

Forge Academy launches new fully-inclusive AI lab

Forge Academy, powered by Nokia, launched a fully-inclusive artificial intelligence (AI) laboratory in Fourways, Johannesburg on 25 November. In attendance at the launch event was minister of communications and digital technologies Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams.



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Situated at The Gantry in Fourways, the programme is designed for South African youths, is modelled on Finnish education principles, and is equipped with Nokia smart technology. Forge Academy will prepare students from all walks of life with theoretical, laboratory and on-the-job training for their participation in the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the global digital economy.

Arthur Anderson, CEO and founder of the Forge Academy, says: “This is more than a dream come true for us, but a lifelong calling to forge people of purpose. We are humbled and immensely proud to launch this academic institution and incubation hub at a time when many youths need to know there is an open door for them to participate in creating a future in a world of work that is rapidly evolving.”

An incubation hub for not only students but Forge Academy is also working in close association with the Finnish Embassy, Nokia and other corporates to provide an enabling space for startup businesses that rely on the 4IR technologies. Here they can access special funding, laboratory time, Wi-Fi, think tanks, smart technologies, assistance in product certification and the latest expertise in order to play in this space.

Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, minister of communications and digital technologies, says: South Africa, just like the rest of the

world, finds itself in the middle of a new revolution. The 4IR is creating opportunities for us to harness converging technologies to design an all-inclusive future."

"The actual opportunities for us are in looking beyond the technological advancements to come up with innovative ways to give citizens the ability to positively impact their families, communities and organisations. Institutions like Forge Academy are helping in bridging the digital divide between the digitally empowered on the one side and the digitally deprived on the other," she concludes.



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Nokia is sponsoring 30 students for a year-long learnership in a 4IR certified diploma. The programme has been designed by Forge Academy in conjunction with Nokia's global team of 4IR specialists and Finnish education specialists, with the country's education watchdog providing oversight.

Pat Wiehahn, head of strategic relations and transformation at Nokia South Africa, says: "Nokia is extremely excited about this journey to support the whole value chain from training to testing to incubation and launch and we look forward to the opportunities that Forge Academy will create for all South Africans in an inclusive digital economy age."

"Our objective is to develop skill sets within the next generation of engineers, technologists, entrepreneurs and job titles still to be created in the years to come, to ensure that South Africans are well prepared to take up their rightful place in their local economy," concludes Wiehahn.

Once the first intake of students complete the accredited one-year diploma, the hope is that some will start their own businesses, others will further their studies at university and others could join a company where their skills will be needed.

The academy is also open for paying students who can choose from an array of short courses such as the basics of computing and basics of coding, which is targeted at children.

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