



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

# HUMAN CAPITAL INITIATIVE PILLAR 1 CALL 2023 - FAQs

Next Generation Graduates



# Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 1 February 2023

## FAQ: SkillsDirect

**Q1. Can two people in our institution get logins for the Skills Direct portal for the HCI submissions?**

Answer: The first person to register from an institution is assigned the role of 'administrator'. Other people can be added in that institution; however, they must be added as a user by their administrator. If your institution has already been registered, then the user is not allowed register but should ask their administrator to register for them.

**Q2. My login details from last year are not working. How can I logon to skillsdirect.heai.ie?**

Answer: You will need to register again for the new year and create a new password. You can 'Click here to read the Call requirements and to Register' at the bottom of the page to register. If you are the first person to register for your institution, you will act as the administrator for your institution, and it is then possible to add other users.

## **FAQ: Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Pillar 1**

**Q3. Are industry letters of support and also Statements of Support from the Regional Skills Managers required again this year for each programme application? If so, is there a template to be completed this year?**

Answer: Proposals will need to demonstrate clear evidence of engagement with enterprise/industry partners and Regional Skills Fora Managers in the development of the programme. Letters of support are no longer required however consultation with Regional Skills Fora Manager is a requirement, and applications must confirm this has taken place.

**Q4. When is the deadline for submissions?**

Answer: The deadline for submissions is Thursday, 23 February 2023 13.00hrs.

**Q5. We are planning a joint proposal with another HEI in our region. I understand that only one HEI can submit a proposal, but can you please let me know if there is a way for both institutions to have visibility on AMS if the course is successful?**

Answer: If a consortium make a successful application for HCI pillar 1 funding, they will be able to individually open applications on the AMS (Applicant Management System) and process applications to their own institution through the website AMS. However, only one HEI can submit the proposal for the consortium through SkillsDirect. Institutions who lead a consortium should liaise with their consortium partners before submitting the application.

**Q6. Can recently submitted courses for renewal or business cases to renew courses be assessed under the Pillar 1 2023 call?**

Answer: Any course that has been offered renewal places for 2023/24 will not be eligible to apply for funding under the 2023 call and should not be submitted under the 2023 call.

**Q7. Can courses previously run under the HCI Pillar 1 call be submitted under the Pillar 1 2023 call?**

Answer: 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 alternatively evidence of significant demand must be provided to be eligible to apply for funding under this call.

**Q8. Can part-time courses be submitted under the Pillar 1 2023 call?**

Answer: Part time courses will be funded under the P1 2023 call, however only in very specific targeted discipline areas as detailed in appendix 6 of the call document.

**Q9. Are HCI Pillar 3 programmes eligible for the Pillar 1 2023?**

Answer: The 2023 call is for newly developed courses. Newly developed courses, which have been recently developed in the last year (2022), under Pillar 3 awards, which are not subject to Pillar 3 additional place monies and address the target identified skills areas, can be submitted to the P1 2023 call.

**Q10. A department has recently developed a Postgraduate Diploma which has been validated but never run. Would this be eligible under Pillar 1 as a submission?**

Answer: Yes. Courses must be newly developed specifically for this call. But in the case of an existing course being submitted evidence of significant change to the content of that course or demand must be provided to ensure eligibility for funding.

**Q11. Is there a minimum/maximum number of contact hours for the students to participate in per week, and is it possible for these contact hours to be delivered online to students or are they required to participate in classroom sessions only?**

Answer: The minimum number of hours is set out in the call document for Full time courses is 10 contact hours per week. Part-time courses must not exceed 17 class contact hours per week. Contact can be multi-mode and the delivery mode(s) should be outlined in the application.

**Q12. Can you confirm if additional students funded under Pillar 1 will receive the additional €2,500 for each student and that this additional funding comes from Pillar 3 funding or does it also come from Pillar 1 funding?**

Answer: Pillar 1 funding to successful Providers will be on the basis of the course fee by reference to the number of credits to be provided. We will not be providing €2,500 in additional funding for each student. Additional places on courses where funding is provided through Springboard+, Pillar 1 or Pillar 2 of the HCI are not eligible to be included for additional places under Pillar 3 even if impacted by the approved project outcomes.

**Q13. Will this Pillar be open to applications again in 2024?**

Answer: At present there is no plan to do so. However, the HEA reserves the right to run another call process in future years.

**Q14. If there is an eligible course commencing in 2023 or 2024, when do you make an application under HCI?**

Answer: You must make the application in this call and provide information of the proposed number of intakes with start and end dates for each intake.

**Q15. If we have a Masters programme with a Postgraduate Diploma option, is the Postgraduate Diploma option eligible for funding under Pillar 1?**

Answer: No, courses at level 8 Higher Diploma and level 9 Postgraduate Diploma on the National Qualifications Framework will be funded under this Pillar. Masters courses at level 9 are not eligible.

**Q16. We are a private training institute partnered with a university who have been offering Springboard+ Programmes for a number of years – are we eligible to apply for HCI Pillar 1 as we are not specifically listed in the appendices?**

Answer: For Pillar 1, providers who were eligible to submit applications under Springboard+ 2022 are eligible to submit proposals.

**Q17. Could you please clarify that the 10 hours per week, is relating to directed learning (e.g. 10 hours in classroom, so does not include study time or other additional undirected online supports)?**

Answer: 10 hours 'contact time' is face-to-face time with a lecturer, either via the classroom, online, or another learning environment, where learners can question, converse with, and receive instant answers from, a lecturer/instructor in real time.

**Q18. Are courses delivered on a block learning basis eligible? We have a brand new Postgraduate Certificate which is best delivered on a block learning basis e.g. 2 full days per month. Is this eligible?**

Answer: No. If the course does not have minimum of 10 contact hours per week for a full time course it is not eligible.

**Q19. Can you please clarify if a PD component of a Masters programme can be funded?**

Answer: The Pillar 1 call will fund courses which lead to an award at level 8 higher diploma or level 9 postgraduate diploma. Participants must be awarded a qualification at the end of their Pillar 1 funded course. The programme will not fund components of other courses.

**Q20. If the programme is not validated through QQI, does the course provider need to seek recognition advice from QQI to confirm that the award is a comparable NFQ level?**

Answer: Yes, recognition advice should be sought with QQI to confirm the award is comparable to NFQ level.

**Q21. Can we arrange a call regarding the recent call for funding?**

Answer: All questions in relation to the call can be submitted by email to [HCI@HEA.ie](mailto:HCI@HEA.ie) and will be answered through the FAQ process. There will also be an information session on Tuesday 31st of January with an opportunity for questions. When a call is live, we answer all questions through the published FAQ process. In the interest of fairness and transparency we do not hold one-to-one meetings or calls to advise applicants.



**Q22. Where can I find a list of providers eligible for multi-annual funding?**

Answer: A list of providers for multi-annual funding can be found in Appendix 8 of the call document. This list was last revised on 26 January 2023.

**Q23. Will we be able to print out drafts of our application from the Skills Direct website?**

Answer: Yes.

**Q24. We have a course that does not fall under any of the Eligible Discipline Areas; however the field of study and the set of skills acquired would be suitable for most of the disciplines listed in the call. Could this course be eligible for the current HCI pillar 1 call?**

Answer: No, this HCI Pillar 1 Call will only fund courses under the specified ISCEDs/discipline areas outlined in Appendix 5 & 6.

**Q25. Did I miss a communication on how we can apply to run a programme again this year?**

Answer: Renewal funding for courses previously awarded HCI funding in 2020 was offered to providers whose courses were identified as having sufficient student demand.

**Q26. Can you submit proposals for programmes proposed last year?**

Answer: Courses submitted for funding must be newly developed specifically for this call, or recently developed, in the last year 2022, and not in receipt of funding from other sources.

**Q27. I have a question over the exact definition of “*newly developed*” – can you please clarify? If a programme has been recently developed and not previously received funding from HCI Pillar 1 (or indeed Springboard+), and meets all the other eligibility criteria – can this be submitted to the call?**

Answer: Newly developed courses, or recently developed, in the last year 2022, which are not being funded from other sources and address the target identified skills areas can be submitted to the P1 2023 call.

**Q28. We have received the information regarding the submission of proposals for course funding. Just reading through [HCI-Pillar-1-2023-Call-Final-Document-1.pdf \(hea.ie\)](#) regarding the Appendix 5 related to ISCED codes, from previous submissions there was the code (0619) Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) which is not elsewhere classified. Is there a different code that we should use as I believe this is the code on Skills direct or should a different code be used?**

Answer: The (0619) Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) code is not included in the Pillar 1 2023 call and submissions under this category are not eligible.

**Q29. Will Pillar 1 2023 fund ICT courses?**

Answer: The HCI Pillar 1 2023 Call will only fund courses under the specified ISCEDs/discipline areas outlined in Appendix 5 & 6 of the call document.

ISCED 0619: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) **is not included in the Pillar 1 2023** call and submissions under this category are not eligible.

ISCED 0612: Database and network design and administration is included in Pillar 1 2023 and courses in this ISCED area are eligible, this includes:

- Computer administration and management
- Computer media applications
- Computer network installation and maintenance
- Database administrator studies
- Information technology administration
- Information technology security
- Network administration
- Network design
- Web design

**Q30. Are courses that are currently funded via Springboard be eligible for the Pillar 1 call 2023?**

Answer: No. The HCI pillar 1 2023 call will fund newly developed courses, or recently developed, in the last year 2022, which are not being funded from other sources and address the target identified skills areas can be submitted to the pillar 1 2023 call.

**Q31. Are micro-credentials with a minimum of 10 credits eligible? To clarify on my query on eligibility of micro-credentials: a new micro-credential is accredited at 10ECTS but does not lead to a course award, e.g. cert, diploma, degree etc. It is in a category eligible for part-time training. Would an academically approved module/micro-credential of 10ECTS be eligible if it is not a full course award?**

Yes, 10ECTS micro-credentials are eligible. They do not have to be full course awards, but they must lead to a qualification.

**Q32. Are we able to submit courses that will not commence until 2024/25?**

Answer: Yes, but only if you are a listed multi annual provider, otherwise no.

**Q33: Is there any space for courses that permit science/ engineering etc. graduates to come study languages within Pillar 1?**

Answer: Courses defined within the ISCEDs listed in the call document are eligible for funding consideration. See appendix 5 of the call document which includes ISCEDs in the sciences, engineering, and language acquisition. If the course is within the defined ISCED categories in the Call document and responds to the call requirements it would be eligible for submission.

**Q34. Are there cut-off dates for when programmes need to be started by or completed by to be counted within 2023/24 academic year?**

Answer: Courses should start no earlier than September 2023, and no later than March 2024. The maximum length of an eligible course is 18 months.

**Q35. Can full time Level 8 and Level 9 programmes be expanded to also include full time level 7 programmes at 60 credits?**

Answer: No. Full time courses must be level 8 or level 9. Part time courses can be levels 6-9.

**Q36. Is the RPL recognition still dependent on the internal standards of the Institute/Partners OR are there emerging guidelines for RPL?**

Answer: The HCI programme has issued no specific guidelines for RPL in this call. RPL will still reside with institutions own procedures and internal standards.

**Q37. Are Self Employed applicants included in this call as per the 2020 HCI Pillar 1 call?**

Answer: Yes, see section 6 of the call document.

**Q38. Has the requirement to be unemployed for 9 out of the past 12 months been removed from the unemployed category?**

Answer: No, at present this remains a requirement. However, applicant eligibility requirements are subject to change for each academic year. Updates to applicant eligibility requirements are made through the Springboard Courses website. Providers are also notified of significant changes.

**Q39. Will the employment eligibility criteria for HCI Pillar 1 2020 course that have been renewed for 2 additional years, be the same for the 2023 call?**

Answer: Eligibility requirements for applicants are expected to be broadly similar to current HCI eligibility requirements, and will be noted in any contract issued. Please note these are subject to change for each academic year and applicants must meet all eligibility requirements (as detailed for them on the Springboard Courses eligibility webpage).

**Q40. Can you be explicit about the enterprise partners?**

Answer: The enterprise partners are the employers and enterprises who engage with the course and/or its potential graduates. They may be referenced in the application.

**Q41. Are part time programmes included in the limit of eight applications? Or does the limit of eight relate only to full time programmes?**

Answer: The application limit refers to the entire submission, including any part time or full time courses.

**Q42: Will the first person logging onto SkillsDirect platform get the administrative rights, or can we nominate whom we want to have these access rights?**

Answer: The first person logging onto the SkillsDirect platform will be given administrative rights for their institution.

**Q43. Must course dates still fit within the 2-year timeframe?**

Answer: No courses do not need to fit the 2-year timeframe. For example, 18-month courses might go beyond 2 years. All courses must commence within the specific academic year for which funding has been approved, as per question 34 above.

**Q44. Just for clarity are Full Time online programmes eligible?**

Answer: Yes, providing they meet the other published requirements.

**Q45. Can you share established modules from other up-and-running courses?**

Answer: Yes, this is possible. For example, pre-existing work-ready modules responding to the work readiness requirements of the call may be used as part of your new course.

**Q46. Would a part time level 9 course for Architects be eligible under the construction section?**

Answer: Yes, if it fits within the identified ISCEDs in the Call document.

**Q47. 15% of funding from last year's Springboard call was due to be ring fenced for private providers etc. that were not eligible for multiannual funding. Is this no longer the case?**

Answer: See Section 7.1 of the call document re multiannual funding.

*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.*

**Q48. For courses that received funding in the previous call but were not invited to apply for renewal, is there any clarification available on the requirement to provide "evidence of significant demand" to be eligible to apply for funding under this call?**

Answer: If there is a course that was not invited for renewal it can be resubmitted but it must show change and new innovations, improvements and evidence that these changes will deliver increased registrations on the course.

**Q49. If a course previously qualified for funding under the first call and is only in its first year, could this still qualify as new?**



Answer: No such a course would need to have been recently developed in 2022, not 2020 as per its original HCI Pillar 1 submission. However, see also question 48 above.

**Q50. Are learner deferrals eligible to retain funding to complete their programmes?**

Answer: As a rule no. Only under very exceptional circumstances, would such a request even be considered.

**Q51. What is the process for getting a course recognised outside of Ireland approved by QQI?**

Answer: QQI's NARIC Ireland provide advice for academic recognition of a foreign qualification. Providers seeking such recognition should approach QQI.

**Q52. Is there a specific ranking form as per last year being supplied?**

A ranking form will be available with the Call on the HEA website.

**If you have a question about the Pillar 1 2023 call, please email it to [HCI@HEA.ie](mailto:HCI@HEA.ie) and it will be answered via an update to this published FAQ document. (For Springboard queries please contact [springboard@hea.ie](mailto:springboard@hea.ie))**

Please note: the final FAQ for this call will be uploaded to the HEA website on **Wednesday, 15 February 2023.**