# Applications for AI degrees surge despite overall drop in computing courses



Applications to study artificial intelligence (AI) at UK universities have surged by 15% this year, even as the overall number of applicants for broader computing degrees has declined, according to data from Ucas provided to the PA news agency.

The data reveals a notable rise in interest among women, with AI degree applications increasing by 15%, compared with a 12% increase among men. Despite this growth, AI courses still represent a relatively small segment, accounting for roughly 5% of all computing applications. Meanwhile, more traditional computing subjects such as computer science, computer games and animation, and software engineering have seen declines, leading to an overall fall of 10% in applications for computing degrees this year. This decline marks a reversal following five consecutive years of growth in computing applications.

Experts attribute the shift toward AI-focused courses to the escalating global interest in AI technologies and the UK Government’s efforts to promote AI adoption across sectors. Earlier this year, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer introduced the AI Opportunities Action Plan, which aims to significantly expand AI tool use within the public sector and invest in upgrading the UK’s AI infrastructure. The strategic vision is to position the UK as a global leader in AI technology.

Julia Adamson, Managing Director for education at BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, commented on the trend, stating, “Young people – and a rising percentage of young women – know studying AI gives them the power to change the world. The results reflect the changing digital economy. AI and information systems are emerging fields, particularly for female applicants, which is a positive step towards a more diverse tech workforce.”

Adamson further emphasised the Government’s strategy, noting, “The Government’s strategy to make the UK a global AI leader relies largely on growing the pipeline of university graduates in a range of related subjects, along with digital apprenticeships and other professional development courses.”

She acknowledged that while specialised AI degrees are experiencing rapid growth, the absolute numbers remain small compared to computing courses overall. Additionally, many individuals with degrees outside computing may enter the AI field through postgraduate conversion programmes such as Google DeepMind’s Research Ready programme.

BCS is currently engaging with government bodies, educators, universities, and industry stakeholders to explore the underlying causes of these computing trends. Factors under consideration include the job market for entry-level developer roles, whether AI has altered perceptions of technology careers, the influence of large technology firms in geopolitics, persistent gender imbalances in the tech sector, and early educational choices related to computing subjects.

The Irish News (Belfast) is reporting on these developments.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.perspectivemedia.com/university-applications-for-ai-degrees-rise-15-data-shows/> - This URL supports the claim that applications to study AI at UK universities have surged by 15%, reflecting a rising interest in AI among students. It highlights the growing popularity of AI degrees despite a broader decline in computing applications.
2. <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/uk-18-year-olds-make-record-number-applications-computing-courses> - This URL provides background information on computing course applications, which, while still popular, have seen a decline in recent years after a period of growth. It underscores the broader context of computing applications in the UK.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/artificial-intelligence-sector-study-2023/artificial-intelligence-sector-study-2023> - This URL supports the Government's efforts to promote AI adoption and positioning the UK as a global leader in AI technology. It details growth in AI-related revenues, employment, and GVA, highlighting the strategic importance of AI.
4. <https://www.lurnable.com/content/the_ai_effect-_a_record_number_of_uk_students_apply_for_computing_courses_in_2023/> - This URL corroborates the trend of increasing interest in computing courses, partly due to AI, by highlighting the surge in computing programme applications among UK high school graduates in 2023.
5. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/global/study-abroad/2025/03/14/record-number-us-students-apply-uk-undergraduate-degrees> - While this URL does not directly address AI, it indicates a broader trend of increased interest in UK undergraduate degrees, which includes AI and computing. It suggests a robust demand for UK education opportunities.
6. <https://www.bcs.org.uk/> - This URL is for the BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, which plays a role in promoting and analyzing trends in IT education and careers. It supports Julia Adamson's perspective on AI's impact on career choices and diversity in the tech sector.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/university-applications-for-ai-degrees-rise-15-data-shows-D4K3BGLACBK6ZLEARZDIILBLSE/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data