University Curriculum Powered by IBM Cloud Aims to Narrow the Technology Skills Gap

In a world-first, students at the University of the Highlands and Islands will be able to earn a four-year Applied Software Development degree via the IBM Cloud

London, UK - 11 September 2019: The University of the Highlands and Islands is launching a new, first of a kind Bachelor of Science Applied Software Development degree in partnership with IBM to address the growing UK skills gap. Available entirely online via the university's virtual learning environment and the IBM Cloud, students will have the flexibility to study from their own location, in the UK and internationally with support from tutors and fellow-students.

The use of emerging technologies such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, data science, security, and blockchain has been growing and as AI is set to contribute $15.7T to the global economy by 2030*, the digital skills gap in Europe is set to grow to 500,000 by 2020**. Through the new course, students will build core development skills in programming, experiencing multiple languages such as Python, Java and Node Red to gain hands-on experience in the tools used by industries today and required for many of tomorrow's jobs.

Through the IBM Academic Initiative, University of the Highlands and Islands staff and students will have easy and immediate access to IBM's resources for data science, cloud development and coding skills. Over the four-year course, these resources will provide students with practical hands-on experience and exposure to cloud services and the same tools used by industries and professionals for emerging digital roles.

Operating in agile methodologies students will work in teams throughout the programme on a portfolio of projects and will manage their time between practical work, directed learning via the university's virtual learning environmentand scheduled tutorialsby video conference. They will take on tasks typical of a junior developer in their early professional career and progress to managing the project lifecycle during the four-year programme, walking away with a portfolio of projects and expertise attractive to employers.

Alongside the programme students will take part in an annual bootcamp to cultivate their leadership and teamwork skills as well as develop their individual expertise with support from IBM subject matter experts who will provide mentorship, an industry perspective and networking opportunities to enhance the students' learning experience. The development of the degree is being funded by the European Social Fund and Scottish Funding Council as part of their Developing Scotland's Workforce programme).

Discussing the benefits of the new course, **Professor Crichton Lang, Interim Principal and Vice-Chancellor** of the University of the Highlands and Islands, said: "In an increasingly competitive computing sector, employers are looking for candidates who can prove that they are confident with cloud services. Students' confidence will only come with actual hands-on experience with cloud technology. Graduates of our new applied software development BSc (Hons) qualification will be in an extremely good position when applying for highly sought-after roles, as they will enter the world of work with four years' worth of experience with IBM Cloud."

Naguib Attia, VP, Global University Programs at IBM added: "Our collaboration with the University of the

Highlands and Islands on its Applied Software Development BSc (Hons) is a first for IBM – nowhere else do we currently use IBM Cloud for a full degree programme. The new venture will highlight the full potential of our technology and unlock many doors for the computer programmers of tomorrow. Skills are the most important issue of our time, as the digital landscape evolves, we need to ensure that we nurture young and promising talent – wherever in the country they come from – and equip them with the skills to participate fully in the digital economy."

IBM is building on the need to advance digital skills in education across its network in Europe of more than 250 institutions and is dedicated to providing future focused curriculum and educational tools to help train the diverse workforce of tomorrow in fast-growing technologies such as AI, blockchain, cybersecurity, cloud and quantum. Additionally, IBM's digital platform, the Academic Initiative provides students with access to IBM Cloud, IBM Software and faculty members with additional course content and materials. More recently, IBM announced the expansion of the P-TECH programme in the UK and Ireland to prepare young people for academic achievement and economic opportunity, regardless of their background.

* https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/data-and-analytics/publications/artificial-intelligence-study.html

**Europe's Digital Progress Report 2017 - https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/europes-digital-progress-report-2017

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