UK FORUM FOR COMPUTING EDUCATION (UKFORCE)

KEY PRIORITIES FOR PARTY MANIFESTOS

UKforCE is an independent committee which acts as a single voice for the computing community on 5-19 computing education issues. It brings together key stakeholders to share the vision of improving computing education across all education jurisdictions of the UK.

The UK is at a critical point for its digital economy. Many of our businesses in the IT and entertainment industries are world leaders. But the digital economy is much more than a few specialist sectors. Almost every business in the UK depends on digital skills. Without the right focus on digital skills from the next government, the UK will fall behind in the global digital race and may never recover.

The establishment of a new Computing curriculum in 2013, including the study of Computer Science, IT and Digital Literacy, puts England in a position to lead the world in computing education, but this is the beginning of a journey that needs to be supported through the next parliament and beyond, if we are to turn aspiration into reality.

This note sets out the key priorities for the next government to meet the future demand for digital skills that is evidenced by the key facts in the final section.

Key priorities for all political parties to consider for inclusion in their manifestos ahead of the general election

1. Comprehensively fund training of the existing teacher workforce to deliver the new Computing Curriculum across all schools in England
   Without more, better and sustained training of teachers, curriculum and qualification reform is ineffective

2. Continue to prioritise training of new Computing specialist teachers
   New specialist teachers are needed to ensure computing education in secondary schools is delivered to the highest standard

3. Improve Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in schools, to provide young people with a better understanding of pathways from further and higher education to rewarding computing jobs that are needed at all levels of expertise.
   Better teaching and curricula can only do so much to encourage the next generation into a range of computing jobs across all industries.

Key Facts on the Digital Economy and Digital Skills

1) **Value:** The digital economy constitutes over 10% of the value of the overall economy and already employs 11% of all workers[i]. The economic contribution of the internet is now said to be worth an estimated £100 billion to the UK economy[ii].

2) **Contribution:** The revenue of digital companies is growing at a rate on average 25% faster than non-digital companies[iii]. The digital economy will drive economic growth for the UK. Optimisation of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) by businesses could generate an additional £47 billion GVA in the UK economy over the next 5 to 7 years.

3) **Skills:** Businesses across all sectors, not just IT, are depending more and more on digital skills. It is estimated the digital economy will require 750,000 more jobs across many occupations and sectors by 2017. With the right policies introduced by the next government, an additional 96,000 job opportunities could also be created[iv].

4) Shortfall: Failing to meet the predicted skills demand will be a serious issue for the digital economy. In 2011, 14% of recruiters said they were having difficulties filling IT & Telecoms positions. The digital skills gap could cost the UK at least £2 billion. Gender imbalance is a serious issue for the IT & Telecoms sector. In 2011 just 18% of IT & Telecoms professionals were women, compared with 48% for the UK workforce as a whole.

5) Careers information and advice in schools: The current policy towards careers information, advice and guidance in schools is still not strong enough despite recent changes to the statutory guidance for schools[v]. According to the 2013 Ofsted report on careers guidance in schools, of the 60 schools visited, only 12 had ensured that all students received sufficient information to consider a wide breadth of career possibilities.

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[i] Future digital skills needs of the UK economy. Development Economics (commissioned by Telefonica UK) September 2013

[ii] Technology Insights 2012 e-skills UK

[iii] Measuring the economy using big data. NIESR July 2013

[iv] Development Economics *Op Cit*

[v] Careers guidance and inspiration in schools. Statutory Guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff. Department for Education. April 2014