

Press release: New training centre to keep Oxfordshire a hi-tech hotspot

Oxfordshire Advanced Skills (OAS) is a partnership between the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and the Science & Technology Facilities Council (STFC) to increase the number of trained technicians available to local employers.

Construction of the 3,800-square metre new OAS centre is underway at UKAEA's Culham site, undertaken by Midas Construction Ltd. The building will welcome its first intake of apprentices in September 2019. OAS Phase 1 has been operational and training apprentices for two years in an existing facility at Culham. The number of trainees has increased to almost 80 and there are now 16 partner employers on board. New employers sending their apprentices to OAS this year include Veolia Oxford Technologies, Oxford Instruments, Polar Technology, Valeofoods, Abbott and Satellite Applications Catapult.

The new building will be able to accommodate many more apprentices, with industry-standard equipment covering a wide range of engineering and technology disciplines. OAS is working with local businesses to ensure the facilities meet their advanced training needs.

Apprentice training at the new OAS centre (OAS Phase 2) will be provided by the MTC's Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre (AMTC). AMTC is a state-of-the-art training centre based next to the Manufacturing Technology Centre near Coventry. It has an impressive track record in teaching not only core engineering skills but also the latest advanced manufacturing techniques being used in industry.

David Martin, the UK Atomic Energy Authority's Chief Operating Officer – himself a former apprentice and the driving force behind OAS – said:

Oxfordshire is one of Europe's biggest areas for science and technology, and the amount of people employed in these industries is four times the national average. We can only sustain this success if we have more skilled young people coming through, and OAS is a vital part of this skills pipeline.

The number of new starters at OAS for 2018 proves the demand exists for high quality apprenticeships in the area. The employer-led training centre we are building at Culham will allow us to greatly expand our capacity and provide more local firms with technicians who can go straight into the workplace with the skills the employer needs.

In AMTC we are partnering with one of the UK's most forward-thinking training organisations. They will give apprentices at OAS access to new technologies and ways of working, ready for the hi-tech industries of the future.

Paul Rowlett, Managing Director of the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre, said:

Having an insight into tomorrow's technology gives us the ability to create training programmes and apprenticeships to equip industry with a capable workforce. We are delighted to be working with UKAEA and STFC to deliver the Oxfordshire Advanced Skills training programme. There is a clear synergy and shared vision across our organisations.

Helen Johnson, Head of Apprenticeship & Graduate Schemes at STFC said:

STFC already employs more than 80 apprentices across our laboratories and has a vibrant and growing apprenticeship programme, recruiting and training apprentices in engineering, project management, computing and ICT. They are an integral part of STFC's skill base and this expansion of what OAS is able to offer engineering and technology apprentices is fantastic news for STFC and the many partner organisations we work with in the commercial and public sectors.

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