

UTC OXFORDSHIRE

Opening in September 2015



Frequently Asked Questions

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1. UTC Oxfordshire specific

What is a UTC?

A UTC is a place for students aged 14 to 19 which specialises in technical studies alongside traditional education and is supported by high profile academic and employer partners.

Why is this a UTC (University Technical College) and not just a school?

A UTC is a free and non-selective co-educational place for students aged 14 to 19 which specialises in technical studies alongside traditional education and is supported by high profile academic and industry partners. It allows a student to study a subject they are really interested in which is taught in industry standard facilities by teachers with real life practical experience. By 16 their technical skills are far in advance of those students in a standard comprehensive school and more enthusiastic engagement with their academic studies leads to greater achievement in this area also.

What are the other plans for secondary education in the area?

Great Western Park in southern Oxfordshire is planned to be a high quality development of 3,300 new homes. The plans include local shops and services, sport pitches, community centres, a health centre, primary and secondary schools, play areas and open space. There is a proposal for a co-educational 11-16 secondary school, to open in September 2017 subject to the progress of the housing development and population growth, growing to approximately 1200 places, with 7 forms of entry in Key Stage 3 and a probable 6 forms of entry in Key Stage 4 (reflecting the expected movement of some Key Stage 4 students to the UTC, other sixth form or Further Education provision).

What is the reason for starting at 14?

11 is too early to choose a subject path to follow and 16 is too late. Students who know what they want to do can often become bored at school and so underachieve by the time they are sixteen.

Who are the sponsors of the UTC?

The Oxford & Cherwell Valley College are the lead sponsors (The OCVC group will have the new name, Activate Learning, from November 2013). They are the leading further education colleges in their region. The academic partners are the University of Reading and Royal Holloway University of London. The key industry partners are: Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, Research Machines, MINI Plant Oxford and IBM. Other associate partners include: Unipart, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Oxford Instruments and Oxfordshire BioScience Network. The local authority, Oxfordshire County Council and the two district councils, South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse, have been strongly involved in the planning group for the UTC and are active supporters of the project.

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How will the Industry partners get involved with the UTC?

The industry partners have committed their involvement in the operation of the UTC in a number of ways:

- consultancy, advice and guidance on curriculum development
- product donations
- employer accreditations
- employer-led projects and challenges
- coaching and mentoring
- work experience.

Industry partners will enable students to study specialisms and gain globally accepted industry standard accreditations.

What are the Sponsors' plans for the UTC?

The UTC will be based at Great Western Park, Didcot. With the backing of some of the world's largest and most prestigious companies based in Oxfordshire and especially through the expansion of Science Vale UK, UTC Oxfordshire will become a world-class exemplar science and engineering learning centre that realises the vision laid down in recent papers endorsed by the Government and the Royal Society.

What is the specialism of the UTC?

UTC Oxfordshire will offer a broad spectrum of science and engineering disciplines and become a world-class centre of excellence in these subjects.

The UTC will achieve this by building a technical curriculum that provides specialisations at Key Stage 4 and corresponding progression pathways at Key Stage 5, to include:

- Life sciences (Biotechnology & Medical)
- Physical Sciences (Chemical, Materials, Cryogenics, Nuclear)
- Advanced engineering (Precision manufacture, Control systems, High vacuum)

and including Computer Science (which will also help deliver Digital Literacy skills) as a core curriculum subject in the UTC at Key Stage 4 alongside Sciences, Mathematics and English.

Will the sponsor benefit financially from the UTC?

No – UTC Oxfordshire is established as an Academy Trust and a charity.

Will the UTC deliver the full Academic curriculum?

Yes - Students will be encouraged to take GCSEs and A levels alongside vocational qualifications, industry standard employer certifications and professional society memberships. Formal learning will be enhanced by a variety of enrichment activities: sports ; arts ; and leadership building activities (e.g. Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh Award).

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When will the UTC open?

UTC Oxfordshire will open in September 2015.

Where do the University of Reading and Royal Holloway, University of London fit in?

The Universities have agreed to work with the UTC as academic partners in a number of ways:

- To provide a representative for the Governing Body;
- To provide a representative for the Advisory Body;
- To provide on-going support to the UTC in the following areas:
 - curriculum planning and pedagogies;
 - academic support;
 - guest talks;
 - support for technical projects;
 - undergraduate mentoring;
 - some access to facilities for tours, etc.
- The UTC could become one of the University of Reading's Institute of Education's partnership schools, including teacher training provision that offers CPD for partnership school teachers.
- The UTC could become one of the Universities' target schools for its Widening Access activities under its access agreement.

How will the UTC's governing body ensure democratic representation?

The UTC Oxfordshire's governing body will consist of representatives from the sponsor, academic and industry partner groups as well as the Principal, staff governors, a Local Authority governor, a minimum of 2 parent governors and additional governors appointed by the Trustees.

How will the UTC establish tangible links with the feeder schools?

The UTC will work with Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils and local schools to establish feeder arrangements. It is envisaged that students who wish to transfer to the UTC at age 14 will be able to take advantage of taster days and visits to the UTC during Key Stage 3.

What is the difference between what UTC Oxfordshire will teach and what other Sixth Form Colleges teach?

Most sixth forms focus on a wide range of A Level programmes that are designed to give students the opportunity to access a university education. At UTC Oxfordshire there will be a small number of A levels but only those that complement the technical BTEC and employer certified qualifications. These qualifications will give students access to higher education at good universities where they want to go on and study computer science or engineering disciplines. However, the qualifications will also be very well suited to provide progression to meaningful employment and Apprenticeships.

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Are the UTC qualifications linked to the 14-19 Diplomas?

No. The UTC will focus on the well-established BTEC programmes that have a good reputation with employers and universities.

What kind of jobs would a UTC student expect to go into?

Studying at the UTC Oxfordshire will prepare you for employment, an Apprenticeship or a place at university: all of which will lead to a career path in either engineering or science. Options in engineering are varied but would include technician engineer, design engineer, electronics engineer, systems engineer and control systems engineer. Our pathways in science encompass life sciences (research, biotechnologies, medical instrumentation and health sciences) or physical sciences (space and satellite technologist, materials scientist, micro and nano technologist, scientific modelling and simulation). In many of our areas of scientific work, opportunities exist to combine science and engineering disciplines in areas such as biotechnology, fusion energy research and robotics.

Where will the UTC be located?

The site for the UTC is on Great Western Park, Didcot, OX11 7TG, a major housing development to the west and south west of Didcot, occupying most of the land between the existing conurbation and the A34 trunk road.

Why is it being located there?

Didcot's location immediately adjacent to the three Science parks that constitute Science Vale UK, and its excellent transport connections by both rail and bus to Oxford, Abingdon, Wantage and Grove in its immediate neighbourhood and to other regional population centres, makes it an ideal centre for establishing this Science focussed UTC.

What is the admissions catchment area?

A set percentage of places will be allocated for students resident in each of grouped post code areas. A map showing these post code areas is shown in Appendix A.

What are the procedures where the UTC Oxfordshire is over-subscribed?

At Year 10, all pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs where UTC Oxfordshire is named on the statement, will be admitted. At Year 12, all pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs where UTC Oxfordshire is named on the statement, and who meet the minimum entry requirements for Year 12, will be admitted.

After the admission of these pupils, and where the number of applications for admission is greater than the published admissions number, applications will be considered against the criteria set out below in the order in which they are set out below:

- a) Looked after children; or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption order, residence, or special guardianship order. A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority,

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- or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions.
- b) Siblings of students in attendance at the UTC in Years 10 to 12. These include brothers and sisters, half brothers and sisters and step brothers and sisters who share the same home. These also include adopted and foster brothers and sisters who share the same home.
 - c) Remaining places will be allocated as follows: a. 30% of places allocated to applicants within Area 1 which will include all postcodes in OX10, OX11 and OX14.
 - d) 30% of places allocated to applicants within Area 2 which will include all postcodes in OX1, OX4, OX12, OX13, OX44, OX49, RG14, RG18 and RG20.
 - e) 30% of places allocated to applicants within Area 3 which will include all postcodes in OX2, OX3, OX9, OX18, OX28, OX29, OX33, RG4, RG8, RG9, RG17, RG31 and SN7.
 - f) Remaining 10% of places will be allocated to pupils living outside the areas listed in b to d above with those living closest to the front gates of Science UTC Oxfordshire (straight line distance - using Ordnance Survey Data points of school and property) being admitted.

See Appendix A for the catchment area map.

How was the catchment area identified?

The UTC is a regional facility and therefore gives priority to applications from Oxfordshire with catchment areas which include Newbury, Reading, Aylesbury and West Wycombe. Grouped post code areas have been defined as the method to ensure geographical spread. This means that applicants living close to UTC Oxfordshire, do not have priority over other applicants within the other areas.

Who manages the UTC's applications process?

There is a coordinated admissions process in England with exchange of information between Local Authorities. This means that for Year 10 students, they must apply to their home Local Authority on a 'Common Application Form'. All applications from all local authorities are then sent to Oxfordshire County Council who coordinates them and passes them onto UTC Oxfordshire. Arrangements for applications for places at UTC Oxfordshire sixth form will be made directly to UTC Oxfordshire.

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Will there be any home to school transport support provided to students?

Oxfordshire County Council's position is likely to be to fund transport to the nearest available school over 3 miles from home or under 3 miles if there is no safe walking route. The UTC will be treated in the same way as all other schools, i.e. it will not be differentiated by way of its more specialist curriculum.

Will there be a phased intake of students over the first few years or will all classes start in September 2015?

The Admissions number will be 150 for Year 10. As the UTC builds to full capacity intake will be restricted to 60 in 2015, 90 in 2016, 120 in 2017 and 150 for 2018 and each subsequent year thereafter.

Given no internal students will transfer from year 11 to year 12 in the first three years of operation, the admission number for 2015 will be 80, in 2016 it will be 100. From 2017, UTC Oxfordshire will operate a sixth form for a total of 300 students. 150 places overall will be available in year 12 (the year 12 'capacity') for its own pupils progressing from year 11. It will not admit external applicants to its sixth form unless undersubscribed by its own pupils.

Will students have to take an exam/aptitude test to get into the UTC?

There are no selection or aptitude tests for students joining in Year 10. The UTC will apply a minimum criteria in relation to academic entrance requirements for admission or transfer to the UTC Oxfordshire sixth form. In order to gain entry to the sixth form, both internal and external applicants must have passed English and Maths at grade A*-D. However, they will only be admitted to follow vocational courses unless they achieve 5 GCSEs at A*-C, in which case they also have the option of studying for A levels. When the sixth form is undersubscribed all applicants meeting the minimum academic entry requirements will be admitted.

How much will the UTC cost and how will it be funded?

The UTC has received funding of circa £10m to build the UTC. The ongoing running of the UTC will be funded like any other school and will be based on standard per pupil allocations and the number of students.

Will the Sponsors be contributing any money towards the build of the UTC?

No – Funding for the build will be provided by the Government.

Will the UTC cause a significant decline in student numbers in other local schools?

The catchment area for the UTC extends across Oxfordshire and into Reading and Newbury, covering catchment areas for a large number of schools. The admission policy will limit the number of students from any one area, mitigating any risks to neighbouring schools.

How will the UTC work with students who have SEN?

The governing body of the UTC will comply with the duties imposed upon the governing bodies of maintained schools as set out in The Education (Special Educational Needs) (Information) Regulations 1999 (as amended from time to time),

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Will the UTC receive excluded students from other schools?

The UTC shall act in accordance with the law on exclusions as if the UTC were a maintained school.

What communication on student performance and behaviour will there be to parents?

As a specialist computer science and engineering college, modern communications technologies will be used to maintain a high level and high quality of parent communications, including email and web based services where information can be placed for secure retrieval, as well as real-time video and voice meetings across the internet.

How will students with aptitude be further encouraged?

Our industry partners have committed to working with the UTC to help students to develop career goals and aspirations and to help them recognise their skills and potential. They will also be engaged in mentoring individual students to encourage them to maximise their education and employment opportunities.

Will the new school be open outside school hours?

Apart from the extended day that the UTC will operate, the UTC may choose to open outside of school hours to enable the community to access whatever facilities may be of interest. We would expect to talk with the local community to establish this.

Who will run the UTC?

The UTC will be run by a Principal and the Senior Leadership Team, reporting into a Board of Governors.

Where will you recruit the teachers from?

Teachers will be recruited from a school or college background or from industry. We are very keen to attract industry staff and are able to support these staff with teacher training qualifications.

Will there be parent governors?

Yes, there will be elected parent governors. In addition to this we will have a range of parent forums to ensure that we consult regularly with our stakeholders.

What will the uniform be like?

In keeping with the aim of the UTC to prepare young people for work in high technology business environments, high standards of personal appearance will be expected. However, in common with many modern British sixth forms and with continental vocational colleges, this will be maintained through a dress code rather than a specified uniform. Male students will wear a shirt, tie, formal trousers and smart shoes. Female students will wear a smart top and skirt/trousers or a smart dress. Jewellery should be discreet. Ugg boots, combat trousers, leggings, denim jeans and similar casual wear will not be allowed.

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Will the classes be mixed ability or not?

Classes will be mixed ability in some cases, but in the main they will be based on individual ability and therefore setting will be used.

What will the pastoral system look like?

An effective pastoral system is essential for the UTC. Apart from the allocation of a tutor to every student, the UTC will feature vertical tutoring where older students participate in supporting younger students. In addition, we expect to make full use of mentors from industry and undergraduate mentors from the university partner.

When do we inform the current school that the child is leaving?

The Local Authority will inform your son or daughter's school. We will however be contacting them, prior to September 2015 to begin the induction process.

Will there be any additional costs for parents regarding equipment?

The UTC will not charge for anything which is an essential part of the curriculum, e.g. text books or a mandatory field trip. In the case of the materials used for example a 'construction project', a charge could be made if the student retained the completed object and took it home but not otherwise.

Will the size of the A-Level offer be reduced with a small cohort of Y12 students?

No, we will be working within the family of local schools to provide a range of subjects.

Will there be special events or evenings for parents to attend during the academic year? If yes, what kind?

There will be a range of open evenings, induction activities and consultation meetings. You will be informed on a regular basis via the website and by letter of future activities.

What examination boards are you going to be using for the core subjects?

We will be using a range of examination boards. We will publish this with our option choices and via the prospectus.

How can I apply to the UTC?

Applications for Year 10 (age 14) should be made directly to your local authority via their co-ordinated in-year admission arrangements and will be made on the Common Application Form provided and administered by the council.

Applications for Year 12 (age 16) should be made directly to UTC Oxfordshire and an application form will be available for download from 1 September 2014. If you would like to find out more on how to apply for a place please email us at enquiries@utcoxfordshire.org.uk or access the UTC's website at www.utcoxfordshire.org.uk and we will guide you through the process.

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Will free school meals continue to be available?

Yes – all pupils that are eligible for free school meals will still have that entitlement.

Will the UTC select pupils according to their ability?

No – the UTC will be a comprehensive and inclusive school, open to pupils of all abilities. It is important though that all UTC students are prepared to work to the very best of their ability and to reach their potential.

My child has special educational needs? How will those needs be catered for?

The UTC will ensure that pupils with SEN are admitted on an equal basis with others in accordance with its admissions policy. The proposed academy will continue this work and will include children with Special Educational Needs throughout the curriculum.

What kind of technology will be used at the UTC?

As a specialist science and engineering centre, the UTC will employ technologies recommended by our industry partners to ensure that the students have access to the industry standards in communications and collaboration systems. The UTC will have ubiquitous WiFi services and a high capacity, resilient network and server architecture. Students will be encouraged to use their own tablet or notebook PCs to enable diversity and choice in end-user devices, once more to replicate commercial environments.

How will the UTC be able to deliver a full sports curriculum and will the UTC have access to other sports facilities?

The UTC will have access to external sports facilities, a gym and a sprung floor area for dance and other sports. Use would also be made of our partners' facilities and other local sports facilities.

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2. General questions about University Technical Colleges

How many UTCs are there?

There are currently five UTCs open. In September 2013, an additional 12 will open ; 15 in 2014 and 13 in 2015 bringing the total number to 45 spread across the country. The 45, when fully operational, will take 27,000 students. Following the Chancellor's Spending Review announcement of 26th June 2013 regarding UTCs, funding is to be made available to open a further 20 University Technical Colleges per year. Further details are available from the Baker Dearing Educational Trust (www.utcolleges.org) who are the founders and promoters of the UTC concept.

What are the advantages of a student going to a UTC instead of staying on at their previous school?

It allows a student to study a subject they are really interested in which is taught in industry standard facilities by teachers with real life practical experience. By 16 their technical skills are far in advance of those students in a standard comprehensive school and more enthusiastic engagement with their academic studies leads to greater achievement in this area also.

What is the reason for starting at 14?

11 is too early to choose a subject path to follow and 16 is too late. Students who know what they want to do can often become bored at school and so underachieve by the time they are sixteen.

Is 14 too young to specialise?

UTC students receive a broad education including English, maths and science combined with practical and technical qualifications which are recognised by employers and universities. They also develop business and financial literacy. The skills they learn and the qualifications they receive are transferable to other post-16 provision and are recognised by employers.

Who are UTCs aimed at?

They are aimed at students who have an interest in the UTC's specialism.

Does going to a UTC improve prospects of getting into the affiliated Universities or college?

It would help a student to move into higher education because of the support they have received from the Universities but the UTC is not part of the Universities and there is no guarantee of a place at a particular University. The Universities may well see the UTC as part of its recruitment plan.

Does a UTC have a specialist subject area?

Yes. Usually they have two specialisms e.g. science and engineering.

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How will a UTC improve job prospects?

Work experience is a vital part of the CV of any prospective employee and the UTC will ensure that its students have the opportunity for appropriate and contextualised work experience regularly during the academic year.

What are the options for continuing in education after a UTC?

Students can either go onto a higher apprenticeship, in employment or onto a University. The UTC will help them decide which is the best route for them.

What qualifications will they offer?

This will vary but all offer GCSEs in English, maths and science combined with a modern foreign language, a humanities subject and practical and technical qualifications which are recognised by employers and universities.

Do they offer GCSEs and A Levels as well as technical qualifications?

Yes but you will have to ask each UTC which ones they offer.

What experience will teachers have in the UTC's specialist areas?

The teaching staff will be made up of school teachers, instructors and people who have worked in industry. (Most of the teachers will have worked in the area of the college's specialism).

Can existing schools or colleges 'convert' to a UTC?

No. UTCs are free standing institutions for 14 to 19 year olds offering just two specialisms. All applications for UTCs must be submitted to and approved by the Department for Education (DfE).

How is the curriculum organised?

The core national curriculum requirements will be provided, but outside of the national curriculum, the subjects available at GCSE will depend on the UTC.

At 14-16 the split of time between general education/bridging core studies and technical studies is 60:40 respectively. For general education they will take English; Mathematics; science; a modern language; humanities; sport/PE; and PSHE; RE; enrichment activities, Financial literacy; understanding and setting up a business; IT; and careers education and guidance. Broad technical studies would be e.g. engineering; experience of work, projects; and mentoring.

Post-16, students will be able to continue with their studies or they may choose to do an apprenticeship, which might include part-time study at the UTC. If students choose to continue full-time study at the UTC, the split of time between general education/bridging core studies and technical studies will become 40:60 respectively. The technical study will become more specialised and job-related.

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How does a UTC day differ from school hours?

A UTC will typically be open from 8.30am - 5pm, perhaps with an earlier finish on Monday or Friday.

How do students fit all the learning in? Isn't it too much?

The typical school day of a UTC runs from 8.30am to 5.30pm to prepare students for the working week and to allow for extra teaching and practical time. There is no homework; all work is done within school hours. Extra curricula enrichment activities all happen within the school day.

What role will FE colleges play?

FE colleges can be involved as a co-sponsor bringing their expertise in technical education. This gives them the credibility that technical schools did not have. The FE college does not have to provide financial support but supports the UTC with its expertise and time and actively contributes to the curriculum. Strong employer links are also a key feature of UTCs and are involved in shaping the curriculum. Support from the local authority is also welcomed.

What is the funding model?

UTCs come under the government's academies and free schools programme, from where they obtain funding after receiving DfE approval.

Who else is involved in the set up and running of the UTC?

The UTC will be run by a Principal reporting into a Board of Governors.

Do you have to pay to send a child to a UTC?

No – UTCs are free.

Do UTCs get more funding than other schools?

No – They receive the funding as any other state school which is based on formula driven by the number of students they have.

Are UTCs inspected by OFSTED?

Yes.

Do children need expensive equipment and uniforms to attend UTCs?

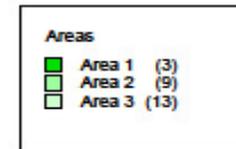
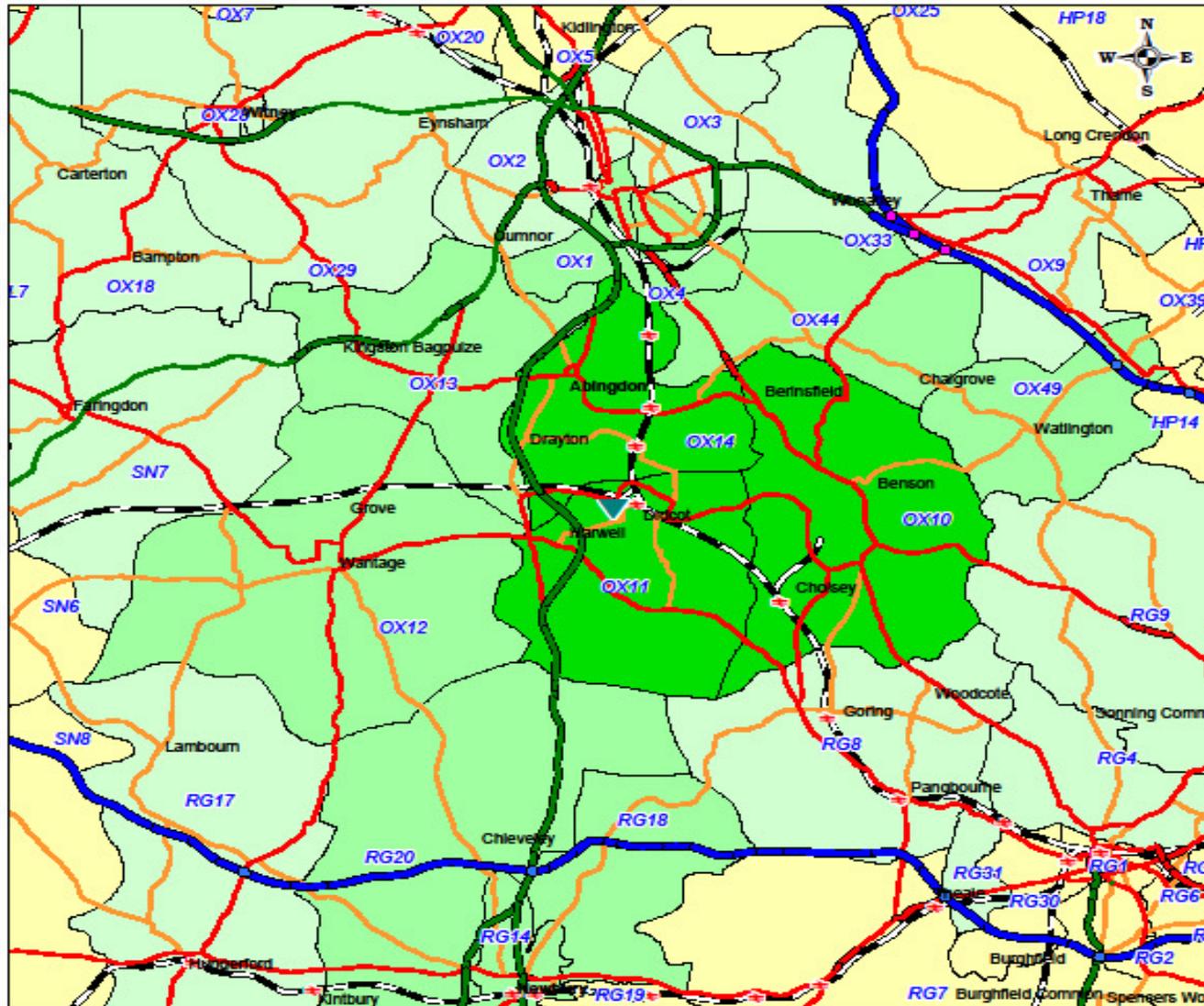
Those students who wish to bring their own computing devices to school will be encouraged to do so, however we anticipate offering a scheme to allow students to buy their own devices to encourage computer system familiarity. In common with commercial organisations, we would expect students to wear business suits when at the college.

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Appendix 1: Admissions Catchment Area



- Area 1:** OX10, OX11 and OX14
- Area 2:** OX1, OX4, OX12, OX13, OX44, OX49, RG14, RG18 and RG20
- Area 3:** OX2, OX3, OX9, OX18, OX28, OX29, OX33, RG4, RG8, RG9, RG17, RG31 and SN7.