

# HSE University Offers Free Tuition to Applicants Who Sign Military Contracts

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Inside the Higher School of Economics campus in Moscow. **Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency**

The Higher School of Economics, one of Russia's most prestigious universities, [announced](#) Thursday that it will offer free tuition to applicants who sign a one-year military contract to fight in Ukraine, even if they fail to meet the university's entrance exam requirements.

According to the university's statement, applicants can enroll immediately but must complete one year of military service before they can actually begin their chosen university-funded bachelor's or master's program. While serving, these recruits will be placed in either a preparatory or a continuing education program, depending on whether they already hold a degree.

"This option is also suitable for applicants who fall short of budget spots," HSE said, referring to tuition-free spots funded by the Russian government.

The university is offering specific enlistment options with either the BARS volunteer formation or a dedicated drone forces unit.

Russia has increasingly turned to universities as a fresh source of recruits for the war against Ukraine as enlistment numbers [dwindle](#) and war casualties [soar](#) into the hundreds of thousands.

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In January, HSE publicly [stated](#) that it is actively encouraging students who struggle with their academic obligations to enlist in the military. At the time, legal experts accused the university of misleading students by promising limited, one-year contracts, even though President Vladimir Putin’s 2022 mobilization decree explicitly makes all military contracts indefinite for the duration of the war.

HSE and other Russian universities reserve 10% of their tuition-free spots for military personnel and their families. More than 28,000 students were [admitted](#) under those military quotas in 2025, which is nearly double the number from the previous year.

Russia’s Defense Ministry has dismissed reports that university students are being pressured to join its drone forces.

Separately, on Thursday, the Defense Ministry [announced](#) that it had completed its first spring draft under its newly revamped, year-round conscription system. Around 141,000 conscripts were sent to military service this spring.

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