



Call for Proposals

January 2025

Springboard+ is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union

HEA

HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tUdaráis um Ard-Oideachas

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Providers who wish to make Springboard+ course proposals must submit their proposals online via **Wizehive**

The deadline for submissions is
1pm on 26th February 2025

Proposals will not be accepted after this deadline or via any other platform



IMPORTANT NOTE

- Courses currently funded under **HCI Pillar 1 2024** are eligible to apply for funding under Springboard+ 2025 if the last cohort has commenced by **31st March 2025**.
- The last cohort eligible for learner fee subsidy funding under **HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials Learner Fee Subsidy 2024** is the Autumn intake in 2025. Learners must be registered and in place on target courses before **31st October 2025**. Funding can cover the duration of the course or the academic year 2025/26. Funding will complete in Summer 2026 at the end of the academic year 2025/26.
- Micro-credentials currently funded under **HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials Learner Fee Subsidy 2024**, where all intakes have started **before 1st July 2025**, may also be submitted for consideration.
- If providers intend to run cohorts **on or after 1st July 2025**, they **cannot submit these courses for funding under Springboard+ 2025**, as the same course cannot be funded under two separate funding streams simultaneously.

The HEA Executive will be reviewing all submissions to ensure that there is **no double-funding** of courses

SECTION 1:

Introduction to Springboard+

Springboard+ began in 2011 as part of the Government’s Jobs Initiative to provide free and heavily subsidised upskilling and reskilling opportunities through higher education in areas of identified skills need. Since then, it has evolved alongside economic improvements to address the skills development needs of those in employment. It continues to have a particular emphasis on upskilling people who are unemployed and in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment, and those wishing to return to the workforce following a period away.

Springboard+ complements the core State-funded education and training system and is one of several initiatives designed to meet the current and future skills needs of the Irish economy. The further development of skilled workers remains central to our ability to attract ongoing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the further development of our Small Medium Enterprise (SME) sector. This year represents the fifteenth phase of Springboard+.

The National Skills Bulletin published in November 2024 stated *“some employers continue to report difficulties in sourcing candidates with the right combination of skills, qualifications and/or experience, and skills shortages across a number of areas persist. This highlights the central importance of reskilling and upskilling amongst the current and future workforce in meeting priority skills needs.”*

It should be noted that intelligence gathering by the Regional Skills Fora Managers has indicated that potential applicants from the employed cohort are increasingly looking for shorter courses that can be completed efficiently with the skills acquired directly applicable to industry across the regions. These shorter courses enable learners to engage with lifelong learning in a flexible manner and develop a pathway to continue their lifelong learning journey. Course providers should be cognisant of this in developing courses for Springboard+ 2025. Micro-credential courses are being considered for funding in this context under Springboard+ 2025.

In addition, course providers should be mindful of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) in the development of course proposals. Courses submitted for funding should enhance the contribution of higher education to the sustainable development agenda. There is a question addressing this on the application form on [Wizehive](#).

Furthermore, to contribute to Ireland's offshore renewable energy targets, courses in **renewable offshore wind energy** will be welcomed under this Call and providers should consider this in the ranking of course proposals. Ireland is aiming to build an impactful wind energy industry in the coming years and providers should consider courses that will contribute skills to this growing industry. Proposals may be submitted for consideration for funding in this skills area under:

- 1) Springboard+ part-time courses at **all NFQ levels** with a **minimum of 20 ECTS**
- 2) Micro-credential courses at **all NFQ levels** awarding **between 5 and 20 ECTS**

Funding of €1 million has been ringfenced for courses in the skills areas related to renewable offshore wind energy. Details of the career opportunities which currently exist in this area are outlined in **Appendix VI**.

Finally, course providers should consider **transversal skills** in the development of course proposals.

Springboard+ is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. An evaluation framework underpins the initiative, with ongoing monitoring of its impact.

SECTION 2:

Programme Objectives

1

- Provide upskilling and reskilling courses to develop the talent base in Ireland and in key growth sectors of the economy.

2

- Support those who are unemployed, formerly self-employed, and those who have been out of the workforce for some time (Returners) to return to sustainable employment. To this end, in developing proposals, providers are expected to have regard to the most recent data and trends on the profile of people experiencing unemployment.

3

- Provide opportunities for workforce development to enhance the skill levels of those already in employment and reskill those whose current occupation may be at risk from technological and other developments.

4

- Increase the national rate of engagement in lifelong learning.

5

- Enhance collaboration between enterprise and higher education to design and deliver relevant higher education courses that support job creation and expansion in line with government policy.

The following sections outline the eligibility requirements, funding structures, application and evaluation processes for Springboard+ 2025

SECTION 3:

Application Criteria and Guidance

3.1 Springboard+ Courses with a minimum of 20 ECTS

3.1.1 Provider and Course Eligibility

Courses submitted by providers must either:

- A.** Lead to a higher education and training award that is included on the **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) at Levels 6 to 9**, from one of the following Irish awarding bodies:
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), including combinations of modules from already validated courses leading to a major award. (***Important:** Combinations should be submitted to QQI for approval prior to or at the same time as submission to Springboard+ to ensure adequate time for validation.*)
 - Institutes of Technology
 - Universities
 - Technological Universities
 - Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
 - Mary Immaculate College

OR

- B.** Lead to a higher education and training award that is a comparable award based on recognition advice available from QQI. This criterion will be strictly enforced to safeguard learners and ensure that, if they undertake a State-funded programme through Springboard+, the comparable NFQ level of that programme will be clear to the learner and can be confirmed by employers and education & training providers for the purposes of employment and progression. Providers will be required to submit the relevant validation confirmation form in either **Appendix III** (QQI validated) **OR** **Appendix IV** (non-QQI validated) for each course proposal.

3.1.2 Collaborative Proposals

Collaborative proposals from two or more providers will be considered for funding. A lead provider must, however, be clearly identified as part of the proposal and the proposal must adhere to all requirements regarding quality assurance and the making of awards.

Collaborative proposals should be submitted by the **lead provider only** and not by each individual institution. Each of the partners must also include the proposal on their ranked list and indicate that they are a partner, not the lead, on the proposal. **The maximum number of applications cannot be exceeded by the lead or partner providers.**

The lead provider will also be responsible for the financial management and reporting of the programme.

3.1.3 Eligible Course Types

Funding will be available for:

- 1) **Part-time** higher education courses at NFQ Levels 6 to 9 up to a **maximum of 12 months** duration
- 2) **Full-time** NFQ Levels 8 and 9 ICT Skills Conversion courses of **12 months duration only**

Please Note:

- Part-time courses must not exceed **17 class contact hours per week**. This is to facilitate eligible learners continuing to seek employment and therefore receive a jobseekers' payment, as well as to accommodate those already in employment. It is important that proposed attendance patterns, including timing of classes / lectures for courses, adhere to this requirement and are made clear to applicants in all published material on the course. Proposals submitted must provide details of attendance arrangements to enable full clarification that they meet the contact hours' requirement.
- Credits should be aligned to the time commitment of the course.
- If Returners are being targeted as an eligible cohort for a course, the provision should reflect this, with classes being provided during school hours.
- In the development of courses for consideration under the Springboard+ programme, course providers should be cognisant of the time commitments of part-time courses in the context of the [Bologna Agreement](#), particularly for the employed cohort.
- Part-time Springboard+ courses must lead to a **minimum of 20 ECTS**. Courses with fewer credits will not be considered for this course category.
- Courses must fall under one of the **eligible discipline areas** (i.e. ISCED Codes), as outlined in **Appendix V**. Courses outside of these discipline areas are ineligible for funding in 2025. These areas were identified in collaboration with the relevant agency stakeholders including the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, the Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU), and the Regional Skills Fora Managers.
- ICT Skills Conversion courses are sought on a **1-year full-time basis only**. In submitting these courses, providers should consider the national skills requirements alongside the needs of their region in meeting this skills gap. They should ensure that there is an adequate cohort of potential applicants for the courses.
- 1-year full-time ICT Skills Conversion course proposals leading to awards of **fewer than 60 ECTS per annum** will not be considered for funding.
- ICT Skills Conversion courses that provide 'multi-stream' options should provide evidence of previous interest from applicants and enrolment patterns to justify a 'multi-stream' approach.

- Proposed courses should be standalone courses that upskill eligible learners for the labour market upon completion. For example, courses that are Year 1 of a course that requires a learner to do a second year are not being sought and will not be funded.
- Full-time courses (except for 1-year ICT Skills Conversion courses) are **not eligible** for funding.
- As appropriate, and depending on the level of credits, courses may include a dedicated job readiness / job preparation component. If relevant, details of this provision should be outlined in the course proposal, including whether the component is credit bearing. It should be noted that it is not compulsory that the module is credit bearing. It should also be noted that eligible learners on reskilling courses may require a dedicated job readiness component on their course to facilitate their transition into a new area of employment. Providers should connect with existing supports in their institution and outline these connections in the application, as appropriate.
- A work placement or project-based credited module **must always be provided for eligible learners who are Returners or Unemployed** and in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment. Where a Springboard+ course has a mixture of applicant types, a work placement may not be appropriate for those in employment and can be waived for these eligible learners. However, if a work placement is sought or deemed suitable for an eligible learner in employment, it should be encouraged. A work placement is **mandatory for full-time 1-year ICT Skills Conversion courses**.

TABLE 1: COURSE REQUIREMENTS

COURSE TYPE	REQUIREMENT
1-year ICT Skills Conversion	Work placement
Springboard+ (<i>part-time</i>)	Work placement or project-based credited module

3.2 Micro-credential Courses awarding 5-20 ECTS

Funding for micro-credential courses to meet the needs of employed applicants who wish to upskill over a shorter timeframe will be eligible under this Call. These courses must range **between 5 and 20 ECTS only**, with the time commitment involved reflective of this. The course content must be relevant to industry and immediately applicable for those currently working in industry or wishing to transfer to a new role. Proposed courses should have the potential for “stackability” so that eligible learners can return and build towards further qualifications.

Be a micro-credential course awarding between 5 and 20 ECTS on the National Framework of Qualifications at Levels 6 to 9

3.2.1 Provider and Course Eligibility

Micro-credential courses submitted for funding must lead to a higher education qualification that is included on the **NFQ at Levels 6 to 9**, from one of the following Irish awarding bodies:

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), including combinations of modules from already validated courses leading to a major award. (***Important:** Combinations should be submitted to QQI for approval prior to or at the same time as submission to ensure adequate time for validation.*)
- Institutes of Technology
- Universities
- Technological Universities
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- Mary Immaculate College

To be considered for Springboard+ funding, micro-credential courses must not have any intakes beginning on or after 1st July 2025 under the current HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials Learner Fee Subsidy 2024

3.2.2 Collaborative Micro-credential Proposals

Collaborative micro-credential courses from two or more providers will be considered for funding. A lead provider must, however, be clearly identified as part of the proposal and the proposal must adhere to all requirements regarding quality assurance and the making of awards.

Collaborative micro-credential proposals should be submitted by the **lead provider only** and not by each individual institution. Each of the partners must also include the proposal on their ranked list and indicate that they are a partner, not the lead, on the proposal. **The maximum number of applications cannot be exceeded by the lead or partner providers.**

The lead provider will also be responsible for the financial management and reporting of the subsidy.

3.2.3 Eligible Micro-credential Course Types

Springboard+ will provide a **50% subsidy** to the learner course fee for higher education micro-credential courses that award **between 5 and 20 ECTS** and are at **Levels 6 to 9 on the NFQ**.

- Micro-credential courses must fall under one of the **eligible discipline areas** (i.e. ISCED Codes), as outlined in **Appendix V**. Courses submitted in other areas will not be eligible for funding.
- Micro-credential courses falling under the skills areas listed in **Table 2** (below), along with those in the **renewable offshore wind energy** skills area, are of particular interest in this Call and providers should take note of these when preparing proposals.

Proposed micro-credential courses should be standalone courses that upskill eligible learners for the labour market upon completion. These courses should also have potential for a “stackability” component to encourage learners to return and build on the course for further qualifications.

Funding will be released in several tranches depending on the course duration and numbers of learners enrolled / registered.

TABLE 2: IMPORTANT SKILLS AREAS FOR MICRO-CREDENTIAL COURSES

NFQ	ECTS	Skills Areas
Levels 6-9	5-20	AI: applicability of AI in an industry / enterprise setting
Levels 6-9	5-20	Digitalisation
Levels 6-9	5-20	Construction / sustainable built environment
Levels 6-9	5-20	Twin Transitions

Micro-credential courses in the **renewable offshore wind energy** skills area, awarding between **5 and 20 ECTS at NFQ Levels 6 to 9**, may also be submitted. Details of the career opportunities which currently exist in this important skills area are outlined in **Appendix VI**.

3.2.4 Twin Transitions

A twin transition approach recognises that there is a huge and largely untapped opportunity for technology and data to **drive sustainability goals**. Rather than treating digital and sustainability in isolation, a twin transition strategy combines these critical functions to unlock huge benefits in terms of efficiency and productivity. The twin transition can make a positive impact by “greening” technology, data assets, and infrastructures, while accelerating sustainability across the organisation.

As noted in the ‘The Twin Transition’ booklet:

“Digital transformation plays a major role in our efforts to reach net zero by 2050. According to the World Economic Forum, digital solutions could reduce global emissions by 20 percent.

While sustainability is on the agenda for most organisations, few consider how digital technologies can accelerate their sustainability transition. This is why, in partnership with Royal Schiphol Group, we developed the Twin Transition methodology.

Proven and tested by Schiphol, the Twin Transition delivers real value and benefits by merging sustainability and digital strategies.

The methodology focuses on unlocking the potential of IT and data solutions to accelerate organisational sustainability (Greening by IT), and applying sustainable thinking to technology, data assets, and infrastructures (Greening of IT).”

Further information:

[What is the 'twin transition' - and how can it speed sustainable growth](#)

[The Twin Transition](#)

For the **Twin Transitions** skills area, we are looking for courses that will give participants the skills to integrate digital solutions into their business, in a manner that is mindful of environmental challenges.

3.3 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Validation

- Springboard+ funding will be subject to the proposed course being validated by QQI.
- The QQI validation process and criteria for proposed Springboard+ courses will be the same as for other kinds of courses. This is to ensure that Springboard+ courses are of a comparable quality. Validation is typically for five years.
- **Proposed Springboard+ courses must be submitted to QQI for validation in advance of submission to Springboard+ for funding.** This is to ensure adequate time for the QQI validation process to be completed. This can take up to 25 weeks, but QQI will endeavour to expedite the process for proposed Springboard+ courses. While initial screening of these submissions may take place, QQI will only proceed with the validation process after they have been approved for Springboard+ funding. **Evidence that this process has commenced at the time of application is required (Appendix II).** Upload facility will be available on **Wizehive**.
- Proposed courses may be marketed to learners before determination of the application for validation but following acceptance by QQI of a completed application, if it is made clear that the courses are offered subject to being validated by QQI.
- The current version of the Programme Validation Manual for Courses of HET should be used for preparing applications.
- A template form (**Appendix III**) has been provided to confirm that courses have been validated by the QQI. Confirmation of validation must be completed and sent by the provider to the HEA by **1st September 2025 at the latest, or in advance of the course start date, should that be sooner.**
- Written evidence that the course has received QQI validation must be submitted within 10 days of receipt of same from QQI.
- Springboard+ courses leading to QQI awards must be validated for the 2025/26 academic year before any learners are enrolled.

Courses validated by other entities (i.e. non-QQI validation) should complete the template form in **Appendix IV**

SECTION 4:

Target Student Cohorts

4.1 Cohort Categories

The following categories of applicant will be considered eligible for funding, subject to further guidance from the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Full eligibility criteria for each applicant category will be confirmed in full and communicated to successful providers prior to the Springboard+ 2025 launch.

TABLE3: ELIGIBLE COHORT CATEGORIES

CATEGORY	PREVIOUS EDUCATION ATTAINMENT
Unemployed <i>(and in-receipt of a qualifying payment from the Department of Social Protection)</i>	Individuals who already hold a NFQ award at Level 5 or 6 or equivalent, with a previous history of employment; OR with a previous history of employment who already hold a higher-level qualification at NFQ Levels 6 to 9, who may require additional upskilling or reskilling to re-enter employment.
Formerly Self-Employed	Individuals at all qualifications levels who may require new qualifications to return to self-employment or to enter employment.
Returner	Individuals who already hold a NFQ award at Level 5 or 6 or equivalent, with a previous history of employment; OR with a previous history of employment who already hold a higher-level qualification at NFQ Levels 6 to 9, who may require additional upskilling or reskilling to re-enter employment.
Employed <i>(including Self-Employed)</i>	Individuals at all qualifications levels wishing to upskill or reskill to meet required skills needs.
Recent Graduate	A graduate from a full-time NFQ Level 8 degree within the 12-months prior to the start of an ICT Skills Conversion course and who does not fit into one of the above categories.

Please note, for courses where eligible applicants are a mix of all applicant categories, as detailed above, **Unemployed / Formerly Self-Employed applicants should form a minimum of 20% of the student cohort**. In instances where there are fewer eligible applicants from these categories, a 20% threshold may not be possible. In such circumstances, providers should consult with the HEA.

4.2 Returning Applicants

- Applicants may not enrol on more than three courses in any five-year period. They may re-engage with the Springboard+ programme after a break period of two academic years.
- Applicants who have failed to successfully complete two Springboard+ courses in the past, are ineligible to apply again for a period of two academic years.
- Applicants who have taken two courses in the past but were unsuccessful in the second, are ineligible to apply again for a period of two academic years.
- All applicants must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in eligibility guidance issued by the HEA and any additional requirements as outlined by the course provider.
- Applicants must have fully completed all Springboard+ courses from previous academic years before applying again. An applicant still enrolled on a 2024/25 course will be unable to take a 2025/26 course and will be blocked automatically by the application system.
- There is no requirement for applicants to move up the National Framework for Qualifications ladder. This means that applicants can take a second Springboard+ course at the same NFQ level, provided it is in a different skills area.

4.3 Priority of Eligible Applicants

Where there are more applications than places available, the HEA expects providers to award places to eligible applicants from priority cohorts first. This means that in all instances, **priority must be afforded to Unemployed / Formerly Self-Employed and Returner applicants over those already in employment**. Special consideration should also be given to those who have not previously undertaken a Springboard+ course.

4.4 Unemployed Learners who Return to Employment

As one of the objectives of Springboard+ is to support upskilling of the labour force, eligible learners who succeed in re-entering employment before completion of a course should be facilitated to gain the course award. In planning courses, providers should ensure that eligible learners who return to employment have a reasonable opportunity to complete the course on a flexible basis. Such eligible learners will not be required to pay any fees to complete their course, provided their status changed **after the date of course commencement**.

SECTION 5:

Springboard+ Funding

5.1 Course Funding

- Providers are required to submit the **total cost of delivering the course** in their proposal through **Wizehive**. Funding to successful providers will be based on the total course fee. Providers should ensure that the full cost of the course is included in these costings.
- Courses must **commence between 1st July and 31st October 2025**. No funding will be provided for courses starting outside of this timeframe.
- Funding will be released in several tranches depending on the course duration, numbers of students enrolled / registered, and having regard to procedures in place for Protection for Enrolled Learners, where appropriate.
- HEA-designated institutions (**Appendix VII**) and non-HEA designated higher education providers (**Appendix VIII**) whose quality assurance procedures have been approved under the 2012 Act (re-engagement/QA approval processes) will be eligible to apply for **multiannual funding of three (3) years** from 2025. This multiannual funding is subject to course validation being in place for each year of the multiannual funding cycle when the course commences.
- Multiannual funding is dependent on funding being continued for the Springboard+ programme beyond 2025 and at the same level of funding. Where the amount of funding is reduced in future years, lower ranked approved courses may only receive 1-year funding. This will be communicated to providers in advance of the 2026 process.
- **The continuation of this multiannual funding beyond Year 1 is dependent on a fill rate no lower than 75% in the previous academic year.** Lower fill rates may result in a course being discontinued for the following year. Lower fill rates on courses deemed critical skill needs may continue to be eligible for multiannual funding.
- All courses funded under Springboard+ 2025 must commence between **1st July and 31st October 2025**.
- Providers submitting proposals which do not fit the criteria detailed above are only eligible for 1-year funding. These providers will be permitted to reapply for funding each year if they meet the eligibility criteria in the subsequent year's Call. In addition, **courses must have a fill rate in the previous academic year of 75% to be allowed to reapply.**
- A minimum of 85% of annual Springboard+ funding will be ringfenced for courses that are awarded multiannual funding. A maximum of 15% of annual funding will be ringfenced for courses that are awarded 1-year funding in 2025.
- A limited Call for new applications for new courses may be made in subsequent years, dependent on available funding from unfilled courses from the previous year. This will be subject to the emerging skills needs at the time. Should a new Call not be necessary, any unallocated funding will be distributed to oversubscribed courses.

5.2 Learner Fee Coverage and Contributions

- Fees are covered in full on **Springboard+ part-time** and **full-time ICT Skills Conversions courses** at all NFQ Levels for eligible learners who are Returners, Formerly Self-Employed, or Unemployed and in receipt of a qualifying DSP payment, as well as Employed eligible learners in receipt of Working Family Payment or those employed on a CE Scheme.
- Fees for **Springboard+ part-time NFQ Level 6 courses** are covered in full for all eligible learners.
- Fees are 90% covered on **Springboard+ part-time courses** for Employed (including Self-Employed) eligible learners at NFQ Levels 7 to 9, with providers collecting the remaining 10% directly from eligible learners.
- Fees for eligible 2025 “recent” graduates are 90% covered for **full-time ICT Skills Conversion courses** and eligible learners will be required to pay the remaining 10% directly to providers. **This cohort is ineligible to enrol on any other course types (i.e. Springboard+ part-time or Springboard+ Micro-credential funded courses).**
- Fees are 50% covered for all categories of eligible learners on **Springboard+ Micro-credential courses** at all NFQ Levels. Providers will collect the remaining 50% directly from eligible learners.
- Please note that in future financial audits the HEA will check that this fee was requested and paid.
- It is important to note that, as in previous years, no learner on a Springboard+ course in 2025 will be eligible for support under the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Higher Education Grants Scheme.

5.3 Managing Course Applications

All providers of courses funded through Springboard+ 2025 will be required to use the Springboard+ Application Management System (AMS) to manage course information, applications, and place offers, as well as return relevant data. The AMS is accessible to registered providers via www.springboardcourses.ie

It is imperative that providers update the AMS on a regular basis to ensure that information on courses and eligible learners is accurate. Failure to do so may result in funding being withheld.

SECTION 6:

Application Process

Proposals should be submitted via **Wizehive**. Applications via other platforms will not be accepted. The deadline for submissions is **1pm on 26th February 2025**. It will not be possible to submit a proposal after this time.

6.1 Changes to the Online Application Process for 2025

In previous Calls the Skills Direct platform was used for the application submission process. A new platform – **Wizehive** – has been developed for the Springboard+ 2025 Call and instructions will be issued separately on how to submit proposals using the new **Wizehive** platform. Support will be available, if required.

6.2 Considerations in Advance of Applying

- **Maximum Number of Applications:** Springboard+ has a limited budget and is a highly competitive Call. As such, a **maximum of 30 proposals is allowed** for most providers. **Technological Universities can submit a maximum of 60 proposals**, given their significant multi-campus/region nature. Providers are asked to be cognisant of the number of successful proposals from previous years when considering how many proposals to submit. When assigning a ranking of proposals please ensure a mix of skills and levels. **The single ranking list must include all course proposals in the Springboard+ Part-time, ICT Skills Conversion (full-time) and Micro-credential categories.** Technological Universities should include the campus location in course titles.
- **Ranking Applications:** Applications must be assigned a rank based on the provider's priority for funding of courses (i.e. you should rank the proposal you most want funded as #1 and so on). **If a course proposal does not meet the eligibility requirements, it will not be considered, regardless of its ranking.**

The list should **not include a rationale as to why a course should be funded; this needs to be outlined on the proposal application form.**

- HEA-designated institutions must consult with their **Regional Skills Fora Manager** regarding their draft ranked applications prior to upload to **Wizehive**. The application form requires confirmation that this has taken place.
- The evaluation panel will assess the relevance of the ranking in non-HEA designated institutions. This may result in courses being moved up or down a provider's ranking. This criterion does not apply to private higher education providers.
- The final agreed ranked list **must** be signed off by the provider's **President/CEO or Vice President/Registrar**.

The final signed off ranked list **must** be submitted to springboard@hea.ie no later than **1pm on 26th February 2026**

Course applications should:

Be nationally and/or regionally focused.

Demonstrate clear evidence of engagement with enterprise / industry partners.

Demonstrate that there is an available supply of applicants.

Identify target cohorts for the course.

Ensure the times of onsite classes are clearly highlighted in your application and consideration must be given to cohorts for whom the course is targeted.

6.3 Indicative* Timetable 2025

ACTION	INDICATIVE DATE
Call for Proposals issues	14 th January 2025
Wizehive portal opens	22 nd January 2025, 2pm
Deadline for submission of proposals	26th February 2025, 1pm
Providers notified of approved courses	Early Q2 2025
Contracts agreed with HEA, providers upload information for applicants to www.springboardcourses.ie	Q2 2025
Applications for Springboard+ 2025 open via www.springboardcourses.ie	Q2 2025

** The HEA will endeavour to adhere to these indicative dates; however, it may prove necessary to amend them as the initiative rolls out. Any changes in the timetable will be notified to prospective course providers.*

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document has been prepared to coincide with the Call document and will be circulated to all providers. Any questions not addressed in this document can be submitted to springboard@hea.ie

The FAQ document will be updated and **circulated to our contact list on Wednesday** each week. Questions received up to **close of business each Tuesday** while the Call is open will be included. The final FAQ will be circulated on **19th February 2025**.

- **The closing date for submission of proposals is 1pm on 26th February 2025**. The online application system will not accept proposals submitted after this deadline.
- As outlined above, any queries on the Call process for 2025 must be emailed to springboard@hea.ie and responses will be updated in the FAQ document.

Telephone queries will not be accommodated, and any form of canvassing will disqualify providers from participation in the initiative

SECTION 7:

Evaluation Process

The HEA will appoint an **independent process auditor** who will oversee the evaluation process.

- A panel of independent evaluators will be assigned to this process. They will assess proposals in accordance with the criteria set out in **Appendix X** of this Call document. The number of evaluators will be dependent on the number of applications received.
- As part of the evaluation process, the independent evaluators will have access to information on academic outcomes from the AMS on courses run in previous years through Springboard+. This will include fill rates and completion rates for all previously funded courses. Please note, graduate data will be based on “Complete Successful” statuses from the AMS only.

The assessment will follow a five-step process:

STEP 1:

The HEA Executive will review applications for eligibility regarding the information provided in **Appendix IX**. All eligible proposals will be assigned to the independent evaluators for the next stage of assessment.

STEP 2:

The evaluators will conduct individual remote assessments on applications assigned to them in accordance with the published evaluation criteria (**Appendix X**). Proposals will be assigned a numeric score based on the information provided in the application.

STEP 3:

The evaluators will convene to consider the final list of scored proposals based on evaluation criteria. This final agreed list will be given to the HEA Executive.

STEP 4:

The HEA will establish a panel consisting of HEA Executive members and representative(s) from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. This panel will consider which proposals from the final agreed list (as outlined in **Step 3** above) to fund in 2025.

It is important to note that funding may not be available to fund all applications on this list. Where this is the case, funding will be awarded based on the following:

- a) Provider application ranking;
- b) The Minister may require prioritisation of particular eligible discipline areas post the submission of proposal where specific interventions are required to meet government policy commitments;
- c) NFQ level (a mix of levels is required to meet applicant cohort needs), excluding the micro-credential proposals;
- d) Geographical spread (required to meet national and regional needs) – CSO and the National Skills Bulletin will be taken into consideration under this heading.

It should be further noted that those proposals that are awarded funding are **not guaranteed** to receive the number of places they requested.

STEP 5:

The final list of courses and associated places recommended for funding will be subject to Ministerial approval in accordance with the governance procedures. The Minister's decision is final. The Ministerial approved outcome will be reported to the HEA Board.

It is planned that notification of approved courses will be sent to providers at the **mid to end of April 2025**.

Contracts will be agreed between providers and the HEA, and planning and marketing of courses will begin. It should be noted that once contracts have been issued by the HEA it will not be possible to make any amendments to these contracts.

Updating of information by providers on approved courses to the online system www.springboardcourses.ie will be an important part of this process.

SECTION 8:

Regulatory Information

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) makes this document available to course providers who wish to submit proposal(s) for higher education courses as part of Springboard+ 2025. The document must not be used for any other purpose. Springboard+ is managed by the HEA on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

The HEA has taken all reasonable care to ensure that the information set out in this Call for Proposals is true and accurate in all material respects as at the time of publication. However, no warranty or representation is given as to the accuracy or completeness of this material. The HEA does not accept any liability or responsibility for the accuracy, adequacy or completeness of the information set out herein.

The HEA will not be liable or responsible for any opinion, statement, or conclusion contained in, or any omission from this document, or for any other written or oral communication made available during the Call process. No representation or warranty is made in respect of such statements, opinions, or conclusions.

The HEA reserves the right to amend this document and any information contained herein at any time by notice in writing to the applicants.

None of the information set out herein will constitute a contract, or part of a contract, or an offer to enter a contract, between the HEA and any provider. Nothing in this document is, nor shall be relied upon, as a promise or representation as to the HEA's ultimate decision in relation to the award of the contract for the services.

However, the HEA reserves the right to take such steps as it considers appropriate, including but not limited to: changing the basis of, or the procedures (including the timetable) relating to, the Call process; rejecting any, or all, of the proposals; abandoning the competition (or any part of it) at any time prior to a formal written contract being executed by and on behalf of the HEA; procuring the services by alternative means if it appears that the services can be more advantageously procured.

No legal relationship or other obligation shall arise between any applicant and the HEA unless and until a contract has been entered into.

Each applicant's acceptance of delivery of the Call for Proposals constitutes its agreement to, and acceptance of, its terms.

Under no circumstances will the HEA be liable for any costs, charges or expenses incurred by applicants because of participating in this Call process, however caused. Any costs associated with the submission of a proposal are the sole responsibility of the applicant and will not be reimbursed.

8.1 Statutory Requirements

All providers making a proposal(s) for courses to be supported via Springboard+ must confirm compliance with statutory requirements regarding their financial and legal status and be prepared to furnish any additional supporting documents as requested by the HEA. The HEA reserves the right to exclude applicants on the basis that the supporting documents are considered inadequate.

8.2 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Springboard+ is financed by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Any applicant data processed as part of Springboard+ is subject to the Springboard+ Privacy Statement which is available at [HEA Springboard+](#)

8.3 Freedom of Information

Information held by the HEA on Springboard will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI Act), which was passed into law in October 2014 and repealed the 1997 and 2003 Acts. The Act has applied to the HEA since the 1st of October 2001. Policies and procedures on access to information is set out here: [HEA Freedom of Information](#) The HEA Data Privacy Notice is available at [HEA Data Privacy Notice](#)

8.4 European Social Fund (ESF) Funding

Springboard+ 2025 is funded through the National Training Fund and forms part of the EU ESF Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training Programme (EIST) 2021-2027. To meet future auditing requirements, successful course providers shall retain all applicant eligibility documentation on the Springboard+ Application Management System (AMS) until such time as the auditing process is complete. The HEA reserves the right to amend this documentation retention requirement to satisfy the needs of the ESF and to which the course provider will be obliged to comply.

8.5 Audits

Please note that all approved providers are subject to audit by the EU and other national bodies (including the DFHERIS, the HEA and their designated auditors). Audits will continue to be carried out during 2025 as part of our ongoing processes. These audits may comprise financial and/or communication and publicity elements. Checks may also be carried out on documents retained as part of applicants' eligibility for courses. It is imperative that all application documentation is retained by providers on the AMS only.

Providers who wish to make Springboard+ course proposals must submit these online via **Wizehive** and the deadline for submissions is **1pm on 26th February 2025**

Appendix I:

Government Policies

- [Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit](#)
- [Building Future Skills: The Demand for Skills in Ireland's Built Environment Sector to 2030](#)
- [Climate Action Plan 2021: Securing Our Future](#)
- [Expert Group on Future Skills Needs](#)
- [Skills for Biopharma](#)
- [Offshore Wind Skills Action Plan 2024](#)
- [Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland](#)
- [Ireland for Finance 2025](#)
- [Languages Connect](#)
- [Skills and Labour Market Research Unit Reports \(SOLAS\)](#)
- [Skills for Zero Carbon](#)
- [Technology Skills 2022](#)

Appendix II:

QQI Course Validation Submission

Confirmation that courses have been submitted to QQI for validation prior to Springboard+ application.

Course Name	
Course Provider	
Course Leader	
NFQ Level	
ECTS Credits	
Length of Course	
Date submitted for QQI approval	
Duration of approval requested	

Course Provider sign off

Name:

Position:

Signature:

Appendix III:

QQI Confirmation of Validation

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Certification of Course Approval Springboard+ 2025

Course Name	
Course Provider	
Course Leader	
NFQ Level	
ECTS Credits	
Length of Course	
Duration of Course Approval	
Approval Granted By	
Date Granted	

QQI Verification

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix IV:

Non-QQI Confirmation of Validation

Name of Validating Body: _____

Certification of Course Approval Springboard+ 2025

Course Name	
Course Provider	
Course Leader	
NFQ Level	
ECTS Credits	
Length of Course	
Duration of Course Approval	
Approval Granted By	
Date Granted	

Verification from Validating Body

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix V:

Eligible Discipline Areas (ISCED Codes)

0211 Audio-visual techniques and media production

Audio Visual, Media, Animation, Games Development

0212 Fashion, interior and industrial design

Need for design skills - product design, design innovation, creative design

0231 Language Acquisition

Languages for sales and customer services

0313 Psychology

Buyer behaviour, smart leadership

0410 Business and administration not further defined

Stock Management, Quality Management, Supervisory Practice, Payroll, E commerce, Supervisory Practice

0412 Finance, banking and insurance

Data Analytics Financial, Fintech, Regulation, Compliance and Risk, International Fund admin, Insurance, Data Governance, Lineage & Architecture, Asset Management, Investment Funds & Securities Services, Insurance and Reinsurance, Wholesale Capital Markets, International Banking, Fintech & Payments, Aircraft Leasing & Finance, Creative Arts Management, Anti Money Laundering, Data Visualisation, Data Analytics for Users

0413 Management and Administration

Business internationalisation, Business management, Lean fundamentals, International Trade and customs, Leadership, Supervisory Management, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Creativity, Design thinking, Strategic Planning, Human Resource Management, Change Management, Business Process Optimisation

0414 Marketing and Advertising

Marketing in a digital world, Virtual Selling, Selling Strategies, Digital marketing for SMEs

0417 Workskills

Resilience skills, Inclusion and diversity, Critical Creative thinking, Entrepreneurship, Transversal, Workforce Development, Talent Management, Coaching, Wellness

0419 Business and administration not elsewhere classified

HR Management, Talent Development

0421 Law

Company Law, Corporate Administration, Corporate Secretarial

0488 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving business, administration and law

Procurement, Purchasing Tendering, Customer Experience

0511 Biology

Cell culture, Analytical Microbiology

0512 Biochemistry

Pharmaceutical Technology, Biopharmaceutical Analysis, Validation, Sterilisation Therapy, Chromatographic techniques, Advanced Spectroscopy

0519 Biological and related sciences not elsewhere classified

International Regulatory affairs, Good Manufacturing Practice, Quality Management Biopharma/Pharma

0521 Environmental Sciences

Sustainability, Biocircular economy, Climate Change, Energy sustainability, Business sustainability, Introductory ESG for corporates/directors/board members, Applied Renewables for qualified trades/engineers, Environmental Impact Assessment, Environmental Policy including CSRD Reporting

0531 Chemistry

Analytical Science, Drug formulation, Advanced Materials, Industrial instrumentation, Calibration and advanced PLC

0542 Statistics

Statistics

0588 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving natural sciences, maths and stats

Data Analytics, Business Information Systems, Validation & CSV, Data Analytics for Non-Data Analysts

0610 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not further defined

Information System Design / Interactive Design

0612 Database and network design and administration

Big data, Data Science, Data analytics, Networking systems, Maintenance Systems, Service Design

0613 Software and applications development and analysis

Cloud Technologies, Software Development Technologies, Mobile Technology, Programming, Software Engineers, AI for Software Engineers, Automated Software Testing, Machine Learning

0619 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not elsewhere classified

ICT Systems, Business Systems, Cybersecurity, Digital Forensics, Dev Ops, Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence, Applicability of AI in an industry/enterprise setting

0688 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Product Management for Product Owners, Twin Transition, Digitalisation

0700 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not further defined

Good Manufacturing Practice, Process Safety, Lean systems and New Product Design-move

0710 Engineering and engineering trades not further defined

Building Services Engineering, Fire Engineering

0711 Chemical engineering and processes

Chemical Process Engineering Technologies

0712 Environmental protection technology

Water and Waste Water Management, Renewable Offshore Wind Energy

0713 Electricity and energy

High and Medium Voltage Electrical Engineering, Renewable Energy, Industrial Electricity, Sustainable Energy Engineering

0714 Electronics and automation

Industry 4.0/5.0, Automation Engineering, Advanced PLCs, Automation and Control, Autonomous Vehicles, Robotics, Mechatronics, Fundamentals of AI, Blockchain

0715 Mechanics and metal trades
Manufacturing Engineering
0716 Motor vehicles, ships and aircraft
Aviation, Leasing
0719 Engineering and engineering trades not elsewhere classified
Estimating for Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Quality Engineering, Polymer processing
0720 Manufacturing and processing not further defined
Lean and Sigma, Introduction to best manufacturing Practice, Smart Manufacturing IOT, Production Management for all types of Manufacturing, Quality Technician for Medtech
0721 Food processing
Food Safety, Food Hygiene, Food Science, Food Manufacturing, Food Innovation/ Entrepreneurship, New Product Development
0723 Textiles (clothes, footwear and Leather)
Textile Manufacturing
0729 Manufacturing and processing not elsewhere classified
Process optimisation & LEAN – people, process technology
0732 Building and civil engineering
Construction Site Management, Computer Aided Design CAD, Building Information Modelling BIM incl MEP Applications, NEAR Zero Energy Buildings NZEB, Retrofitting, Utilities Design, Modern Methods of Construction, Construction/Sustainable Built Environment
0788 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving engineering, Manufacturing and construction
ESG for Management, renewables as add on for engineers/trades
0799 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not elsewhere classified
0819 Agriculture not further defined or elsewhere classified
0821 Forestry
Professional forester
0914 Medical diagnostic and treatment technology
Medical Technology, Medical Device Design, Product Design
0916 Pharmacy
Pharmacy Technician
0919 Health not elsewhere classified
Health informatics, Innovation, Interaction Design, Service Design
1013 Hotel, restaurants and catering
Culinary Skills/Arts, Chef, Revenue Management, Hotel Management
1015 Travel, tourism and leisure
Destination Leadership, Tourism and Travel
1022 Occupational health and safety
Occupation and Process health and Safety
1041 Transport services
Logistics, Supply chain, Transport Management, Freight Forwarding, Customs and Global Trade (Incl Brexit)

Appendix VI:

Offshore Wind skills areas with immediate skills needs

Job Title	Timing of skills need
Offshore Consents Manager	Short term
Grid Package Manager	Short term
GIS Technician	Short term
Bid Manager	Short term
Offshore EIA Manager	Short term
Marin Ecologist	Short term
Ornithologist	Short term
Resource Analyst	Short term
Geophysicist	Short term
Geotechnical Engineer	Short term
Commercial Analyst	Short term
Supply Chain Manager	Short term
Electrical Engineer	Short to medium term
Civil Engineer	Short to medium term
Mechanical Engineer	Short to medium term
Structural Engineer	Short to medium term
Naval Architect	Short to medium term
Marine Engineer	Short to medium term
Project Engineer	Short to medium term

Appendix VII:

Eligible HEA-Designated Institutions

- Atlantic Technological University
- Dublin City University
- Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Mary Immaculate College
- Maynooth University
- Munster Technological University
- National College of Art & Design
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- South East Technological University
- St Angela's College
- Technological University Dublin
- Technological University of the Shannon
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Galway
- University of Limerick

Appendix VIII:

Non-HEA Designated Eligible Higher Education Providers

(Eligible for MFA)

- American College Dublin
- Bridge Mills Galway Language Centre
- Carlow College, St Patricks
- CCT College Dublin
- Chevron College
- Children's Therapy Centre Limited
- City Education Group
- City of Dublin Education and Training Board
- Clanwilliam Institute
- Consortium of Centres for Nursing and Midwifery Education (CCNME) (HSE)
- Dorset College
- Dublin Business School
- Dublin International Study Centre
- Galway Business School
- Griffith College
- Hibernia College
- Holmes Institute Ireland Limited
- IBAT College
- ICD Business School
- IICP Education and Training Limited
- Independent Colleges
- Innopharma Education
- International College for Personal and Professional Development
- International School of Business
- Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences Limited
- Irish Payroll Association
- National College of Ireland
- PCI College
- Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
- Setanta College
- Sport Ireland
- SQT Training Limited
- Teagasc
- The Open Training College

Appendix IX:

Eligibility Criteria – HEA Checks

- Does the application meet provider and course eligibility requirements in **Section 3**?
- If QQI validation is required – is there evidence process has been initiated. Is the form confirmation (**Appendix II**) uploaded?
- Where validation is already in place, has the relevant validation confirmation form for QQI validation (**Appendix III**) or Non-QQI validation (**Appendix IX**) been uploaded?
- Does the application meet the discipline eligibility requirements (**Appendix V**)?
- Is there evidence that the delivery methods and on-campus hours are suitable for the target cohort(s)?
- Has evidence been provided of the credit load?
- Is there sign off from RSF, where appropriate?
- Is there President/CEO or Vice President sign off?
- Does the application ensure that course **contact hours do not exceed 17** for part-time courses?
- Does the application ensure that the course start and end dates are aligned with criteria outlined in the Call?
- Is there availability of job readiness / work placement where it is relevant to the target cohort?
- Is there a **work placement** for ICT skills conversion courses, as this is mandatory?
- Ensure the micro-credential courses have 5-20 ECTS, part-time Springboard+ courses have a minimum of 20 ECTS, and full-time ICT Skills Conversion have a minimum of 60 ECTS.
- Ensure any course currently funded under **HCI Pillar 1 2024** has no cohorts beginning **after 31st March 2025**.
- Ensure any micro-credential course currently funded under **HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials Learner Fee Subsidy 2024** has no cohorts beginning **on or after 1st July 2025**.

Appendix X:

Evaluation Criteria for Independent Panel

- Does the “**Course Description**” on the **Wizehive** application clearly identify how it will facilitate participants to obtain labour market relevant skills?
- Has there been **enterprise engagement** in the development of this course and a clear indication of the enterprise demand?
- Has **demographic demand evidence** been provided at a regional and national level sufficient to run a course successfully?
- Have appropriate **Target Cohorts** been identified?
- Does the approach to delivery, the contact hours and associated credits provide confidence that this course will meet the needs of the target cohort?
- Assessment of cost. Does the **proposed cost** represent good value for money?