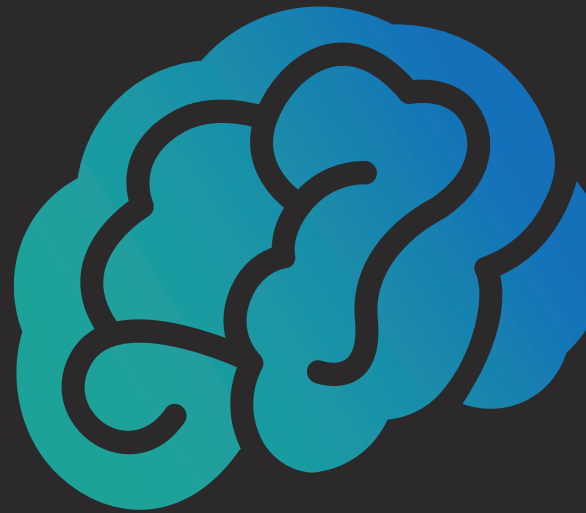




BRAIN MOTIVATION EMOTIONS

Our Learning
Philosophy
in Action





Welcome

A few times in our careers, we encounter something incredibly special. Working at Activate Learning with the combination of our amazing people and our Learning Philosophy is one of those times.

The Learning Philosophy is the DNA of Activate Learning, creating a strong organisational culture.

It doesn't matter where we work in Activate Learning, the role we play or the level at which we work, the Learning Philosophy applies to us all, just as it applies to our learners and the employers we serve.

We have already had some early adopters of the Learning Philosophy, many of whom were recognised by the new Learning Philosophy Awards during the 2022-23 academic year, and this will continue.

Having a strong organisational culture creates an extraordinary organisation for several reasons:

- Learner satisfaction and achievement
- Employer satisfaction and engagement
- Staff engagement and motivation with a strong sense of belonging
- Cohesion, fostering a sense of camaraderie and teamwork
- Attracting and retaining talented people
- Organisational clarity leading to high performance
- Innovation, experimentation and risk-taking
- Ethical behaviour and trust
- Leadership development
- Adaptability and resilience
- Long-term sustainability

As we continue our journey to become an extraordinary, highly resilient and sustainable organisation, that delivers an outstanding and consistent quality and relevant education to all the communities we serve, let us please all contribute positively to our organisational culture by understanding, embracing, living and breathing our Learning Philosophy.

Gary Headland DL

**Chief Executive Officer
Activate Learning**



Our Learning Philosophy

When we launched our Learning Philosophy in 2014, shortly after Oxford Chervell Valley College merged with Reading College to form Activate Learning, we knew we were embarking on the start of a transformational journey to accelerate the learning and progress made by our current and future learners.

We set out to bring our understanding of neuroscience into the classrooms of our further education colleges and create an educational experience that places every learner's unique needs at the centre of their learning experience.

By basing our approach around the three elements of Brain, Motivation and Emotions, it has allowed us to work with our students in a holistic way, supporting their emotional needs alongside their educational ones too.

We believe that education is not just about acquiring knowledge, but also about developing transferable skills and attributes that will enable you to succeed and thrive in your future personal and professional life.

We also believe that learning should be a lifelong ambition, so by working with our learners we support and challenge them to achieve their potential and motivate them to push themselves to succeed in their chosen career pathway.

Some of the greatest barriers to individuals' learning and fulfilling their potential are self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy. This in turn can lead to fear of failure and experimentation. We try and create a sense of curiosity in our learners through our Learning Philosophy-led approach, that overrides these fears and enables individuals to appreciate that growing in confidence and experiencing failure are both an important part of the process of learning.

The Learning Philosophy has become an integral part of our organisation, growing beyond the initial application for our learners. It has become the golden thread that is woven throughout the tapestry of Activate Learning and has come to represent so much more than our approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

Over the past nine years, we have worked tirelessly at embedding the Learning Philosophy across all areas of the organisation, moving it from a high-level strategic philosophy to a real, lived approach, which is brought to life by staff teams and with groups of students in the classroom. During this time, we have also received various external validation for the impact of the philosophy on achieving our mission of 'Providing talent for business and transforming lives through our Learning Philosophy by empowering every learner to reach their full potential.'



1

We were proud to receive external validation of its impact in transforming the lives of our learners. We won the Edge Foundation sponsored AoC Beacon Award in 2016-17 for Practical Teaching and Practical Learning. The award assessors commented:

“

The Learning Philosophy created within the college environment empowered learners, drove employer engagement, incorporated technology and delivered real project-based learning. ”

2

When we pitched to be the merger partner for the previous Guildford College Group in 2018, one of the reasons given in the feedback about why we were selected, was because we have a unique Learning Philosophy at the heart of our organisation.

3

In our Ofsted inspection in November 2022, inspectors said:

“

Leaders and senior managers, supported by governors, have successfully established their Empowering Learning Strategy. A key part of this strategy is their Learning Philosophy promoted across all courses and all college campuses; it is well understood by staff. ”

4

Most recently in February 2023, we won the JISC sponsored AoC Beacon Award for the Innovative Use of Technology in FE.

“

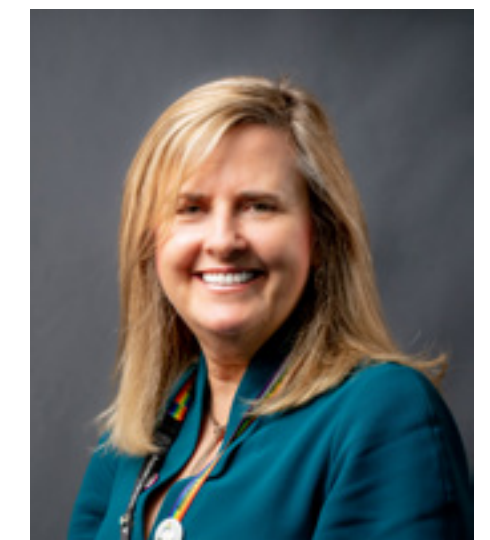
With the use of their learning philosophy, they developed an online programme that prioritises continual feedback to help learners develop and succeed at their own pace. Since implementing the programme, Activate Learning has seen improvements in GCSE pass rates and received positive feedback from learners who are benefitting from a more flexible way of working. ”

JISC report February 2023.

I hope that you enjoy reading more about our Learning Philosophy in action at Activate Learning. We believe that everyone has the potential to achieve great things, and our Learning Philosophy is vital in helping our learners, staff and stakeholders meet their full potential.

Cheri Ashby

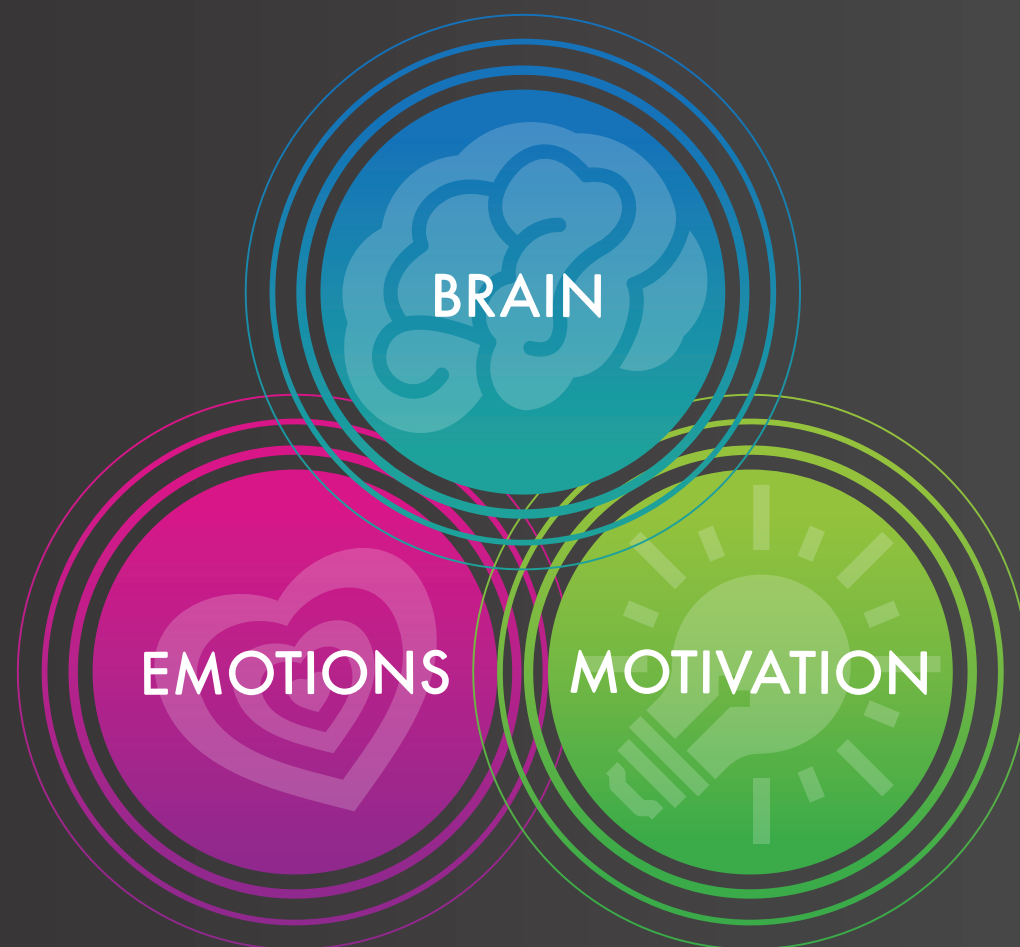
**Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Activate Learning**



What is Our Learning Philosophy?

Activate Learning's Learning Philosophy: The Neuroscience Behind Brain, Emotions and Motivation

When it comes to education, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Every student is unique, and their individual needs and learning styles must be considered. At Activate Learning, our Learning Philosophy considers the latest research in the field of neuroscience to create a comprehensive approach to education. Our philosophy is centered around three aspects of the individual: **Brain**, **Motivation** and **Emotions**.



Brain

The Brain element is focused on the latest research into how the brain works and how we learn. Our understanding of the brain has come a long way in recent years, and we now know that the brain is not a static organ but is constantly changing and adapting, based on our experiences. This means that learning is not just about acquiring new information, but also about changing the structure and function of the brain itself.

When we are feeling confident and psychologically safe, we are best open to learning new things. However, if we are in an environment where we feel insecure and anxious, the part of our brain associated with emotions, our amygdala, presses the panic button, we freeze and find it difficult to learn new information and skills.

To support this, we have developed a range of tools and resources to help learners understand better how their brains work and how they can optimise their learning. For example, we use brain-based teaching techniques that

are designed to engage learners' brains and help them make connections between new information and their existing knowledge. This takes the form of a Learning Cycle, which we use to plan and deliver lessons. The first stage of the Learning Cycle is for the teacher to provide learning opportunities, which enable learners to make connections with material learnt previously. We also provide students with tools for self-reflection and metacognition, so that they can monitor their own learning and adjust as needed.

Supporting learners to develop a growth mindset is also an important part of the learning process. We draw on the work by Carol Dweck on Growth Mindset to help learners understand that intelligence isn't fixed at birth but through effort, practice and learning through feedback and failure, we can improve and become more intelligent. This is a positive, empowering message for many people.



Motivation

The Motivation element is focused on helping learners develop a sense of agency over their own learning. We believe anyone can achieve great things if they believe in themselves, study hard, and have the right support and environment.

Our approach is designed to help students develop a sense of ownership over their own learning and to foster a love of learning that will stay with them for life. We want people to have a sense of curiosity that drives them to learn more and make new discoveries.

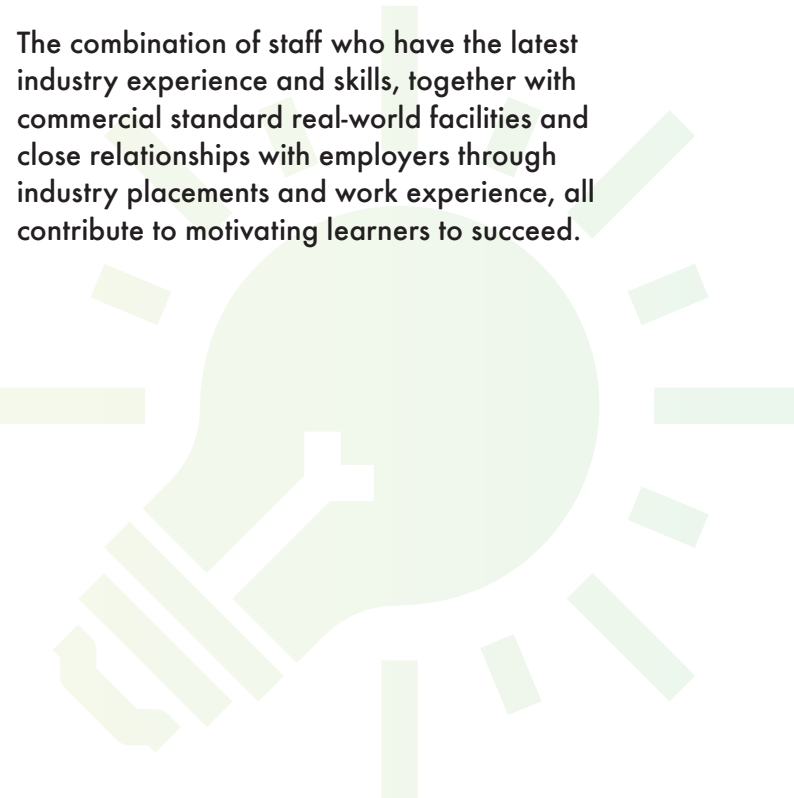
We have deployed a range of strategies to promote intrinsic motivation. Having a goal or target to work towards is important for staying focused. When a learner enrols on a programme of study, they join a specific career pathway. This might be in hospitality, caring, early years, visual arts or engineering for example. This approach enables learners to see the relevance of what they are studying to their future career. This increases their motivation and willingness to put in hours of practice to achieve mastery.

We also recognise the power of showing them what might be. Which is why we place a great importance on the relationships we have with more than 2,000 employers across the UK. These relationships provide learners with a range of opportunities, from work experience and industry placements to project-based learning experience and masterclasses.

It gives our learners a taste of the opportunities that wait for them beyond college and motivates them to push themselves to succeed.

We have invested in industry-standard facilities, co-designed with employers at our campuses. For example, we have commercial standard care skills training centres, experimental kitchens, science laboratories and Institute of Technology facilities. These industry-standard facilities support learners in staying motivated as they understand how they can apply their learning in real-world settings.

The combination of staff who have the latest industry experience and skills, together with commercial standard real-world facilities and close relationships with employers through industry placements and work experience, all contribute to motivating learners to succeed.



Emotions

Emotions are focused on the feelings, hormonal responses and social aspects of learning. We know that emotions play a critical role in learning and that learners who make positive associations with learning are confident, self-aware and emotionally engaged are more likely to be successful. Just as those who have experienced failure before are more likely to doubt themselves and their own abilities.

When we feel confident and self-assured, our bodies release the hormone oxytocin. This creates feelings of positivity, empathy and trust, which in turn enables us to be open to learning. Conversely, when we feel stressed and anxious, our bodies pump the hormone cortisol through our blood circulation, which in turn heightens our stress levels.

Our approach is designed to create a positive and supportive learning environment that promotes emotional wellbeing and fosters a sense of belonging. Feeling safe in every sense of the word is key to a successful learning experience.

We have developed a range of strategies for promoting emotional wellbeing and social connection, such as mindfulness practices and community-based learning. This includes providing opportunities for students to connect with each other and their teachers and promote positive working relationships built on trust.

At the beginning of the term, we run a programme we call Connect to College Week. The purpose of this week is to focus on the three Rs with learners: relationships, routines and readiness for learning. This supports learners in getting the foundation right in preparing for their programmes of study.

It's also seen us invest in structures that support our learners' emotional needs, with the creation of Student Enrichment Officers roles to develop on-campus activities that promote a college community. We also focus on building a culture of respect and inclusivity that values diversity and encourages open and honest communication.

Being able to manage your emotions is an important employability skill, as work can be stressful and emotional for many people.



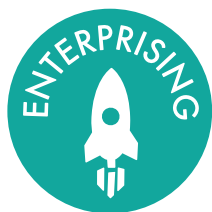
The role of neuroscience

At Activate Learning, we believe neuroscience is essential for informing our approach to education, which is why we recognised it as one of our five strategic drivers. The brain is an incredibly complex organ, and we are only just beginning to scratch the surface of our understanding of how it works. However, by staying informed of the latest research, we are ensuring our approach to education is always grounded in scientific knowledge.

Our teachers embed the 10 key principles of instruction, based on neuroscience developed by Barak Rosenshine into lessons. These principles include: helping learners make connections with previous learning, presenting new material in small steps, asking questions, scaffolding difficult tasks and providing models or examples of successful exam answers. Or completed practical projects.

Another area where neuroscience has been influential is in our understanding of the plasticity of the brain. We now know that the brain is constantly changing and adapting based on our experiences, which means that learning is not just about acquiring new information but also about changing the structure and function of the brain itself.

This has led to us developing programmes for high need and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) learners that have pushed them beyond their previous levels of attainment and achieve far beyond predicted levels of achievement.



Learner Attributes

Many of our employers say they struggle to find candidates with the right attitudes and characteristics to work in their organisations. For some students, when work becomes challenging and demanding instead of digging in and persevering, they choose to opt out. This can be mirrored in the workplace too and it is therefore important that future employees develop the right attributes. Working with employers, we have identified five attributes that are relevant for all sectors of employment: resilience, awareness, confidence, enterprising and professional. Our teachers, Progress Coaches and other learning professionals work with students to support them in developing these attributes.

We try and understand as much as we can about our students' previous learning experiences, wellbeing and career goals, in order that we can plan and deliver meaningful, personalised learning when they join their career pathway. Our teachers are experts in their fields, combining both recent industry experience, together with teaching pedagogy.

The emotional connection leads to students enjoying, displaying interest and curiosity as well as taking pride in their learning. They are more likely to put in greater effort and practice into their studies. This includes learning more about the subject, beyond the prescribed curriculum and doing additional reading and research around particular topics.

The Learning Philosophy in Action

Activate Learning's AoC Beacon
Award-winning online programme

Activate Learning's AoC Beacon Award-winning online learning programme has been successful in providing high-quality teaching and learning that puts learners at the centre of its delivery.

Although the programme was initially designed to address skills needs and widening participation in healthcare-related provision, it has since expanded to include online maths and English GCSEs, as well as new pre-GCSE progression programmes.

The online programme was designed with the Learning Philosophy at its core, as we recognised that in order to be successful, it needed to break down barriers that had traditionally stood in people's way. This included those with physical and learning disabilities, who may have struggled to access education previously.

The Learning Philosophy sets out the idea that anyone can change their lives through learning and the only barriers that stand in someone's way are a lack of self-belief and motivation to learn. The online model of delivery has proven popular with working parents, who don't have time to engage with traditional, classroom-based delivery and need more flexibility.

Activate Learning has developed an online provision that is truly changing lives and delivering outcomes far beyond that of anyone else in the sector.

Since the online programmes launched, we have delivered teaching and learning to people from:

18

different ethnic groups and

67

different countries



with learners ranging from

17 > 72

The model blends pre-recorded lessons and live group-based sessions, with live captions making it accessible to hard of hearing and deaf learners. It has also provided sign language assistance to a learner online, providing opportunities that previously wouldn't have been available in a traditional setting.

Activate Learning's online programme stands out because of its level of both academic and pastoral support and attention given to learners as they progress through their learning experience with us.

The way the curriculum and its associated materials, have been developed, allows the teachers to deliver a more personalised and responsive experience for learners.

This has been evidenced in learner surveys conducted with 563 of our GCSE cohort, where students gave us an average score of 4.8 out of 5 in a satisfaction survey



and a 4.7 for the emotional support we provided.



The Learning Philosophy looks at the dynamic between the brain, motivation, and emotions in learning. So, the way we deliver our online learning is designed to support our learners' growth and development, with constant, timely feedback that is specific to the areas where they need to improve.

This has seen a shift in the way tutors spend their time engaging with learners, with approximately

60% of time spent teaching
and the other

40%
spent providing tailored bespoke support to the learners on their GCSE provision.

There are similar levels of support in place for those on Access to HE programmes and the newly formed pre-GCSE courses.

The way we have developed an outstanding learner experience is by taking a one team approach. This has allowed for more attention to detail, which has seen a forensic analysis of all communication with the applicants to ensure a smooth onboarding process to their online programmes. They have focused on recruiting excellent teachers from across the country and clearly set out their expected high standards right from the staff member's induction. With 60 teachers currently employed as part of their online provision, this model of delivery has provided opportunities for employment for many who otherwise may not have been able to work in education for a variety of reasons, including health-related conditions or family commitments.

Onboarding and development of the team was given importance, with a clear structure in place. Training of new staff commenced one month in advance of their start date. They have built a team that collectively believes that no student should be left behind, and the message to the students is: "giving up is not an option."

Our award-winning online learning programme is changing lives and delivering outcomes beyond anyone else in the sector, due to our unique Learning Philosophy-based approach. By placing the learner and their needs at the centre of everything we do, the programme has removed barriers to education and provided personalised support, resulting in sector-leading results.

“ My tutors supported me throughout the units and helped me develop my confidence in my ability to do well, by believing in me and pushing me to do my best even when I felt like giving in. ”

Our Learning Philosophy in Action for Online Learners

Brain

- » Growth Mindset
- » High expectations
- » Attend live sessions no matter what
- » Carefully sequenced curriculum
- » Weekly learning cycle
- » Rosenshine's neuroscience principles embedded
- » Analyse and learn from mistakes
- » Deliberate practice through Century nudges (GCSE)
- » Practice, repetition to embed learning
- » Weekly assessment and feedback
- » Interweaving with previous learning
- » Daily Century challenges to train maths muscles and English language muscles (GCSE)

Motivation

- » Learning relevant to future career path
- » Highly-personalised interventions motivate
- » Learner feedback swiftly followed up
- » Targeted Century Clinics untangle misconceptions (GCSE)
- » Motivational attribute - driven award ceremonies
- » Each week is a fresh week for mental and physical health
- » Some teachers are alumni

Emotions

- » Positive relationships
- » Feeling psychologically safe
- » Learning environments inclusive and safe
- » Balance between coaching and teaching
- » Learners coached to develop positive attitudes to maths
- » Learners feel safe to share vulnerabilities in learning
- » Coaching builds confidence, self-belief and resilience attributes



Learners are empowered to access their learning sweetspot

“ I’m not sure what made me more resilient, but I know I am. If I had missed a deadline or struggled with work before, I would have just given up completely. But this course has given me the ability to realise even in the hardest moments that I am capable and that giving up isn’t an option. ”

The Learning Philosophy in Action

Putting it into practice

Wellbeing

Through wellbeing lessons and college services, students have differentiated opportunities to learn about taking care of their wellbeing in several contexts, including: occupational, emotional, intellectual, social, financial, spiritual, environmental and physical wellness. Understanding that work can be stressful and being able to manage moods and emotions is an important part of being employable.

Managing emotions

Some of our students may display challenging and disruptive behaviour caused by adverse childhood experiences. Post pandemic, many individuals will have experienced different levels of trauma. When individuals have an experience that triggers a memory and emotion, the brain can react making them feel angry or fearful. By using the principles of trauma-informed practice, we can empower our students to overcome these challenges, through building trusting relationships, creating safe learning environments and offering choices about what and where they can learn.

Progress coaching and goal setting

Most of our full-time students have a Progress Coach, who they work with to review their progress and performance, every term during progress review weeks. Our Progress Coaches use the GROW model of coaching: Goal, Reality, Options and Will. During one-to-one Progress, Review meetings, they jointly review a learner's progress, based on their targets. Their performance is assessed as: Exceeding Potential, Meeting Potential, Developing Potential and Limiting Potential. Coaching conversations are designed to not only support those who require additional help, but also to stretch and challenge individual students to achieve the highest grades possible for their qualification.

Evaluating progress

To build confidence and self-belief, it is important for our students to experience small successes early on in their programme. Teachers and students work in partnership, checking their learning and understanding with different types of formative assessment, including quizzes, activities to demonstrate practical skills, modelling answers short exam questions, students are more likely to develop higher levels of motivation and resilience. Further into their studies, as assessment becomes more challenging, students will develop higher levels of resilience. Students are encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, fail and learn from those experiences. Increasingly, students see failure as a stepping stone to success.

We plan ways in which teachers and students can evaluate their progress which are authentic, reflect real-world scenarios and accessible to all students irrespective of learning needs. It provides a balance of automated and teacher marking and feedback, with ongoing opportunities for students to improve through effort and practice. JISC research shows we are 70% more likely to remember a skill if we have learnt it using virtual reality technology.

Giving and receiving feedback

We encourage two-way feedback between staff and students, students and their peers, based on design thinking. By offering feedback in this emotionally-safe way, the individual is more likely to receive and learn from it. It is provided with the intention of motivating and challenging the individual.

Student mentors

Our second-year and third-year students are experts in engaging in their own learning and development. They are best placed to become mentors of our first-year learners. Other examples include high-needs learner mentors helping to develop students doing supported internships.

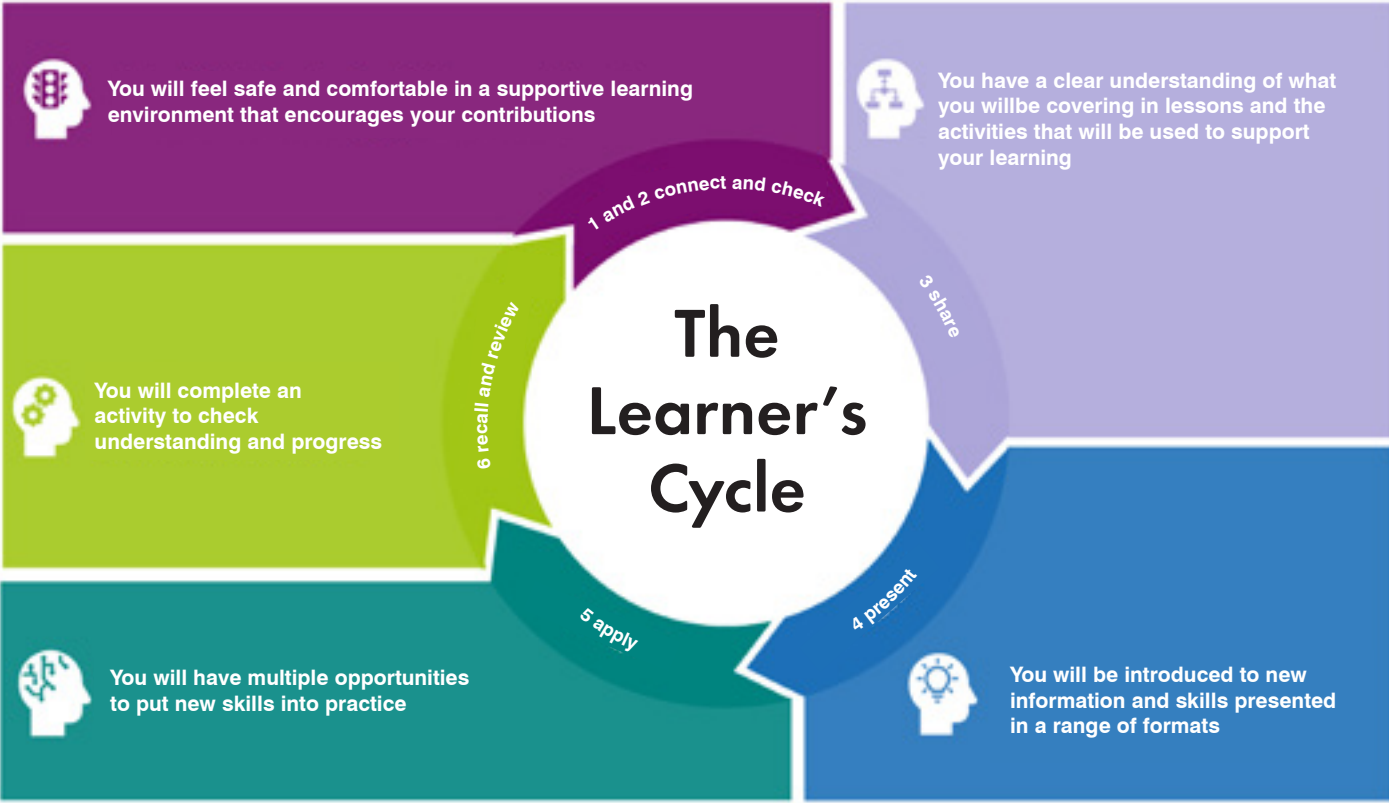
Through neuroscience research, we know the impact of peer pressure and social influence is greatest on the behaviour of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 years old. By training volunteer second-year students in mental health awareness, they are likely to have a greater impact on our younger students, than more mature teachers.

Project-based learning

Our staff work together and with employers to co-design and in some cases co-deliver projects based on real-world challenges. This provides a powerful means of communicating to our students the knowledge, skills, and attributes they need to be successful in their chosen career.

Learning companies

Our learning company model immerses learners in simulated commercial environments as they train. These real-life working environments mirror those in industry to provide opportunities for learners to practice their vocational skills. These environments provide the space for students to fail safely, learn from mistakes and build confidence.



Learning Philosophy in Action

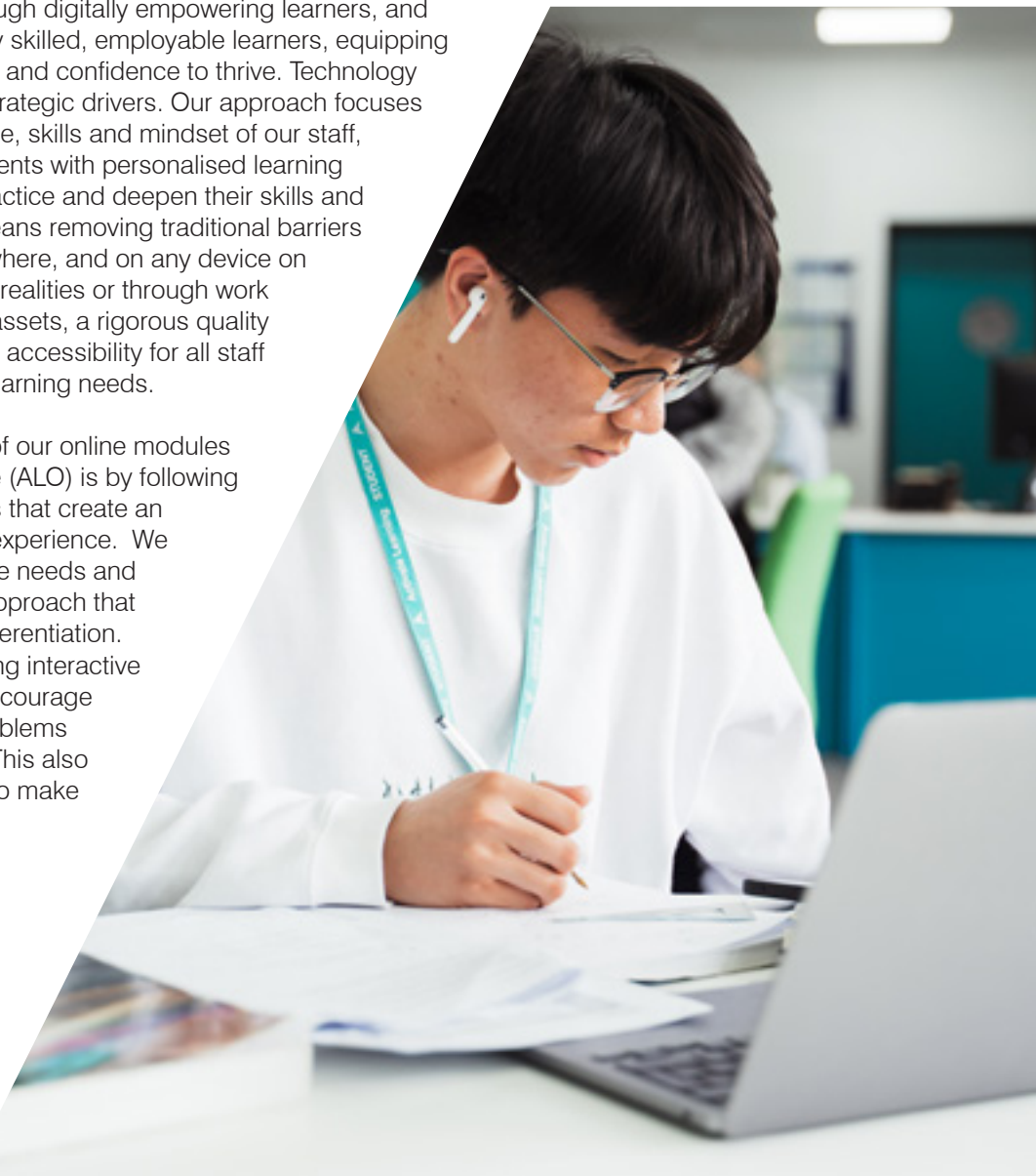
Maximising the power of Technology in education

Today's students and staff will have to respond with agility over their lifetime to shifting market environments and fast-changing developments in technology.

Our vision is to propel Activate Learning as a Digital-First organisation, at the forefront of digital innovation and efficiencies in teaching, learning and assessment, curriculum design and business practices. We are committed to developing our staff's digital knowledge, skills and mindset, ensuring they are equipped to support and empower our learners effectively. We aim to provide an outstanding student digital experience, which develops their digital mindset, resilience and curiosity.

Our intent is to transform lives through digitally empowering learners, and building a talent pipeline of suitably skilled, employable learners, equipping them with the digital competencies and confidence to thrive. Technology and neuroscience are two of our strategic drivers. Our approach focuses on developing the digital knowledge, skills and mindset of our staff, to enable them to provide our students with personalised learning opportunities to gain feedback, practice and deepen their skills and understanding online. This also means removing traditional barriers by providing access anytime, anywhere, and on any device on campus, online, through extended realities or through work experience. When curating digital assets, a rigorous quality procedure is followed to guarantee accessibility for all staff and learners, irrespective of their learning needs.

The way we approach the design of our online modules hosted on Activate Learning Online (ALO) is by following instructional design methodologies that create an impactful and motivating learning experience. We recognise that learners have unique needs and we aim to offer a learner-centred approach that offers both personalisation and differentiation. This is mainly achieved by designing interactive and engaging elements that will encourage learners to think critically, solve problems and collaborate with one another. This also means leveraging the technology to make the most out of modern tools and platforms.



Virtual Reality (VR) learning has strong links to our Learning Philosophy and employability skills, preparing our learners for success in their chosen career pathway. Research has shown that learners feel 40% more confident when studying using VR compared to classroom training. This results in VR training being completed four times faster than in-classroom training.

Brain: This extends learning with aspects of employability skills not yet included in the current curriculum.

Motivation: Inbuilt gamification to ensure progression through the experience builds on skills developed but ensures achievement is evident.

Emotions: This provides a positive experience with new technology, empowering the learners with transferable employability skills.

This year, we have developed a fully immersive Virtual Reality experience, delivered with a DJI Mavic Pro Drone, which features the latest, state-of-the-art technology, which will benefit all Construction learners at Activate Learning. It will also potentially support learners across 170 partner colleges via the Blended Learning Consortium, of which Activate Learning is a member.

Learners will have the opportunity to access this photogrammetry virtual reality experience, which will provide them with an introduction to the basic commands of flying a drone and the inspection of the construction site using photogrammetry.



Our emotional response to studying has a massive influence on how we learn. The more positive our emotional response, the more likely we are to engage with and remember what we are learning. This year we incorporated technology and the Learning Philosophy through the use of the Immersive Spaces to promote relaxation and reduce stress, especially in the run-up to the exam period. Students have reported that the sensory assets have helped in decreasing their pre-exam anxiety.

This has helped to change the sensory input that our brain receives and change our brain's interpretation of our current reality.



At Activate Learning, we recognise the importance of our learners' mental health and wellbeing. We intend to utilise AI solutions to develop resources and coping strategies, fostering a mentally-healthy atmosphere, helping our students to manage their emotions.

We know the research is showing where jobs become automated with AI, humans will need to focus on using their superpowers of emotional intelligence in the jobs of the future.

By combining the Learning Philosophy at Activate Learning with AI-driven solutions for mental health support, students can benefit from a more comprehensive and compassionate learning experience. AI becomes a valuable tool in promoting mental wellbeing, creating inclusive learning environments, and ensuring that students have the necessary support to excel academically and emotionally.

Learning Philosophy in Action

SEND and high-needs learners

Our Learning Philosophy has had a profound impact on how we have shaped our approach to delivering education to learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and high-needs learners.

The Brain element of the Learning Philosophy emphasises the importance of cognitive development and critical thinking in learning. Activate Learning recognises that each learner is unique and has different needs, particularly those with SEND and high needs. With our SEND and high need learners, we are taking an individualised approach to their learning experience, focusing on their strengths and creating opportunities for them to develop their cognitive abilities.

The way we approach teaching and learning for high-needs and SEND learners is a testament to the power of the Learning Philosophy and our belief that we can deliver truly transformative education for learners of all abilities. Through our commitment to providing a positive, inclusive, and supportive learning environment, we are proving that with the right approach, every learner can thrive and achieve their full potential.

One area where the Learning Philosophy has been instrumental in shaping not just the approach to the delivery of teaching and learning, but also the recruitment and training of staff and development of new and different approaches, is Activate Learning's High-needs provision.

Our Ofsted rated Outstanding High-needs provision was recognised for the impact it had on learners' lives during our recent inspection in November 2022.

Here, Michelle Parks, Group Director, Activate Learning, responsible for our Lifeskills faculty, outlines why the Learning Philosophy has been so important in achieving such remarkable outcomes:



"Working within the framework of the Learning Philosophy allows us to think about what the learner needs to ensure that they can develop in all areas. That is the culture of Lifeskills; that you do whatever you need to do to ensure that learner can succeed. The Learning Philosophy is really inspirational for us in helping to achieve the success we have."

"We put the learner at the heart of every single decision we make and as a result we know our learners really well. It starts with a really good assessment, where we look at their needs and what opportunities we can provide for them. From there, we plan a curriculum around those individual learners' needs. We don't plan the curriculum around the programme they are studying, it's always around the learner."

And it's not just about the way that we work with our learners as Michelle points out, but also the way the Lifeskills faculty has used the Learning Philosophy to work and engage with staff.

She added:

"The Lifeskills way is to work with our staff like we work with our learners. So we believe that all of our staff have the potential to develop in any areas they want to develop in and we proactively encourage that."

"We don't see it as a limitation that our faculty area has the highest turnover of staff of any faculty, as that high turn over is directly related to the fact that we develop and train so many of our team, that opportunities are created for them to move into other roles. But we think that's great and testament to our Learning Philosophy-led approach."

“

Learners with high needs make outstanding progress as a result of the highly personalised curriculum and specialist support that enables them to realise their ambitions, get jobs or live more independently. ”

Ofsted 2022

This approach has seen an investment in staff at all levels within the Lifeskills faculty and resulted in outstanding progression opportunities.

Michelle added: "If you look at the number of Learning Support Assistants that developed into teaching roles, or the number of teaching roles that developed into faculty manager or other management coordination roles, it shows the amount of development that the Lifeskills faculty gives people."

"A lot of this comes down to not saying that someone can't do something. It's about believing everyone is capable of achieving if given the right opportunities and tools. We don't believe in putting people in a box and saying you should only do this role or teach this subject."

"It's constantly about what we're doing to stretch and challenge our staff and push them out of their comfort zones. I think the amount of staff that develop into other roles and move into other roles into the organisation is a credit to Lifeskills trying to do that."

With our students, the faculty has developed Beacon Award-winning Learning Companies to help train and stretch learners in as close to real-world settings as possible.

"Learners in the classroom don't have the contextualised experience that our Learning Companies can. So if you have a learner in a classroom and you want to teach them about customer service, you can do role play. You can do some worksheets, you can watch some videos. But until you've actually got that challenging customer stood in front of you it's impossible for a learner to really practise and demonstrate those skills and be able to take risks."

Ofsted feedback relating to our Learning Philosophy

Activate Learning was last visited by Ofsted inspectors in November 2022, and we were consequently graded Good overall and found to be making a strong contribution to identifying and meeting local skills needs.

Here is what Ofsted had to say about our Learning Philosophy and how we work with both our staff and students to deliver education to our learners:

“Learners are ambitious and keen to do well on their courses. They work hard, and standards of work for most learners are high. Learners complete their work with pride, and most know what they need to do to achieve the grades they would like. For example, carpentry apprentices are highly motivated, aspire to achieve distinction grades, and their current work demonstrates that they can achieve highly.”

“Leaders and senior managers, supported by governors, have successfully established their Empowering Learning Strategy. A key part of this strategy is their Learning Philosophy promoted across all courses and all college campuses; it is well understood by staff. Leaders have made significant investments in both their staff team and the physical resources to empower learning. Most staff recognise their role within the strategy and can explain how they are empowered and supported to do their job well.”

“Staff benefit from plentiful high-quality professional development, which helps them to be effective in their roles. For example, mentors support new teachers to understand their Learning Philosophy and hone their skills. More experienced staff members can apply to join a range of management development programmes relevant to their level of experience. This includes a specialist programme to encourage potential managers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds to develop their careers.”

“Learners develop a wide range of skills that help them to be successful. For example, they become effective communicators as they participate in discussions and listen and respond to the views of others. They develop empathy and explore more sensitive topics with thoughtfulness and maturity. For example, health and social care learners learn about the range of clients they may work with and their physical and emotional needs to consider.”

“Learners value the supportive and positive relationships that they have with their peers and staff. Learners feel safe across all college sites and know who to talk to about any concerns. They are confident that any concerns they did have would be dealt with promptly.”

“Teachers are well-qualified subject specialists, who use their knowledge skilfully to explain concepts clearly and successfully stimulate learners’ interest so that they are enquiring learners.”

Activate Learning and Heston Blumenthal

Uniting culinary
artistry with the
three pillars of the
Learning Philosophy

In the realm of culinary education, where creativity, passion, and practicality converge, Activate Learning has embarked on a groundbreaking collaboration with renowned chef Heston Blumenthal.

Together, we have crafted a curriculum for our hospitality and professional cookery provision, seamlessly incorporating Heston's expertise and Activate Learning's Learning Philosophy.

This symbiotic relationship between culinary artistry and educational principles has given rise to a truly transformative learning experience for our aspiring culinary professionals.

The first pillar of Activate Learning's Learning Philosophy, Brain, focuses on engaging the mind and promoting intellectual growth. We believe that anyone is capable of learning and by collaborating with Heston Blumenthal, a culinary visionary known for pushing boundaries and challenging conventions, we have exposed students to cutting-edge gastronomic theories and techniques.

By harnessing Heston's passion for experimental gastronomy, we have ignited the curiosity of our students and stimulated their minds, encouraging them to think critically and explore new aspects of culinary arts.

Through immersive experiences, students are exposed to Heston's innovative approaches, such as molecular gastronomy and multisensory dining. They are encouraged to analyse the science behind cooking, understand the chemical reactions that occur during food preparation, and experiment with ingredients to create extraordinary flavour combinations. By incorporating Heston's ideas into the curriculum, Activate Learning ensures that students' intellectual curiosity is nurtured and their minds are challenged, laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

The second pillar, Emotions, places a strong emphasis on personal growth, wellbeing, and empathy. Heston Blumenthal's approach recognises the profound emotional impact of food and the transformative role it plays in people's lives. Heston's philosophy of creating memorable dining experiences resonates with our commitment to fostering emotional intelligence and empathy in students. Our approaches come together to provide a nurturing and safe environment for students in which they can flourish and be the best versions of themselves.

CREATIVE
CURIOSITY



Through hands-on culinary experiences, students are encouraged to explore their own emotions and understand the role that food plays in evoking feelings and memories. They learn to channel their creativity into creating dishes that not only a delight on the palate but also engage the emotions of those who consume them. By embracing Heston's emphasis on emotional connections with food into the curriculum, Activate Learning ensures that students develop a deep appreciation for the transformative power of culinary artistry and its ability to forge connections with others.

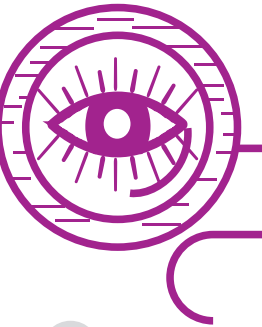
The third pillar, Motivation, focuses on empowering students to take ownership of their learning and pursue their aspirations with passion and determination. Heston's journey from a self-taught chef to an internationally-acclaimed culinary innovator serves as an inspiring example for our students. His relentless pursuit of perfection and his unwavering dedication to his craft, motivates students to strive for excellence and pursue their own culinary dreams.

Through Heston's mentorship and guidance, students are encouraged to set ambitious goals, embrace challenges, and develop a strong work ethic.

They learn the value of resilience and perseverance in the face of setbacks, understanding that true mastery in the culinary arts requires continuous learning and growth. By intertwining Heston's motivational approach with Activate Learning's curriculum, students are equipped with the drive and determination needed to excel in the competitive culinary industry.

The collaboration between Activate Learning and Heston Blumenthal exemplifies the powerful interplay between culinary artistry and educational philosophy. By incorporating Heston's expertise and ideas into Activate Learning's three pillars of the Learning Philosophy, Brain, Emotions, and Motivation, the curriculum for hospitality and professional cookery provision goes beyond the traditional boundaries, empowering students to become innovative, emotionally intelligent, and motivated culinary professionals.

RESTLESS
PERFECTIONISM



Our staff and the Learning Philosophy

At Activate Learning, we are proud to celebrate the achievements of our colleagues, which are the key to our success.

Our Learning Philosophy is the golden thread unique to Activate Learning, and these behaviours deserve recognition.

- Our Learning Philosophy Awards are a platform to recognise and reward those colleagues who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to living our Learning Philosophy in practice.

Each month, colleagues across the organisations nominate other members of staff, detailing how they implement the Learning Philosophy in practice in their jobs. This can refer to staff who:
- Are committed to their own professional development and how they develop their own neural pathways.
 - Create safe working environments where team members are encouraged to take risks and learn from their mistakes.
 - Motivate their teams to achieve their best.



Learn more about the stories of some of our Learning Philosophy Awards winners.

Jemma Coleman, Contact Centre Admissions Team Leader, Activate Learning:

"Jemma displays a high level of professionalism and customer focus through her work with faculties and customers alike. She has been proactive in her onboarding of new starters and solutions focussed on her approach working with the Talent team to attract new staff. Jemma is self-aware and is always looking for and accepting of feedback on ways to improve her management and leadership style."

Dr Fumiko Pescott, Faculty Manager – Online, GCSE Maths Online Tutor, Activate Learning:

"Miko embraces all aspects of the Learning Philosophy in all her interactions with colleagues and students. She is an inspirational leader who motivates her team to strive for the greatest level of success for every learner. The success of GCSE maths and English online is testament to her creativity, expertise and effective collaboration with the Digital Education team. The courses have been created with all elements of the Learning Philosophy as the primary consideration."

Taylor Smith, Animal Management Team Leader, Activate Learning:

"Taylor includes all aspects of the Learning Philosophy in his planning and delivering of the Animal Care sessions, both theory and practical. He is very keen for our students to leave Animal Care with a strong basis of the attributes, so they can transfer easily into working life or the next stage in their lives. He has designed several information sheets to help the Level 1 and Level 2 students understand the attributes in their environment."

Bothwell Jones, Business Teacher, Activate Learning:

"Bothwell provides learners with an environment that allows them to make great progress. The learners have a clear understanding of their achievements so far, what they need to do to improve and what their goals are for the future. It is clear to see in learning walks and in speaking to this group of learners that Bothwell has really thought about the learners' emotions and motivation to give them the opportunity to make great progress."

Alida Niehaus, Management and Leadership Trainer, Activate Learning:

"Alida is a passionate facilitator within the Business School Apprenticeship team. She motivates both her apprentices and her colleagues with her consistently high professional standards. She always puts learners first, understanding the emotional impact of changes. Alida has also undertaken long-distance travel to support a fledgling programme for senior leaders for one of our most prestigious clients (BMW). At the same time Aida is undertaking her own Learning and Development Apprenticeship, dedicating herself to doing her very best through incredible effort."

Sharmen Ibrahim, Group Director of Digital Education and Artificial Intelligence, Activate Learning:

"Sharmen goes above and beyond for her team, ensuring they are always developing, motivated and encouraged as staff members and individuals. She champions learning about how we can all be better human beings, teachers and practitioners. Her passion for student development in inspiring, and she is always motivating us to strive for the very best we can be. She is emotionally supportive and a pleasure to work with."

Group members**Colleges**

- Banbury and Bicester College
- Bracknell and Wokingham College
- City of Oxford College and University Centre
- Farnham College
- Guildford College
- Merrist Wood College and University Centre
- Reading College and University Centre

Schools

- The Bicester School
- Theale Green School
- UTC Heathrow
- UTC Oxfordshire
- UTC Reading
- UTC Swindon

Training

- Activate Apprenticeships
 - Activate Business School
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