

NEWS FROM DIGITAL UNITE

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Championing digital inclusion through ‘people power’

More than eight million people in the UK are still missing out on all the many benefits of being online - despite a whole series of digital inclusion initiatives. Now Digital Unite, one of the UK's main providers of digital skills learning, plans to train qualified ‘Digital Champions’ to bridge the gap.

Emma Solomon, Managing Director of Digital Unite, says: “Digital Unite is launching its online Academy and its very first qualification, the Digital Champion ITQ, to enable those who already know their way around a computer to acquire the skills – and formal qualifications - to become effective Digital Champions.”

“Our experience over 16 years of providing digital skills learning has shown that good intentions and enthusiasm are not enough to make real change in the way people understand and use computers and the internet. The missing ingredient is that if UK plc is to improve its digital skills it needs thousands of qualified Digital Champions to go out and train others in their communities and workplace.”

The Digital Champion ITQ is an innovative e-learning course and the only one of its kind that is designed to advance students’ computer skills while training them to inspire and engage others to get online. It leads to a level 2 City and Guilds qualification.

Emma Solomon adds: “Over the years, we’ve seen many different styles of Digital Champion, some formal, others informal. What we’ve lacked is a common framework against which to evaluate their capacity and capability and from which it would be easy to identify and fill in any gaps in skills and experience. We devised the Digital Champion ITQ to solve this fundamental problem and to give all budding Champions a valued and valuable starting point.”

Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion, is backing the initiative and says: “I believe that people power is the only way we’ll get the whole of the UK connected and Digital Champions are vital in this journey. By equipping people with a Digital Champion ITQ not only do they achieve a fantastic qualification but they will also gain essential skills in inspiring and engaging others to make that step in to the online world.”

The online course has already been successfully piloted with learners from businesses, charities, social housing, libraries, unions and community groups. The first set of successful

graduates were awarded their qualification certificates at the launch of the Academy on March 21.

For more information about the Digital Unite Academy and the new Digital Champion ITQ qualification, go to www.digitalunite.com

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Note to editors: Digital Unite is one of the UK's main providers of digital skills learning. An independent organisation established in 1996, it offers a range of services and resources to support people on their digital journey, from the complete beginner to the more experienced user.

The Digital Unite Academy offers a new and innovative Digital Champion ITQ qualification to help people develop in-depth, formal digital championing skills. The e-learning syllabus can lead to a Level 2 qualification under the National ITQ Framework and accreditation by City and Guilds.

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