# UK launches Sparck AI scholarships to boost tech talent



The UK Government has launched the Sparck AI scholarships, a new initiative to develop the next generation of artificial intelligence talent. Named after pioneering British computer scientist Karen Sparck Jones, the programme will run across nine universities, with the University of Southampton among its key partners.

The scholarships offer full funding for tuition and living costs, alongside access to industry placements, mentoring and partnerships with firms such as Darktrace, Faculty and Quantexa. Designed to accelerate AI innovation, the scheme aims to open direct routes into high-skilled tech employment.

“This is a nationally significant opportunity to attract talented students to the UK to benefit from our world-leading expertise in AI,” said Mark Spearing, Vice-President for Research and Enterprise at the University of Southampton.

The programme complements the expanded Turing Pioneer Fellowships and aligns with the AI Opportunities Action Plan, which sets out a roadmap for strengthening the UK’s AI sector. Announced during London Tech Week, the scholarships form part of the Government’s broader Plan for Change.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak emphasised the importance of nurturing AI talent to drive economic growth and innovation. Technology Secretary Peter Kyle said the scheme would help build a future-ready workforce by enabling students to complete master's degrees in AI.

A strong emphasis on practical experience sets the programme apart. Partner companies will provide mentorship and insights into real-world applications of AI in areas including cybersecurity, analytics and machine learning.

With its mix of academic rigour and industry collaboration, the Sparck AI scholarship scheme is set to play a key role in keeping the UK at the forefront of global AI development. As applications open, the initiative marks a major investment in the skills and technologies shaping the country's future.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/25224646.southampton-university-provide-sparck-ai-scholarships/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-announces-new-ai-scholarships-to-boost-talent-pool> - The UK government has announced a new initiative to support young people with exceptional talent in artificial intelligence (AI). The Sparck AI scholarships will be available at nine universities, including the University of Southampton, as part of a fellowship programme aimed at making Britain a global leader in AI. The programme will be fully funded, covering both tuition and living expenses, and will provide students with unparalleled access to industry partnerships, work placements, and mentorship opportunities, including with firms like Darktrace, Faculty, and Quantexa. The scholarships are named after pioneering British computer scientist Karen Sparck Jones.
3. <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/news/2025/06/sparck-ai-scholarships.page> - The University of Southampton is excited to be a founding partner in the Sparck AI Scholarship programme. Mark Spearing, Vice-President for Research and Enterprise at the university, stated that this is a nationally significant opportunity to attract talented students to the UK to take advantage of the university's world-leading expertise and education in artificial intelligence. The scholarships aim to drive forward AI innovation and provide students with a direct route into highly skilled jobs in the UK's tech sector.
4. <https://www.turing.ac.uk/research/research-projects/sparck-ai-scholarships> - The Sparck AI scholarships and expanded Turing Pioneer Fellowships follow recommendations from the AI Opportunities Action Plan and are part of a broader strategy to develop the UK's AI sector. These initiatives are part of a national skills drive announced at London Tech Week by the Prime Minister. Technology Secretary Peter Kyle stated that the government is providing unique opportunities for talented young people to take up master’s degrees in AI, with fully funded tuition and unparalleled access to industry, aiming to build a workforce fit for the future and boost economic growth as part of the Plan for Change.
5. <https://www.darktrace.com/en/about-us> - Darktrace is a leading cybersecurity firm that uses AI to detect and respond to cyber threats in real-time. The company offers mentorship opportunities as part of the Sparck AI scholarships, providing students with practical experience in applying AI to real-world challenges. Darktrace's innovative approach to cybersecurity has made it a key partner in the UK's efforts to develop AI talent and drive forward AI innovation.
6. <https://www.faculty.ai/about> - Faculty is a UK-based AI company that collaborates with organisations to build AI solutions. As part of the Sparck AI scholarships, Faculty offers mentorship opportunities, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in developing AI applications. The company's expertise in AI and its commitment to fostering talent make it a valuable partner in the initiative to boost AI skills in the UK.
7. <https://www.quantexa.com/about> - Quantexa is a global data and analytics company that uses AI to help organisations make better decisions. Through the Sparck AI scholarships, Quantexa provides mentorship opportunities, enabling students to work on real-world AI projects. The company's focus on data-driven decision-making and its innovative use of AI align with the goals of the scholarship programme to develop the UK's AI sector.