

FOI Release

Information released under the Freedom of Information Act

Title: Prisoner Education

Date of release: 24 February 2015

Information request

- 1) The total amount of money that is spent, by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, for purposes of prisoner education.
- 2) The total amount of money that is given by sources, other than the Department for BIS, for the purpose of prisoner education.
- 3) The qualifications available to prisoners serving a custodial sentence, of any length.
- 4) The number of prisoners that have, and are currently undertaking work towards a qualification of any kind.
- 5) The 'type' of a prisoner to be able to undertake a qualification (e.g. only available to a particular category of prisoner).

Information released

Q1: The total amount of money that is spent, by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, for purposes of prisoner education.

The information below relates to programme budgets (i.e. budgets for the delivery of education, information, advice and guidance) and does not include administrative expenditure, e.g. the salary costs for Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) staff working on prison education.

The total Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) budget BIS made available for 2014-15 was £145,686k, which includes £14,000k for delivery of the National Careers Service in custody. The BIS budget covers those held in adult prisons in England, excluding HMPs Lowdham Grange, Rye Hill, Peterborough, Altcourse, Forest Bank, Bronzefield, Ashfield and Dovegate where the prison operator – not the Department – funds education delivery.

In 2014-15, we also made available budgets totalling £1,330k to the Open University (OU), the Prisoners Education Trust and Women in Prison to fund their

activity in supporting Higher Education (HE), distance learning and specialist information, advice and guidance services.

Prisoners are required to take out, and then repay, Tuition Fee loans in the same way as other learners for HE courses and 24+ Advanced Learning Loans for eligible learners undertaking level 3 and 4 Further Education courses. We do not have data on the total amount of loan funding given to prisoners.

Q2: The total amount of money that is given by sources, other than the Department for BIS, for the purpose of prisoner education.

Provision such as peer mentoring and specialist courses are provided and funded by a range of organisations such as charities and other third sector providers. As noted above, prison operators are responsible for education delivery in a number of adult prisons in England. European Social Fund money, administered by the National Offender Management Service, funds tailored education provision. We do not hold information on the total amount of money given by other sources for the purpose of prison education.

Q3: The qualifications available to prisoners serving a custodial sentence, of any length.

The prison Governor takes the lead role in determining the curriculum in their establishment/cluster. The core curriculum must include:

- Employability skills
- English and maths, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and ICT
- Ofqual Regulated Vocational Qualifications

There is an emphasis on addressing English and maths at the start of a prisoners' sentence and vocational skills in the run-up to release.

A list of the qualifications the Skills Funding Agency has approved for public funding in the academic year 2014/15, all of which (but see below regarding some restrictions) are potentially available to prisoners depending on prison Governors' commissioning decisions, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifications-simplified-funding-rates-2014-to-2015>.

For a list of courses that have been funded, the Skills Funding Agency, under OLASS, you should contact the Skills Funding Agency at: freedomofinformation@sfa.bis.gov.uk

HE courses are largely delivered by the OU who also deliver introductory level access modules.

A list of OU qualifications available to prisoners can be found at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/about/offender-learning/studying-ou/courses-and-qualifications>

It must be noted there are certain subjects precluded for reasons of public safety or because of the offence that the offender has committed e.g. a prisoner who has been sentenced for fraud would not be allowed to study forensic accounting.

Q4: The number of prisoners that have, and are currently undertaking work towards a qualification of any kind.

It is not clear exactly what information you required here. If you want to know offender learning current and historical participation data, this can be found (by academic year from 2010/11 to 2013/14) at table 7.1 in the Statistical First Release SFA/SFR27 Published on 29th January 2015 which can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399453/learner-participation-outcomes-and-level-of-highest-qualification-release-jan15.pdf

If your question is asking about the number of prisoners who already had qualifications prior to entering prison, I can confirm that this data is not collected. However you may wish to look at the report 'The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners' results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction longitudinal cohort study of prisoners' at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278832/newly-sentenced-prisoners.pdf

Q5: The 'type' of a prisoner to be able to undertake a qualification (e.g. only available to a particular category of prisoner).

Generally speaking, all prisoner categories are able to study for a Further Education qualification. However, as priority is given to maths and English to prisoners at the start of their sentence and vocational training in the last 12 months before release, prisoners on remand and those mid-sentence may have limited access to OLASS provision.

Prisoners on remand are not eligible to apply for HE courses but those who started studying with the OU prior to entering prison may be allowed to continue to study in certain circumstances. On conviction and sentence, a prisoner will become eligible to apply to study for a HE qualification.

As stated in response to Q3 above, a qualification must be appropriate in the context of a prisoners' conviction.