

Pathways into Tech

Northern Ireland's tech sector is thriving and is one of the fastest growing in the UK. Almost 23% of all job opportunities in Belfast are in tech.

Pursuing a career in tech offers great opportunities, high salaries, flexibility, and a chance to shape the future. So how do you get started?

1: Identify What You **Want to Learn**



**Computing
General**



Data



IT Skills



Cyber



Design



Programming

Identifying which part of tech you are most interested in is the **first step**. This will help create a clear vision of where you want to go and understand which pathway to take. Read our 'Top 12 Tech Jobs: Explained' to find out which role might suit you.

For further career advice, you can follow **Bring IT On** and visit their website for more information on how to get started: <https://bringittonni.co.uk/resources/>

2: Join a **Tech Community**

Joining a tech community can provide you with the opportunity to learn **technical skills**, meet like-minded individuals, and gain insight into the world of tech. Join Eventbrite and MeetUp to hear about the tech meet-ups. Some great clubs to join are:

- CoderDojo
- Women Who Code Belfast
- Northern Ireland Raspberry Jam
- CyberFirst

3: Take an **Introductory Course**

There are hundreds of online tech courses you can take. Some of the best courses can be found on Edx, Coursera, and Udemy.

4: Choose a **Pathway**

1 **Bachelor's Degree**

A Bachelor's Degree is a **higher education qualification** awarded by a University. In Northern Ireland, you can study at **Queens, Ulster, or Open University**. It typically takes **three to four years** to complete and you will learn at a very high level.

Having a degree gives you a fantastic accreditation that can lead to many career opportunities.

2 **Foundation Degree**

A Foundation Degree can be a great option if you aren't ready for university or didn't get the results you wanted. A Foundation Degree is a **two-year higher education qualification** equivalent to two-thirds of a bachelor's degree. **It combines both academic study and practical work experience**. It is an excellent option for those seeking to gain practical skills alongside their studies.

After completion, you can either enter employment or progress to a full degree, whereby you can bypass the first or second year of University.

3 **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeships are great if you **learn by doing**, combining both study and work experience. There are different levels of Apprenticeship, you can start at **Level 3 or Higher Level (HLA)** and progress all the way to **level 7 (Postgraduate Degree)**.

Doing an apprenticeship is the best option from a financial perspective as you don't need to pay high tuition fees and can earn a salary while you study. You also can increase your career opportunities as you gain practical experience.

5: **Other Routes**

1 - **Assured Skills**

The Assured Skills programme offers pre-employment training to give you the skills needed to compete for new employment opportunities. Once you complete an Assured Skills training programme, you will be offered a job interview.

2 - **Flexible Skills (Skill Up)**

The Flexible Skills Programme is for ages 18 and over, to help re-train and re-skill. They are government-funded short courses with over 7,000 free places. Opportunities are available from entry to postgraduate levels.