

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Local Growth Fund Evaluation Report:



Abingdon & Witney College Advanced Skills Centre



The Advanced Skills Centre is part of Abingdon and Witney College, with a core focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) learning - equipping students with the skills to succeed in these sectors and the ability to adapt to this increasingly complex, changing and technological world.

STEM education in the UK has continued to grow over recent years, with curriculums aiming to provide students with highly sought-after skills, by presenting a range of cohesive learning platforms that are largely based on real-world applications. STEM itself underpins the foundational stage of many sectors, ranging from healthcare, to aviation – and far beyond, often integral to an organisation and thus an ever-more important field for students to study – a key factor within sustaining our economy.

The Advanced Skills Centre addresses local, regional and national skills shortages in STEM subject areas, by supplying skilled technicians to Harwell and elsewhere across Oxfordshire; deploying the unique expertise and facilities available at and around Harwell as a learning resource for the rest of the United Kingdom, Europe and the world.

OxLEP secured £4m of funding for the project via the government's Local Growth Fund – the overall cost of the project was £5.9m. The project began in October 2016 and opened in January 2018.

In the past 4 years (from 2017/18 to 2020/21) the Advanced Skills Centre has enabled the following number of students to gain experience and qualifications.

Level 1	19 students
Level 2	96 students
Level 3	383 students
Level 4+	182 students
Intermediate & Advanced Apprenticeships	603 students
STEM Short courses	89 students
Diploma in Management Apprenticeship (L3)	58 students
Other STEM courses	258 students
Total	1,688 students

The initial response from both students and staff to the new building has been excellent. Engineering and computing students can make the most of the innovative equipment and learning tools that are available, including a Haas Five-Axis CNC machine, advanced robotics equipment and 3D printers. An adjoining classroom is equipped with specialist engineering CAD software.



Supported by the Local Growth Fund