

**COUNCIL OF PROFESSORS AND HEADS OF COMPUTING**

c/o BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT  
3 Newbridge Square, Swindon SN1 1BY

**Monday 2 February 2026**

**Northern Ireland Update****NI Science Festival**

The annual NI Science Festival of which I am a founding member and Deputy Chair, is taking place from 11–22 Feb 2026 with 300 events across the 12 days.

Take a look at the range of fantastic events promoting STEM including Digital Technologies across the Festival at <https://nisciencefestival.com/>

**Agentic AI**

There will be a number of events focussing on AI during the festival including one from Ulster University on the 'Rise of Agentic AI' on 11<sup>th</sup> February.

<https://nisciencefestival.com/event/the-rise-of-agentic-ai/>

Agentic AI is definitely one of the most widely used AI buzzwords currently and can mean widely different things to different people / companies / bodies. We have been working a lot on Agentic AI over recent months, particularly with the local software sector through the Faculty's Computing Employer Advisory Board (CEAB) which I chair and engaging with Software NI the local industry body.

We had a fantastic presentation and discussion around Agentic AI and the Software Development Life Cycle at our recent quarterly CEAB meeting on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January. Particularly around the importance of core computing skills so that our students can remain the Human in the Loop (HITL) / Human on the Loop (HOTL) when 'orchestrating' AI. (Currently looking for permission from AFLAC-NI, our January meeting is hosted by a company member each year, to share the presentation with this Committee).

**The AI Bubble**

Following on from the success of our joint AICC TSAB / CEAB engagement in September 2025 (report from which I shared previously), we are intending to run another joint engagement in April / May 2026 on the 'AI Bubble and the impact on both the NI economy and the continued uptake of AI by SMEs and FDI companies if / when it bursts'. To that end we are having a preliminary 'Red Team' Discussion on the AI Bubble at our next quarterly TSAB meeting which is taking place on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January.

**Victim of Showcasing Placement ?**

Looks like showcasing our successes with Placement nationally has come back to bite us as feedback from local companies both SMES and FDI is that they have been inundated since September with very engaged students from GB seeking computing placements in Northern Ireland. Which increases the competition in a tighter market due to right-sizing and impact of AI for local students in both Ulster and QUB.

J Wallace  
26 January 2026