

Advanced Skills Centre



The Advanced Skills Centre is part of Abingdon and Witney College, with this new Skills Centre concentrating on STEM learning. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and empowers individuals with the skills to succeed and adapt to this increasingly complex, changing, technological world. STEM education in the UK has grown in recent years as a curriculum that aims to skill students by presenting a cohesive learning platform that is largely based on real-world applications. It underpins the foundational stage of many sectors, ranging from healthcare to aviation and much more and is often integral to an organisation and thus is becoming an ever-more important field for students which is a key factor on the sustaining of our economy.

The Centre addresses local, regional and national skills shortages in STEM subject areas by supplying skilled technicians at Harwell and elsewhere in Oxfordshire; and 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.



Despite Oxfordshire's rich research and development traditions the area's STEM provision had historically struggled to keep up with the rapid pace of change in Oxfordshire's business base. Research in 2014 developed as part of our initial City Deal negotiations identified that less than 5% of government investment into further education directly supported STEM based subjects, whilst over 20% of our businesses were STEM based. When future funding opportunities arose through Local Growth Funding soon after we were delighted that the FE sector responded to this evidence, and we were able to invest significant capital investment into Oxfordshire's STEM provision that will support residents and businesses for decades to come – including the Advanced Skills Centre within the Abingdon and Witney College.

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, this includes a Haas Five-Axis CNC machine, advanced robotics equipment and 3D printers. An adjoining classroom is equipped with specialist engineering CAD software.

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

OxLEP secured £4,000,000 of funding for the project via the government's Local Growth Fund – the overall cost of the project was £5,900,000. The project began in October 2016 and opened in January 2018.



Supported by the Local Growth Fund