

# Defence-related skills funding competition

## Invitation to bid

**Bids to be submitted by 20 March 2026**

**Reference:** OfS 2026.05

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

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# Summary

1. This document sets out the arrangements for the distribution by the Office for Students (OfS) of £80 million funding by competition. The purpose of this scheme is to increase the supply of appropriately qualified graduates in the subject areas of computing and engineering, to deliver defence industry relevant skills and specialisms. This funding is being provided by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to support the government's Defence Industrial Strategy.<sup>1</sup> The OfS is working with the MoD and the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver this scheme.
2. The funding will be allocated through a single bidding exercise, which will run over the spring of 2026, comprising two strands:
  - a. £50 million programme funding, available across academic years 2026-27 to 2030-31.<sup>2</sup>
  - b. £30 million capital funding, to be spent across financial years (1 April to 31 March) 2026-27 to 2028-29.
3. The programme funding is being provided with the aim of securing approximately 2,400 total extra places (or their full-time equivalents (FTE)) over three cohorts of undergraduate students at Levels 4 to 6, starting their studies in academic years 2026-27 to 2028-29. Eligible, OfS-registered higher education providers that are successful with their bids will be able to receive £7,000 for each additional computing or engineering FTE they will deliver. This amount of funding has been calculated by the government, to help bridge the gap between the tuition fee and the average annual cost per student cost of running these higher-cost undergraduate courses. We will need to be satisfied that the provision we support clearly fits within the subject areas of computing and engineering.
4. The capital funding will help to increase capacity, for example by supporting additional equipment and facilities needed by providers, as necessary.
5. Providers may submit a bid requesting solely programme funding, solely capital funding, or a combination of both programme and capital funding. We will then assess and score the bids accordingly. Bidders will not be disadvantaged if they only choose to seek one of the funding streams. We will seek to fund the highest quality bids with the amounts of funding available to us for this scheme. Funding will be awarded based upon how strongly the information provided in the bids submitted meets the assessment criteria.
6. In order to manage public funding securely and effectively, these grants will be proactively monitored by the OfS and funds will be reclaimed if, for example, providers are unable to meet the student number targets as set out in their bids.
7. We are now inviting bids from providers currently registered with the OfS in the Approved (fee cap) category. This reflects the scope of our funding powers under section 39 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). The places are open to full-time and part-time Home-fee, OfS fundable undergraduate students. This publication sets out our requirements for submitting a bid and explains how we will make decisions about which projects will receive

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<sup>1</sup> See Gov.UK, '[Defence Industrial Strategy - Statement of Intent](#)'.

<sup>2</sup> All years given are academic years unless otherwise specified.

funding and how we intend to monitor progress and delivery. The activities delivered under this scheme should be part of a balanced portfolio for providers and their staff and students.

## Action required and timeframe

8. We invite eligible providers that wish to submit a bid for funding to download and complete a copy of the bidding template, available alongside this guidance on our website. We will accept one bid per provider. The deadline for bids is **Friday 20 March 2026**. The completed template should be submitted via the defence funding bids area of the OfS portal, following the guidance in this document and in the bidding template.<sup>3</sup> This area of the portal will open for submissions by 6 March 2026. We appreciate that this is a short timescale: for places to be delivered from 2026-27, providers will need to know the outcomes of this competition by mid-May 2026.
9. Further details on how to upload the bidding templates are provided in Annex C. We strongly recommend that you ensure you can access the portal well in advance of the bid deadline. If you have difficulties accessing the portal then please contact us at [portal@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:portal@officeforstudents.org.uk).
10. We expect to confirm the outcomes of the bidding competition to applicants in May 2026. A public announcement of the successful applicants will follow, on a date to be determined in conjunction with the MoD and DfE. We will then aim to publish, during summer 2026, an overview of the outcomes. We will not routinely provide detailed individualised feedback on unsuccessful bids, but our publication will provide information on what did and did not make for a successful proposal.
11. The indicative timeframe for the process is set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Indicative timeline for process**

Action	Date
Deadline for receipt of bids	20 March 2026
Acknowledgement of bids	The OfS will confirm receipt of bids by 1700 on 23 March 2026. If you have not received a confirmation by this time, please contact us at <a href="mailto:defence@officeforstudents.org.uk"><u>defence@officeforstudents.org.uk</u></a> .
Assessment process and decision making	March to May 2026
Outcomes confirmed to bidders	May 2026
Successful projects and allocations announced publicly	Late May or early June 2026
Monitoring of projects	Monitoring should commence from autumn 2026. We propose that projects will be monitored each spring and autumn until the end of the scheme.

<sup>3</sup> See Office for Students portal [Login](#).

Action	Date
End of capital funding period	31 March 2029
Final monitoring of capital funding	April 2029
End of programme funding period	31 July 2031
Final monitoring of programme funding	End of 2031

# Introduction

## Background

12. On 4 February 2026, the DfE and MoD issued a guidance letter<sup>4</sup> requesting that the OfS distribute up to £80 million to providers through a competitive bidding process with two strands: £50 million for programme delivery and £30 million for capital investment, with successful bids supporting the objective of increasing the supply of appropriately qualified graduates in subject areas that will deliver defence industry relevant skills and specialisms.

## Strategic aims

13. The objectives of this additional Strategic Priorities Grant funding are, as set by the MoD and DfE, to:
  - a. Support the ambition set out in the Defence Industrial Strategy to develop a highly skilled workforce that enables the UK's defence industry to meet the objectives of the Strategic Defence Review.
  - b. Support the ambition set out in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper for two-thirds of young people to participate in study at Level 4 or higher.
  - c. Expand provision in computing and engineering courses, supporting the MoD's strategic workforce priorities by boosting the supply of graduates for defence-related roles.
  - d. Strengthen partnerships between higher education providers and defence employers to improve graduate progression into defence careers, aligned with Local Skills Improvement Plans.
  - e. Support defence-related research and qualification for careers as part of a balanced portfolio.
14. We will support these objectives by using a single bidding exercise to:
  - a. Allocate £50 million of programme funding to providers that can demonstrate that they are able to enrol additional students in computing, engineering, and other subjects determined by the government as relevant to the skills needs of the defence sector. The current focus is on computing and engineering and not other courses. This funding equates to £7,000 per additional student place at Levels 4 to 6.
  - b. Allocate £30 million of capital funding to successful providers that can demonstrate that they need and will deliver additional facilities that align with the needs of local employers and regional economies, as identified in Local Skills Improvement Plans.
15. We consider that these objectives will promote choice and opportunities for students across the country, enabling providers to support priority subject areas that require specialist teaching facilities and help support the government's priorities by meeting the skills needs of both

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<sup>4</sup> Available at [Guidance from government - Office for Students](#).

students and employers. Providers will need to undertake these activities in ways that are compliant with their statutory free speech duties under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

16. We have had regard to our other general duties in section 2 of HERA, in particular the need to promote value for money in the provision of higher education by English higher education providers and to use the OfS's resources in an efficient, effective and economic way. We have also had regard to our free speech general duties. These are: the need to promote the importance of freedom of speech within the law in the provision of higher education by English higher education providers, and the need to protect the academic freedom of academic staff at English higher education providers.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2: Summary of funding**

	<b>Programme funding</b>	<b>Capital funding</b>
Total funding available	£50 million	£30 million
Minimum funding request	–	£250,000
Maximum funding request	–	£2 million
Funding period ends	31 July 2031	31 March 2029

## Assessment criteria

17. The OfS will assess each bid against eight criteria. While Criteria 2 to 5 will be used to assess both programme and capital funding requests, Criterion 1 and Criterion 6 are split into two sub-criteria, addressing programme funding and capital funding respectively. Providers must respond to all criteria that relate to their bid.
18. Bids for programme funding only are not required to respond to Criteria 1C and 6C. Bids for capital funding only are not required to respond to Criteria 1P and 6P. Bids for both programme and capital funding must address all criteria.
19. The eight criteria are:

**Criterion 1P:** How bids demonstrate that they will achieve an increase in the number of students in Level 4 to 6 courses in computing and engineering within the funding period to July 2031.

**Criterion 1C:** How bids demonstrate, through their capital spending, that they will achieve an increase in the number of students in Level 4 to 6 courses in computing and engineering within the funding period to March 2029.

**Criterion 2:** How the courses in which providers will expand capacity are relevant to careers in defence or associated industries, and aligned with Local Skills Improvement Plans.

**Criterion 3:** How providers are currently engaging or plan to engage with the defence industry through their higher education teaching, research and other activities. Providers must also

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<sup>5</sup> See Gov.UK, '[Higher Education and Research Act 2017 Section 2 \(enacted\)](#)'.

show how, in carrying out these activities, they are safeguarding their own institutional autonomy and taking steps to secure the free speech and academic freedom of staff, students, members and visiting speakers, as required by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

**Criterion 4:** How providers' approaches to defence-related higher education teaching or research align with the strategic objectives of the Defence Universities Alliance (DUA), and how they are currently supporting (or what will be in place to support) the following:

- careers as part of a balanced portfolio;
- defence and security teaching and research; and
- collaboration with strategic partners and other relevant organisations.

Wherever relevant, this will also include how the provider is (as required by the DUA Charter) taking robust and proactive steps to detect, and robustly resist, any foreign interference that attempts to subvert or negatively influence their institutional autonomy or the freedom of speech or academic freedom of their staff, students, members or visiting speakers.

**Criterion 5:** How higher education providers are collaborating with other providers of defence-related training and skills and any future plans to collaborate with defence technical excellence colleges.

**Criterion 6P:** Whether the project and associated risks will be well managed, ensuring effective governance and oversight, and how the project's programme spending will provide excellent value for money during the funding period to July 2031.

**Criterion 6C:** Whether the project and associated risks will be well managed, ensuring effective governance and oversight, and how the project's capital spending will provide excellent value for money during the funding period to March 2029.

20. As set out to the OfS in the government's guidance letter for this scheme, as a binding term and condition of funding, the OfS must take into account advice from the MoD to protect against risks to national security. This advice covers matters where the MoD has or develops significant concerns, based on their knowledge of the selected provider's research collaborations, funding avenues or other relationships. On the basis of this advice, the OfS will reject, suspend or rescind the award of funding where appropriate.

# Funding

## Programme funding

21. £50 million of programme funding is available to fund approximately 2,400 additional undergraduate student places at Levels 4 to 6 in computing and engineering subjects across the academic years 2026-27 to 2028-29. Providers will be paid £7,000 for each additional student FTE they are able to recruit. Bids must explain how this funding will be used for students and the subjects they intend to offer, and the likely demand from students and external partners.
22. Funding will be awarded for intake places per annum across the three academic years, and is based on three cohorts of undergraduate students taking three academic years to complete their studies. Programme funding will be distributed across a five-year period, until 2030-31 (the final year of a three-year, full-time, undergraduate course beginning in 2028-29). Bidders must be clear about the cohort to which their requested student numbers will apply, particularly if they are bidding for a cohort to start in a specific year. We anticipate a distribution of total places as follows:
  - 794 places for the 2026-27 intake (794 total places)
  - 794 places for the 2027-28 intake (1,588 total places)
  - 794 places for the 2028-29 intake (2,382 total places)
  - For 2029-30, 1,588 total places will be funded
  - For 2030-31, 794 total places will be funded.
23. Programme funding allocations for 2026-27 will be confirmed to the successful bidders when the outcomes of the competition are decided in May 2026. For the academic years from 2027-28 onwards, allocations for successful providers will be confirmed on an annual basis, and will be based on progress made against their targets, which will be reviewed as part of ongoing monitoring and reporting processes. Providers will not though need to bid again. We intend to adopt a system where funding for student places can be redistributed across the projects – so those that are doing better than expected with their student recruitment can receive funding redistributed from those that are doing less well with their recruitment than planned. This will enable us to maximise the funds on offer to support as many students as possible, and ensure demand and growth are met accordingly.
24. Bidders will be asked to provide precise information in their proposals regarding:
  - the subjects in computing and engineering in which they will be able to deliver additional student places with the funding available
  - the current number of students enrolled on these courses (their 2025-26 intake numbers as the baseline)
  - the projected additional student numbers that they will be able to deliver as part of this programme.

It is imperative that this information is as clear and accurate as possible, as it will be used to calculate initial programme allocations for the successful bidders. Current student intake numbers will also be checked against our student data records to inform the baseline for subsequent growth. The OfS reserves the right to reduce the funding awarded if actual baseline numbers differ from those set out within bids.

25. The places should be available to Home-fee, OfS fundable undergraduate students. This does not include international students. Providers can use funding for part-time students. Funding awarded for part-time students will be allocated on a pro rata basis across the funding period. As funds cannot be distributed beyond 2030-31, bidders will not be able to receive funding for students whose studies continue beyond this point. Providers should therefore consider carefully whether they wish to include in their bid students whose studies might continue beyond this point and, if so, be certain that they can resource any additional costs appropriately.
26. Programme funding should be used for costs associated with teaching and academic support for the students. It must not be used for capital expenditure, or for the essential wider support services that providers should already be making available for their students. Providers must already have the resources and strategic approaches in place to meet their legal obligations for their students.
27. Programme funding is only available for computing and engineering places; no other subjects are fundable at the current time. The government may, over the course of the funding programme, advise us of other subject areas or courses which have become national priorities. If this is the case, we will advise the funded projects in the first instance.

## Capital funding

28. We will distribute up to £30 million capital funding to providers over the three financial years (1 April to 31 March) 2026-27 to 2028-29, to support growth in student numbers. Capital funding can be used to support eligible spending at any point in a relevant financial year. OfS capital funding must be used for projects that focus on higher education teaching in computing and engineering subjects. We recognise, however, that it may be neither feasible nor desirable to create ring-fenced boundaries between higher and further education, or teaching and research facilities. For example, equipment purchased using OfS capital funds may be used by both higher and further education or postgraduate students, or for both teaching and research purposes.
29. There is up to £10 million available in each of the three financial years and we will need to distribute this funding to projects accordingly. Any funding which is not spent at the end of each financial year will likely need to be reclaimed by the OfS.
30. Bids must have a strong and clear focus on the priority areas for investment set out in this guidance. With this in mind we are interested to support:
  - a. New capital investments that will deliver additional capacity and benefits for students, as well as providing excellent value for money.
  - b. Refurbishment of, expansion of or adaptations to existing teaching facilities, to improve infrastructure and thus deliver growth in student numbers.

- c. Critical investment to support the long-term viability and sustainability of a provider's facilities, where they cannot be resourced by other means and are vital in order to deliver additional growth in student numbers.
- d. Upgrading or purchase of specialist equipment.

## **Capital funding thresholds**

- 31. We have set a minimum threshold for capital funding through the bidding competition of £250,000, to ensure that funding can support significant capital developments.
- 32. We are also applying a maximum cap of £2 million. In setting the cap at this level, we want to try to support a range of investments and provide significant funding for any relevant larger projects. However, if we are oversubscribed for the available funding, we may adjust these thresholds, as we have done in our recent capital funding schemes.

## **Considerations for submission of a bid**

- 33. We will prioritise the bids that we consider overall best meet the assessment criteria for this scheme. If you consider that your provider may have a less compelling case against the specific criteria and objectives for this scheme, or may struggle to deliver growth in the relevant subjects over the funding period, then we would ask you to consider the opportunity cost involved in submitting a bid on this occasion. Bids that do not provide specific examples or evidence of activities or engagement with the defence industry, or other providers of defence-related training and skills, or that are unable as necessary to point to steps that are relevant to compliance with their free speech duties, are unlikely to score well against the relevant criteria. This is a competitive process and bids will be judged against the information they provide against the assessment criteria and in relation to the quality of the other proposals we receive.
- 34. As this is a multi-year programme, if you consider that you will want to deliver relevant activity at any point over the funding period then you should submit a bid to us now, as it is very unlikely that we will be able to reopen the process in later years.
- 35. Where providers are bidding for both programme and capital funding, they should ensure that the overall proposition is coherent and clear to us and that both strands of activity clearly support each other. Where bidders are only seeking one strand of the funding, their proposals must be clear about how they will achieve growth in student numbers and deliver the specific provision. This will be particularly necessary for any bids seeking capital funding only.
- 36. It is imperative that bids are accurate and the project activities and capital works are viable and can be delivered as set out in proposals. Bids should demonstrate that:
  - the additional numbers could not be achieved without these funds
  - the provider has realistic delivery plans in place across the funding period
  - the provider is ready for the funding sought.
- 37. For Criterion 4, relating to the new Defence Universities Alliance (DUA), the MoD is running the process for and making decisions on membership of the DUA. The MoD has advised that

any provider that has approval for university title and offers defence-focused research, teaches defence-related courses, or can promote undergraduate or postgraduate career pathways into the defence sector is eligible to apply for DUA membership and is invited to write a letter of intent. This OfS funding competition is only available to eligible higher education providers in England. More details on eligibility to join the DUA and the process to submit a letter of intent are available from the MoD and should be requested via email to: [spodise-growthandplaceteam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:spodise-growthandplaceteam@mod.gov.uk).

38. As part of our assessment and decision-making process, the OfS will liaise with the MoD to confirm which providers have submitted letters of intent. While the OfS is running the bidding competition and administering the funding allocations, DUA membership is being led separately by the MoD. Therefore, all questions about the DUA, eligibility and timetable should be directed to the MoD using the email address in paragraph 37, and not to the OfS.
39. If your provider is not eligible to submit a letter of intent for the DUA, the scoring will be adjusted accordingly in the assessment process. We recognise that there are likely to be strong and compelling bids from providers that are not currently eligible to join the DUA, but whose activities are aligned to the strategic aims of the DUA.
40. If your provider is eligible to submit a letter of intent for the DUA but chooses not to do so, then this will be reflected in the assessment of the bid. However, it is not essential to submit a letter of intent to join the DUA to be awarded funding; the assessment process will take into account the full range of criteria.
41. As set out to the OfS in the government's guidance letter for this scheme, as a binding term and condition of funding, in order to protect against risks to national security, the OfS must 'take into account advice from the MoD on matters where the MoD holds or develops significant concerns, based on their knowledge of the selected higher education institution's research collaborations, funding avenues or other relationships, enabling the OfS to reject, suspend or rescind the award of this funding where appropriate.'
42. Our expectation is that, as per the guidance letter, the provision to be delivered should be within computing and engineering and not in other subjects. Unless we are advised by government, providers should not seek to use this funding to deliver courses outside of these subjects. Should national priorities change, we would contact successful projects in the first instance to offer them greater flexibility to fund a wider range of subjects if they wish and are able to.
43. A provider must ensure its bid reflects its own strategic priorities and expertise, and has the support of its senior management and governing body. In previous competitions we have received some proposals from individual members of staff, which lacked the clear strategic support required to provide confidence that they would be viable and successful.
44. Each eligible provider may submit only one bid. We will not consider multiple bids from a provider, or bids received after the application deadline of 20 March 2026.
45. We will not score individual elements or strands within a bid – all proposals will be scored against the criteria. Providers should consider carefully whether the inclusion of particular activities or strands within a multi-layered bid will enhance or undermine the overall strength of their proposal.

46. We will consider carefully any proposals that seek funding linked to projects and activities we have supported in previous years, and whether there is sufficient additionality on offer for us to provide new investment through this scheme.
47. Our decisions on which proposals to fund are final and, because of the timeframe for this competition and the starting point for delivery in the forthcoming academic year 2026-27, we will not be able to accept representations against the outcomes.
48. We will aim to allocate the funding available to us in full, but if we are unable to do so or if there is underspending as the funded projects develop, then we may contact other bidders as appropriate during the lifetime of the scheme, to see whether they can deliver any activity as was set out in their proposals. We may also explore these types of engagement if the provision to be offered is widened by government.

# Approach to scoring and prioritisation of funding

49. We will score each criterion on a scale of 0 to 4 according to the scale set out in Table 3.

**Table 3: Scoring scale**

Score		Description
4	Excellent	Very clear, well reasoned and evidenced explanation of how the bid meets the criterion. No material weaknesses in explanations or in the evidence referred to or provided.
3	Very good	Clear, well reasoned and evidenced explanation of how the bid meets the criterion. Some gaps in explanations or the evidence referred to or provided.
2	Satisfactory	Some basic explanations and evidence provided for how the bid meets the criterion. Lower confidence that bid can be delivered. Substantial gaps in evidence referred to or provided.
1	Poor	Minimal explanation of how the bid meets the criterion, or minimal evidence to support the proposals. Bid contains material inconsistencies or weaknesses in the explanation or evidence referred to or provided.
0	No score	No explanation of how the bid meets the criteria, or no evidence to support the bid. Bid contains significant, material inconsistencies or weaknesses in the explanation or evidence referred to or provided. No confidence that activities can be delivered.

50. The assessment criteria will be individually scored, and bidders should ensure that each criterion is fully addressed in the template. Irrespective of the score for the other criteria, we will not support a bid that scores less than 2 under either answer for Criterion 6 (value for money, project and risk management).

## Scoring process

51. Where a bid contains a funding request for only one of the funding streams, the scores for Criteria 1 and 6 (so, Criteria 1P and 6P for a bid that is for solely programme funding, or Criteria 1C and 6C for a bid that is for solely capital funding) will be scaled up by a factor of 2. Bidders for both funding streams will not have their scores scaled up.
52. Relevant bidders that have submitted to the MoD a clear letter of intent to join the DUA will receive an additional 4 points added to the total score for their bid. Where a bidder cannot, due to the eligibility rules, submit to the MoD a letter of intent to join the DUA, their score for Criterion 4 will be scaled up by a factor of 2. If a bidder is eligible to submit a letter of intent but chooses not to do so, it will not receive any additional points and neither will its score for Criterion 4 be scaled up.

53. Using this system, the maximum available score is 36 points. The scoring is demonstrated in Table 4 for illustrative purposes, to show how various proposals and eligibility would be treated through the scoring mechanism and scaling factors.

**Table 4: Scoring system illustrative example**

Criteria	Bid A Programme and capital funding		Bid B Programme funding only		Bid C Capital funding only		Bid D Eligible to send letter of intent for DUA		Bid E Not eligible to send letter of intent for DUA	
	Bid score	Final score	Bid score	Final score	Bid score	Final score	Bid score	Final score	Bid score	Final score
1P	3	3	3 x 2	6		0	3	3	3	3
1C	3	3		0	3 x 2	6	3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	3
3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4 x 2	8
5	2	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	3
6P	3	3	3 x 2	6		0	3	3	3	3
6C	3	3		0	4 x 2	8	3	3	3	3
Total score	23 +4 for clear letter of intent 27		23 +4 for clear letter of intent 27		30 Eligible to provide letter of intent but none submitted		25 + 4 for clear letter of intent 29		29	

## Prioritisation of funding

54. As part of our internal due diligence, before we confirm the award of funding we will need to check for assurances of a provider's financial sustainability, management and governance, any known quality issues affecting courses to be offered, and relevant regulatory cases, factors or actions using information we hold internally. These will help us to determine whether we can confidently award public money for a project. The MoD will also need to check for and advise of any national security concerns during the assessment process and then throughout the funding period. These points, issues and concerns may also affect decisions to stop or reclaim funding from providers during the lifetime of this scheme.

55. We will aim if possible to support a broad group of providers and activities that will have a material impact on growth in the defence-related subjects, and that collectively will meet the objectives and priorities for this scheme. There will, however, be a balance to be struck in determining how many bids we are able to support and the levels of grant we are able to provide, against the quality and volume of the proposals we receive. This may be even more relevant than usual given the specific focus of this scheme.

56. In the event that the funds available to us are oversubscribed, we may need to reduce the maximum funding limit for capital, allocate all funding pro rata, to offer less funding to providers than requested, or a combination of these. We are unable to move funding between the respective budget lines.

# Annex A: Bidding template

1. Providers wishing to bid must do so by completing the bidding template, in the form of a Microsoft Excel file, available alongside this guidance on the OfS website.<sup>6</sup> The template should be downloaded for completion, then when ready it must be uploaded and submitted to the OfS portal area – under defence funding bids. Providers will need to confirm that the proposal has the approval of the accountable officer.
2. We encourage providers to give concise responses to the narrative questions. Each question therefore has a proposed word limit, indicated in the bid template below the relevant cell for completion.
3. Feedback from our 2025 capital funding competition indicated that some providers had issues with viewing their narrative responses while using Microsoft Excel, due to limits on the size of cells. We strongly recommend using another programme, such as Microsoft Word, to compile responses before copying the text into the formula bar in Excel. We will be able to extract all responses from the bids and read them in full.
4. The deadline for bids is **1700 on Friday 20 March 2026**.
5. Table 5 lists the tabs for completion contained within the bidding template. Bidders must complete the tabs which relate to the funding streams for which they are bidding. The table also directs bidders to the relevant paragraphs of the guidance.

**Table 5: Bidding template – table of contents**

Bidding template tab	Funding stream	Paragraphs
A. Contact details	Both	7
B. Student number projections	Both	8 to 16
1P. Student number growth	Programme	19 to 22
1C. Capital infrastructure and capacity	Capital	23 to 28
2. Defence industry relevance (including alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plan)	Both	29 and 30
3. Defence industry engagement (including free speech)	Both	31 to 33
4. Alignment with objectives of DUA (including free speech and foreign interference)	Both	34 to 41
5. Collaboration on training and skills	Both	42 to 44
6P. Programme project management (including risk and value for money)	Programme	48 to 58
6C. Capital project management (including risk and value for money)	Capital	59 to 74

<sup>6</sup> See Defence-related skills funding competition - Office for Students.

6. The rest of this annex provides further detail about how to complete the sections of the bidding template, and explains how the information provided in each tab of the bidding template will be used to inform our assessment of a bid.

## Tab A: Contact details

7. Please complete Tab A with the name and UK Provider Reference Number of the provider, and the contact details of the person submitting the bid. This is the person who will receive all correspondence from the OfS including, alongside the accountable officer, the outcome of the bid.<sup>7</sup>

## Tab B: Student number projections

### Table B1

8. Providers are asked to indicate in Table B1 whether their bid includes a request for programme funding, capital funding, or both.

### Table B2

9. Table B2 is split into two parts: Table B2(i), covering full-time students, and Table B2(ii), covering part-time students. Please use these tables to record the additional Home-fee, OfS fundable undergraduate student numbers in defence-related subjects that are estimated to be delivered as a result of any OfS funding. In the event that a provider bids for capital funding only, these tables can be used to demonstrate anticipated growth resulting from the proposed investment, alongside the response to Criterion 1C.
10. Please input the data outlined below, using a new line for each different course. Further instructions are included within the bidding template, underneath Table B2(ii).

### Course name and course ID

11. The name of each individual course that will enrol additional students as a result of the funding. Courses should be recorded in the same manner as in the Higher Education Statistics Agency record or Individualised Learner Record, including course codes.<sup>8</sup> Successful projects will be monitored using this data, so it is vital that the course names are recorded accurately.

### Total student numbers on course in 2025-26

12. The number of Home-fee, OfS fundable undergraduate students who were studying on the course in academic year 2025-26, across all years of study. We will use this data as the baseline for the overall student numbers benefitting from this funding programme, so it is essential that this data is as accurate as possible.

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<sup>7</sup> See OfS, '[Regulatory advice 10: Accountable officers. Guidance for providers on the responsibilities of accountable officers](#)'.

<sup>8</sup> See Higher Education Statistics Agency, '[Course COURSETITLE 23056](#)' and '[Course COURSEID 23056](#)', or Individualised Learner Record specification, name and 'LearnAimRef' from LARS.

### **Total FTE for students who were studying on the course in 2025-26 (Table B2(ii))**

13. The total FTE<sup>9</sup> for Home-fee, OfS fundable undergraduate students who were studying on the course in academic year 2025-26, across all years of study. This will only need to be completed for Table B2(ii), covering part-time students. For full-time courses this figure will match the headcount figure, so does not need to be completed here. We will use this data as the baseline for overall student FTE benefitting from this programme, so it is essential that this information is as accurate as possible.

### **Projected additional student numbers delivered as a result of funding**

14. Projected additional Home-fee, OfS fundable undergraduate student numbers studying on the course as a result of the requested funding in each of the academic years 2026-27 to 2030-31. We will not fund new enrolments in academic years 2029-30 and 2030-31 – the numbers recorded for these years should only include additional numbers enrolled in 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 who will be continuing their studies. A flag will be raised in the workbook if the additional student numbers recorded in 2029-30 or 2030-31 are greater than those recorded in 2028-29.

### **Projected additional FTE delivered as a result of funding (Table B2(ii))**

15. Projected total FTE for additional Home-fee, OfS fundable undergraduate students studying on the course as a result of the requested funding in each of the academic years 2026-27 to 2030-31. This will only need to be completed for Table B2(ii), covering part-time students. For full-time courses, this figure will match the headcount figure, so does not need to be completed here. Providers should use a reasonable estimate for this figure, based on their data.

### **Table B3**

16. The total forecast additional FTE figures input by providers will be used to calculate programme funding awarded to successful bidders in each of the academic years from 2026-27 to 2030-31. This is demonstrated in Table B3, which providers are not required to complete.

### **Criterion 1: Defence-related student number growth**

17. Criterion 1 consists of two questions, one each for programme and capital funding, asking providers to explain how the funding will result in student number growth in defence-related subjects.
18. Criterion 1P addresses programme funding and Criterion 1C addresses capital funding. Providers are required to respond to the questions as they relate to their bid. These criteria will be scored separately, but in the case of a provider bidding under just one of the funding streams, the score for that criterion will be scaled up by a factor of two. The total maximum score for Criterion 1 is therefore 8 points.

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<sup>9</sup> Note that FTE in this context refers to the full-time equivalence (FTE) of part-time students – this is an estimate of the study intensity for these students across the academic year.

## **Criterion 1P: Programme funding for defence-related student number growth**

19. To meet this criterion, providers should demonstrate how they will achieve an increase in the number of students in Level 4 to 6 courses in computing and engineering.
20. Please provide a commentary outlining the rationale for the estimated additional student numbers and FTE outlined in Table B2. Purely aspirational or unrealistic estimates that cannot be supported by clear evidence are likely to score poorly.
21. Bids must demonstrate how their activities will help to increase the number of enrolments of students studying these defence-related courses. Approaches based on evidence of effective practice are likely to score more highly.
22. Bids that can demonstrate that they have been informed by and integrated with the needs of students are likely to score more highly.

## **Criterion 1C: Capital funding for defence-related student number growth**

23. To meet this criterion, a bid must demonstrate that capital expenditure will directly support relevant facilities and capital works. Relevant facilities are:
  - a. The purchase of equipment (including IT equipment) used for learning, teaching or assessment. This does not include renting or hiring of equipment.<sup>10</sup>
  - b. The acquisition, replacement or construction of premises or infrastructure (including IT infrastructure) used for learning, teaching or assessment. Acquisition may include the purchase of leaseholds, but this category does not include the making of payments outside of the purchase price, such as for rental or service charges.
  - c. The refurbishment, expansion or adaptation of existing premises or infrastructure (including IT infrastructure) that are to be used for learning, teaching or assessment.
24. Capital expenditure projects must support the capital needs of providers to increase the number of undergraduate students studying computing and engineering. We recognise, however, that it may be neither feasible nor desirable to create ring-fenced boundaries between higher and further education, or teaching and research facilities. For example, equipment purchased using OfS capital funds may be used by both higher and further education or postgraduate students, or for both teaching and research purposes.
25. Providers should submit a short summary of the aims and objectives of the capital investment, with a clear description of the relevant facilities for which the proposal is seeking funding. This should include a short description of the status of the project currently, and the progress that should be reached by 31 March 2029.
26. Higher-scoring bids will provide clear details of focused capital investments, with credible information and evidence to support their case. We are likely to award higher scores to bids

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<sup>10</sup> Permissible capital expenditure on software includes the purchase of operating systems and substantial applications packages, including where licence, update and maintenance charges are rolled up into the upfront cost and not separately charged over the expected life of the product – that is, where the product has been purchased outright. However, software licences and maintenance expenditure incurred on a periodic basis are not allowable as capital expenditure, and should instead be treated as revenue.

with provision that requires specific facilities and equipment for learning and teaching, where these are relevant to the skills needs of defence-related industries, either locally or nationally. Lower-scoring bids will provide more generic or limited information, with insufficient evidence about how the capital expenditure will meet the aims and objectives of this scheme.

27. Details of the amount of capital funding and items of expenditure are collected in Table 6C(i) and do not need to be repeated in full here.
28. If the bid does not include a request for programme funding, data entered into Table B2 will be used for the estimated increase in student numbers in defence-related subjects resulting from this capital investment.

## **Criterion 2: Relevance to defence industry and Local Skills Improvement Plans**

29. To meet this criterion, providers should explain how the courses within computing and engineering in which they will expand capacity are relevant to careers in defence or closely associated industries, and how they are aligned with the needs of local employers and regional economies, as identified in their Local Skills Improvement Plan.
30. Bids should demonstrate a clear understanding of the defence-related skills needs that their proposal intends to address, citing evidence where applicable. Bids should identify how any capital funding sought will directly support relevant higher education provision for those skills needs. This should include a description of how the specific subjects that the provider offers, or proposes to offer, will meet those employment and skills needs that the funding will support.

## **Criterion 3: Higher education activity and defence industry engagement**

31. To meet this criterion, providers should set out any specific relationships and examples of work they already have or are doing with the defence industry, focusing on their defence-related teaching and research activities. Please explain how these current activities are being used to support the defence industry, and how the provider will support students to consider careers in the defence or related industries. Set out any other defence-related teaching and research activities in which the provider is currently engaged, give a description of how this is used in defence-related industries, and any future plans in these areas.
32. Bids that do not evidence clear, existing engagement with the defence industry through teaching or research activities, or outline convincing plans or strategies to work with the industry, will not score highly for this criterion.
33. Bids must also show how, in carrying out these activities, providers are safeguarding their own institutional autonomy and taking steps to secure the free speech and academic freedom of staff, students, members and visiting speakers, as required by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

## **Criterion 4: Alignment with objectives of Defence Universities Alliance**

34. To meet this criterion, bidders should set out how the provider's approach to defence-related higher education aligns with the objectives of the new Defence Universities Alliance (DUA),

and provide a commentary outlining whether and how the provider intends to engage with the DUA's objectives and application process (if eligible to do so).<sup>11</sup> Please contact the MoD for more information on DUA requirements: [spodise-growthandplaceteam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:spodise-growthandplaceteam@mod.gov.uk). Any questions about the DUA process should be directed to the MoD, and not to the OfS.

35. To score higher marks under this criterion, the response to Question 4b should provide strong evidence of how the provider's current and future approaches to relevant higher education activity aligns with the strategic aims of the DUA, with a focus on defence and security teaching and research and collaboration with strategic partners or other relevant organisations. We are looking for clear evidence that the provider understands the objectives of the DUA. Providing specific examples of current or planned future work that demonstrates commitment to the DUA's aims will help strengthen the evidence submitted and achieve higher marks.
36. It is possible to score highly under this criterion even if a provider does not currently intend to join the DUA, by providing strong and clear evidence on a commitment to the DUA's aims.
37. For those providers eligible to join the DUA and that submit a letter of intent before final decisions are made on which projects to fund, their bids will receive an additional 4 points added to the total score. For a provider that is not currently eligible to join the DUA and is therefore unable to submit a letter of intent, a scaling factor of 2 will apply to their score for Criterion 4. It is important to note that if a provider is eligible to join the DUA but does not submit a letter of intent, they will not receive an additional 4 points, nor will their score for this criterion be scaled up. Bidders should use the drop-down menu in Question 4a to indicate whether or not they meet the MoD's current eligibility requirements for the DUA. The OfS is responsible for the funding competition and associated grants; the MoD is responsible for the DUA process, letters of intent, and eligibility requirements. Therefore, the MoD will respond directly to providers on all questions regarding the DUA process, including eligibility.
38. Wherever relevant, providers should also show how they are (as required by the DUA Charter) taking robust and proactive steps to detect, and robustly resist, any foreign interference that attempts to subvert or negatively influence their institutional autonomy or the freedom of speech or academic freedom of their staff, students, members or visiting speakers.
39. If a provider demonstrates some evidence of how its work and future plans are consistent with some of the DUA's objectives, but does not clearly address them all, and the evidence provided is lacking in detail and clear examples, then it will score lower on this criterion.
40. Providers should also demonstrate how they currently, or plan to, engage students in defence-related employment and career opportunities, and provide specific examples. Bids that can demonstrate that their proposals have been informed by and integrated with the needs of relevant employers and organisations are likely to score more highly. The response should include information on how the provider will work with students through, for example, impartial careers advice, guidance and information as part of a balanced portfolio.

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<sup>11</sup> The DUA will need to undertake its activities in ways which are compliant with the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. Members of the DUA will need to safeguard their own institutional autonomy; and they must take steps to secure the free speech and academic freedom of staff, students, member and visiting speakers, as required by the HERA 2017.

41. There is, of course, no obligation for students to go into careers in the defence or related industries after their studies (and individual destinations will not be monitored), and we would expect careers advice to be impartial. The objective is to provide opportunities and choice for students to develop new skills, and to understand and undertake specific career paths and employment opportunities if they chose to do so, as part of a balanced and impartially presented portfolio.

## Criterion 5: Collaboration on training and skills

42. To meet this criterion, bidders should provide details of any current collaborations with organisations providing defence-related training and skills. This response should outline what the respective roles are for the provider and the collaborative partners, what the outputs are, and what benefits to students and the defence industry arise from these collaborations and activities.

43. Bidders should also outline their future plans in this area and the potential benefits of these. If the provider has plans to collaborate with the new defence technical excellence colleges, please provide clear details. For example, we would expect to see details of any agreements or strategic relationships that are already in place, and how these collaborations result in tangible outputs for students and industry.

44. Proposals that can provide evidence of how their current collaborative approaches with organisations delivering defence-related training provides tangible outputs, and demonstrate coherent plans to expand these, are likely to score more highly. Bids that do not evidence existing collaborations with defence-related training providers, or do not outline convincing plans to work in this area, will receive a lower score for this criterion.

## Criterion 6: Value for money, project and risk management

45. Criterion 6 consists of two questions, one each for programme and capital funding, asking providers to set out how their proposals will provide value for money and how the activities and any associated risks will be well managed. This criterion is an important factor in relation to the OfS's general duties in section 2 of HERA.<sup>12</sup> It includes management of all aspects of the project, from planning through to delivery, ensuring that risks are well managed and that the provider is both ready for the money and able to spend it all in the time available.

46. Criterion 6P addresses programme funding and Criterion 6C addresses capital funding. Providers are required to respond to the questions as related to their bid. These criteria will be scored separately, but in the case of a provider bidding under just one of the funding streams, the score for that criterion will be scaled up by a factor of two. The total maximum score for these criteria is therefore 8 points. We will not support bids that score less than 2 (satisfactory) for either of these criteria, as this rating will not give us the assurances required to be able to award public funding.

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<sup>12</sup> See Gov.UK, '[Higher Education and Research Act 2017 Section 2 \(enacted\)](#)', in particular the OfS's duty to have regard to the need to promote value for money in the provision of higher education by English higher education providers.

47. The information below outlines how the responses for value for money and project management should be addressed for both funding streams.

### **Criterion 6P: Programme funding – value for money, project and risk management**

48. This criterion will be primarily assessed using the data collected in the tables within Tab 6P and the response to Question 6P(ii) in the bidding template. The information provided in the tables and the narrative question should support, and not duplicate, each other. Further guidance regarding the information requested in this tab is provided below.

#### **Table 6P(i): Programme project plan**

49. Table 6P(i) asks providers give the following information:

##### **Key milestones (Column A)**

50. Bids should include details of key milestones for their projects, outlining the main activities and giving estimated dates for completion. The information provided here should complement, but not duplicate, the commentary provided in Question 1P.

##### **Details of expenditure (Columns B and C)**

51. Bids should outline in Columns B and C how the programme funding will be spent and what it will deliver. The overall planned expenditure should be clear to us from this table. Details of expenditure using OfS funding can be entered into Column B, with details of expenditure using funding from other sources entered into Column C.

##### **Other sources of funding (Columns D and E)**

52. Providers should use Column D to input the value of any contribution of funding from any other public sources, and Column E to input the value of any contribution of funding from sources such as the provider itself and any partners contributing to the project.

53. If any information is required to support the qualitative data provided in Table 6P(i), this can be provided in the response for Question 6P(ii) regarding value for money and project management.

#### **Question 6P(ii): Programme project management**

54. Providers should use the narrative response to Question 6P(ii) to provide further detail of and context for the data provided in Table 6P(i). The following list is not exhaustive, but we expect providers to use this section to provide details on the following:

- The benefits that the project will bring to students, graduates, employers and the defence industry. The response to Question 6P(ii) should provide a commentary outlining the relationship of the funding and student numbers requested to the benefits described under the other criteria.
- How key activities, and benefits such as new relationships with industry and employers, may be sustained into the medium and long term.

- c. The additionality that OfS funding would bring to the project – that the additional student numbers could not be achieved, and capacity could not be increased, without OfS funding.

#### Project and risk management

- 55. Bids should detail the governance and management arrangements for the programme funding. Higher-scoring bids will set out clearly how the project will be managed (including, if appropriate, across any collaborative partners). Bids should explain how the provider will review progress, and how it will identify and address emerging risks to the success of the project. This could include, for example, a description of how issues such as risk and recruitment will be reported upwards to senior management and the governing body.
- 56. Bids should provide a commentary regarding the roles and contributions of any local or collaborative partners involved in the capital project, and how the relationship between these partners and the lead bidder will be managed.

#### **Table 6P(iii): Project risks and mitigations**

- 57. Table 6P(iii) should outline the risks to the project, how the provider intends to mitigate and manage the risks, what the impact would likely be should the risk materialise, and what the alternative course of action would be should it occur.
- 58. Providers should give details of any dependencies that would impact delivery or for example cause disruption to existing students.

#### **Criterion 6C: Capital funding – value for money, project and risk management**

- 59. This criterion will be primarily assessed using the data collected in the tables within Tab 6C and the response to Question 6C(ii) in the bidding template. The information provided in the tables and the narrative question should support, but not duplicate, each other. Further guidance regarding the information requested is provided below.

#### **Table 6C(i): Capital project plan**

- 60. Table 6C(i) asks providers to give the following information.

#### Key milestones (Column A)

- 61. Bids should include details of key milestones for their projects. The following list is not exhaustive but, where relevant, we would expect to see information on the following:
  - any planning permissions – application and approvals
  - purchase orders placed
  - delivery of equipment and materials
  - design stages
  - construction – groundworks, main build, completion
  - installation of equipment

- completion of project
- facilities ready for use by students.

62. Information provided in Column A will form the basis of monitoring for those bids that are successful.

**Items of expenditure (Columns B and C)**

63. Providers should detail the items of expenditure that funding will be spent on, split between those proposed to be purchased with OfS funding and those using other sources of funding.

**Proposed capital expenditure (Columns D to G)**

64. We are looking to understand how the OfS funding sought will contribute to the overall financing of a project, in the financial years 2026-27 to 2028-29. Providers should give details in Column D of values of money from the OfS to be used for this project. The amounts entered in this column should relate to the items of expenditure outlined in Column B.

65. We do not require match funding or co-investment, but Columns E and F ask providers to specify any other sources of finance and investment for their proposals (as relevant). Column G and rows 10 and 11 will automatically calculate total funding amounts. If the total cost of the project exceeds the maximum total funding that can be requested, this will help us to understand how a provider will cover the costs and complete the project. There must be no double-counting in attributing the same amounts of capital expenditure to OfS grant and income provided by any other public funds.

66. If the funding requested from the OfS includes any retention payments to contractors, this should be made clear in the row for November 2028 in Table 6C(i). Providers should set out an estimate of the value of the retention payment and give a date for when this is likely to be paid in full. Successful bidders will be required to provide evidence of the agreement for this payment as part of our monitoring of the project.

67. If any information is required to support the qualitative data provided in Table 6C(i), this can be provided in the response for Question 6C(ii) regarding value for money and project management.

**Question 6C(ii): Capital project management**

68. Providers should use the narrative response to Question 6C(ii) to provide further detail and context to the data provided in Table 6C(i). The following list is not exhaustive, but we expect providers to use this section to provide details on the following:

- a. The benefits of the funding – how proportionate the OfS contribution is to the benefits that the project will bring to students, graduates, employers and others. The response to Question 6C(ii) should provide a commentary outlining the relationship of the funding requested to the benefits described under the other criteria.

- b. The additionality that OfS funding would bring to the project – that the growth in student numbers could not be achieved, and capacity could not be increased, without OfS funding.

#### Project and risk management

- 69. Bids should detail the governance and management arrangements for the project. Higher-scoring bids will set out clearly how the project will be managed (including, if appropriate, across any collaborative partners). Where appropriate (for example, where bids relate to the construction, refurbishment, expansion or adaptation of premises), bids should explain how the provider will review progress, and how it will identify and address emerging risks to the success of the project. This could include, for example, a description of how issues such as progress and risk will be reported upwards to senior management and the governing body.
- 70. Proposals should provide information on procurement, tendering and contract administration, such as tendering procedures for expensive items, or procurement consortia.
- 71. Bids should comment on the roles and contributions of any collaborative partners involved in the capital project, and how the relationship between these partners and the lead bidder will be managed.

#### **Table 6C(iii): Project risks and mitigations**

- 72. This table should outline the risks to the project, how the provider intends to mitigate and manage them, what the impact would likely be should the materialise, and what the alternative course of action would be should they occur.
- 73. Providers should give details of any dependencies that would impact the project. For example, if delivery of the project is contingent on planning permission being granted, this should be included, with information on what stage the application is currently at, when a decision is expected, and a contingency plan if planning is not granted.
- 74. We would also expect this table to provide details regarding the management of any disruption to students caused during termtime, for any related capital works.

## Annex B: Grant payments, conditions of funding and monitoring

1. Details of our monitoring requirements and grant payments will be set out to the successful bidders in our grant award letter. Through our monitoring of student recruitment and growth we would like to move student numbers and associated programme funding between the funded projects, to take account of, for example, those that might not be delivering the amount of growth they expected, and those that are doing better than planned. In this way, we can ensure the available funding delivers maximum impact for students across the funding scheme. If places cannot be filled, we will seek to reclaim £7,000 per place, in line with the terms of the programme funding provided to us.
2. As part of our monitoring work, we will continue to check for assurances of a provider's financial sustainability, management and governance and any regulatory cases (including relevant quality issues at the provider and the quality of the provision to be offered), and other relevant factors or actions using information we hold internally. These will help to determine whether we can confidently provide public money for a project. These regulatory matters, issues and concerns may affect decisions to stop or reclaim funding from providers during the lifetime of this scheme. The MoD will also need to check for and advise of any relevant national security concerns throughout the funding period.
3. The OfS will normally pay funding according to a phased payment profile, which will be confirmed in grant award letters. We will consider any changes to payment profiles alongside our monitoring of the progress of the funded projects. We will not be able to extend the funding periods for either programme or capital grants, because of government spending and accounting rules and requirements.
4. During and at the end of the funding periods, we will request written monitoring reports from providers to satisfy ourselves that spending is aligned to our terms and conditions of funding, and that the scope and scale of the project is being delivered as set out in the bid.
5. If our monitoring of a provider's delivery of its project does not give us confidence that the provider will be able to use all the relevant funding awarded within the funding period, then in line with the terms and conditions that apply, we may withdraw the offer of funding in whole or part. Such exceptional circumstances may include significant delays in delivery (for whatever reason) compared with the timetable set out in the provider's bid (or as may subsequently be agreed by us), or failure of the provider to engage to our satisfaction in any reporting and monitoring requirements.
6. Capital funding is provided on a financial year basis. Spending will be monitored during and at the end of each of the three financial years that this funding is available. OfS funding must not be used for advance payments to contractors, or other financing arrangements (such as bonds) where payments precede production of goods or delivery of services.
7. Money spent in the financial year ending 31 March includes contractually committed expenditure that is clearly identified as such within the provider's finance system as at 31 March – that means, in accounting terms, that you would expect to be able to accrue for this

expenditure to reflect the point at which the contractual commitment was made, and that auditors could confirm this treatment if required.

8. Allocations of capital funding are provided to enhance the learning experience of higher education students at providers, by helping raise the quality of their learning and teaching facilities. Providers must use capital grants for this purpose, in particular to support relevant facilities for this competition. In addition, any capital grants awarded through this competition must be used:
  - a. On expenditure items included in the bidding template for the provider's successful bid. We will expect to understand and to monitor how the funds were spent.
  - b. In accordance with our general OfS terms and conditions of funding,<sup>13</sup> published on an annual basis, along with any other terms and conditions that we may specify when we award the grant or through our monitoring of the projects.

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<sup>13</sup> For OfS funding terms and conditions for 2025-26, see [Terms and conditions of funding for 2025-26 - Office for Students](#).

# Annex C: The OfS portal for submission of bids

## Assigning yourself to the ‘Defence funding bids’ survey area

1. To submit a bid, you will need to be a registered user of the OfS portal, and assigned to the defence funding bids survey area. This area of the portal will be open by 6 March 2026. You should download the template from our website for completion, and when it is ready, upload it by the submission deadline – **1700 on Friday 20 March 2026**. To submit your completed bid to us, please:
  - a. Login to the portal using this link: [Login - Office for Students portal](#).
  - b. Navigate to the ‘Your data returns’ area (this should be showing in the top right-hand corner of the page).
  - c. Click through to the ‘Defence funding bids’ area.
  - d. Upload your completed bid template to this area.
2. If you have not registered on the OfS portal before, you will need to ask the nominated OfS portal user administrator at your provider to create an account for you. You will also need to be assigned to the relevant survey area by the nominated OfS portal user administrator at your provider. The user administrator can find guidance on how to add portal users to portal areas on the main portal login page ([www.officeforstudents.org.uk/how-to-manage-your-portal-users/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/how-to-manage-your-portal-users/)). If you are the user administrator, please note that you will still need to assign yourself to the relevant survey area before you can submit a bid.
3. You can view the user administrators at your provider by logging onto the OfS portal. Select ‘My account’ towards the right-hand side of the yellow banner, and then click ‘Activate an access key’. The names and contact details of the user administrators at your provider will be at the top of the page. If you are not registered and do not know who your user administrator is, please contact [portal@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:portal@officeforstudents.org.uk).

## Completing your bidding template

4. The bidding template is provided as an Excel workbook on our website. You should not attempt to alter the format of the worksheets by adding or deleting columns or rows, except where this is specified. Only cells where data is required should be edited. The workbook is protected to ensure that the data submitted is accurate and is only entered into relevant cells. The worksheets contain information critical to accurate loading of the bid and its data after submission; it is essential that this is preserved. We will not accept any templates that have been unprotected or altered.
5. We recommend that you do not copy and paste data into your workbook, except for the narrative questions, as this can cause formatting issues. If you wish to copy and paste data, ensure that you use the ‘Paste values’ option. This will not copy the formatting of the data you are pasting and will preserve the formatting in the template.

## **Uploading your bidding template**

6. Completed workbooks can be uploaded any number of times until the deadline for submission, when we will take the latest uploaded version as the final version. Guidance for how to submit information to us through the new portal can be found at: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/how-to-submit-your-data-returns/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/how-to-submit-your-data-returns/).



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