LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

BAROMETER REPORT 2024

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BAROMETER REPORT 2024

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Burnley College

Blackburn College

Runshaw College

Nelson & Colne College Group

Our research partners include:

Edge Hill University

Lancaster University

University of Central Lancashire UCLan

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COLLABORATION, FLEXIBILITY AND PROSPERITY

Linda Dean,
Managing Director of The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology is fundamentally about prosperity.

This government initiative is about bringing together industry and education to benefit our regions and we're hugely proud to be leading the charge.

There are about 80,000 businesses and population numbering 2m in our region, which the IoT has the potential to reach and impact positively. But we cannot do that alone, and that's why we've adopted a pan-Lancashire and Cumbria approach as a cluster of colleges, universities and employers.

Collaboration will ensure we can grow the economy together and all benefit both now and in years to come.

In Lancashire and Cumbria, we've spent £8.7m on state-of-the-art facilities that bring our students to the cutting edge of the industries they want to work in. No longer is education detached from the world around it, but mirroring the environment of the businesses our students will be going on to work in and help grow.

On a day-to-day basis my colleagues in our partner colleges are having ongoing conversations as we create a curriculum for now and the future. We know the landscape is evolving constantly and that means the skills we teach now may not be relevant in the next ten years.

To ensure we meet these needs, we're forming employer advisory groups in health, digital and engineering to enable a continuous flow of ideas and valuable insight that will shape what we offer. This will ensure we have the employees we need for the future who can get straight to work in their chosen industries.

There's a legacy piece for the IoT, too. If people are able to secure level four or five qualifications, they are more likely to be able to secure well paid employment and that's the difference for their life chances and the community.

This Skills Barometer sets out the findings of our employer engagement teams that perform valuable outreach work in our business communities to ensure we provide exactly what is needed for the region to prosper.

The IoT is a journey for Lancashire and Cumbria and we look forward to many more employers and students coming on that journey with us.

LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Soft skills carry equal weight

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology's employer engagement teams have found businesses report a need for better education around how to behave in the workplace, how to dress, telephony skills and general communication – from speaking to colleagues and customers to writing emails.

This is why all of the IoT's courses include employability skills training to ensure candidates are work ready.

In Blackpool, the IoT has worked with Vodafone to create a digital degree to suit the needs of the business, which includes a skills bootcamp to ensure candidates are employability ready, knowing exactly what to do when they set foot in the workplace.

THE IoT IS A REAL OPPORTUNITY – MAKE THE MOST OF IT

Sarah Hall,
Director for B&FC for Business, Blackpool and The Fylde College

SHORTER COURSES CAN BE A TRY-BEFORE-YOU-COMMIT OPTION

WE NEED TO HELP SMES AND CUT THROUGH THE COMPLEXITY

DIGITAL SKILLS ARE NEEDED ACROSS INDUSTRIES

Employers across Lancashire and Cumbria have the same issues – they need to recruit but can't find the candidates with the right skills. Upskilling existing staff can take time they don't have and a project could have moved along before employees have managed to complete a course to give them the learning they need.

And then there can be a lack of understanding around the options available to them. For anyone outside of education, we know the many qualifications on offer can be confusing. Even then, once you've worked out what option best suits your business needs, does the course content align with the skills gaps you're experiencing?

At Blackpool and the Fylde College, our employer outreach teams are working hard to build relationships with employers and discover what they need to help them grow. Here are some of our findings.

We need to cut through the complexity

Language can be a major barrier for businesses looking to education for assistance – but The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology can assist with this.

We've thought carefully about how we contact employers to make it easy and in a language they understand because we know that the education system can be complex for some. From our research, we've found that employers do not necessarily know what a HNC or HND is, or what a Level 4 equivalent is, unless they have inhouse experts dedicated to training.

For that reason, as an IoT we've been striving to make language more meaningful for the industries we're working with. That means presenting our courses in a way that translates to their day-to-day operations and explains exactly how learning can make an impact.

B&FC
BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE

Short courses have led to longer courses

As is the experience of other colleges within The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology, businesses are increasingly reporting that they would like short, swift learning packages through a modular approach.

Signing an employee up to a three-year course can suit some businesses but it is not the right path for others. Businesses want to be sure that the time and money they put into an employee will ultimately benefit their bottom line. The IoT can support small businesses to find the right option for them, whatever that may be.

At B&FC, we've found the short courses often led on to longer qualifications, such as apprenticeships. Attending a short course gives those students a measure of whether or not they can commit to something larger and the content can often spark an excitement for a subject that encourages that longer-term approach.

Within engineering businesses, a top-performing engineer could be promoted to management and, suddenly, find they don't have the formal management skills to perform their role. For these businesses, the short, modular courses would be an effective solution.

Care homes with better managers tend to perform better when they are inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology is working with care homes in the Blackpool area and has created two courses – Lead to Succeed and Well Led – for existing managers and for aspiring managers. These ten-week courses, with mixed cohorts from different care homes, provide the chance to share and debate issues and learn management techniques.

Many people who have gone through these ten-week courses have gone on to enrol in our Level 5 Leader in Adult Care course because of the realisation that this formal training will benefit them and their care home.

SMEs need our help

The Lancashire and Cumbria area has a wealth of small and medium-sized enterprises doing fantastic work to grow the economy. But there remains a gap in knowledge and understanding about the funding around apprenticeships.

In Blackpool and the Fylde, we've found that 89% of SMEs have fewer than ten employees. This means it is likely that the owner or managing director will be working on and in the business, leaving them with no time to lift their head to assess their future skills needs and look outwardly to gauge what is available.

We must also consider the competition they face from larger organisations when it comes to the fight for talent. In Lancashire and Cumbria, world-leading employer BAE Systems builds its reputation among school and college leavers through attending careers events. Smaller manufacturers do not always have the time to promote themselves and, in some cases, approach colleges too late to find apprenticeship candidates. The IoT must ensure smaller businesses don't necessarily have the quietest voices and have equal access to the skills they need.

Digital skills are a real issue

Digital skills are no longer solely required by digital businesses. Most industries now require employees to have digital skills as techniques such as automation and machine learning enter all business sectors.

Cyber security is also a real issue for organisations and there are shortages in these skills that lead to some Lancashire and Cumbria businesses having to pay a premium to recruit candidates. We know that those with the right skills can often be pulled away from Lancashire and Cumbria to work in Manchester or Liverpool. That's why it's critical that SMEs recognise the opportunity to take on degree apprentices and, as an IoT, we must work more with the business community to encourage this.

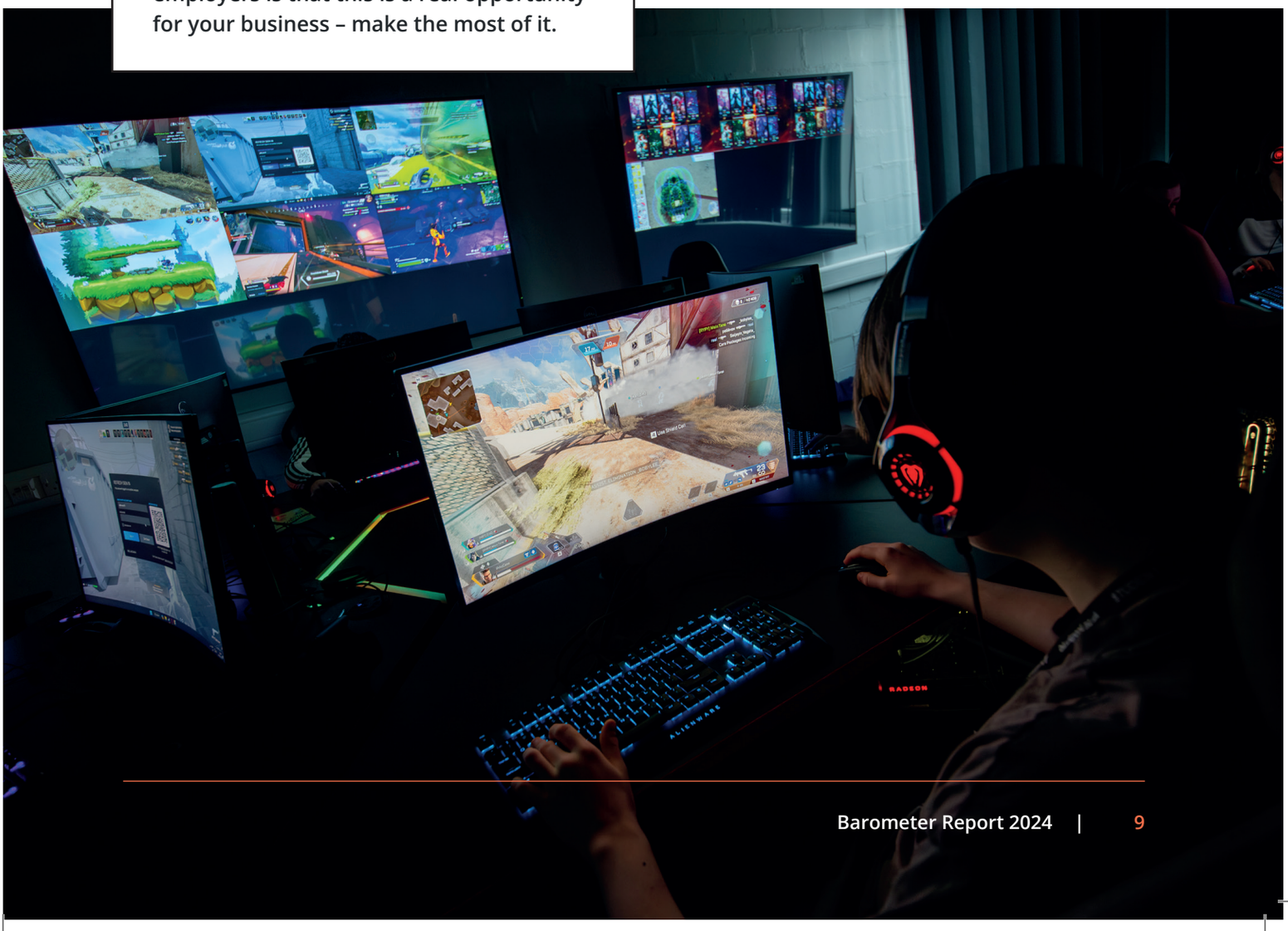
The arrival of the National Cyber Force in Samlesbury could present a real opportunity to keep talent here and that's something to look forward to.

What the IoT can achieve

+ Most employers seem to experience the same issues – recruiting the right talent and finding quicker ways to upskill existing staff.

+ The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology's employer engagement teams are working hard with businesses to find out what they need and how we can help them.

+ The IoT has a great story to tell in terms of what we can do. Our message to employers is that this is a real opportunity for your business – make the most of it.



THE LANDSCAPE IS SHIFTING CONSTANTLY – THE IoT CAN FLEX TOO

Neil Burrows,
Director of Skills and Innovation at Burnley College

SHORT-TERM TRAINING IS VITAL

AUTOMATION IS A PRIORITY ACROSS SECTORS

TRADITIONAL SKILLS REMAIN RELEVANT

Businesses came out of the Covid-19 pandemic and diversified – and with that came the need to upskill staff. This shift presents an opportunity for The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology to assist employers in filling these skills gaps and that's been a journey for employer engagement teams at all our IoT colleges.

Work has been going on to engage with employers as part of the IoT since the post-pandemic period, with skills analyses going on to ensure we were catering for their needs. From this, we learned that where previously we had treated further, higher and adult education as individual areas, there was a need to move away from that approach. Now we begin by asking businesses about their strategy from a skills perspective and we work from there.

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology outreach work discovered that employers were looking for skills in three areas: automation through manufacturing, digital and health. Here is what we discovered:

Short-term skills needs are the focus

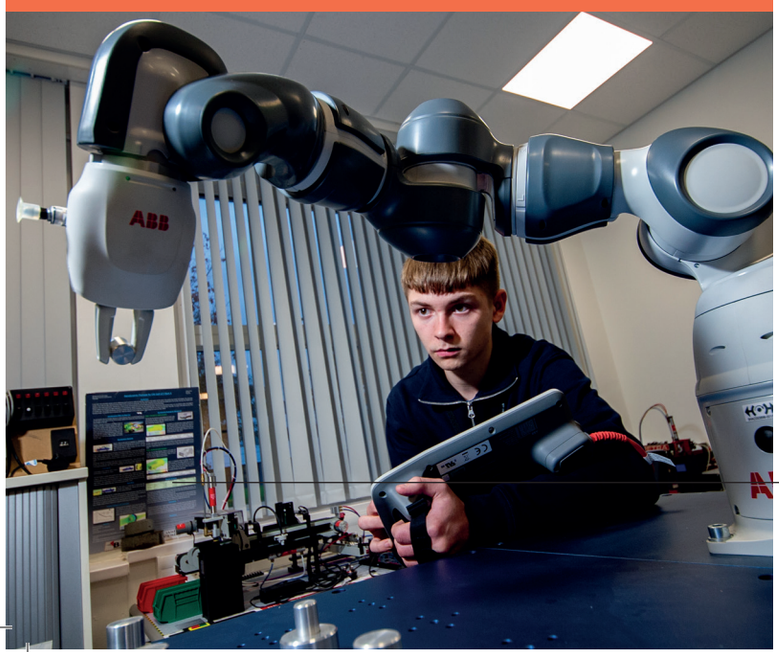
The business landscape is moving rapidly. What a business needs one month can change within the next quarter as orders come in and then just as quickly ease off. While traditionally, businesses enrolled employees on lengthier qualifications, our research has discovered they now often favour shorter courses over the likes of HNCs. Quick wins are essential so upskilled staff can make an immediate impact. The IoT bid was based on providing Level 4 and 5 qualifications but, as we have found, this is not necessarily what industry needs the most now.

Of course, these qualifications will always have a place, but the beauty of the IoT is that we can flex to the needs of the businesses we serve. And we need to become an institution that can respond quickly and adapt its curriculum swiftly to keep that talent pipeline moving.

Burnley College

Manufacturing is a key focus in Burnley. One manufacturing business Burnley College worked with needed an employee trained on five-axis CNC machines but could not afford to lose that person from the business for a year.

Working with the business, The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technologydeveloped courses that are five days long to enable change at a faster pace. People receive these short, sharp training courses and are able to make instant impact as their employers need it. Business needs change at a fast pace and could have shifted by the time a much longer course has been completed.



Automation skills are a priority

Business processes are increasingly using automation and that requires a whole new skillset to be introduced. This digital skill is being incorporated by manufacturers and retailers, to name just two sectors, and demonstrates how industry divisions are becoming blurred, with skills needs shared.

IoT investment has gone into automation technology to give students and existing employees these valuable skills that they'll need now and even more in the future. And businesses need to know that this facility exists to benefit them.

Our outreach teams have found businesses wanting to upskill groups of employees in automation but unsure how to do it. We worked with one company that had lost some work to another country because that overseas business used automation and the task could be done quicker. The Burnley business came to us to upskill its employees in automation so it could address the gaps and ensure it could do the work in the same way next time.

On the digital side, IoT funding has also bought a 3D printer, which has been used by the digital and construction sectors. These types of crossover will emerge all the time, I suspect.

Traditional skills are still in demand

Despite the emergence of new technologies, we still have businesses in the Lancashire and Cumbria area who demand the traditional skills they were built on.

Manufacturing has an ageing workforce that needs to be backfilled. While some businesses may have cobots in one area of their factory, the other side still relies upon traditional methods that incoming employees need to be trained in.

As an example, our welding course at Burnley College is booming and we have a population, due to the economic makeup of the area we are based in, that is ready to take those jobs. That's going to be what sets The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology apart. We don't want to train people in skills only for them to go elsewhere because there aren't the jobs. If we cater for the needs of our local economy then people have no reason to look elsewhere and that's a win-win situation for everyone.

Collaboration is needed if Lancashire and Cumbria are to thrive

Employer engagement teams are active at all of our partner colleges, with great relationships with the Chambers of Commerce and, in Burnley, with organisations like Burnley Bondholders and a Make It Manufacturing event, which is held three times a year.

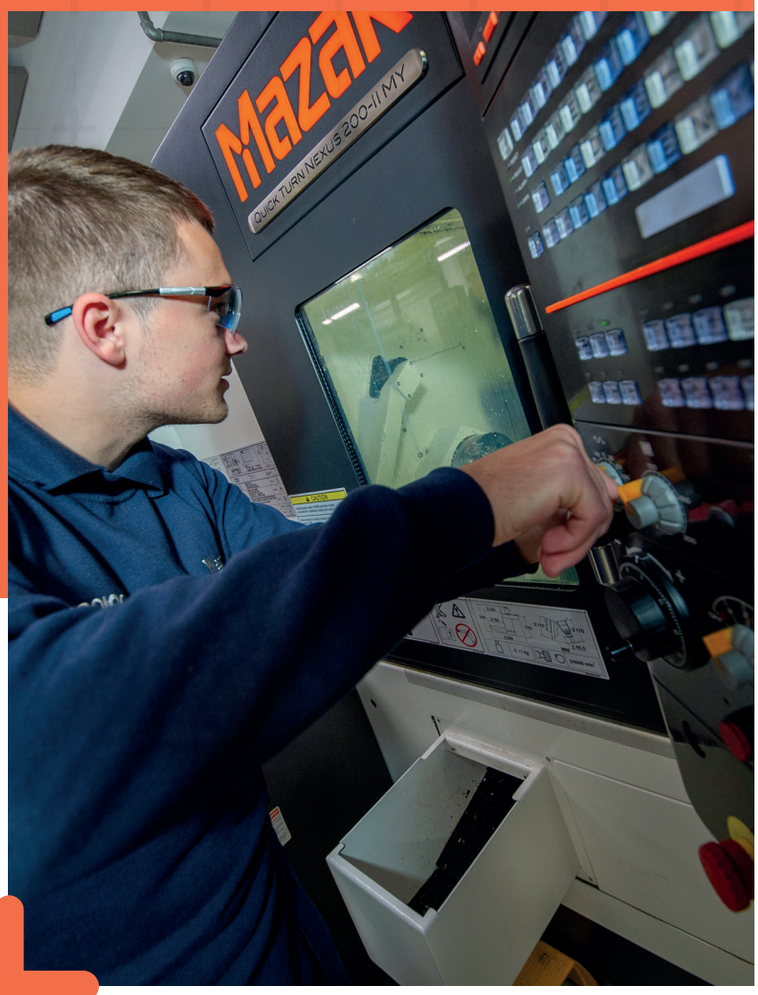
But we can't be everywhere and our message to businesses is always 'come and speak to us'. For skills gaps to be addressed we need people to tell us their emerging priorities. Tell us your strategy in the short term and we can work together to achieve quick wins.

It's working in practice already, but we need to do more so we can create that lasting legacy. It's a two-way conversation and we need that input, so we can continue to benefit businesses and our students for years to come.

A manufacturing business approached The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology about upskilling some employees on its 5-axis CNC machines.

In the meantime, the business wanted to take on a piece of work but was struggling to fulfil it because their own machines within the business were being used on another project.

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology offered use of its CNC machines for three weeks so they could make the 80 components they needed. And in return, the business agreed to six IoT students working on the project, giving them valuable experience. It wasn't on the curriculum but the IoT made it happen. The business was able to grow thanks to the IoT and was able to offer the work itself rather than having to outsource it.



CO-CREATING IS WORKING – AND THERE'S MORE WE CAN ALL DO

Morag Davis,
Group Executive Director
of Strategy and Transformation at Nelson and Colne College Group

NEED TO GET THE RIGHT CANDIDATES ON THE RIGHT COURSES

BITESIZED COURSES ARE MUCH SHORTER THAN THOUGHT

CO-CREATION IS VALUED

It's a stark reality that business growth is being hindered in Lancashire and Cumbria when organisations can't find the people they need.

We see this particularly in engineering and manufacturing, but in other sectors too, and there can be a number of reasons for this. Outdated views of manufacturing, for example, can deter people from entering these professions. Yet far from being the dirty factories of the past, our region's manufacturing businesses are often clean, high-tech operations with the need for both traditional and digital skills.

Our employer outreach teams work closely with businesses in the Nelson, Colne, Pendle and Hyndburn areas and report these findings.

Better selection processes are needed

Businesses need assistance in finding the right candidates. The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology has found this was an issue for many employers, some of which report 50pc attrition rates in some apprenticeships.

This shows us we must all do better when recruiting for apprenticeships. It's a waste of resources when a business invests the time and money into a candidate for that person not to go the full course. Work is needed on identifying the right people for the job, ensuring they understand what is required of them and that their expectations of the role align with the reality.

There is a feeling from businesses that awareness of technical education needs to start much sooner in schools so that young people know about the opportunities open to them. Of course, apprenticeships are not the only option. There has never been a greater range of qualifications and technical training open to employers to address skills shortages, giving greater flexibility to businesses of all sizes. The IoT is here to assist.

NELSON & COLNE COLLEGE GROUP

Smaller organisations need help to raise their profile

When it comes to aerospace, a sector our area flies the flag in, candidates aspire to work for BAE Systems. Yet we know that we're a region rich in other aerospace engineering businesses that are doing equally amazing things. These businesses all need machining technicians, toolmakers, aerospace engineers and welders, and The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology can meet these needs, whether it is in upskilling existing employees or feeding through young people ready to work.

We must all collaborate to keep a steady stream of talent flowing through to these smaller organisations to help them thrive.

Similarly, it is not always easy for employers, especially SMEs and micro businesses, to understand their future skills needs. It could be described as a chicken and egg situation. If they are concentrating on their businesses, they do not always have the time to be horizon scanning and preparing for the future. Yet when they arrive there, they will find gaps in their businesses that are hindering their growth.

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology is starting to develop the future skills piece, for example around retrofit in construction. But this will take time and we need to assess how we assist SMEs with this process.

Bitesized courses would have the most impact

As has been discovered right across the area the IoT covers, businesses report they would find the most benefit from short, impactful courses for their employees. Small and medium-sized businesses cannot afford for workers to be off the shopfloor for too long and, to have someone spending several years on a qualification risks their skills being irrelevant when they return to work.

The message to the IoT has been that we need to be more responsive. Our idea of a short course lasting from three to six months did not tally with the view of employers, who suggested a six-week programme would suit them best in a lot of cases.

A business might have eight people that need upskilling within a few months and that presents a challenge for us in terms of working out their requirements, the qualifications needed and the cost-effectiveness of running such a course. It's a challenge that we relish.

Education around qualifications is essential

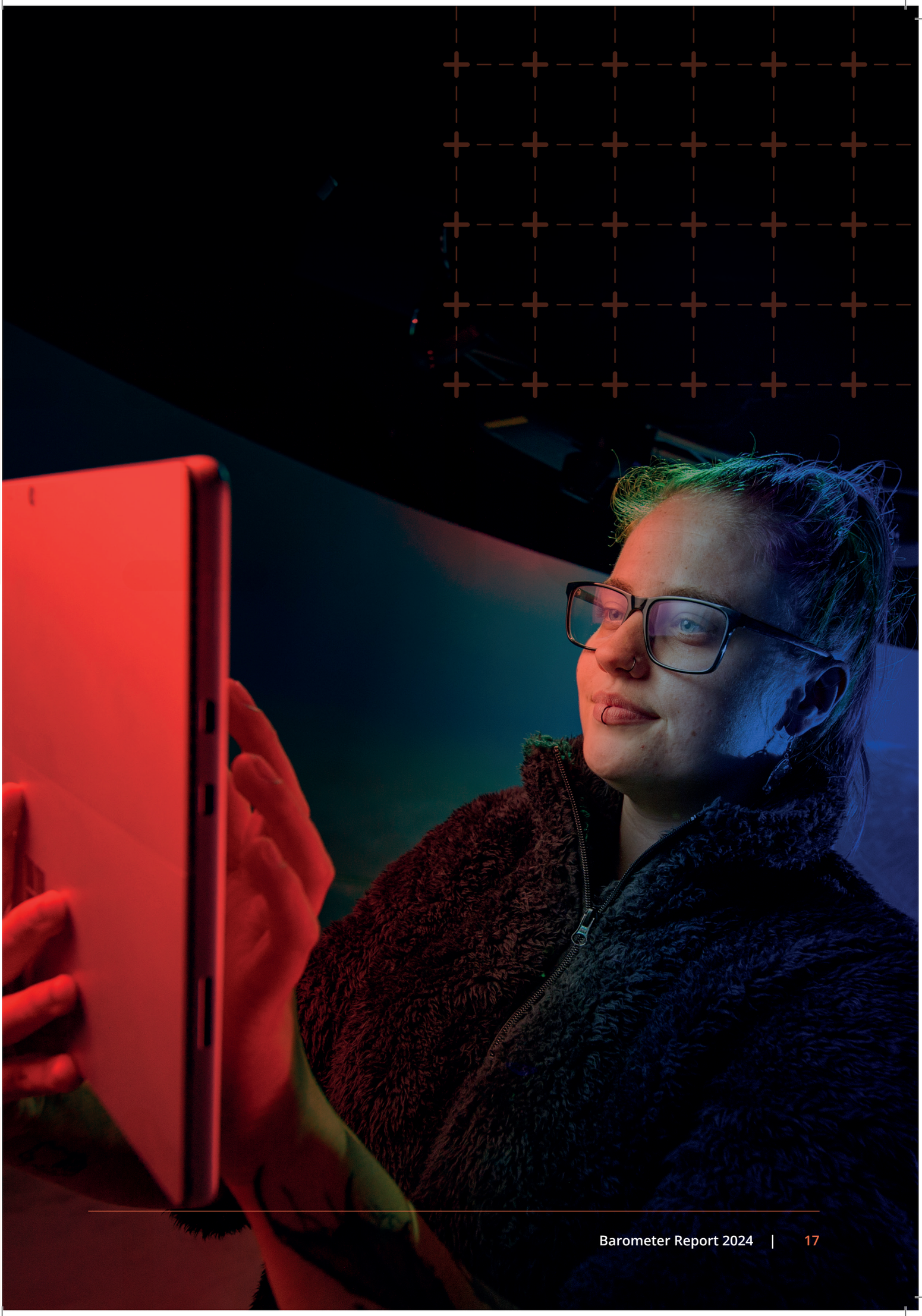
Businesses often report to us that they are unsure which qualifications their people need because they don't understand the system. That means we need to do better as an IoT to spell out the options available and how they might impact industry.

T Levels, for example, have been extremely successful for the digital and health organisations Nelson and Colne College Group works with. In some cases, we have had candidates switch from an apprenticeship to a T Level, and this presents a great opportunity for both the student and the business, allowing both sides to essentially 'try before they commit'. Programmes such as T Levels will secure better retention for the industries we serve and our role now is to assist by ensuring people are signposted to the correct courses.

Co-creation is a journey we need to embark on

It's clear from the employers we work with that they see the benefit of working closely with education to ensure we provide the training they need. But we need to spread the message much more widely. Part of this has been establishing industry boards to help shape the course content and provision from The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology to ensure we are providing exactly what is needed as the economic climate changes. As an example, the NHS' focus in our recent conversations has been on health informatics and we are working alongside them to bring the right skills to their employees.

It's an ongoing process that will be evolving as we all grow, but the IoT means we have the resource and facilities to do this much more effectively, for the whole of Lancashire and Cumbria.



WHY THE IoT IS A GENERATION-DEFINING OPPORTUNITY WE MUST ALL EMBRACE

Mick Noblett,
Vice Principal and head of the IoT's curriculum group
Preston College

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology has a responsibility to see into the future – and that's a role I'm passionate about. Years of work from all of the academic partner colleges and universities went into the bid to be granted an IoT for Lancashire and Cumbria. And we're immensely proud to have made that happen. Now it is on us to ensure the Institute of Technology achieves its potential and becomes a shining example of what can be done when education and industry collaborate.

The IoT represents a fantastic opportunity for this region to flourish and grow. We have a strong business community, education partners doing amazing things every day and a steady flow of learners of all ages ready to learn new skills and fill the roles where they are needed the most.

At Preston College, we recognise the role we have to play in the Institute of Technology as a technical community college. Our curriculum applies to all the key sectors in Lancashire and we are already forging close links with industry in our area for the benefit of both learners and businesses.

But only by working closely with our partner colleges and universities will we see the most impact. And when you think about the collective power, expertise and enthusiasm within the Institute of Technology, it's an exciting prospect.

PRESTON COLLEGE

Two-way flow

We've formed Sector Advisory Groups to ensure our courses best meet the needs of industry, but there is more work to be done. That two-way flow of conversation is essential. Businesses have the expertise and day-to-day knowledge of their industries but they need our training programmes, using industry-leading equipment, for current and future employees.

We have the facilities, techniques and know-how to upskill workers to better equip businesses for the future, but we need that up-to-date insight to ensure we're best meeting those requirements. It's a perfect match, and there's no limit to what we can achieve if we all pull in the same direction.

At Preston College, we're already seeing fantastic engagement from the construction and engineering sectors, feeding into our course content, offering their expertise through guest lectures and sending employees to gain qualifications. For these sectors, this is how they've always worked, through the provision of courses such as apprenticeships.

Elsewhere there is more work to be done to encourage organisations in sectors such as health to work with us to ensure they are fit for the future. We're up for that challenge and we'd love to work with even more organisations to create stronger bonds that will benefit future generations. In Preston, for example, we have a mental health crisis that is placing extra strain on current service provision. Through our work with mental health service providers, we're launching a new qualification that will give learners the skills they need to strengthen this stretched industry.

Our USP

For businesses, the potential is incredible. But what about our offering to learners? For me, the IoT sets itself apart in countless ways. Our £8.7m investment in equipment allows learners to get hands-on experience daily with the tools they will use in their future professions. We know this proves inspirational when we hear of the engineering students who have gone on to buy their own 3D printers to use in their own time.

Then there are those industry links, providing clear pathways to employers that will lead on to future roles and opportunities.

But there is so much more that we offer. Our dedicated staff bring a wealth of industry experience and knowledge, giving learners invaluable insights and practical knowledge that prepares them for real-world experience and success in their chosen fields.

Further education also operates in smaller class sizes, making the learning more intimate and personalised than sitting in a huge lecture theatre, and we also offer competitive fees. Indeed, for our new mental health course we've deliberately limited our intake to a small group because we believe the nature of what they're learning requires that more intimate approach.

Similarly, the support infrastructures both we and our partner colleges offer in terms of welfare, student services and counselling, tend to be strong and accessible. And then there are the value-added elements that we intend to implement, from our annual IoT conference that will bring together learners, staff and businesses, through to the guest speakers we have inputting into every IoT course. We know it's a strong offering.

Employment skills

Along with the technical skills we offer, there are other benefits we can bring to employers. From working closely with businesses, we know that employability is a key part of what our learners need. Employers want softer skills around behaviours and attitudes delivering to their future workforces so that they can hit the ground running once they start their careers. We need to ensure learners are open to learning, enthusiastic and able to fall into the company culture, wherever they end up.

But we know it works both ways too. There is a perception that young people aren't employment ready but sometimes it can be about an employer flexing to meet the needs of the next generation. Things like flexible working and use of technology are important considerations for businesses, and the IoT can help with that.

An IoT fit for the future

Now Lancashire and Cumbria has the IoT, it is up to us to make the most of it. It would be easy for our colleges to continue to work as we have always done. But there is a really exciting opportunity for us to collaborate to develop a curriculum that can be delivered across the network.

My vision is that together we write courses that can be delivered at one or many of our partner colleges, so learners, wherever they are in Lancashire and Cumbria, receive a consistent education that draws on our shared expertise. A net-zero qualification in construction, for example, could be worked on together and rolled out wherever there is a particular need.

AI affects every sector – every future worker will have to work with AI. The IoT has the opportunity to write a module that can be embedded into every programme that every college can deliver. Working together rather than individually.

These are just some of the ideas for how our region can truly benefit from this generation-defining opportunity. My call to employers is to take full advantage – work with us to ensure our region truly prospers.

WE WANT TO COLLABORATE WITH EMPLOYERS TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF INNOVATION

Danny Braithwaite,
Principal
Lancaster and Morecambe College

Lancaster & Morecambe College

Working with employers to co-create the curriculum is essential to meet the needs of our local economy.

We have forged a strong and long-lasting relationship with a major local employer, which employs more than 1,400 staff across two power plant sites in Heysham.

We co-created the course with EDF Energy to primarily give staff seeking career advancement the opportunity to gain a Level 4 qualification. Working closely with the employer ensures the engineering course meets the high standards expected by both the learners and the industry.

The Level 4 Engineering HNC covers both power stations – Heysham 1 and Heysham 2 – flexing to meet the needs of each site.

The Extended Certificate in Engineering (Nuclear) is delivered by the college in collaboration with the National College for Nuclear (NCfN). It has the potential to open doors to many exciting careers within the sector such as Radiation Protection Technician, Project Control Engineer and Aerospace Engineer.

We need to help employers navigate the education landscape. If it's complicated for us to navigate the jargon used in education, what must it be like for employers who don't use the same language as us on a day-to-day basis?

It's up to us to be able to distil and articulate what the various levels and courses mean to our existing and potential customers – students, their parents, and employers. We need to make it as clear and concise for people as we can.

The HNC in Engineering essentially means you get the practical hands-on experience of an apprenticeship, but also the knowledge of a higher-level qualification.

Technology is a key learning component, and expectation, of the student offer.

The investment from the Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology has enabled us to invest in a state-of-the-art CAD suite. Using current, industry-standard hardware and software is essential to enable high quality teaching and learning. This instils confidence when developing courses and speaking to employers.

The right equipment creates a different conversation and experience for students, tutors and employers – who want to emulate the standard of technology in the workplace.

When you have employers like EDF, a prestigious major employer in the area and a key stakeholder, at the table word spreads. The College has to ensure the value aligns to the standards they expect.

We want to attract more employers – those who want to upskill and reskill staff, and offer more opportunities for their existing and future workforce to be at the forefront of innovation.

The IoT allows us to be part of that conversation.

Organisations need to work together. They must work in collaboration. Working in synergy with one another can develop additional resources and you can learn from each other.

We need to make it clear what sets us apart and what brings us together as a collective.

IoT IS BREAKING BOUNDARIES BY MAKING COURSES ACCESSIBLE

Mark Heaton,
Head of Adult Education
Runshaw College

Making courses more accessible is fundamental to addressing the skills need for Lancashire and Cumbria.

With strong job growth projected through 2032 and exciting technologies like augmented reality and natural language processing (NLP) expanding web developers' capabilities all the time, demand for these skilled professionals will remain high across industries.

The UK is leading the way in the digital space. Manchester has been named as Europ's fastest-growing digital city. It is also the top choice outside of London for technology workers to job-hunt. It welcomes many investors from London and abroad. Tech firms secured a nearly tenfold increase in investment from £48 million in 2018 to £519 million in 2020, according to data by Adzuna and Tech Nation.

Also in the North, another area fast emerging as a UK tech hub. The city not only attracts new firms, but it is also home to some big tech companies like NHS England.

And, in 2025, The National Cyber Force (NCF) - which carries out cyber operations to counter and contest those who would do harm to the UK or its allies, to keep the country safe, and to protect and promote the UK's interests at home and abroad – will open its new home in Samlesbury, Lancashire.

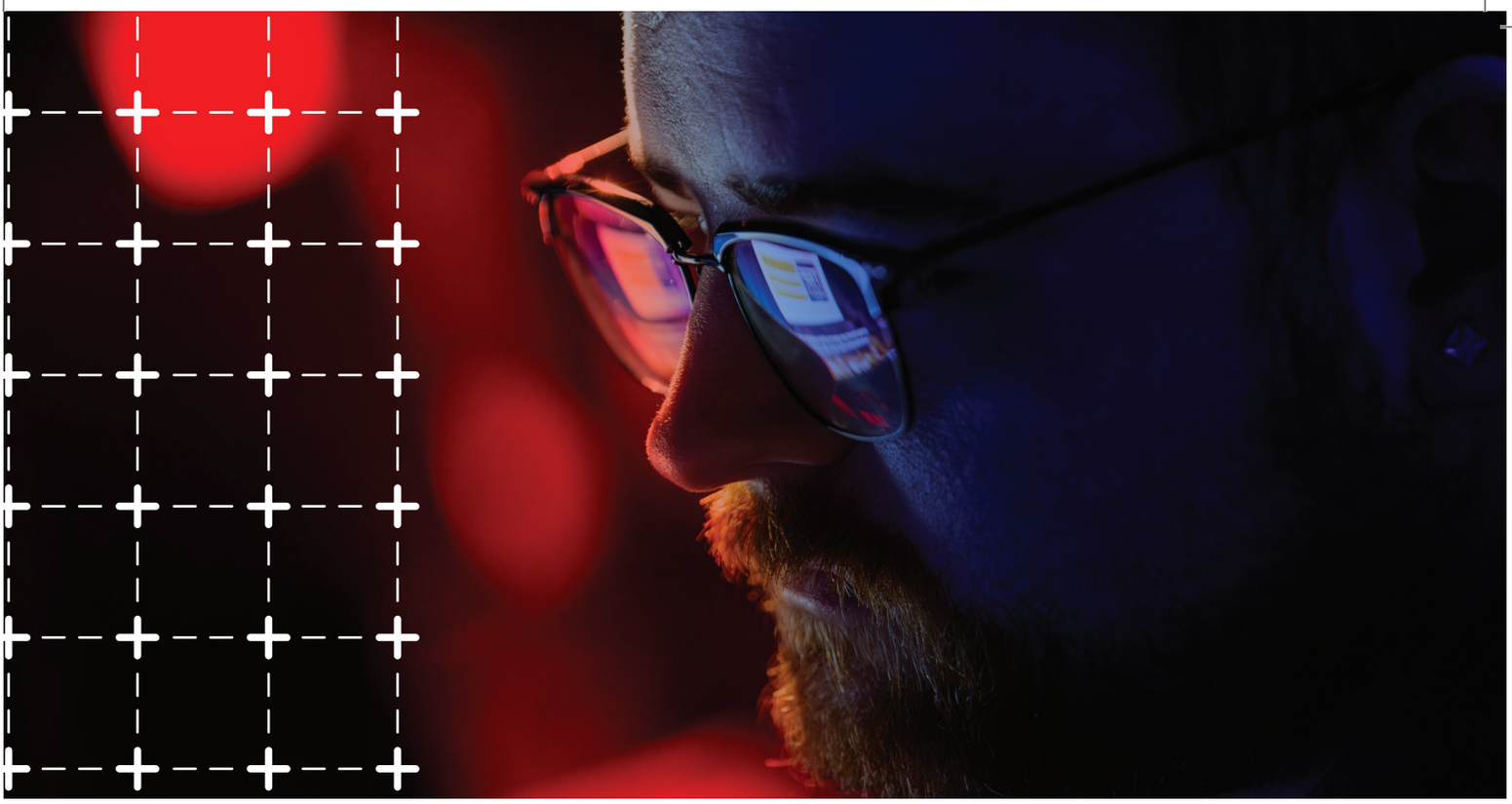
These new digital hubs mean the expected demand for web developers will also rise, providing lots of career opportunities for developers.

However, those seeking a career change are not always in the position to follow their dreams due to factors such as personal and financial reasons.

At Runshaw College, we may only be a small part of the Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology, but we are helping to meet a skills gap in the region via our Level 5 Diploma in web application development.

Not only is the college offering a new career opportunity for learners, but the course has been made as accessible as possible to those who enrol.

We have invested in 100 sets of equipment to support remote learning. Each course enrolment includes the cost of the online learning platform and the equipment package, which consists of a powerful laptop, high-spec monitors, keyboard, mouse, and laptop stands.



The qualification was developed to meet the industry demand for the growing number of roles in software and web application development. It's a career focused qualification awarded by Gateway Qualifications and has been developed in consultation with an industry advisory council of companies in the tech sector.

The college is working in partnership with Code Institute – a leading coding educator, which equips learners with essential skills for a future AI-driven workforce – along with other partners such as Microsoft.

The content is being created in partnership with big global companies, alongside local employees in Lancashire.

On average, 60% of graduates will have a job by the time they finish the course – and many will go on to be web developers and work in software development. The students also get invited to hackathons and challenges where they can demonstrate their skills in front of local and national employers.

The students are loaned everything they need to be able to complete the course from home. There's a big skills gap in Lancashire so we've made this course more accessible for people to learn if they're looking for a career change, or to upskill.

Due to various reasons – like work, family and financial commitments etc, some people can't physically come on to site. This course gives them the opportunity to study from home during the day or evening, without the additional cost of the equipment. It offers flexibility for those seeking a career change, or looking to take the next step.

Not only do we have people from Lancashire accessing the course, we also have national students because of how accessible it is. Once they complete the course, they send the equipment back to us.

Being part of the Lancashire and Cumbria IoT has allowed us to create a meaningful adult digital provision which is servicing our local and national community.

This course has allowed us to provide a new provision that's really addressing a skills need locally and nationally. And from the learner's side, they have the opportunity to learn new skills, providing the opportunity of change without being hindered by financial or personal circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology's first Skills Barometer has found the following themes that need to be addressed to enable prosperity in the region:

01
+ SHORT TRAINING COURSES TO DELIVER QUICK, RESPONSIVE SKILLS TRAINING ARE VITAL

02
+ THE IoT NEEDS TO DO MORE TO CUT THROUGH THE COMPLEXITY OF WHAT WE CAN DELIVER FOR INDUSTRY

03
+ BUSINESSES MUST COMMUNICATE THEIR NEEDS WITH US SO WE CAN BEST CATER FOR THE REGION'S ECONOMY

04
+ DIGITAL SKILLS GAPS CUT ACROSS ALL SECTORS – BUT TRADITIONAL SKILLS NEEDS REMAIN RELEVANT

05
+ COLLABORATION IS THE KEY TO BOOSTING THE ECONOMY AND CREATING A LASTING LEGACY

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