

Short university courses to provide flexible training

People looking to study or train throughout their lives will have access to short university or college courses, in a major shake-up of traditional higher education.

Universities and further education colleges have been [invited to bid](#) for a share of £2million to create new 'short courses' across five important subject areas; STEM, healthcare, digital innovation, education, and supporting Net Zero. Providers will be tasked with developing courses under these topics which could be as short as six weeks – or as long as a year if studied part-time – and which will deliver learners with a certificate they can use to build towards future training and employment.

The plans aim to put an end to the perception that traditional three- and four-year degree courses are the only route for those who want to pursue further education or training. Students will be able to space out their studies and learn at a pace that is right for them, including opting to build up their qualifications over time, within both colleges and universities. The first short courses will be available from September 2022.

Delivered by the Office for Students, the Higher Education Short Course Challenge Competition will fund up to 20 successful bids from HE providers to trial short courses aimed at boosting skills and getting more people into work.

The trial is the next major step in the Government's Lifelong Learning Entitlement which will allow adult learners to study more flexibly through short courses, allowing them to upskill, retrain, and work towards a full qualification as both their circumstances and the economy change .

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

Ensuring everyone is given the opportunity to reach their full potential, no matter their age or life stage, is a vital part of our mission to level up this country.

By trialling university short courses – backed up by new, flexible student loans – we are giving people the chance to learn at a pace that is right for them.

Learning is a lifelong journey, and this competition is a critical step in creating courses which meet the needs of learners, employers and our wider economy.

The Lifelong Learning Entitlement is a key part of the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, which will offer tens of thousands of adults the

chance to retrain in later life, gain in-demand skills and open further job opportunities.

Through this trial, government will work with universities and colleges to pilot a range of high-quality courses which support sectors vital to our economy, such as healthcare, education and STEM.

The trial will also see the first ever 'flexible' student loan arrangements – in which students will have access to a bespoke loan to support them for the duration of their short course. More flexible student finance is at the heart of the Government's plan for lifelong learning, which will see a 'Lifelong Loan Entitlement' giving learners access to financial support for different courses throughout their lifetime.

Chair of the Office for Students, Lord Wharton said:

Higher education plays a vital role in our country's economic and social prosperity. These new short courses will enable students to study in a way which works for them, rather than committing to a three or four year degree which isn't for everyone.

It is important to break down existing barriers around access to higher education, and these courses help to further add to the diversity of England's well regarded higher education system. I encourage all universities and colleges to consider applying for this important funding which will help ensure the doors of our universities are open to anyone with the ability to succeed.

David Wallace, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Customer Officer for the Student Loans Company said:

SLC exists to enable people to invest in their futures through further and higher education, as such we're delighted to be supporting the Department for Education and the Office for Students in the delivery of this trial.