

University of Aberdeen partners with IBM to drive innovation in cognitive computing

Aberdeen, Scotland - 17 Mar 2016: The University of Aberdeen has become the first Scottish university to partner with IBM (NYSE: [IBM](#)) to offer students and staff access to [Watson Engagement Advisor](#), one of IBM's cognitive computing technology solutions.

The partnership will provide students within the University's Department of Computing Science the opportunity to gain hands-on experience of IBM's system, which is widely regarded as world leading in the field of cognitive computing. This partnership will not only allow the University to expand its curriculum and help nurture the next generation of innovators, it will also provide exciting research opportunities that will further cement its status as a university at the forefront of work in this area.

Cognitive computing systems learn and interact naturally with people to extend humans capabilities. These systems also work with experts to make sense of complex data in order to facilitate better decisions.

Watson represents a new era of computing based on its ability to interact in natural language, process vast amounts of disparate data, and learn from each interaction. IBM has worked closely with the world's leading academic institutions ever since the development and introduction of Watson.

As a result of this partnership with IBM, Aberdeen becomes one of only four UK Institutions to have access to the [Watson Engagement Advisor](#) solution and its experts. It will initially be used by students undertaking the Department of Computing Science's Semantic Web Engineering module, which is taught by Dr Jeff Z. Pan, who is the leader of the Knowledge Technology group in the department. It will eventually be offered more widely across a range of relevant programmes.

Academics at the University are already undertaking cutting-edge cognitive computing research using Watson.

Researchers are collaborating with a team of IBM scientists on the EU Marie Curie K-Drive project, which investigates ways of understanding and utilising big data and knowledge graphs for applications, such as those in the treatment of cancers. This involves using IBM Watson's question & answering, knowledge representation and dialogue capabilities. The results of the work will also form the basis of new research proposals from the University for the EU Horizon 2020 Programme.

Dr Pan, the coordinator of the K-Drive project, said: "With access to Watson we are providing the next

generation of students with experience of the latest techniques in cognitive computing, which puts them in a strong position when it comes to a career in the industry.

“The partnership with IBM is an exciting opportunity to advance our research in this area. Cognitive computing is empowering human decision-making processes by understanding and exploiting data which is structured and unstructured, and our research is focused on how to make the best use of both types of data.”

IBM Academic Initiative Leader, Paul Fryer, said: "Cognitive represents an entirely new model of computing that includes a range of technology innovations in analytics, natural language processing and machine learning. The collaboration between IBM and the University of Aberdeen, which builds on a long-standing relationship, aims to help nurture the next generation of innovators; and is the first initiative of this type in Scotland."

About the University of Aberdeen

Founded in 1495, the University of Aberdeen is Scotland's third oldest and the UK's fifth oldest university, and is consistently ranked among the top 1% of the world's universities.

The University's Department of Computing Science has a long-standing reputation in Intelligent Systems, with world recognised expertise in areas such as knowledge technologies, multi-agent systems and natural language generation.

In the most recent UK research quality assessment (REF 2014) the department was ranked 16th in the UK in terms of research intensity, with 70% of its research assessed to be world leading or internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour, and 100% being internationally recognised.

The [K-Drive project](#) has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 286348.

For more information about Dr Jeff Z. Pan's research, visit: <http://homepages.abdn.ac.uk/jeff.z.pan/pages/>

IBM Watson: Pioneering a New Era of Computing

Watson is the first open cognitive computing technology platform and represents a new era in computing where systems understand the world in the way that humans do: through senses, learning, and experience. Watson continuously learns, gaining in value and knowledge over time, from previous interactions. With the help of Watson, organizations are harnessing the power of cognitive computing to transform industries, help professionals do their jobs better, and solve important challenges.

To advance Watson, IBM has two dedicated business units: [Watson](#), established for the development of cloud-delivered cognitive computing technologies that represent the commercialization of "artificial intelligence" or "AI" across a variety of industries, and [Watson Health](#), dedicated to improving the ability of doctors, researchers and insurers and other related health organizations to surface new insights from data to and deliver personalized healthcare

For more information on IBM Watson, visit: ibm.com/Watson and ibm.com/press/watson

For more information on the Watson Developer Cloud,
visit: <http://www.ibm.com/smarterplanet/us/en/ibmwatson/developercloud/>

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