



Call for Proposals

January 2021



EUROPEAN UNION
Investing in your future
European Social Fund



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS



Table of Contents

Section	Title	Content
1	Introduction, Background and Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Background to Springboard+ ■ Introduction to the 2021 call ■ Legal notice, GDPR, FOI and other legal / regulatory notices ■ Funding details
2	Application Eligibility, Criteria and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programme eligibility ■ Individual eligibility ■ Programme assessment criteria ■ Guidance for applicants
3	Application Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Guidelines for proposal development ■ Marking scheme ■ Timeline ■ Submission details and rules ■ Selection process
A	Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Further guidance documents ■ ISCED codes ■ QQI Confirmation sheet

Providers who wish to make Springboard+ course proposals must submit their proposals online via <http://skillsdirect.heai.ie>. The deadline for submissions is **13.00hrs on Thursday 11th March 2021**.

Section 1

1.1 Background to Springboard+

Springboard+ began in 2011 as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative. It has provided free and heavily subsidised upskilling and reskilling in higher education in areas of identified skills need, with a particular emphasis on upskilling of people who are unemployed or in receipt of a social welfare payment. Springboard+ complements the core State-funded education and training system and is one of a number of initiatives designed to support people back into employment and improve the skills of those in employment and to build the supply of skilled graduates to meet current and future skill needs of the Irish economy.

Springboard+ forms part of the Government's Future Jobs Ireland 2019 which has as a central objective how to plan for the Irish economy of the 21st century. 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 eleventh phase of Springboard+. When the initiative was first introduced in January 2011 unemployment was at 15%, with over 400,000 people out of work. However, unemployment was less than half that in 2019, with the CSO reporting 4.8% for October 2019¹.

The Covid-19 Pandemic had a considerable impact on the Irish economy and society in 2020. Significant supports were introduced by the government during the crisis, including the Pandemic Unemployment Payment and the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (later replaced by the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme). The Covid-19 adjusted unemployment rate for December 2020 was 20.4% for all persons including those on the Pandemic Unemployment Payment. The ESRI have indicated that economic activity will return to normal during the latter part of 2021; however, the unemployment rate will average at 15%.

With this in mind, Springboard+ in 2021 will continue to have a dual focus of upskilling and reskilling people who remain out of the workforce (activation) and also a focus on upskilling those in employment (workforce development).

The programme was funded through the National Training Fund and formed part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. The ESF are currently determining their programme for 2021 and beyond and although not confirmed it is likely that Springboard+ will once again form part of that programme. Until this has been confirmed, it is advised that Providers retain all applicant eligibility material. We will engage with you on requirements when we have confirmation.

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. All of the evaluation reports are accessible via www.springboardcourses.ie.

¹ [Monthly Unemployment - CSO - Central Statistics Office Quarterly Economic Commentary, Winter 2020 \(esri.ie\)](http://www.esri.ie)

There are four additional specific objectives of the programme:

- Helping those who are unemployed, formerly self-employed and 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. This year it is particularly important that providers are cognisant of trends emerging in industries due to the impact of COVID-19 and how those displaced by the impact could be facilitated by the programme. Courses in skills areas which support the development of a low carbon economy will be welcome under Springboard+ 2021.
- Provide opportunities for workforce development to enhance the skill levels of those already in employment; to increase the national rate of engagement in Life-Long Learning; to reskill those whose current occupation may be at risk from technological and other developments. The four areas of digital skills, transversal skills, management and leadership skills and the workplace of the future will be significant principles to be addressed under this objective.
- Enhance collaboration between enterprise and higher education to design and deliver relevant higher education courses that support job creation and expansion in line with the Government's Future Jobs Ireland, National Skills Strategy and National Development Plan.
- Enhance the skills profile of the labour force to meet the targets and objectives of Future Jobs Ireland the National Development Plan and the National Skills Strategy, Technology Skills 2022, Languages Connect, Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit and other skills reports as outlined in Appendix 1.

1.1.2 Labour Market Trends

The Covid-19 adjusted unemployment rate for December 2020 was 20.4% for all persons including those on the Pandemic Unemployment Payment; the seasonally adjusted rate was 7.2% compared to 4.7% in December 2019.

[Monthly Unemployment - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

1.3 Introduction to Springboard+ 2021

The primary objective of Springboard+ in 2021 is to provide upskilling and reskilling courses to develop the talent base in Ireland in key growth sectors of the economy. Providers should be cognisant of the data and trends on national and regional skills shortages in expanding enterprise areas and submit proposals which are evidence-based. Courses can include, **but are not limited to**, ICT, biopharma, medical device technologies and manufacturing, financial services, hospitality and entrepreneurship.

Providers should, where relevant, be cognisant of the impact of Brexit, in particular any arising skill needs as a consequence of developments. They should also be mindful of the changes on the horizon due to the developments in technology and how this will impact on the future of how we work.

In relation to the Covid-19 Pandemic providers should be cognisant of the impacts of the pandemic at a regional level, identifying sectors which would benefit from courses designed specifically to upskill or reskill those directly affected by the pandemic. In this regard the Regional Skills Fora managers should be consulted to ensure that the courses being designed meet the needs of industry in the region as well as national skills gaps. As referenced above, courses which contribute to the development of a low carbon economy will be welcome.

Covid-19 Statistical Analysis SLMRU (we will link to this on our website).

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 Springboard+ courses.

1.4 Important Notice

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) makes this document available to course Providers who wish to submit a proposal(s) for higher education courses as part of Springboard+ 2021. 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 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.

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 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.

1.4.1 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.

1.4.2 GDPR

Springboard+ is financed by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The ESF are currently determining their programme for 2021 and beyond and although not confirmed it is likely that Springboard+ will once again form part of that programme. Until this has been confirmed it is advised that Providers retain all applicant eligibility material.

The Springboard+ Privacy Notice can be reviewed at this link [HEA - Springboard+ \(springboardcourses.ie\)](#)

1.4.3 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 can be viewed at the following link Data Protection | About us | Higher Education Authority \(hea.ie\)](#)

1.4.4 ESF Funding

Springboard+ to 2020 was funded through the National Training Fund and formed part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. The ESF are currently determining their programme for 2021 and beyond and although not confirmed it is likely that Springboard+ will once again form part of that programme. Until this has been confirmed it is advised that Providers retain all applicant eligibility material. The HEA will issue guidance on ESF protocols when we receive clarification on the fund. It is anticipated that this will be prior to the opening of the application process to eligible applicants.

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 2021. Due to Covid-19 restrictions the audits planned for 2020 could not take place and it is now planned that audits will take place during 2021, subject to public health guidance. Application material from 2020 applicants will be included as part of this. 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.

Section 2

2.1 Application Eligibility, Criteria and Guidance

2.1.1 Eligibility: Providers (Course Eligibility)

Eligible courses must either:

(a) Lead to a higher education and training award that is included in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) at Levels 6 to 9, which is made by one of the following Irish awarding bodies:

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), including combinations of modules from already validated programmes 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 with delegated authority to make awards,
- Universities,
- Technological University Dublin (TUD),
- 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 programme funded by the State through the Springboard+ Call the comparable NFQ level of that programme will be clear to the learner and can be confirmed by employers and education and training institutions**

for the purposes of employment and progression.

Collaborative proposals from two or more Providers will be considered for funding, including those who form part of regional clusters in higher education, where a skill need in a particular sector has been identified. 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. They will be responsible for the financial management and reporting of the programme.

As part of course proposals, Providers will be required to set out the teaching, learning and assessment methodologies that will be used to meet learner needs, including flexible approaches; practical application of learning; and study skills/return to learning components. Academic and student supports should also be referenced, including details of job readiness training and, where relevant, work placement/internship supports. Regarding entry and achievement of an award, it is expected that proactive Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will be used by Course Providers. Details of each provider's policy in this area will be required as part of course proposals. Arrangements to promote and raise awareness of Springboard+ course opportunities will also be required.

Important note for courses requiring validation by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

- Springboard+ funding will be subject to the proposed course being validated by QQI.
- Springboard+ courses leading to QQI awards must be validated for the 2021/22 academic year before any learners are enrolled.
- The QQI validation process and criteria for proposed Springboard+ courses will be the same as for other kinds of programmes. This is to ensure that Springboard+ courses are of a comparable quality. Validation will normally be for **five years**.
- **Proposed Springboard Courses must be submitted to QQI for validation in advance of submissions to Springboard+ for funding.** This is to ensure adequate time for the QQI validation process to be completed as this can take up to 25 weeks though it will be expedited by QQI. For programmes that are designed exclusively for Springboard+ purposes, while initial screening of the submission may take place, QQI will only proceed with the validation process after they have been approved for Springboard funding.
- Proposed programmes may be marketed to learners before determination of the application for validation but following acceptance by QQI of a completed application as long as it is made clear that the programmes are offered subject to being validated by QQI.
- The current version of the Programme Validation Manual for Programmes of HET and Apprenticeships (FET and HET) should be used for preparing applications.
- A template (Appendix 4) has been provided to confirm that courses have been validated by the QQI. This must be completed and be sent by the provider to the HEA by **1st September 2021**.
- Written evidence that the course has received QQI validation must be submitted within 10 days of receipt of same from the QQI.

2.1.2 Types of courses which will be supported via Springboard+ 2021

Funding will be available for

- I. part-time higher education courses **up to a maximum of 12 months** in duration
- II. proposals for Level 8 and 9 ICT skills conversion courses both full and part-time.

Regarding part-time courses, Providers should note that for a course to be deemed part-time within Springboard+ **it cannot provide for more than 17 class contact hours per week**. This facilitates participants continuing to seek employment and therefore receive a job-seekers payment, and those already in employment. It is important that proposed attendance patterns, including timing of classes/lectures for programmes facilitate these requirements. Proposals submitted must provide details of attendance arrangements to enable full clarification that they meet the contact hours' requirement.

Please note the following:

- Courses in all areas of demonstrated skills needs are eligible, particularly including new and emerging skills areas. However, all proposals must be evidence-based.
- **For the purposes of this Call, the term 'part-time' is intended to cover all forms of flexible delivery including those offered partially during the day or in the evenings/weekends or those with an online and/or distance component. Given the emphasis on upskilling people in employment in Springboard+ 2021, Providers should be cognisant of the fact that many participants will be unable to attend classes during regular business hours of 9-5pm, Monday to Friday. Therefore, it is expected that courses will be proposed based on flexible provision and/or at times of the week and weekend that suit the needs of learners in employment. If Providers are targeting Returners as an eligible cohort for a course, the provision should reflect this with classes being provided during school hours. This will be factored into the assessment process of these programmes. As highlighted above, providers should be mindful of public health advice in relation to the delivery of programmes.**
- As in 2020, ICT skills conversion courses are sought on a one-year full-time *and* two-year part-time basis. We anticipate that there will be demand for both types of courses so Providers should consider the national skills requirements alongside the needs of their region in meeting this skills gap.
- Courses being submitted for 2021 should be stand-alone programmes 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, with exception of two-year ICT skills conversion courses.
- As referenced earlier in the Call, when developing courses Providers should be aware of the need to develop courses that address digital skills, transversal skills, management and leadership skills and the workplace of the future.

- Standard full-time courses in higher education will **not be** eligible for Springboard+ funding.
- Proposed Springboard+ full-time courses (with the exception of the one-year ICT skills conversion course) are not eligible for funding.
- Part-time course proposals which lead to an award of fewer than 10 ECTS credits or equivalent per annum will not be considered.
- Likewise, two-year part-time ICT skills conversion courses must lead to an award of at least 60 ECTS credits in total.
- 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.
- **Courses at Level 6 in a defined advancement to Level 7 will be particularly welcome under Springboard+ 2021.**

2.1.3 Job readiness and work placement

Courses must include a dedicated job readiness/job preparation component (i.e. distinct and specific credited module(s) on enhancing job readiness). Details of this provision will be required as part of course proposals. 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. This may be particularly relevant to courses designed for participants who have been displaced by Covid-19.

Where a Springboard+ course is a mixture of those in employment, Returners and those in receipt of a social protection payment, it is accepted that a work placement may not be required for a participant who is in employment. However, if a work placement is sought or deemed suitable for a participant in employment, this is encouraged. In the case of participants who are Returners or unemployed, a work placement or project based credited module should be provided.

A work placement is mandatory for 1-year full-time ICT skills conversion programmes and a work placement or credit bearing project is required for the 2-year part-time ICT skills conversion programme.

2.1.4 Springboard+ Applicant eligibility

The categories below may be amended based on advice received from the Department of Social Protection at the time of courses launching in 2021.

Category of Applicant	Description of Applicant	Criteria to be met
1.Those in receipt of an eligible 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.	To be eligible for a Springboard+ part-time course, a person must be in receipt of an eligible DSP payment or be signing for social insurance contribution credits and have a previous history of employment or self-employment and be actively seeking work.
2.Previously self employed	Individuals at all qualifications levels who may require new qualifications to return to self-employment or to enter employment.	As above.
3. Returners	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	Returners seeking to apply in 2021 will be required to verify their status as a returner. This will include providing a letter/statement signed by a Commissioner for Oaths confirming their current status. It should be noted that acceptance on to a Springboard+ course does not confer any entitlement to DSP payments or childcare

	employment.	supports. * See note below
4.Those in employment	wishing to upskill or reskill to meet required skill needs across a range of sectors.	This category of applicant will be required to provide a copy of their most recent P60 or other relevant revenue documentation or a letter from their current employer to confirm employment or self-employment. Self-employed will fall under this heading and will be required to provide evidence of self-employment. * See note below
5. Recent Graduates	wishing to acquire industry relevant skills to enable them to join the workforce	2021 graduates will be eligible for ICT conversion courses and must pay 10% of the cost of the course fee. 2021 graduates will not be eligible for part time Springboard+ courses.

Places will be provided free of charge to those participants from categories 1-3 above. In the case of category 4, Level 6 courses remain free and a contribution of 10% of the cost of the place will be collected by the provider for Level 7-9 courses. This contribution can be paid by the participant or their employer. The HEA will fund the remaining 90% of the cost directly to the Providers.

* Returners and employed participants will be required to meet the residency requirements for Springboard+; that they must have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to their course.

It is important to note that as in previous years, no participant on a Springboard+ course in 2021 will be eligible for support under the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Higher Education Grants Scheme.

2.1.5 Target participants for ICT skills conversion courses

Courses both full and part time are available to applicants who have a Level 8 qualification in a cognate discipline, as well as the capacity and underlying aptitude to undergo an intensive programme of study and work-experience to acquire industry-relevant ICT and software development skills at Level 8 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). In the case of the one-year full-time ICT skills conversion courses, persons meeting the entry criteria are eligible regardless of employment status. **Those in receipt of jobseeker's payments are not eligible for the two-year part-time ICT skills conversion courses.** Please see the eligibility criteria on www.springboardcourses.ie for further details.

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. Full-time ICT skills conversion proposals leading to awards of fewer than 60 ECTS credits per annum **will not** be considered for funding.

Students will be able to enter these courses directly from their undergraduate courses without requiring a year's break. For example, a student graduating in summer 2021 will be eligible for an ICT Skills Conversion course in autumn 2021. This cohort will be required to pay 10% of the cost of the course fee.

Please note the following which applies to all Springboard+ 2021 applicants:

- Participants may not enroll in more than three courses in any five-year period. They may re-engage with the Springboard+ programme after a break period of two years.
- Participants who enrolled in **more than one Springboard+** course since the inception of Springboard in 2011, and **did not complete** any course, are **not eligible** to apply in 2021. This criterion applies to all categories of applicant.
- Participants who enrolled in **just one course**, since the inception of Springboard+ in 2011, but did not complete, **are eligible to apply** in 2021.
- All applicants must meet the eligibility criteria outlined below and any additional requirements as outlined by the course provider.

Participants who return to employment

As one of the objectives of Springboard+ 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.

Priority of eligible participants

While the initiative is building on the changes made in 2018 in respect of the eligible cohorts, it should be noted as follows:

HEA will expect that when Providers are making decisions on the awarding of places to eligible applicants on these courses, in instances where two candidates meet the course academic

admissions criteria, priority must be afforded to the unemployed / Returner applicant over those who are already in employment in every instance. Consideration should also be given to those who have not previously undertaken a Springboard+ course.

As indicated above, the HEA will provide further guidance on eligible DSP payments when this is available from the DSP at the time of courses launching in early summer.

In courses (except 2-year part-time ICT skills conversion courses) where eligible applicants are a mix of all applicant categories, as outlined in Section 2, applicant categories 1 and 2 should form a minimum of 30% of the student cohort. In instances where there may be fewer eligible applicants from categories 1 and 2, it is acknowledged that the 30% threshold may not be possible. In such circumstances Providers can consult with the HEA.

2.2 Guidance for Applicants

All Providers of courses funded through Springboard+ 2021 will be required to use the online system www.springboardcourses.ie to manage course information, applications and acceptances as well as return of data as set out above. It is imperative that Providers update www.springboardcourses.ie on a regular basis to ensure that information and courses and participant records are accurate. Failure to do so may result in funding being withheld.

Section 3

3.1 Application Process

3.1.1 Guidelines for Proposal Development

Overview

- All sectors of the economy *with a demonstrated skills shortage* are included. Springboard+ 2021 will continue to prioritise national skills requirements in growth sectors of the economy. Furthermore, courses proposed in *all skills categories* will be considered where strong and clear evidence of a regional or national need is articulated with evidenced enterprise support. Key areas to consider in this regard are digital skills, transversal skills, management and leadership skills and the workplace of the future.
- All courses are open to people irrespective of their employment status. **The programme will continue to prioritise those in receipt of a social protection payment and returners to upskill or reskill and re-enter the workforce by providing places free of charge. Therefore, 30% of places approved will be ring-fenced for these applicants based on the 2020 applicant data.**
- Increasingly target the upskilling and reskilling requirements of those in employment, and in particular, those that are under-employed or whose job could become obsolete due to technological advances. The rates of engagement with Life-long Learning (LLL) have been increasing over recent years. In Q4 2019 the lifelong learning participation rate was 14.7% [SOLAS - SLMRU Publish Lifelong Learning Q4 2019 Report - Regional Skills](#) To assist in improving this position and aligned with the priority of further developing work-ready graduates, upskilling and reskilling remain a focus of Springboard+ 2021.
- In courses (except 2-year part-time ICT skills conversion courses) where eligible applicants are a mix of all applicant categories, applicant categories 1 and 2 (as outlined in section 2.5 below) should form a minimum of 30% of the student cohort, where possible.
- For employed participants on courses NFQ L7-9, HEA will fund 90% of the course fee, with Providers collecting the remaining 10% from participants. Please note that in future financial audits HEA will check that the fee has been sought and paid by employed participants.
- 2021 graduates are eligible to apply for ICT Conversion courses and will be required to pay 10% of the course fee. They are not eligible to apply for part time Springboard+ courses.
- Level 6 courses are free to all eligible participants.
- There is no restriction on the movement from one discipline area to another to pursue a course.
- There is no requirement for participants to move up the National Framework for Qualifications ladder. This means that participants may take a second Springboard+ course for example at Level 7 in a different skills area. Please reference section 2.7 below for eligibility criteria.

It is important to note that proposals submitted by Providers should:

- Be flexible and innovative in the provision proposed to ensure the best possible opportunity for potential applicants to participate in Springboard+, particularly in the context of

upskilling for those in employment. Providers should be mindful of updated public health advice in relation to the delivery of programmes and ensure that programmes are delivered in a flexible manner as appropriate.

- Be nationally or regionally focussed.
- Demonstrate clear evidence of engagement with enterprise/industry partners and Regional Skills Fora Managers in the development of the programme. For example, evidence of co-operation with industry on course design, guest lectures from industry, work placements etc. *Note that generic/pro forma letters of support from industry are not deemed sufficient evidence of engagement with industry.*
- Include plans for work placements or credit-bearing projects as appropriate to the participant.
- Demonstrate that there is an available supply of applicants.
- Include career guidance as part of the course delivery, where applicable.

In addition, Providers will be expected to supplement the information provided in this document on skills demand through direct engagement with local and regional employers, and with representative organisations such as IBEC, Chambers of Commerce, ISME; with enterprise development agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and the City and County Enterprise Boards.

3.2 Marking Scheme

Criteria	Marks available
Course description, modules, delivery and other relevant details. Digital skills, transversal skills, management and leadership skills and the workplace of the future should be addressed under this criterion	40
Course details relating to industry collaboration and support for the course proposal	30
Course details relating to supports for course participants	10
Cost and value for money	20
Total	100

3.3 Indicative* timetable 2021

Call for Proposals issues	Thursday 21st January 2021
Deadline for submission of proposals	Thursday 11th March 2021, <u>13.00 hrs</u>
Providers notified of approved courses	May 2021
Contracts agreed with HEA, Providers upload information for applicants to www.springboardcourses.ie	May 2021
Applications for Springboard+ 2021 open via www.springboardcourses.ie	May 2021

*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.

3.4 Submission of proposals

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 uploaded to the website on Wednesday 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 **Thursday 4th March 2021**.

- (i) Proposals must be submitted online via <http://skillsdirect.hea.ie/>
- (ii) The closing date for submission of proposals is **13.00hrs Thursday 11th March 2021**.
The online application system will not accept proposals submitted after this deadline.
- (iii) As outlined above any queries on the Call process for 2021 must be emailed to springboard@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.

3.5 Selection process and criteria

Since it was established, Springboard+ has had an Expert Panel who make recommendations to the Minister for Higher and Further Education, Research, Innovation and Science on proposals to be funded under the Call. This Expert Panel comprises national experts in the areas of enterprise, recruitment, biopharma/medical technology and information and communication technology.

Independent external evaluators will score the proposals in accordance with the criteria set out in Sections 2-5 of the online course proposal form and the associated marking scheme as highlighted above. An independent process auditor will oversee the assessment and selection process.

As part of the assessment procedure the external evaluators will have access to information on academic and employment outcomes from the Application Management System (AMS) on courses run in previous years through Springboard+. As programmes are evaluated each year based on the application material provided, there should not be an expectation that programmes funded in previous years will automatically receive funding again.

It is intended that Springboard+ will support a mix of courses at different NFQ Levels, of varying duration, and having regard to the educational attainment levels of the priority participant groups.

The assessment will follow a five-step process:

1. All proposals will be checked for eligibility and completeness as per the call terms and conditions, by the HEA executive. Proposals which do not fulfil the eligibility criteria and/or are incomplete and do not address all questions as set out in the online application portal will not progress. The HEA executive will assign all proposals to the external evaluators and share the outcomes of step 1.
2. The HEA executive will assign all proposals to the external evaluators and share the outcome of step 1. The external evaluators will conduct individual remote assessments on applications assigned to them in accordance with the published evaluation criteria. All proposals will be considered by at least two members of this group.
3. The external evaluators will provide its scored list of proposals. The external evaluators will convene and consider the final list of scored proposals taking into consideration the overall programmatic composition of projects by quality, type, size and duration, as well as geographical spread.
4. This list will be communicated to the Expert Panel. The Expert Panel will meet and review the list and make a final recommendation to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on courses to be funded. The panel's final recommendation on courses approved will also take into consideration the overall mix of courses by level, type and duration, as well as geographical spread and mode of delivery.
5. The final list of courses 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, The National Skills Council and the National Training Fund Advisory Group.

Subject to demand and take-up of individual course places, the HEA may agree to re-allocate unfilled places to other Springboard+ courses. Since the expansion of the programme to include those in employment, demand for course places has increased. Demand for places on Springboard+ 2020 was approximately 30% higher than in 2019. Whilst the budget for 2021 has increased, we anticipate significant demand for course places and it is likely that the HEA will not be in a position to re-allocate unfilled places to other Springboard+ courses, and Providers should not expect that additional places on courses will be funded.

It is planned that notification of approved courses will be sent to Providers at the end of May 2021. 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. Uploading of information by Providers on approved courses to the online system www.springboardcourses.ie will be an important part of this process.

3.5.1 Costs and fees

Providers are requested to submit details of all costs associated with the delivery of proposals in the format outlined in Section 5 of the online proposals system <http://skillsdirect.heai.ie>. Funding to successful Providers will be on the basis of the course fee by reference to the number of credits to be provided. As mentioned above, for participants who are in employment HEA will fund 90% of the course fee, with the Provider receiving the balance from the participant (or her/his employer). The marks allocated in Section 5 on the value for money of a course will be competitive and will be made with reference to average costs in previous years across the same skills areas and at the same NFQ Levels. Providers should ensure that the full cost of the course is including 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).

Appendix 1

Further Skills Guidance Documents

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs publications – www.skillsireland.ie

[Future Jobs Ireland 2019](#)

[Regional Labour Markets Bulletin 2016](#)

[Winning by Design 2017](#)

[Update on the Future Skill Needs of the Food and Drink Sector 2017](#)

[National Skills Bulletin 2020](#)

[Hospitality Skills Oversight Group Report 2018](#)

[Languages Connect](#)

[Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit](#)

[Vacancy Overview 2020](#)

[Future Skills Needs of the Biopharma Sector in Ireland, 2016](#)

[Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland, 2015-2020, 2015](#)

[Assessing the Demand for Big Data and Analytics Skills 2013-2020, 2014](#)

[Addressing Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills, 2013](#)

[Technology Skills 2022](#)

[Ireland for Finance 2025](#)

[SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Ireland](#)

[Autumn Skills Bulletin 2020: Profile of Part-Time Workers in Ireland, Quarter 1 2020](#)

[National Skills Bulletin 2020](#)

[Summer Skills Bulletin 2020](#)

[Building Future Skills: the Demand for Skills in Ireland's Built Environment Sector to 2030](#)

[Together for Design: Digital, Product and Strategic Design Skills of the Future](#)

APPENDIX 2 – Springboard+

ISCED-F 2013: List of codes

Broad field	Narrow field	Detailed field
00 Generic programmes and qualifications	000 Generic programmes and qualifications not further defined	0000 Generic programmes and qualifications not further defined
	001 Basic programmes and qualifications	0011 Basic programmes and qualifications
	002 Literacy and numeracy	0021 Literacy and numeracy
	003 Personal skills and development	0031 Personal skills and development
	009 Generic programmes and qualifications not elsewhere classified	0099 Generic programmes and qualifications not elsewhere classified
01 Education	011 Education	0110 Education not further defined 0111 Education science 0112 Training for pre-school teachers 0113 Teacher training without subject specialisation 0114 Teacher training with subject specialisation 0119 Education not elsewhere classified
	018 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving education	0188 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving education
02 Arts and humanities	020 Arts and humanities not further defined	0200 Arts and humanities not further defined
	021 Arts	0210 Arts not further defined 0211 Audio-visual techniques and media production 0212 Fashion, interior and industrial design 0213 Fine arts 0214 Handicrafts 0215 Music and performing arts 0219 Arts not elsewhere classified
	022 Humanities (except languages)	0220 Humanities (except languages) not further defined 0221 Religion and theology 0222 History and archaeology 0223 Philosophy and ethics 0229 Humanities (except languages) not elsewhere classified
	023 Languages	0230 Languages not further defined 0231 Language acquisition 0232 Literature and linguistics 0239 Languages not elsewhere classified
	028 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving arts and humanities	0288 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving arts and humanities
	029 Arts and humanities not elsewhere classified	0299 Arts and humanities not elsewhere classified

Broad field	Narrow field	Detailed field
03 Social sciences, journalism and information	030 Social sciences, journalism and information not further defined	0300 Social sciences, journalism and information not further defined
	031 Social and behavioural sciences	0310 Social and behavioural sciences not further defined 0311 Economics 0312 Political sciences and civics 0313 Psychology 0314 Sociology and cultural studies 0319 Social and behavioural sciences not elsewhere classified
	032 Journalism and information	0320 Journalism and information not further defined 0321 Journalism and reporting 0322 Library, information and archival studies 0329 Journalism and information not elsewhere classified
	038 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving social sciences, journalism and information	0388 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving social sciences, journalism and information
	039 Social sciences, journalism and information not elsewhere classified	0399 Social sciences, journalism and information not elsewhere classified
04 Business, administration and law	040 Business, administration and law not further defined	0400 Business, administration and law not further defined
	041 Business and administration	0410 Business and administration not further defined 0411 Accounting and taxation 0412 Finance, banking and insurance 0413 Management and administration 0414 Marketing and advertising 0415 Secretarial and office work 0416 Wholesale and retail sales 0417 Work skills 0419 Business and administration not elsewhere classified
	042 Law	0421 Law
	048 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving business, administration and law	0488 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving business, administration and law
	049 Business, administration and law not elsewhere classified	0499 Business, administration and law not elsewhere classified

Broad field	Narrow field	Detailed field
05 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	050 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics not further defined	0500 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics not further defined
	051 Biological and related sciences	0510 Biological and related sciences not further defined 0511 Biology 0512 Biochemistry 0519 Biological and related sciences not elsewhere classified
	052 Environment	0520 Environment not further defined 0521 Environmental sciences 0522 Natural environments and wildlife 0529 Environment not elsewhere classified
	053 Physical sciences	0530 Physical sciences not further defined 0531 Chemistry 0532 Earth sciences 0533 Physics 0539 Physical sciences not elsewhere classified
	054 Mathematics and statistics	0540 Mathematics and statistics not further defined 0541 Mathematics 0542 Statistics
	058 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	0588 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving natural sciences, mathematics and statistics
	059 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics not elsewhere classified	0599 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics not elsewhere classified
06 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	061 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	0610 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not further defined 0611 Computer use 0612 Database and network design and administration 0613 Software and applications development and analysis 0619 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not elsewhere classified
	068 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	0688 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Broad field	Narrow field	Detailed field
07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction	070 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not further defined	0700 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not further defined
	071 Engineering and engineering trades	0710 Engineering and engineering trades not further defined 0711 Chemical engineering and processes 0712 Environmental protection technology 0713 Electricity and energy 0714 Electronics and automation 0715 Mechanics and metal trades 0716 Motor vehicles, ships and aircraft 0719 Engineering and engineering trades not elsewhere classified
	072 Manufacturing and processing	0720 Manufacturing and processing not further defined 0721 Food processing 0722 Materials (glass, paper, plastic and wood) 0723 Textiles (clothes, footwear and leather) 0724 Mining and extraction 0729 Manufacturing and processing not elsewhere classified
	073 Architecture and construction	0730 Architecture and construction not further defined 0731 Architecture and town planning 0732 Building and civil engineering
	078 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving engineering, manufacturing and construction	0788 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving engineering, manufacturing and construction
	079 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not elsewhere classified	0799 Engineering, manufacturing and construction not elsewhere classified
08 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	080 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary not further defined	0800 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary not further defined
	081 Agriculture	0810 Agriculture not further defined 0811 Crop and livestock production 0812 Horticulture 0819 Agriculture not elsewhere classified
	082 Forestry	0821 Forestry
	083 Fisheries	0831 Fisheries
	084 Veterinary	0841 Veterinary
	088 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	0888 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary
	089 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary not elsewhere classified	0899 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary not elsewhere classified

Broad field	Narrow field	Detailed field
09 Health and welfare	090 Health and welfare not further defined	0900 Health and welfare not further defined
	091 Health	0910 Health not further defined 0911 Dental studies 0912 Medicine 0913 Nursing and midwifery 0914 Medical diagnostic and treatment technology 0915 Therapy and rehabilitation 0916 Pharmacy 0917 Traditional and complementary medicine and therapy 0919 Health not elsewhere classified
	092 Welfare	0920 Welfare not further defined 0921 Care of the elderly and of disabled adults 0922 Childcare and youth services 0923 Social work and counselling 0929 Welfare not elsewhere classified
	098 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving health and welfare	0988 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving health and welfare
	099 Health and welfare not elsewhere classified	0999 Health and welfare not elsewhere classified
10 Services	100 Services not further defined	1000 Services not further defined
	101 Personal services	1010 Personal services not further defined 1011 Domestic services 1012 Hair and beauty services 1013 Hotel, restaurants and catering 1014 Sports 1015 Travel, tourism and leisure 1019 Personal services not elsewhere classified
	102 Hygiene and occupational health services	1020 Hygiene and occupational health services not further defined 1021 Community sanitation 1022 Occupational health and safety 1029 Hygiene and occupational health services not elsewhere classified
	103 Security services	1030 Security services not further defined 1031 Military and defence 1032 Protection of persons and property 1039 Security services not elsewhere classified
	104 Transport services	1041 Transport services
	108 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving services	1088 Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving services
	109 Services not elsewhere classified	1099 Services not elsewhere classified
99 Field unknown	999 Field unknown	9999 Field unknown

Appendix 3

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Certification of Course Approval Springboard+ 2021

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: