

[News story: University of Edinburgh to become centre of excellence for cyber security research](#)

- Scotland to get its first Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Research
- Edinburgh joins Warwick amongst 14 centres announced across the UK
- Cabinet Office: Research centres will ensure we build the capabilities to tackle cyber threats

Ben Gummer, Minister for the Cabinet Office, visited the University of Edinburgh to praise its efforts in becoming the first such centre in Scotland to gain the accolade – making it one of the leading establishments in this growing field of work.

Chosen from more than 20 applicants from across the UK, the 14 selected universities are:

- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- Lancaster University
- Imperial College London
- Royal Holloway University of London
- University College London
- Newcastle University
- University of Oxford
- Queen's University Belfast
- University of Southampton
- University of Surrey
- University of Warwick
- University of Edinburgh

As announced in the Government's [National Cyber Security Strategy](#) last year, Academic Centres of Excellence will specialise in developing the latest cyber security techniques and contribute to the UK's increased knowledge and capability in this field.

All are now recognised by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) – launched in February 2017 in London – as meeting the tough minimum standards required:

- commitment from the university's leadership team to support and invest in the university's cyber security research capacity and capability
- a critical mass of academic staff engaged in leading-edge cyber security research
- a proven track record of publishing high-impact cyber security research in leading academic journals and conferences

- sustained funding from a variety of sources to ensure the continuing financial viability of the research team's activities.

The NCSC looks forward to working with these 14 universities over the next five years to continue to grow UK academia's capacity and capability in cyber security research and to cement its position as an international leader in this area.

With NCSC-approved research moving into Scotland for the very first time at the University of Edinburgh, the Minister gave an address to students on the campus, and spoke to leading academics about their work.

Universities will have Centre of Excellence status for five years from June 2017 before assessments are carried out again.

Ben Gummer, Minister for the Cabinet Office & Paymaster General, said:

This Government is determined to make the UK the safest place in the world to live, work and do business online.

That is why we need truly ground-breaking research to stay one step ahead of the growing threat of cyber attacks. I am pleased to announce the University of Edinburgh as the latest academic institution to contribute their expertise to this vital field, joining thirteen other universities from around the country.

By engaging with business, industry and academia, we will ensure that we develop the skills and research we need to tackle this growing threat to the UK.

Chris Ensor, Deputy Director for Cyber Security Skills and Growth at the NCSC, said:

It's fantastic to see so many leading universities committed to trailblazing improvements to the UK's cyber security research, and it is particularly good to see Scotland represented for the first time.

At the NCSC, we are absolutely committed to maintaining and improving our already strong reputation as a global leader in cutting edge research, and look forward to collaborating with these establishments to make the UK the safest place to live and work online.

These universities conduct world-class cyber security research and this initiative will improve the way academics, government and business work together – benefiting the whole of the country.

Professor David Aspinall, of the University of Edinburgh's School of

Informatics, said:

Cyber security and privacy is now an essential aspect of modern life which impacts the technology we see and use, as well as the behind-the-scenes technology we rely on that supports the physical and virtual infrastructures.

Our recognition as a centre of excellence will bring fresh impetus to our research, to help make the digital world safer for everyone.

Underpinned by £1.9 billion of investment, the National Cyber Security Strategy sets out the Government's key cyber security objectives:

- deter hostile action against the UK
- defend the UK against evolving cyber threats
- develop the cyber security industry, create a self-sustaining pipeline of talent into the UK

Investment into cyber security is almost doubling in order to meet the growing threat and to build the infrastructure necessary to put UK cyber security on a sustainable footing.

All universities which are recognised as an Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Research have met rigorous criteria which assess the quantity and quality of their researchers, their research output and the impact of their research. All of the successful universities have invested considerable capital – financial, intellectual, managerial, leadership and so on – over years to grow their capacity and capability to the point where they meet the standards for recognition.

The Universities of Edinburgh and Warwick join the list for the first time. The remaining 12 have all successfully had their applications for Academic Centre of Excellence status renewed since the scheme was first established in 2012.

The UK Government would be delighted to see more universities recognised as Academic Centres of Excellence and, to this end, the NCSC has committed to working with unsuccessful applicants to provide guidance and encouragement to help them work towards submitting another application in future years.

[Press release: Secretary of State visits HMP Onley to meet staff and see](#)

reform in action

The Warwickshire-based establishment this week launched the Ricoh training centre at the prison, which will give offenders the opportunity to gain digital media qualifications and get a job with the firm on release.

This follows the successes of the prison's Halfords bicycle academy, which provides trainees with repair and maintenance skills. More than 30 offenders from the prison have gone to achieve employment with the company.

Rehabilitation is a crucial part of the Justice Secretary's Prisons and Courts Bill, which outlines that a key purpose of prisons is to reform offenders so they stop committing crime.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss said:

I have always been clear that as well as punishing offenders, our prisons must become places of safety and reform. We must do all we can to give prisoners the best chance to turn their lives around.

There is some fantastic work going on across the prison estate and I am delighted that the innovative schemes formed by the hardworking and dedicated staff at HMP Onley are having a positive impact on lives.

Tackling the risks of reoffending will help reduce the £15 billion annual cost it has to society and reduce the turmoil faced by people who become victims of crime, therefore creating safer communities.

Since taking up post, the Justice Secretary has taken immediate action to boost safety, announcing £100m a year to recruit 2,500 prison officers to bolster the frontline and increase staff numbers.

A further £10m has been invested for increased security measures in a number of prisons. HMP Onley received £160,000 and has used the money to increase CCTV and on the wings and bringing in staff with specialist security and safety training.

Staff at HMP Onley have built relationships with local businesses, such as Halfords and the Ricoh, to explore opportunities for prisoners to gain training and employment.

This is an example of governors being empowered to take control over how they run their establishments – a key commitment in the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper.

Notes to editors:

Progress made on key reforms so far includes:

Recruitment and retention

- boosting pay for hard-working staff by up to £5,000 at some of the most difficult-to-recruit prisons and those with high levels of staff-turnover
- appointing 75 mentors for new starter prison officers to help them in their first few months in the job which we know can be a difficult time;
- starting targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need;
- launching a new Prison Officer apprenticeship scheme next year for over 1000 new officers that will help increase diversity and make it easier to join the prison service.
- developing a new graduate scheme that will encourage people from a broader range of backgrounds to join the service;
- we have set up a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the prison service after leaving the military.

[News story: New water choice for English businesses](#)

The world's biggest competitive water market officially opened on April 1st, which for the first time gives more than 1.2 million businesses, charities and public sector bodies the chance to choose their water provider wherever they are in the country.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom welcomed the launch of the market, which will deliver up to £200 million of benefits to the economy and water customers over the next 30 years, through improved service and better value for money.

By opening the market, companies ranging from businesses with very few employees to multinationals, as well as charities and public sector organisations, will be able to shop around for the best deal from all water utilities in England.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Over a million businesses, charities and public sector organisations will now be able to find the water deal that works best for them. Opening the market is an historic milestone, paving the way for innovation and efficiency and giving customers the same choice over their water retailer as they currently have for their energy and other essential services.

Defra has worked with partners Ofwat, which will regulate the new market, and Market Operator Services Ltd (MOSL), which will operate the market on behalf of its water company members, to ensure there is a smooth transition for customers.

Ofwat Chief Executive Cathryn Ross said:

Business customers have been crying out for choice over their provider of water and waste water services for years. From today businesses, charities and public sector organisations in England will be able to choose their retailer to get a better deal.

The opening of the business retail market takes us into new territory. It is the single biggest change to the water sector since privatisation and I am hugely optimistic about the changes that lay ahead and the benefits they will bring to customers.

But it is important that we at Ofwat maintain effective oversight of how the new market is working and what customers are experiencing. This will mean that we can step in if we need to, to make sure customers are protected.

MOSL Chief Executive Ben Jeffs said:

This launch marks the successful delivery of the largest and most complicated transformation programmes undertaken by the water sector since privatisation. Delivering a programme of this scale and complexity has involved a huge team effort across Government, Ofwat and the entire industry.

Competition not only offers non-household customers the prospect of a better price for a better service, it will create new opportunities and challenges for the sector as a whole. The level of engagement we have had to date has been exemplary and, as the market operator, we look forward to working with companies to ensure the new market delivers on its promise to customers.

The new market in England now becomes the biggest of its kind in the world

and Defra will continue to support the water sector as the market develops.

Scotland is the only other country with a competitive water market for businesses and this government has been working closely with its Scottish partners in the lead-up to the opening to draw from their learnings and expertise.

Businesses, charities or public sector organisations interested in changing their water retailer should shop around. There is more information available about available water retail suppliers on the [Open Water website](#).

[Green Party: Theresa May must raise war crime allegations during Saudi Arabia visit](#)



Green Party

3 April 2017

The Green Party has called on Theresa May to raise allegations of war crimes in Yemen when she visits Saudi Arabia this week [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“It is deeply disturbing to see the prime minister cosy up to an oppressive regime in an attempt to get a trade deal after Brexit. Saudi Arabia has an appalling human rights record and we should not be exposing ourselves to a dependent relationship with a country that was accused of killing civilians as recently as last month [2].

“The Met police are currently investigating Saudi Arabia for war crimes in Yemen and Theresa May must raise the allegations during her visit.

“We have repeatedly called on the Government to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia. If there’s any chance UK weapons were used to violate international law and human rights, we must stop supplying them immediately.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/theresa-calls-closer-uk-ties-10146879>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/02/met-police-examine-allegations-saudi-arabia-war-crimes-yemen>

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[News story: Institute for Apprenticeships to ensure quality skills training](#)

The new [Institute for Apprenticeships](#) will start its first official working day today (3 April 2017).

Independent from government, the institute, which is to be chaired by Antony Jenkins, has been launched to ensure that all apprenticeships are top quality and deliver the skills that employers need. It will further support the government's commitment to deliver 3 million quality apprenticeships by 2020.

High-quality apprenticeships are an important part of the government's plan for Britain and the institute marks an important milestone in working with businesses to invest in the home grown-skills our country needs.

To ensure employers are at the heart of every decision, the institute has appointed leading figures in the business world to sit on its board. This will ensure that employers needs are being met and they have the opportunity to review and challenge apprenticeship standards and how apprenticeships are assessed.

Skills and Apprenticeships Minister Robert Halfon said:

I am delighted that today marks the first working day of the Institute for Apprenticeships. This is a key part of the jigsaw that will ensure employers get the skills their workforce needs.

With the apprenticeship levy coming into force later this week, we are truly working together with business to invest in home-grown skills and ensuring people of all ages and all backgrounds get their foot on the ladder of opportunity.

Chair of the Institute for Apprenticeships Antony Jenkins said:

The institute is now formally up and running. As an employer-led organisation we will be well informed and responsive to the evolving skills that they need to succeed and that our apprentices need to fulfil their potential.

The institute launches ahead of the apprenticeship levy coming into force on Thursday (6 April 2017). The levy will double the annual investment in apprenticeships to £2.5 billion by 2019 to 2020. This will ensure that every person, regardless of their background, gets the chance they deserve to succeed.

Latest figures show that there is currently the highest numbers of apprenticeships on record with 900,000 apprentices last year alone. 90% of apprentices get employment or progress to additional education.