



MET CONNECT

2021



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Welcome to the latest edition of Met Connect for 2021

We are delighted to present the extensive range of programmes and activities that we have been delivering within the College's Centre for Economic Development and Social Inclusion over the past year which has provided vital support to many throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

This edition will provide an insight into our diverse portfolio of work including our work with industry on key programmes such as Assured Skills, Innovateus, Skills Focus and Innovation Vouchers; our up-skilling initiatives such as the Skills Intervention programme that provided free accredited training to individuals impacted by the pandemic; youth training interventions such as our Futures programme as well as our international project activities.

If you are interested in learning more about our programmes and how they could support you or your business, please contact us on cedsi@belfastmet.ac.uk.



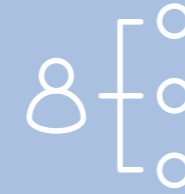
53
Online Courses

778
Learners



45
Participants

OCN Level 3 Award in Digital Construction with Building Information Management (BIM)



82
Participants

ILM Level 3 Award in Leadership & Management



169
Participants

OCN Level 2 Awards in Digital Marketing and Social Media



196
Participants

Industry Standard IT courses which included Cisco Cyber Security, MTA Programming, MTA Networking, Azure Cloud Computing and Microsoft Power BI



286
Participants

Health and Wellbeing courses which included Level 2 Awards in Mental Health Awareness, Managing Challenging Behaviour, Autistic Spectrum and Meeting the needs of learners with ADHD

Press Refresh



In partnership with Women in Business, we delivered the innovative female returners programme Press Refresh, designed to encourage women to “Press Refresh” on their careers. The project’s aim was to equip women with new skills needed to return to work and build a career within the IT Sector.

As Covid-19 restrictions impacted employment opportunities across Northern Ireland, it was a critical time to support women to develop these skills and build confidence in returning to work. With almost 300 applications for the programme, it was encouraging to see the high demand of women wishing to move into IT roles.



Press Refresh delivered this exciting part-time programme to 21 women who gained qualifications in Programming, Database Fundamentals, Agile Project Management and Data Analysis. They also developed important skills in resilience, confidence, communication, problem solving as well as CV writing and interview techniques. The 17 week course also provided vital industry mentoring support.

13 participants from the course have secured employment. 50% of which are now working in IT in roles such as Data Analytics Analyst, Social Value Manager, Project Manager and Project Administration leading to Business Analyst.



Press Refresh Participant

It was a privilege to be part of the Press Refresh programme and I would highly recommend it to others considering returning to the workplace after an extended break. The technical and career skills were invaluable but more importantly, it gave me a much-needed boost in confidence.”



Belfast Met supporting businesses through the Covid 19 pandemic

The pandemic has transformed the way we work, learn and do business. Belfast Met quickly adapted to meet the needs of businesses and learners during the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns.

We secured funding from the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver a range of short courses and programmes through the Skills Intervention Programme to support individuals who had been impacted by the pandemic. Many participants had been made redundant, placed on furlough or had been self-employed and required a change in career. Find out more about the projects and how we supported individuals and businesses in the wake of the pandemic.



Short courses to support those impacted by Covid-19

Over the last year we delivered 53 online courses supporting 778 individuals whose jobs had been impacted by Covid. We developed a range of courses that could be delivered online in short bursts to fit with the changing daily routines of learners.

DIGITAL FUTURES



Case study

Martin completed the Department for the Economy funded Digital Futures programme at Belfast Metropolitan College.

A Graphic Design and Communication and Marketing graduate with over 18 years' experience, he was seeking to develop a new career path.



Martin McKee

I'm not from a technical background and had no knowledge of the concepts or terminology involved, yet after only three months training from industry experts, I was on placement as a cybersecurity consultant with relevant, industry-recognised qualifications, putting my knowledge into practice. It was a steep learning curve – fast-paced, but never overwhelming, due to the structured, high-quality training and support. The lecturers were excellent and with patience, understanding, encouragement and motivation, they helped me succeed. I thoroughly recommend the Digital Futures programme to anyone considering a career in IT. It's given me a great sense of achievement and I now have greater confidence in my own abilities."

After completing Digital Futures, he secured a 10 week industry placement with Tisec, a Belfast based cyber security start up.



In November 2020, 20 successful applicants began an intensive 10-week training programme to gain key skills in areas of cloud computing such as Microsoft Azure, Networking, Programming, Cyber Security and Database Administration. After securing a range of qualifications, 17 students went on to undertake a 10-week work placement where they were able to put all the learning and knowledge gained into practice for a company.



Digital Futures

At a time where some graduates found themselves unemployed, as a result of the pandemic, Digital Futures was designed with our Belfast Region City Deal partners and delivered by Colleges. This provided graduates with an opportunity to achieve industry relevant qualifications and gain valuable work experience within the digital sector.

The Department for the Economy provided funding to support graduates across three stands of the programme: Cloud Computing, Cyber Security and Data Analytics, with Belfast Met delivering the Digital Future Cloud Academy.



Creative and Digital Technologies Academy

We were delighted to partner with Cinemagic and North West Regional College to support 60 young people through the Creative and Digital Technologies Academy. This was delivered at our Belfast Film and Television School by Creative and Digital staff. It provided participants with the chance to develop real skills, explore opportunities and give them the confidence to thrive in a career in the creative and digital sector, with a particular focus on film-making.

Since starting the Academy in February the students have participated in a targeted programme of support that included masterclasses, practical hands-on filmmaking and achievement of a BTEC Level 3 qualification in Film Production.



The masterclasses were delivered by some of the industry's leading experts such as workshops on Writing and Story Development with Ivor Baddiel, Directing with Sammy Nutt, and Production with Jessica Malik.

Participants completed a range of topics; mindfulness and wellbeing, resilience, mental health, production management, screen writing, casting, and the concept of film. The programme focused on personal development and career planning within the creative and digital industries which is booming in Northern Ireland. The participants produced three short films – Lose Your Way, A Bitter Pill, The Carer – which will soon be available to view in addition to the behind scenes documentary following the progress of the Academy students.



Louise Warde Hunter, Chief Executive and Principal at the College

We are delighted to be working with our partners on this exciting programme. There is no doubt that young people have been greatly impacted by the pandemic and this Academy not only provides them with an amazing opportunity to gain industry relevant skills and experience through the wide range of masterclasses and film production but is also under-pinned by a qualification to enhance their chances of gaining employment in the creative sector."

let's do hospitality and tourism

FE COLLEGES - LEADING TOGETHER ON CURRICULUM EXCELLENCE

Hospitality and Tourism Recovery Programme

Having recognised the severe impact that the pandemic has had on the hospitality sector, we developed the Hospitality and Tourism Recovery Programme. This provided a skills-led approach to supporting managers in hospitality and tourism as they navigated the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions towards future recovery.

Launched in April 2021 and funded by the Department for the Economy, the six Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland worked in partnership to support the industry province wide. The programme addressed the key challenges identified by the sector, such as the delivery of a Management Spotlight series with discussion from industry experts as well as in Skills Support; Attraction and Retention of Staff; Building Resilience and the Changing Customer Service Needs.

Our Technical Skills Series of masterclasses were delivered to promote skills development in AR and VR Technologies, Podcasting for the Tourism industry and a range of hospitality masterclasses in Butchery, Baking and Patisserie, Poultry, Chocolatier and Cocktail Making.

All six FE colleges delivered an ILM/CMI Level 3 Award in Leadership and Management with a specific focus on skills to boost recovery, as identified by sector representatives in the Hospitality and Tourism industry.



The Management Spotlight Series and a selection of the Technical Skills Series are available to watch again on the Programme website

[View our Management Spotlight Series here](#)



4 Management Spotlight Webinars



350+ people have engaged with the series



6 Leadership & Management Courses

56 participants



7 Technical Skills Session



450+ people have engaged with the series

let's do business



Belfast Met's award-winning support for business team is here to support your business

Do you have an innovative new idea for a product? Are you a local business requiring support to develop? Our dedicated team of Business Development Executives will work with you to assess your training needs, guide your innovative concepts and connect you with subject experts within the College.

Read on to learn how we have supported local businesses to bring their product to market.



Let's Do Business Webinar Series

In November 2020 the College partnered with Belfast Chamber of Commerce to deliver a series of webinars to support companies navigating the challenges as a result of Covid 19.

We focused on relevant topics like Adapting Customer Service during the Covid Crisis, Going Digital and Personalising the Customer Experience Online. We also delivered sessions on apprenticeships that demonstrated the benefits of apprenticeships for businesses, and highlighted the DfE funded support packages available to businesses who employ apprentices or take on new apprentices.

Business representatives from organisations such as Beggs and Partners, LIT Photography, and Tribe Belfast had the opportunity to share their experiences of the pandemic in webinars, and the solutions they adopted to overcome the many challenges.



[View our Let's Do Business Webinars here](#)



Developing Skills to Innovate

InnovateUs provides fully funded training to small businesses and social enterprises to embed skills that support the development of innovative new products, processes and services. Belfast Met provide support in a wide range of areas, some of these include:



Animation, Graphics and Video Production



Software Development and Programming



Product Design and Prototyping



Textiles Sewing and Manufacturing Techniques



Digital Pattern Development



Food Product Development and Upscaling



Over the past year, our InnovateUs programme at Belfast Met has resulted in:



75 innovative new project concepts being developed



104 employees upskilled across 69 businesses



Over 200 jobs safeguarded within small businesses across NI



85% of businesses now in a position to scale up their business



An average 6% increase in sales across NI



82% of businesses have greater confidence to engage in innovation in future



Supporting Innovation Webinar Series

The College works proactively with industry to deliver a range of innovation support services, and this year has been no exception. We ran a series of 13 webinars led by lecturers and industry guests who shared their valuable technical expertise across a range of areas.

Funded by the Connected Programme, the webinars illustrate the College's track record of support it has provided and will support in the future for businesses to innovate. Throughout the series we engaged with over 340 participants from across a range of industries and sectors that were interested in learning more about emerging technologies.



IT Technologies (Blockchain; Internet of Things)



New Product Design and 3D Printing



Creating a Dashboard in Power BI



Fashion and Manufacturing Innovation



Podcasting: Scripting and Technology



Belfast Met helps Map Cover to transform Machine Learning processes

Map Cover produces, maintains and delivers comparison tools for insurance cover. The company has been working successfully in the Republic of Ireland, producing live comparison of the cover provided by competing car, home and van insurance products. This has given vital insight into insurance coverage across the market. However, the comparison process was conducted manually and collated into a dashboard, taking several days each month to complete. This method had been feasible in the Republic of Ireland market due to a small number of insurance providers and policies but left their expansion options limited, as it was not feasible to apply the same method to the much larger UK market.

Map Cover approached Belfast Met for support and were able to gain access to the Connected Programme. Connected provides support to companies exploring innovative and emerging technologies. Through Connected, Map Cover engaged with Belfast Met Lecturer, Martin Naughton, to explore automating the process and investigate how technology such as machine learning could be applied. Having discussed a potential technological solution to this issue, Map Cover successfully applied for an Invest NI Innovation Voucher,

securing £5,000 that enabled them to develop a proof-of-concept solution with Belfast Met. The project demonstrated how automation could be applied to the process in the Republic of Ireland market, which would reduce working time from 2 working days down to a matter of minutes. With a viable solution presented, Map Cover was keen to investigate the local machine learning ecosystem from both a service provider and academic perspective. Belfast Met developed an overview to illustrate the machine learning expertise across Northern Ireland, which led to conversations with the College's peers at both Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University.

Based on the success of the Innovation Voucher and the level of support available within Northern Ireland, Map Cover were keen to test the possibility of applying further machine learning techniques to the UK insurance market. A joint bid from Belfast Met and QUB was successful in securing £34,000 of funding from the Connected Competitive Fund to develop a UK marketplace prototype machine learning solution on behalf of Map Cover. The Connected Competitive Fund provides funded support from HE and FE academic partners to work together to explore and develop innovative new concepts.

The project has continued throughout the pandemic with regular virtual meetings between partners and the product is now in its final testing stage. The project partners developed bespoke machine learning algorithms tailored to extracting relevant comparison data from UK insurance policies and a cloud-based platform to house the comparison outputs in a user-friendly self-service portal. It is expected that the project will be a growth enabler for Map Cover and provide the platform to launch into the InsurTech UK market.



MapCover



Martin McRandal
FCII Managing Director

We have been working with Belfast Met since 2019. At that time, we sought help with an Innovation Voucher supported proof of concept project on use of AI. From then we have developed a productive relationship with the Belfast Met Business Development Team. I am very grateful for the support that Belfast Met has provided to Map Cover. We deliver innovative and disruptive products. The Business Development Team have taken time to understand our business. They have provided support and guidance that has helped us to make progress on delivery of our business plan."

Invest NI Innovation Voucher

Through an Invest NI Innovation Voucher your business could receive £5,000 of support from Belfast Met to provide knowledge and expertise to tackle a specific business issue. Typical projects funded by Invest NI are:

- Ideas for new or improved products, processes and services
- Validation and testing of new or enhanced products or services
- Access to specialist information and expertise on new materials
- Tapping into research and scientific expertise

Our Business Development team will discuss your project, assist with your application and align you to our delivery team to support your innovative project concept.



Connect with us today:

Why not Arrange a virtual meeting today with one of our Business Development team who are happy to review your training and innovation needs and discuss the full range of support available:

cedsi@belfastmet.ac.uk

028 9026 5069



New skills critical to StreetDock's smart infrastructure plans

Belfast based company, StreetDock is combating urban congestion and fossil fuel emissions in cities by developing smart city infrastructure.

The first stage of their new logistics system creates a network of Micro-Warehouses which dispatch orders by bicycle couriers that are designed to increase efficiency and reduce fossil fuel impacts in cities. The business wanted to redefine delivery operations and approached Belfast Met to explore logistics and system mapping to ensure their Smart Infrastructure model would be most efficient. They chose to develop the skills in house for process mapping rather than outsource. Their plan was to build small scale trials of their model, gain feedback from customers, test the technology and manage impacts from various real-world conditions.

Through the InnovateUs programme which provides training to support innovation in small businesses, StreetDock aligned 3 team members to be upskilled by Belfast Met Lecturer, Stephen Brownlee in areas of inbound logistics, operations and goods outwards, process mapping models and feedback loops.

The 60 hours of training was fully funded by the Department for the Economy and ran concurrently with live trials. This enabled Belfast Met and StreetDock to more effectively explore the Smart Infrastructure's use of micro-warehouses and identify potential bottlenecks within the order and delivery system. As a result of the new skills embedded within the company, StreetDock is now able to start a Beta launch of its new system in East Belfast.



Training leads to new digital service for PhDcartoon

PhDcartoon transforms business data, academic research and client concepts into concrete designs, illustrations, and animated videos. The need for design solutions for academia was first identified when business owner Dr Ashleigh Neill completed her own PhD.

Initially, when developing designs and illustrations by hand, Ashleigh had to scan her designs to create digital versions. This required additional work to adjust them to fit templates. She realised that her business needed to innovate by upskilling in digital drawing software packages including Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop and use of a Wacom tablet to increase her productivity and create an improved service to clients.

With support through the InnovateUs programme, PhDcartoon received 60 hours of training with Digital & Creative Technology Lecturer, Andrea Shine. The training was delivered virtually and incorporated digital drawing techniques and training in developing animated illustrations. Ashleigh has described the innovative technologies that she learnt as 'game changing' for her business.

Ashleigh's training helped her to combine her traditional illustration skills with new digital technologies to offer a unique portfolio of products and services to clients. She is also able to offer a completely new service for animated illustrations for online publications, social media platforms and web pages, details can be found at www.phdcartoon.com. The training has also resulted in reduced production times, improving productivity, and enabling PhDcartoon to take on more clients.



Ian Richardson
Street Dock
Co-Founder
and MD

As an early stage start-up business, the right support is critical to getting things off the ground. By collaborating with Belfast Met we found support in multiple areas that has been able to build momentum and achieve results faster than we expected. It is a joy to work with such professional and experienced people."





Centre for
Economic Development
& Social Inclusion



Skills Focus



**funding support available
for SMEs to upskill staff**

Skills Focus, funded by Department for the Economy, provides funding support to SMEs and Social Enterprises with under 250 employees. The programme supports skills development in the workforce that leads to the achievement of qualifications at Level 2 and above. Contact Belfast Met today to discuss training solutions for your business needs. qualifications at level 2 and above to NI businesses with less than 250 employees.

cedsi@belfastmet.ac.uk

028 9026 5069

Belfast Met has a wide range of courses available that can be tailored to your business needs.



Business and Finance

- Leadership & Management
- Accounting Technicians
- Marketing/Digital Marketing
- Human Resource Management



Food and Hospitality

- Food Allergen Awareness
- Food Safety in Catering
- Customer Service



Engineering & Construction

- Electrical Installations
- Welding
- Computer Aided Design
- Digital Construction (BIM)



ICT & Emerging Technology

- IT Essentials
- Networking
- Programming Languages
- Cyber Security
- Data Analytics



HONEYCOMB

Skills Focus support invaluable to Honeycomb Jobs

Honeycomb Jobs is an established, independent and locally owned company, specialising in recruitment for business support services. The team at Honeycomb are passionate about securing the best recruitment solutions for their clients.

Mairead Scott, Managing Director, is extremely proud of the expertise and dedication of her team and wanted to support their continued professional development and career progression. Following her meeting with Margaret McCabe, Business Development Executive at Belfast Met, a training skills audit was completed. Our Skills Focus programme was then identified as the best solution for Honeycomb Jobs. Skills Focus provides fully funded accredited training in a wide range of courses and is funded by Department for the Economy.

Five members of the Honeycomb Jobs team have received accredited training in Marketing, Human Resources and Accounting. Each course was delivered in a live classroom environment online, allowing individuals to engage with other businesses and share opinions and ideas. A key impact of the training was to build confidence in technical areas, and to enhance transferable skills that would lead to improved processes and efficiencies for the business.



Mairead Scott
Managing
Director,
Honeycomb
Jobs

The Skills Focus programme and the partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College has been invaluable in helping us implement our talent development strategy and investing in our team here at Honeycomb and we look forward to building this partnership over the coming years.”



Assured Skills Academies go virtual

The Assured Skills Academy programme, funded by the Department for the Economy, plays a key role in supporting businesses to provide graduates with the right skills to find employment and develop their careers. The College plays a key role in the delivery of these Academies, as Belfast Met teaching staff have delivered training for over 100 Academies since 2013.

Despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic and the uncertainty in the economy, the College has successfully delivered 18 Assured Skills Academies virtually which have transformed how students learn and helped them to gain employment.

Throughout the subsequent lockdown restrictions Belfast Met continued to deliver a further 18 Assured Skills Academies remotely with companies such as KPMG, PwC, Deloitte, Sensata and FinTrU. Typical topics on these academies include:

On the first week of the brand-new Microsoft Assured Skills Academy in March 2020, lockdown restrictions came into force and we quickly adapted to transition the Academy training programmes to remote delivery. All training was moved online and teaching quickly adapted to ensure that it remained interactive and engaging, whilst providing students with access to emerging software remotely. The expertise and level of delivery at the College demonstrates how quickly our staff adapted to the new delivery model.



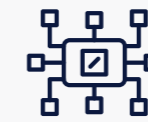
Software Testing



Future Business Skills



Cyber Security



IoT



AI



Modern Application Development



Data Analytics



Fin Tech



**ASSURED SKILLS
ACADEMIES**



19
academies
during Covid
pandemic



6
companies



367
graduates



92%
employment
rate





Facilities Hire for Filming Locations

With the filming industry continuing to thrive across Belfast, the College has often played a role in some of your favourite shows. Recently, the BBC TV series Bloodlands used facilities within the College's Titanic Quarter and Springvale campuses to film scenes of a hospital, café offices and corridors, as well as exterior shots of the buildings and car parks.

The College has worked with several production companies who have recognised our fantastic facilities as being the perfect creative environments to hire, as they translate with great impact on film and TV screens. The College estate has been used for film productions featuring Liam Neeson, many episodes of the hit BBC TV series Line of Duty and The Fall. Producers of the ITV drama Marcella were attracted to the College's facilities which was also filmed there. Production companies recognise the consistently high standards and range of locations on offer, and list the professional service and welcome they receive from staff as some of many reasons that they continue to return to film at the College.

The Commercial and Events Team manage the College's commercial events, training, conferencing and hire of specialist facilities. Filming is typically scheduled out of curriculum hours to allow the widest use of facilities for productions. Our campuses are used by a wide range of organisations, including public, private and third sector businesses.



The staff are outstanding and incredibly helpful and professional. They go to great lengths to make sure everything runs as smoothly as possible."

Facilities Hire at Belfast Metropolitan College

- Multiple venues across Belfast that can host delegates, and can cater for all business needs
- A choice of training / meeting rooms with a wide range of audio-visual equipment
- In-house technical assistance on hand
- Spacious settings with natural lighting in a professional environment
- Excellent catering to suit all budgets, tastes and requirements
- All areas Wi-Fi enabled using secure log-on
- Room hire available on full day and half day rental
- All facilities fully accessible

Business Incubation Suites at Springvale Campus e3 Building

The business incubation suite at e3 is a unique, modern hub promoting innovation and start-up, as well as facilitating the needs of established organisations.

There are nine modern, fully equipped business incubation units at e3. Features include: -

- Flexible easy in/easy out terms
- Free on-site car parking
- 24/7 access to units
- Reception services during College office hours
- Shared kitchen facility for convenience
- Discounted rates on the hire of our training rooms, specialist IT, Digital Media, Technology and Hospitality Zones
- Café Met and corporate hospitality service available on site
- Opportunities for knowledge transfer and networking
- Access to student groups for live business projects



It's a great location with convenient parking, the facilities are excellent."

meet at the met

Hire of Conference & Events Facilities



100% Would recommend Belfast Met as an event and conference venue



98% Thought the hospitality was excellent/good



98% Thought the in-house event management was excellent/good



100% Loved the venue and facilities



Meet at the Met - Contact Us

For all commercial, events and business office hire enquiries:



meet@belfastmet.ac.uk



028 9026 5049



[Hire our facilities](#)

The Commercial and Events team look forward to welcoming our valued clients back to the College when it is safe to do so. We will be delighted to discuss room capacities, specific configurations and room hire rates for all College sites.



Belfast Met Outreach

The College recognises the vital role that FE Colleges play in social and economic inclusion and our outreach programmes are absolutely vital in engaging with the wider community. The College has been an integral part of the city for over 100 years providing education and career pathways for everyone. We continually develop programmes that will inspire and connect with people of all ages and 'lead the city to work.' Read on to discover our Bring IT On and Futures Project programmes.

Futures Project triples delivery during the lockdowns

Belfast Met's flagship Futures Project is a 6-month programme that works supportively with young people aged 16-24 to improve their confidence, leadership and teambuilding skills, whilst gaining qualifications and building new relationships.

Futures is highly interactive, involving residential trips and 1 to 1 support work led by our Youth Facilitators. The project has been delivered at Belfast Met campuses, community centres, and in schools. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, the project was engaged with 132 participants, primarily in the Greater Belfast area. The Futures team had then to find a way to continue interactive support work remotely.

They transformed the programme to continue to support and mentor the participants in a fun and engaging way online.

This was done by:

- Increased one-to-one mentoring for participants
- Online video sessions
- Home activity packs
- Weekly check-ins with facilitators
- Peer check-ins
- Health & wellbeing activities
- Social media campaigns to raise awareness of lockdown issues including the #stayathome challenge
- Letter writing to people living in care homes
- Fundraising campaigns for St John's Ambulance by running a gaming marathon.

The Futures Project supported young people with practical issues and coping skills to improve their resilience during the lockdowns. Students received an incentive payment for attendance - vital to young people who were not able to work due to the lockdown restrictions. Some participants took part in a project with Politics in Action to make their views heard about school closures, predicted grades, social distancing, and mental health during the lockdown.

Remote learning was highly successful. The project was able to open the catchment area and welcome 302 new participants during the lockdown, more than tripling the delivery online. 10% of participants joined from Causeway Coast, Mid Ulster, Fermanagh, Omagh, Derry and Strabane. Following robust risk assessments and with the provision of PPE, face-to-face delivery of the Futures Project recommenced in 6 schools, providing 102 young people with mentoring and support face to face.



What is the progression path after Futures?

Over the duration of the programme:

89% of participants progress into education, employment or training within 3 months of completing the programme

27% join Belfast Met or another FE College

42% of participants re-engage with school after taking part in the course

13% go into training

7% employment

86% of participants successfully progressed into education, employment or training this year, despite



OCN Awards Northern Ireland

In September 2020, the Futures team delivered their first virtual celebration event, which was streamed on Facebook live. The Celebration event is held every year to mark the graduation of the participants. It was viewed over 760 times and received over 400 live comments as the participants interacted with staff on the stream.

In 2020, Futures participants Ethan Gould and Phil Marten were highly commended Learners of the Year at the OCN awards. Jamie Maze, project manager of the Futures Project also received high commendations as Inspiring Teacher of the Year.

In 2021 Shane Green was also highly commended Learner of the Year along with Futures facilitator Nicole McKee as Inspiring teacher of the Year. Emad Hazaea also won FE Learner of the Year.



Jamie Maze,
Project Manager
for Futures.

This was not what we expected but we are thrilled that we have been able to support so many young people across the region during an extremely challenging time. This is a credit to the staff and participants who were open minded, creative and resilient and turned an obstacle into a triumph."



Emad Hazaea

I just want say thank you very much for selecting me to receive the OCN award. This is clearly one of the most significant events of my student life in Northern Ireland. I sincerely appreciate the attention and support, that my tutors gave me at all times. Thanks for believing in me."



Futures works with young people across Northern Ireland who are not in education or training, to develop their resilience, confidence, and the skills to succeed. It enhances their capacity to form positive relationships with others of different backgrounds and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society. Futures is a partnership between Belfast Met, Start360 and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The project is funded by SEUPB as part of PeaceIV.

Participants explore topics including health and wellbeing, teamwork, communication, leadership, risk and decision making, prejudice and discrimination, active citizenship and employability skills. They also participate in an outdoor activities residential and complete a social action project in their local community.

To find out more about Futures Project and register interest for this programme, please contact

futures@belfastmet.ac.uk



Bring IT On for Career Changers

Bring IT On showcases the opportunities and benefits of careers in IT by raising awareness on the great diversity of options in this exciting and ever-changing sector.

Bring IT On is funded by the Department for the Economy and delivered throughout Northern Ireland on their behalf by Belfast Met. Bring IT On was formed to address the skills shortage and employability issues within the IT sector in Northern Ireland. Our mission is to ensure that Northern Irish IT companies have an ongoing diverse pipeline of skilled talent fit for industry needs.

The Bring IT On team run events, speak at schools, attend job fairs and work with employers, careers advisers, IT teachers, parents, and carers to promote job opportunities available in IT throughout NI. Working closely with local employers, teachers, careers advisers, parents & carers, the team work to raise awareness of the career opportunities available in our local IT industry. The programme develops links with IT employers through the Bring IT On Ambassadors programme, giving teachers, careers advisers and new entrants to the sector access to industry expertise and mentoring.

The calendar year is typically full of face-to-face events across the province however the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the Bring IT On team needed to switch to an online delivery model, and swiftly implemented new strategies to keep the audience engaged and promote the opportunities for local IT careers. The highlight of the online delivery for the year was the Bring IT On Live event held in April 2021.

In April of 2021 bring it on hosted a live virtual event focusing on the exciting I.T apprenticeships and foundation degrees available through FE colleges in Northern Ireland. The event was aimed at school students from years 10 – 14 who wished to explore it or technology and gain an understanding of the opportunities available to them through FE colleges.

Over 400 young people, parents and teachers from across Northern Ireland tuned in to find out more about IT Apprenticeships and Foundation Degree routes available through the NI Further Education Colleges. The event was an important centrepiece of NI Apprenticeship Week 2021.


The event was hosted by award-winning BBC NI presenter, Emer Maguire, a science communicator and musical comedian. Keynote speakers included Sheree Atcheson, founder of Women who Code Belfast, who is considered to be one of the UK's most influential women in Tech. Attendees were able to put their questions to a live panel of current and past apprentices and foundation degree students.

Other guests included Andrew Trimble former Ulster and Ireland rugby legend who joined with his business partner Gareth Quinn who spoke about their sports technology company Kairos; founded in 2018 the company's digital expertise is helping to optimise the performance of elite sports teams by empowering athletes with scheduling, communication, and athletic planning tools. Phil Allen, Curriculum Area Manager for IT at Belfast Metropolitan College, delivered an information session about the exciting range of IT apprenticeships and foundation degree options at Further Education colleges in Northern Ireland.

As part of the programme, Jo McVeigh, Founder of coaching & leadership development consultancy Potential Collective, delivered a bespoke session on building confidence and resilience skills.

Contact

 bringiton@belfastmet.ac.uk

 www.bringitonni.co.uk



@BringITOnNI



Webinars

Bring IT On for Career Changers

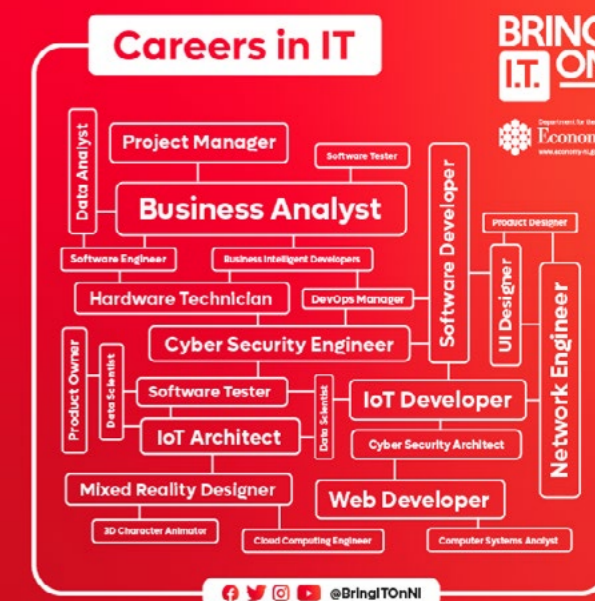
In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Bring IT On held five webinars between November 2020 and March 2021. Each month Bring IT On hosted a webinar specifically for people impacted by Covid-19, career changers and people returning to work.

Each webinar focused on the opportunities in, and benefits of, a career in IT as well as the multitude of pathways available into the sector including specific Covid response programmes such as the Skills Intervention Programme. Within each webinar we featured an interview with someone working in the industry and facilitated questions from audience members around various roles and pathways.

The webinar series had 132 live delegates and over 500 additional views on the recordings post-event.

Check out Bring IT On's YouTube channel 'Bring IT On NI' to catch up on the series.

 [Visit our YouTube channel](#)





More than 12 million people in the UK are without essential digital skills, so embracing digital transformation and empowering change is critical to driving economic growth. Before COVID, many companies thought that they had 'Digitally Transformed'.

However, when faced with remote working they realised that their skills and processes were not fully digitised. Many businesses are now looking to the future and exploring how they can create a new digital strategy, to innovate, and successfully lead their organisation into our post COVID-world.

Many of us are familiar with Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud and Blockchain. However, businesses tend to overlook upskilling staff in these areas. It is evident that employers need to train employees, especially those that may not be involved in the IT sector, to improve their understanding of the digital competencies and strategies used in business.

Belfast Met is working with businesses developing and creating content materials to support their move to an increased online presence. This has allowed them to continue to operate remotely during the lockdown.



This project has developed training modules and blended learning content in Cloud, AI, Blockchain and Cyber Security to support learners, employees, and teaching staff. The training explores why leaders must understand digital transformation and the Internet of Things to grow and compete globally. It guides the learner through a framework to measure their AI readiness and assess what they can do to fully realise their AI potential. The framework measures user availability from both an internal and external organizational perspective. The training also investigates why artificial intelligence has led to ethical disputes and how to mitigate these risks. Finally, the training reviews how to plan your journey in AI.



Zara McMullan
Director at
lonology,
Belfast.

I am delighted to be a part of the IOTAI project. Our main goal is to help students and the workforce understand Digital Transformation and assist them in bridging the gap between leadership, strategy and technology, in order to become relevant during times of change."



Introduction to international projects

Belfast Met is leading the way with its innovative international projects. GenComm is on the important journey of growing our hydrogen economy, vital in helping to reduce our carbon emissions. The College is also developing a new direction for Building Information Modelling and promoting digital inclusion with our European partners. Read on to find out more about our international projects.



Internet of Things to Artificial Intelligence

The Internet of Things to Artificial Intelligence project is an exciting project being led by Belfast Met, supported by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ programme. It's aim is to address digital skills gaps and contribute to a higher quality of vocational education for students and employees both locally and Europe wide.



More information on the project, it's research and the training modules can be found at:



www.iotoai.infoproject.eu



GenComm project extended as influence grows

The College has been leading the GenComm (hydrogen renewable) project since 2018, promoting the use of hydrogen energy in Ireland and across Europe, to replace fossil fuel consumption.

The project will develop three renewable energy plants in North-West Europe using wind power in Northern Ireland, bioenergy in Scotland, and solar power in Germany. This will produce hydrogen in three different countries. Recently, the hydrogen refueling station arrived at the plant in Germany. These Hydrogen plants will be used to establish technical and financial models to develop a Decision Support Tool (DST). The DST can then be used to help communities transition to renewable hydrogen.

The project is working to help remote communities transition to hydrogen use. GenComm is working with representatives from Rathlin Island, Co Antrim and Valentia Island Co Kerry on 'Hylanders', supporting the islanders on their energy journey to use renewables by developing a hydrogen ecosystem for the islands for a range of uses including, mobility and heating.

In February GenComm hosted the 'How can renewables sustain resilient communities?' webinar which discussed the use of hydrogen for transport use across land, sea and air. The key speakers were from remote communities including the Canary Islands and Aran Islands who discussed the challenges for remote communities in their transition to hydrogen.

A key speaker on the day was Dr Rory Monaghan from GenComm partner, NUIG, who spoke about 'The Community Hydrogen Forum, CH2F', another output of GenComm. The CH2F is a platform and discussion space where stakeholders can outline the latest developments/papers in this area. Energy co-operatives, energy agencies, community development groups, electricity and gas operators are invited to join.

GenComm contribution to the NI energy strategy

Two of the speakers Ian Williamson and Dr Rory Monaghan both from GenComm partners, were also commissioned by the Department of the Economy to prepare the Think Piece on Hydrogen Opportunities for Northern Ireland. This report will contribute to the evidence base for the development of a new NI Energy Strategy.



Louise Warde Hunter, Principal of Belfast Met

Northern Ireland, as with most of the world, is on a green energy path as we strive to reduce our CO2 emissions. I am delighted that Belfast Met is at the centre of this transition, today launching hydrogen-powered public transport in partnership with DFI Minister Nichola Mallon, Translink, Energia and others. This is testimony of the Further Education sector's vision for innovation, driving industry to new heights. We are proud that GenComm has been a catalyst for the growth of renewable hydrogen in Northern Ireland."

GenComm pioneer 'green' buses in Belfast

Meanwhile, GenComm Programme Manager Paul McCormack has welcomed the first hydrogen-powered buses entering service in Northern Ireland. Speaking at a launch event at Stormont attended by Infrastructure Minister Nichola Mallon, Paul said: "Today is a momentous day for those of us who have been on this hydrogen journey for some time now. The fact the three double-decker buses are set to enter service locally is excellent news. Our GenComm project aims to address the energy sustainability challenges of North-West Europe by validating hydrogen technologies. Translink working with our GenComm partner Energia ably supported by funding from the Department for Infrastructure has helped bring about this day at Stormont."

The fuel cell buses were purchased by Translink under a framework contract from Wrightbus. They will run on fully sustainable hydrogen which will be produced by electrolysis at one of Energia's wind farms in Co Antrim. Energia is one of 10 partners on the £9.39 million GenComm project.

Belfast Met to lead new vocational mobility project ARISE



Funding of 1.24M has been secured under the EU Horizon 2020 Framework programme for the ARISE project, a 24-month EU wide recognition scheme of digital energy efficient BIM (Building Information Modelling) construction skills with a digital ranking scheme.

ARISE will revolutionise the learning process by developing a crypto skills exchange monetizing the skills and learning interface with a system based on skills recognition rather than accreditation. The reward of acquiring a competence at a certain level will be a CERT coin. This reward based on skills and time credits will be stored in an individual learning account and can be used as a digital points accumulation in a skills barometer or for exchanging into micro certificates. This will be an industry driven, easier accessible, less time consuming and a highly competitive way to upskill blue and white collars and to increase vocational mobility.

Nine European partners led by Belfast Metropolitan College will deliver the on-demand training scheme for digitalisation towards sustainable energy tools, aimed at SMEs, public authorities and other stakeholders. Belfast Met previously led the digital construction project BIMcert which provided a training and qualification scheme for the skills needed to implement BIM across the construction chain. ARISE is a natural progression from this. Once again, a collaborative approach between industry and academia can bear fruit on a Europe wide basis.



Paul McCormack, Innovation Manager and ARISE Project Manager

This project win reinforces Belfast Met's position on the international stage. Securing additional EU funding in the face of increased competition is testimony to the expertise and professionalism within Belfast Met to deliver a new opportunity for industry to maximise their competitiveness through digital transformation."



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