HCI PILLAR 1
CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2023

Next Generation Graduates

HCI PILLAR 1 2023

HCI Pillar 1 2023

Providers who wish to make HCI Pillar 1 course proposals must submit their proposals online via SkillsDirect. The deadline for submissions is **13:00hrs on Thursday, February 23, 2023**. Proposals will not be accepted after this deadline or via any other platform.

1. Call for Proposals

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are invited to submit proposals for funding under the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) call for proposals for Graduate Conversion and Specialisation courses. Over five years from 2020 to 2024, €300m has been allocated for the HCI from the surplus in the National Training Fund (NTF). This is in line with recommendations contained in the independent review of the NTF on the use of the surplus and the development of labour market skills. This is the second call for proposals under HCI Pillar 1 and will fund courses in the academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25.

2. Policy Context

The Human Capital Initiative (HCI) complements the core State-funded education and training system and is one of several initiatives designed to meet current and future skill needs of the Irish economy. The HCI is embedded in national policy to make Ireland a better country for all its people. The Government strategy Project Ireland 2040[1] provides the framework for making Ireland a great place to live and do business, through integrated spatial and investment strategies. It will drive Ireland's long term economic, environmental and social progress across all parts of the country over the next decade.

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[1] https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/project-ireland-2040-policy/

The HCI programme addresses the 2022 Harnessing Digital – the Digital Ireland Framework[2] in providing Higher Education digital skills provision and assisting in increasing life-long learning and meeting the target of increasing the share of adults with at least basic digital skills to 80% by 2030.

The HCI also addresses the aims of the National Skills Strategy 2025[3], to improve the relevance of skills provision to society and the economy; provide more effective engagement with employers in skills development; increase lifelong learning; enhance the quality of teaching and learning; develop participation in education and training and the labour market; and increase skills supply.

HCI innovations and activities also address the Government Climate Action Plan 2023[4]. Funded programmes must include consideration of how they can positively assist the diverse and wide-ranging impacts that Climate Change will have on Ireland's environment, society, economic and natural resources. The Climate Action Plan sets out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to address these issues; the HCI must aim to assist achieving these actions and targets in all ways possible and enable Ireland to significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption. The initiative should also cover the skills requirements to implement the Housing for All strategy.

The HCI will address these and other national policy objectives through its suite of initiatives.[5]

HCI complements the core State-funded education and training system and is one of several initiatives designed to meet current and future skill needs of the Irish economy.

HCI 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.

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[2] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/adf42-harnessing-digital-the-digital-ireland-framework/

[3] https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf

[4] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/

[5] This includes the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf the Indecon Review of the National Training Fund https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/indecon-review-of-national-training-fund.pdf and the HEA System Performance Framework https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/managing-performance/system-performance-framework/

3. Human Capital Initiative Objectives

The Human Capital Initiative (HCI) will increase capacity in higher education in focused programmes designed to meet priority skills needs for enterprise. These needs are identified though the detailed and comprehensive framework now in place under the National Skills Council, including publications from the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU), the work of the Regional Skills Fora, the National Training Fund (NTF) Advisory Group, and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, and the direct involvement of employers.

The HCI will also incentivise continued reform and innovation in third level provision building on best practice nationally and internationally, strongly supporting innovation in programme design and delivery. It will respond to the targets outlined in the *National Skills Strategy,* and other Government strategies. It will seek to promote innovative and responsive models of programme delivery, and to enable the higher education system to respond rapidly to changes in both skills requirements and technology.

The key objectives are to:

- Increase provision in areas of identified skills need for enterprise

- Future proof graduates with industry relevant skills for emerging technologies

- Ensure that there is a greater focus across the whole spectrum of higher education course provision on promoting and embedding transversal skills

- Incentivise continued reform and innovation in higher education provision building on best practice available nationally and internationally.

The key areas of focus for actions under the initiative are:

- Priority skills needs for society and the economy, particularly in high productivity sectors

- Mitigating Brexit risks

- Promoting regional development and *National Development Plan[6]/Project Ireland 2040* objectives

- Innovation and reform in programme provision

- Responding to digitalisation and the future world of work

- Strengthening relationships with enterprise and addressing identified future skills needs

- Provision of upskilling and reskilling through lifelong learning

4. Human Capital Initiative Pillar 1

HCI Pillar 1 has extended the approach currently in place for ICT under Springboard+. It offers incentivised places for graduates to reskill in areas of skills shortage and emerging technologies via graduate conversion and part time courses.

Multi-mode delivery courses are at level 8 Higher Diploma or level 9 Postgraduate Diploma and provision is on a full- time basis ranging in duration from 9 to 18 months. Courses are in areas of identified skills needs

The primary objective of HCI pillar 1 in 2023 is

- To provide upskilling and reskilling courses to develop the talent base in Ireland in key growth sectors of the economy **by supporting those who are unemployed or Returners to gain 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.

- To provide opportunities for **workforce development** to enhance the skill levels of those already in employment; to increase the national rate of engagement in

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[6] https://assets.gov.ie/19240/62af938dce404ed68380e268d7e9a5bb.pdf

Life-Long Learning; to reskill those whose current occupation may be at risk from technological and other developments.

- To enhance **collaboration between enterprise and higher education** to design and deliver relevant higher education courses that support job creation and expansion.

- To enhance the skills profile of the labour force to meet the targets and objectives in line with **Government policy**.

5. Application Criteria and Guidance

5.1 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 HCI Pillar 1 to ensure adequate time for validation*)

- Institutes of Technology

- Universities

- Technological Universities

- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

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 HCI the comparable NFQ level of that programme will be clear to the learner and can be confirmed by employers and education and training providers for the purposes of employment and progression. Providers <u>will be required</u> to submit a letter of verification from the awarding body as part of the application process in this instance.

Courses must be newly developed specifically for this call. Existing courses funded under HCI Pillar 1 2020-22 which were not invited to apply for renewal funding in 2023, must provide evidence of significant change to the content of that course or evidence of significant demand must be provided to be eligible to apply for funding under this call.

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

5.3 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Validation

HCI Pillar 1 funding will be subject to the proposed course being validated by QQI where appropriate. The QQI validation process and criteria for proposed HCI courses will be the same as for other kinds of courses. This is to ensure that HCI Pillar 1 courses are of a comparable quality. Validation is typically for five years.

Proposed HCI Pillar 1 Courses must be submitted to QQI for validation in advance of submissions to HCI Pillar 1 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 HCI Pillar 1 courses. While initial screening of these submissions may take place, QQI will only proceed with the validation process after they

have been approved for HCI Pillar 1 funding. Evidence that this process has commenced at the time of application is required. Upload facility will be available on the application form (Appendix 2).

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 (Appendix 3) 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 1 September 2023. Written evidence that the course has received QQI validation must be submitted within 10 days of receipt of same from the QQI.

HCI Pillar 1 courses leading to QQI awards must be validated for the 2023/24 academic year before any learners are enrolled.

5.4 Eligible Course Types

HCI Pillar 1 funding will provide funding for

1. Full-time higher education NFQ level 8 Higher Diploma and NFQ level 9 Postgraduate Diploma courses **up to a maximum of 18 months** in duration

2. Part-time higher education courses **up to a maximum of 12 months** in duration from NFQ levels 6-9 **in a particular discipline area as set out below. (See Appendix 6)**

Full-time Courses

-   Full time courses must not be less than 10 **class contact hours per week**. It is important that proposed attendance patterns, including timing of classes/lectures for courses, adhere to this requirement and are made clear to applicants. 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.

- Full time HCI courses must lead to a minimum of 60 ECTS credits. Courses with fewer ECT credits will not be considered.

Full Time Courses	Minimum	Maximum
Credits	60 ECTS	90 ECTS
Duration	9 months	18 months
Contact hours	10 hours per week	
NFQ	8 or 9	

- Courses must fall under one of the **eligible discipline areas** (i.e. ISCED Codes), as outlined in Appendix 5. Courses outside of these discipline areas are ineligible for funding in 2023. These areas were identified in collaboration with the Regional Skills Fora Managers and the NTF Advisory Group.

- Multi-mode delivery courses at level 8 Higher Diploma and level 9 Postgraduate Diploma on the National Qualifications Framework will be funded under this heading. Masters courses at level 9 are **not** eligible.

- Proposed courses should be stand-alone courses that upskill participants for the labour market upon completion. For example, courses that are year one of a course that requires a participant to do a second year of a course are not being sought and will not be funded.

- Courses must include a dedicated job readiness/job preparation component. Details of this provision will be required as part of course proposals including whether the component is credit bearing. It should be noted that it is not compulsory that the module is credit bearing. It should be noted that participants on reskilling courses may require a dedicated job readiness component on their course to facilitate their transition into a new area of employment.

- A work placement or project-based, credited module must always be provided for participants who are Returners or Unemployed and in-receipt of a DSP payment. Where a HCI Pillar 1 course has a mixture of applicant types, a work placement may not be appropriate for those in employment and can be waived for these participants. However, if a work placement is sought or deemed suitable for a participant in employment, it should be encouraged.

Part-Time Courses

- Part-time courses must not exceed 17 class contact hours per week. This is to facilitate participants continuing to seek employment and therefore receive a job-seekers 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.

- 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. Returners as an eligible cohort for a course, the provision should reflect this with classes being provided during school hours

- Part-time courses must lead to a minimum of 10 ECTS credits. Courses with fewer ECT credits will not be considered.

- Courses must fall under one of the eligible discipline areas (i.e. ISCED Codes), as outlined in Appendix 6. Courses outside of these discipline areas are ineligible for funding in 2023. These discipline areas were identified by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

- A work placement or project-based, credited module must always be provided for part-time participants who are Returners or Unemployed and in-receipt of a DSP payment. Where a HCI course has a mixture of applicant types, a work placement may not be appropriate for those in employment and can be waived for these participants. However, if a work placement is sought or deemed suitable for a participant in employment, it should be encouraged.

6. Target Student Cohorts

6.1 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 2023 launch. The table below lists the categories of applicant eligible to apply and the previous education requirements. Exact academic eligibility requirements will be determined by individual providers and may depend on the nature of the course. Providers will be required to have a Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) policy in place.

Category	Previous Education Attainment
Unemployed and in-receipt of a qualifying payment from the Department of Social Protection (DSP).	Individuals who already hold a National Framework of Qualifications (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 in order to re-enter employment. For graduate conversion courses: Individuals who already hold a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) award at minimum Level 8 or with equivalent recognised prior learning, who may require additional upskilling or reskilling in order 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. For graduate conversion courses: Individuals who already hold a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) award at minimum Level 8 or with equivalent

	recognised prior learning, who may require additional upskilling or reskilling in order to re-enter employment.
Returners, a Homemaker, on other caring duties, or economically dependent on a partner/spouse for at least 9 of the last 12 months.	Individuals who already hold an 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 in order to re-enter employment.
Employed	Individuals at all qualifications levels wishing to upskill or reskill to meet required skill needs. For graduate conversion courses: Individuals who already hold a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) award at minimum Level 8 and wish to upskill or reskill to meet required skill needs across a range of sectors.
Recent Graduates from a full-time NFQ Level 8 degree within the 12 months prior to the course start date and who does not fit into one of the above categories.	Individuals who have completed a full-time, NFQ Level 8 degree no more than 12 months prior to the course start date.

6.2 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 / Returner applicants over those already in employment.** Special consideration should also be given to those who have not previously undertaken a HCI Pillar 1 course.

6.3 Unemployed Participants who Return to Employment

As one of the objectives of HCI Pillar 1 is to support upskilling of the labour force, participants 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 participants who return to employment have a reasonable opportunity to complete the course on a flexible basis. Such participants will not be required to pay any fees to complete their course, provided their status changed **after** the date of course commencement.

7. HCI Pillar 1 Funding

7.1 Course Funding

- Providers are required to submit the total cost of delivering the course in their proposal through SkillsDirect. Funding to successful Providers will be based on the course fee by reference to the number of credits to be provided. Providers should ensure that the full cost of the course is included in these costings.

- Funding will be released in a number of 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 7) and non-HEA designated higher education providers (Appendix 8) whose quality assurance procedures have been approved under the 2012 Act (re-engagement/QA approval processes) will be eligible to apply for multi-annual funding of 2 years from 2023. This multiannual funding is subject to course validation being in place for each year of the multi-annual funding when the course commences. Multi-annual funding is dependent on funding being continued for the HCI Pillar 1 programme beyond 2023 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 2024 process. The continuation of this multi annual funding beyond year 1 (2023) is dependent on

a fill rate no lower than 75% in the 1st year (2023). Lower fill rates may result in a course being discontinued for the following year (2024). Lower fill rates on courses deemed critical skill needs may continue to be eligible for multi annual funding.

- Applicant providers who do not fit these criteria are only eligible for 1 year funding. Should a subsequent call arise, these providers will be permitted to reapply for funding each year if they meet the eligibility criteria in the subsequent years Call documents. In addition, courses must have a fill rate in the previous year of 75% to be allowed to reapply except for critical skill needs set out in this document.

- Approximately 85% of annual HCI Pillar 1 funding will be ringfenced for courses that are awarded multi-annual funding. Approximately 15% of annual funding will be ringfenced for courses that are awarded 1 year funding in 2023.

- A limited Call for new applications for new courses may be made each year dependent on available funding from unfilled courses from the previous year. This will be subject to the emerging skills needs at the time.

- Submitted courses costs will be fixed for the duration of the award.

7.2 Participant Fee Coverage and Contributions

- Fees are covered in full for eligible participants who are **Returners**, **Formerly Self-Employed**, or **Unemployed** and in-receipt of a qualifying DSP payment, and all participants on NFQ Level 6 courses. Qualifying DSP payments will be determined by the DSP and published on the Springboard website.

- Fees are 90% covered for eligible, **Employed** participants on NFQ Level 7, 8 and 9 courses, with providers collecting the remaining 10% from participants. Please note that in future financial audits, the HEA will check that this fee was requested and paid.

- Eligible **Recent Graduates** are 90% covered for graduate conversion courses and will be required to pay the remaining 10% to providers.

- It is important to note that no participant on a HCI Pillar 1 course in 2023 will be eligible for support under the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Higher Education Grants Scheme.

Category	Percentage of Fee paid by HEA to provider
Unemployed (in receipt of eligible DSP payment)	100%
Returner (in receipt of eligible DSP payment)	100%
Formerly Self Employed (in receipt of eligible DSP payment)	100% (or 90% if not in receipt of eligible DSP Payment)
Employed	90%
Recent Graduates	90%

7.3 Managing Course Applications

All Providers of courses funded through HCI Pillar 1 2023 will be required to use the Springboard Application System (AMS) to manage course information, applications, and offers, as well as return relevant data, as set out above. The AMS is accessible to registered providers via www.springboardcourses.ie. It is imperative that Providers update this on a regular basis to ensure that information on courses and participant records are accurate. Failure to do so may result in funding being withheld.

8. Application Process

Proposals should be submitted via SkillsDirect. Applications via other platforms will not be accepted. The deadline for submissions is **Thursday, 23 February 2023 at 13:00**. It will not be possible to submit a proposal after this time.

The SkillsDirect portal will open shortly after the call publication. It will be necessary to register for an account at that time, even if you have registered in previous years. The first person to register from each provider will be automatically assigned the role of "Provider Admin" by the system. Other users from the same provider can be added, but only one "Provider Admin" is possible.

8.1 Changes to the 2023 Application Process

- QQI submission for validation prior to application – form confirmation- Section 5 and Appendix 2
- List of eligible discipline areas – Appendix 5 and Appendix 6
- Proposals must be ranked– Section 8.3
- Limit on the number of proposals providers can submit – Section 8.3
- Requirement for a letter of confirmation where the awarding body is outside of Republic of Ireland – Section 5
- Confirmation Regional Skills Fora Managers viewed the draft submission from HEA designated institutions – Section 8.3
- President/CEO or Vice-President/Registrar Sign off – Section 8.3
- Inclusion of part-time courses in specific needs areas – Section 5.4 and Appendix 6

8.2 Changes to the Online Application Process for 2023

- Section requiring the following – course description, evidence enterprise engagement and demand for skills, evidence of demographic demand, identification of target cohort
- No requirement for Industry Support Letters
- No requirement for RPL Procedures document upload
- No requirement for Regional Skills Fora Manager Letters

8.3 Considerations in Advance of Applying

- **Maximum Number of Applications**: HCI Pillar 1 has a limited budget and is a highly competitive Call. As such, a **maximum of 8 proposals** is allowed for the majority of providers. Technological Universities can submit a maximum of 15 proposals, given their significant multi-campus/regional nature. When assigning a ranking of proposals please ensure a mix of skills and levels. Technological Universities should include the primary campus location in course titles.

- **Ranking Applications:** Applications must be assigned a rank based on the providers 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. Providers are asked to be cognisant of the number of successful proposals from previous years when considering how many proposals to submit.

- HEA Designated institutions must consult with their **Regional Skills Fora Manager** regarding their draft ranked applications prior to upload to SkillsDirect. 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 the providers ranking.

- The final submission must be signed off by the provider **President/CEO or Vice President/Registrar**.Ranked lists and institutional sign off must be emailed to hci@hea.ie by the closing date 13.00hrs Thursday 23 February 2023. The online application system will not accept proposals submitted after this deadline.

- **Careers support services** at higher education providers should be consulted in the design of courses, employer engagement and identification of cohorts who would benefit from HCI Pillar 1 courses.

Course applications should:

- Be nationally and/or regionally focussed.

- 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.

8.4 Indicative* Timetable 2023

Call for Proposals Launched	**Friday 20 January 2023**
SkillsDirect portal opens	**Friday 3 February 2023**
Deadline for submission of proposals	**Thursday 23 February 2023, 13.00hrs**
Providers notified of approved courses	**Early Q2 2023**
Contracts agreed with HEA, Providers upload information for applicants to www.springboardcourses.ie	**Q2 2023**
Applications for HCI Pillar 1 2023 open via	**Q2 2023**

*The HEA will endeavor 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 hci@hea.ie The FAQ document will be updated and uploaded to the HEA each week. Questions received up to close of business each Tuesday whilst the Call is open will be included. The final FAQ will be uploaded on **Wednesday 15 February 2023.**

The closing date for submission of proposals is 13.00hrs Thursday, 23 February 2023.
The online application system will not accept proposals submitted after this deadline.

As outlined above any queries on the Call process for 2023 must be emailed to hci@hea.ie and responses will be updated on the FAQ document. Telephone queries will not be accommodated, and any form of canvassing will disqualify Providers from participation in the initiative.

9. Evaluation Process

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

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 and The National Training Fund advisory group. They will assess proposals in accordance with the criteria set out in Appendix 9 of this Call document. The number of panel members will be dependent on the number of applications received.

As part of the evaluation process the Panel will have access to information on academic and employment outcomes from the Application Management System (AMS) on courses run in previous years through HCI Pillar 1. This will include fill rates and completion rates of all courses.

The assessment will follow a five-step process:

1. The HEA executive will review applications for eligibility regarding the information provided in Appendix 9. All eligible proposals will be assigned to the Panel for the next stage of assessment.

2. The Panel will conduct individual remote assessments on applications assigned to them in accordance with the published evaluation criteria (Appendix 10). Proposals will be assigned a pass or fail based on the information provided. The Panel reserve the right to interview applicant providers on their overall application where there are significant queries on the application.

3. The Panel will convene to consider the final list of pass proposals based on evaluation criteria.

4. The HEA executive will consider the list of courses recommended for funding with consideration of the available budget. It is important to note that funding may not be available to fund all applications awarded a pass. 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),

   d. Geographical spread (required to meet national and regional needs). CSO and the National Skills Bulletin will be taken into consideration under this heading.

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

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 in early to mid-April 2023. 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.

10. 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 HCI Pillar 1 2023. The document must not be used for any other purpose. HCI Pillar 1 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 course of 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 into 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.

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 as a result 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.

10.1 Statutory requirements

All Providers making a proposal(s) for courses to be supported via HCI Pillar 1 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.

10.2 GDPR

HCI Pillar 1 is financed by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The ESF are currently determining their programme for 2023 and beyond and it is planned that HCI Pillar 1 will form part of that programme. Until this has been finalised it is advised that Providers retain all applicant eligibility material. We will engage with you on requirements when we have confirmation.

The HCI Pillar 1 Privacy Statement is available at
https://springboardcourses.ie/privacyStatement

10.3 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 1 October 2001. Policies and

procedures on access to information is set out in the following link: http://www.hea.ie/en/freedom-of-information

The HEA Data Privacy Notice is available at https://hea.ie/about-us/data_protection/

10.4 Audits and ESF Co-Funding

HCI Pillar 1 in 2023 is funded through the National Training Fund and will be part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) 2021-2027. Providers must retain all applicant eligibility material. The HEA will issue guidance on ESF protocols when we receive clarification on the funds.

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). **It is anticipated that a number of audits will be carried out in 2023. These audits may comprise financial and/or communication and publicity elements. Checks may also be carried out on material retained as part of applicant's eligibility for courses. It is imperative that all application material is retained by Providers.**

Providers who wish to make HCI Pillar 1 course proposals must submit their proposals online via SkillsDirect. The deadline for submissions is **13:00hrs on Thursday, February 23, 2023**. Proposals will not be accepted after this deadline or via any other platform.

Appendix 1 – 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 2023
- Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
- Future Skills Needs of the Biopharma Sector in Ireland, 2016
- Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland
- Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework
- Ireland for Finance 2025
- Languages Connect
- Skills and Labour Market Research Unit Reports (SOLAS)
- Skills for Zero Carbon
- Technology Skills 2022

Appendix 2 – QQI Validation Submission

Confirmation that courses have been submitted to QQI for validation prior to HCI Pillar 1 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 3 – QQI Confirmation of Validation

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Certification of Course Approval HCI Pillar 1 2023

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 4 – Non-QQI Confirmation of Validation

Name of Validating Body: _____

Certification of Course Approval HCI Pillar 1 2022

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 5 – Full-Time (only) Eligible Discipline Areas (ISCED Codes)

0211 Audio-visual techniques and media production

Audio Visual, Media, Animation, Games Development

0231 Language Acquisition

Languages for sales and customer services

0412 Finance, banking and insurance

Data Analytics Financial, Fintech, Regulation, Compliance and Risk, International Fund admin, Insurance

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

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

0612 Database and network design and administration

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

0700 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not further defined

Good Manufacturing Practice, Process Safety, Lean systems and NewProductDesign - 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

0713 Electricity and energy

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

0714 Electronics and automation

Industry 4.0, Automation Engineering, Advanced PLCs, Automation and Control, Autonomous Vehicles, Robotics

0715 Mechanics and metal trades

Manufacturing Engineering

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

0721 Food processing

Food Safety, Food Hygiene, Food Science, Food Manufacturing, Food Innovation/Entrepreneurship

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

0788 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving engineering, Manufacturing and construction

0799 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not elsewhere classified

0914 Medical diagnostic and treatment technology

Medical Technology, Medical Devise Design, Product Design

Appendix 6 - Discipline areas relevant for Part-Time and Full-Time Funding

- Offshore renewable – Planners for Offshore Renewable Energy; Marine Ecologists; Grid Engineers

- Construction Building Surveyors;

- Project Management (ensuring specific focus on new responsibilities in construction mgt. in courses available, re on-site building/off-site mgt, building techniques, new materials, sustainability); Hazardous Waste Management/Disposal (as component of relevant courses)

Appendix 7 - Eligible HEA-Designated Institutions (Eligible for Multiannual funding)

- 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

- Southeast 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 8 - Non HEA Designated Eligible Higher Education Providers (Eligible for Multiannual funding)** *Updated 26/1/23*

- Carlow College, St Patricks

- CCT College Dublin

- Chevron College

- Children's Therapy Centre Limited

- City Education Group

- Clanwilliam Institute

- Dorset College

- Dublin Business School

- Dublin Institute of Design

- 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

- Institute for Supply Chain Excellence

- 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

- Saint Nicholas Montessori College Ireland

- Setanta College

- Sport Ireland

- SQT Training Limited

- The Open Training College

Appendix 9 – Eligibility Criteria HEA Checks

- Does the application meet provider and course eligibility requirements in section 5.1?

- If QQI validation is required – is there evidence process has been initiated. Is the form confirmation (Section 5.3) uploaded?

- Is the letter of confirmation uploaded where the awarding body is outside of Republic of Ireland – Section 5

- Does the application meet the discipline eligibility requirements (Appendix 5/ Appendix 6)

- Is there evidence that the delivery methods and on campus hours are suitable for the target cohort (s)?

- 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 applied are within the minimum and maximum allowances for to Full and Part time courses?

- Is the appropriate minimum and maximum number of credits applied for Full and 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 Work placement for courses as this is mandatory?

Appendix 10 – Evaluation Criteria for Assessment Panel

- Does the Course Description in Section 2 of the 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