


**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Federal Bureau of Prisons**



**PROGRAM STATEMENT
Postsecondary Education Programs**

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| Approved by |  William K. Marshall III Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons |
| DPI | RSD |
| Number | 5354.04 |
| Date | June 22, 2026 |

Summary of Changes

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| <p><i>Program Statement Rescinded:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 5354.03 Postsecondary Education Programs for Inmates (12/17/2003) |
| <p><i>Changes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Changes the title of the policy from “Postsecondary Education Programs for Inmates” to “Postsecondary Education Programs.”▪ The Education Services Branch’s role is defined to maximize efficiency of oversight and resource utilization.▪ Clarifies the types of PSE programs and courses offered to inmates while incarcerated.▪ Adds codes to differentiate PSE programs in the applicable Federal Bureau of Prisons (Bureau) inmate management system.▪ Defines the types of PSE programs eligible for First Step Act (FSA) credit and incentives.▪ Removes guidance related to instructor-led, on-site programs funded by inmates due to the reinstatement of the Federal Pell Grant program.▪ Removes specific references to Bureau inmate management systems and their codes. Staff must now refer to the Education Services Branch page of the Bureau’s intranet site for guidance regarding these systems and required codes for PSE programs. |

1. **§ 544.20 Purpose and scope.**

The Bureau of Prisons offers inmates the opportunity under its postsecondary education program to participate in postsecondary education courses (courses for college credit other than those courses which pertain to occupational education programs) which have been determined to be appropriate in light of the institution's need for discipline, security, and good order. Participation

in postsecondary education courses which are part of occupational education programs is governed by the provisions of the Bureau's occupational education program (see subpart F of this part).

This program statement defines postsecondary education programs (PSE) and provides guidance for all Bureau facilities offering PSE programs. PSE programs include correspondence courses and instructor-led courses presented on-site, virtually, or in combination. PSE includes a broad range of educational opportunities. Prison Education Programs (PEP), authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, represent a distinct subset of PSE programs that are subject to U.S. Department of Education approval and compliance requirements, including institutional eligibility, reporting, and oversight provisions. Staff must ensure PEP offerings are administered in accordance with all applicable federal regulations and Bureau guidance. Correspondence courses typically involve instructors sending course materials through the mail to be completed at the student's pace.

a. Program Objectives.

- Inmates will be provided with the opportunity to enroll in instructor-led (on-site or virtual) PSE programs and/or correspondence study.
- Promote continued educational attainment beyond initial credential completion, including progression to higher-level academic or professional programs beyond the secondary level.
- To decrease recidivism by increasing opportunities for inmates to secure employment upon reentry to the community.

b. Institution Supplement. None.

2. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

The following Bureau components are responsible for ensuring consistent establishment of the PSE programs, services, and resource allocations.

a. Education Services Branch

The Education Services Branch (ESB) is the agency's source for expertise on development, coordination, and management of PSE programs. Specifically, the ESB is responsible for the following functions:

- Providing national oversight of PSE programs and initiatives for the inmate population.
- Researching and gathering information on emerging, high-demand career fields to inform PSE program planning.
- Assisting Regional Education Administrators (REA) and Supervisors of Education (SOE)

in establishing new PSE programs.

- Coordinating with REAs and SOEs to monitor PSE programs.
- Representing the Bureau at internal and external events/conferences by providing information regarding inmate PSE programs.
- Providing leadership and guidance to regional and institution staff.
- Developing and providing staff professional development regarding PSE programs.
- Preparing monitoring reports on the PSE programs for internal and external stakeholders.

b. Regional Education Administrator (REA)

- Ensuring all Bureau institutions offer PSE programs.
- Advising the ESB of issues and concerns affecting PSE programs at the institutions in their region.
- Providing oversight to institutions regarding the implementation and monitoring of new and existing PSE programs.

c. Institutions

- Offering PSE programs and services that target the needs and interests of the inmate population.
- Tracking participation in PSE programs by updating the applicable Bureau inmate management system and other databases as appropriate.
- Monitoring and reporting PSE program performance and outcomes quarterly in accordance with standardized metrics and reporting procedures established by ESB.
- Include the PSE programs in the Admission and Orientation (A&O) reference materials and post them on the Education Department bulletin board.

3. § 544.21 Procedures.

(a) The Warden or designee must appoint a postsecondary education coordinator (ordinarily an education staff member) for the institution. The postsecondary education coordinator is responsible for coordinating the institution's postsecondary education program.

The SOE oversees the post-secondary education program and may appoint an education staff member as the PSE Coordinator. Where PSE programs are offered, institutions will establish written enrollment and approval procedures. This information will be made available to inmates during A&O and posted on the Education Department bulletin board. The written procedure requirement applies to all funding sources and program delivery methods (i.e., instructor-led, on-site/virtual or correspondence).

The PSE Coordinator will work with the Prison Education Program (PEP) provider from the college on all aspects of the program, which may include establishing course schedules, enrolling

students, and assisting with the implementation of the college program. The PSE Coordinator will not perform functions reserved for the education provider, including admissions determinations, academic advising, or financial aid processing, beyond general informational support provided to inmates.

The PSE Coordinator is responsible for maintaining PSE program offerings, managing enrollment and completion data in accordance with the ESB guidance, updating inmate student participation and completion records in the applicable Bureau inmate management system, and assisting the SOE with any additional responsibilities required within the PEP.

(b) An inmate who wishes to participate in a postsecondary education course must apply through the postsecondary education coordinator. If the postsecondary education coordinator determines that the course is appropriate in light of the institution's need for discipline, security, and good order, the inmate may enroll provided that:

- (1) The inmate meets eligibility requirements for the course which have been set by the course provider,
- (2) The inmate is responsible for payment of any tuition either through personal funds, community resources, or scholarships available to the inmate, and
- (3) The unit team determines that the course is appropriate for the inmate's apparent needs.

The PSE Coordinator is responsible for sharing available resources with the inmate population to include scholarships, veterans' benefits, and other sources (e.g., Federal Pell Grants).

With the exceptions of programs funded through Federal Pell Grants, institution funding, or other approved funding sources (e.g., scholarships, grants, or authorized donations), inmates are responsible for all costs associated with participation in PSE programs, including tuition, books, and related fees.

All sentenced inmates have their needs assessed according to the Program Statement **First Step Act Assessment, Programming, and Incentives**. When a PSE program is recommended, Education staff will advise Unit Management staff by entering their recommendation in the feedback section of the Insight Application Suite.

4. TYPES OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

PSE programs follow the successful completion of a secondary education diploma or high school equivalency certificate/diploma. PSE program providers include universities and colleges, as well as trade and vocational schools. Completion of a PSE program is awarded with a certificate or academic degree. Career and technical education programs are addressed in the Program

Statement **Career and Technical Education Programs.**

PSE programs subject to the provisions of this program statement are defined as programs funded by the Federal Pell Grants, institution funds, inmate personal funds, donations, and scholarships, as well as other forms of federal and state aid. These PSE programs can be delivered to inmates by instructors on-site or with a combination of in-person instruction, virtual, and/or correspondence study.

Instructor-led, On-site, Virtual, or Combination Programs funded by Federal Pell Grant, FSA, and Other Federal or State Funding Sources. Where a sufficient number of inmates meet the funding criteria as defined by the college or education source, and funding is available, Bureau institutions are encouraged to offer instructor-led, on-site postsecondary certificate, two-year degree programs, or four-year degree programs.

Correspondence Courses. Inmates may enroll in PSE programs through correspondence instruction.

Inmates must receive approval from the PSE Coordinator before enrolling in any virtual or correspondence program.

Tuition and associated fees for correspondence courses are incurred by the inmate; they will not be paid from Trust Fund, FSA, or Salaries and Expenses (S&E) funds.

5. **FIRST STEP ACT CREDIT**

The FSA, codified in part in 18 U.S.C. § 3632, provides that eligible inmates may earn FSA time credits (FTC) for participating in and completing approved Evidence-Based Recidivism Reduction (EBRR) programs or Productive Activities (PAs).

PSE programming is a vital part of the Bureau's FSA effort to assist inmates in preparing for post-release employment. Specifically, inmates who have participated in PSE programs learn valuable knowledge and skills needed to enhance their post-release employment opportunities. Upon completion of approved PSE EBRR programs, eligible inmates may be awarded incentives as described in the Program Statement **First Step Act Assessment, Programming, and Incentives.**

6. **SELECTION OF PSE PROGRAM SERVICE PROVIDERS**

All selections of PSE contract service providers will be made in accordance with the Program Statement **Bureau of Prisons Acquisition Policy.** In accordance with the Program Statement **Acceptance of Donations,** the SOE will consult with the Ethics Office, Central Office regarding the procedures when PSE programs are offered to the Bureau with no charge. PEP

offerings that have undergone ESB and Department of Education approval operate under separate statutory and regulatory frameworks and are not managed as traditional contracted or donated services; however, institutions must ensure compliance with all applicable PEP-specific ethics and partnership requirements.

7. INMATE PSE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RECORDS

The PSE Coordinator will enter all inmate PSE participation records using the Education Course Category in the applicable Bureau inmate management system in accordance with guidelines provided on the ESB page of the Bureau's intranet site. The SOE has oversight responsibility for the accuracy of PSE program data entries in this system. The SOE will ensure quarterly education roster reports are reviewed and, when applicable, develop a corrective action plan to address keying errors.

REFERENCES

Program Statements

Career and Technical Education Programs

First Step Act Assessments, Programming, and Incentives

Federal Regulations

28 C.F.R. § 544.20–21.

ACA Standards

Performance-Based Standards and Expected Practices for Adult Correctional Institutions (5th Edition): 5-ACI-3D-04, 5-ACI-3D-05, 5-ACI-5E-02, 5-ACI-5E-03, 5-ACI-7B-01, 5-ACI-7B-02, 5-ACI-7B-04, 5-ACI-7B-05, 5-ACI-7B-06, 5-ACI-7B-07, 5-ACI-7B-08, 5-ACI-7B-09, 5-ACI-7B-10, 5-ACI-7B-11, 5-ACI-7B-12, 5-ACI-7B-13, 5-ACI-7B-14, and 5-ACI-7B-15

Performance-Based Standards and Expected Practices for Adult Local Detention Facilities (5th Edition): 5-ALDF-5A-02, 5-ALDF-5A-09, 5-ALDF-6B-02, 5-ALDF-6B-03, 5-ALDF-6B-05

Standards for the Administration of Correctional Agencies, 2nd Edition: 2-CO-5B-01, 2-CO-5C-01

Records Retention Requirements

Requirements and retention guidance for records and information applicable to this program are available in the Records and Information Disposition Schedule (RIDS) on the Bureau's intranet site.