Andrea Rodrigues

BTEC Level 3 in ICT and Computing

BTEC IT & Computing Learner of the Year 2020 is a student at Ada, the National College for Digital Skills working towards a BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Computing. Nominated by the Vice Principal, Ms. Tina Gotschi, Andrea Rodrigues is a passionate, proactive, and ambitious student, who actively pursues opportunities both within and beyond the college. With top grades in all her exams and coursework, Andrea's dedication and commitment to computing are evident. "She has a real love for the subject and always displays incredible curiosity to learn new things as well as producing rigorous work," says Tina Gotschi. In fact, Andrea's work has been of such a high standard, that it has led to her gaining recognition and accolades from a variety of tech sector experts and professional organisations already.

Following her proposal to the organisers, Andrea was accepted to create and facilitate a session at the Mozilla Festival in June 2019, bringing on board a group of her peers, and so developing her own leadership skills while also supporting the development of these skills in others. Indeed, supporting the development of others – and particularly those in lower stages of education – is a theme that is woven throughout Andrea's life.

As a founding member of the college's Primary Computing Club, Andrea took a lead role in developing and delivering over twenty Computer Science lessons to local Year 4 and Year 5 pupils. On the back of this, Andrea was invited by the Royal Institution to help develop and deliver the first of a national set of Primary Computing Masterclasses, and this in turn, was a key factor in Andrea being voted Young Digital Leader 2019 by Digital Leaders – the UK's premier digital leadership platform.

With a growing reputation not only as a talented programmer, but also as an ambassador for young people in tech, Andrea also served as a panellist at the Teaching Tech to Gen Z conference at the German School in Richmond, speaking about how to ensure the social and mental well-being of young adults in the digital age, and was a speaker the Young Digital Leaders Conference in Salford in June 2020. As if Andrea weren't busy enough, she is also the student body president at Ada, and so leads the student voice group in initiatives including fundraising for charity as well as organising the student yearbook.

Vicky Clarke, Assistant Principal at Ada says: "Andrea's ambition is second-to-none; she knows what she wants to achieve and she sets out, working hard to achieve it," while Graphics Lead and Student Voice coordinator, Natasha Reynolds describes her as: "pro-active and approachable, with great leadership qualities in her role as Student Voice President."

Andrea chose to study BTEC Computing to help her fulfil her ambition of becoming a software engineer and was particularly attracted by the wide variety of units available to study. "From project management to software design and development to computer networking and cyber security, I felt that the units covered in the course would give me the best learning foundation, exposing me to the different types of career opportunities in the computing industry while giving me the opportunity to work on projects in the units in college," she says.

The skills that Andrea has learned through her course are not only useful for her future career but are already showing dividends. She recounts: "As part of the BTEC Computing course I had to develop a game. This first project I worked on gave me the opportunity to learn a new programming language: JavaScript. Learning this language has opened me up to so many opportunities as I have used the knowledge from working on this project to develop other web apps.

As a highly motivated and proactive student, Andrea carries her learning on outside the classroom as much as possible, going above and beyond the course expectations: "Outside of college I like to develop my programming skills by working on web development projects, where I learn about the new web technologies that are being used and how I can use them in my own projects. This has helped with my BTEC Computing coursework units, for example Human Computer Interaction (Unit 10), when developing my product as a web app.

I feel I go the extra mile in learning by reading more about the topics that I am studying. For example, the book "Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products" gave me a better understanding about the users of different products," Andrea enthuses.

This interview took place June 2020.

You can find out more about BTEC at

↘ **btecworks.com**

Pearson | BTEC