Dr Amr Al Khateeb—written evidence (ACT0021)

House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee inquiry: Scaling Up: AI and creative tech

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My team and I are currently working on a project funded by International Science Partnership entitled: "Prototyping Generative AI in Digital Marketing to Overcome Disability Disadvantage". We would like to answer questions 4 and 5 to the best of our knowledge and experience below:

4. What further measures (financial and non-financial) are needed to address barriers to scale in AI, and creative technology?

Pro-Innovation Regulatory Framework:
The current regulations around AI and creative technology can be either prohibitive or inadequate, hindering investment in SMEs. Agile regulatory frameworks are needed to support SMEs, particularly in the areas of intellectual property (IP), ethics, and privacy. These new regulations should balance protection with openness, facilitating innovation as AI technologies evolve.

Creating and Sustaining Talent:
The government should introduce inclusive apprenticeship schemes across the UK, specifically aimed at supporting SMEs in AI and creative technology. These initiatives would help develop the talent pipeline required to scale businesses in these sectors.

Tax Incentives:
Tailored tax relief for AI and creative technology would encourage investment. Either a new scheme can be developed, or existing schemes like the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) could be expanded to clearly cover AI and creative technology sectors.

Access to Technology and Infrastructure:
SMEs require access to affordable and easily accessible resources. The government should facilitate the availability of shared infrastructure facilities, such as cloud computing and high-performance computing (HPC) and expand high-speed internet connectivity across the UK—not just in London.

Mentorship Schemes:
Advisory support through mentorship schemes designed specifically for SMEs is essential. Leveraging existing initiatives like UKRI Innovate UK would provide these firms with the guidance they need to scale.

5. What role do academic institutions play here, and what can be done to boost commercial links with AI and creative technology?

AI Research Centres:
New research centres focused on AI and creative technology should be established to provide the foundational knowledge necessary for SMEs. These centres should not only engage in research but also offer specialised professional training to improve the capabilities of SMEs in these sectors.

PhD Studentships:
Universities should offer specialised PhD opportunities in AI and creative technology to foster innovation within SMEs. This would help produce the talent and research needed to drive advancements in these fields.

Degree Programmes, Placements, and Apprenticeships:
Degree programmes, placements, and apprenticeships should be designed specifically to meet the needs of SMEs in AI and creative technology. This would help create a workforce equipped with the technical skills required to foster innovation.

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