



Oct 19, 2020 10:29 BST

Northumbria University joins new employability programme for autistic students

Northumbria University, Newcastle, has joined The Employ Autism Higher Education Network, a ground-breaking higher education employability programme, which aims to unlock the potential of autistic students and graduates and help them into full-time work.

The nationwide programme is run by Santander, through Santander Universities UK, and the charity Ambitious about Autism and will enable autistic students and graduates studying at Northumbria University to access

paid internships and tailored careers support and advice.

Latest research has found that autistic graduates are the least likely of all disabled students to find employment following their studies – with only 33% in full-time work.

This new programme aims to tackle this issue by ensuring more autistic students and graduates have access to meaningful employment experience. It will also ensure local businesses can benefit from neurodiverse talent within their workforces.

Julia Bennett, Northumbria University lead, said: “We’re delighted to be joining The Employ Autism Higher Education Network and playing our part in helping more autistic students and graduates achieve their potential and access full-time employment.

“We’re really looking forward to working with our autistic students to match their talents to autism-confident employers who can support their needs and allow them thrive in the workplace.”

During the 18-month programme, careers and employability professionals at Northumbria University will receive specialist training and support from Ambitious about Autism to work specifically with autistic students, helping to guide them into sustainable employment.

Working with professionals who understand their needs, students will receive support to identify roles that match their skills and given help with the application and recruitment process, which often needs to be adapted to allow autistic young people to shine.

Northumbria University will also work with local employers to create opportunities for these students to take part in internships with autism-confident businesses, providing them with valuable ‘on the job’ experience in a supportive environment.

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive of Ambitious about Autism, said: “Autistic students and graduates are among our brightest talents and yet too many face a much more challenging path into long-term employment than their

neurotypical peers.

“By joining our programme, Northumbria University will be at the forefront of the drive to increase the neurodiversity of the UK workforce and will also be helping to change the lives of autistic people.”

Matt Hutnell, Director of Santander Universities UK, said: “Santander is committed to supporting students from diverse backgrounds into university, work and self-employment so we’re pleased to join forces with Ambitious about Autism and a number of our university partners to launch this pioneering new programme. By working together, we hope to improve employment outcomes for autistic students and graduates by providing life changing opportunities.”

Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson, said: “It’s great to see Santander leading by example by investing in the often untapped talent of autistic young people. Through innovative programmes like this, alongside the support that is available through government-funded programmes like Access to Work, we’re working together to unlock potential and remove barriers to employment.”

Santander and Ambitious about Autism’s Employ Autism Higher Education Network programme will bring together the higher education sector and employers to create further lasting employment opportunities for autistic young people across the UK. For more information visit: www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk.

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk --- Please contact our Media and Communications team at media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk