



Department
for Education

Early Years Initial Teacher Training – Requesting Places and Allocations Methodology

2025 to 2026 Academic Year

July 2025

Contents

Summary	2
Main points	2
Introduction	2
Early years courses leading to EYTS.....	3
Recruitment.....	3
Preparing for recruitment	4
ITT accreditation	4
Lead schools.....	4
Recruiting for courses: allocations	5
Requesting permission to recruit trainees	5
Recruitment figures.....	6
Allocations.....	6
Adding new courses.....	7
Data accuracy	7

Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to provide accredited initial teacher training providers with the methodology used to allocate places on their early years initial teacher training courses for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

Accredited providers offering early years initial teacher training courses in England for the 2025-2026 academic year. In this guidance, accredited ITT providers offering EYITT courses are referred to as accredited EYITT providers.

Main points

Each year the Department for Education requires accredited providers offering early years initial teacher training courses in England to communicate how many trainees they wish to recruit onto their courses for the following academic year. The Department for Education then grants a number of allocations to each provider for each relevant early years initial teacher training course and asks providers to not recruit above that number.

For the 2025-2026 academic year, the allocations process is relevant only to providers wishing to offer Early Years courses leading to Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS).

Introduction

The Department for Education is responsible for regulating the volume of trainee early years teachers in England where training leads to the award of EYTS. The department also aims to support recruitment for all initial teacher training (ITT) courses in order to meet teacher demand from schools in England, efficiently using public funds and minimising an oversupply of teachers.

This document provides guidance on early years teacher trainee recruitment for the 2025-2026 academic year, and the methodology for allocating training places for the 2025-2026 recruitment cycle. It is intended to be of use for accredited EYITT providers across the country.

To formulate this approach, DfE has:

- accounted for previous recruitment patterns;
- listened to sector feedback;
- analysed the information supplied by accredited EYITT providers and lead schools during the allocation request period in November 2024; and
- analysed the data provided in the ITT Census for academic year 2024-2025 taken in November 2024.

DfE, or any successor organisation, may modify or amend the approach taken in future years.

This guidance applies to the academic year 2025-2026 only.

Early years courses leading to EYTS

There are four training routes available for people to train as an early years teacher and be awarded EYTS upon successful completion:

- **Graduate entry:** where a financial grant is allocated to providers by DfE to assist course fees coverage for graduate trainees studying full-time. Bursaries are available for eligible trainees (see 'ITT funding' section).
- **Graduate employment-based:** where a [training grant and employer incentive](#) is given respectively to graduate trainees and to the trainee's employer. This is a route open to graduates in paid employment, working in an early years setting and requiring further training to demonstrate Teachers' Standards (Early Years). Trainees must have the right to work in the UK for the duration of the training.
- **Undergraduate:** where a tuition fee is payable by a person studying for a full-time degree (three or four year-long) in an early childhood-related subject. Funding is not available for trainees on this route, but trainees may be eligible to receive [a tuition fee or maintenance loan](#).
- **Assessment only:** a route for experienced practitioners (who may have gained qualifications overseas). This route is self-funded.

Recruitment

EYITT courses leading to EYTS for the 2025-2026 academic year fall into the 'allocated' category, meaning providers are given a limited number of trainees they can recruit.

Allocated recruitment to courses is limited by the number of places granted by the DfE to providers. 'Allocations' indicate the number of places available for each organisation to recruit trainees for each of their ITT courses in this category.

To recruit for early years courses leading to EYTS, accredited providers must first complete specific actions (see 'Recruiting for courses: allocated category' section). On the basis of national early years professional demand and providers' requests, DfE grants an

established set of allocations to providers for courses in this category. Providers must not recruit over their granted allocations, unless in-year requests are permitted, or communicated otherwise by DfE.

Preparing for recruitment

Provider-led training courses are held by ITT providers. All organisations offering EYITT courses must ensure they have taken the adequate steps to ensure they are ready to recruit.

ITT accreditation

To ensure ITT providers and lead schools can offer early years courses for the 2025-2026 academic year and recruit trainees for these, they must firstly ensure they have received accreditation by DfE.

Following the government's response to the 2021 ITT Market Review, all organisations delivering ITT leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) must be accredited against these new criteria, including the new quality requirements. Passing this accreditation process is a mandatory requirement to deliver EYITT courses. A list of accredited ITT providers is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

At present there are no requirements for EYITT courses to meet the same standards as ITT courses as a result of the reaccreditation process, although providers may want to consider using the [initial teacher training and early career framework](#) when developing their programme to mirror the same standards across their offerings.

All EYITT courses must enable trainee teachers to meet all of the [teachers' standards \(early years\)](#) in order to be able to be lead to an award of EYTS.

Usually, as part of the DfE's approach to quality assurance, Ofsted will inspect EYITT delivery for all accredited providers under the initial teacher training and early career framework. However, Ofsted has postponed the start to its next initial teacher education (ITE) inspection cycle until the 2025/26 academic year, following a request by the Secretary of State for Education. Other quality-assurance activity will be carried out in the form of thematic monitoring visits, and most inspection activity is expected to restart from January 2026, with further details available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-to-postpone-initial-teacher-education-inspection-cycle>.

Lead schools

Existing lead schools must ensure they have the ability to recruit with the EYITT provider they partner with. New lead schools should contact

becomingateacher@digital.education.gov.uk for guidance, in order to be able to recruit. It is advised that schools that wish to become a lead school first consider joining an existing partnership in their area. The minimum partnership size is five partner schools (or three for special schools).

Recruiting for courses: allocations

To recruit trainees for courses in the allocated recruitment category for the 2025-2026 academic year, accredited providers must:

- Request permission to recruit trainees by contacting the EYITT allocations mailbox (eyitt.ALLOCATIONS@education.gov.uk).
- Provide an indication of interest and recruitment figures for each EYITT route via DfE's regular Recruitment Update Survey, as well as actual figures as part of the ITT Census.
- Receive allocations
- Provide data to support bids for additional places in the second and third allocations windows

They will then be able to open their courses for applications.

Where applicable, they can also consider:

- In-year allocations
- January cohorts

Requesting permission to recruit trainees

The process to request permission to recruit applied only for courses in the allocated category for academic year 2025 to 2026 had to be completed by all accredited EYITT providers by Friday 29th November 2024. For lead schools, their permission to recruit was to be completed by the EYITT provider they partner with. Accredited EYITT Providers were instructed to inform DfE of their recruitment figures for each of their courses in the allocated recruitment category for the 2025-2026 academic year (see 'Recruitment figures' section). They were also asked to agree on requests being made on behalf of lead schools and ensure they submitted all requests before the end of the request period. Partnerships were able to decide for themselves whether lead school requests were completed by the lead school or the EYITT provider, as long as the EYITT provider submitted the request to DfE.

The request to offer this course and the recruitment figures were to be submitted via a Microsoft Form. The form was sent via email from GOV.UK to all accredited EYITT providers by DfE.

Recruitment figures

When requesting permission to recruit for courses in the allocated recruitment category, providers were required to specify the recruitment figures for their EYITT courses for the 2025-2026 academic year. DfE requires this information to understand demand and capacity in the system nationally. The Database of Trainee Teachers & Providers (DTTP) is not used to collect information of requests.

When considering these figures, accredited EYITT providers and lead schools should account for their most recent cohort sizes, recent recruitment patterns, current or anticipated growth in partnership arrangements, recent trends in applicant route preferences and a realistic assessment of employment need in the local area. This applies to the capacity for training that their partnerships can accommodate and their ability to attract high quality trainees who will make excellent teachers. Accredited EYITT providers and lead schools have a responsibility to ensure that DfE funding, data and reporting requirements are met, and therefore are responsible for submitting accurate information on the capacity of their training programmes. Any errors in submission are the sole responsibility of the accredited EYITT provider or lead school. Requests to amend or correct data beyond the deadline will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Allocations

November allocations

DfE received more allocation requests for both funded EYITT routes for the 2025 to 2026 academic year than places on offer.

Places for both of the funded EYITT routes were allocated based on a provider's share of total places allocated in the 2024 to 2025 academic year. For example, if a provider held 3.1% of the total allocations in 2024 to 2025, their initial allocation for 2025 to 2026 was calculated as 3.1% of the total available places.

New EYITT providers for academic year 2025 to 2026 were accommodated in the methodology by some providers from academic year 2024 to 2025 ceasing to deliver EYITT for 2025 to 2026.

As part of the allocations process, all accredited EYITT providers for 2025 to 2026 were initially allocated at least 60% of the total places they bid for before final adjustments.

However, allocations were then scaled proportionally to ensure the total number of places matched those available, which may have resulted in final allocations being below 60% of the original bids in some cases.

As stated in the Requesting Permission to Recruit Trainees section, providers may have the opportunity to apply to deliver more places for both routes at two points during the 2025 to 2026 academic year, should unfilled places be returned to the Department.

May allocations

DfE ran an additional round of allocations in May 2025.

Accredited EYITT providers were asked to share information concerning the viability of their courses, and for their additional bids. Based on this information, several providers required additional places to remain viable.

Those providers with viability concerns were prioritised initially, with places being allocated to address the concerns.

The remaining places were then allocated proportionally, based on how many additional places each provider bid for beyond any viability need, compared to the total additional bids received.

Opening and closing courses

Accredited EYITT providers are able to open their courses to applicants once their allocations have been granted and start recruiting trainees. Providers are advised to close their courses when they run out of places for courses. They may want to re-open these courses should they have newly freed places, such as if a candidate withdraws their accepted offer.

Adding new courses

Where a provider wants to add a new EYITT course for the 2025 to 2026 academic year, they should contact the Department for Education via EYITT.GENERALENQUIRIES@education.gov.uk.

Data accuracy

Accredited ITT providers who report inaccurate data may be impacted in their permission to recruit or in their granted allocations in subsequent years. Following the [ITT criteria and supporting advice](#), failure to comply with DfE data requirements may lead to withdrawal of accreditation.



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