

Newcastle University Spärck AI Scholarship

Regulations 2026–27

1. Introduction

Newcastle University is pleased to offer 10 Spärck AI Scholarships, a UK government-funded scholarship programme named after pioneering British computer scientist Karen Spärck Jones. The scholarships are funded primarily by the UK's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

Selected scholars will join a dynamic, world-class cohort of ambitious, adaptable individuals who demonstrate leadership potential, resilience, and a clear vision for the future of AI. You'll be empowered to drive innovation and contribute meaningfully to the UK's AI ecosystem—emerging as part of the next generation of AI leaders.

Through industry exposure, mentorship, and structured cohort activities, you'll gain the skills and networks needed to shape responsible, high-impact AI development across research, government, and industry.

Throughout the year, you'll take part in a range of activities designed to build connections within your cohort and with professionals across the AI landscape, acting as a prestigious community of future AI leaders. Towards the end of your Master's course, you'll have the opportunity to apply for a work placement with one of our industry partners in an AI-related field.

These regulations govern the award of the scholarship for the 2026–27 academic year.

2. Eligibility

To be eligible for the Spärck AI Scholarship, applicants must:

- be domiciled in one of the following countries at the time of application:
 - Algeria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, UAE, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Uzbekistan, Vietnam or Zimbabwe
- hold an offer of admission for a full-time eligible postgraduate taught programme at Newcastle University
- demonstrate evidence of the knowledge, skills, and motivation to contribute to the field of AI, including academic accomplishments, practical experience, personal projects, or other indicators of leadership and innovation not be in receipt of another Newcastle University scholarship or award that covers full tuition fees

We are committed to equity of opportunity and to attracting talented students from a wide range of backgrounds. Alongside our assessment of merit, and where applicants

are of equivalent merit, we will take contextual factors into account and look favourably on applicants who are:

- from an ethnic group that is under-represented at Newcastle University
- applicants who have experienced being in care as a young person
- women
- applicants with a disability, including, but not limited to, those with sensory and/or mobility impairments, long-term mental health conditions, neurodivergences, long-term illnesses, and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs)
- first-generation students (whose parents or immediate caregivers did not go to university)
- an estranged person, who no longer has the support of your family
- a refugee, seeking asylum in the United Kingdom or under humanitarian protection
- a parent/carer with children under the age of 17 or a recognised carer

3. Eligible Programmes

The scholarship is available for selected postgraduate taught programmes offered by Newcastle University. The eligible programmes are as follows:

- MSc Data Science
- MSc Data Science and Artificial Intelligence
- MSc Data Science and Sport
- MSc Data Science and Digital Humanities
- MSc Data Science and Industrial Biotechnology
- MSc Data Science and Finance
- MSc Advanced Data Science
- MSc Advanced Data Science with Statistics
- MSc Advanced Data Science with Health
- MSc Advanced Artificial Intelligence
- MSc Robotics and Artificial Intelligence
- MSc Geospatial Artificial Intelligence
- MSc Human-Centred Artificial Intelligence

4. Number of Awards

Ten scholarships are available for 2026-2027 entry. The University reserves the right to vary the number of awards offered.

5. Value of the Scholarship

The scholarship covers:

- **full tuition fees** for the duration of the programme
- **a living allowance**, set in accordance with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) rates

The living allowance is currently **£20,780** and will be brought into line with the UKRI minimum rate for the **2026/27 academic year**.

6. Duration

The scholarship is valid for the normal period of registration for the approved programme, subject to satisfactory academic progress.

7. Payment of the Award

Tuition fees will be paid directly to the University. The living allowance will be paid in instalments according to the University's standard payment schedule.

8. Conditions of Award

Scholarship holders must:

- enrol on and remain registered for the approved programme
- maintain satisfactory academic progress and attendance
- comply with all University regulations and policies

All scholarship holders must adhere to the scholarship conditions imposed by DSIT.

Failure to meet these conditions may result in withdrawal of the scholarship.

9. Deferral and Withdrawal

The scholarship cannot be deferred to a later academic year. If a student withdraws from their programme, the scholarship will be withdrawn and payments may cease.

10. Application Process

The scholarship application deadline is 17 April 2026.

Eligible applicants must submit a scholarship application by the stated deadline. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

11. Selection Process

We are looking to recruit candidates from a broad range of backgrounds who can demonstrate how they meet some of the following characteristics. Upon receipt of your application, assessors will consider these qualities as part of the selection process, recognising that candidates may demonstrate them in different ways and through varied experiences:

Strengths:

- Curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving
- Comfort with ambiguity and change
- Strong communication

- Entrepreneurial mindset and leadership potential
- Teamwork

Motivations:

- What it means to be part of a government-funded scholarship and how you would leverage this opportunity
- Why you want to be part of a cohort-based programme
- Your motivation to contribute to the AI ecosystem in the UK

Scholarship applicants will be scored on their answers and ranked by score, with consideration to our equity criteria in Section 2.

- The University's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

12. Publicity

Recipients may be asked to participate in promotional activities or provide testimonials as part of the scholarship conditions.

13. Amendments

Newcastle University reserves the right to amend these regulations at any time.