



ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

ADA, THE NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR DIGITAL SKILLS

2024/25 ACADEMIC YEAR

Published July 2024

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[Hyperink: Ada. National College for Digital Skills](#)

Mission and Purpose (I)



Our Mission:

To educate and empower the next generation of diverse digital talent

OUR VALUES:

CURIOSITY

Learning is about more than facts and figures. It's about discovering how things work. It's about different people, cultures and environments and a strong appreciation for the new.

RIGOUR

Quality comes from the discipline of hard logic, honest challenge, thorough analysis and precise execution and communication.

CREATIVITY

Ambiguity and uncertainty are our friends. That's why we make the space to imagine, to connect the unconnected, and to be inspired to create the new, and to solve the unsolved.

COLLABORATION

Individually we can be great but together we are greater than the sum of our parts. We show people how to get the best out of each other, how to motivate each other, how to co-create and how to come together to solve the challenges and create the new.

RESILIENCE

Adversity and change are inevitable factors we face in life. We build the adaptable and flexible mindset to ensure you are armored to face the future with confidence



Mission and Purpose (II)



Introduction:

Ada was announced by David Cameron in 2015 as the Government's new National College for Digital Skills. To be confirmed as a National College Ada had secured significant industry support including five founding partners: Deloitte, IBM, King, Bank of America and Gamesys. Ada was established to address the well-documented, acute national digital skills shortage, specifically more advanced digital skills shortages at levels 3-6. Numerous reports by organisations such as [TechNation](#), [Royal Society](#), [House of Lords](#) and [NESTA](#) have, over the years, highlighted the ongoing economic impact of this skills shortage on the UK.

London and Manchester are the two main 'tech hubs' in the UK, with Manchester now recognised as one of the fastest grow tech hubs in Europe. Greater London and Greater Manchester are therefore where advanced digital skills shortages are most acute. We opened our Manchester campus for this reason following a feasibility study. It follows therefore that these hubs are where the most opportunities exist for Ada's learners to secure aspirational entry-level roles in the tech sector using the knowledge, skills and behaviours they acquire at Ada to launch successful tech-focused careers at large, medium and small organisations.

In addition, The Education Policy Institute recently released a report, ['Digital Skills Divided'](#), highlighting those from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially young women and those from certain ethnic minority backgrounds, are failing to learn the skills required to take advantage of the job opportunities being created by the London and Manchester 'tech hubs' and emerging hubs elsewhere in the country. This is despite employers and their representative bodies regularly stating the need for more diverse talent in the tech workforce.

Finally, the importance of digital skills, especially those at a higher level has been recognised across Government and enshrined in the 'National Skills Priorities'. Working with employers, we ensure that both of Ada's core education programmes: 16-19 and Higher / Degree Level Apprenticeships align closely to these priorities and provide clear progression pathways into aspirational tech-focused jobs.

[The Ada Story - Ada. National College for Digital Skills](#)

Context and Place - London

Ada London

With the support of the DfE and our industry partners, we are delighted that we moved to our new permanent campus at 1, Sutherland Street in Pimlico, just a short walk from Victoria station in August 2023. This c.5,000sqm building allows us to significantly grow our learner volumes and expand the programmes of study we will offer - For example, we are launching our Digital T-level programme from Sept. 2024.

16-19 provision:

The majority of students study the L3 BTEC National Diploma in Computing along with one or two additional A-levels (Maths, F.Maths, Graphics, Business Studies, Media Studies, Psychology) choosing either a *technical, entrepreneurial or creative* pathway. Some students study the L3 BTEC Extended Diploma in Computing. From Sept. 2025, students will have the option of studying the Digital Production, Design & Development. >70% of students are from low income households, 28% are female, 50% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. We recruit from across Greater London and beyond. Some students travel 4 hours a day to access our specialist provision.

Our standard entry requirements are that students have achieved an average grade of a 5 or above in their GCSEs, including at least a 4 in English Language and Maths. However, We do understand that sometimes circumstances mean that students who have the potential to succeed at Ada might not meet our standard entry requirements. We therefore ensure we have the in-house capacity to support students with Eng. / maths resits and usually have a handful of students who require this support each year.

Apprenticeship provision:

We train L4 and L6 digital apprentices for 40+ employers ranging from large corporates (e.g. PwC and HSBC) to a range of SME employers in a variety of industry sectors inc. fintech, health tech and retail. 80%+ of our apprentices are 18-24. 40% come from low income households, 32% are female and 45% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. We work with employers to support them with their entry-level diversity recruitment in tech roles. Most apprentices/employers are based within M25 though some come from towns with good rail links (e.g. Peterborough / Corby) to access specialist provision. Post-pandemic we've moved to a hybrid delivery model. We conduct annual roundtables with employers to review curriculum and ensure it is current and assess demand for new programmes. We work with the OU as our validating partners. We use Foundation Degrees as the knowledge component of our L4 apprenticeships which enables a unique 'top-up' programme to a L6 Degree Apprenticeship if desired.



Context and Place - Manchester



Ada Manchester

Manchester is the largest tech hub in the UK outside of London and has been ranked the #1 UK city for IT professionals to live and work. It is also the fastest-growing European tech city according to the 2020 Tech Nation report. Following a feasibility study in Autumn 2019 and with philanthropic support from local businesses, Manchester City Council and DCMS, along with key industry figures and employers, we launched a small pilot L6 digital apprenticeship programme in the North West in Spring 2021 with apprentices from Capita, Sykes Cottages, Bank of America and Call Sign utilizing training space in Manchester Technology Centre on Oxford Road (an in-kind donation from Bruntwood, a property management firm).

Our higher level and apprenticeship provision has seen rapid growth due to high demand from employers such as PwC, Moneysupermarket.com and Booking.com amongst others and we are now starting to train apprentices who will be based in other cities such as Sheffield (HSBC) and Leeds (Lloyds Banking Group) from our Manchester campus due to the quality of our training and the support we provide employers with recruiting high-quality, diverse, entry-level apprentices. We now have 150+ apprentices on roll and this will grow to 200+ in Autumn 2024. We are delighted to be involved in the recently announced Greater Manchester Institute of Technology (GM IoT), which has really helped us bed into the local skills eco-system. The funding from our involvement has enabled us to refurbish and take on the lease for a former studio school building in the Ancoats area, which will be our permanent campus in the region and provided much needed capacity for further growth and enable us to launch our T-level provision in the coming years alongside other new programmes and qualifications.

Ada's national ambitions:

Ada has medium term ambitions to open further campuses where there is evidenced demand from industry and local / combined authorities and learners. Ada's specialist model gives employers confidence in the quality of our provision and the diversity of the learners / apprentices they can work with. We believe our model would resonate in a number of other cities/regions in years to come – e.g. Birmingham, Belfast and Bristol– utilising a hub and spoke model as was originally intended for National Colleges.



Approach to Developing the Statement



Background

Ada was set up off the back of extensive support from industry when awarded the title of 'National College for Digital Skills'. The College continues to work with industry on a deep and meaningful level that influences our curriculum design but more importantly directly benefits our learners. Ofsted's March 2023 inspection highlighted this: *'Leaders and managers have strong and active relationships with a diverse range of employers across the country. Employers are very positive about these relationships and are strong advocates of the college. They highly value the knowledge, skills and behaviours that learners acquire at the college.'*

For this first iteration of the accountability statement the very tight timescales mean that Ada has not had the opportunity to work with the full range of stakeholders to test and allow challenge to the plan. However, Ofsted noted the college's strong contribution to meeting local and national skills needs: *'Leaders' and managers' active engagement with a range of stakeholders ensures that they understand and have a good strategic overview of the skills needs in both of the regions in which they operate.'*

London Local Stakeholders and Partners

- Ada actively contributes to the [Central London Forward strategic partnership](#) directly aligning and making a strong contribution to addressing their well identified [LSIP](#) priority areas.
- We are also pleased to have been actively involved in the [LSIF](#) bid and are now busy implementing our aspects of the proposal
- Ada is also a member of the Tech London Advocates Network hosting and contributing to events, panel discussions and wider forums
- Ada regularly attends the AoC's regional meetings to understand the evolving nature of other College's provision
- Ada's new London campus is 50% funded by the London LEAP with the explicit aim of helping address London's well identified digital skills challenges

Manchester Local Stakeholders and Partners

- Ada is a member of the new GM IoT
- Ada actively contributed to the [GM LSIP](#) directly aligning and making a strong contribution to addressing their well identified digital skills challenges given the explosive growth of the tech sector in recent years
- Ada has engaged extensively with the IGM Business Advisory Board with the Chair, Lou Cordwell, engaged on our Advisory Board
- Ada is working closely with Manchester City Council's skills team to consider proposed 16-19 provision to meet the local demographic challenges of the region

Strategic Aims and Objectives



Ada's current strategy runs to December 2025 and is entitled: 'Evolving to Ada 2.0'. It is focused on consolidating Ada as a sustainable, high-quality specialist technical college and increasing our impact by doubling our learner volumes and more effectively harnessing tech as a positive tool for social mobility while maintaining our already high standards teaching, learning and assessment and ensuring greater consistency.

Ada 2.0

***By December 2025** we want to evolve to Ada 2.0: Delivering an industry-led learning experience, in an aspirational culture, to larger volumes of diverse learners, which ensures our alumni secure jobs in tech & that Ada is sustainable.*

Quality of Education

- QARs >85% for both programmes in 24/25
- Cross College attendance av. >=93%
- Operating at consistently outstanding level based on external review

Learner Volume Growth

- 250 6th formers on roll
- 600 higher level apprentices on roll across Ldn & Manc.
- 75% of Ada recruited apprentices are from our diversity outreach programmes
- New programmes rolled out inc.:
 - Digital T-levels, new apprenticeship standard and Adult learning pilot

Learner Diversity

- 50% of learners from low-income backgrounds
- 38% of our learners identify as female
- 50% of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds

People

- Staff retention at 85% for 24/25
- Formalised Teacher Training & Development programme Launched

Alumni

- Alumni programme established & engagement metric defined
- 95% of Alumni in tech jobs 3-years after graduation

Operations & Resources

- >£50k from venue hire across LDN & MCR buildings
- Buildings & IT provide an aspirational learning environment, are compliant and operating within budget

Finance & Fundraising

- Raise £1m unrestricted philanthropy in 24/25
- Minimum of 40 cash days & ESFA financial health at least "Good" in July 2025

Strategic Aims 2024-25 (I)



Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p><i>Colleges should set out a limited number of strategic objectives/aims that will make a major contribution to national, regional and/or local priorities and/or address priority areas for performance improvement by the college</i></p>	<p><i>Colleges should summarise for each aim/objective:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. The target impact/outcome/improvement anticipated</i> <i>2. The relevant national/regional/local priority or performance target that the college objective/priority will contribute towards (with particular reference to LSIPs)</i> <i>3. Current performance / status (with reference as appropriate to the performance dashboard)</i> <i>4. Planned timelines for improvement/achievement</i> <i>5. The role and contribution of other partners required to achieve target outcomes</i>
<p>Aim/Objective 1:</p> <p>'Quality of Teaching, Learning & Assessment'</p> <p>Improve consistency of TLA and share learning and insights with in local, regional and national forums</p>	<p>To be confident we are a beacon of best practice in our regions, we want to ensure our TLA is consistently outstanding by August 2025 and begin to share our best practice on a local, regional and national forums</p> <p>To achieve this we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appoint / assign a QoE lead who has the capacity to take on this role across both settings - Use the LSIP forums and networks to co-ordinate and host Regional CPD sessions for 'Digital practitioners' in other FE Colleges, - Host and co-ordinate the annual, and national, Computing at Schools (CAS) conference in summer 2024 and hopefully on an annual basis - Pilot a number of GAI initiatives focus on curriculum evolution, effective assessment practices and organisational efficiency and share learnings through the LSIP and IoT networks of which we are part
<p>Aim/Objective 2:</p> <p>Work with local, regional and national employers to better understand and meet their skills needs</p>	<p>Due to economic headwinds, political uncertainty and the disruption caused by GAI, employers are reviewing their technical entry-level skills needs. We will work with them to help them better understand the range of apprenticeships, T-levels and Level 4 and 5 courses that learners can study to develop the skills needed to meet their business needs. We will do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hosting a number of sector specific roundtables with employer partners and sharing the outputs of these discussions - Co-develop new curriculum for L4 apprenticeship and HTQ programmes - Engage communities of association eg T&L group, CTO groups & Special interest groups offering them free meeting space and access to our learners to inform their discussions

Strategic Aims 2024-25 (II)



Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p>Aim/Objective 3:</p> <p>Launch a number of small but targeted new programmes</p>	<p>As a result of increased physical and team capacity, we are keen to better align to the Gov't priorities and launch new advanced (T-levels) and higher level provision (L4 apprenticeships and/or HTQ) that meets employer's needs in Greater London and Manchester.</p> <p>How will we achieve this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market test new qualifications to identify which ones will be financially viable • Create clear governance and key milestones for new programme development and sign off • Devise clear plans for each programme which are financially sustainable. • Ensure we build delivery teams with sufficient resourcing
<p>Aim/Objective 4:</p> <p>Significantly enhance learner and employer experience through investing in new operating systems</p>	<p>Based on employer and learner feedback, Ada's leadership team, with Governors, have identified a mismatch between Ada being the Government's National College for Digital Skills and the effectiveness/completeness of our digital infrastructure. A number of Ada's systems are not scalable and do not allow for efficient cross-team collaboration to ensure employer partner's needs are not efficiently met. This is leading to high staff turnover and compromises learner and wider stakeholder experience.</p> <p>How will we improve?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Create the strategic vision for Ada's digital future through workshopping with external support B. Evaluate the changes required to achieve the digital transformation to our systems and architecture, creating the roadmap for change C. Plan the detailed resources, change management and timelines for transformation D. Complete the Year 1 'quick wins' and essential objectives - CRM and Apprenticeships E. Plan in place for the Year 2-3 further transformation

Strategic Aims 2024-25 (III)

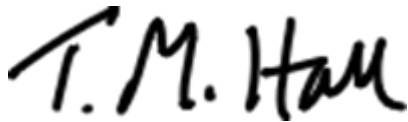


Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p>Aim/Objective 5:</p> <p>Launch Ada's Alumni community to promote greater engagement with digital skills education and employment of young people on Regional level</p>	<p>In Autumn 2024 Ada will have 500+ alumni working in the tech sector. Some are now in management roles. We want to cohere this community better to help drive work placement and employment opportunities for young people and expand employer engagement with Colleges in the Greater London and Manchester regions. We also want to share lessons learnt from our improved Impact data collection with wider stakeholders inc. Central London and GM LSIPs.</p> <p>How will this be achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific campaign to improve the quality of our alumni data and drive (re)engagement • Launch Alumni programme / offer • Define and communicate engagement methods and opportunities with local colleges to our alumni • Identify new employer partners through our alumni network and involve them in LSIF, IoT and other networks where appropriate • Share insights and learnings from improved impact measurement

Corporation Statement

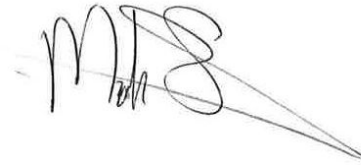
On behalf of the Corporation of Ada – National College for Digital Skills, it is hereby confirmed that the accountability statement set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on [INSERT DATE].

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link:



Tiffany Hall

Chair of Governors



Mark Smith

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Dated: 6th July 2024

Other Supporting Information



[The Post-18 Education Review \(the Augar Review\) recommendations - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

[Introduction of T Levels - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[National Skills Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Share your skills and teach in further education - Teach in further education - gov.uk \(campaign.gov.uk\)](#)

[English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[The Ada Story - Ada. National College for Digital Skills](#)

[Statutory Information - Ada. National College for Digital Skills](#)

[Ofsted | Ada National College for Digital Skills](#)