



## Collaboration between Scotland's Universities and Colleges is maximising the benefits of the Cisco Networking Academy Programme

University of Paisley is collaborating with its college partners to think outside the box and offer innovations in service delivery, illustrating how Scotland's universities and colleges are moving one step ahead in the Cisco Networking Academy Programme.

As colleges that are Cisco Networking Local Academies know, good support is a key element when offering industry training programmes. Colleges signed up to the University of Paisley in Scotland Regional Academy for back up, instructor training and advice are finding they are getting 'added value' for their CISCO registration fee.

Business development manager at Paisley's School of Computing, Patrick Afchain, realised that in many cases, once instructors from the Local Academies had done their Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) training, their fees were paying simply for telephone support and he believed Paisley could offer more. Now the University makes a wide range of additional Cisco training available at no extra cost to its Local Academy partners..

Mr Afchain said: "Under the CISCO quality assurance plan we have to offer CCNA instructors training twice-a-year – that amounts to the equivalent of 44 days training. We say, 'you select which 44 days training you do'. Otherwise, if an Academy's instructors are already trained in CCNA and there is no curriculum update that needs further CCNA training, they're not getting anything back."

The 44 days of training time can be used for up-skilling their instructors with Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) or specialist curricula such as Wireless. Paisley has seen Local Academies request training in Cisco IT Essentials I as well as the Fundamentals of Wireless LANS. There has also been interest in the possibility of Voice Over IP (VOIP) and Network Security courses being made available at a later date.

And more than that, Mr Afchain is exploring ways in which the Local Academies can cut their hardware costs.

The University recognises that not all Local Academies are equal partners in the project as they can only afford basic lab kit and may struggle to offer enough practical sessions to students in the program. To remove this barrier to success, Paisley have offered Local Academies remote access to their network lab for all CCNA curricula.

"To deliver the training for CCNA with cabling and set up it can cost approx £6-7,000, even with 50% discount. It's a lot with training on top.

**"We have set up remote access. You don't have to be physically in the lab – you can get access to our NETLAB set up over the internet. For example you would see the back of a router on screen and you could move and interact with it.**

"We don't charge for that and people can access a higher level of equipment than they can afford to buy. You can't use NETLAB to teach instructors but it can be used for students. It saves colleges who want to be Local Academies having to go out and spend £6,000 to £7,000 on equipment and a further £3,000 registration fee – which is £10,000 up front, and equipment needs upgrading regularly," said Mr Afchain.

Ultimately if colleges bought into the idea of using NETLAB full time then Mr Afchain said there would have to be some charge, possibly with students purchasing sessions one hour at a time, but it would be minimal compared to the cost of equipping their own labs.

The University also offers drop-in sessions with hands on time in the lab for instructors with questions.

"We say to them if they've got questions around learning or want to look at our equipment to contact us. We didn't just turn them away when they were

looking for assistance. It's about networking and it's about helping others."

The advanced lab setup has given Paisley instructors experience of purchasing, installing and configuring equipment. This experience is available to any Local Academy which may intend to purchase additional equipment such as remote access.

And the support model offered by Paisley is proving highly successful.

**"In another few years there will be closer ties between HE and FE and vendor programmes because that's what industry is looking for. There really needs to be stronger links between HE and FE."**

### What do the Local Academy instructors say about Paisley?

Instructors who use the University's services seem pleased with what they are getting.

Once Local Academy instructor said: "I phoned Paisley for an informal chat as we were intending to purchase NETLAB servers. Rather than turn me away I was invited over to see the setup, discuss configurations with staff and given a list of equipment and suppliers contact details. I couldn't ask for a better service."

Another said: "We were with our Regional Academy for a number of years. Once our initial staff had been trained we were not offered any new training. Paisley offered us the option of choosing anything from their large remit of courses. This is what all Regional Academies should be doing."

### Paisley University industry programmes

University of Paisley is a modern University with a strong commitment to vendor certifications. The University was one of the first to become accredited to deliver Cisco, Microsoft and Adobe professional certifications into their undergraduate and postgraduate programme. Cisco courses are embedded into return-to-work training schemes, such as 'Training for Work'.

The University offers training and support to 8 Cisco Networking Local Academies. These stretch from Argyll College to Cumbernauld College. Whilst the main support offered is for CCNA, as other sponsored and specialist curricula are offered at the University, this training has been made available to Local Academies as well. In addition to training, Paisley offers information sessions for Local Academies, a resource and equipment sharing scheme, technical support for lab set up and equipment purchases, and remote access facilities for Academies that don't have their own lab or extensive equipment.

*'Based on a series of case studies featured in the Cisco 'State of the Nations' Scotland report commissioned through DIVA (Digital Media and ICT Vendor Alliance) Programme. DIVA is the Scottish Qualifications Authority's flagship initiative to collaborate with industry, education and employers on updating and expanding the Scottish ICT and digital media curriculum and awards.*

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