

Office for  
Students



# **Strategic interventions in health education disciplines 2019 challenge fund**

**Innovations in recruitment to and  
delivery of healthcare courses**

**Reference** OfS 2018.51

**Enquiries to** [healthcarepolicy@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:healthcarepolicy@officeforstudents.org.uk)

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## Summary

1. The Office for Students (OfS) is offering new funding for projects which will develop innovative approaches to recruitment to, or delivery of, pre-registration higher education courses in nursing, midwifery and allied health subjects. Total funding of up to £400,000 is available and all universities and colleges offering these courses are eligible to apply.

## Background

2. The OfS funds a programme of strategic interventions in health education disciplines (SIHED). Government reforms to the funding of nursing, midwifery and allied health courses took effect from September 2017, and the SIHED programme is part of a package of support for small, specialist health disciplines in these areas. The budget is £1 million per year for three years (from 2018 to 2020). More information on the SIHED programme is available from the OfS's website at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/funding-for-providers/health-education-funding/strategic-interventions-in-health-education-disciplines/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/funding-for-providers/health-education-funding/strategic-interventions-in-health-education-disciplines/).
3. As part of the SIHED programme, in 2018 a SIHED challenge fund was launched to encourage the development of new approaches to the delivery of, or recruitment to, healthcare courses. This first funding round was restricted to podiatry and therapeutic radiography, as these disciplines have been identified as vulnerable – both because they are small and specialist and because they have reduced numbers of applicants. The call resulted in funding for a range of innovative projects. Details can be found at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/funding-for-providers/health-education-funding/challenge-fund-funded-projects/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/funding-for-providers/health-education-funding/challenge-fund-funded-projects/).

## 2019 challenge fund

4. The OfS is now launching a second SIHED challenge fund. Up to £400,000 is available in 2019 to support innovative projects relating to healthcare courses. This call is open to all existing providers of pre-registration higher education in nursing, midwifery and allied health. New providers may be considered if their projects meet the criteria.
5. The criteria have been designed in collaboration with the organisations represented on the SIHED programme board, including Health Education England and the Council of Deans of Health. The Allied Health Professions Federation has also been consulted.
6. Approved (fee cap) providers on the OfS register as at 24 April 2019 can bid for a maximum of £50,000 as individual institutions, or as lead institutions leading a collaborative project. It is expected that providers, and where applicable their partners, will contribute resources, funding or both to the project they are bidding for, and the bids should clarify the amount and shape of this contribution.
7. Bidders are required to outline how they aim to embed the innovation tested using this funding, to ensure benefits continue after the funding ceases. Projects funded through this initiative will be expected to evaluate their outcomes and share lessons learned and good practice among and potentially beyond other providers of their discipline. This will entail supporting the SIHED programme management with monitoring and evaluation, including supplying data (e.g. student application data) if required.

## Assessment

8. The OfS will carry out initial assessment of the bids. Decisions will be made by a panel chaired by Prof Alistair Fitt, Chair of the SIHED programme board, and including representation of the Council of Deans of Health, Health Education England, the College of Podiatry and the Society and College of Radiographers. Allocation of funding will be based on the quality of bids only. The panel will not be required to allocate equal amounts of funding between disciplines, or between different criteria. It is expected that decisions will be made in May 2019 and funding will be released from June. Projects are expected to conclude and submit their final evaluation by December 2020.

## Bid criteria

9. The theme of this call is innovative approaches to recruitment to, or delivery of, nursing, midwifery and allied health courses.
10. Bids should address **at least two** of the following criteria:
  - a. The project is led by a provider, or prospective provider, of higher education in therapeutic radiography, podiatry, orthoptics or prosthetics and orthotics, and one of those disciplines is central to the bid.
  - b. The project proposes an interdisciplinary approach to recruitment or delivery involving at least one other healthcare discipline, either at the same provider, or as part of a collaboration with another provider.
  - c. The project proposes new ways to attract and retain mature students or students from other underrepresented groups, including men. Projects seeking to meet this criterion will need to demonstrate that they are proposing a new approach; it will not be sufficient to show that current courses attract a high proportion of mature students.
  - d. The project proposes to develop novel delivery approaches – for example distance or blended learning. Projects seeking to meet this criteria will need to propose objectives that can be met within the timescale of the funding. Apprenticeship development is not within the scope of this call.
11. In addition, providers should:
  - a. Explain how innovations piloted through the challenge fund could be embedded in the institution's work beyond the period of funding.
  - b. Engage with the SIHED programme and commit to sharing lessons learned and good practice resulting from initiatives enabled by the challenge fund.
  - c. Commit to providing statistics and contextual information to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the SIHED programme up to 2020-21.

## Next steps

12. On 8 February 2019 the OfS will run a workshop for potential bidders. This will take place at Finlaison House, 15-17 Furnival St, London EC4A 1AB. Please register interest at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sihed-challenge-fund-workshop-tickets-53439441809> by **Friday 11 January**.
13. Bidders should complete Annex A, the business case template, available to download alongside this document at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/strategic-interventions-in-health-education-disciplines-2019-challenge-fund-innovations-in-recruitment-to-and-delivery-of-healthcare-disciplines/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/strategic-interventions-in-health-education-disciplines-2019-challenge-fund-innovations-in-recruitment-to-and-delivery-of-healthcare-disciplines/), and submit it by **noon on Thursday 25 April 2019** to [healthcarepolicy@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:healthcarepolicy@officeforstudents.org.uk).



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