The Spectacle Makers' Charity Bursary Scheme 2026–27: Guidance Notes

1. The bursary application form tells us about you and provides important information on which the Trustees will make their decisions. Please read the application form and this guidance carefully before you start.

2. Applications will be accepted from students in any year of a course in the UK (minimum Level 4 or above) which is intended to lead directly to an optical, optometric, orthoptic, ophthalmic nursing or ophthalmic imaging profession. This includes part-time, day-release and block-release students and apprentices on a government-approved apprenticeship at Level 4 or above. The course or programme on which the applicant is enrolled must cover a period of more than six months.

3. It does not need to be your first course of study – e.g., those progressing from a Level 4 diploma to a Level 6 dispensing course/degree or Level 7 Master of Optometry degree are eligible. Applicants who already hold a first degree in a subject other than optical dispensing or optometry may also apply but the Trustees will expect more from those who already hold a degree level qualification.

   Bursaries will **NOT** be awarded for stand-alone one-year Master's degrees or for any postgraduate programmes, other than ophthalmic nursing.

4. Candidates of any nationality may apply but they must be registered to study within the United Kingdom, must be eligible to work in the UK and must hold a UK bank account.

5. All applications must be submitted via the online form on our website https://www.spectaclemakers.com/charity/bursaries-and-travel-awards **between the launch date of Monday 19 October 2026 and no later than midnight on Wednesday 25 November 2026.** Applications sent in any other format, including letters or emails asking for financial support, will not be considered by the Trustees.

6. You must give the name and contact details of your personal tutor, course director or supervisor on the form.

Section A – Personal details and data protection

A1. The Spectacle Makers' Charity and the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM) will hold and process the details in your application form in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

A2. By submitting an online application, you agree to your data being stored and shared with the WCSM and with the Trustees of the Charity individually and as a body, for the purposes of assessing, awarding, and monitoring the Bursary Scheme and informing you about the work of the WCSM and the Spectacle Makers' Charity.

A3. By submitting the form, you also agree to the Charity Trustees or a representative of the Trustees contacting you, your tutor or other staff at your training institution, and any employer or organisation declared on the form if needed to check the information you have provided in your application.

A4. We ask for your consent for possible use of your name in publicity relating to the scheme if you are successful in being awarded a bursary. This is entirely optional. Your application will be considered in the same way even if this consent is not given.

A5. Data relating to unsuccessful applicants may be deleted one year following the announcement of the grant of awards. Under normal circumstances, unless further consent for contact has been given, data relating to bursary winners will be destroyed four years after the granting of an award.

A6. We would like to keep in touch with you but if you do not want to be informed of WCSM events and activities in the future, this will not count against your application.

A7. Applicants and award winners can update their contact details or change or withdraw consent for use of their personal data at any time by contacting the WCSM office on 020 7236 2932 or emailing charity@spectaclemakers.com.

Section B – Application details

B1. The number of awards we can make is limited. **IMPORTANT: Not everyone who applies will receive a bursary.** Bursary awards are made at the discretion of the Trustees **up to a maximum amount of £1,000.**

B2. If you applied for a bursary in a previous year and were not successful, you can try again but past winners cannot re-apply. No person can receive more than one bursary.

B3. The process is competitive, but the Trustees are not looking for people with the highest exam grades or the most impressive personal statements. They are looking to help people who would really benefit from a personal bursary, people who are committed to a career in eye health, have thought about what financial support they need to help them in that goal and have shown that they can make sensible budgeting and cost-effective decisions.

B4. A very important part of the form is your explanation of why you are interested in your course, including any individual experience or inspiration that led you to apply for your chosen programme of study.

B5. Please provide details of the amount applied for and how it will be used. The Trustees will expect you to explain how their financial support could support you in your training leading to qualification as an eye health professional. Bursaries will not be given for personal expenses such as health and beauty, gym memberships, holidays or gifts to friends and family.

B6. Communication skills are very important so please check your entry carefully for spelling and grammatical errors, make sure you answer **all** the questions and **maximise each response within the set word count.** Skipping questions or failing to fully complete the application form will make your application invalid.

Section C – Assessment and payment process

C.1 In assessing the applications, no account will be taken of an applicant's age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, race, religion or marital status. Names will be removed from applications before they are assessed, being replaced by a unique number.

C.2 Applications will be scored and independently reviewed by two Trustees. Awards will be made only after agreement by the Board of Trustees of the Charity.

C.3 All assessors are Freemen or Liverymen of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, and all bursary applicants are warmly invited to take an interest in the Company and its programme for Journeymen and Freemen but connecting with the Company will not give any advantage in the assessment of bursary applications. Any connection an applicant may claim to have, directly or through a tutor, family or Company member, will be disregarded in assessing applications.

C.4 The Trustees expect a large number of applications and neither they nor their admin support team will offer any individual advice or give feedback on unsuccessful applications. Applicants are expected to think for themselves. All the guidance needed is given in this document and on the form itself.

C.5 Awards will be confirmed by email **by 5 March 2027** and paid directly into the bank accounts of bursary winners before the **end of March 2027**. Applicants who have not received a communication from the Trustees by 5 March 2027 should assume that their application has not been successful. The Trustees will not enter into discussions about the assessment process. The judgment of the Trustee Board will be final and there is no right of appeal.

C.6 A bursary will not be awarded to any person until confirmation has been obtained that they are still enrolled on the course at the UK institution named on the application form and they are attending regularly and participating fully in the programme.

Section D – Use of funds

D1. The Trustees will expect bursary awards to be spent within 18 months of the award. You will be required to provide formal evidence of expenditure, in the form of receipts. Please be aware of this when applying. **You may have to repay funds if you do not use the money appropriately or if you do not complete the course.**

Section E – Terms and conditions

E1. Please make sure you tick the box to confirm you have understood the terms and conditions of the Bursary Scheme.

E2. Please make sure that you let us know of any changes to your contact details during the application process, otherwise we will not be able to tell you if you are successful.

E3. You must not copy from others or use published information such as wording from prospectuses or training materials. An application will be deemed invalid if it appears that information has been shared with, or copied and pasted from, another source.

E4. Bursary awards can only be paid into a UK bank account held in the name of the award winner. Details will be requested only if your application is successful.

E5. It is a condition of the award that all bursary winners must provide a written report of around 750 words or, if preferred, a short video on their progress. Reports in either format must be submitted by **31 July 2027**. Bursary winners will also be required to send receipts or other evidence to prove how bursary funds have been spent. Action may be taken to reclaim funds from you if you do not report to the Trustees on progress and/or cannot prove proper evidenced use of the bursary. The writer of the best progress report will be eligible to receive the Anne Macintosh Award and will be invited to the next Annual WCSM Presentation Ceremony where they will have the chance to meet experienced professionals from all parts of the eye care sector.