



May 13, 2022 11:45 BST

Minister for Science, Research and Innovation opens £2m investment in region's Engineering and Environment students

Office for Students funding upgrades Northumbria University's teaching facilities with cutting-edge technologies

George Freeman MP, Minister for Science, Research and Innovation has officially opened new world-class engineering teaching facilities at Northumbria University, Newcastle following a successful capital funding

award from the Office for Students (OfS).

The funding award has allowed the University to expand, refurbish and install new equipment to develop state of the art teaching laboratories for programmes in its Mathematics, Physics and Electrical Engineering areas, providing advanced resources that will help to inform teaching in live projects which directly support businesses in the region.

The opening of the new teaching spaces follows the news that the University's research power continues to grow with results from the Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) showing Northumbria University with the [biggest rise in research power ranking of any UK university](#). Its research power ranking rose to 23rd, having previously risen to 50th in 2014 from 80th in 2008, making Northumbria the sector's largest riser in research power ranking for the second time.

Upgrades to existing facilities has seen a new 120-seat Microelectronics and Communications Laboratory with 100 individual workspaces with oscilloscopes, embedded circuit systems, benchtop control electronics and IT, as well as groupwork space for live industry projects with telecommunication and microelectronics firms.

Refurbishments will also see the University enhance its Power Electronics laboratory. This work will provide new microgrids, motor and renewables testing equipment and facilities for teaching and assessing modules in renewable energy generation and power transmission, building on current work with local industry partners.

Northumbria's reputation as a sector-leading centre for battery technologies research has been further enhanced with improvement to its Battery Technology laboratory including new cell assembly facilities and environmental testing that can be used for specialist teaching in conjunction with established partners, such as Nissan, Hitachi and BritishVolt.

To celebrate the opening of the new facilities the University gathered academics, industry experts and politicians to discuss collaborations between leading businesses and higher education institutions that can serve as a driver for regional growth. The event included a roundtable discussion with a keynote speech from George Freeman MP who highlighted the need for cross-sector collaboration and partnerships to drive innovation, greater

opportunity and prosperity.

George Freeman MP, Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, said:

“This laboratory is a fantastic addition to the University of Northumbria’s world-class facilities. I am pleased to have been here to open the site today, and to hear about the excellent opportunities it will provide for young people to develop the skills they need to thrive in the quickly evolving STEM economy.

“Investment like this is crucial to supporting productivity in the North East and levelling up the UK, supporting collaboration between researchers and industry as well as driving our ambitions as a global science superpower.”

Professor Andrew Wathey CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University, commented:

“Northumbria University continues to respond to global challenges, providing sector leading learning with a strong focus on renewable energies, battery and satellite technologies.

“We are delighted that the Minister was able to open our new facilities here at the University. This funding award from the Office for Students will hugely benefit our students as we continue to provide them with the knowledge and understanding to help shape the future.”

Further works will also see the refurbishment of an existing teaching laboratory to provide a new Satellite Engineering Laboratory which will include new thermal vacuum, vibration and radiation testing chambers that can be used for specialist teaching to provide the skills needed in the UK space sector.

In addition, the funding will allow to refurbish existing areas to create a new 120-seat Engineering IT Hub, supporting laboratory teaching with additional investment in digital facilities and High-Performance Computing (HPC) for modelling work.

[Find out more information on courses relating to Mathematics, Physics and Electrical Engineering at Northumbria University.](#)

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