

Eligibility Criteria for the 2026 Nuclear Bursary Scheme

Nuclear Bursary Scheme 2026 - Eligibility Criteria

The Nuclear Bursary Scheme provides financial support to help individuals start or progress a career in the UK civil or defence nuclear sector through education, training, placements or work-related learning.

Who can apply

You are eligible to apply if you will be a minimum of 18 years old ¹on 1st September 2026, and all the following 1-3 apply:

1. Financial need and disadvantage

You can demonstrate financial need or personal disadvantage, which may include (but is not limited to):

- Low household income - Indicative: £25k² per annum or less
- Eligibility for means-tested benefits (for example, free school meals)
- Living in/completing statutory school education an area of high deprivation or low participation in further or higher education
- Being the first in your family to progress to higher education or advanced vocational study (e.g. Level 3+).

We welcome applications from people from all backgrounds, and from those who may not otherwise have access to financial support.

2. Residency, nationality and right to work in the UK

To be eligible, you must:

¹ The nuclear bursary is open to applicants 18 years old and above. There is no upper age limit, and we welcome applications from career changers as well as early career entrants.

² This indicator of low household income is widely used across the Higher Education sector as a starting point when determining eligibility for financial support. Individual circumstances vary widely and households with incomes above this level such as those with multiple dependents and/or specific barriers may also experience financial hardship. Applicants are encouraged to provide complete information in the *Financial Circumstances and Barriers* section of the application form. We take the information you provide into account and refer to the Minimum Income Standard for the United Kingdom when assessing bursary applications.

- Intend to or are interested to pursue a career in the UK civil or defence nuclear sector after completing your studies or training.
- Have the right to live and work in the UK at the time of application and be likely to retain that right for the duration of your course and into employment

This includes (but is not limited to):

- British or Irish citizens
- People with settled or pre-settled status
- People with another form of long-term permission to live and work in the UK

Applicants' legal right to work in the UK is a pre-requisite for applying for a bursary through this scheme

3. Education, learning and engagement

You must also be willing and able to:

- Begin or continue a programme of education, training or work-related learning relevant to the nuclear sector within a STEM or UK priority skills subject area as identified by the sector. Priority skills are identified in the Nuclear Workforce Assessment, September 2024. These include
 - Project planning and control
 - Engineers (Mechanical, Electrical, Control and Instrumentation, Nuclear, Systems, Materials, Process, Commissioning, Safety, Waste),
 - Operations (Plant and Reactors),
 - Emergency Planners,
 - Safety Case Authors,
 - IT & Digital
 - Cyber Security.
 - The above list is not exhaustive and other disciplines, particularly science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, including physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc are directly relevant to roles and career opportunities in nuclear and will be considered under this bursary scheme.
- Provide evidence of your course, placement or training where required e.g. an offer letter, confirmation of enrolment, etc. *Please note:* If awarded a bursary,

payment is dependent on acceptance to and you taking up a place on your course.

- Engage with associated Nuclear Bursary support activities , which will include an online 1-hour induction, completion of eLearning designed to provide an introduction to working in nuclear (circa 3 hours), Nuclear Institute Associate Membership (fully funded for bursary recipients for 1 year), online events (3-6 online events scheduled throughout the year – each event is typically 1-2 hours) and mentoring (usually online, the frequency and number of meetings agreed individually)
- Participate in the independent evaluation of the bursary scheme including a baseline survey when your Bursary award is confirmed, an end of Programme (i.e. end of the bursary) survey, and a post-support follow-up survey/check-in 9 months after your bursary support period ends.

Participation in the independent evaluation is a condition of each bursary grant award.

You may also be approached to contribute a case study exploring how the bursary award has supported you/your development. This will only be progressed with your agreement.

Additional Guidance for Applicants

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement

The Nuclear Bursary Scheme is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. We actively encourage applications from:

- People from under-represented or disadvantaged backgrounds
- Disabled people and those with long-term health conditions
- People with caring responsibilities
- People from minority ethnic communities
- Those with non-traditional education or career pathways

We assess applications fairly and proportionately, based on potential and need. You will never be disadvantaged for choosing “prefer not to say” on equality monitoring questions.

We can provide reasonable adjustments throughout the application process on request.

Security clearance – important information

You do not need to hold a security clearance to apply for this bursary.

However, you should be aware that:

- Many roles in the nuclear sector, particularly in defence, require UK Government National Security Vetting (NSV), such as Security Check (SC) or Developed Vetting (DV)
- By the time you move into certain nuclear roles, you may typically be expected to have lived in the UK for around five years (SC) or longer for the most sensitive defence roles
- Holding a bursary does not guarantee that you will be granted a particular level of security clearance
- The Nuclear Bursary is jointly funded by employers and the UK government with the aim of encouraging and supporting people with appropriate education and training to pursue careers in the civil and defence nuclear sectors.
- To ensure bursary funding is directed to people with a realistic expectation of working in nuclear, applicants' legal right to work in the UK is a pre-requisite for applying for a bursary through this scheme.
- As well as maximising the impact of bursary funding, this avoids creating unrealistic expectations for future employment while being transparent about potential restrictions and associated security vetting requirements for certain roles.

Security clearance decisions are made independently by government vetting authorities and employers, not by the bursary scheme.

Further information about security vetting and an overview of the process can be accessed online at:

[National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK](#)

Security clearance is a routine process initiated, when applicable, by an employer during their recruitment process. It is straightforward and not intended to be off-putting, as its focus and purpose is on ensuring continued safe and secure operation of nuclear in the UK.

Further information

Applicants should visit the Bursaries webpage before applying.

Nuclear Bursary Scheme 2026 – Applicant Checklist

Use this checklist to help you decide whether the Nuclear Bursary Scheme is right for you.

You may be eligible if:

Financial need or disadvantage

You can show financial need or disadvantage, for example:

- Low household income Indicative: £25k per annum or less
- Eligibility for free school meals or other means-tested support
- Living in/completing statutory school education an area of high deprivation or low participation in further or higher education
- Being the first in your family to progress to higher education or advanced vocational study (e.g. Level 3+)

Right to live and work in the UK

You:

- Have the right to live and work in the UK now, **and**
- Expect to retain that right through your course and into employment

(This includes British and Irish citizens, people with settled or pre-settled status, or other long-term UK visas.)

Education or training

You are:

- Starting or continuing education, training, a placement or work-related learning relevant to nuclear or priority STEM skills
- Able to provide evidence of your course or programme

Willing to engage

You are willing to:

- Take part in mentoring, learning events or support activity, where offered, during the period you are in receipt of a nuclear bursary
- Contribute to the independent evaluation of the bursary scheme

Future career intent

You plan to or are interested in exploring:

- Work in the **UK civil or defence nuclear sector** after your course or training

Understanding security clearance (important)

- You do not need a security clearance to apply
- Some nuclear jobs later on may require UK Government security checks
- These checks usually look at UK residency history, particularly for defence roles
- Being awarded a bursary does not guarantee a particular security clearance