

Unity Centre of Excellence at HOST, MediaCity

Impact Report 2021-2022



“Creating a ‘Beacon of the North’ for best-in-class technical skills and innovation across media industries.”

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Foreword

“This is an incredible coup for us, we are immensely humbled and privileged for Unity to have chosen us. We can now massively accelerate start-up growth, business innovation, incentivise the creation of thousands of jobs, and provide fair access to high-quality career starts with ground-breaking initiatives.

Greater Manchester is blessed with the most integrated and diverse digital ecosystem, a foundation upon which our partnership with Unity will drive a job-rich recovery.”

- **Mo Isap, CEO of IN4 Group**



“Establishing Unity’s UK Centre of Excellence at HOST brings a fantastic blend of high demand skills generation, cutting edge innovation and unparalleled business support.”

- **Simon Benson, Director of Immersive and XR at HOST**



“We are so thrilled that Unity - the world’s largest 3D and immersive technology platform - has chosen MediaCity as its UK Centre of Excellence.

It will mean so much for our ambitions around digital skills, it will bring innovation to Greater Manchester’s digital and tech ecosystem, but of course the Unity technology that can transform so many industries will be available to organisations here in Greater Manchester.”

- **Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester**



About Unity at HOST

The Unity Centre of Excellence at HOST offers extensive in-person support to students, professionals and small businesses with a mission of becoming the 'Beacon of the North' for best-in-class technical skills and innovation across industries.

The Centre of Excellence aims to upskill learners to prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow, promote interactive and

immersive technology usage across sectors, create highly skilled jobs and establish a central home for the thriving UK video games industry at MediaCity.

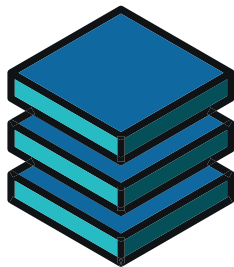
It connects innovators with the creativity, imagination and expertise of Unity, providing unique and invaluable access to Unity's technical leads, creatives and support networks.



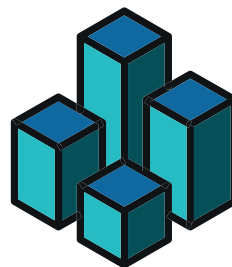
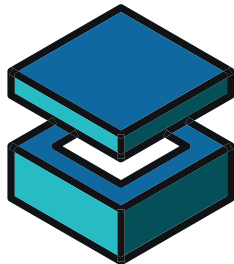
What we've achieved...

HOST's partnership with Unity has allowed for the creation and activation of a number of projects, bootcamps and programmes:

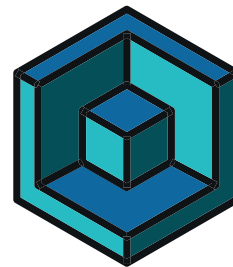
**SKILLS CITY
BOOTCAMPS**



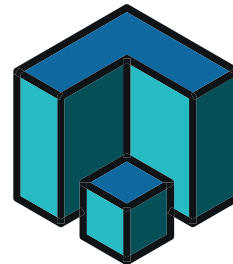
**HOST
IMMERSIVE
INNOVATION
MEMBERSHIP**



**EVENTS,
WEBINARS
and INDUSTRY
ROUNDTABLE
CONFERENCES**

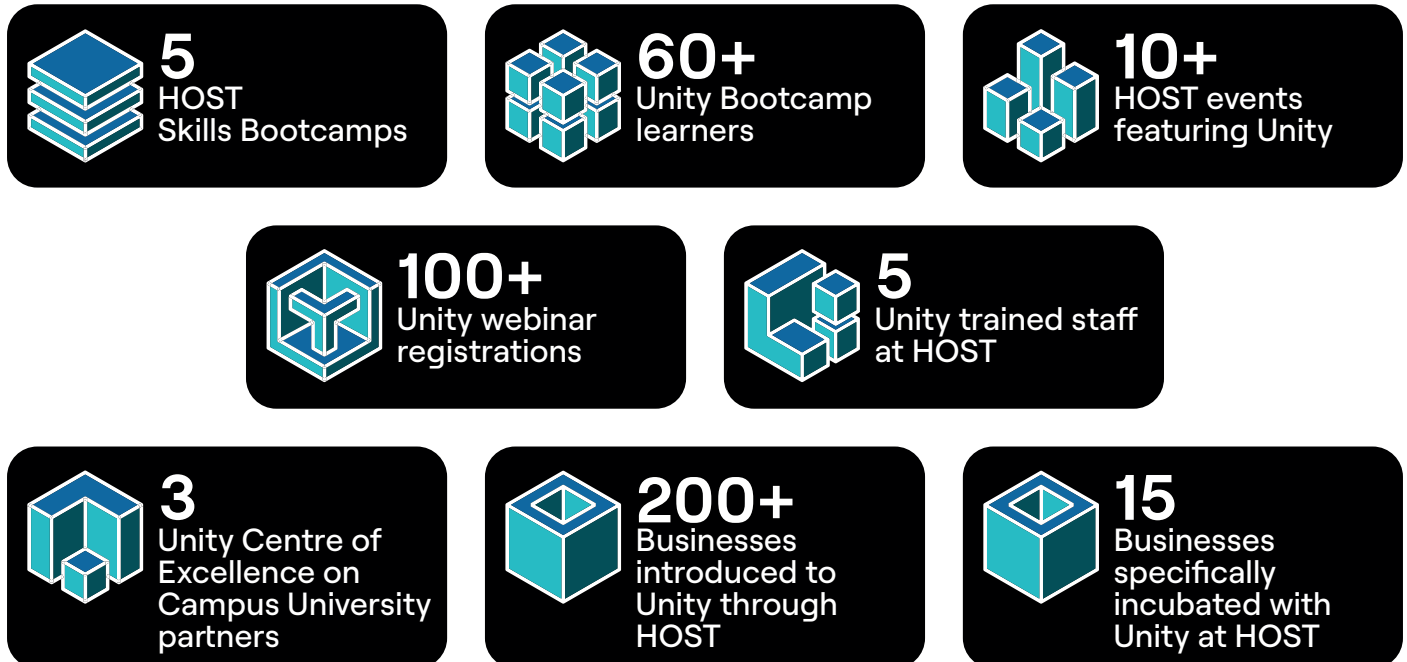


**IMMERSIVE
LAB**



**UCofE
on
CAMPUS**

We introduced our wide community to Unity through...



We delivered impactful and educational material...



Promoting Skills Development and Training

Skills Bootcamps

Skills City at HOST is a unique, digital skills powerhouse transforming talent diversity in the North West.

Skills City aims to break the barriers faced by those from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds, by fast-tracking learners into careers in digital technology every year. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE), Skills City is part of the Plan for Jobs initiative.

Our Skills City Bootcamps currently include two Unity-centric courses: Unity Professional Programmer and Unity Professional Artist.

These courses are designed to give learners the skills and confidence they need to earn their Unity Programmer or Artist qualification, and approach future employers.



Department
for Education



SKILLS CITY

Fair Access to Technology Futures



Skills Bootcamps statistics...



2
Unity Professional
Artist Skills
Bootcamps



2
Unity Professional
Programmer Skills
Bootcamps



22
Unity exams
booked



5
Unity trained
staff, mentors and
facilitators



240
Learning sessions
held



80+
Unity Bootcamp
learners



Unity Professional Programmer:

On this 12-week course, students follow the Unity Professional Programmer course syllabus which includes learning about player movements, UI, customisations, analytics and remote settings, navigation and animation. All of these skills will be checked in mini projects to put learners' skills to the test.



37%
of learners unemployed upon enrolment



45%
of learners had a disability

Programme statistics



34
Unity Professional Programmer learners



22-54
Learner age range



11
Professional Programmer exam levels chosen



15
Interviewed for employment after course completion



8
Employed after course completion



7
Associate Programmer exam levels chosen

Unity Professional Artist:

On this 12-week bootcamp, students follow the Unity Professional Artist syllabus which includes learning about asset creation and management, UI design and interactivity, the Unity systems, effects, animations and build settings. Students will also take part in mini projects as well as a commercial project provided by one of our partners.



65%
of learners unemployed upon enrolment



10%
of learners had a disability

Programme statistics



48
Unity Professional Artist learners



20-46
Learner age range



8
Professional Artist exam levels chosen



19
Interviewed for employment after course completion



4
Employed after course completion



14
Associate Artist exam levels chosen

HOST Immersive Innovation Programme

This 12-month programme is designed to give businesses the opportunity to develop their AR, VR or XR services or projects with a community of immersive technical, business growth and innovation experts unlike any other.

Currently, we have 8 businesses involved in our Innovation Programme, with 4 businesses specifically focusing on our Immersive Innovation Membership offerings. Our membership numbers are constantly growing,

and we are continuously connecting our members to our Unity facilities.

During the first four weeks of the course, we will work with members to define their 12-month roadmap based on their target objectives. We will mobilise relevant business growth sessions as well as technical sessions with our Immersive experts and quarterly workshops with Unity.

After the roadmap is developed, the following steps are carried out:

STEP 1

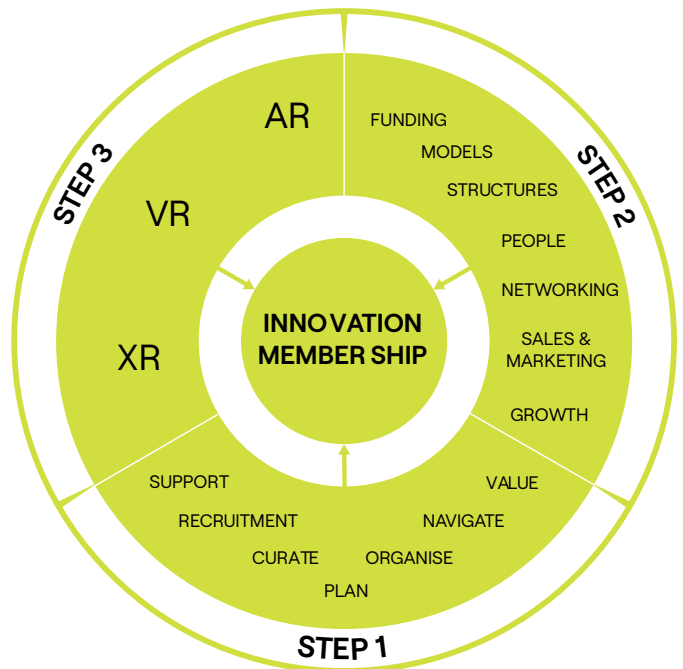
HOST will help members define their 'sprint' objectives – eg concepts, prototypes or business model basics

STEP 2

HOST will coordinate with Unity to provide any support needed – eg beta testing, mentoring or technical workshops.

STEP 3

Progress reflection and next steps will be discussed.



Unity Centre of Excellence on Campus

HOST has worked with three universities to establish a 'Unity Centre of Excellence on Campus' in three regions, with an aim of bringing immersive technology skills, jobs and business innovation support to the areas.



Edge Hill University

As part of the Unity Centre of Excellence on Campus, we have developed a 'Train the Trainer' programme to upskill faculty teaching staff in the disciplines of interactive media, computer sciences, and psychology to become Unity certified professional instructors.

The Unity Centre of Excellence on Campus programmes also aim to train students as Unity professional programmers or artists; and provide graduate led immersive technology start-ups with dedicated business incubation support from HOST.

On top of our 3 current campus facilities, we have approached over 20 UK universities to introduce them to our Unity Centre of Excellence on Campus offerings. We've had positive conversations with a number of them, and we're very confident that we'll be broadening our Centre of Excellence on Campus outreach in the future:

Other UK Universities approached for Unity Centre of Excellence on Campus facility discussions:



Edge Hill University over 2 years:



Coventry University over 2 years:

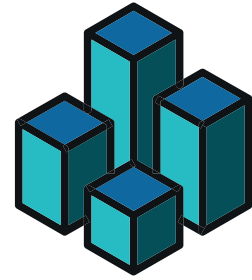


University of Salford over 2 years:



Events

At HOST, we hold a wide range of events every year. From industry roundtables, to open days and partner events, the Unity Centre of Excellence and our partnership with Unity is showcased to our visitors from across the country. Here are some events we have held:



Webinars

We held two Unity-focused webinars over the past year, and received over **300 registrations** for the events:

‘Unity is the future’ – promoting HOST’s Unity Skills Bootcamps (**250+ registrations**)

‘Disruptive Innovation with Immersive Technologies’ – to promote HOST’s Immersive Innovation programme (**40 registrations**)

Roundtables

Roundtables

We also held two industry roundtable events over the past year, where our Unity partnership and facilities were showcased to industry professionals.

Ukie Westminster Games Week – to discuss the future of the gaming and esports industries in the North.

This event had 17 attendees in the setting of our Unity Centre of Excellence, and we exposed 20 businesses to our partnership with Unity through this event.

HOST Esports & Gaming roundtable – to discuss HOST’s future esports projects in the North. This roundtable was attended by 15 gaming and esports industry members, who were introduced to our partnership with Unity.



Hands-on technology meet-ups:

DCIA

Digital Catapult Immersive Arcade Event

We hosted a Digital Catapult Immersive Arcade Event, commissioned by the UKRI. This event was attended by over 30 Immersive and gaming enthusiasts who were introduced to our Unity partnership and facilities.

The event gave us the chance to give our attendees a unique opportunity to experience the best examples of virtual reality 360 experiences created in the UK between 2000 and 2020 in the setting of our Unity Centre of Excellence.

VR Manchester

Summer Mixer at HOST

A relaxed, informal get-together to reconnect and talk about all things immersive for VR enthusiasts.

This industry event took place at HOST within the setting of the Unity Centre of Excellence, with over 30 businesses in attendance. These businesses were introduced to our Unity facilities here at HOST.

World Esports Day university tournament

This event – held in celebration of World Esports Day – brought together three Universities and their Esports Societies for a competitive tournament and networking.

Held in the setting of our Unity Centre of Excellence, within HOST Labs and the Immersive Lab, this event introduced around 60 young gaming enthusiasts to our partnership with Unity and the Unity Centre of Excellence facilities here at HOST.



HOST Women in Esports networking event



This event aimed to introduce and expand the HOST Women in Esports Network through panel discussions and networking at HOST. The event was attended by 30 gaming, immersive, Esports and technology enthusiasts and helped to progress a network of approximately 50 members.

This event was specifically for women and non-binary network members, creating a diverse, safe space for attendees.

At this event, we introduced our network members to our Unity partnership, facilities and Immersive Lab. We believe this network will directly feed into our Unity Skills Bootcamps, allowing us to increase our learner numbers and the gender diversity of our future cohorts.

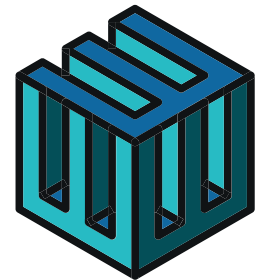


Other events, including:

- 'Immerse yourself in Virtual Reality with HOST'
- HOST open days
- Prince's Trust Game Changer week
- Prince's Trust Unity taster



Global Press Releases



HOST's Unity Centre of Excellence is regularly featured in the press, including publications from Greater Manchester, the UK and worldwide. From launch to our ongoing events and projects, the word of HOST's Unity Centre of Excellence is being spread throughout industry circles and communities alike.

Excerpt from Salford City Council – March 2021



“HOST and Unity will collaborate to make sure Salford and Greater Manchester people are first in the queue for these exciting jobs and grow new talent to create games we cannot even imagine right now.”

- Paul Dennet, Mayor of Salford

Excerpt from Manchester Evening News – March 2021



“The Centre of Excellence is another major asset in our world-leading digital city region. Greater Manchester is blessed with the most integrated and diverse digital ecosystem, a foundation upon which our partnership with Unity will drive a job-rich recovery.”

- Mo Isap, CEO of IN4 Group

Excerpt from Education Technology – September 2021



“This unique partnership clearly demonstrates how we are addressing the sector skills gaps head-on and creating industry qualified pathways for our talent to step confidently into future careers.”

- Dr Maria Stukoff, Director of Maker Space

Excerpt from XR Today – June 2021



“The Unity Centre of Excellence at HOST will define a new premium standard of skills generation in Unity. With the pace of innovation across industries, the academy is built to support the next generation of skills needed both for the roles of today and tomorrow”

- Nicole Zingg, Global Head of Channel Partnerships at Unity

Social Media

HOST has a large presence on multiple social media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter.

We also showcase the Unity Centre of Excellence to website visitors on our HOST Salford webpage, and our dedicated Unity Centre of Excellence website.

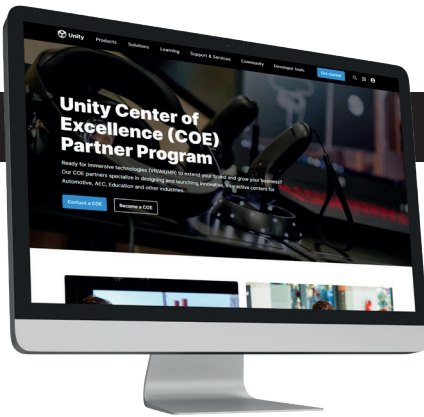
Exposure across our audiences...

1,034 followers 

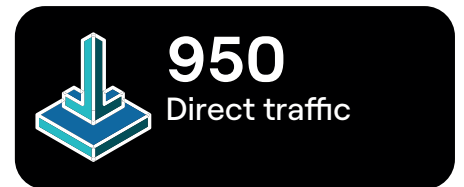
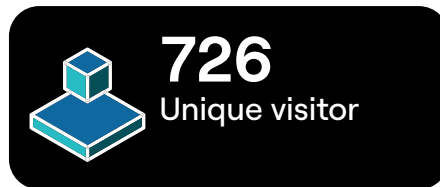
6,908 followers 

784 followers 

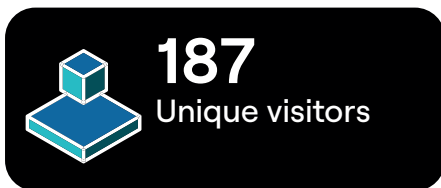
2,413 followers 



Unity Centre of Excellence webpage, one month statistics



HOST Salford website - UCofE webpage, one month statistics



Excerpts from LinkedIn

Infrastructure

At HOST we have a number of staff engineers and Unity bootcamp graduates on hand to assist with training, projects, mentoring and events.

We have also developed a number of partnerships with organisations and companies such as Ukie, Gameopolis and the Prince's Trust to deliver Unity-focused events and programmes to a wider community.



Alongside this, Digital Catapult - the UK authority on advanced digital technology - and HOST are allies in creating long lasting growth and development of the UK's immersive technology innovation ecosystem.



Across the last year, over 200 businesses have been introduced to our Unity partnership through HOST business incubation, acceleration and memberships, partnerships and events.

Our Immersive Lab facility is also a key part of our Unity Centre of Excellence.



Immersive Lab and Projects

Using HOST’s state-of-the-art technologies and unique infrastructure, we’ve created a real-world testing environment to help transform innovations into reality.

Our Immersive Lab provides a high-end, versatile suite of immersive tools and technologies, including a wide range of the latest VR and MR headsets, a motion capture

suite and a 4K stereoscopic Virtual Reality projection system delivering ‘VR in the room.’

HOST Labs – the area of HOST where the Immersive Lab is situated – has had approximately 1000 unique visitors over the year. These visitors are all exposed to our Unity facilities and partnership here at HOST.

The Immersive Lab is designed to facilitate the following applications and more:

- Advanced research
- Simulation applications
- Engineering and architectural visualisation
- Motion capture for digital application development
- Virtual production prototyping and development
- Immersive video game development and demonstration
- Healthcare training development and delivery
- ‘Metaverse’ technology prototyping and development
- Collaborative reviews of immersive content



Success Stories

Stella Vazquez, Junior Engineer at IN4 Group

Learner story: Stella Vazquez studied on our first Unity Professional Artist Skills bootcamp, and is now employed as a Junior Engineer at IN4 Group.



“The impact that the Unity Professional Artist Bootcamp had in my life has been monumental.

As an interior architect, I always wanted to learn how to use Virtual Reality on my 3D architectural models. Then, I discovered that Unity isn’t just for video games; it’s an excellent tool for creating architectural visualisations too!

Thanks to the Unity Bootcamp, I now know how to incorporate interactive systems in my 3d models, allowing me to visualise a completed architectural scheme in VR and showcase my design proposals in an immersive experience to clients.”



Phil Owen, Head of Engineering at d3t

Partner story: d3t - an award-winning, co-development studio within the game technology sector - is partnered with the Unity Centre of Excellence at HOST.

d3t, with its combined 450 years of industry insight and experience, is supporting the centre through a combination of workshops, roundtables and guiding new start-up projects.

“At d3t, supporting and mentoring the next generation of games programmers, on a wide variety of game development environments including Unity, is a key focus of ours.

We also work with universities and initiatives both locally and nationally to ensure that students get the support they need to enter and thrive within the games industry, and we are excited to continue this with HOST.”



Our Team



Simon Benson
Director of Immersive and XR



Amber Keats
Education and Employment Manager



Rachel Birtwhistle
Immersive and Gaming Project
Coordinator



Luke Wolstenholme
Associate Consultant



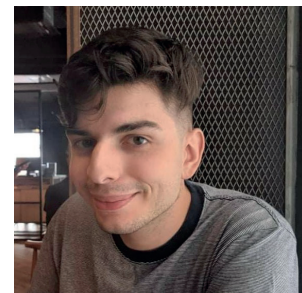
Jonathan Walsh
Digital Innovation Technician



Ivaylo Ivanov
Junior Engineer



Stella Vazquez
Junior Engineer



Ilya Phillips
Junior Engineer

The Future of Unity at HOST

We have many future projects, programmes and partnerships ready to be planned and activated involving Unity at HOST:

- Our Unity Centre of Excellence on Campus will be activated next year, and more universities will be added
- HOST Indie Games Accelerator programme
- HOST plans to become an Esports epicentre for the North
- We have Virtual Production projects and facilities currently in planning
- More bootcamps in planning involving Unity



