

# **Distance Learning Handbook**

## **for Prison and Education Staff**



# This handbook outlines the benefits of studying with Prisoners’ Education Trust (PET).

It helps prison and education staff support people in prison along the whole learning journey — from getting ready for distance learning to completing their course and thinking about their next steps.

Taking the reader through the process step-by-step, the handbook offers tips for helping applicants choose the right course, explains what a successful application looks like, and suggests ways to create a positive learning environment. It also outlines what support is available from PET every step of the way.

Thank you to every member of prison and education staff who suggested ideas for content and read and gave feedback on the handbook. A special thanks to PET alumna Erika Flowers, Claudia Moore (Curriculum Team Leader at HMP Rochester), and HMYOI Aylesbury’s Further Education Facilitator, for sharing their insight and stories for the handbook.

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# Who are Prisoners' Education Trust?



**Our vision:** Every prisoner a learner, every prison a place to learn.

**Our mission:** Prisoners' lives transformed through learning.

Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) is the UK's leading prison education charity. Since 1989 we have equipped thousands of prisoners with the skills and qualifications to build brighter futures.

Initially working in just HMP Wandsworth, we now fund distance learning courses in every prison in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man — from GCSEs to the start of degrees, as well as a wide range of vocational courses.

We also work to improve education in prisons, advocating for system-wide improvements to make

the most of its potential — for prisoners, their families, and society as a whole.

PET's work is made possible through the generosity of our donors and supporters. Our team raises funds from charitable trusts and foundations, corporate supporters and from individual givers. We also receive an annual grant from HMPPS.

We have a team of over 20 staff members based in London and Cardiff, supported by volunteers, trustees and patrons, as well as the people we once funded to study in prison, our alumni.

## What is distance learning?

**Many prisoners are looking to study at a higher level than the standard education on offer in their prison. PET meets their learning aspirations by providing funding for over 200 different courses, in subjects and at academic levels that are otherwise unavailable in prison.**

Distance learning courses are mostly paper-based and can be completed by learners in their own time and space — whether it is in their room, the library or a classroom. This way of learning offers people in prison the opportunity to:

- Choose from a wide range of subjects and academic levels
- Achieve the same qualifications that they would in college, or even start a degree
- Get sent course materials and get feedback from a personal tutor by post
- Study independently and flexibly
- Take their course with them if they are transferred to another prison or released.

# The benefits of studying with PET



For the learner, distance learning offers the chance to gain higher-level knowledge and meaningful qualifications in subjects that interest them.

For the prison, it's a way to offer a wider variety of courses without needing to run whole classes. The cost of distance learning to the prison is minimal — we ask for a contribution of 10% per course. The returns are significant.

**Research by the Ministry of Justice's Data Lab<sup>1</sup> has shown that PET's courses:**



Reduce  
reoffending by

**25%**

Out of 100 PET learners leaving prison, 82 of them lead crime-free lives in the year after leaving prison, compared to 75 in a matched group.



Increase the chance  
of finding work by

**26%**

Out of 100 PET learners leaving prison, 39 of them find work in the first year of release, compared to 31 in a matched group.

Speaking to the people we fund, we know that education has a positive effect on mental health and self-confidence. It can also improve relationships with family members and help create a more hopeful, purposeful and positive prison environment.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Justice-Data-Lab-PET-employment-and-benefits-outcomes.pdf>

# What does PET offer?

In 2019, PET helped people in 120 different prisons start over 1,700 distance learning courses, across 200 different subjects and levels.

We offer accredited and unaccredited courses from a range of specialist education providers, from level 2 to level 5.

The Total Qualification Time (TQT) of our courses ranges from 30 to 270 hours, meaning learners can choose the length of course that best suits them.

PET also offers funding for exam fees, educational books and course extensions.

You can find the full range of our courses on our website:  
👉 [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/)

“If it wasn't for you guys I wouldn't be able to go to university until I'm at least 23 because I'd have had to start college again upon release. You're doing amazing work and I wouldn't be surprised to see my parents cry when I tell them about this on a visit.”

Adam, Psychology AS-Level

## Our ten most popular courses in 2019 demonstrate the variety on offer.

Course		Number of new learners
People, Work and Society Access Module (Open University)		137
Science, Technology and Maths Access Module (Open University)		113
Business Start-Up (NEC)		54
Gym Instructing – Passport to Level 2 Certificate (HFE)		52
Creative Writing Certificate (NEC/The Writers Bureau)		46
Plumbing Installation Theory Course – Level 2 (Learn Plumbing)		43
Understanding Substance Misuse Level 3 Certificate (NCC Home Learning)		41
Nutrition for Physical Activity – Level 3 (HFE)		38
Construction Technologies Theory – Level 3 (Study House)		34
NEBOSH Health & Safety at Work Level 2 Award (ATM Safety)		34

### Information, advice and guidance

PET also offers information, advice and guidance to people in prison, supporting them to choose a course and progress with their learning.

Our Access to Learning team makes prison visits to meet with staff and to advise potential learners individually or in groups, and responds to phone calls, letters and emails from staff and prisoners every day.

Find out about the support PET offers to staff and learners before making an application on [page 9](#) and during studying on [page 25](#).



## Erika's story: from PET learner to successful artist



Getting funding from PET for a Visual Arts course opened the door for **Erika** to work as an artist and tutor after prison.



“

When I entered the prison system I was very naïve and out of my depth in this new world behind locked doors. I remember it taking six weeks for me to finally get through the induction system in the education department, only to realise I was well beyond the courses on offer, having already gained a degree-level qualification.

“Following a careers advice meeting I discovered that I could do distance learning through PET. I decided on an Events Management course and applied to PET. Fortunately I was accepted and received my coursework in the post. It was really exciting but I was a little daunted by the amount of handwriting I faced – the odd hour on the computer in the library was not going to cut it here!

“Sometimes I found it hard to work: I was in a dorm so I had very little time when I didn't have distractions. But I am pleased to say that I got a distinction for my course, so overcoming the trials of completing it were well rewarded!

“Having completed my first course, I was keen to continue learning. I discovered OCA's The Practice of Painting course in the PET curriculum. I was really excited to find that I could study a subject that I was passionate about. Now I'm out of prison, I am still thoroughly enjoying doing the course and find it really inspiring.”

“

I've seen real success with my art. I'm really proud that many of the pieces I produced for my coursework have gone on to be sold, or have been exhibited and won awards at Koestler Arts' annual exhibition at London's Southbank Centre.

“I was really lucky to volunteer at Koestler Arts on ROTL and continued for some time following my release. Finding work in my field of choice was not easy as I have an unusual skillset, so working freelance for me works much better.

“I also now have the opportunity to feed my experience back through the organisations that have helped me. I sit with the Alumni Advisory Group for PET; have been elected to the Steering Group of the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance; and have run workshops with arts charity 'It's Not Your Birthday But...' at HMYOI Feltham. The opportunities that pop up can be really surprising: recently I attended PET's Young Adult Summit at HMP Askham Grange, drawing the event to illustrate a subsequent report.

“Coming out of prison with qualifications not only made me feel that I had put my sentence to good use and made the most of a bad situation. It also gave me purpose during my sentence: it kept me busy, helped me realise I could overcome adversity, and gave me a creative outlet that I am still applying in my life now.”

To see more of Erika's artwork, visit: [www.recordedinart.com](http://www.recordedinart.com)





# Getting ready for distance learning

## What support does PET offer before making an application?

We can help staff and learners choose the right course and prepare for distance learning. There are a number of ways we offer information, advice and guidance:

- We can **provide advice to staff** by phone and email. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries about which course would be most appropriate for an applicant, or for more information about how to apply. If you have any doubts or concerns, please let us know before sending off an application.
- **Prisoners and their families can contact our Access to Learning team directly** by phone, post or email. Phone calls with prisoners are particularly useful if more in-depth or specialist guidance is needed, as options can be discussed at length. In some prisons, staff are able to provide a confidential space to enable people to speak to us in private, rather than on the wing.
- Our Access to Learning team **regularly visits prisons** to meet with staff and to advise potential learners individually or in groups. If you would like us to visit your prison, please get in touch.
- We can **provide a range of printed materials** including leaflets, posters, and our course prospectus. Staff and learners can also request printed versions of our course summaries.

Find out how to get in touch with PET on **page 46**.

**“PET creates the map to show you a world of new possibilities.”**

**Dalton, PET alumnus**

## Application criteria

Before applying to PET, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Earliest Date of Release (EDR)
  - Have six months or more left to serve on their sentence
  - If they are applying for an Open University Access Module, they must be within eight years of their EDR
- Have gained level 2 English (literacy)
- Be over 18 years old
- Not be studying another PET course at the same time
- Some courses also require level 2 Maths (numeracy). You can find a full list of these courses in the prison staff area of our website.

There may also be specific entry requirements that you need to consider for the applicant's chosen course. You can find these requirements by searching for the course on Our Courses page here:

➔ [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/)

Under Ministry of Justice and prison rules, some courses are unsuitable for certain applicants because of the nature of their offence. You can find a full list of these courses in the prison staff area of our website (find out how to create your prison staff account on **page 15**).

## Getting to the right academic level for distance learning

While distance learning has many advantages over classroom-based teaching, it does require the learner to take full responsibility for their own studies.

Although most courses will be undertaken with some support from a tutor and prison education staff, there are no organised classes so learners need to be able to study independently. They will have to make decisions about when and where to study, and it will be up to them to stay motivated and meet deadlines.

We want learners to enjoy studying and to have the best chance of completing their course, so it is important that they are at the right academic level before they start.

PET requires applicants to have gained level 2 English (literacy) before applying. Some courses also require level 2 Maths (numeracy). This is because a majority of our courses start at this level (which is equivalent to GCSE – grades 9–4 or grades A\*–C).

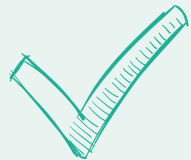
If you are working with a potential applicant who is not assessed at level 2 or does not have any relevant qualification at that level, you should:

- Consider a prison re-assessment to confirm the applicant's levels. It may be that the applicant scores differently when re-assessed.
- Provide the applicant with information about the prison's level 2 English and Maths classes so that they can reach the right level for distance learning. Taking these classes would also demonstrate the applicant's commitment to studying.

## Choosing the right course

PET can offer advice and guidance to applicants around choosing the right level at which to study, or the best available course to help them reach their goals.

If someone is keen to study but not sure which subject to choose, here are a few strength-based questions to help them make their choice.



### Strengths

What are they good at?



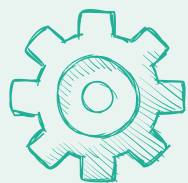
### Interests

What are their interests? What aspects of previous jobs or education did they enjoy most?



### Ambitions

What are their plans or ambitions for the future? What kind of work would they like to do?



### Character

How would their family or friends describe them? For example, if they are a sociable and outgoing person then they may well be suited for a career in customer service, health and social care, or hospitality.



### Motivation

What energises them? How do they stay motivated? What does a successful day look like for them?



### Research

Encourage them to take a look at what distance learning courses are available through PET and make a note of any that interest them. If they would like any advice about which course to study, they can contact us. They could also talk through their options with peer mentors, family and friends.

## Making sure your prison can facilitate the course: taking exams

Whilst many of our courses are assessed by assignments, some require the learner to pass an exam in order to gain the full qualification.

PET will only fund these courses if the prison is able to facilitate the exam (whether in the prison or on ROTL), or if the applicant is planning to take the exam after their release.

You can find out if a course requires an exam on Our Courses page.

Visit: [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/)

## How do I know if my prison can facilitate an exam?

While PET will be on hand to support and advise you throughout the process, it is the prison's responsibility to make arrangements for exams. There are two main ways exams can be taken in prison:

- Some prisons are **approved exam centres**
- Other prisons register as **host centres** — in this case the learner is entered as a transferred candidate with either a partner exam centre or a local college. This means a staff member can invigilate the exam at the prison.

If your prison is able to facilitate the exam, please speak to the course provider to make arrangements for the learner. Provider contact details can be found on [pages 35-36](#).

If you are unsure if your prison is able to facilitate exams for a particular course:

- Ask your Head of Learning and Skills (or equivalent) if your prison is an approved exam centre or registered as a host centre with the examining body
- If it is not registered, contact the examining body to ask if it is possible for the prison to do so.

Alternatively, the learner can take the exam on ROTL or after their release. Some course providers can accommodate exams at their own premises. The learner should contact the provider for more information.

“Prison has proven that people can pick up whatever labels they want, but they do not have to keep them. Like the mythical phoenix, rehabilitation can cause people to emerge afresh and become the real person that was hidden inside them.”

Mark, PET alumnus

Taking practical assessments

Some of the courses that PET fund are entirely theory-based, but act as preparation to full, practical qualifications.

If a learner is at a Category D prison and entitled to ROTL, they may be able to complete the practical assessments for some courses at local Further Education Colleges or approved exam centres. These include:

- HFE Sport and Fitness courses
- 18th Edition Wiring Regulations
- Plumbing Installation (Level 2 and 3)
- CPC Operator.

You can find out if a course requires practical assessments by searching for the course on our online prospectus. Please visit Our Courses page here: [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/)

Applying for funding for exam fees

Some of the courses we fund include fees for the exams (e.g. our NEBOSH and Horticulture courses), but others do not (e.g. GCSEs and A-Levels).

If you are unsure whether a particular course requires additional funding, please visit Our Courses page: [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/)

Learners can apply to PET for funding for their exam fees. You can find out how to make an application on [page 30](#).

Are the right resources for distance learning available in your prison?

Resource	Why is this needed?	Necessity 1 = must have 2 = should have 3 = good to have
 Staff support	Staff play a vital role in helping learners complete their distance learning course. Find tips from staff for creating a positive learning environment on <a href="#">page 26</a> .	1
 Basic stationery	Basic stationery, including pens and paper, is not included with course materials, so will have to be sourced in the prison.	1
 Library	All PET's courses are self-contained, meaning learners will receive all the materials they need to study. However it is important that, where possible, they can access the library for any additional research they want to do.	2
 IT access (not internet)	<p>The majority of our courses are paper-based and learners are assessed by posting assignments to tutors for feedback. Learners normally handwrite a draft of their assignment before organising access to a computer to type it up. However, most providers are happy to accept handwritten assignments if this is not possible.</p> <p>Some courses, such as Sage Accounting and Webmaster, are on a CD-ROM and so require regular computer access.</p> <p>You can find the requirements for every course on Our Courses page: <a href="http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/">www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/</a></p>	2
 Virtual Campus access	For Open University Access Modules, learners will be provided with login details for the Virtual Campus. However, if it is not available in your prison, do not worry – the modules are designed to be studied with or without access.	3
 Mentor support	Peer mentors can help other prisoners to study. Find out how they can support your work on <a href="#">page 26</a> .	3



# What support is available through the PET website?



## A dedicated prison staff area

Our website has a dedicated prison staff area that hosts resources to help you support learners through the whole journey – from applying for distance learning to completing their course.

You can download application forms, keep track of application deadlines, and find other useful information including our guidance on subjects and offences.

If you already have a PET account on our website, log into the staff area here:

👉 [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/login-area/prison-staff/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/login-area/prison-staff/)

If you do not have an account, you can create one here:

👉 [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/login-area/create-an-account/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/login-area/create-an-account/)

## PET's digital prospectus

On Our Courses page you can find an overview of all the courses we offer.

You can:

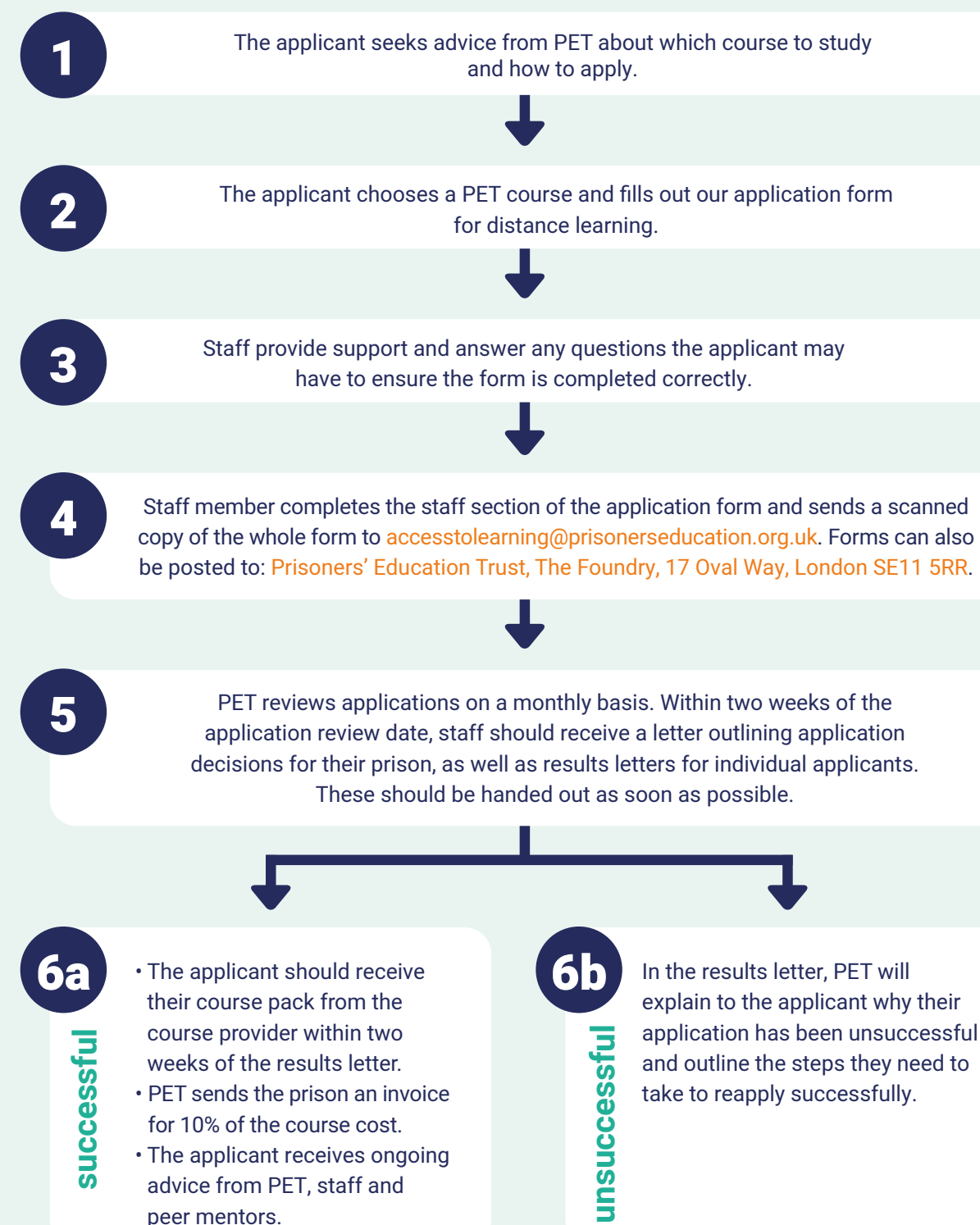
- 📖 See a detailed breakdown of a course's content
- 📖 Check if it leads to regulated accreditation
- 📖 Find out about entry requirements
- 📖 Discover what type of assignments and exams the course involves
- 📖 See what support is required from you and the prison for the learner to complete the course.

Take a look at all our courses here:

👉 [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/)

# Applying for a distance learning course

## A step-by-step guide to making an application



# The PET application form for distance learning

In this section of the handbook, you can find guidance for answering the questions in the PET application form for a distance learning course.

Please note, this section does not cover every question in the form, only those that require further explanation. If you have queries about any of the questions, please get in touch.

### The applicant privacy notice

By submitting their PET application form, the applicant is consenting to their data being used as outlined in our Applicant Privacy Notice (on [page 13](#) of the form). We ask that the applicant read the notice before submitting their application.

Once you have signed the staff declaration, please detach the Applicant Privacy Notice and give it to the applicant to keep as a reminder.

## Section 1: Your details

We require all the information requested in this section to ensure that the applicant meets the criteria, to monitor applicant data, and to match successful applicants to specific grant funding (for example, for geographical areas or age groups).

### Question 3: Total cost of course (if known).

The applicant should contact the course provider directly to find out the cost of the course. You can also find a full list of our course costs in the prison staff area of the PET website (find out how to create your prison staff account on [page 15](#)).

### Question 3 continued: Please detail any contribution to the course cost from other sources (e.g. family or other charities).

This information will help us calculate how much to contribute to the course cost if the application is successful.

We will also collate and monitor this data over time to help us understand how many applicants are seeking contributions from elsewhere.

### Question 10: Approximately how long do you have left on your sentence?

This information will help us to ensure that the course the applicant has applied for is suitable given their sentence length. Applicants serving an IPP or life sentence should put their earliest date of release or parole.

## Sections 2 and 3

In Sections 2 and 3 of the application form, applicants are asked questions about their preparation for distance learning, their reasons for applying, and their plans for the future. The more detail the applicant can provide the better.

The questions in these sections are scored from 0-3 to inform our decision-making, ensuring that it is fair and transparent.



## Section 2: Academic achievements and work experience

In Section 2, we appreciate that the applicant may not know the exact start and end dates for their education, employment, or activities. However, please encourage them to put a date, even if approximate, to help us build a picture of their background.

### Question 1: Have you been assessed in prison at level 2 English (literacy) and/or Maths (numeracy), or do you have a level 2 English (literacy) and/or Maths (numeracy) qualification?

If the applicant does not have level 2 English (literacy), they do not meet the criteria to apply for distance learning. Some courses also require level 2 Maths (numeracy). You can find a full list in the prison staff area of our website (find out how to access the area on [page 15](#)).

### Question 2: Please list a maximum of six of your highest level qualifications – particularly if they relate to your chosen distance learning course.

Applicants should list their highest level qualifications in descending order. They must also include the English/ Maths qualification(s) they stated on the previous page of the form.

In this question, we will consider:

- The applicant's knowledge of and interest in the subject area
- The skills they have acquired to ensure they can complete the course
- Whether they are applying for a course at the appropriate academic level.

### Question 3: If you have taken part in any other courses, workshops, groups or activities either in or out of prison, please list a maximum of four here – particularly if they relate to your chosen course.

In this question, through detailing the activities and courses they have taken part in, we are looking for the applicant to demonstrate:

- Their commitment to learning
- The skills they have acquired to ensure they can complete the course
- Their knowledge of and interest in the subject area.



Applicants might give examples such as:

- Vocational courses that did not lead to a qualification
- Being part of a club or group (e.g. art, sport, or reading)
- One-off courses provided by an outside organisation (e.g. PACT, St Giles Trust, a college or university)
- A first aid course
- OpenLearn or Wayout TV courses.

**Question 4: If you have any employment and/or volunteering experience either in or out of prison, please list a maximum of four roles here – particularly if they relate to your chosen course.**

In this question, through detailing their past employment or volunteering, we are looking for the applicant to demonstrate their familiarity with the subject area and the skills they have acquired to ensure they can complete the course.

Applicants might give examples such as:

- Working in a similar industry or field before custody
- Working as a Listener, Peer Mentor or Orderly
- Volunteering in the community.

### Section 3: Reasons for applying and preparation for distance learning

In Section 3, applicants must only use the space provided to complete their answers. Any additional sheets of paper will not be considered in our decision-making.

**Question 1: Please tell us why you have chosen to study this particular course.**

In this question, the applicant should tell us about their motivations for applying for this particular course. Good examples of this are:

- They have an interest in the subject
- The course will help with their current job in prison
- They are keen to study at this higher level
- They see it as a stepping stone to further study in this area
- They will develop skills that can help them achieve their employment goals.

When reading the application, we will consider to what extent the course being applied for will help the applicant to achieve their stated aims.

**Question 2: Have you received any advice or guidance from PET, prison staff, the course provider, or another organisation to help you choose this course?**

This question is not scored. The answer will not affect the application in any way.

**Question 3: What preparation have you done so that you will be able to complete this course in prison?**

Answers to this question should show the applicant's motivation and readiness to study. Good examples of this are:

- Detailing previous experience of distance learning
- Working towards and achieving level 2 qualifications in order to apply for distance learning
- Visiting the library regularly
- Speaking to staff, other distance learners and family members about studying
- Considering how they will study in their room.

**Question 4: How will completing this course benefit you while you are in prison and/or after prison?**

Here the applicant is given an opportunity to set out the specific benefits they want to get out of completing the course. Good examples of this are:

- Being able to secure a better job or progress to further studies in or after prison
- Demonstrating their capability to family and friends and strengthening ties
- Personal development e.g. increasing their confidence
- Improving their mental health and ability to cope with their sentence
- Giving them the skills to help others inside prison or in the community.

**Question 5: Once you have completed this course, what do you plan to do next?**

In this question, the applicant can tell us what they are planning to do after completing the course. We will consider the level of detail in the answer and how the course fits in with these plans.

Good examples of this are:

- Progress to another course or to Further or Higher Education
- Find employment in prison or upon release
- Support others using the knowledge gained, either in prison or upon release
- Inspire and/or support others to study.

Please make sure that the applicant's next steps are realistic and not out of immediate reach.

### Section 4: Charitable donation

If the applicant states an amount they wish to donate, we will send them confirmation of this, together with further information about how to complete the donation using a cash disbursement form (or your prison's equivalent).

### Section 5: Monitoring for diversity

PET has an active commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. This section of the form is optional and applicants do not have to complete it. The answers given here will not affect their application in any way.

We will collate and monitor this data over time. Completing this section helps us to try and make sure we are reaching all groups of people in prison.

## Section 6: Learning support

Here applicants with a long-term disability or difficulty can write down any support or materials they may need to assist their studies.

As explained on the form, PET will speak to you and the course provider to see if the applicant’s support needs can be met.

## Section 8: Staff endorsement

The staff endorsement section helps us understand whether the applicant is ready for the course and whether the right resources are available to them.

This section is also an opportunity for you to confirm that the information the applicant has given is correct.

### Question 5: Please indicate which resources would be available for the applicant.

Please go to [page 14](#) to see why each of these resources is required for distance learning.

### Question 6: Please indicate if the applicant’s study plans are linked to their Learning, Progression, or Sentence Plan.

Answers to this question will inform our policy work, giving us a better sense of how prison education fits in with rehabilitation more broadly.

### Question 7: If there is anything else you would like to add about the applicant, please do so here.

You do not need to answer this question. However, please use this space if there is any more information you would like to give about the applicant, especially if you think it would be useful for our decision-making.

## Section 9: Risk management

Under Ministry of Justice and prison rules, some courses are unsuitable for certain applicants because of the nature of their offence. You can find a full list of these courses in the prison staff area of our website (find out how to create your prison staff account on [page 15](#)).

## Section 10: Staff declaration

All applications require a signature from an authorised member of staff before they can be considered for funding. This is usually the prison’s Head of Learning and Skills (or equivalent).

# Applying for an Open University Access Module

Open University (OU) courses are a core part of PET’s offer to people in prison. In 2019, we helped more than 280 learners start an OU Access Module, giving them the perfect introduction to university-level study.

OU modules have two start dates a year – February and October. For applicants who plan to start their studies in October, we accept applications from June. For applicants who plan to start their studies in February, we accept applications from October the previous year.

## A step-by-step guide to reserving and registering a place with the OU

**It is the responsibility of staff in the education department to contact the OU SiSE (Students in Secure Environments) Registration team to reserve a place for the applicant on the chosen module. We would recommend you do this at the same time as making an application to PET for funding.**

Here is how to reserve a place:

1. Contact the OU to inform them that you want to reserve a place for the applicant on the module:

**Email:** [sr-sise@open.ac.uk](mailto:sr-sise@open.ac.uk)

**Phone:** 0300 303 6789 (Mon to Fri 9am–5pm)

**Post:** SiSE Registration team, Student Recruitment and Support, The Open University, PO Box 197, Milton Keynes, MK7 6BJ

2. Once a place on the module is initially reserved, the SiSE team will send the prison a registration pack containing a registration agreement form.
3. You will need to check the details on the form, amending any information that is incorrect.
4. The registration agreement form then needs to be signed by the applicant. Return the form to the OU as soon as possible – you do not need to wait for the outcome of the PET funding application.
5. If the application for funding is successful, PET will inform the applicant and the OU of the decision and complete the enrolment process onto the OU module.
6. The OU will then provide the education department with the learner’s login details for the Virtual Campus and send the course materials before the module start date. (If the Virtual Campus is not available in your prison, do not worry – Access modules are designed to be studied with or without IT access.)
7. On rare occasions, an applicant who PET has approved for funding may not be able to begin on their chosen start date, either because the module is oversubscribed or because the applicant has not been reserved a place in time. If this happens, the prison will be contacted by the OU and advised on next steps.



# Why might an application be unsuccessful?



In the results letter, PET will explain to the applicant why their application has been unsuccessful and outline the steps they need to take to reapply successfully.

There are four main reasons applications are unsuccessful:

## 1. Initial criteria not met

- The applicant is under 18 years old
- They have six months or less left to serve on their sentence
- They are currently studying a PET course
- They have not gained level 2 English (literacy) and/or, in some cases, level 2 Maths (numeracy)
- The course is unsuitable because of the nature of the applicant's offence(s)
- The applicant has applied for an Open University Access Module but is over eight years away from their earliest release date
- The staff endorsement has not been completed or the application form does not have an authorised staff signature.

## 2. Low score

The application did not score highly enough in Section 2: Academic achievements and work experience and Section 3: Reasons for applying and preparation for distance learning.

## 3. Course choice

- The course is not on PET's approved list
- The course level is not appropriate for the applicant
- The course choice is not appropriate given the applicant's stated goals.

## 4. Funding restrictions

PET is unable to fund the application because of the charity's limited funds. We do our utmost to raise funds, however when demand is high we are unable to support as many applicants as we would like.

## Reapplying successfully – the staff perspective

HMYOI Aylesbury's Further Education Facilitator explains how she helps learners overcome an unsuccessful application and work towards reapplying successfully.

“

When the letters outlining application decisions arrive, I always see all the applicants personally and congratulate those who have been successful, as well as letting them know what happens next.

“I also sit down with those who have been unsuccessful. If PET suggests they consider applying for a different course, I take the PET prospectus or course information with me so that alternatives can be discussed properly and an informed decision can be made. If the applicant requires time to decide or wants to look at more alternatives, I return at a later date.

“If an applicant needs to improve their qualifications to be accepted I speak to the relevant staff member at the prison who will enrol them and encourage the applicant to do so.

“I also spend time with those who need to re-apply due to problems with filling in the form and guide them when it comes to writing the form again.”

“ This course keeps me busy, it makes me feel like a normal person, wanting to make a change and do better. I also like the idea of setting a good example for other inmates and showing people there are opportunities to take.”

**Sammy, OU Access Module**

# Helping learners to complete their distance learning course



Successful applicants should receive their course materials within two weeks of the results letter.

If the materials have not arrived within four weeks, please contact the course provider (contact details for our main providers can be found on [pages 35-36](#)).

If a learner has still not received their materials, please contact us using the details on [page 46](#).

## What support do course providers offer during the course?

Most course providers give written feedback on assignments by post. A small number of them, including the Open University, also offer support and tutorials over the phone.

## Addressing issues with a course

While PET funds courses, it is important to note that we do not write or supply them.

If a learner has an issue with their course, they should contact the course provider directly. If the issue remains unresolved, please contact us.





“ I spent the first 40 years of my life being told I can’t do anything and was stupid. That’s why receiving that letter from PET saying I’d been funded, it is difficult to express how amazing that was – that someone was believing in me.”

Jennie, Mentoring

## Creating a positive learning environment

While PET’s courses give learners the opportunity to study in their own time and space, there are lots of ways you can help create a positive environment for learning in the prison and the education department.

We appreciate that time, resources and space may be limited, but here are some useful tips:

-  Give learners protected time in the library or as part of a study group and enable their movement around the prison to support these activities
-  Create a space where learners feel comfortable and confident asking questions
-  Recognise that learning is personal and that people progress at different rates
-  Use supportive language as much as you can. Education and distance learning can be a challenge – positive language can help learners face it optimistically.

## Distance learning peer mentors

PET is a charity with limited resources so unfortunately we are unable to visit prisons as regularly as we would like. However, with the help of committed staff and peer mentors we are able to reach and support more learners.

A distance learning peer mentor is someone who is able and willing to support other prisoners to study. Their responsibilities can include:

- Promoting distance learning to other prisoners
- Helping other prisoners decide which distance learning course to study
- Supporting other prisoners to complete their PET application
- Assisting and motivating learners
- Signposting learners to other support available in the prison.

Peer mentoring not only builds the mentor’s confidence and expands their skillset, but can also be an invaluable additional resource for staff – helping support learners with day-to-day challenges.

In prisons where peer mentoring roles exist, the position may either be paid or voluntary. If you are interested in establishing a distance learning peer mentoring role, please inform your Head of Learning and Skills.



## Supporting learners – the staff perspective

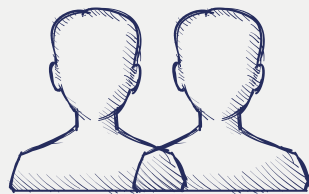
Claudia Moore, Curriculum Team Leader at HMP Rochester, shares her top tips for running successful distance learning sessions:



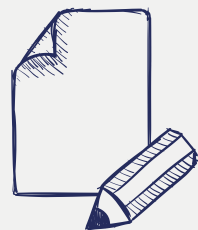
**The use of the library or an alternative study** space creates a focused atmosphere and helps learners to “switch gears” when it is time to study. This also helps alleviate distractions and creates structure. If possible, a seating area should be provided to allow learners the option to study round a table with others when not using a PC.



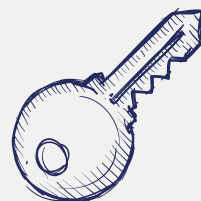
**Regular study groups** provide essential support and help staff to closely monitor progress. Weekly face-to-face contact means that learners can quickly raise any worries, discuss requirements such as tutorials and extensions, and submit assignments. It also allows staff to encourage engagement and challenge lack of motivation early on if needed.



**Red Bands and Peer Support Workers** can be used for liaison and to offer support to learners. It is preferable to choose someone who is also studying as this creates a common bond and allows them more insight. Where feasible, Red Bands and Peer Support Workers can be used to lead the study sessions and provide individual support.



**Themed study groups** can be very effective. Learners can be organised into subject areas so that they can discuss ideas and tips with others who are studying within similar disciplines. Study sessions can also be used as “workshops” covering a range of general issues that affect all learners, such as note-taking or essay writing skills. These can even be led by learners themselves or by Red Bands and Peer Support Workers.



Arrangements should be made by supporting staff to ensure that **all distance learners have access to the study sessions**, regardless of their actual attendance. It should be a resource available for when they feel they need the support or simply need access to PCs, staff or tutorials. Ideally it should not be something that adds unnecessary pressure or is made mandatory – these sessions work best when the learners take ownership and plan when and how to use them effectively.

## What happens if a learner moves prison? – the staff perspective

One of the advantages of distance learning is that learners can take their course with them if they are transferred to another prison.

HMYOI Aylesbury's Further Education Facilitator outlines the steps she takes to make sure learners there can continue their course after they have moved on:

1. As soon as I hear that one of my learners has been transferred, I email all of the institutions directly involved, including PET and the course provider, to inform them of the date of the move and the new location of that individual. This ensures that any study materials and assignments are sent to the correct prison and that PET can maintain contact with the learner as they progress in their studies.
2. I also write an email to the new prison informing them of the learner's course details and include information on how they are working and where they are up to. I attach scanned copies of any work and front sheets. This helps with the learner's continuity of study.
3. If I don't know who to contact at the other prison, I get in touch with the team at PET to find out – they have the details for every prison's point of contact for distance learning.
4. Finally, I encourage the learner to make themselves known to the education department at their new prison.

“I have become a more confident person as a result of successfully completing the course. I intend to use this experience and qualification to start my own company upon my release from prison. I would be one of many prisoners with no future to look forward to without the help and support of the PET course funding.”

**Kembo, Sustainable Construction**

# Applying for exam fees, educational books and course extensions

PET also funds exam fees, educational books and course extensions.

## Funding for exam fees

Some of the courses we fund include fees for their exams (e.g. our NEBOSH and Horticulture courses), but others do not (e.g. GCSEs and A-Levels).

If you are unsure whether a course requires additional funding for exams, please visit Our Courses page:

👉 [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/prison-staff/our-courses/)

## Funding for educational books

PET tries to ensure that the courses we fund are self-contained and do not require any additional books. However, should the learner feel they need an additional book that cannot be provided by their prison, we recommend first approaching the course provider for help.

If the course provider is unable to support them, the learner may apply to PET for funding, explaining why they require the book.

## Other funding for educational books and reading material

Learners can also contact Haven Distribution, a charity that can provide:

**1. Educational books for prisoners who are on any kind of academic course.** Haven can provide one book up to the value of £20 free-of-charge each year. The learner can write to Haven requesting an application form. Alternatively you can email Haven for a form on the learner's behalf.

**2. Books from their catalogue to any prisoner.** Haven can send a maximum of two catalogue books every three months to each prisoner. Their catalogue includes fiction, history, philosophy, social sciences, and more. The learner can write to them to request a catalogue.

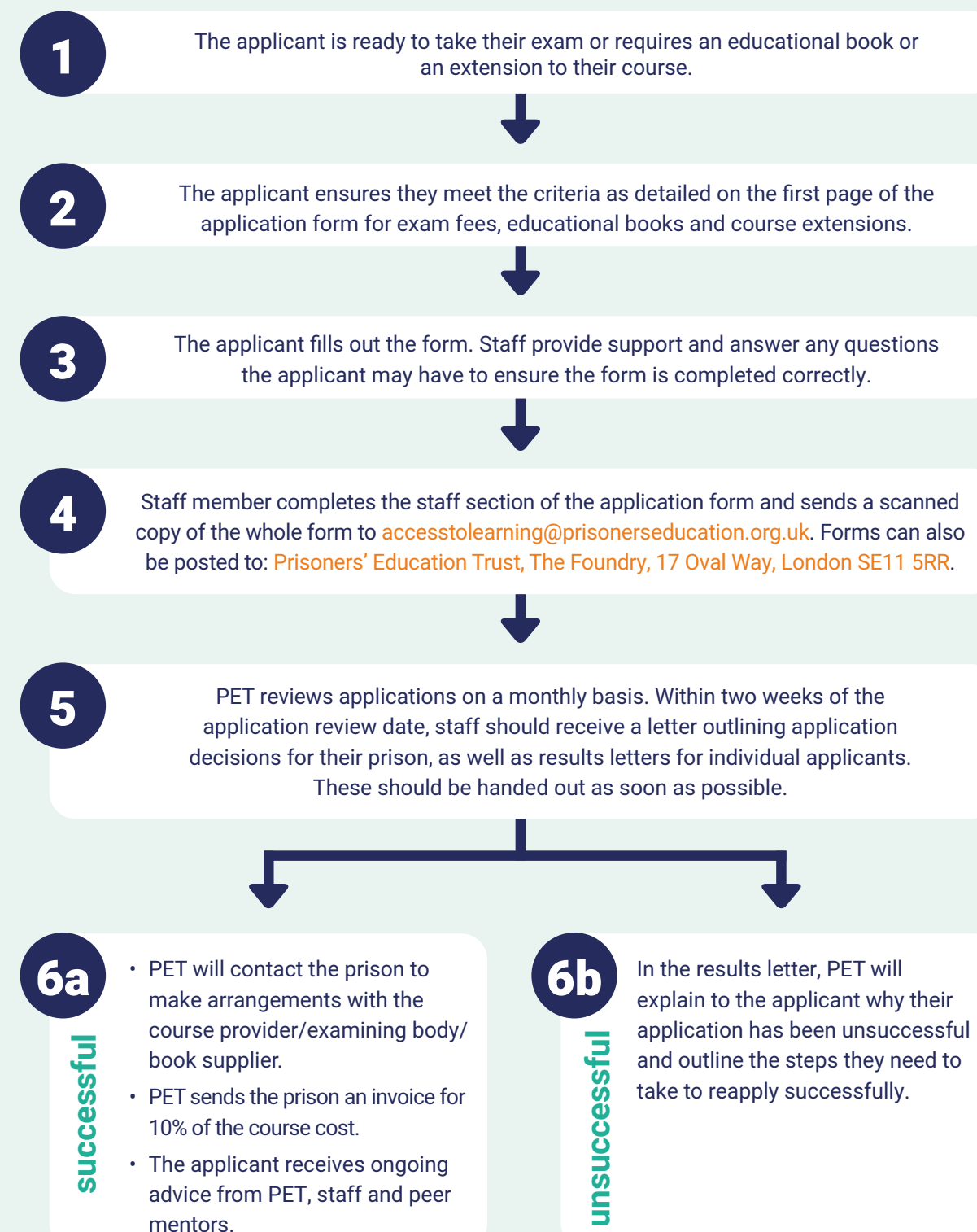
The charity's postal address is **Haven Distribution, 27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3XX.**

Their email address is [info@havendistribution.org.uk](mailto:info@havendistribution.org.uk).

## Funding for course extensions

If a learner is unable to complete their course in the time set by the provider, they can apply to PET for funding for a course extension.

## A step-by-step guide to making an application





# The PET application form for exam fees, educational books and course extensions

In this section of the handbook, you can find guidance for answering the questions in the PET application form for exam fees, educational books and course extensions.

Please note, this section does not cover every question in the form, only those that require further explanation. If you have queries about any of the questions, please get in touch.

## Application criteria

Before applying for exam fees, educational books and course extensions, applicants should meet the following criteria as stated on the first page of the application form:

If they are applying for exam fees:

They have contacted the course provider to find out the cost and date of the exam.

If they are planning to take their exam:

**In prison:** their current prison is able to facilitate this

**On ROTL:** their current prison is able to organise this

**After their release:** they have contacted the course provider to organise this

If they are applying for an educational book:

They know the title, author and cost of the book.

If they are applying for a course extension:

1. Their course is still available
2. They still have all their course materials
3. They are now in a position to complete the course
4. They have checked with the course provider how long the extension needs to be and have enough time to complete the course
5. They have contacted the course provider to find out the cost of the extension.

If the applicant does not meet the criteria, they should speak to you or PET for advice and guidance about their next steps before making an application.

## The applicant privacy notice

By submitting their PET application form, the applicant is consenting to their data being used as outlined in our Applicant Privacy Notice (on **page 15** of the form). We ask that the applicant read the notice before submitting their application.

Once you have signed the staff declaration, please detach the Applicant Privacy Notice and give it to the applicant to keep as a reminder.

## Section 1: Your details

PET requires all the information requested in this section to monitor applicant data and to match successful applicants to specific grant funding (for example, for geographical areas or age groups).

### Question 10: Approximately how long do you have left on your sentence?

Applicants serving an IPP or life sentence should put their earliest date of release or parole.

## Section 2: Exam fees

### Question 2: Please state the date of your exam

The applicant should contact the course provider directly to find out the date of the exam before starting their application.

### Question 3: Cost

The applicant should contact the course provider directly to find out the cost of the exam before starting their application.

### Question 4: If you have answered 'Yes' to Q4, please state how many times you have taken this exam before and explain your reasons for needing a retake.

For this question, applicants are asked to explain their reasons for requiring a retake. These might include:

- They were unable to take the exam because of prison restrictions
- They were unable to prepare for the exam or did not take it because of personal circumstances
- They did not get their desired grade.

Answers to this question will help inform our decision-making.

## Section 3: Educational books

### Questions 1–4: Full title of book; Author of book; ISBN number (if known); Cost

If the book is included on a list of supplementary reading by the course provider, they will generally include the title, author and ISBN number, but not necessarily the cost.

You will need to assist the applicant by finding out the cost of the book, either from the course provider or from an approved supplier, before they can start their application.

### Question 5: Please explain why you require this book for your course.

PET is only able to fund a limited number of books, so it is important that the applicant explains why they require the book for their studies. Reasons might include:

- Wanting to do extended research to add to the learning experience
- Going beyond the course requirements in order to achieve the highest grade possible
- Course materials state further research is required but the applicant has no online access and relevant books are not available in the prison library.

## Section 4: Course extensions

### Question 1: Please explain why you require a course extension.

To inform our decision-making we need to understand why the applicant requires a course extension. Reasons they were unable to complete their course in the allocated time might include:

- Prison restrictions
- Prison transfer
- Personal circumstances
- Learning speed
- Misplaced, lost or stolen course materials.

### Question 2: Cost of course extension.

The applicant should contact the course provider directly to find out the cost of the course extension before starting their application.

### Question 3: Do you still have all your course materials?

If the applicant does not have all their course materials, unfortunately they do not meet the criteria to apply for a course extension. They will need to contact the course provider to replace these materials before making their application.

## Section 5: Academic achievements and work experience

If the applicant's current course was not funded by PET, they must complete this section.

If they have already provided this information to PET in a previous application form, the applicant can go to Section 6: Monitoring for diversity.

We require all the information requested in this section to monitor applicant data. To find guidance for answering the questions, please go to [page 18](#).

## Section 6: Monitoring for diversity

If the applicant has already provided this information to PET and their answers have not changed, they can go to Section 8: Charitable donation.

To find out why we want to know about the diversity of our applicants, please go to [page 20](#).

## Section 7: Learning support

To read guidance for completing this section, please go to [page 21](#).

## Section 8: Charitable donation

To see the next steps for applicants who wish to make a donation to PET, please go to [page 20](#).

## Sections 10–14: Staff endorsement

The staff endorsement sections help us understand whether the applicant can be funded. These sections are also an opportunity for you to confirm that the information the applicant has given is correct.

### Section 11, Question 2: If the applicant is planning to take the exam in prison, on ROTL, or after their release.

To find out more about how applicants can take their exam in prison, on ROTL, or after their release, please go to [page 12](#).

### Section 12, Question 1: Please indicate which resources would be available for the applicant.

Please refer to [page 14](#) to see why each of these resources is required for distance learning.

### Section 13, Question 1: Is this course still suitable for the applicant with regard to the nature of their offence?

Under Ministry of Justice and prison rules, some courses are unsuitable for certain applicants because of the nature of their offence. You can find a full list of these courses in the prison staff area of our website (find out how to create your prison staff account on [page 15](#)).

For this question, you can tell us if the applicant has committed a further offence or another offence has come to light that means their course is no longer suitable for them.

### Section 14, Question 1: If there is anything else you would like to add about the applicant, please do so here.

To read guidance for completing this section, please go to [page 21](#).

“These courses are a lifeline for many of us in a prison environment. With the help and support of PET, I am now more confident, learning more about myself, and my abilities. Education is very important to me, but I never received support to achieve in the past. Prison, prison staff, the education department and PET have given me hope.”

**Andrea, Yoga Beginners**



# Course provider contact details

## Animal Care College

Old Station House, Brandis Corner, Devon EX22 7YH  
01409 220 775 | [www.animalcarecollege.co.uk](http://www.animalcarecollege.co.uk)

## ATM Safety

Berrington Lodge, Hoo Lane, Chipping Campden,  
Gloucestershire GL55 6AZ  
01386 840198 | [www.atmsafety.org.uk](http://www.atmsafety.org.uk)

## Clwyd Associates

Orton House, Overton Close, Coleorton,  
Leicestershire LE67 8FY  
01530 837477 | [www.clwydassociates.co.uk](http://www.clwydassociates.co.uk)

## Distance Learning Centre

Swaledale, 4 Coaley Lane, Newbottle,  
Houghton le Spring, Tyne & Wear DH4 4SQ  
0845 129 7238 | [www.distance-learning-centre.co.uk](http://www.distance-learning-centre.co.uk)

## East Anglian Sea School

Suffolk Yacht Harbour, Levington, Suffolk IP10 0LN  
01473 659992 | [www.eastanglianseaschool.com](http://www.eastanglianseaschool.com)

## Electacourse

The White House, Hunston, Chichester PO20 1PD  
0208 123 3084 | [www.electacourse.com](http://www.electacourse.com)

## EP Training Services

The Old Library, Lower Shott, Leatherhead Road,  
Great Bookham Leatherhead, Surrey KT23 4LR  
01372 450 800 | [www.eptraining.co.uk](http://www.eptraining.co.uk)

## Futuretrend

81 Southbury Road, Enfield, London EN1 1PJ  
020 8443 2888 | [www.futuretrend.co.uk](http://www.futuretrend.co.uk)

## HFE

7 & 8 Roundhouse Court, Barnes Wallis Way, Buckshaw Business Centre, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 7JN  
0800 612 4067 | [www.hfe.co.uk](http://www.hfe.co.uk)

## Horticultural Correspondence College

Lyne Akres, Dunsland Cross, Brandis Corner, Holsworthy, Devon EX22 7YH  
01409 220 777 | [www.hccollege.co.uk](http://www.hccollege.co.uk)

## Institute of Counselling

40 St Enoch Square, Glasgow G1 4DH  
0141 204 2230 | [www.instituteofcounselling.org.uk](http://www.instituteofcounselling.org.uk)

## Learn Plumbing

21 Cranbourne Road, Ashton-under-Lyne OL7 9BH  
0161 330 1309 | [www.learnplumbing.co.uk](http://www.learnplumbing.co.uk)

## Linguaphone

PO Box 225, Mullaghboy Industrial Estate,  
Co Meath, Ireland  
020 3603 6554 | [www.linguaphone.co.uk](http://www.linguaphone.co.uk)

## London Teacher Training College (L TTC)

60 Windsor Avenue, London SW19 2RR  
0208 133 2027 | [www.teachenglish.co.uk](http://www.teachenglish.co.uk)

## National Extension College (NEC)

The Michael Young Centre, School House,  
Homerton Gardens, Cambridge CB2 8EB  
0800 389 2839 | [www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk)

## NCC Home Learning

Warwick House, Riverside Business Park,  
Benarth Road, Conwy LL32 8UB  
0333 3445 690 | [www.ncchomelearning.co.uk](http://www.ncchomelearning.co.uk)

## National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ)

The New Granary, Station Road, Newport, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3PL  
01799 544 014 | [www.nctj.com](http://www.nctj.com)

## The Open University

SiSE Registration team, Student Recruitment and Support, PO Box 197, Milton Keynes MK7 6BJ  
0300 303 6789 | [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

## Rocketeer

Parkfield Business Centre, Park Street, Stafford,  
Staffordshire ST17 4AL  
01785 223 253 | [www.rocketeer-enterprise.co.uk](http://www.rocketeer-enterprise.co.uk)

## Sage Qualifications

554 Bradgate Road, Newtown Linford,  
Leicester LE6 0HB  
01530 243 426 | [www.sagequalifications.com](http://www.sagequalifications.com)

## Stonebridge

Stonebridge House, Ocean View Road, Bude,  
Cornwall EX23 8ST  
0121 392 8288 | [www.stonebridge.uk.com](http://www.stonebridge.uk.com)

## Study House

8 Hillswood Avenue, Kendal LA9 5BT  
01539 724622 | [www.study-house.org](http://www.study-house.org)

## The Writers Bureau

8-10 Dutton Street, Manchester M3 1LE  
0161 819 9922 | [www.writersbureau.com](http://www.writersbureau.com)

# Keeping PET up-to-date



“Learning has been like a duvet on a winter night; it is something comforting when everything appears bleak.”

**Carl, Exercise to Music**

It is essential that we keep track of how learners are getting on with their courses. With the help of staff, learners and course providers, we can:

- Provide you with a report on your learners' progress
- Keep in touch with learners who transfer into or out of your prison
- Gather detailed information on educational progression to inform what we report back to our funders and to improve the work we do.

## 1. How staff can help us

PET sends a quarterly monitoring form by post or email to your education team for you to complete.

In this form we ask for an update on learners' progress at your prison — including information on completed and abandoned courses, transfers to and from the prison, and releases.

## 2. How learners can help us

At the start of, during, and at the end of their course, we will send a monitoring form to learners to find out how they are getting on and to ask for feedback on the course and the support we have provided.

## 3. How course providers can help us

We send a quarterly monitoring form to our course providers to find out the number of completed and abandoned modules and courses.

“My educational progression, I hope, will convince my friends, my family, society, and most importantly myself that I'm worthy of a much needed second chance to lead a good life as the law-abiding citizen that I always envisaged I'd be.”

**Saman, Bookkeeping**

## What happens if staff move on?

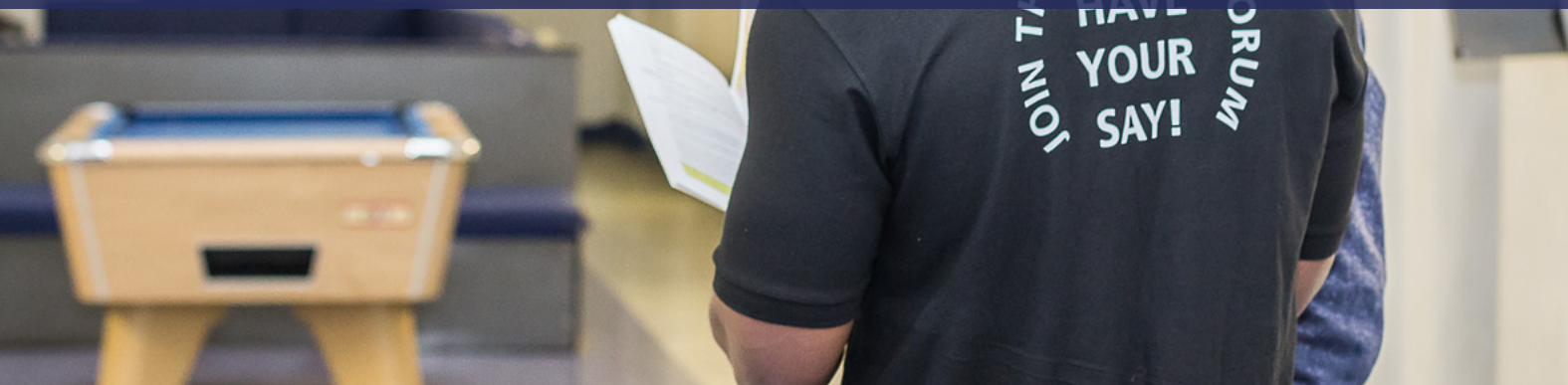
If you move prison, change roles, or leave the service, it is important that you let us know who the new point of contact for distance learning at your prison will be.

Please complete a handover with the new point of contact, explaining your role supporting distance learners. If you are unable to do this, please let us know. The handover should cover:

- The contact details for PET's Access to Learning team;
- Creating an account on the dedicated staff area of our website (go to **page 15** to find out how to do this);
- PET's application forms and the staff handbook;
- Who in the prison is authorised to endorse and sign off applications;
- Key dates, including the monthly deadline for sending applications and PET's application review dates;
- Where learners' course materials are delivered to in the prison;
- The average number of applications the prison makes each month.



# Completing a course: what next?



“Many women who arrive in prison have experienced trauma. The course helped me to speak to them.”

**Cathy, Counselling**

## Can learners apply for PET funding for another course?

**In prison:** PET are happy to fund learners for one-off courses, but we are especially keen to see people progress from one level to the next. If a learner has completed their course and they are interested in continuing their studies, please encourage them to apply again.

We can offer advice on progression routes, as there will often be a higher level course in the same subject area. If that is not the case or the learner wishes to change direction in their studies, they can contact PET for advice.

**After prison:** Unfortunately, PET does not fund any courses in the community. You can find information about alternative sources of funding on [page 41](#).

## Can learners continue their PET course in the community?

Learners can continue their course in the community after their release, but it is essential that they let the course provider know that their address has changed for course materials and tutor feedback. The providers' contact details can be found on [pages 35-36](#) or should be included in the course materials.

They should also leave a forwarding address with the prison if possible, in case course materials are sent to the prison before the provider is informed of the change of address.

Learners can also take the exams needed to complete a qualification after their release. Some course providers can accommodate exams at their own premises: the learner should contact the provider for more information.

## Studying in the community: further and higher education

### Further education<sup>2</sup>

Further education (FE) includes any study after secondary education that is not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree). Courses range from Basic English and Maths to work-related Higher National Diplomas (HNDs).

Learners can use the National Careers Service course search to find FE courses by subject, provider and location. Visit: [nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course](https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/find-a-course)

### Higher education<sup>3</sup>

Higher education courses are usually taught in universities, colleges, and specialist institutions like art schools or agricultural colleges.

Higher education qualifications include:

- 📖 Diplomas
- 📖 Bachelor degrees
- 📖 Foundation degrees
- 📖 Post-graduate degrees

Course entry requirements vary – the learner should check with the university or college. Some universities will accept professional qualifications or relevant work experience. Others may need:

- 📖 A levels
- 📖 An Access to Higher Education course
- 📖 NVQs, BTEC or other work-based qualifications

Most Open University courses do not have entry requirements.

To find out how to search and apply for higher education courses, including full-time, part-time, post-graduate and Open University options, visit: [www.gov.uk/higher-education-courses-find-and-apply](https://www.gov.uk/higher-education-courses-find-and-apply)

“There is nothing better than knowing you're getting through your sentence gaining qualifications to improve your future.”

**Ella, Construction Technologies Theory**

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/higher-education-courses-find-and-apply> and <https://www.gov.uk/mature-student-university-funding>

## What funding is available for further and higher education?

While PET does not fund courses in the community, the organisations listed below offer information about alternative sources of funding:

- 📖 **The Hardman Directory** – a directory for current and former prisoners seeking funding support for education, personal development and resettlement purposes. Download the directory here: [www.hardmantrust.org.uk/directory](http://www.hardmantrust.org.uk/directory)
- 📖 **The Longford Trust** – this charity funds Higher Education scholarships and mentoring for people who have spent time in prison. Visit: [www.longfordtrust.org](http://www.longfordtrust.org)
- 📖 **Turn2us** – learners can look for educational grants using this charity's grants search. Visit: [www.turn2us.org.uk/Get-Support](http://www.turn2us.org.uk/Get-Support)

### Funding for further education

Learners can apply for grants and bursaries to help pay for courses and training.

For most grants and bursaries they can apply directly to the organisation that gives them out. The organisation will have an application form and will be able to tell learners if they qualify. To find out more, visit: [www.gov.uk/grant-bursary-adult-learners](http://www.gov.uk/grant-bursary-adult-learners)

Learners can also find out more about financial support, for example for a course or day-to-day living costs, here: [www.gov.uk/further-education-courses/financial-help](http://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses/financial-help)

### Funding for higher education

Learners may be able to borrow money to help pay for university or college tuition fees and to help with living costs. To find out more, visit: [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

They may be able to get extra money on top of this, for example if they are on a low income, have a disability or have children. To find out more, visit: [www.gov.uk/student-finance/extra-help](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance/extra-help)

“It was like as education grew in importance, drugs became less important.”

Emma, PET alumna

## Will having a criminal record stop someone from studying in the community?

**After leaving prison, many PET alumni have gone on to study at university.**

Following a campaign by PET, Unlock and the Longford Trust, the institution that manages university applications, UCAS, no longer asks people to disclose a criminal conviction. However, some universities still ask for disclosure through their own application process – though this does not automatically mean someone with a criminal record will not be able to study there.

If someone is within their licence period, they may have conditions about travelling to certain geographical areas, or restrictions around internet use, and the university might ask about this. Some courses might require DBS checks, and some may lead onto careers where the learner may be restricted – such as law, where they might be unable to register with the Solicitors' Regulation Authority.

We would be very happy to talk to anyone who would like information or advice about applying to university with a conviction. Find our contact details on [page 46](#).

More information is also available from Unlock, a charity for people with convictions.

Visit: [www.unlock.org.uk/support-for-people-with-convictions](http://www.unlock.org.uk/support-for-people-with-convictions)

### Free online courses

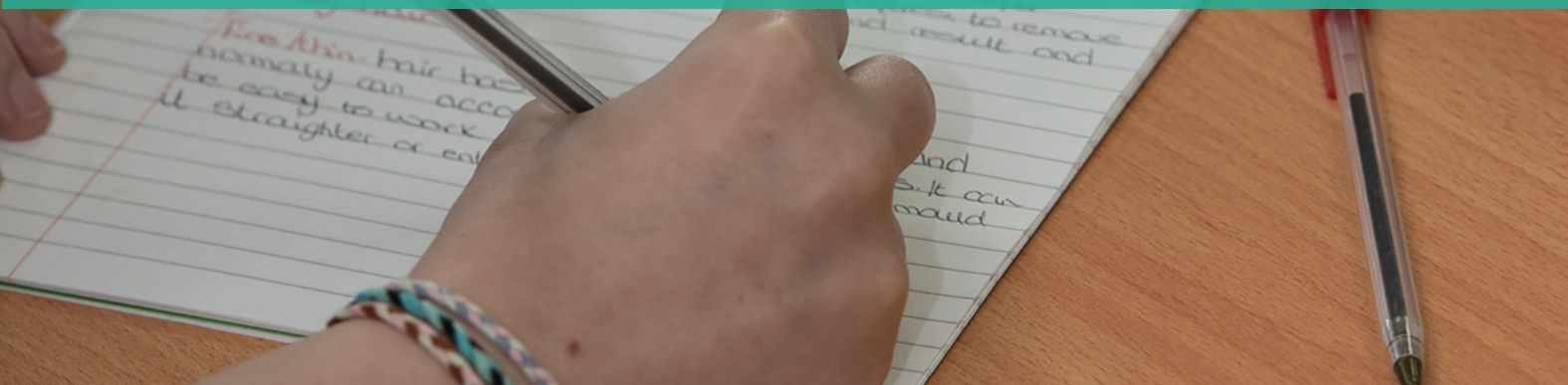
**If the learner is unable to find alternative funding, there are lots of free courses available online.**

Open Culture lists over 1,300 free online courses from top universities. Visit their website here: [www.openculture.com/freeonlinecourses](http://www.openculture.com/freeonlinecourses)

Another option is OpenLearn, which features over 1,000 free courses from the Open University. Visit their website here: [www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue)



# Keeping in touch



## Keeping in touch with PET learners

We would love to hear from learners once they have completed their course.

We will send them a monitoring form to find out how they got on, but they can also get in touch with us using the contact details found on [page 46](#).

After leaving prison, they can become a member of the PET alumni network of former learners. Through the network, they can:

- Keep up-to-date with services and opportunities from different organisations
- Shape PET practice and policy through our Advisory Group, where their experiences will help us improve the work that we do
- Share their personal experience and expertise at talks, conferences, on our website, and through the media.

If you support a learner who is interested in joining the network after prison, we would love to hear from them. You can find out more about the alumni network on our website.

Visit: [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/people-leaving-prison/join-alumni-network/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-support/people-leaving-prison/join-alumni-network/)

## Other ways for you to get involved with PET

PET would not be able to transform the lives of people in prison without your support. We would love you to get involved with the charity in other ways too – whether it is coming along to an event, joining one of our networks, or making a donation.

Visit our Get Involved page to find out more: [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-involved/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/get-involved/)

## Sign up to e-news to get the latest from PET

Every month, we share stories of the people we fund, along with the latest PET events, developments, news and views. You can sign up to our e-news here: [www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/news-and-views/newsletter-signup/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/news-and-views/newsletter-signup/)

# The story of Prisoners' Education Trust



Prisoners' Education Trust must be unique – its origins can be traced back to a train journey. In the late 1980s, prison education officer David Burton and barrister Vernon Cocking commuted together from HMP Wandsworth.



On that journey they discussed how prisoners' education could be better funded. Like today, prisons' budgets were limited. The demand was great. David and Vernon saw prisoners prevented from reaching their full potential because of a lack of learning opportunities.

So the pair hit upon an idea: an organisation that would offer prisoners the chance to study distance learning qualifications in their cells, doing the same courses as their peers in the community. On 19 April 1989, Prisoners' Education Trust was officially formed. Over 30 years on from our foundation, we have funded thousands of learners and now offer courses in every prison in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

As it has grown, Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) has been able to join up some of the brilliant work going on across the criminal justice system and use its expert voice to champion prison education. In 2012,

we established the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA), a network of organisations and individuals working together to improve prison education. We also run a network to support partnerships between prisons and universities, as well as the Prisoner Learning Academic Network (PLAN), a hub for researchers working on prison education.

At PET, our learners are at the heart of what we do: their experience and expertise help us move forward as an organisation. In 2014 we launched our alumni network, a community of former prison learners who are passionate about education. Not only are they changing minds by sharing their stories, they are also shaping PET's future through our Alumni Advisory Group.

By December 1989, the end of our first calendar year, we had helped 12 people in prison start distance learning courses. Three decades later, we have now made over 40,000 educational awards. But we do not want to stop there. With your support, we want to reach more people in prison and make an even bigger difference to our learners' lives.

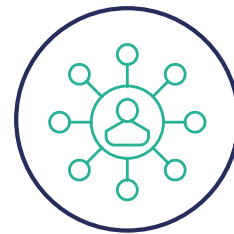
## Our values



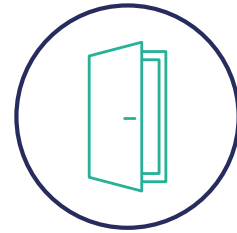
**We inspire**



**We care**



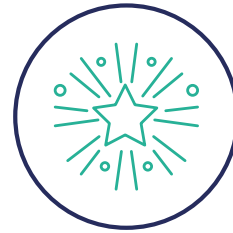
**We collaborate**



**We are tenacious**



**We are expert**



**We celebrate**



**We are inclusive**

“I’m so grateful for this opportunity and I can’t wait to do the course and successfully get the experience and qualification so I can get a secure job, support my family, and make them proud.”

**Pete, Plumbing Installation Theory**

## Contact us




If you have any questions about the courses PET offers or need any advice about the application process, our teams in London and Cardiff would be happy to help.

### Get in touch by email, phone or post:

 [accesstolearning@prisonerseducation.org.uk](mailto:accesstolearning@prisonerseducation.org.uk)

 020 3752 5680

 Prisoners’ Education Trust, The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR

Learners can also contact us using our freepost address — no stamp is required: **FREEPOST, Prisoners’ Education Trust**





## This handbook outlines the benefits of studying with Prisoners' Education Trust (PET).

It helps prison and education staff support people in prison along the whole learning journey – from getting ready for distance learning to completing their course and thinking about their next steps.

 [accesstolearning@prisonerseducation.org.uk](mailto:accesstolearning@prisonerseducation.org.uk)

 020 3752 5680

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