

Livestock Technology Centre – Abingdon & Witney College



Abingdon & Witney College's new Livestock Technology Centre project, which includes the construction of a new indoor riding school, has extended the College's potential to integrate technology into their courses. It features a large practical space, changing and bio-security areas and a theory teaching room.

The £1,900,000 facility at Common Leys Farm was funded through a grant of £1,139,000 from the government's Local Growth Fund, secured by OxLEP. It is an innovative technology building for students to develop the latest skills and knowledge and establish a career in the agriculture industry. This centre of excellence and innovation comprises of a research centre, employer engagement hub and training facility for agriculture apprentices and full-time students. The Centre is helping to provide a solution to the agritech skills shortage problem in Oxfordshire and was opened by Robert Courts MP on the 17th of May 2019.



Within surroundings optimised for agritech and farming careers, students can use a [NEDAP Pig Performance Testing](#) station, Shearwell Data for sheep stock analysis and a live feedback system through the large screen installed on the wall. This enables theory to be taught within the livestock area alongside the practical tasks, giving students a unique learning experience. The building also houses a classroom, student changing areas with ample room for their equipment, and a range of animals, including sheep, pigs and goats.

The centre has successfully joined the North East Cotswold Farm Cluster Group ([North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster CIC - Farmer Clusters](#)). This comprises of over 100 local farms that collaborate on farmer-led conservation projects. In addition, the Centre continues to work with a further six agricultural employers.

As part of Landex (Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence), each year the Centre has a curriculum and quality peer review. Feedback as part of this has been very positive and included:

“The college is active with employer engagement, hosting two Employer Partner Boards across the academic year. The college invites employers from all three full time curriculum areas to the Boards, potentially providing the college with a wider range of skills requirements for the students. There is evidence that the Boards have impacted curriculum content and design, for example the inclusion of dairy this academic year after feedback from employers. The peer reviewers spoke with two of the college

employers, who both provided very positive feedback. The employers explained the relationship with the college and their influence on the co-design and co-deliver of curriculum, as well as how they safeguard students and the training received from the college to understand how to cater for their needs.”

The Centre is currently part of a pilot project bid for Landscape Recovery, one of the three Environmental Land Management schemes being developed as successor to the Government Common Agricultural Policy. The Centre is working with the Farm Cluster Group in putting together a bid for flood management.

In the past 5 years from 2019/20 to 2023/24 the Centre has enabled the following number of students to gain experience and qualifications:

	Total students from 2019/20 to 2023/24
Full Time students	592
Higher Education students	212
Apprentices	0
TOTAL	804

Achievement rates within the Land Based Industries 22/23 were 92% against a national average of 84% with an expected increase of 3% for 23/24 to 95%.

Due to the additional learner numbers, to date 3.6 jobs have been created compared to a target of 2.5.