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## NMI announces UK Electronics Skills Foundation to address threat of diminishing skills

*UKESF created to tackle dramatic decline in UK electronic engineering degrees*

The National Microelectronics Institute (NMI) has announced the creation of the UK Electronics Skills Foundation (UKESF) to address the threat of diminishing skills in the UK electronics sector. The foundation aims to increase and sustain the supply of industry-ready graduate engineers and boost career take-up in the sector.

NMI CEO Derek Boyd said, "The dramatic decline in the numbers of Electronic Engineering graduates will present the country with a long term issue if left unchecked. We've identified the underlying problems in the existing skills pipeline which undermine the future prospects of the industry and UKESF has been created to tackle the major issues. Its goal is to ensure that the sector is supplied with the quality of talent to enable it to continue to be innovative, competitive and able to provide high-value jobs to support the wider economy."

UKESF is a collaboration of public bodies, private companies and leading UK universities and has been launched with initial start-up funding from founder partners NMI, BIS (Department for Business Innovation and Skills), SEMTA (The Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies), ARM, Cambridge Silicon Radio, Dialog Semiconductor and Imagination Technologies. Founder university partners are Bristol, Edinburgh, Imperial College, Southampton and Surrey.

Indro Mukerjee, Chairman and CEO of C-MAC MicroTechnology and Chair of SEMTA's Electronics Sector Strategy Group said, "It has taken a lot of hard work and collaboration to get UKESF off the ground and I now look forward to it becoming an integral part of the UK electronics scene. The foundation has set itself realistic goals yet to achieve them more private enterprises need to support it. Forward looking electronics companies need to sign-up to the UKESF programme and help address what is a national concern of strategic importance."

UKESF will initially focus on:

- Encouraging electronics employers to engage with schools in order to raise awareness of the sector and the variety of career opportunities it offers.
- Electronics summer schools to attract school students towards studying for electronics engineering degrees and careers in Electronic Engineering.

- A scholarship scheme, accessible to small and large companies, to link undergraduate students with electronics companies for work experience and to encourage progression into careers within the sector.

Minister for Higher Education David Lammy said, “It is essential that we raise awareness of the rewarding careers available to young people in our growth industries, such as those in the electronics sector and this new foundation will help provide the high quality industry-ready graduates we need for economic success.”

The UKESF operational plan aims to have achieved the following levels of engagement with school and undergraduate students, companies and universities within 5 years:

- 80 participants p.a. (16-17 year olds) on summer schools.
- 1600 pupils p.a. (all ages) reached through employers engaging with schools.
- 160 new undergraduate scholarships p.a.
- Over 100 sponsoring companies.
- Over 50 companies engaging with schools.
- 10 partner universities across England, Scotland and Wales.

Notes to editors:

The UK electronics industry

Estimated to be worth £23 billion a year, the UK electronics industry is currently the fifth largest in the world. The UK sector employs about 250,000 people in 11,500 companies<sup>1</sup>, with design accounting for 52,500 engineers across 5,200 sites<sup>2</sup>. The UK is also acknowledged as the European leader in independent electronics system design, making up approximately 40% of the market. UK companies lead electronic design in multiple niche market application areas, such as communications (e.g. NFC, Bluetooth, Basestation, cellular and satellite), microprocessor design, video, graphics, audio and many other areas.

The diminishing supply of graduate electronics engineers

Despite the UK's position in the market, it is widely recognised that the industry is finding it difficult to source engineers domestically with the requisite skills and experience for the design sector. There are particular concerns over the supply of graduate engineers, the low level take-up of careers in the sector, and the decrease in students enrolling on electronics degree courses. The ETB report 'Engineering UK 2007'<sup>3</sup> reveals that Electronic and Electrical Engineering degrees saw a 45% decline in UK acceptances of places to 2,824 between 2002 and 2006, and that only one third of recent graduates in this discipline move on to professional engineering careers. More recent UCAS<sup>4</sup> data show a continued decline in UK acceptances to 2,689 for 2008. A 2008 report for SWRDA<sup>5</sup> also reflects the common concern from industry that the "pipeline of graduate engineers is drying up" particularly in view of the "ageing population" of engineers<sup>6</sup>.

## References:

- 1 Electronic System Design: A Guide to UK Capability 2009/10 Edition, BERR/UKTI
- 2 New Electronics Census 2008
- 3 Engineering and Technology Board, "Engineering UK 2007", Research Report, Dec 2007
- 4 Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
- 5 Microelectronics Sector Development Framework, Report presented to SWRDA, September 2008
- 6 UK Electronics Alliance, "Submission to the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee Major Inquiry into Engineering", March 2008

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## About NMI

The National Microelectronics Institute (NMI) is the premier trade association representing the semiconductor industry in the UK and Ireland.

Its aim is to help build and support a strong micro and nanoelectronics community by acting as a catalyst and facilitator for commercial and technological development.

A not-for-profit organisation funded by its members, the NMI has a membership that spans the supply chain and includes fabless semiconductor manufacturers, IDMs, foundries, design services, IP providers, business associates, research and academic institutions.

The NMI's work includes:

- Encouraging innovation, communication and collaboration through networking, funding, brokering and sign-posting activities.
- Representing the micro and nanoelectronics sector to government, policy makers and regulators.
- Supporting skills development, education and training.
- Improving operational efficiency through benchmarking and best practice initiatives.

- Providing an industry specific information flow.

The NMI also welcomes collaborations on a national and global basis, to ensure it delivers the very best service to its members and partners. More information can be found at:  
[www.nmi.org.uk](http://www.nmi.org.uk)