

The Institute of Coding: A University-Industry Collaboration to Address the UK Digital Skills Crisis

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The UK is not the only country with a serious digital skills crisis, but it is one with a formal Government inquiry (The Shadbolt Report) and response. It also has very detailed tracking of people into, through and out of higher education into employment. The Institute of Coding (<https://instituteofcoding.org/>) is a new £40m+ initiative by the UK Government to transform the digital skills profile of England. It responds to the apparently contradictory data that the country has a digital skills shortage across a variety of sectors, yet has unemployed computing graduates every year.

The Institute is a large-scale national intervention funded by Government, industry and universities to address some of the perceived issues with formal education versus industry skills and training, for example: technical skills versus soft skills, industry-readiness versus “deep education”, and managing expectations for the diverse digital, data and computational skills demands of employers across a wide range of economic sectors. Its work ranges from the development of specialist, in-demand digital skills to the provision of work experience, employability skills and ensuring work-readiness of computing graduates, and the provision of digital skills for those from a non-digital background. It is also addressing under-representation and under-achievement by a variety of groups, notably women (only 16% of university students) but also ethnic minorities and other groups.

Keywords: Digital skills; employability; industry-academia collaboration; gender

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3287324.3293834>

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