ICT workforce requirements and job opportunities

- 1.2 million people are currently employed in ICT occupations in the UK. The ICT professional workforce is forecast to grow by about 1% per annum over the coming decade. The ICT industry is forecast to see employment growth of around 2.2% (*ICT Insights: Employment Forecasts*, e-skills UK/Experian, November 2004).

- This growth, along with natural wastage, means that the total demand for new staff in the ICT professional workforce has been estimated at between 156,000 and 179,000 people per year (*ICT Insights: Trends and UK Skills Implications*, e-skills UK/Gartner Consulting, November 2004). Many of these will be in roles which require graduate skills.

- Recent research indicates that recruitment efforts for experienced ICT staff have more than doubled and update training spend has increased by 40% (EURIM Newsletter, Philip Virgo, EURIM February 2005).

- Workforce demand in all of the major graduate ICT professional occupations is expected to grow over the coming decade, as follows: ICT managers – 0.9%, ICT strategy and planning professionals – 2.3%, ICT software professionals – 2.3%. By contrast, a slight fall in workforce demand is projected for some associate professional and technical roles, e.g. operations technicians and user support workers (*ICT Insights: Employment Forecasts*, e-skills UK/Experian, November 2004).

- Two important components of the 'entrepreneurial environment' which foster the establishment of software companies are 'well-funded and abundant academic research', including the development of research clusters, and 'access to skilled employees', software developers and managers (*Sector Competitiveness Analysis of the Software and Computer Services Industry*, DTI July 2004). Computing and ICT-related graduates are one important source; currently the USA has ten times more professional developers than the UK, from a population five times larger. India, China and Russia all have more than any Western European nation.

- In 2004, 17% of organisations which had vacancies stated that some of these were for ICT professionals. This equates to around 65,000 vacancies for ICT staff in around 41,000 organisations across the UK (*ICT Insights: Employer Skill Needs*, e-skills UK, November 2004).

- According to an OECD report, the skilled use of ICT is crucial in facilitating productivity growth, and 'policies to foster the uptake of ICT are no longer sufficient...'. In addition, 'policies specific to ICT diffusion and use will not, on their own, lead to stronger performance: they should be part of a comprehensive set of actions to create the right conditions for growth and innovation'. This report concludes that skills are key: the most important benefits [of ICT] arise from effective use' (*Seizing the Benefits of ICT in a Digital Economy*, OECD 2003).