

Coding school setting up in Edinburgh



We all know that coding is the thing to learn these days. But how do you even start? Well it may become easier to get a new skill now as Scotland's first dedicated software skills academy is to be set up. The aim is to produce wave after wave of software developers ready for work every 10 weeks, with the first cohort graduating in February 2016.

CodeClan, a coding school for web and mobile software development, is based on the success of the new breed of immersive academies around the world including Flatiron School in New York, Makers in London and Stackademy in Berlin.

The aim is to create a new generation of software developers that will allow Scotland's vibrant digital sector to flourish and drive the economy. CodeClan will draw on an untapped resource of talented individuals who have an aptitude for coding but need a route into the industry.

The academy is being launched amid a global shortage of digital skills affecting businesses in many different sectors of the economy. Forecasts suggest Scotland alone could offer up to 11,000 job opportunities a year in the digital sector, rising by 2000 every year. Skills-starved employers are currently offering upwards of £23,000 to £25,000 to recruit entry-level developers.

Industry led and Government backed, the academy's curriculum has been tailored to fit real time market demands in Scotland and is working with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), to offer its graduates 'Professional Development Awards' in Software Development.

Rebecca Heaney from CodeClan explains: “Digital is part of every day life and CodeClan will fast track access into shaping that world. A CodeClan qualification will create countless career paths and give students skills they can take anywhere.”

Digital Industries Trade Body, ScotlandIS has championed the need to grow the talent pool in Scotland for many years and is one of the principal architects of CodeClan. Polly Purvis, CEO of ScotlandIS explains: “It is a phenomenally exciting time to be working in the digital technologies in Scotland with companies like Skyscanner and Fanduel taking the world by storm. CodeClan is a ‘way in’ for people who want to be part of that story.”

SQA Chief Executive, Dr Janet Brown, said, “SQA is committed to helping people realise their potential and achieve their ambitions by providing a wide range of high quality, internationally recognised qualifications and associated services. We work with employers and industry to ensure that SQA qualifications accurately reflect learners’ knowledge and skills and provide routes to jobs or further study as well as enable organisations to succeed in meeting a wide range of educational and workforce development challenges.

“We are delighted to be working with ScotlandIS in the development of Professional Development Awards in Software Development, which will upskill employees in the digital technology industry and support the sector in addressing the current skills shortages.”

CodeClan is looking for people who are natural problem solvers and the students will need to hit the ground running. Long hours are an inevitable part of immersive education, so there will also be a focus on student wellbeing to ensure students are given the support needed to cope with the demands of the course.

The first cohort of students will be drawn from a variety of backgrounds from STEM graduates and coding hobbyists to people changing career or returning to work. Although a tech background is not needed a rigorous selection process, including mandatory pre-qualification course, will help determine aptitude and fit.

Industry leaders in Scotland agree that coding education is needed to safeguard future growth. According to Nigel Eccles CEO of FanDuel, the global leader in daily fantasy sports which was founded and has its engineering team based here in Scotland said: “We need developers in the tech talent pipeline not just in Edinburgh but throughout Scotland. The growth of any company correlates precisely to the skills and experience of its people. We have found great talent here and we are looking forward to seeing the next generation emerge.”



Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, said: “I greatly welcome today’s launch of CodeClan, the industry-led digital skills academy. CodeClan will provide new opportunities for people from many walks of life to meet pressing skills shortages in this growing and vibrant digital sector. The Scottish Government is very pleased to support this initiative as part of our commitment to make Scotland a world class digital economy by 2020.”

The launch of CodeClan was also welcomed by John McClelland, Chair of Skills of Development Scotland, whose career in the industry spanned global firms including Philips and IBM.

He said: “Scotland is ideally-placed to take advantage of the global growth in the ICT and Digital Technologies sector, and the launch of CodeClan will offer many people the opportunity to be a part of that.



As well as helping people forge an exciting career, it's also a key development for industry, who need cutting-edge software skills if they are to thrive in this competitive marketplace."

The immersive education model marks a new approach to software education in Scotland, supplementing and complementing what is already on offer and opening it up to new talent

Critically, staff-student ratios will be unusually high with one tutor for every five students. Blended courses focus on software development with a short intensive course lasting 16 weeks following a mandatory three week pre-course programme to be accepted onto the course.

The academy also forms part of a co-ordinated response to the digital skills shortage, with other strands including a marketing campaign showcasing the opportunities available in the digital sector, and giving more school pupils the skills and knowledge to pursue digital careers.

Heaney adds: "CodeClan needs people who share our passion for software and who want to learn the craft of coding so they can build and design digital products for the real world. Applicants don't need any prior experience to apply to CodeClan but we do demand an intense desire to learn."

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