how much funding providers will get.

Providers must register all trainees with us by October 2026.

Providers must also submit the:

- names of all their EYITT trainees
- training courses they provide
- outcomes of the training

Providers must update records in [Register](#) if a trainee:

- withdraws
- changes their status
- defers

## **Financial monitoring**

Providers must only use their funding as set out in this guidance.

If providers do not comply with the terms and conditions, we may withdraw a provider's accreditation and funding.

Providers must hold full records of all payments made to employers of trainees who get the employer incentive. This information can be audited by us at any time.

## **Assurance**

Providers will be asked to complete an Annex G in accordance with published guidance, containing income, expenditure and trainee data. This must be independently audited and countersigned by the accounting officer.

We will contact providers with further details of the Annex G process after the academic year 2026 to 2027.

We will use the Annex G to reconcile providers' funding with their declared expenditure.

This also takes into account the effect of trainees who have withdrawn or deferred so that we can recover any funding providers did not spend.

## **Non-compliance**

We may withdraw accreditation if providers do not fully comply with funding guidance. This includes:

- data collection
- monitoring and assurance requirements

## **Early years ITT funding cycle**

Key dates in the funding cycle.

### **June to July 2026**

EYITT providers in their first year of delivery will be contacted in order to submit grant funding agreements (GFAs) to us. If other documents, such as letters of variation, are required, we will contact individual EYITT providers separately.

### **August 2026**

A proportion of a provider's allocation is incorporated into the funding model, based upon overall recruitment. This allows us to make interim payments to providers from September to November 2026.

### **September to November 2026**

The first 3 payments will be made if providers have a GFA in place. Payment profiles are available in Register during this period.

### **November 2026**

Provider's Register data is incorporated into the funding model to confirm payments from December 2026.

This is based on provider's trainee registration returns, submitted through Register, along the Graduate Entry and Graduate Employment Based routes on or before the census closure date.

### **December 2026 to January 2027**

These payments will be made if providers have a GFA in place, based on their Register data.

Register is available for providers to see funding summaries and payment profiles.

### **February to April 2027**

Provider's Register data will be updated in the funding model in February 2027 to include any changes that they have submitted through Register since the census was published.

These payments will be made (if providers have a GFA in place) based

on their Register data. Any subsequent changes to provider's Register data will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Register is available for providers to see their funding summaries and payment profiles.

### **May to July 2027**

Provider's Register data will be updated in the funding model in May 2027 to include any changes that they have submitted through Register in April 2027.

These payments will be made (if providers have a GFA in place) based on their Register data. Any subsequent changes to providers' Register data will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Register is available for providers to see their funding summaries and payment profiles.

## **Assurance and audit cycle**

Key events in the funding cycle.

### **September to December 2027**

We will send Annex G documents to providers at the end of the academic year. We will pre-populate this with the amount of funding providers have received, and the trainees that funding relates to.

The completed document, and Auditor's report, will help providers to provide us with the necessary assurance for both the amount received and the purpose for which it was used. Further guidance on this process will be sent to providers at the same time.

These should be returned by 31 December 2027.

### **January to March 2028**

In addition to the audited document and Auditor report, we also apply a risk-based sampling strategy to gain assurance of the Early Years ITT funding expenditure. This involves assurance checks through the collection of evidence on sampled trainees, including withdrawals, course information, degree class and payment information.

Recoveries and reimbursements will be completed through the payment profile, invoice or credit memo.

## Further information

For queries on the administration of funding to providers or transactions, contact [ITT.FUNDING@education.gov.uk](mailto:ITT.FUNDING@education.gov.uk)

For any general enquiries on EYITT policy, contact us at [eyitt.GENERALENQUIRIES@education.gov.uk](mailto:eyitt.GENERALENQUIRIES@education.gov.uk)

For any specific queries on allocations, contact us at [eyitt.ALLOCATIONS@education.gov.uk](mailto:eyitt.ALLOCATIONS@education.gov.uk)

Published 18 February 2026

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