Accountability Agreement for

Ada, The National College For Digital Skills

2023/24 Academic Year

June 2023

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Mission and Purpose (I)

Our Mission: To educate and empower the next generation of diverse digital talent

About our namesake Ada Lovelace:

Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace was a British computing pioneer from the 19th century regarded as the first programmer. Ada was the bold visionary who recognised the potential of computers to solve problems in many areas, from maths to music, and she embodies our College's values:

OUR VALUES:

CURIOSITY
Learning is about more than facts and figures. It's about discovering how things work. It's about different people, cultures and environments and a strong appreciation for the new.

RIGOUR
Quality comes from the discipline of hard logic, honest challenge, thorough analysis and precise execution and communication.

CREATIVITY
Ambiguity and uncertainty are our friends. That's why we make the space to imagine, to connect the unconnected, and to be inspired to create the new, and to solve the unsolved.

COLLABORATION
Individually we can be great but together we are greater than the sum of our parts. We show people how to get the best out of each other, how to motivate each other, how to co-create and how to come together to solve the challenges and create the new.

RESILIENCE
Adversity and change are inevitable factors we face in life. We build the adaptable and flexible mindset to ensure you are armored to face the future with confidence

Mission and Purpose (II)

Introduction:

Ada was announced by David Cameron in 2015 as the Government's new National College for Digital Skills. To be confirmed as a National College Ada had secured significant industry support including five founding partners: Deloitte, IBM, King, Bank of America and Gamesys. Ada was established to address the well-documented, acute national digital skills shortage, specifically more advanced digital skills shortages at levels 3-6. Numerous reports by organisations such as TechNation, Royal Society, House of Lords and NESTA have, over the years, highlighted the ongoing economic impact of this skills shortage on the UK.

London and Manchester are the two main 'tech hubs' in the UK, with Manchester now recognised as one of the fastest grow tech hubs in Europe. Greater London and Greater Manchester are therefore where advanced digital skills shortages are most acute. We opened our Manchester campus for this reason following a feasibility study. It follows therefore that these hubs are where the most opportunities exist for Ada's learners to secure aspirational entry-level roles in the tech sector using the knowledge, skills and behaviours they acquire at Ada to launch successful tech-focused careers at large, medium and small organisations.

In addition, The Education Policy Institute recently released a report, 'Digital Skills Divided,' highlighting those from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially young women and those from certain ethnic minority backgrounds, are failing to learn the skills required to take advantage of the job opportunities being created by the London and Manchester 'tech hubs' and emerging hubs elsewhere in the country. This is despite employers and their representative bodies regularly stating the need for more diverse talent in the tech workforce.

Finally, the importance of digital skills, especially those at a higher level has been recognised across Government and enshrined in the 'National Skills Priorities'. Both of Ada's core education programmes: 16-19 and Higher / Degree Level Apprenticeships align closely to these priorities and provide clear progression pathways into aspirational tech-focused jobs. 91% of our 500+ alumni to date are employed in tech-focused roles and 98% of our alumni are in employment or higher education as of March 2023.

The Ada Story - Ada. National College for Digital Skills

Context and Place - London

Ada London

Ada opened it's doors in Sept. 2016 as the first brand new FE College in England since 1993 with a small 16-19 cohort. We continue to run this provision in Tottenham Hale. In May 2017, with the launch of the apprenticeship levy, we launched two level 4 digital apprenticeships (software development and data analytics) directly addressing what our industry partner's cited as their most acute areas of higher level skills shortages. Due to rapid volume growth of our apprenticeship provision and a lack of space we took on a second, temporary, campus in Whitechapel to accommodate our apprenticeship provision. Due to protracted issues regarding our premises in London, as well as the impact of the pandemic, Ada's growth has been stymied in recent years. Working closely with the DfE's LocatED team, we are delighted to be moving to a new, permanent campus in Victoria on 1st August 2023, which will give us additional capacity to grow our learner volumes and meet the ambitious goals in our 'Evolving to Ada 2.0' strategy.

16-19 provision:

Following extensive employer engagement, Ada has designed a curriculum around 3 pathways: Innovator, Pioneer or Entrepreneur. They link academic rigour with practical application. The majority of students study the L3 BTEC National Diploma in Computing along with one or two additional A-levels (Maths, F.Maths, Graphics, Business Studies, Media Studies, Psychology). Some students study the L3 BTEC Extended Diploma in Computing. >70% of students are from low income households, 25% are female, 50% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. We recruit 40% of students from within 3 m of the College and 60% from a much wider geography. Some students travel 4 hrs a day to access our specialist provision. Our standard entry requirements are that students have achieved an average grade of a 5 or above in their GCSEs, including at least a 4 in English Language and Maths. We do understand that sometimes circumstances mean that students who have the potential to succeed at Ada might not meet our standard entry requirements. We therefore ensure we have the in-house capacity to support students with Eng. / maths resits and usually have a handful of students who require this support each year. We will launch a pilot of the Digital T-level in Sept. 2024 and are working with a number of other FE Colleges as well as MATs and attending DfE/Gatsby conferences to learn from best practice and ensure the pilot is successful.

Apprenticeship provision:

We train L4 and L6 digital apprentices for 35 employers ranging from large corporates (e.g. Salesforce, Deloitte and HSBC) to a range of SME employers in a variety of industry sectors inc. fintech, health tech and retail. 80%+ of our apprentices are 18-22. 40% come from low income households, 32% are female and 45% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. We work with employers to support them with their entry-level diversity recruitment in tech roles. Most apprentices/employers are based within M25 though some come from towns with good rail links (e.g. Peterborough / Corby) to access specialist provision. Post-pandemic we've moved to a hybrid delivery model. We conduct annual roundtables with employers to review curriculum and ensure it is current and assess demand for new programmes. We work with the OU as our validating partners. We use Foundation Degrees as the knowledge component of our L4 apprenticeships which enables a unique 'top-up' programme if

Context and Place - Manchester

Manchester background and location:

Manchester is the largest tech hub in the UK outside of London and has been ranked the #1 UK city for IT professionals to live and work. It is also the fastest-growing European tech city according to the 2020 Tech Nation report. Following a feasibility study in Autumn 2019 and with philanthropic support from local businesses, Manchester City Council and DCMS, along with key industry figures and employers, we launched a small pilot L6 digital apprenticeship programme in the North West in Spring 2021 with apprentices from Capita, Sykes Cottages, Bank of America and Call Sign utilizing training space in Manchester Technology Centre on Oxford Road (an in-kind donation from Bruntwood, a property management firm).

Our higher level and apprenticeship provision has seen rapid growth due to high demand from employers such as PwC, Moneysupermarket.com and Booking.com amongst others and we are now starting to train apprentices who will be based in other cities such as Sheffield (HSBC) and Leeds (Lloyds Banking Group) from our Manchester campus due to the quality of our training and the support we provide employers with recruiting high-quality, diverse, entry-level apprentices. We now have 120+ apprentices on roll and this will grow to 200+ in Autumn 2024. We are delighted to be involved in the recently announced Greater Manchester Institute of Technology (GM IoT), which has really helped us bed into the local skills eco-system. The funding from our involvement has enabled us to refurbish and take on the leave for a former studio school building in the Ancoats area, which will be our permanent campus in the region and provided much needed capacity for further growth and enable us to launch our T-level provision in the coming years alongside other new programmes and qualifications.

Ada's national ambitions:

Ada has medium term ambitions to open further campuses where there is evidenced demand from industry and local / combined authorities and learners. Ada's specialist model gives employers comfidence in the quality of our provision and the diversity of the learners / apprentices they can work with. The biggest constraint to expansion will be identifying physical buildings and securing required capital funding for refurbishment, though we believe we now have a identified a low-cost, efficient approach to this through working with DfE/LocatED should there be the desire from DfE for further growth to areas of need. Our specialism, strong social mission and clear curriculum intent, implementation and impact as well as the quality of our pastoral provision, all recently evidence by our March 2023 Ofsted inspection, are what attracts us to employers and we feel this will resonate in a number of other cities/regions in years to come – e.g. Bristol, Newcastle, Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield – utilising a hub and spoke model as was originally intended for National Colleges.

Approach to Developing the Statement

Background

Ada was set up off the back of extensive support from industry when awarded the title of 'National College for Digital Skills'. The College continues to work with industry on a deep and meaningful level that influences our curriculum design but more importantly directly benefits our learners. Ofsted's March 2023 inspection highlighted this: 'Leaders and managers have strong and active relationships with a diverse range of employers across the country. Employers are very positive about these relationships and are strong advocates of the college. They highly value the knowledge, skills and behaviours that learners acquire at the college.'

For this first iteration of the accountability statement the very tight timescales mean that Ada has not had the opportunity to work with the full range of stakeholders to test and allow challenge to the plan. However, Ofsted noted the college's strong contribution to meeting local and national skills needs: 'Leaders' and managers' active engagement with a range of stakeholders ensures that hey understand and have a good strategic overview of the skills needs in both of the regions in which they operate.'

London Local Stakeholders and Partners
- Ada is a member of the Tech London Advocates Network hosting and contributing to events, panel discussions and wider forums
- Ada has been involved in the preliminary meetings of the LSIPs, specifically those focused on the digital skills shortage
- Ada regularly attends the AoC's regional meetings to understand the evolving nature of other College's provision
- Following recommendations from Ofsted, Ada is seeking to be more actively involved in sub-regional skills forums in the Greater London area
- Ada's new London campus is 50% funded by the London LEAP

Manchester Local Stakeholders and Partners
- Ada is a member of the new GM IoT
- Ada attends the Manchester Digital Skills Network events monthly
- Ada has engaged extensively with the local LEP, with the Chair joining our Advisory Board for the region
- Ada is working closely with Manchester City Council's skills team to consider proposed 16-19 provision to meet the local demographic challenges of the region

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Ada's current strategy runs to December 2025 and is entitled: 'Evolving to Ada 2.0'. It is focused on consolidating Ada as a sustainable, high-quality specialist technical college and increasing our impact by doubling our learner volumes and more effectively harnessing tech as a positive tool for social mobility while maintaining our already high standards teaching, learning and assessment and ensuring greater consistency.

#Ada2

Ada 2.0

*By **December 2025** we want to evolve to Ada 2.0: Delivering an industry-led learning experience, in an aspirational culture, to larger volumes of diverse learners, which ensures our alumni secure jobs in tech & that Ada is sustainable.*

Quality of Education
- QARs >85%
- Cross College attendance av. >90%
- 95% of Ada Alumni in tech jobs 3 years after graduation
- Good or Outstanding Ofsted
- 95% Alumni data accuracy

Learner Volume Growth
- 300 6th formers on roll
- 500 higher level apprentices on roll across Ldn & Manc.
- 135 diverse learners from our short courses join our apprenticeships
- New programmes rolled out:
  - Digital T-levels as BAU
  - 2 new apprenticeship standards

Learner Diversity
- 50% of learners from low-income backgrounds
- 38% of our learners are women
- Ada piloting new, chargeable services to employers focused on diversity recruitment support

People
- Staff retention at 85% for 2024/2025
- Formalised Teacher Training & Development programme Launched

Fundraising
- Raise >£1.5m core fundraising
- Secure c.£600k in building sponsorship

Buildings
- Deliver 2 new buildings on budget
- Wind down 3 existing buildings
- Generate >£100k from venue hire

Finance & Compliance
- 100% compliance
- Reserves of 3 months of operating expenditure
- Minimum of 40 cash days
= ESFA financial health at least "Good" in July 2024

Strategic Aims 2023-24 (I)

Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
Aim/Objective 1: 'Buildings' **Deliver Ada's Property Strategy in London with new campus opening in August 2023**	Successful opening of new London HQ in Victoria. This ensures: - Much-needed increase in capacity for the Sixth Form, T Levels and Tech Apprenticeships - A high quality campus for learners, especially apprentices and employers to better collaborate in (our apprenticeship provision has been housed in a former primary school for the past 4 years) - Greater financial efficiency as we have been made to pay c. 8% of our operating budget in rent for the past 3 years - Increased regional partnership with other colleges, training providers, schools and employers due to central London location, close to major train station (Victoria) and fit-for-purpose building design
Aim/Objective 2: 'Buildings' **Deliver Ada's Property Strategy as part of the Manchester IoT with new campus opening in January 2024**	Plans finalised for opening of larger, permanent premises for the Manchester IoT. This ensures: - Much-needed increase in capacity for Tech Apprenticeships (to meet IoT targets) and future programmes – e.g. T-levels - A high quality campus for learners, especially apprentices and employers to better collaborate in (our temporary provision is meant to be office space not training space) - Greater financial efficiency through economies of scale and opportunity to launch new programmes - Partnership with Manchester IoT (lead – Salford Uni) and other colleges, schools and universities in the region due to central Manchester location close to 2 major train stations (Piccadilly & Victoria)
Aim/Objective 3: 'Learner Volume Growth' **Scale up Ada's Level 4 programmes (Software Dev, Data Analytics and Digital Growth Marketing) using Skills Injection Funding**	Ensuring a <20% in Level 4 apprenticeship volumes to support our Evolving to Ada 2.0 volume targets. In line with our Skills Injection Fund application we are keen to re-invigorate our L4 Apprenticeship pipeline for our existing programmes and prepare to introduce a new Level 4 programme in Autumn 2024. This will translate through to: - 37 L4 Digital apprentices (21 SD / 16 DA) – an increase of 150% from 2022/23 - We are on track to enrol 30 learners onto a L4 marketing executive programme in Sept. '24 or Jan. '25 – This will be a new L4 apprenticeship at Ada. Note: We will also consider launching an HTQ in 2024/25 – This is likely to be a Foundation Degree delivered in partnership with the OU

Strategic Aims 2023-24 (II)

Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
Aim/Objective 4: 'Learner Volume Growth' **Ensure existing 16-19 provision in London grows by >20% in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to ensure longer-term viability**	Ada's existing16-19 provision needs to reach 200+ learners on programme to become cost efficient. It is currently at c.130. We plan to enrol 97 learners in late August 2023, replacing the 55 who will graduate. This will deliver the 23/24 growth at c.30%. We then need to put the recruitment/selection campaign in place, utilising our new Victoria campus, to drive further growth in AY 2024/25. The target is 120 learners enrolling in August 2024, as we believe our new campus will increase our reach and attractiveness to candidates and we will also offer the T-level programme as a new option.
Aim/Objective 5: 'Learner Volume Growth' **Plan for delivery of inaugural T-level programme from September 2024**	We will begin marketing the Digital T-Level to prospective students in August 2023. We are working with a number of partners, eg. Leigh Academy Trust and Southwark College, that have already launched digital T-level provision successfully. Our target is an initial pilot cohort of 10-20 learners (inc. within the 16-19 learner volume growth targets outlined in objective 4). We will utilise our capital grant allocation to ensure a state-of-art learning environment and work with our existing industry partners to broker the required work placements. From January 2024, we will have a dedicated Assistant Principal allocated to creating the curriculum and cohering the pilot cohort.
Aim/Objective 6: 'Learner Diversity' **Ensure Ada remains on track to meet our learner diversity targets, especially 50% of learners coming from low-income households**	Working with the Impetus Foundation we have devised a number of workstreams to continue to focus on improving learner diversity @ Ada. Target for Dec. 2025 is >50% from low-income households, >38% female learners and >50% ethnically diverse learners: - Continue to invest in and refine our Outreach Strategy increasing our reach to 100+ schools in Greater London in 23/24 focused on recruiting more female students and students from low-income households - Work with LSIP and other FE Colleges to deliver programme of short courses to support 350+ diverse learners to apply and secure Ada's higher level digital apprenticeships - Work with selected employers to review their existing recruitment and selection strategies for their apprenticeship programmes to help improve their diversity recruitment. By Summer 2024 >50% of our employer partners (currently 34) will outsource the initial stages of the recruitment and selection to Ada.

Strategic Aims 2023-24 (II)

Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
Aim/Objective 7: 'Quality of Education' **Ensuring sustained improvement of the Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment**	Following our recent Ofsted inspection we have identified 3 main areas of focus: 1. Staff retention and development: - Improve staff retention through improved benefits package (e.g. travel loans and cycle to work and more defined flexi working opportunities) - Enhanced personal development opportunities - Consider Taking Teaching Further pilot either for later in 23/24 or to launch in Sept. 2024 2. Increase the quality and consistency of line management to drive improvements in the quality of TLA: - Roll out new HR software including performance management module and ensure reporting set up so senior leaders and middle leaders can review quality of line management - Keep up momentum of training and support for LMs, especially those in education leadership roles. - All teachers and lecturers to have a defined development plan in place by End of December '23 - More defined and specific pedagogical training and development opportunities for teachers and lecturers. - Increasing opportunities for staff to share best practice both internally and with other schools and colleges, especially computer science teachers and lecturers. 3. More defined, consistent employer input opportunities into our curriculum: - Increase regularity of employer surveys to relevant HR and IT/Technical points of contact - Cycle of employer roundtables defined at the beginning of the year and communicated early. Test whether virtual roundtables are as effective - Re-institute employer advisory board - Involve employers committing to T-level placements in preparation work to roll out digital T-level

Corporation Statement

On behalf of the Corporation of Ada – National College for Digital Skills, it is hereby confirmed that the accountability statement set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on [INSERT DATE].

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link:

Tiffany Hall   **Mark Smith**

Chair of Governors   **Chief Executive and Accounting Officer**

Dated:

Other Supporting Information

The Post-18 Education Review (the Augar Review) recommendations - House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)

Introduction of T Levels - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

National Skills Fund - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Share your skills and teach in further education - Teach in further education - gov.uk (campaign.gov.uk)

English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Ada Story - Ada. National College for Digital Skills

Statutory Information - Ada. National College for Digital Skills

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