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## Northumbria helps to plug digital skills gap as founder member of new national Institute of Coding

Northumbria University is to play a leading role in a new £40 million nationwide Institute of Coding, established to plug the digital skills gap and give UK an edge in the global digital economy.

Launched by Prime Minister Theresa May at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the [Institute of Coding](#) aims to boost the employability of digital specialists and bring more people from underrepresented groups into the tech sector, which is growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy.

More than 500,000 highly trained computer scientists will be needed by 2022 – three times the number of UK Computer Sciences graduates in the last 10 years – but a gap in digital skills means many need a wider skills base to be more attractive to employers. The Government has committed £20 million funding, via the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), matched by more than £20 million from partner organisations, to address this issue.

The Institute, led by the University of Bath, will bring together a world-class consortium of 25 universities – including Northumbria, Newcastle and Sunderland in the North East region – with national and international corporations such as IBM, Cisco and Microsoft, SMEs, training providers and professional bodies, such as the British Computer Society. They will work together through the Institute to develop apprenticeship, undergraduate and masters programmes throughout the UK.

It will develop and deliver innovative, industry-focused higher education across the UK, with a vision to enhance the education and employability of every learner, and ensure that employers and individuals across the UK can access the skills they need to compete in the global digital economy.

As a founder member, Northumbria's expertise in working with industrial partners and in the delivery of degree apprenticeships, places the University in an excellent position to help the Institute to close skill gaps in this sector. This will be of particular benefit in the region, where Northumbria will work in partnership with Newcastle and Sunderland Universities as the North East hub of the Institute of Coding.

The University will receive £512,000 from HEFCE to deliver its contribution to the project and will match-fund this amount with contributions from industrial partners.

In a further boost to the region's digital skills sector, the University will shortly be opening a new [purpose-built £7 million building](#) for the 1,200 students based in the [Department of Computer and Information Sciences](#), equipping them with the latest cutting-edge technologies for learning and research. The department encompasses the University's research and teaching in areas including computer science, games, animation and visual effects, computer forensics and security, digital networks and technologies, library management, big data and information sciences.

Professor Andrew Wathey CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University, said: “The digital skills shortage is a clear concern for the North East, in view of its rapidly growing digital sector, so we are delighted to be a part of this exciting and innovative collaboration, working with other universities and industry partners in the region and across the UK to help address this challenge.

“The Institute of Coding will focus on priorities which Northumbria is well-placed to contribute, meeting the need for high-quality programmes to educate students and teachers and to upskill staff working in the sector, and drawing especially on Northumbria’s expertise in data analytics, artificial intelligence, cyber security, and human-computer interaction.”

Universities Minister, Sam Gyimah, said: “A world-class pipeline of digital skills are essential to the UK’s ability to shape our future. By working together, universities, employers and industry leaders can help graduates build the right skills, in fields from cybersecurity to artificial intelligence to industrial design.

“The Institute of Coding will play a central role in this. Employers will have a tangible input to the curriculum, working hand-in-hand with universities to develop specialist skills in areas where they are needed most. As we have outlined in the Industrial Strategy, this is part of our ambition to embrace technological change and give us a more competitive edge in the future.”

Dr Rachid Hourizi, Director of the Institute of Coding, said: “The strength of the Institute of Coding lies in the fact that it brings together educators, employers and outreach groups to co-develop digital skills education at undergraduate and masters level for learners in universities, at work and in previously under-supported groups across the country.

“In addition, we’ll work with our partners to target underrepresented talent through outreach activities, tailored and inclusive curricula, flexible delivery and removal of barriers to working in the industry.”

For university students, the Institute will deliver a range of industry-accredited courses that include top quality computer science teaching alongside the business skills, interpersonal skills and real-world experience required for success in the digital economy. Learners already working in industry will benefit from courses designed to ensure that their skills are up-

to-date, from both traditional universities and education providers such as the Open University, Birkbeck and FutureLearn.

The Institute will also work with outreach and community groups, schools and FE colleges to encourage a larger number of currently under-represented groups into digital education. One early focus will be on increasing the number of women choosing to work in the digital sector and on support for those returning to work. Nationally, women currently represent just 5% of computer scientists.

Any business wanting to find out more about Northumbria University's role in the Institute of Coding, or to explore opportunities to work together, should contact [Dr Huseyin Seker](#), the University's Academic Lead and Co-Investigator for the Institute of Coding, in the first instance.

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## UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

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