



Call for Proposals

February 2017



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AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

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The Higher Education Authority (HEA) makes this document available to course providers who wish to submit a proposal(s) for higher education and training courses as part of Springboard+ 2017. The document must not be used for any other purpose. Springboard+ is managed by the HEA on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

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The HEA reserves the right to amend these documents and any information contained herein at any time by notice in writing to the candidates.

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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 candidates 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 candidate and will not be reimbursed.

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.

Springboard+ 2017

Introduction

Springboard began in 2011 as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative. It provides free upskilling in higher education in areas of identified skills need. The initiative's primary target group has been unemployed people with a previous history of employment. In 2014, Springboard incorporated ICT Skills Conversion courses (i.e. *Springboard+*), some of which are open to applicants regardless of their employment status.

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 to build the supply of skilled graduates for vacancies arising across key sectors of the economy. A Department of Social Protection scan of the Live Register carried out in July 2016 reported that 80% of Springboard participants (2011 – 2015) were no longer on the Live Register. In addition, 7% of graduates for whom an employment outcome has been reported are now self-employed. <https://springboardcourses.ie/pdfs/An-Evaluation-of-Springboard+-2011-16.pdf>.

Springboard+ is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. An evaluation framework underpins the initiative, with ongoing monitoring of its impact. The most recent evaluation was published in December 2016. All of the evaluation reports are accessible via www.springboardcourses.ie.

Springboard+ forms part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs, Action Plan for Education and the National Skills Strategy, which aims to increase the number of people in employment to 2.1m by 2020. The programme is funded through the National Training Fund and the European Social Fund.

1. Overview of Changes to Springboard+ 2017

- Expanded set of eligible applicants
- Changes to the eligibility of previous Springboard+ applicants
- Changes to eligible skill needs sectors
- New evaluation template

2. Changes to Springboard+ 2017 Potential Applicants

This year represents the seventh phase of Springboard+. When the initiative was first introduced in January 2011 the economy was struggling. Unemployment was at 15%, with over 400,000 people out of work. Now, fortunately, the economic outlook is more positive. Unemployment is less than half that in 2011 with the CSO reporting 6.8% for December 2016. Nevertheless, we still have a way to go and the continued development of a skilled workforce through upskilling, and reskilling remains central to our ability to attract ongoing FDI and the further development of our SME sector.

The eligible applicants for Springboard+ 2017 are as follows (See section 4 for further information on eligibility criteria):

1. Those in receipt of an eligible payment from the Department of Social Protection and the formerly self-employed
2. People who meet the criteria for ICT conversion courses irrespective of employment status
3. People not in receipt of a payment from the Department of Social Protection that have been out of the work environment for a number of years due to childcare or other caring obligations and have a previous history of employment but may require upskilling, reskilling or cross-skilling to transition back to the workforce (“Homemakers”)
4. People with a level 7 ICT qualification seeking upskilling in that discipline to a level 8 irrespective of employment status
5. People who wish to upskill or reskill to meet a specific emerging skills gap in the Biopharma/Med Tech sector irrespective of employment status (see section 4)

NEW eligibility categories 4 and 5 have been added for the following reasons:

The ICT and biopharma/med-tech sectors continue to grow with significant demand for skilled personnel across a range of areas. In ICT for example there is continuing demand for skills in cybersecurity, data analytics, and many other areas, across a range of industries. The bio-pharma/med-tech sector is noting a particular need for technicians, a range of qualified engineers and skilled personnel equipped to perform quality assurance/ validation and regulatory roles.

In addition, Higher Education Institutions have informed the HEA that a number of students now graduate with a level 7 ICT qualification and opt not to do the add-on year for a level 8 degree due to the demand from the sector and the ease at which they can secure employment. We encourage providers to submit proposals to upskill this cohort (irrespective of employment status) to a level 8 ICT qualification. The purpose of this upskilling will be to build on the current qualification by enabling this cohort to enhance their skill set by specialising in a particular area (e.g. software development, cyber security). As these skills are gained and the graduates move into new roles in the IT industry it is envisaged that their current positions will be back-filled by newer IT graduates.

On the basis of the significant and urgent demand for skilled workers in the biopharma and med-tech sectors, and based on feedback received from industry representatives and the Regional Skills Fora managers, the eligible applicants for this sector is being expanded. The aim is to upskill people (irrespective of their current employment status) to work in the growing bio-pharma/med-tech sector. It is envisaged this target group will be a mix of people who currently work in the sector seeking to upskill or people seeking to gain entry to employment in this sector based on a reskilling course.

Proposals invited:

This Call invites proposals for

1. Part-time higher education courses, levels 6-9, and/or
2. Proposals for level 8 ICT Skills Conversion courses both full and part-time.

Further information on the types of course sought is provided in Appendix 1.

Guidance is also provided in Appendix 1 on current and future skills needs. Supporting information on the development of ICT Skills Conversion courses is provided in a separate document.

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 Friday 24th March 2017**.

3. Information to assist providers in making proposals

3.1 Objectives of Springboard+

The primary objective of Springboard+ in 2017 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 skills shortages in expanding enterprise areas, including ICT; hospitality; biopharma, medical device technologies and manufacturing; financial services; and entrepreneurship.

There are three additional specific objectives of the programme;

- helping those who are unemployed, formerly self-employed and homemakers 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, including the priority accorded by the Government to supporting people who are more than 12 months unemployed.
- 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 Action Plans for Jobs, National Skills Strategy and Action Plan for Education.
- enhance the skills profile of the labour force to meet the targets and objectives of the Action Plan for Jobs, the Action Plan for Education, the National Skills Strategy, the ICT Skills Action Plan and other skills reports as outlined in Appendix 1.

3.2 Labour market trends

The seasonally adjusted number of persons unemployed was 147,400 in December 2016, relating to an adjusted unemployment rate of 6.8%^[1], down from 8.9% in December 2015. In December 2016 the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.5% (90,100) for males down from 10.6% in December 2015. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for females in December 2016 was 5.8% (57,300) down from 6.9% in December 2015.

3.3 Springboard+ target applicants

The target applicants identified for Springboard+ 2017 are:

1. Those in receipt of an eligible payment from the Department of Social Protection

- who already hold a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) award at level 5 or 6 or equivalent, with a previous history of employment.
- 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.

2. Previously self-employed

- people at all qualifications level who may require new qualifications to return to self-employment or to enter employment.

3. Homemakers

- who already hold an NFQ award at level 5 or 6 or equivalent, with a previous history of employment.
- 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.

4. Those in employment

- with an ICT qualification seeking upskilling in that discipline from a level 7 to a level 8.

^[1] <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/pressreleases/2017/prQNH5Q42016.pdf>

- with a level 8 cognate discipline wishing to do a full or part-time ICT conversion course (see 3.4. below)
- wishing to upskill or reskill to meet the urgent skill needs of the biopharma/med-tech sectors.

3.4 Target participants for ICT skills conversion courses

Courses both full and part time are available to applicants that 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 conversion courses. Please see the eligibility criteria on www.springboardcourses.ie for further details.

4 Applicant eligibility

Please note the following which applies to all 2017 applicants:

- Those who have completed a Springboard+ course within the past two years (i.e. graduated from a 2015 or 2016 Springboard+ call course) are not eligible to apply in 2017 (**unless the participant is seeking to progress their qualification level in the same discipline, e.g. level 7 to level 8**).
- 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 2017.
- Participants who enrolled in **just one course**, since the inception of Springboard+ in 2011, but did not complete, are eligible to apply in 2017, but will be required to meet all eligibility criteria as outlined below.

a) Those in receipt of an eligible payment from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and the formerly self-employed

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. Information on eligibility criteria regarding DSP payments is available on www.springboardcourses.ie

b) Homemakers

Homemakers seeking to apply in 2017 will be required to verify their status as a homemaker. 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 supports.

c) Those in employment (ICT and bio-pharma/med-tech)

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.

It is important to note that as in previous years no participant on a Springboard+ course in 2017 will be eligible for support under the Department of Education and Skills Higher Education Grants Scheme.

4.1 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, part-time basis. Such participants will not be required to pay any fees to complete their course.

4.2 Priority of eligible participants

While the initiative is expanding the eligible applicants in 2017 to include employed people with a level 7 ICT qualification upskilling to a level 8 or those currently working in the biopharma/med-tech sector or those in employment wishing to reskill to the biopharma/med-tech sector, 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 accorded to the unemployed applicant over those who are already in employment in every instance.

In courses (except ICT conversion courses) where eligible applicants are a mix of all applicant categories (1-5) as outlined in Section 2, applicant categories 1 and 3 should form a minimum of 50% of the student cohort. It is acknowledged that on high level courses e.g. levels 8 and 9 there may be fewer eligible applicants from categories 1 and 3 and the 50% threshold may not apply in these instances subject to consultation with the HEA.

5 Types of courses which will be supported via Springboard+

Funding will be available for

- I. part-time higher education courses **up to a maximum of 12 months** in duration
- II. one year full-time and two-year part-time ICT Skills Conversion courses (NFQ Level 8)

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** as this facilitates participants continuing to seek employment and therefore receive a job-seekers payment. It is important that proposed attendance patterns for programmes facilitate this requirement. Proposals submitted must provide details of attendance arrangements to enable full clarification that they meet the contact hours' requirement.

Please note the following

- As per 2016, ICT conversion courses are sought on a one-year full-time *and* two-year part-time basis. However, it should be noted that eligibility for the two-year part-time option will continue to be confined to those who are not in receipt of an eligible DSP social protection income that has job-seeking conditionality, as the Part Time Education Option (PTEO) payment will not be available to participants on the two-year course. Eligibility for the full-time course has not changed and will continue to cater for both the unemployed, homemakers, the employed and those currently or formerly self-employed.
- 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.
- In order to minimise the travel and other costs of attendance for participants, courses which provide online/distance components are encouraged.
- Please note that full-time courses (with the exception of the ICT conversion course) are not eligible for funding.
- Standard full-time courses in higher education will **not be** eligible for Springboard+ funding.
- Part-time course proposals which lead to an award of fewer than 10 ECTS credits or

equivalent per annum will not be considered.

- Full-time ICT conversion proposals leading to awards of fewer than 60 ECTS credits per annum **will not** be considered for funding.
- Likewise, two-year part-time ICT Conversion course must lead to an award of at least 60 ECTS credits in total.

5.1 Job readiness and work placement

All 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.

Course proposals should include plans for work placement. Almost 90% of Springboard+ courses approved (excluding those in the Entrepreneurship skills category) in 2016 included a work placement. A work placement is mandatory for 1-year full-time ICT Conversion programmes and a work placement or credit bearing project is required for the 2-year part-time ICT conversion programme.

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.

5.2 Current and future skills needs of enterprise

To be considered eligible for approval, Springboard+ courses must seek to address an identified current or future skills need and include a precise labour market rationale. Springboard+ course proposals may focus on development or conversion of relevant technical skills and knowledge, to develop generic/transferable skills that will put participants in the best possible position to attain sustainable employment or return to self-employment.

To assist potential providers, information has been provided in Appendix 1 summarising identified and forecasted skills requirements, including information and communications technology (ICT); high-level manufacturing, including biopharma and medical device technology; international financial services; hospitality and entrepreneurship and other specific regional skill needs. The aim of Springboard+ is to upskill individuals to meet

demonstrated skills needs and is not to provide bespoke training programmes for a specific company / employer.

A separate document, *Additional information on ICT skills conversion courses*, provides further detailed information to support course proposals in this area.

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

- Be regionally focussed,
- Demonstrate engagement with enterprise/industry partners and Regional Skills Fora Managers in the development of the programme,
- Demonstrate engagement with enterprise/industry partners in the delivery of the programme including the provision of work placements,
- Be flexible and innovative in the provision proposed,
- Include plans for work placements,
- Demonstrate that there is an available supply of applicants,
- Include career guidance as part of the course delivery.

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.

5.3 Eligible NFQ award types

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:

- Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)
- 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 – see note in box below*)
- Institutes of Technology with delegated authority to make awards

- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- Universities

or

(b) Lead to a higher education and training award that is a comparable award based on recognition advice available from QQI.

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.

To ensure that Springboard+ meets the needs of people with a range of previous education qualifications, providers are encouraged to propose courses which have been designed for participants with no previous higher education experience.

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, and 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 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**.
- Applications for validation must be submitted to QQI before proposed Springboard+ courses are marketed. 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 Programme Validation Manual (2016) for Programmes of HET and Apprenticeships (FET and HET) should be used for preparing applications.
- **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.

6. Application and Evaluation Process

6.1 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 cost per student by reference to the number of credits to be provided. 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. 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). Providers will make Springboard+ courses available free of charge to participants.

6.2 Data requirements and evaluation

Course providers will be required to promptly return data to the HEA on course activity and outcomes, and co-operate with ongoing monitoring and evaluation, which is managed by the HEA in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills. Requirements will include maintaining a student record for each Springboard+ participant, linking input data (education, employment history) with outcomes data (course completion, award, and employment by sector). Further details will be supplied as part of contract terms. Funding of courses will be conditional on co-operation with all aspects of the evaluation process and timely return of data, including requirements under the ESF co-financing arrangements as stipulated below.

6.3 ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020

Springboard+ is co-funded under the European Social Fund Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. Participation in ESF co-financed programmes necessitates specific requirements with regard both to financial management and controls, participant's data collection and verification of student eligibility.

In addition, participation in ESF co-funded programmes necessitates compliance with ESF communication and publicity requirements. Any material publicising or promoting Springboard+ funded courses (including posters and signage) must explicitly acknowledge ESF co-funding and ESF logos must be incorporated into all Springboard publicity material.

Please see

<http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Info-and-Pub/Information-and-Communication-Guidelines-2014-2020-V21.pdf> for details.

Further information on ESF is available on the ESF website www.esf.ie

Please note that all approved providers are subject to audit by the EU and other national bodies (including the DES, the HEA and their designated auditors).

6.4 Online system for Springboard applicants

All providers of courses funded through Springboard+ 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.

6.5 Selection process and criteria

Decisions on proposals for funding will be made by a panel of experts with industry and educational experience, supported by the HEA. An independent process auditor will oversee the assessment and selection process.

Course proposals will be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in Sections 2-5 of the online course proposal form and the associated marking scheme. As part of the assessment procedure the assessors will have access to information on academic and employment outcomes from the Application Management System (AMS) on courses run in previous years through Springboard+.

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 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.

Subject to demand and take-up of individual course places, the HEA may agree to re-allocate unfilled places to other Springboard+ courses.

It is planned that notification of approved courses will be sent to providers during the week commencing April 24th. Contracts will be agreed between providers and the HEA and planning and marketing of courses will begin. Uploading of information by providers on approved courses to the online system www.springboardcourses.ie will be an important part of this process.

6.6 Freedom of information

Information held by the HEA on Springboard will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1997 (FOI Act), which was passed into law on 21st April 1997, 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.heai.ie/en/freedom-of-information>.

7 Submission of proposals

A briefing for higher education providers will take place on Thursday 9th February.

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document will be prepared in due course and published along with the Call document on the HEA website www.hea.ie

- (i) Proposals must be submitted online via <http://skillsdirect.heia.ie>
- (ii) The closing date for submission of proposals is **13.00hrs Friday 24th March 2017**.
The online application system will not accept proposals submitted after this deadline.
- (iii) Any queries on the Call process for 2017 must be emailed to springboard@hea.ie and responses will be made via email. Telephone queries will not be accommodated, and any form of canvassing will disqualify providers from participation in the initiative.

Indicative* timetable 2017

Call for Proposals issues	Thursday 23 February 2017
Deadline for submission of proposals	Friday 24 March, <u>13.00hrs</u>
Providers notified of approved courses	w/c Monday 24 April
Contracts agreed with HEA, providers upload information for applicants to www.springboardcourses.ie	w/c Monday 8 May
Applications for Springboard+ 2017 open via www.springboardcourses.ie	w/c Monday 15 May

*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.

APPENDIX 1

As we move into economic recovery it is clear that a number of sectors can be identified as having significant skill requirements over the coming years. These sectors include:

- Information and Communication Technology
- Manufacturing/Biopharmachem and Medical Technology
- Financial Services
- Hospitality
- Entrepreneurship
- Other

Please note that, in particular, course proposals that demonstrate innovative and flexible provision are encouraged in 2017.

1. Information and Communications Technology

Springboard+ has been very successful in producing ICT graduates over the last 5 years.

In 2012 there were an estimated 68,280 ICT professionals working within the ICT sector and across other sectors of the economy. According to the report of the *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs* "Addressing Future Demand for High Level ICT Skills" Ireland is likely to face an average increase in demand of 5% a year to 2018 with employment of ICT professionals likely to reach 91,000. The "*ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018*" set a target to meet 74% of the forecast industry demand for high level ICT skills from our own education system by 2018. Given current graduate projections it is unlikely that target will be met by 2018 without increasing the enrolment on ICT courses. As the economy improves students entering through the traditional CAO route may choose to take up other courses such as construction so will need to look at other more non-traditional cohorts to fill demand including upskilling those in employment.

It was noted in 2016 that demand for full-time *ICT Conversion courses* declined in comparison to previous calls. On this basis it is anticipated that subject to assessment of submitted proposals the number of places approved will reflect the lower level of demand identified in 2016.

Higher Education Institutions have informed HEA that a number of students now graduate with a level 7 qualification and opt not to do the add-on year for a level 8 Degree as there is such demand from the sector and the ease at which they can secure employment. We encourage providers to submit proposals to up skill this cohort (irrespective of employment status) to a level 8 ICT qualification.

Priority will be given to courses in the following disciplines

- General Computing
- Cloud Computing
- Data Analytics, Data Mining, Data Scientist
- Web Development
- Software Systems Development

- Cybersecurity
- Middleware and Integration Software
- Networking and Wireless Technology
- Mobile Applications

2. Manufacturing/Biopharmachem and Medical Technology

The recent report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, “*Future Skills Needs of the Biopharma Industry in Ireland*” anticipates that there will be some 8,400 potential job openings will arise in the Biopharma industry alone in the period up to 2020, between expansion and replacement demand. As the report states “(t)he Biopharma industry is highly regulated with stringent clean and safe operational requirements. A particular difficulty cited is the sourcing of experienced staff especially for Process Engineering and for Quality Assurance/Validation roles. Over the next five years, it is anticipated that the industry will create a diverse range of roles requiring specific science, engineering, technology, and business skills across NFQ levels 6-9”.

A forthcoming publication (February 2017) examines the skills requirements of the Med-tech sector in Ireland and outlines a potential 4,000 jobs up to 2020. Analysis as part of the publication has identified skill shortages arising in many areas of Med-tech but in particular to the availability of qualified engineers in areas such as bio-medical, validation, automation and other areas. In addition, there are shortages of qualified personnel in regulatory roles.

There is an opportunity, via *Springboard+*, through upskilling and reskilling those on the live register and in employment to address this challenge. Demand for places in 2016 Manufacturing/Biopharmachem and Medtech was very strong with some providers having applications far in excess of that available in 2016. It is expected this demand will continue into 2017. Places offered in this discipline area have high employment outcomes.

On the basis of the significant and urgent demand for skilled workers in this sector as outlined above, and based on feedback received from industry representatives and Regional Skills Fora, the eligible applicants for this sector is being expanded as per Section 2 of this document.

3. Financial Services

The IFS 2020 Strategy for Ireland “*International Financial Services Sector 2015-2020*” states that in Ireland today there are more than 400 companies employing over 35,000 people. The report sets an ambitious target to grow the level of direct employment in the IFS sector to at least 45,000 people by 2020 requiring the creation of a net total of 10,000 jobs.

This offering should include Fintech, Financial and Systems Analysis and Supply Chain Management courses.

4. Hospitality Sector

The Hospitality Sector is one of the most important services sectors in the Irish economy. It directly employs 158,000 persons within 16,000 enterprises. A recovery in the Hospitality sector is leading to increased demand for employees of varying skill levels. In November 2015, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) published an ‘Assessment of Future Skills Requirements in the Hospitality Sector in Ireland, 2015-2020’. The report noted that the Hospitality sector has potential for future growth, but that the skills demand shortfalls are likely

to continue to emerge in key occupations if action is not taken to address them in the short-to-medium term

5. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship remains key to the further development of Ireland's economy and job creation. As stated in the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland* (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2014), "(h)istorically, two thirds of new jobs in Ireland have been created by companies in their first five years. This is because new businesses drive change and are the source of creative ideas and new technologies. They are the quickest to adapt to new opportunities and to the shifts that disrupt markets and business models".

Springboard+ has offered a number of courses in the area of entrepreneurship over the last five years and courses in this area are being sought again for 2017.

6. Other Types of Courses not listed above

Any other courses will be considered on the basis of available evidence for their need in terms of regional and national skills requirements (e.g. as indicated by the Regional Skills Fora managers).

Further Skills Guidance Documents

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

Regional Labour Markets Bulletin 2016

National Skills Bulletin 2016

Future Skills Needs of the Biopharma Sector in Ireland, 2015

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*", 2012

"ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018", 2013

The IFS 2020 Strategy for Ireland "*International Financial Services Sector 2015-2020*
(<http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/IFS2020.pdf>)

National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2014)