

CSIT

Taking deep cyber research beyond the research centre.

Marketing strategy • Technology communications • Programme delivery • Industry engagement • Stakeholder management

THE SETTING

The Centre for Secure Information Technologies (CSIT) at Queen’s University Belfast is one of the UK’s Innovation and Knowledge Centres, designed to connect internationally competitive research with commercialisation, industry and economic growth.

I joined as Marketing Executive at a useful moment: CSIT was expanding its role in Northern Ireland’s cyber ecosystem, government investment was accelerating, and the centre needed to communicate highly technical work to audiences far beyond academia.

£18.9m

UK Government cyber investment announced in Feb 2023

8

R&D-intensive companies in the Cyber-AI Hub

100+

companies in the wider NI cyber innovation ecosystem cited by UKRI

01 REPOSITIONING THE CENTRE

The challenge was translation, not visibility

CSIT had a strong research reputation, but much of its external communication still behaved like an academic institution speaking to other academic audiences. That became a constraint as the centre sought deeper relationships with industry, government and technology partners.

My job was to make the work easier to enter without making it less intelligent: understand the research well enough to identify why it mattered, translate technical and academic language into stakeholder value, and build a more regular communications pipeline around research, partnerships, funding, events and ecosystem activity.

Over the year, I reworked the website and communications approach, established a more structured content and stakeholder-update pipeline, and used LinkedIn, Twitter, news, campaigns and events as connected parts of the same industry-engagement system.

OPERATING PRINCIPLE

Technical accuracy stayed with the researchers. Accessibility, relevance and narrative became the communications job.

02 FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME LAUNCH

Launching the Cyber-AI Hub

One of my first major workstreams was the launch of the Cyber-AI Hub, announced as part of £18.9m of UK Government investment in Northern Ireland’s cyber security sector. £11m of government funding supported the new Hub at CSIT, intended to help businesses and start-ups explore AI-enabled cyber security opportunities.

I owned the communications and event workstream end to end: post event content, messaging, press and media coordination, website and digital content, social communications, collateral, and video coordination and industry outreach.

The chief guest was Minister of State for Northern Ireland Steve Baker MP. The ministerial announcement gave the launch national visibility, but the work did not end with the press moment. The next task was sustaining the Hub’s industry-facing narrative and creating reasons for companies to understand, engage with and follow the programme.

PLAN

Launch roadmap, dependencies and delivery schedule

ALIGN

Researchers, leadership, government, companies and university teams

TRANSLATE

Research and funding proposition into accessible messages

DELIVER

Media, digital, content and stakeholder communications

AMPLIFY

Press, social, web and industry-facing promotion

SUSTAIN

Post-launch pipeline for continued partner engagement

03 MARKETING AND STAKEHOLDER PIPELINE

Building an industry-facing communications engine

The broader overhaul was less about producing more content and more about creating a repeatable system. Research announcements, programme milestones, industry activity and events needed to reach the right audiences consistently, while the centre also needed a clearer route for attracting new partners.

I built the process around an editorial pipeline, stakeholder segmentation, researcher input, content development, channel planning, event touchpoints and follow-up. That gave the centre a more predictable rhythm for keeping existing stakeholders informed while widening the top of the relationship funnel.

15+ news stories written and managed	8+ events supported or delivered	5+ campaigns across major initiatives
2 core social channels managed	1 website rehaul	12 months to build the new communications rhythm

04 INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Washington DC: a small room with a very specialised guest list

The RISE workshop in Washington DC brought together 50+ senior cyber and technology experts from the UK and US around semiconductor and hardware security. The scale was intentionally focused; the stakeholder profile was not.

I managed the operational and communications work across venue and logistics, speaker and delegate coordination, invitations, travel dependencies, agenda development, partner liaison, event collateral, pre-event communications, on-the-day delivery and post-event outputs.

That meant managing an international event where academic, government and industry expectations overlapped, and where the usefulness of the room depended as much on who was in it as what appeared on the agenda.

DELIVERY MODEL

Scope → stakeholder map → workback schedule → speaker/delegate coordination → logistics and risk tracking → communications → live delivery → follow-up

05 CONNECTING PROGRAMMES

CyberUK, the NI Cyber Security 2023 Snapshot and the wider ecosystem

The year also placed CSIT inside a much wider regional story. Belfast hosted CYBERUK 2023, the UK's flagship cyber security event, while the Northern Ireland Cyber Security Snapshot provided a recurring evidence base on the sector's companies, employment, skills and economic contribution.

I supported CSIT's activity around CYBERUK and helped organise and develop content for the Cyber Security Snapshot launch. These workstreams required the same discipline as the Hub: take research, sector data and institutional expertise and turn them into material that government, companies, media and prospective partners could use.

Across the portfolio I routinely coordinated with academics and researchers, centre leadership, technology companies, NCSC, DSIT, the Northern Ireland Office, UKRI and Innovate UK, Invest NI, government representatives, international universities, students and media.

06 TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

A year of learning a new language

I had deliberately wanted to understand the academic–industry relationship more closely. I had already spent years working with businesses and SMEs; CSIT put me on the other side of that equation, inside a research institution trying to move knowledge, technology and expertise into the market.

Cyber security and AI were new technical domains for me, so the first few months involved a lot of listening, reading and asking researchers questions that occasionally began with, “Explain this to me as though I am intelligent, but not a cryptographer.”

That learning curve became useful quickly. I became comfortable moving between technical teams and non-technical stakeholders, identifying the commercial or societal relevance inside complex research, and shaping communications around what different audiences actually needed to know.

07 WHAT CHANGED

Portfolio outcomes

The most visible change was a more active external presence: a rebuilt website, a regular flow of accessible research and innovation stories, structured promotion around major programmes, and a clearer rhythm of stakeholder communications and events.

The figures below are working portfolio placeholders for metrics that were not captured in the source material available here. They should be replaced with analytics or internal records before publication.



AT A GLANCE

Selected scope

CYBER-AI HUB End-to-end launch communications, ministerial event, media, digital, industry outreach and sustained promotion.	CSIT WEBSITE Reworked the digital experience and content architecture to make research and partnership activity easier to understand.
RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS 15+ news pieces translating technical research, funding and ecosystem developments for broader audiences.	EVENT PORTFOLIO 8+ events including international delivery, sector showcases, stakeholder engagement and programme promotion.
NI CYBER SECURITY 2023 SNAPSHOT Supported content development, publication organisation and launch activity for the sector evidence base.	CHANNEL & STAKEHOLDER PIPELINE Built a more regular process for LinkedIn, Twitter, web, campaigns and stakeholder updates.