

The Complete Guide to sponsored degrees



Sponsored degrees: the basics

Did you know that sponsored degrees allow you to combine full-time study with paid work experience and reduce the amount you pay for your degree?

Employers have various titles for sponsored degree schemes, including school leaver programmes, sponsored degrees and scholarship schemes. It might sound confusing, but the great news is that in all cases you can expect more than an average degree, including one year industrial placements, paid summer work experience and annual scholarship or bursary payments. So not only do you reduce the amount you pay for your degree, you will also get valuable work experience under your belt.

Who pays the fees?

In most cases you are largely based at university. You're not usually employed by the company, but are paid for work

Example of a scholarship scheme

- EY Assurance Scholarship offers £15,000 of payments for students on accounting degrees at three universities. It includes a four-week summer placement in your first year and a paid year-long industrial placement in your third year.

Example of a sponsored degree

- UK Electronics Skills Foundation (UKSEF) – work during summer, attend a four-day residential and help promote electronics in school at least once a year.

you do on summer placements of around 4-12 weeks or longer 6-12 month industrial placements. There are some great benefits; you often receive a bursary or scholarship for each year of study and may gain from mentoring and attending industry networking events.

As an example, the Costain Sponsored Student Programme offers engineering opportunities in energy, water and transportation with bursaries for each year of study. It includes a 6-12 month industrial placement and an 8-12 week summer placement.

You are not guaranteed a job when you graduate, but a place on a graduate scheme is highly likely if you perform well in your degree.

Sponsored degrees are often designed by employers or professional associations in partnership with universities. This means that employers often take an active role in delivering the course, providing teaching materials, live projects and company visits.

How does it differ from a degree apprenticeship?

On a degree apprenticeship you are employed by a company and receive a salary as well as having your entire course fees and sometimes accommodation and

living costs paid. You follow a training programme that includes studying for a degree. Rather than being a full-time student on a sponsored degree, you may work four days and attend university for one day a week or attend university in weekly blocks.

What is the difference between sponsored degrees and scholarships?

Increasingly, companies or industry organisations offer sponsorship in the form of a scholarship, and the titles are often used interchangeably. Scholarship schemes may be open to anyone or you may need to be on a degree or at a university specified by the employer. To be eligible for some scholarship schemes, your parents will need to have a combined household income below a certain level. For example, the Royal Television Society (RTS) Bursaries for

television production and broadcast journalism students are only available to students with a household income below £25,000.

Other sponsorship opportunities

- You could also consider sandwich degrees. These are usually four-year degrees with one year spent on placement in industry. Companies often sponsor the year spent in industry.
- If you already work for a company and they want to keep you on, they may consider sponsoring you for a related degree.
- You don't have to stick to advertised schemes - be proactive and ask for sponsorship from companies you are interested in working for. Offer to work for them in the summer and/or after you have graduated in return for funding your degree.

“The Lloyds Scholars programme, in partnership with eight universities, is for students from lower income backgrounds. We offer financial support through bursaries and achievement awards, two 10-week paid internships and a business mentor throughout their degree. At the end of their degree, students have the opportunity to join the Lloyds Banking Group graduate programme but with no obligation to do so. In return students give at least 100 hours per year of volunteering in the community and develop valuable transferable skills doing so.”

Paul O'Neill - Head of Lloyds Scholars Programme, Lloyds Banking Group



Is a sponsored degree right for you?

There are many benefits to studying a sponsored degree - but are you suited to this kind of study?

The benefits of choosing a sponsored degree

Like the idea of combining work and study, reducing your course fees and learning from a mentor? Read on to find out more about the benefits a sponsored degree can offer...

- You may be able to get scholarships or bursaries to help you pay course fees and end up with less debt than non-sponsored students.
- Combine the full-time student experience with gaining work experience. This differs from apprenticeships when you will often study part-time or by distance learning.
- You'll have a head-start towards a professional qualification or Chartership. For example, the PWC Flying Start Degree Programme in Assurance allows you to complete 12 out of the 15 exams required to be a Chartered Accountant.
- Opportunities to learn from senior employees. You may have a designated mentor who you can speak to throughout your degree, not just on placements.
- Seminars, workshops and events where you can start to build professional networks.
- The IET Power Academy offers a two-day conference every summer, with networking opportunities across the power industry.
- Gain commercial awareness and boost your employability skills, such

as teamwork, time management and communication skills.

- Potential for a place on a graduate scheme or permanent job with the sponsoring employer when you graduate.
- Work placements are usually paid at a competitive salary and you may also be entitled to annual leave while on placement.
- Gain hands-on experience on live projects and with real clients.
- Gain an insight into a career area from work experience, helping you decide whether this is the career for you.
- You may have to offer time for volunteering, but this can be seen as valuable community experience for your CV.
- Possible support with your dissertation.

Possible downsides:

- Unlike an apprenticeship, you are not usually employed by the sponsoring company and you are not usually guaranteed a permanent job on graduation.
- You can only apply to the universities participating in the scheme.
- The entry requirements can be very high for some (but not all) sponsored degree schemes. For example, the UK Electronics Skills Foundation (UKSEF) Scholarship Scheme asks for AAA including Maths and Physics.





Student view

"I was attracted to the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) Power Academy because of the experience it offered, the potential financial support throughout my degree and the chance to secure a graduate job in the power sector after graduation. Receiving a bursary each year took the pressure off worrying about finances, allowing me to focus on my degree. The scheme gave me the opportunity to apply my academic knowledge, start building a professional network and the opportunity to test whether this was the sector or company for me as there were no obligations to join Atkins at the end. Without the Power Academy and the work experience it provided I might not be working in Future Energies for Atkins now!"

Mark Goudie - Electrical and Mechanical Engineer, Future Energies, Atkins

Employer view

"One of the benefits of the IET Power Academy Scheme is the high likelihood that when you graduate your sponsoring employer will offer you a place on their graduate training scheme. And, by the time you graduate you will have typically a year's more work experience than a non-sponsored graduate - a head-start that makes you attractive to employers."

Elizabeth Birchenough - Co-ordinator, Atkins IET Power Academy

Student view

"At the end of my first year, I had a four-week placement in an EY office working in Assurance. I was able to apply the knowledge from the first year of my degree in a practical situation and it really helped me understand what we have learned at university. The placement also gave me the opportunity to ask questions, find out about their people's experiences and to gain insight into working in Assurance."

Phoebe Bryant - second year student at the University of Bath, on an EY Assurance Scholarship

Employer view

"Benefits of the EY Scholarship for students include financial support, two or more industry placements, an opportunity to clarify career objectives, build professional networks and gain commercial awareness by exposure to a range of business issues, all without the obligation to work for EY at the end of their degree."

Emma Judge - Head of Student Recruitment, EY

Where to find out about sponsored degrees

Excited about the opportunities out there? Here's how to find out more

Information about the various forms of sponsored degree is not all listed in one place, so you will need to do your own research. The following websites are useful - but they don't list every opportunity and in some cases the information isn't fully up-to-date, which can be frustrating. The best approach is to look at websites of the employers and universities listed below to find up-to-date information.

- www.thescholarshipub.org.uk
- www.notgoingtouni.co.uk
- www.studentladder.co.uk



*Please note, these are examples, this list is not exhaustive

What degree subjects are available?

- Accounting and Finance
- Business
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemistry
- Civil Engineering
- Computer Science and Software Engineering
- Construction, Economics
- Electronic, Electrical and Systems Engineering
- Maths
- Mechanical Engineering
- Medicine (Armed Forces only)
- Manufacturing and Production Engineering
- Materials Engineering
- Natural Sciences
- Physics
- River and Coastal Engineering
- Technology
- Television Production and Broadcast Journalism

Organisations/Professional Associations linked to sponsored degrees

- ICAEW
- Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)
- Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET)
- Royal Television Society
- Ship Safe Training Group
- UK Electronics Skills Foundation (UKSEF)

Employers offering sponsored degrees

- Armed Forces (Army, Navy, RAF)
- Atkins Power
- BAE Systems
- Chemistry
- Barclays
- Barratt
- Bosch
- BP
- BT
- CGI
- Civica
- Costain
- Defra
- Environment Agency
- EY
- GSK
- Helmsley Orrell Partnership (HOP)
- Jaguar
- LandRover
- Johnson Matthey
- Kier
- KPMG
- Lloyds Banking Group
- London Underground
- Moog
- Morrisons
- National Grid
- Nestle
- Network Rail
- PWC
- Rolls Royce
- Siemens
- Sir Robert McAlpine
- Western Power
- Vinci Construction

Universities offering sponsored degrees

- Aston University
- University of Bath
- University of Birmingham
- Cardiff University
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Imperial College London
- University of Lancaster
- Loughborough University
- University of Manchester
- Newcastle University
- University of Nottingham
- Nottingham Trent University
- Queens University Belfast
- University of Reading
- Sheffield Hallam University
- University of Southampton
- University of Strathclyde
- UWE Bristol
- University of Warwick
- University of Winchester

How to apply for a sponsored degree

You've found a scheme that's right for you - but how do you apply and what will they be looking for? Our Q&A and top tips will help you...

When do I apply?

It's really important to check details on sponsoring employer/professional organisation websites, as when and how you apply can vary massively between courses.

For some, you need to apply at the beginning of Year 13, with different closing dates. For others you can only make an application after you've applied through UCAS and have an offer on a specified course.

Or, you may be able to apply part way through your degree, in your first, second or even third year. Some schemes are also open to students on Masters degrees.

Who do I apply to?

Again, it depends on the degree you're applying for. For some sponsored degrees you apply using an online application form, found on the employer or organisation website.

For others you apply through UCAS or/as well as applying to the sponsoring

employer/organisation. Sometimes, an application is made once you are at university and your course will advise who to apply to.

What entry requirements will I need?

You'll find a wide variety of grade requirements - some are highly competitive and require A or B grades or a specific number of UCAS points. There may also be other eligibility criteria, such as only being open to UK or EU students or to those whose parents earn below a certain level.

Tips for applications

- Check your application carefully, paying close attention to spelling and grammar.
- Read the application guidance and make sure you answer all the questions fully - application forms are often scored and you need a certain score to get to the next stage.
- Show interest and awareness of current issues affecting your sector.

How do I apply?

Usually via an online application form. This might include searching questions such as, why should the employer invest in you? There may also be online tests or assessments in areas such as numerical and verbal reasoning, a situational judgement test (with scenarios you may come across in the workplace and how you would respond) or a personality profile. You may also have a telephone interview.

After this, you may be invited to an interview and/or assessment centre at the university or employer's premises. At an assessment centre you can expect group exercises to test how you work with others and you may be asked to make a presentation.

What are employers looking for?

Sponsorship schemes can be competitive; The Lloyds Scholars programme has around 1,600 applications for 120 places each year, for example. So it pays to make sure you've got what they're looking for - including personal strengths and values, such as:

- Ability to work on your own
- Commercial awareness
- Communication skills

"At Atkins we don't expect every applicant to have straight A grades at A-level or to be able to offer any technical expertise. What we're looking for are life skills gained from work experience (not necessarily engineering related), potential, interest in power engineering, determination, inquisitiveness and different ways of solving problems - and a little bit of sparkle."

Elizabeth Birchenough - Co-ordinator, Atkins IET Power Academy

"My advice is to structure your application carefully. Emphasise transferable skills that you have gained and most importantly how they are relevant to the company you are applying for. Think about what differentiates you from your peers and what's unique about you."

Mark Goudie - Electrical and Mechanical Engineer, Future Energies, Atkins



Phoebe Bryant is on an EY Assurance Scholarship - here are her application tips:

- Carefully research what sort of person the company is looking for and then demonstrate how your experience fits with this. Are you the right personality type, would you fit in well?
- Be yourself at an assessment centre - this is the only way you will know if you are the sort of person they are looking for. Believe you can do it; if you're worried about how you come across you won't act naturally.
- Remember the selectors are people - don't be afraid to ask questions and get the information you want.

- Confidence
- Flexibility
- Team-based approach
- Using initiative
- Planning and problem solving skills
- Resilience and determination

"We are not necessarily looking for students with prior relevant work experience - we are looking for potential demonstrated through strengths such as taking pride in their work, working well with others, building and growing relationships with people and analytical and problem solving ability."

Emma Judge - Head of Student Recruitment, EY