

Opportunity Bursary

Application Guidance for Students 2024



What can I use the funding for?

The bursary is intended to help you develop skills, enhance your student experience and support you to increase your employability. We are open to a variety of project suggestions.

Some activities suitable for using the bursary funds are:

- Funding travel/accommodation for an overseas internship, work experience or research trip
- Supporting the costs of completing an internship in the UK *
- Costs of a professional qualification or language course 6 months or less in length
- Membership of a professional body
- Attendance at professional events, conference or training courses
- Paying for equipment or software that will enable you to undertake freelance work
- Reducing the need for paid part-time work to free up time for employability-related activities (internships, volunteering, student society leadership roles)

* If you are applying for this option, please clarify whether the proposed internship would be paid and how much – so we can understand the need for additional funds from this bursary.

You can apply for funds to cover more than one of these categories – for example, the cost of some software in addition to a relevant training course.

What can I not use the funds for?

This bursary is not intended to fund educational fees, standard maintenance costs, or as a hardship fund.

The funds cannot be used to cover the cost of longer programmes (6+ months in length, such as a Law conversion course) and sandwich years – e.g. placement years in industry or a year abroad.

How much funding is available?

We will award grants of between £2500 and £5000. You can apply for any amount within this range. Your application will be assessed on the quality of your project proposal, and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged based on the amount you request.

The funds will be issued in 3 instalments from February to September 2025. The funds must be spent in their entirety by the end of the calendar year (December 2025).

Who can apply?

To apply for the Opportunity Bursary, you must:

- Have completed a **Sutton Trust programme** OR the **Aspiring Professionals Programme** (run by JP Morgan and the Social Mobility Foundation).
- Have completed at least 1 year of undergraduate study.
- Be enrolled on a course (undergraduate or postgraduate) at a UK university for the academic year 2024/2025.

If you have already received the Opportunity Bursary or the Career Skills Bursary in previous years, you are unfortunately not eligible as we need to maximise the opportunities available on these extremely oversubscribed programmes.

What is the application process?

There are two stages to the application process.

Stage 1 – Eligibility sift

Dates: 9 AM 13th August – 9 AM 16th September 2024

Applicants provide some information that enables us to check their eligibility for the programme, as well as some additional contextual information relating to other funding they receive and their financial status. They will provide an academic or professional referee to confirm their identity.

Once all stage 1 applications have been received, applicants will be prioritised in order of need. We will use the following criteria to sift applications and identify the 200 most eligible applicants:

- Social mobility scoring data – based on the existing information The Sutton Trust collects for its pre-18 programmes.

- Aspiring Professionals Programme alumni will be required to complete the same questions that Sutton Trust alumni complete for their programme – such as free school meal eligibility, postcode, and whether your parents have attended higher education.
- Household income (as stated on your student finance application)

Additionally, we have committed to ensuring that a minimum of 60% of our applicants being from a Black or minority ethnic background, within which at least 30% will be Black students. This will be collected in stage 1 as contextual information. Our alumni community tends to meet these proportions naturally and so it will only be considered in selection decisions in the unlikely event that these proportions are not initially met.

Stage 2 – Application window

Dates: 9 AM 23rd September – 9 AM 14th October 2024

The 200 most eligible applicants will be sent a unique link to complete their written application for the bursary. They will provide:

- Information about what they propose to use the funding for
- An estimated costing of their proposed project
- Any additional information they would like the panel to take into consideration e.g. previous achievements or barriers faced

Any candidates who would like to read through the written application in advance of the stage 2 window can do so [here](#). You can access some examples of the completed costs spreadsheet [here](#).

Candidates are welcome to begin preparing a written application before the stage 2 window, but please note we cannot guarantee that you will get a place on the longlist.

What is the selection process?

There are three stages to the selection process.

1 – Written application review

Dates: 14th October – early November 2024

Volunteer application readers from JP Morgan will review all written applications from the longlist once the application window is over. They will assess the clarity of focus and level of detail in the written applications, as well as the applicant's articulation of how the funds would improve their employability.

2 - Interviews

Dates: Mid-Late November 2024

Applicants will be informed of their outcome by mid-November. Shortlisted candidates will be invited for a 20-minute online interview in late November. Further guidance about preparing for this interview will be provided to shortlisted candidates.

3 – Selection panel

Dates: Early December 2024

A selection panel from JP Morgan and the Sutton Trust will review all applications holistically and reach a decision about the final cohort to be awarded. All candidates will be informed of their outcome by mid-December.

How can I write a strong application?

- **Research is key** - we know you won't be able to have a full plan yet for what you'd spend the money on if you were successful – but we're looking for evidence of some research on your part.
- **Back-up plan** - if your plan for the funds is dependent on being accepted onto a scheme, or the cooperation of another person/organisation, make sure you include a second plan for what you could do with the funds instead if this doesn't happen.
- **Be clear about the goals and skills you want to work on** – applications will be assessed on the clarity and detail given about your plans and how they will support your overall employability.
- **Set SMART goals** – make sure your goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound. This will help bring structure and clarity to your goals in the short word count provided.

Frequently asked questions

Can I apply if I am not in receipt of student finance for religious reasons?

Yes, please state your household income in the same space on the application form, and we may reach out about verification.

Can I apply if I completed a different programme with the Social Mobility Foundation?

No, unfortunately we can only accept applications from those who completed the Aspiring Professionals Programme with JP Morgan.

Can I apply if I have already received the Opportunity Bursary in a previous year?

Unfortunately not, due to the extremely limited number of places on the bursary – we look to maximise the opportunity for as many people as possible.

Can I apply if I have received the Career Skills Bursary?

Unfortunately not, due to the extremely limited number of places on the bursary – we look to maximise the opportunity and financial support we can provide for as many people as possible, and participation in the Career Skills Bursary already constitutes significant financial support from us.

What if my social mobility circumstances have changed since my original application?

Please reach out to the team to discuss any changes or amendments to your circumstances and we can address these on a case-by-case basis.