



QUEEN ELIZABETH SCHOLARSHIP TRUST

APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATION GUIDANCE

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OVERVIEW

ABOUT QEST

The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QEST) supports the training and education of talented and aspiring craftspeople through traditional college courses, vocational training, apprenticeships and one-to-one training with a master craftsman; helping to support Britain’s cultural heritage and sustain vital skills in traditional and contemporary crafts.

QEST has awarded over £5.5 million to almost 800 individuals working across the UK in 130 different craft disciplines. From guitar making to printmaking, thatching to enamelling, we embrace craft in all its many forms and are proud to contribute towards its evolving traditions. QEST funding has provided an essential turning point for many of our alumni, and we continue to support them throughout their careers, offering opportunities for exhibitions, collaborations and commissions through our extensive craft network.

QEST was founded by the Royal Warrant Holders Association in 1990 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Association and the 90th birthday of HM Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. In 2017 the former Prince of Wales became our Patron, with Vice Patrons the Earl of Snowdon and the Marquess of Salisbury

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ABOUT THE APPRENTICESHIP

QEST offers apprenticeship funding of up to £12,000 over three years, up to a maximum of £6000 per year, for the training and education of aspiring craftspeople. We provide these opportunities to maintain vital skills in traditional and contemporary crafts and advance the quality of craftsmanship in the United Kingdom.

The application process for a QEST Apprenticeship involves a collaborative effort between an organisation or master and the individual apprentice. It is a joint application that demonstrates the commitment of both parties to the development and growth of the apprentice's craft skills.





ELIGIBILITY

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WHO CAN APPLY?

We welcome applications from all craftspeople, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or nationality; and particularly encourage those with protected characteristics that are under-represented in the craft sector to apply.

We support makers who identify their practice within the field of craft and have a strong foundation and clear commitment to their craft. Our interpretation of craft is broad and we are excited by both contemporary craftsmanship and innovative applications of traditional craft techniques. We define craft as:

The skilled making, by hand, of tangible objects – or the conservation/ restoration of such objects.

Apprentices must be:

- Aged 18 or above at the time of application (with no upper age limit)
- Living in the UK with the right to reside permanently
- Able to demonstrate a certain level of skill and potential for excellence (meaning that they possess some experience and are not completely new to the field)
- Commitment to their craft, with a willingness to remain with the organisation they are apprenticed to in the long term and/or an aspiration to establish their own business in the future
- Employed or working closely with the master or company for a minimum of 6 months (preferably 1 year) before applying



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Employers must be:

- A micro-business or sole trader based in the UK. These businesses must meet the eligibility criteria outlined by Companies House, which include a turnover of less than £632,000, a balance sheet value of £316,000 or less, and fewer than 10 employees
- Able to demonstrate a sound and viable business, along with genuine financial need, illustrating their requirement for QEST's support to hire an apprentice
- Unable to access funds from any other apprenticeship schemes, including government programs

Please note that we do not fund:

- Performing arts
- Audio arts
- Literary arts
- Body arts
- Trades (e.g. plumbing)

To see the types of crafts that we have supported in the past please visit the [directory](#) on our website.

If you do not see your craft, or if you have any other questions about your eligibility, please get in touch by emailing info@qest.org.uk or call **020 7798 1535** to discuss your potential application.

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WHAT WE FUND

We offer funding of £12,000 for a two or three-year apprenticeship or £6,000 for one year, to contribute to the apprentice's salary, ensuring they receive at least the minimum wage.

Our focus is on supporting apprentices who aspire to become established craftspeople and are committed to staying in the UK, making a valuable contribution to the British craft sector.

WHAT WE DO NOT FUND

QEST does not fund:

- Repeat applications from previously successful employers
- Anything that is not related to craft
- Business start-up/support costs
- Loss of income

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WHEN CAN YOU APPLY?

QEST holds two application rounds per year:

Spring:

- Applications open: January
- Applications close: February
- Assessments: March
- Interviews: April
- **Award notifications: May**
- Apprenticeship period begins: June

Autumn:

- Applications open: July
- Applications close: August
- Assessments: September
- Interviews: October
- **Award notifications: November**
- Apprenticeship period begins: December

CAN I REAPPLY?

If your application is unsuccessful and you did not reach the interview stage, you may reapply in the next round.

If you reach the interview stage and are unsuccessful, we ask that you wait at least a year from the date of your application before you re-apply.

If your application is successful and you are awarded an Apprenticeship, you will not be eligible to apply for the same grant in the future. However, you may apply for a QEST Scholarship 5 years after completing your QEST-funded Apprenticeship.

If you are unsure about when to apply, please get in touch by emailing **info@qest.org.uk** or call us on **020 7798 1535**.

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HOW TO APPLY

Applications are completed online via an online form.

When the application round is open you can register via a form on our website at www.qest.org.uk. You will then be sent an automated email with a link to take you to the application form. Each application round is open for five weeks and you can access the application form throughout this period.

Please note that you MUST register and start a new application form for each application period. If you use a link from a previous application round, your application will not be assessed.

The application form has 3 parts:

For the apprentice to complete:

- About the Apprentice
- Apprenticeship Summary
- Apprenticeship Future Plans
- Career History and Qualifications
- Equal Opportunities



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For the employer to complete:

- About The Employer
- Company's Financial Details
- Employer Summary of Apprentice
- Supporting Documents:
 - Completed Training Plan
 - Company Accounts
- Declaration

You will also need to upload 1 PDF document containing:

- 5 images of the apprentice's work
- 3 images of the master/employer's work

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING YOUR APPLICATION

Our application process is competitive and we cannot fund every application we receive. When writing your application, you should be clear and concise.

Strong applications are those from applicants who can demonstrate:

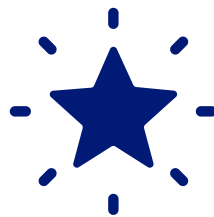
- A strong working relationship between the apprentice and the employer/master
- An apprentice's potential for excellence and long-term commitment to their chosen craft
- A detailed and well-thought-out training plan that covers the entirety of the apprenticeship
- A sound, viable business with a genuine financial need for QEST funding

With this in mind, you might want to consider the following questions when planning your application:



How will you showcase your skill level and understanding of the craft?

What images will you include in your application?



What are your short-, medium- and long-term goals?

Will you stay with the organisation that you are apprenticed to and/or do you have aspirations to set up on your own?



What will be your key training milestones and when do you hope to achieve them?

What key skills will you learn on the apprenticeship? How will you record your progress and measure success?



THE APPLICATION FORM

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THE APPLICATION FORM

The form includes questions related to the Apprenticeship Assessment Criteria.

Remember that our assessors will only know what you tell them. In answering the questions, be sure to provide all the information they need to understand and assess your company's finances and training plan.

The headings below will give you advice on how to answer key sections of the application form.

FOR THE APPRENTICE TO COMPLETE:

About the Apprentice

This section will ask for your personal details, along with your website and social media accounts. Please only include social media accounts if they are dedicated to your craft or if you feel they are relevant.

Apprenticeship Summary

Briefly state the overall purpose of the apprenticeship. What skills will you learn? How will you and the employer/master work together? (250 words max.)

This question is your first opportunity to let us know what your apprenticeship will entail. Think of it as an outline for your application. You should clearly explain what you would like to learn during your apprenticeship and why.

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The Future

Describe how your apprenticeship will positively contribute to the UK Craft Sector (150 words max.)

We would like to know how your apprenticeship will enable you to contribute to the UK craft sector. This question gives you a chance to display any knowledge you have about your chosen craft field. Think about gaps in the market or an area of your craft that is currently overlooked. Try to explain how this apprenticeship will help you to fill these gaps.

What do you hope to gain from the apprenticeship (such as skills, work experience etc)? (150 words max.)

Let us know what your short to medium-term goals are. Specifically, outline what you aim to achieve throughout the apprenticeship and your aspirations after completing it. You can use a list or bullet points to present your response.

What are your long-term career plans? (150 words max.)

Tell us about your long-term goals; they should be clear and realistic. Explain why you would like to complete this apprenticeship and how your career will develop as a result of your training.

Training and Qualifications

In this section, you should include any training that is relevant to your craft, as well as any relevant awards you have received.

Career History

This section asks you to list previous employment and experience, and you should only include past experiences you consider relevant. You may also want to include volunteer work, commissions, or residencies.

For the employer to complete:

About the Employer

This section will ask for the company's details, such as name, address and contact details.

Company's Financial Details

In this section, we ask you to provide information that demonstrates a sound and viable business. Showcase your business practices and the ability to support the apprentice throughout the apprenticeship. We are looking for companies that can invest in the apprentice's training and development and are not solely reliant on QEST funding. Make sure the financial details you provide align with your submitted company accounts.

With this in mind, you will be required to answer the following questions:

If applicable, outline your company's training plans and policies (150 words max.)

Describe any existing training programs or initiatives offered to apprentices or employees. Highlight how these plans and policies align with the goals of the Apprenticeship and demonstrate your commitment to supporting the apprentice's growth and development.

What would you use the funds for? Please be accurate in your answer (150 words max.)

In this question, we seek a clear understanding of how the QEST funding will be utilised. Please provide details on the apprentice's wage, the number of days working and how the QEST funds will be used to support these aspects. For example, will you use the funding to supplement the apprentice's wage or increase their training time?

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Why does the company need QEST to support the apprenticeship? Please state why your company/business cannot fund the apprenticeship itself (150 words max.)

Explain why your company requires QEST funding to support the apprenticeship. Describe any financial constraints or limitations that prevent your company from fully funding the apprenticeship on its own. Highlight the value and impact that QEST funding would bring to your company and the apprentice's development.

QEST believes we must all play a role in building a sustainable future for us and the planet.

We would like to know what steps you have taken, are taking, or intend to take to monitor, manage and reduce the impact of your craft practice/business on the environment (300 words max.)

Whilst we won't be holding employers accountable – we won't be following up to see if you have achieved your sustainability objectives or issuing consequences if you don't – we do want to see that the company is considering this important issue.

Under one or more of the following headings, you might write 1-2 sentences on how you have, are, or intend to:

- **Workspace** – reduce your consumption of electricity, gas and water in your studio/workspace
- **Travel** – reduce the frequency of travel or choose more energy-efficient methods on your commute/for deliveries
- **Waste** – rethink, reduce, reuse and recycle your waste
- **Procurement** – choose suppliers who are open about their ethics, supply chain and carbon reduction; choose local suppliers to reduce miles travelled; choose low-impact, renewable or responsible materials/packaging
- **Social impact** – contribute to diversity and equity in your craft; employ locally; provide training or work experience for a less traditional route into work; reward and recognise employees; volunteer; donate to charity or community groups
- **Communicate** – advocate for sustainable practices; promote online or in studio/in-store; share your knowledge with new or existing audiences, have a written policy
- **Measure** – measure any of the above; set targets for improvement; keep track of increases/decreases in consumption
- **Other** – do something else to be more sustainable

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Employer Summary of Apprentice

In this section, you should provide information about your working relationship with the candidate and your shared and individual goals. This is an opportunity to explain why the applicant is an excellent fit for the apprenticeship.

How did you source the candidate? (150 words max.)

Please describe the process through which you found and selected the candidate for the apprenticeship. Explain the steps you took to ensure that the candidate was a suitable match for the opportunity. Remember, the apprentice must have been employed or working with your company for a minimum of 6 months before applying.

Why is the candidate right for this apprenticeship? (150 words max.)

Highlight the candidate's qualities, skills and experiences that make them a strong fit for the apprenticeship. Consider their passion for the craft, relevant educational background, previous work experience, or any other attributes that set them apart.

How will this apprenticeship improve your business? (150 words max)

QEST's focus is on developing the skills of the apprentice. However, the apprenticeship should be beneficial for **both** the apprentice and the organisation they work with. Describe the potential positive impact of having the apprentice in your business. Consider how their training and development will contribute to the growth, productivity, or innovation within your company.

How will an apprenticeship with your company benefit the candidate? i.e. What long-term opportunities do you intend to provide? (150 words max.)

Show how your company's commitment to the apprentice's development sets them up for success. Explain the long-term benefits the apprentice will gain from their experience with your company, including skills, knowledge and professional growth. Highlight any unique aspects of the training, mentorship opportunities, or exposure to different aspects of the craft. Emphasise how these align with the candidate's career aspirations and discuss any potential pathways for advancement or continued employment within your company after the apprenticeship.

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Where do you see the apprentice in 5-10 years' time? (150 words max.)

Consider the future prospects for the apprentice and envision their growth within the craft industry. Share your insights into the potential career trajectory of the apprentice based on their performance, potential and the skills they will acquire during the apprenticeship.

Training plan

You will need to download and complete the following document: [Apprenticeship Training Plan](#)

For each 6-month period of the QEST-funded Apprenticeship, you will need to list a training objective, three skills the apprentice will learn, and details on how these skills will be achieved. Here are some tips to consider when developing a training plan:

- Make sure that the training plan aligns with the goals and aspirations of the apprentice, as expressed in their application
- Set specific and measurable training objectives for each 6 months. These objectives should outline what the apprentice will achieve and demonstrate a coherent and progressive learning journey
- Take into account the specific skillset and existing knowledge of the apprentice when designing the training plan. Tailor the plan to address their areas for improvement while also leveraging their strengths. These skills should be relevant to their craft and offer meaningful growth opportunities. Consider a mix of technical, creative and business-related skills to provide a well-rounded learning experience
- Describe how these skills will be taught and acquired. Outline the training methods, resources, workshops, mentorship or other learning opportunities that will be provided to support the apprentice's skill development

You must be able to demonstrate appropriate assessment and recording (evidence) of the apprentice's progress. If successful you will be required to submit a report to QEST every 6 months to report on their training progress.

Supporting documents:

Images

Please upload one PDF document containing:

- 5 images of the apprentice's work
and
- 3 images of the master/employer's work.

Apprentice images can be of completed projects or current works that highlight the progress made throughout their training so far. The master/employer images will help the assessors understand the level of craftsmanship the apprentice will be trained to achieve.

Here are some tips to consider when preparing images for the application:

- Quality is key! Make sure that your images are of high resolution and clarity. Avoid blurry or pixelated images. If there are any intricate details or techniques in the work, consider including close-up shots that highlight these aspects. This will allow the assessors to appreciate the details and craftsmanship of the work.
- Provide a brief one-line description for each image to provide context and highlight key features or techniques. This will help the assessors understand the significance of each piece and its relevance to the apprenticeship.
- Clearly indicate which images belong to the apprentice and which belong to the Master/Employer. This can be done by labelling the images or providing separate sections within the PDF document.
- Keep the file size of the PDF document below the specified limit (**Max 15 MB**). Compress the images if necessary to ensure smooth uploading without compromising image quality.

Remember, the images play a crucial role in conveying the apprentice's potential and the quality of work that the apprentice will be trained to achieve.

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Company accounts

Please upload a pdf copy of the company's most recent accounts,

Submitting full company accounts or a profit and loss statement is an important requirement to demonstrate the financial solvency of your business. Our assessors will review your accounts to understand the financial stability of the business and its capability to support the apprentice throughout the apprenticeship period.

The accounts should provide a clear overview of your annual turnover and profit and provide all the information needed to assess your company's finances. Bank statements, tax returns, or annual tax summaries will not be accepted as substitute. **If you do not provide the adequate company accounts your application will not be taken forward.**

Remember, employers must be:

- A micro-business or sole trader based in the UK. These businesses must meet the eligibility criteria outlined by Companies House, which include a turnover of less than £632,000, a balance sheet value of £316,000 or less, and fewer than 10 employees
- Able to demonstrate a sound and viable business, along with genuine financial need, illustrating their requirement for QEST's support to hire an apprentice

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark t-shirt and a grey apron, is peeling a strip of light-colored wallpaper from a wall. The wall is covered in several vertical strips of wallpaper that have been partially removed, creating a textured, layered appearance. The woman is looking up at the wall with a focused expression. The background shows a workshop or studio setting with wooden beams and various items hanging on the wall. The overall lighting is soft and slightly dim, with a blueish tint. The text "WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?" is overlaid in a white, serif font on the left side of the image.

WHAT HAPPENS
NEXT?

HOW WE ASSESS YOUR APPLICATION

Applications are reviewed by a group of experienced Skills Assessors who include a broad range of craft practitioners, industry specialists, QEST Trustees and QEST Alumni – those who have received grants in the past and who are now leading craft practitioners in their own right.

The assessment is a three-stage process, culminating with a shortlist for interview.

At the end of each stage, we will contact you via email to let you know whether you have been successful.

When we assess your application form, we will consider:

- Existing skills and understanding of the craft
- Commitment to the apprenticeship
- Suitability of the training plan
- Visible career progression and future prospects
- Company finances

If you pass the first two stages, you will both be invited to attend an interview, either in person at the QEST office in London, or via Zoom, depending on your preference.



WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO IF YOU RECIEVE A GRANT?

Apprenticeship funds can only be used for the apprentice's salary as described in your application.

If you receive a grant, you will be required to:

- Sign and return our Terms and Conditions
- Complete a Finance plan
- Provide a copy of the apprentice's employment contract clearly showing the apprentice's:
 - Salary
 - Start and end dates for the apprenticeship
 - Holiday entitlement, probationary period, sick pay, and other relevant aspects.

You will also both be required to submit a report every 6 months and a final report upon completion of the QEST-funded Apprenticeship.

The apprentice will be featured on our website directory and encouraged to continue to share their news with QEST for the Stories section of the website and our social media platforms.

You will also receive news, updates and invitations from QEST to participate in events and projects, which may include: alumni socials; opportunities to showcase, demonstrate and exhibit; and business skills workshops, as well as networking events with QEST supporters and Royal Warrant-holding companies.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Eligibility Criteria

What visas are valid?

You must have an eligible visa in place, at the time of application. We currently accept Settled, Pre-settled Status, and Partner Visas.

We do not accept Student Visas. If you have any questions about your visa type or eligibility please contact info@qest.org.uk.

Is there an upper age limit?

No, providing you are over the age of 18, you can apply.

Can I still apply if I haven't known the apprentice/master for 6 months prior to the application, but will reach the 6-month mark by the time the awards are announced?

No, apprentices must have a minimum of six months of employment or working experience with their employer/master before applying. This is to make sure that there is a strong working relationship between the apprentice and master, and that the apprentice has a realistic understanding of what the apprenticeship will entail.

NEED HELP?

If you have any questions regarding this or any of our other grants, or if you require additional assistance, please get in touch, and we will be happy to help.

Email: info@qest.org.uk

Web: Fill out a form on our website - <https://www.qest.org.uk/contact-us/>

Call: 020 7798 1535