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Guidance

TechFirst

TechFirst is the government's flagship tech skills programme opening pathways into the UK's fast-growing tech sector.

From:

[Department for Science, Innovation and Technology](#)

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TechFirst builds on the success of CyberFirst, which has proven impact supporting talent into the cyber

security workforce, engaging over 415,000 young people since launch. TechFirst will broaden this success to new areas of technology and grow its impact.

Our ambition is to support over 4000 graduates, researchers and innovators, and reach one million students in secondary schools across the UK.

TechFirst offers tailored support for people at key stages in the tech ecosystem: from young people beginning to explore the world of technology, to students and researchers studying critical tech subjects, to businesses looking for new talent.

On this page you can find information about the different TechFirst opportunities available.

For young people (up to 18)

TechYouth

TechYouth is for young people aged 11 to 18. We aim to reach one million students in schools and colleges across the UK with opportunities to develop their tech skills, get confident with AI and gain insight into a range of potential tech careers.

CyberFirst already supports young people interested in cyber security in schools and colleges throughout the country. By August 2026, this will grow to cover more areas of technology, with activity in every region and home nation of the UK. Delivery partners will support the programme at a local level, organising activities and inspiration days for schools and colleges in their area and recognising those making strides in technology and computing education. They will work in partnership with local industry, academia and third sector organisations.

[Cyber Explorers](#) is our interactive cyber security

learning platform for 11 to 14 year olds. It offers free interactive learning, live competitions and tailored lesson plans, with over 120,000 students registered already. We are working with industry partners to grow our virtual offer in 2026, launching content across more areas of computing and tech.

Last year's CyberFirst Girls Competition saw almost 10,000 girls take part tackling challenges from cryptography to machine learning for the chance to be crowned cyber security champions. Winners each took home a brand-new laptop and prize money for their school. We are now looking forward to an exciting TechFirst Girls Competition in 2026.

For university students

TechGrad Scholarship

TechGrad is for those who want to take the university route into a tech career. It aims to support up to 900 domestic undergraduate students and 100 master's students every year.

The undergraduate scholarship programme is designed to help students from all backgrounds build the skills and connections they need for a career in tech. It is open to students planning to study at any UK university— you just need an interest and aptitude for technology. Scholarship holders will receive £4000 per year of their degree, summer placement opportunities with top tech employers and access to an inclusive network of experts and alumni.

Applications for study in 2026 have now closed. Applications for 2027 scholarships will open in September 2026.

Semiconductors Scholarship

Semiconductors are at the heart of the UK's frontier technologies, powering innovation in areas from artificial intelligence to clean energy. As part of the [Digital and Technologies Sector Plan](#), the government is investing in the development of a highly skilled workforce to support this strategically vital sector.

To help deliver this ambition, the government is expanding its [recently established programme](#) to encourage and support undergraduate students to pursue careers in the semiconductor sector. Students looking to study undergraduate degrees in electrical and electronic engineering, computer science, materials science and physics will be able to apply for scholarships.

This programme is designed to raise awareness of the semiconductor sector and promote exciting and rewarding career pathways. Scholarship holders will benefit from opportunities to connect with industry and access professional development activities and training. Further details, including how to apply, will be shared in the coming months.

Spärck AI Scholarship

For master's students, the Spärck AI Scholarship (named after pioneering British computer scientist Karen Spärck Jones) will provide full tuition and stipend funding for master's degrees at 9 leading UK universities, paired to AI and AI interdisciplinary courses.

We are looking for talented individuals from diverse backgrounds who demonstrate leadership potential, resilience, and a clear vision for the future of AI.

As part of a prestigious cohort, you'll take part in a variety of activities that help you build connections across the AI landscape and as a group. Towards the end of your Master's course, you'll have the chance to

apply for a work placement in an AI-related field with one of our industry partners. Partner universities will soon provide details about the courses linked to the Spärck AI Scholarship.

Applications to the first cohort of the Spärck AI Scholarship opened on 28 January 2026. You can **apply through our partner universities** details below.

- [University of Bristol](#)
- [University of Cambridge](#)
- [University of Edinburgh](#)
- [Imperial College London](#)
- [University of Manchester](#)
- [University of Oxford](#)
- [University of Newcastle](#)
- [University of Southampton](#)
- [University College London \(UCL\)](#)

For researchers

TechExpert

[TechExpert](#) will support 500 domestic doctoral students, offering a stipend top-up of up to £10,000 per year with comprehensive wraparound support. Students will be conducting research in the frontier technology sectors, focusing on critical questions of national cyber security, machine learning, quantum technology and more.

TechExpert aims to make doctoral study a more competitive and financially viable option for talented graduates, while also providing a pathway back into research for those who may have left due to financial constraints. By doing so, it strengthens the UK's

innovation pipeline and contributes to a more inclusive, resilient, and high-impact research ecosystem.

Applications for supported doctoral training places can be applied for through Autumn and early Winter, with eligible Centres for Doctoral Training advertising the increased stipend. [A current list of participating universities can be found here.](#)

Turing AI Fellowships

The Turing AI Fellowships were first launched to attract and retain the best AI research talent and support world-leading academic work across the UK. Since 2021, they have supported over 80 leading researchers across UK universities and institutions, helping to build a strong national AI research and innovation ecosystem.

This year, DSIT announced an expansion of the Turing AI Fellowships to strengthen the UK's position as a global leader in AI. The expanded programme now includes 2 new fellowship opportunities:

Turing AI Global Fellowships

The Global Fellowships will bring world-class AI researchers from around the globe to the UK. Fellows will relocate to the UK and lead a 5-year programme of cutting-edge AI research. They will receive support for visas, relocation and family transition, ensuring a smooth move to the UK, and join a cohort of Turing AI Fellows shaping the UK's long-term AI ecosystem. The Turing AI Global Fellowships are part of the UK's [AI Opportunities Action Plan](#), our roadmap to ensure the UK remains a global leader in AI.

Turing AI Pioneer Interdisciplinary Fellowships

Turing AI Pioneer Interdisciplinary Fellowships will

provide established professionals from non-core AI backgrounds with resources to develop AI skills and knowledge to tackle a specific challenge in their fields. Fellows will receive research funding and be connected with AI mentors, experts, and industry leaders.

Turing AI Pioneer Fellowship applications launched via UKRI on 22 July, and closed on 14 October 2025.

[More information can be found here.](#)

For local businesses, innovators, and tech talent

TechLocal

[TechLocal](#) is a regional grant fund designed to support local employers and tech talent across all parts of the UK. Delivered by Innovate UK, it aims to help regional innovators and small businesses find skilled people, connecting them to roles that create growth. The fund closed for applications on 18 March 2026. More detail on the winning projects will be shared when they commence in July.

TechFirst Women's Programme

The TechFirst Women's Programme is designed to boost the number of women entering, staying, and progressing in high-demand tech roles. It will provide training, tailored support and role placement to at least 300 participants nationwide, promoting their long-term retention by embedding inclusive workplace culture and clear progression pathways. By lowering the cost and risk barriers that often prevent SMEs from hiring new talent, the programme enables more businesses to benefit.

For interested providers, please [find more details on the procurement process here](#). If you are interested in

being part of this future programme, either as a partner employer or participant, please watch this space for further updates.

How organisations and industry can get involved

For organisations interested in supporting the TechFirst programme and developing the talented students coming through it, please get in touch via TechFirst@dsit.gov.uk.

There are 2 main ways to support as an organisation:

- TechFirst members will lend support to the various activities within the TechFirst programme, including engaging with events, volunteering within schools and supporting scholarship work placements.
- Strategic industry partners will commit to substantial numbers of scholarship work placements, volunteering hours and other forms of in-kind support across the UK. They will support both the successful delivery and strategic oversight of the programme.

If you are an industry professional interested in supporting the programme and sharing your expertise with schools, please consider signing up to become a [STEM Ambassador](#).

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CyberFirst International Pilots

CyberFirst is the UK's established cyber security skills programme, engaging over 415,000 young people since launch. Because of its proven impact and

international reputation, we are piloting a small number of CyberFirst programmes overseas alongside the domestic TechFirst rollout.

UK delivery partners are licensed to run CyberFirst programmes in other countries under the same standards used in the UK, ensuring consistency in course content, teaching quality and learner experience. A portion of revenue from international delivery is reinvested into the UK's TechFirst ecosystem, supporting long-term programme sustainability.

The first pilots will run from mid-2026 in Saudi Arabia and Canada, testing the model across different education systems and workforce contexts.

Once the pilots conclude, we will review the findings and consider how international delivery could support the wider TechFirst programme going forward.

For essential digital skills

In addition to the TechFirst programme, government is committed to ensuring everyone has the essential digital skills they need to get on in everyday life and the workplace. To find out more about government's work to support essential digital skills, please visit:

- [Skills for Life](#) to find training courses in essential digital skills, to progress your career and stay competitive in the workplace.
- [AI Skills Boost](#) to find the training and resources to start your AI upskilling journey. This is part of government and industry's commitment to upskilling 10 million UK workers with essential AI skills for the workplace by 2030.

7 May 2026

Added details of the CyberFirst International Pilots.

30 January 2026

Cyber Explorers Cup returns from the 16 to 20 March 2026. Details about the TechLocal application added.

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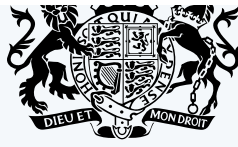
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