



Going Global Partnerships

**Call for Proposals for
Women in STEM Scholarships 2025-26
for UK Universities and Research Institutions
Call opens on 2 October 2024**

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Please review the full set of documents that forms part of this call and submit your response to the British Council by 08 November 2024, 16:00 UK time, email: WomenInSTEM.HEPs@BritishCouncil.org

1. Background

Going Global Partnerships supports universities, colleges, and wider education stakeholders, around the world to work together towards stronger, equitable, inclusive, more internationally connected higher education, science and Technical and Vocational Education and Training through international partnerships, system collaborations and opportunities to connect and share. We enable stronger transnational education, more collaborative research, higher quality delivery, enhanced learner outcomes and stronger, internationalised, equitable and inclusive systems and institutions.

Within Going Global Partnerships, the Women in STEM scholarship programme provides funding for women from eligible countries to complete a one-year master's degree in the UK. Since 2020, the British Council has delivered the programme in partnership with selected UK Universities and Research Institutions and has awarded over 300 scholarships.

The gender gap in STEM is well documented¹. Not only do women make up a small fraction of the workforce and research teams in STEM, but they are also published less, paid less and are less likely to reach positions of leadership than their male counterparts², despite being proven to be on average 8% more productive³.

Considering “a typical STEM worker now earns two-thirds more than non-STEM workers”⁴⁵, and not just in direct terms, but in ways far more reaching, for example, there is a robust and positive correlation between women’s authorship of medical research papers, and the likelihood of a study including gender and sex analysis⁶– which is increasingly recognized as a key factor in creating better , as we close the gender gap in STEM, this can be considered a key strategy in working towards the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 – Gender Equality healthcare, particularly for women and girls.

The British Council has established programmes to support Women and Girls in STEM around the world, designed with a lifecycle approach in mind, from inspiring young girls to stay in STEM to supporting women working in STEM fields reach positions of leadership and network with their peers in their region and the UK.

Women in STEM Scholarships 2025-26 is being launched in partnership with the following funders and partners:

- State of Paraíba Research Support Foundation - FAPESQ
- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK
- Fundacion Coppel, Mexico
- ASEAN UK -SAGE
- Sir Shiu Kin Tang Educational Trust, Hong Kong

¹ <https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/the-stem-gap/>

² <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/women-science>

³ <https://publications.iadb.org/en/gender-gaps-and-scientific-productivity-middle-income-countries-evidence-mexico>

⁴ https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/01/09/women-and-men-in-stem-often-at-odds-over-workplace-equity/ps_2018-01-09_stem_1-09/

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

⁶ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-017-0235-x>

2. Objectives

Access to education is one contributing factor leading to the underrepresentation of women in STEM. The objective of this programme is to help address this situation by providing opportunities for women from the countries listed below to continue with their studies and research in STEM subjects. The table below lists the countries from which eligible applicants can apply.

Master scholarships are open to applicants from all countries listed below.

AMERICAS	EAST ASIA	WIDER EUROPE
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Brazil2. Mexico	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Brunei Darussalam2. Cambodia3. Indonesia4. Laos People's Democratic Republic5. Malaysia6. Myanmar7. Philippines8. Singapore9. Thailand10. Viet Nam11. Timor-Leste12. <i>Hong Kong (Non-ODA)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Kazakhstan2. Uzbekistan3. Turkey4. Azerbaijan5. Albania6. Bosnia and Herzegovina7. Kosovo8. Montenegro9. North Macedonia10. Serbia

In particular, the British Council Scholarship for Women in STEM project will:

Significantly increase the number of opportunities for women from eligible countries able to complete a UK master's degree in the 2025-26 academic year.

Ensure scholar selection will be based on an individual's academic potential, demonstrated case for financial support and first significant international experience (i.e., lack of previous opportunities for studying in the UK or other non-ODA countries).

We will be particularly encouraging of women whose identities include multiple intersecting factors, including race, class, and religion. This scholarship is open for women and anyone identifying as a woman.

Provide the selected scholars with a foundation to launch their careers in higher education and research in their home country.

Enable women scholars to promote and enhance science and innovation in their home country through their exposure to the expertise in the UK's renowned STEM research sector.

Ensure scholars create strong and lasting connections with the UK through active engagement with [Alumni UK](#) network in the, directly contributing towards/supporting the success of the alumni network and this programme in future iterations of the Scholarship.

Provide a platform for the countries included in this call and the UK to work together to address the significant challenge of the global gender gap in STEM.

3. Opportunity for UK Universities and Research Institutions

Through this project, the British Council, in partnership with selected universities and research institutions, will be able to fund at least 40 full scholarships, covering all academic and living expenses, for women to study full-time, a 1-year Master's programme in the UK beginning in Sep/Oct 2025.

This call seeks proposals from UK universities and research institutions, with a commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)⁷, and Anti Racism⁸ who wish to host **Master's scholars**.

For all other eligible countries, please consider that the programmes selected should meet the **spirit of ODA**⁹, with the potential to focus on outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth of countries on the OECD DAC list (all countries included in this Call are on the DAC list).

4. Budget and Cohorts

This call is for UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or Research Institutions to host cohorts of five master's students each. The grant amount for each **cohort is £180,000**, which the British Council will pay as a grant in advance to the UK Higher Education Institutions or Research Institution selected for that cohort in December 2024, after successful signing of Grant Agreements.

For each cohort, the Higher Education Institution or Research Institution and the British Council will select applicants to be recipients of full scholarships (with an average value of £36,000 per scholar) to study in the UK. This is expected to be sufficient for institutions to make at least 5 scholarship awards.

Should additional funding become available during the application process, the British Council may increase the total funding allocated to some of the cohorts, and subsequently increase the number of expected scholarships allocated. We expect to award at least one bid per cohort description in the table below.

The Grant is not transferable, and any underspend will need to be returned to the British Council.

Higher Education Institutions and Research Institutions may apply to any of the master's cohorts below. When applying to the cohorts, each institution must establish their order of preference in the Application form.

⁷ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-values/equality-diversity-inclusion>

⁸ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-values/anti-racism-action-plan>

⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>

The cohorts available are the following:

4.1 Cohorts for Masters programmes

Cohort	Description
East Asia (1)	<p>This cohort is supported by ASEAN-UK SAGE.</p> <p>Cohort will comprise 5 students from the list of eligible countries as below:</p> <p>At least one scholar must come from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Viet Nam, or Timor-Leste.</p> <p>The master’s programmes must be ODA compliant and drawn from the eligible programme areas listed as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Life Sciences • Climate Change, Environment and Risk Reduction • Energy Transition • Agriculture • Industry 4.0 / Digital Transformation • Disaster Resilient Infrastructure • Conversion masters from BA/MA in a range of disciplines <p>Within each cohort, a range of eligible master’s programmes may be offered by a single institution, including conversion Master’s. Institutions need to ensure geographical spread across countries in the region, when there are enough applications that meet the criteria.</p> <p><i>*Final split of geographies will be agreed in discussion with awarded institution.</i></p>
East Asia (2)	<p>This cohort is supported by ASEAN-UK SAGE.</p> <p>Cohort will comprise 6 students from the list of eligible countries listed as below:</p> <p>At least one scholar must come from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, or Timor-Leste.</p> <p>The Master’s programmes must be ODA compliant and drawn from the eligible programme areas listed as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Life Sciences • Climate Change, Environment and Risk Reduction

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Transition • Agriculture • Industry 4.0 / Digital Transformation • Disaster Resilient Infrastructure • Conversion masters from BA/MA in a range of disciplines <p>Within each cohort, a range of eligible Master’s programmes may be offered by a single institution, including conversion Master’s. Institutions need to ensure geographical spread across countries in the region, when there are enough applications that meet the criteria.</p> <p><i>*Final split of geographies will be agreed in discussion with awarded institution.</i></p>
East Asia (3)	<p>This non-ODA cohort is for students from Hong Kong only. The cohort will comprise 4 students from Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Cohort for 2025-26 is funded by the Sir Shiu Kin Tang Educational Trust.</p> <p>Bids for this cohort and the students recruited are not restricted by ODA compliance on courses offered. However, there are priority themes for Hong Kong, where we can support students pursuing master’s qualifications in economics, law, management, project planning, international relations, diplomacy, education, business administration, and environmental studies.</p>
Americas - Brazil 1	<p>Cohort will comprise 5 students from Brazil.</p> <p>The master’s programmes must be ODA compliant and drawn from the eligible programme areas listed as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Life Sciences • Climate Change, Environment and Risk Reduction • Energy Transition • Agriculture • Industry 4.0 / Digital Transformation • Disaster Resilient Infrastructure • Conversion masters from BA/MA in a range of disciplines <p>Within each cohort, a range of eligible master’s programmes may be offered by a single institution, including conversion Masters.</p>
Americas - Brazil 2	<p>This cohort is funded by the State of Paraíba Research Support Foundation - FAPESQ</p> <p>Cohort will comprise 5 students from Paraíba in Brazil.</p> <p>The Master’s programmes must be ODA compliant and drawn from the eligible programme areas listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital transformation. • Climate change.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated sustainable local development and economic inclusion. • Renewable energy and energy security. • Agro industrialisation • Entrepreneurship and innovation. <p>Within each cohort, a range of eligible Master's programmes may be offered by a single institution, including conversion Masters.</p>
Americas - Mexico	<p>This cohort is supported by Fundacion Coppel, Mexico</p> <p>Cohort will comprise 5 students from Mexico</p> <p>Programme areas for scholars from Mexico can be from these eligible programme areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Life Sciences • Climate Change, Environment and Risk Reduction • Energy Transition • Agriculture • Industry 4.0 / Digital Transformation • Disaster Resilient Infrastructure • Conversion masters from BA/MA in a range of disciplines <p>Within each cohort, a range of eligible master's programmes may be offered by a single institution, including conversion Masters</p>
Wider Europe 1	<p>Cohort will comprise 5 students from the list of eligible countries as below:</p> <p>Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia</p> <p>The master's programmes must be ODA compliant and drawn from the eligible programme areas listed as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Life Sciences • Climate Change, Environment and Risk Reduction • Energy Transition • Agriculture • Industry 4.0 / Digital Transformation • Disaster Resilient Infrastructure • Conversion masters from BA/MA in a range of disciplines <p>Within each cohort, a range of eligible master's programmes may be offered by a single institution, including conversion Master's. Institutions need to ensure geographical spread across countries in the region, when there are enough applications that meet the criteria.</p>
Wider Europe - 2	<p>Cohort will comprise 5 students from the list of eligible countries as below:</p>

	<p>Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia</p> <p>The master's programmes must be ODA compliant and drawn from the eligible programme areas listed as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Life Sciences • Climate Change, Environment and Risk Reduction • Energy Transition • Agriculture • Industry 4.0 / Digital Transformation • Disaster Resilient Infrastructure • Conversion masters from BA/MA in a range of disciplines <p>Within each cohort, a range of eligible master's programmes may be offered by a single institution, including conversion Master's. Institutions need to ensure geographical spread across countries in the region, when there are enough applications that meet the criteria.</p>
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5. Expected Deliverables

The grant given to the university should be administered as a scholarship for the selected scholars. The scholarship should cover all costs (up to agreed limits for each element) associated with the programme study including:

- Tuition fees.
- Up to 12-months monthly stipend at the rate of £1603 per month to cover costs of living, including accommodation. The stipend should align with any increase in rates set by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office for HMG awarded scholarships.
- IELTS exam fee (for scholars without a valid test of English).
- Return economy-class travel from home country to UK.
- Study-related costs, such as essential travel, materials, equipment, thesis printing etc.
- Visa and insurance / NHS surcharge costs.
- Ad hoc costs (heavy baggage allowance, etc.)
- Reasonable adjustments costs for scholars with disabilities

Excluded costs:

- The grant cannot cover application fees for Master's courses. We ask that the universities waive or cover any application fees for the applicants, and that this provision is clearly communicated to the Admissions teams ahead of time, to avoid any confusion.
- Higher Education Institutions must ensure that prospective students applying for this scholarship are not asked for a deposit to secure admission to the course. The intention of the scheme is to support candidates who could not self-fund study in the UK, therefore we do not expect them to pay deposits in advance to hold a place.
- Higher Education Institutions should only ask candidates to make the final decision on acceptance of their course offers once the final selection is completed and communicated to candidates. If a candidate is accepted on the course but not awarded the scholarship,

they can make an informed decision on whether to proceed with the course at their own expense.

- For students starting on courses after 1 January 2024, dependents will no longer be able to accompany postgraduate students on Level 7 (master's) courses. We will strictly abide by the immigration regulations in place at the time of the awards, and the budget for the Women in STEM scheme will no longer be able to cover dependent support.

Higher Education Institutions who would like to host students under this scheme would be expected to co-fund the scholarships by way of making up any shortfall in funding, if applicable, for the up-to 12-month period that the £36,000 grant does not cover. This can be cash or in-kind, such as a reduction on the tuition fees or discounted university accommodation.

Host Higher Education Institutions, through their international student support structures, would be expected to provide support in the lead up to and throughout the up-to 12-month term. This should include:

- Communications prior to arrival – including support for visa application, arrival to the UK etc.
- Support for the international student experience, including mentoring and welfare support.
- Arranging accommodation or housing for the scholar (to include final exam period)
- General information about adapting to living in the UK.
- Opportunities for skills development – including links with industry and networking.
- A nominated point of contact for any issues or concerns and clear safeguarding procedure.
- Reporting requirements: Universities participating in the programme will have the following reporting commitments, templates of which will be issued by the British Council:
 - Report on scholars hosted by the university – this will be in three parts which have to be submitted in November 2025, April 2026 and December 2026.
 - An end of course report on the overall programme (due December 2026).

6. Higher Education Institutions Participation Criteria

- All participating institutions must be listed on the UK Home Office Register of Student Route Sponsors (approved Education Providers) and also QAA/ OfS/ SFC/ HEFCW/ DfE inspected and approved.
- Higher Education Institutions should propose 1-year Master's programmes, which meet the spirit of ODA funding where required, and will therefore be included in the scheme.
- Higher Education Institutions should demonstrate how they will connect scholars with industry partners and provide opportunities for internships, placements, or networking for the students throughout their period of study.
- Higher Education Institutions should demonstrate how they will support welfare of applicants and the "student experience" through a lens of Safeguarding and EDI.
- Desirable: special consideration will be given to Higher Education Institutions that can contribute with cash or in-kind to the overall Scholarship programme (beyond making up any projected shortfall) potentially increasing the number of scholarships available in

their cohort, and/or that can demonstrate added value to the overall student study and welfare experience.

7. How will the programme be managed?

The British Council aims to pay £180,000 to the selected Higher Education Institution in November/December 2024 following signing of the grant agreement, which will then be administered as a bursary to the selected scholars by the Higher Education institution in the academic year 2025-26.

- The selected Higher Education institutions are expected to adhere to the timelines with all aspects of this scheme mentioned on Section 11 at page 13 of this document.
- The selected Higher Education Institutions will advertise the opportunities on their institution's portal and encourage applications to their selected programmes.
- The British Council will support wide promotion of the Scholarship and programme in the eligible countries.
- The Higher Education Institutions will manage the application process, submitting to the British Council a shortlist with the pre-selection of the scholars. It is important to note that the British Council will work with the institutions to ensure geographic reach to select the final awardees.
- Higher Education Institutions are required to share all applicant data with the British Council and not only of the shortlisted applicants.
- The application data should be shared with British Council using the Shortlist Submission template. The template will be shared with selected institutions ahead of submission timeline.
- Once successful applicants have been confirmed, the UK institutions are required to share full applications of awarded scholars with British Council.

Once successful applicants have been confirmed, the UK Institutions will administer the scholarship to each recipient in their awarding cohort, covering all academic and living expenses (as per page 8).

The Higher Education Institutions selected to receive scholars will go through a screening process and shall then sign a Grant Agreement with the British Council. This Grant Agreement will detail all items to be funded, payment methods, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting requirements. A template Grant Agreement can be found in the Annexes of this Call.

The Higher Education Institution will also be responsible for reporting proof of enrolment in the Master's programme by the end of October 2025

8. Eligibility and selection of scholars

The following guidelines should be considered for the selection of scholars. Scholars must:

- Be or identify as a woman.
- Be a passport holder and permanent resident of one of the eligible countries listed on page 3.

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- Meet the entry requirement of the UK Higher Education Institution for the course they apply for, including academic equivalents and English language.
 - The candidate must have completed all components of an undergraduate degree at the time of submitting the application for the scholarship; British Council can consider final awards pending on a case-by-case basis.
 - Demonstrate case for financial support / socio-economic need¹⁰
 - Not be in receipt of financial support or funding towards their study programme in the UK from any other source and not be able to privately fund their UK studies.
 - Preference should be given to candidates who have not had any international exposure prior to this scheme. International experience will also include any third country other than the UK.
 - Have not previously studied at degree level or higher in the UK or lived recently in the UK. Distance learning at a UK university or study at a UK branch campus in another country will also be considered as studying in the UK.
 - Indicate their preference for course and institution in the case of applying to multiple institutions.
 - Meet the English language requirement of the UK Higher Education Institution.
 - Be motivated and academically able to follow and benefit from a UK postgraduate taught course.
 - Be active in the field with work experience or with a proven interest in the proposed subject area.
 - Be willing to demonstrate future contribution to capacity-building and socio-economic advancement of their home country through the benefits achieved after graduating from UK higher education.
 - Agree to maintain contact with the British Council and act as an ambassador for the UK and engage with activities as part of a Scholarships for Women in STEM alumnus during and after their studies in the UK.
 - Demonstrate a plan and a passion to engage other women and girls in STEM from their home country.
 - Agree to their personal data being shared with the British Council for purposes of assessment and promotional activity, as a condition of applying for the scholarship.
 - Agree to return to their country of citizenship for a minimum of two years after their scholarship award has ended.

A candidate will not be eligible for a British Council Scholarships for Women in STEM if they:

- Hold dual British citizenship.
- Are an employee, a former employee, or relative (*) of an employee of Her Majesty's Government (including but not limited to: British Embassies/High Commissions; Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Department for Energy Security and Net

¹⁰ To assess socio-economic need at the point of scholar's application, the British Council will provide guidelines and a standard evaluation framework that institutions will be expected to incorporate into their application process.

Zero (DESNZ) and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT); Department for International Trade; the Ministry of Defence; and the Home Office)

- Are an employee, a former employee, or relative (*) of an employee of the British Council Scholarships for Women in STEM – eligible countries.

(*): *Relatives are defined as parents or stepparents, siblings or stepsiblings, children or stepchildren, spouse, civil partner, or unmarried partner (where the couple have been in a relationship akin to marriage or civil partnership for at least two years).*

- Are currently in receipt of financial support or funding towards your study programme in the UK from any other source.
- Have previously studied in the UK with funding from a UK Government-funded scholarship or a UK institutional scholarship/financial bursary, as well as those who privately funded their UK studies.

10. Scholarship branding

The scholarships will be branded as “British Council Scholarships for Women in STEM”. Branding guidelines will be included in the grant agreement.

11. Timeline

Please consider the following indicative timeline for the implementation of this programme:

Date	Action
2 October 2024	Call opens for UK Higher Education Institution
8 November 2024	Deadline for submission of proposal by HEIs
Early November 2024	Panel assessments of proposals
Mid-November 2024	The British Council notifies institutions of results
November - December 2024	Grant agreements are signed between the British Council and participating institutions and grants are disbursed.
December 2024	Virtual information session hosted by British Council with all successful universities
December 2024	Institutions to share promotional content to be used in overall marketing campaign.
December 2024 - January 2025	Launch of the Scholarships marketing campaigns in all eligible countries listed in this call.

January 2025- April 2025	Application to apply for the scheme is open for students. Universities to advertise scheme on their portals and share link with British Council
30 April 2025	Deadline for scholars to apply to the programme. The deadline is to be strictly followed by all successful Higher Education Institutions. However, if there is a specific reason for preponing-postponing this date the Institutes need to inform British Council in advance.
By 15 May 2025	Institutions submit shortlisted candidates to the British Council. The shortlist template will be shared by British Council ahead of submission date.
By 30 May 2025	British Council to confirm shortlisted candidates to HEIs. British Council to share Terms and Conditions document to be signed by selected scholars.
By 12 June 2025	Higher Education Institutions to make offer to selected scholars agreed with the British Council.
15 July 2025	HEIs to confirm receipt of signed copy of British Council Terms and Conditions from successful scholars.
July- September 2025	HEIs provide support to scholars for their arrival into the UK
September/October 2025	Courses start in the UK
31 October 2025	Deadline for HEIs to report proof of enrolment in the Master's programme
April 2026	HEIs will submit a progress report on the scholars
December 2026	HEIs will submit a final report to the British Council.

12. How to Apply

- In order to participate in this call, UK institutions are requested to send the required supporting documents listed below as attachments to womeninstem.HEPs@britishcouncil.org
- The subject line should read “*Scholarships for Women in STEM – Expression of Interest 2025-26 _Name of Institution*”, by the deadline of 8 November 2024
- The forms required for submitting your response proposal are listed below:
 1. Women in STEM Application Form for HEIs 2025-26
 2. Women in STEM Application Annex 1 -Track Record HEIs 2025-26
 3. Women in STEM Application Annex 2 Budget template HEIs 2025-26

4. Grant Agreement template Annex 4 (for reference purpose only)

Higher Education Institutions participating in this call must submit their proposals with all supporting documents. Submissions which are incomplete or submitted in a format other than the templates provided will be regarded as ineligible.

13. Selection Criteria

The following selection criteria will be used:

Criteria	%
Selection and suitability of Master's programmes), including ODA compliance and relevance to Sustainable Development Goals.	25%
Holistic support offered to scholars and university's commitment to EDI values and safeguarding?	25%
Cash or in-kind contributions to the programme	25%
Professional/Industry and career development opportunities for the Scholars, linked to programmes	15%
Track Record in administering similar schemes	10%

If eligible institutions are awarded evaluation scores within 5% of each other, the British Council reserves the right to award the grant with consideration to the geographical spread of institutions across the UK.

All participating institutions will be informed of the results of the bid, and written feedback will be provided upon request.