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NEW COLLEGE SELECTED TO TAKE PART IN GROUND-BREAKING HEWLETT-PACKARD ACCREDITED DEGREE THAT'S SET TO ADDRESS UK IT SKILLS GAP

New College Swindon announced today that they have been selected by Hewlett-Packard (HP) and Thames Valley University (TVU) as one of just 12 centres across England to offer a unique Foundation Degree (FdSc) course. The course will be available to part-time students and aims to help address the nation's IT skills gap.

In an industry first, the Computer Systems Management degree aims to support people already working in IT, or those seeking to move into the field. It will integrate HP Certified Professional content with key elements required for a UK degree course and work based learning. It is the first time that a global IT company has partnered with a College in this way, to provide a degree course accessible to people across the country.

Steve Ridge, Director of Adult Learning at New College, commented: "Nationally, the number of school leavers entering full-time higher education courses in Computing has halved in recent years, which is in stark contrast to research that suggests that 163,000 new employees will be needed in the IT profession by 2016. Without significant action, either even more jobs will be lost through outsourcing to countries like India, or UK business as a whole will suffer major problems relying as it does on IT infrastructures. With the supply of full-time graduates beginning to dry up, the new 'HP degree' course offers employers across the country an effective and highly cost efficient way to train and retain staff."

The result of more than three years co-development between Thames Valley University and Hewlett-Packard, the Foundation Degree, which launches nationally in Autumn 2008, combines 14 separate HP certifications and offers people across England the opportunity to gain commercial awareness and skills that they couldn't expect from a standard degree course. The certifications cover a range of disciplines, including sales, planning and design.

Students will only need to attend the College on Saturdays, enabling them to continue in full-time employment. There will also be four three-day residential courses per year where students will take the Hewlett-Packard element of the degree integrated with general degree content. On completion they will be able to progress to a full BSc Honours degree.

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Mike Bicknell, Business Development Manager at Hewlett-Packard Certified & Education, Solution Partner Organisation (SPO), commented: "Working towards closing the IT skills gap, the Computing Systems Foundation Degree is a result of more than three years collaboration between Hewlett-Packard and Thames Valley University. The government-supported e-skills council is keen to facilitate collaboration between IT vendors and academic institutions, so we are excited about the new nationwide delivery of an industry-first degree in which both the needs of employers and the academic structure will be met."

Steve Ridge added: "In conjunction with Hewlett-Packard and Thames Valley University, we have worked hard to develop a joint delivery model which can address the needs of people working in Wiltshire and surrounding counties. Being part-time, the course fee is much lower than for full-time study and, depending on earnings, grants are available that in some cases may mean that the course is effectively free. We are delighted to be in a position to work with Hewlett-Packard and Thames Valley University on this unique opportunity. Not only will the Foundation Degree enable students to develop new skills, it will also offer them the opportunity to gain accredited work within their existing employment."

Those interested in the course can find out more at www.ifoundhp.com or contact Dawn Hardy at New College on: 01793 732807 or email dawn.hardy@newcollege.ac.uk

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