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Students

The logo for the Office for Students, featuring a dark blue square with a yellow square in the top right corner containing the letters 'OfS' in white.

OfS

# Funding competition:

AI and data science postgraduate conversion  
course scholarship programme

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The Science Museum, London

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# Background to the funding competition

- [The National Artificial Intelligence Strategy](#), sets out how continuing to develop, attract and train the best people to build and use artificial intelligence (AI) is at the core of maintaining the UK's position among the global AI superpowers.
- In February 2022, the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport announced funding to support the delivery of up to 2,000 scholarships, to help to increase the diversity of students studying AI and data science postgraduate conversion courses.
- This funding builds on the success of the existing £13.5 million investment into the current AI and data science postgraduate conversion course programme delivered by the OfS.
- The [competition guidance and template](#) were published on 22 September 2022.

# Programme aims

The aims of this competition are to:

- increase the diversity of people entering the UK AI and data science workforce
- increase industry support to diversify the UK AI and data science workforce
- increase the supply of digitally skilled workers by converting graduates who did not study a STEM undergraduate degree.

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# Funding available



- Up to £17 million between April 2023 and March 2025
- Funding is available to deliver scholarships worth £10,000 each to students from underrepresented backgrounds
- Funding will be confirmed on an annual basis
- We will accept bids for a minimum of £70,000 there is no maximum amount (for 2023-24)

# Competition timeline

Date	Activity
1700 on 11 January 2023	Deadline for bids
January 2023	Assessment process
February 2023	Panel meeting to review and recommend bids for funding
March 2023	Decisions communicated to providers and public announcements made
April 2023	Funding for financial year 2023-24 commences
March 2024	Confirmation of funding allocations for financial year 2024-25
April 2024	Funding for financial year 2024-25 commences
March 2025	Funding ends

# Eligibility criteria

- To be eligible to bid, a provider must:
  - Be registered, or have applied to register, with the OfS in the Approved (fee cap) category
  - Be able to offer conversion courses in AI and data science for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years.
- Providers may only submit and lead one bid, but providers may be involved in further bids as a partner.

# Bidding process

- All bids must be submitted using the OfS template (available on our [webpages](#))
- Bids should clearly demonstrate there is a need for the proposal and that the provider has realistic plans in place to address this need. All bids must be underpinned by evidence.
- Bids will need to evidence support from industry and other partners
- Deadline for submissions is 1700 on 11 January 2023
- Bids should be submitted by email to [Pgconversion@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:Pgconversion@officeforstudents.org.uk)

# Bidding process

- Bids will be assessed internally by OfS officers in the first instance (according to the scoring process outlined in paragraph 110 of the guidance)
- Bids will be reviewed by an expert panel who will consider which bids should be recommended for funding
- We aim to fund a portfolio of projects that includes regional spread of providers, diversity of providers and diversity of courses
- Final decisions will be made by the Director for Fair Access and Participation and announced in March 2023



# Bid criteria

- Bids should address all criteria outlined in the funding competition guidance
- Bids will be assessed against the following criteria:
  - **Criterion 1: The credibility of project proposals to achieve the programme aims:**
    - Category a. Increasing the diversity of people entering the UK AI and data science workforce
    - Category b. Increasing industry support to diversify the UK AI and data science workforce
    - Category c. Increasing the supply of digitally skilled workers by converting non-STEM graduates
  - **Criterion 2: Value for money and project and risk management**

# Criterion 1: Category A - Increase the diversity of people entering the UK AI and data science workforce

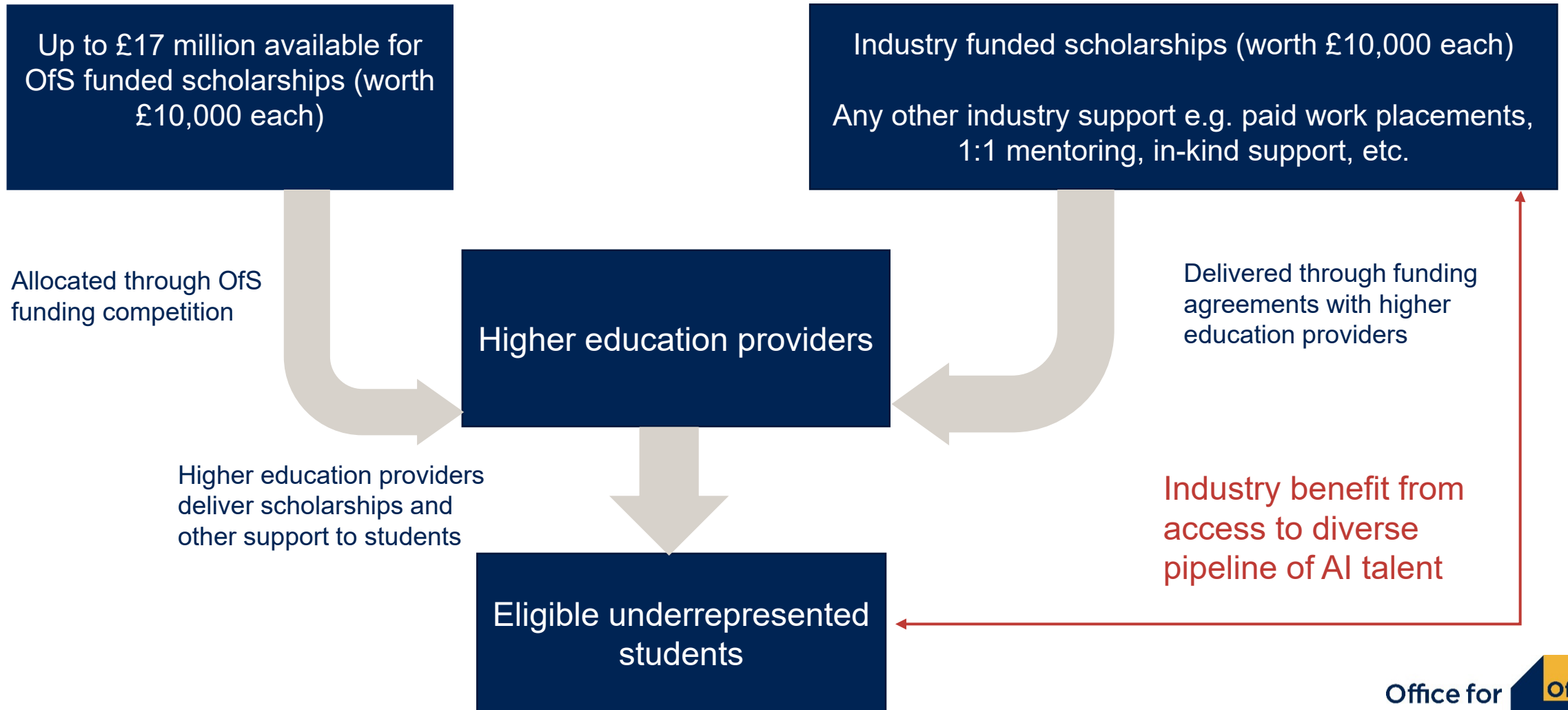
- OfS scholarship funding must be used to deliver scholarships to eligible students from underrepresented groups, with priority being given to the first four groups.
  - To be eligible for scholarship funding students must meet the nationality or residency status criteria to qualify for the postgraduate masters' loan.
- Eligible students:
    - **women**
    - **black students**
    - **students registered disabled**
    - **students from low socioeconomic background**
    - students who have been in care
    - estranged students
    - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students
    - refugees
    - children from military families, veterans and partners of military personnel

# Criterion 1: Category B - Increasing industry support to diversify the UK AI and data science workforce

- As part of their bids, providers should seek to work with businesses and industry partners to agree funding commitments to deliver industry co-funded scholarships, worth £10,000 each
- Bids that can evidence that industry funding for scholarships has been secured will score more highly
- Bids may also include:
  - proposals to deliver other industry support alongside OfS funded scholarships such as paid work placements, 1:1 mentoring, in-kind support etc.
  - Proposals on how providers plan to secure industry co-investment over the course of the programme

# Industry co-investment model

2,000 scholarships



# Support for higher education providers



- The OfS has commissioned Group GTI to act as the programme's employer engagement partner to:
  - Support higher education providers to develop strong relationships with employers and industry
  - Support the development of an 'AI skills community'
  - Recommend and encourage co-investment opportunities to employers to facilitate industry support
  - Provide support and advice on template funding models and agreements
  - Deliver networking events and other opportunities to support the development of relationships between employers, providers and students

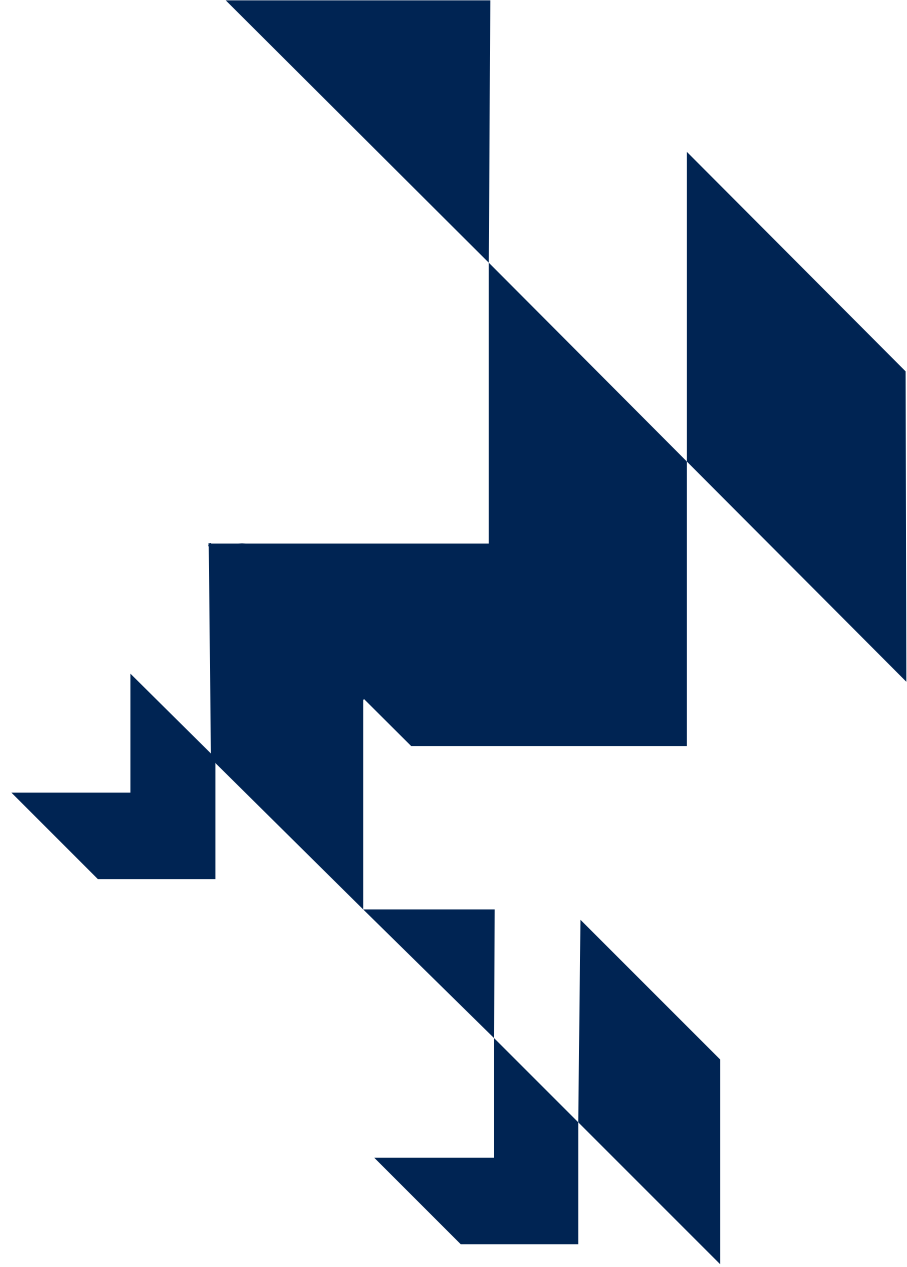
# Criterion 1: Category C - Increase the supply of digitally skilled workers by converting graduates who did not study a STEM undergraduate degree

- Conversion courses enable graduates from a wide range of disciplines to achieve a postgraduate degree and begin working in AI and data science occupations.
- The graduates will be from a range of prior educational backgrounds including:
  - cognate: students who have studied the same broad subject area as conversion course (e.g. computer science, AI, data science)
  - ‘core-STEM’: science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects such as physics, engineering, mathematics, statistics, IT
  - ‘far-STEM’: other STEM subjects (e.g. biology, geology, psychology, medicine)
  - ‘non-STEM’: any other subject (including economics, business, arts etc.)

# Criterion 2: Value for money and project and risk management

- Bids should set out clearly how:
  - the project will provide value for money
  - how the project and any associated risks will be well managed
  - how any OfS funding contributes to the overall financing of a project
  - how proportionate this contribution is to the benefits that the project will bring to students, graduates, employers and others.
- Bids must provide evidence that the provider will be able to manage public funding effectively throughout the project.

# **Top tips for submitting a bid**





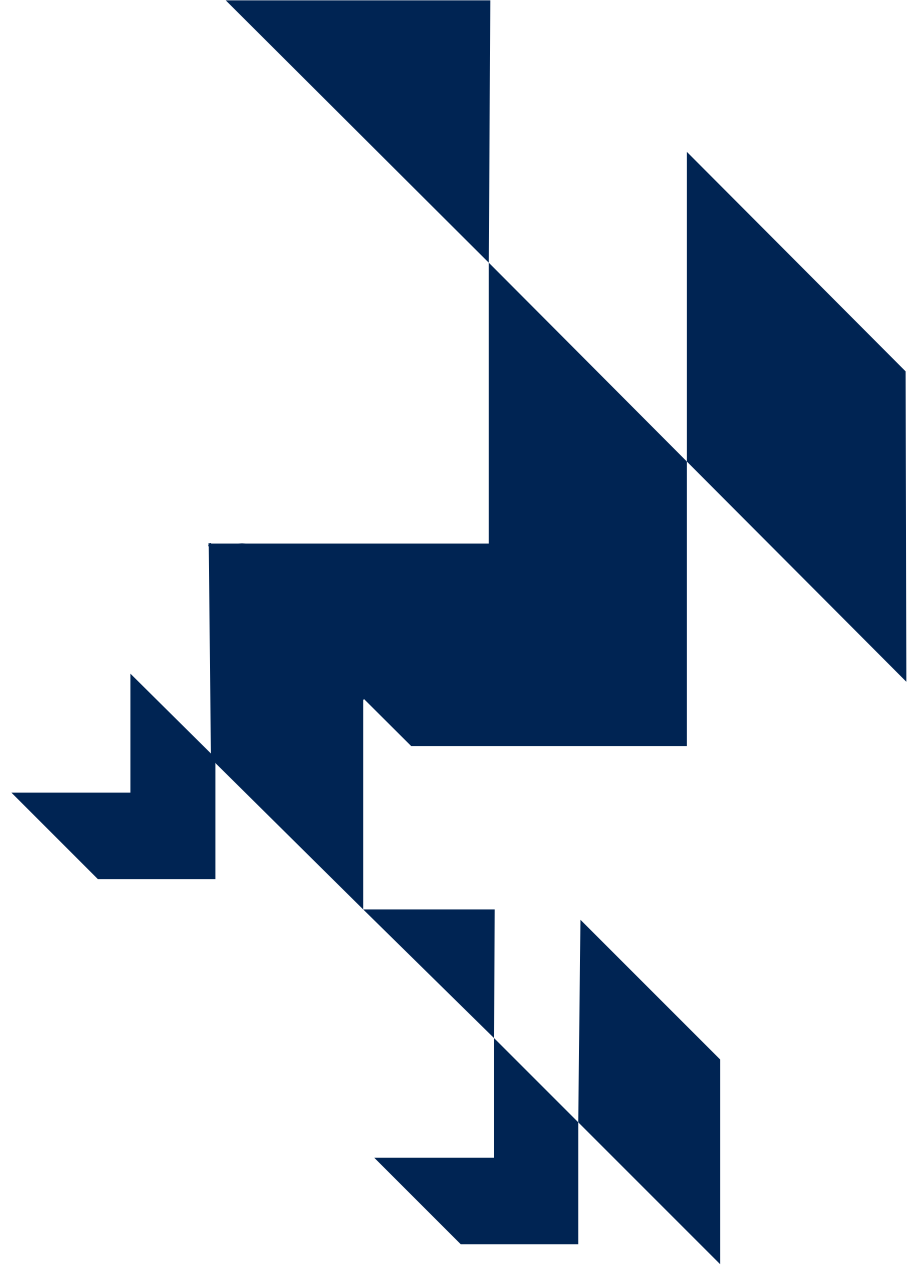
# Key questions to consider

- Does the proposal address all of the criteria outlined in the guidance?
- Is the proposal underpinned by evidence?
- Is the proposal of the most effective scale and impact? Is it credible?
- How does it deliver the aims of the programme?
- How will it involve and benefit eligible students?
- How will it involve and benefit employers?

# Key questions to consider

- Is the financial package clear?
- How does the proposal deliver value for money?
- How committed are the partners?
- What is the real status of other sources of investment?
  - If not confirmed, when will they be confirmed?
- Are any of the key activities sustainable beyond the funding period?
- Of what risks do we need to be aware?
- Who exactly is responsible for successful delivery?
- Who is managing the risks, the money?

# Frequently asked questions



# Q. Can we use the funding to develop new conversion courses in AI and data science?

A. No, the available funding is for delivery of scholarships only

- Funding is NOT available for:
  - the cost of curriculum development
  - internal validation
  - advertising and promotion of the courses, including outreach and recruitment activity
  - work placement or internship salaries
  - capital expenditure

# Q. Can we use our own funding to top up OfS funding requested for scholarships?

A. No, OfS funding can only be used to deliver full scholarships worth £10,000 to students.

- All requests for OfS funding must be in multiples of £10,000,
- Providers may use their own funding to top up any funding secured by industry in order to deliver a full £10,000 scholarship
- We will consider any proposals to use other sources of funding as part of our assessment but proposals where the majority of other investment is secured from industry are likely to score more highly

## **Q. Are there targets for providers on how many industry funded scholarships they should be aiming to deliver?**

A. There are no set targets or expectations for the amount of industry funded scholarships to be delivered at a provider level.

The programme as a whole has a target to deliver 2,000 scholarships across the duration of the programme.

# **Q. We don't anticipate being able to secure any funding from industry. Can we still submit a bid?**

A. Yes, we aim to fund a portfolio of projects across all regions, types of courses and providers.

Bids are likely to score more highly if they have secured funding from industry to deliver scholarships but we will also consider other proposals to increase industry support such as in-kind contributions, paid work placements, etc.

# Q&A

Any questions?

Visit [our webpages](#) for more information  
or email any questions to  
[Pgconversion@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:Pgconversion@officeforstudents.org.uk)





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# Thank you for listening

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