

BUILDING ON THE BLUEPRINT

SKILLS FOR THE OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE
GROWTH CORRIDOR



OXFORD —
CAMBRIDGE
ARC
UNIVERSITIES GROUP



Oxford-Cambridge
SUPERCLUSTER

**east
west**
RAIL



FOREWORD



Lord Patrick Vallance, Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is home to a thriving innovation ecosystem, bringing together a unique combination of world-class universities, research-intensive businesses and a highly skilled workforce to provide solutions to the problems of tomorrow.

While there is no shortage of scale, talent, brainpower or aspiration in this region, we know that growth has been held back by underinvestment in our infrastructure and in our people. To ensure that the Corridor can reach its full potential, the Government has already committed significant support to deliver sustainable growth, including record funding for transport, housing and infrastructure so that people can live, work and thrive right across the Corridor.

We are also backing talent in all its forms, educators, technicians, entrepreneurs, technologists, public leaders, planners and creatives. They will educate future generations and build the innovative companies of tomorrow. Growing local talent and creating opportunities for existing communities and young people is essential if they are to benefit from the innovation-led growth taking place. Stronger partnerships between educators and industry, as highlighted in this report, will be key to making this vision a reality.

To remain globally competitive, we must concentrate on areas where the Corridor excels, cultivating skills in health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, AI and data, clean technologies and creative industries. These sectors underpin the cutting-edge research and development for which this region is renowned.

I want to thank the authors of this report for bringing sharp analysis and practical recommendations to a vital part of the growth agenda.

FOREWORD



Alistair Lomax, Director, Arc Universities Group, a collaboration between the ten universities in the Growth Corridor, working in support of the Government's growth agenda, and now part of the Supercluster Board.

Every major technological breakthrough, every solution, improvement or advancement in society, is a result of innovation.

Some are discovered purely by accident, while others are purposeful. But at one fundamental level or another, someone – at some time, in some place – has challenged the status quo, in order to bend or disrupt an established way of doing things.

One skills pioneer was Dr Marjory Stephenson (1885-1948), a celebrated bacterial chemist, Fellow of the Royal Society and one of the founders of the new field of Biochemistry. Stephenson wrote *Bacterial Metabolism*, a blueprint for the skills necessary for an evolving field, serving the needs of thousands. This is analogous to the skills challenge that we face today, only it is amplified and multiplied across so many fields simultaneously; new fields and disciplines requiring new skills.

Like Stephenson, today we stand at the threshold of a skills revolution. The skills we need, at the scale that they are needed, are out of reach. The way we approach education and training in the future is

set to be dramatically different. Stephenson saw a gap and filled it, lighting the touchpaper that has spawned a huge variety of subdisciplines. How can we replicate this in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor? How can we unlock the talent required to drive innovation, and – in doing so – deepen economic development?

As a body committed to joint working across all universities that inhabit this extraordinary region, neither the Arc Universities Group, nor the Supercluster Board, can claim to have all the answers. But we recognise wholeheartedly that skills are essential to growth; established ways of training are difficult to change, coordination is needed and education shapes how intellectual capital is formed.

In this report, we assemble what we think should be the bedrock of a new skills agenda for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. As in Marjory Stephenson's experience, we are creating a reference point. Anticipating that from this will spring new, independent ways of meeting the demands of investment, industry and entrepreneurship, across the region.

At the centre of this undertaking is what we call the Skills Commission, open to everyone who shares our vision. Embedding fresh ways of training requires a critical mass to begin a movement, and we hope to see this culminate in support for policies that we see as constituent of a future-ready curricula – from the rollout of V-Levels, to reskilling and upskilling programmes sponsored by business.

In light of the publication of a new Modern Industrial Strategy and the remit of Skills England to provide data-driven insights which will help deliver solutions that power economic growth, this could not come at a better time. Together with the Oxford to Cambridge Supercluster Board and with generous support provided by the East West Rail, the work and mission of the Arc Universities Group feels more relevant – and more urgent – than ever.

On a personal note, a special thanks are owed to the many members of our Steering Group and project team that continue to offer insights that have been invaluable to our work. Particular thanks to Professor Kamil Omoteso, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Anglia Ruskin University for chairing; to Professor Claire Pike now at The University of East Anglia; and to colleagues at Cambridge University Health Partners and Innovate Cambridge, for sharing so generously their work of the last years.

SETTING THE SCENE



We have focused on three strategic sectors in which the Oxford to Cambridge Growth corridor performs particularly strongly: science and technology, the creative economy and green skills.

In a rapidly changing economy, the need for a coherent and responsive skills system has never been more evident. National initiatives such as Skills England, alongside practical mechanisms like Employer Reference Boards and Local Skills Improvement Plans, are helping shape a more aligned approach to lifelong learning – one that reflects real business demand and regional priorities. At the same time, the education sector is evolving, with vocational pathways such as the new V-Levels offering students more flexible routes into higher education and employment.

Skills remain the foundation of productivity, opportunity, and long-term growth. Countries that invest in broad access to high-quality education and training consistently strengthen their economies and create a sense of shared prosperity. To keep pace with changing labour markets and technological shifts, closer collaboration between employers, educators, and local communities will be essential. Encouragingly, that collaboration is now beginning to influence the future skills landscape in meaningful ways.

Our thanks go to the leads for each area – **Sarah Haywood** of Advanced Oxford (science and technology), **Dr Steve Partridge** of the University of Hertfordshire (creative industries), and **Prof Aled Jones** of the Global Sustainability Institute at Anglia Ruskin University (green skills) – for their expertise and leadership.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is the place in the UK with the greatest concentration of knowledge-intensive innovation. It already delivers £135 billion in turnover each year, supported by 8,000+ high-tech companies, 2,500 start-ups, 400 university spinouts, and 10 major universities.

Across the wider Supercluster, there are 19,000+ companies, 569,000 jobs with 27% of all employment in knowledge-intensive sectors – more than double the national average. Here you will find more than 72,000 employees with a graduate or PhD qualification

For decades, this region has shaped and accelerated technological progress.

Oxford and Cambridge rank 1st and 5th globally for innovation intensity, and the density of R&D activity here remains unmatched anywhere else in the UK. However, research excellence and private investment alone will no longer secure future competitiveness. The region’s long-term success will depend increasingly on its ability to attract, develop and retain talent.

To compete globally, the Corridor must grow from one of the world’s most intense innovation clusters into one of the largest. To break into the global top 10, the region will need to triple the scale of its innovation economy over the next 25 years. Achieving this requires a pipeline of skilled people that is deeper, more diverse and better aligned to labour-market needs than exists today. Meeting projected demand will require 403,000 new knowledge-intensive roles by 2050.

This report sets out a blueprint for delivering that workforce. It focuses on three interconnected skills ecosystems – science and technology, the creative economy, and green industries – the pillars of the region’s next growth phase. It identifies the structural barriers currently holding the region back, from housing and commuting costs to fragmented training systems and proposes reforms that are practical, collaborative and cost-effective.

These system-level reforms form the foundation of this blueprint:

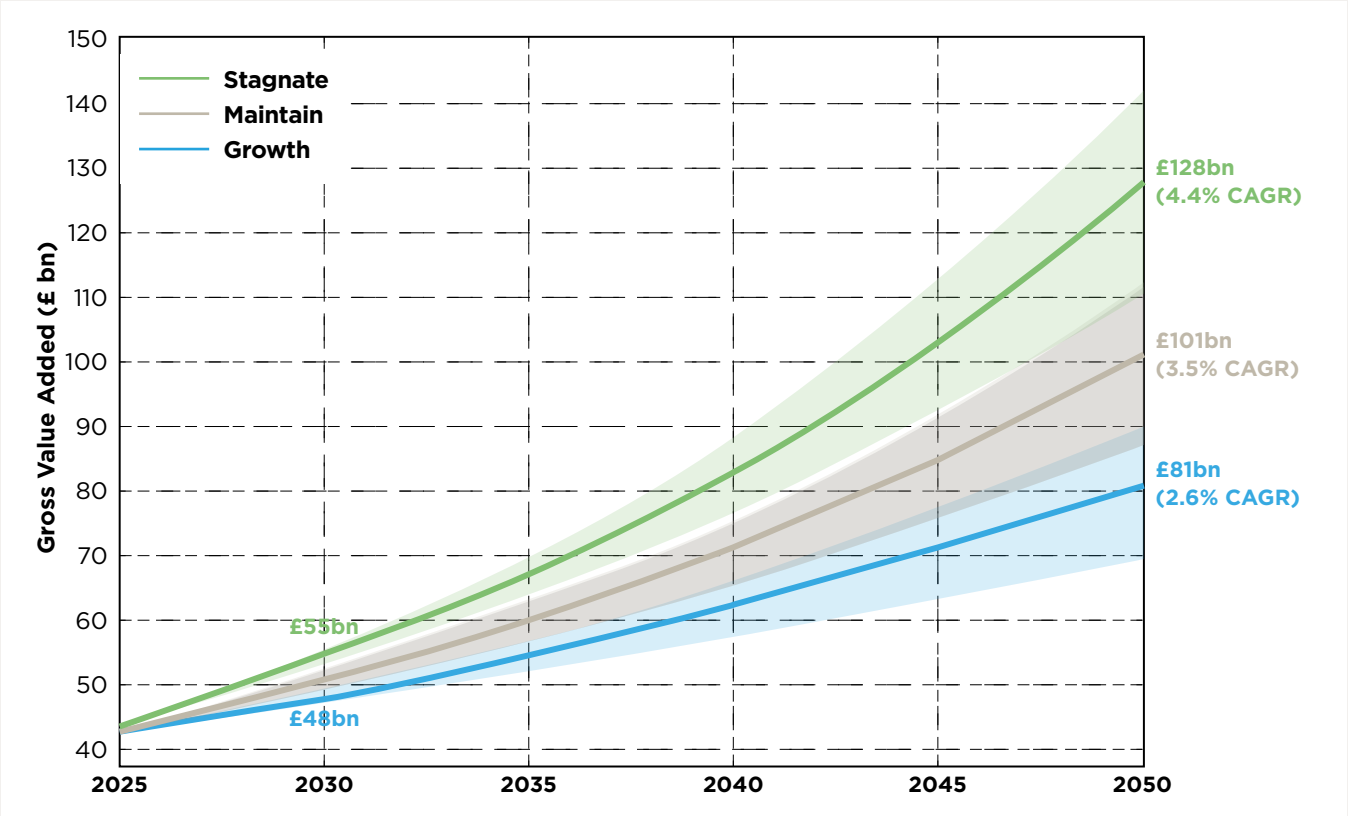
1. **A Skills Commission** to unite business, government and education institutions at all levels around shared growth priorities.
2. **A shared Opportunities Hub** connecting learners, providers and employers across the Corridor, aiming to integrate and coordinate existing provision from levels 1-8, with four key parts:
 - Intelligence Hub:** a data-driven observatory to identify and quantify current and future labour market needs, informing the creation of targeted educational provision.
 - Multi-Mentoring Hub:** Targeted support for successful start-ups to scale up, rather than seek market exit, to maintain talent within the region
 - Talent Hub:** a brokerage service, staffed by experts, creating the right ladders and bridges between employers, education providers and learners for a connected system.
 - Experience Hub:** new support for university spinouts and scale-ups, enabling high-growth firms to expand in-region.

These reforms reflect the realities of a rapidly evolving economy. With the arrival of East West Rail, the Corridor will function as a single labour market spanning Oxford, Cambridge, Bedford, Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Bicester and Tempsford, allowing talent to move more freely and businesses to access a wider workforce.

Investment is already flooding into the region. This is helping to realise the Corridor’s potential to become Europe’s leading hub for innovation and creativity.

FROM IDEAS TO IMPLEMENTATION

As might be expected, there are many competing views about what to prioritise to realise this vision, and several challenges stand in the way, not least that skills provision has been directed locally rather than across a wider region. Taking ideas and translating them into implementation will require concerted effort and coordination. Realising the region’s full growth potential will depend on the availability of the requisite skills – the very principle that has made this region successful in the first place.



Public First, 2025, illustrated three levels of growth – ‘stagnate, maintain, grow’ – which led to the Government’s commitment to a growth scenario that aspires to deliver £78 bn additional GVA with 403,000 high skilled jobs.

In a phase of grand transformation in science, technology and artificial intelligence, intellectual capital will play an even greater role in shaping the future of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. These forces of human ingenuity will alter the trajectory of modern industry, ushering in what could become a Fourth Industrial Revolution.

While the national stock of skills will inevitably evolve to meet demand, the stakes are particularly high here. With 403,000 additional knowledge-intensive roles required by 2050, and international competition intensifying, the region cannot afford to be reactive. It must take the lead: empowering innovative businesses, strengthening its talent base and shaping a skills agenda fit for the future.

- £135 billion turnover per year, with the potential for a further £78 bn
- £65,000-£70,000 GVA per worker
- 8,000+ high-tech companies
- 2,500+ start-ups
- 400+ university spinouts
- 10 major universities

AN ENGINE OF INNOVATION



Reproduced from the Government's Investment Prospectus for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, 2025

SKILLS FOR THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Preparing for Transformative Change

Whether we are living through the Fourth Industrial Revolution or a continuation of the digitalisation that defined the Digital Revolution of the early-2000s, data, automation, generative AI and connectivity are changing how we view practically every industry on Earth.

For every major economy, interpreting the consequences of and adapting to such a widespread transformation should be a priority of policy.



Future job creation, retention and turnover, relies on an objective appraisal of the sectors that will be most affected by technological advancement and a corresponding programme to skill and reskill the domestic workforce.

With projections suggesting that the region could add a further £78 billion to its annual GVA by 2035, growth plans, supported by public commitments and endorsed by private capital, place further responsibility on the Growth Corridor to assemble the skills necessary to enhance its contribution to the UK economy and society.

We have chosen to focus on three broad sector categories in which the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor excels: science and technology, the creative economy and green skills. In each of these areas, which will play an outsized role in the Corridor's growth, the approach we take to skills – and how well it is resourced – will either inhibit or help to unleash the region's full growth potential, including the creation of an estimated 403,000 additional skilled workers over the next 25 years.

An adaptive and flexible approach to skills development is critical. This involves learning from one another, testing innovative models for teaching environmental skills and collaborating across sectors.

Embedding sustainability across all levels of education and training ensures that skills are not only current but also forward-looking, anticipating future green technologies and practices. Employers, educators and policymakers must work together to create pathways that combine on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and continuous professional development. By taking an inclusive and forward-thinking approach, the Growth Corridor can position itself as a leader in the green economy, unlocking new opportunities and long-term economic growth.



Dr Kathryn Chapman, Executive Director, Innovate Cambridge

We need skills at all levels.
Be that lab technicians,
engineers, manufacturing
or product development.

THREE SECTORS OF STRATEGIC STRENGTH

1. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH HAYWOOD

Sarah Haywood is the Managing Director of Advanced Oxford, which represents senior leaders from Oxford's knowledge-intensive businesses. Sarah also serves as a member of the Supercluster Board.

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is a world-leading science supercluster. If we want to grow this region and see it really fulfil its potential, we need to tap into its superpower: talented and skilled scientists, technologists, entrepreneurs and innovators, and swell the numbers of people working in STEM.



Sarah Haywood

We called this workstream 'science and technology' but we mean any business that requires STEM-related skill, knowledge and competence. The landscape of science and technology companies across the Corridor cannot be defined or limited to one or two dominant sectors. We are a region that excels in life sciences, aviation, automotive industries, engineering and advanced manufacturing. This is one of our challenges: how to build a skills system and a skilled workforce that can respond to this diversity of technology.

Another challenge is the rapidly changing nature of science and technology. The only thing we can be sure of is that technology will change both the way we work and the science that is being applied to developing new products and services. We only need to look at the impact of AI on sectors like life sciences, where data analysis and drug discovery are being transformed.

What we can say is that we will need flexibility in the skills system. We need to encourage transferable skills – leadership, project management and commercial skills. We need a system that is about skilling and reskilling throughout careers, a culture of life-long learning, training and development that moves with the individual as they move through their career.

In this way, we can start to create a system that will provide the skills and talent needed for our science and technology sectors, and for the technologies we can only dream of today. We need to continue to build a thriving and successful pool of people, not just for five years' time, but for 10, 15 years and beyond.



Dr Stephen Partridge

2. THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

INTERVIEW WITH DR STEPHEN PARTRIDGE

Dr Stephen Partridge is Dean of the School of Creative Arts at the University of Hertfordshire, CEO of KAVE, space and creator of Propeller Stages, an innovative, collaborative model for film and TV production and creative-technical skills training.

The creative industries contributed over £124 billion to the UK economy in 2023, employing 2.4 million people in one of the country's highest growth sectors. Much of this pioneering activity is found in the Corridor.

The creative industries have the power to enhance societal wellbeing, foster cultural expression and strengthen the UK's global influence. Creativity is a superpower that should interface routinely with other facets of learning. It doesn't just happen, but is nurtured through critical enquiry, design thinking and inquisitive creative practice.

To silo knowledge, separating art and culture from science, medicine, technology and environmental issues, is short-sighted. Learning has cross pollinated productively for centuries, yet we have normalised separation to the detriment of knowledge and skills development. A school system fixated on league tables, lining up learners to receive knowledge, then cramming into exam halls to regurgitate, will not underpin a thriving, modern workforce. Educators are weary of change but crave a clear vision aligned to a deliverable plan.

Collaboration is not easy, but it accelerates confidence building, nurtures emotional intelligence (problem solving, communication, empathy) and represents a compelling antidote to a sustained and widespread mental health and wellbeing crisis.

Enabling and incentivising employers to feed into collaborative learning and research enhances educational and industrial outcomes. Employers need talent that is better aligned to current and future need.

The creative economy must be involved. In our agenda for future skills we need to seriously consider career pathways into freelancing, small creative firms and micro-businesses, as well as larger corporates, beginning with expanded access to media and creative jobs and investment in the infrastructure this special part of the economy requires to evolve.



Professor Aled Jones

3. GREEN SKILLS

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR ALED JONES

Professor Aled Jones is the Inaugural Director of the Global Sustainability Institute (GSI) at Anglia Ruskin University. He is a member of the Expert Panel for the HRH Prince of Wales's Accounting for Sustainability (A4S) initiative and a member of the Science Advisory Group for the UK Global Food Security Programme.

Sustainability skills are no longer optional, they are vital as we work toward a net-zero Britain. These skills are no longer confined to specialist “green” roles; they are essential for business leaders, new starters and every individual across the business spectrum, shaping the future of how we work and innovate.

**SUSTAINABILITY
SKILLS ARE NO
LONGER OPTIONAL,
THEY ARE VITAL AS
WE WORK TOWARD
A NET-ZERO
BRITAIN**

It is essential to both upskill the existing workforce and develop knowledge-intensive environmental roles to support the UK's transition to a net-zero economy. As the nature of work evolves, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) estimates that between 135,000 and 725,000 new jobs could be created in low carbon sectors by 2030. However, this transformation will not happen automatically; it requires a deliberate strategy to equip people with the skills needed to thrive in a greener economy.



A FRAGILE ECOSYSTEM

System Barriers to Skills Development

If the challenge is to unlock the skills necessary to accelerate growth across the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, where should we begin? In our view, it is in recognising that this is a region with a fragile ecosystem that is perhaps disproportionately dependent on its existing resources to thrive.

To explain, in the hierarchy of needs representative of what a highly skilled worker would expect from where they live, as well as where they work, the competitiveness of wages and access and affordability of housing would rank first. This is then followed by the density of employment opportunities, the relative cost and convenience of commuting and connectivity.

In terms of attractiveness, the Growth Corridor may be outmatched by comparable regions elsewhere, such as Boston, MA Knowledge Cluster and Silicon Valley. Housing may be more expensive in such places, but real wages are higher, affording a generally better standard of living. In short, this could make other places more attractive to our emerging talent.

We have a shared challenge across the whole ecosystem... in fact, across the country. This is about building sovereign capabilities.

Ed Bussey
CEO, Oxford Science Enterprises

From a comparatively less competitive footing when it comes to the economic costs of living and working in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, what can be said of alternative 'pull' factors? The network effects, the presence of globally significant research labs, career progression, proximity to London, flexibility, social life and the reputational capital developed in working with world-class companies in the science and technology sectors, the creative industries, and in green technologies, are all commonly cited. This exposes the fragility of the Corridor's growth model, which relies on the credibility of its institutions and innovation ecosystem to offset the cost disadvantage of living in the region.

OUTLINING THE CHALLENGES

The Five Factors Inhibiting Skills Formation

Having outlined why we need a specific skills agenda to realise the growth potential of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, it is appropriate to turn to the five critical challenges that inhibit and confuse skills formation across this region.

Broadly, these are:

- Fragmentation in how skills formation is approached
- New sector growth and the pace of change
- Upskilling and reskilling
- Availability and awareness of funding is patchy
- The skills mismatch.

FRAGMENTATION IN SKILLS FORMATION

Supplying the skills required for the future demands coordination across the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, which is limited today.

Across the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, there are five Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) areas, each covering several local authorities. In every part of England, LSIPs are led by an Employer Representative Body (ERB) designated by the Secretary of State to undertake this role. Mayoral Combined Authorities and other Strategic Authorities work jointly with the designated ERB on both the development and delivery of the plan.

Within the Growth Corridor, this joint-working approach applies in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Buckinghamshire.



NEW SECTOR GROWTH AND THE PACE OF CHANGE

If we were looking at one industry or sector alone as being strategically significant to the region we might say that fragmentation is navigable. But in a complex knowledge cluster that collectively houses thousands of subdisciplines, knowing what to focus on introduces further confusion to the task of allocating resources effectively.

UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING

Over 80% of the 2030 workforce is already employed today. This alone should be enough of a reason to focus on upskilling and reskilling to embed essential skills.

Furthermore, by 2035, over one million jobs across the UK are at risk of disappearing, leading to significant workforce transitions and the threat of mass unemployment if exposed labour is not given the support to reskill. This makes it imperative to re-evaluate whether the existing skills base is fit for the future, requiring education and training that feeds into a wider demographic than young graduates coming into full-time employment.

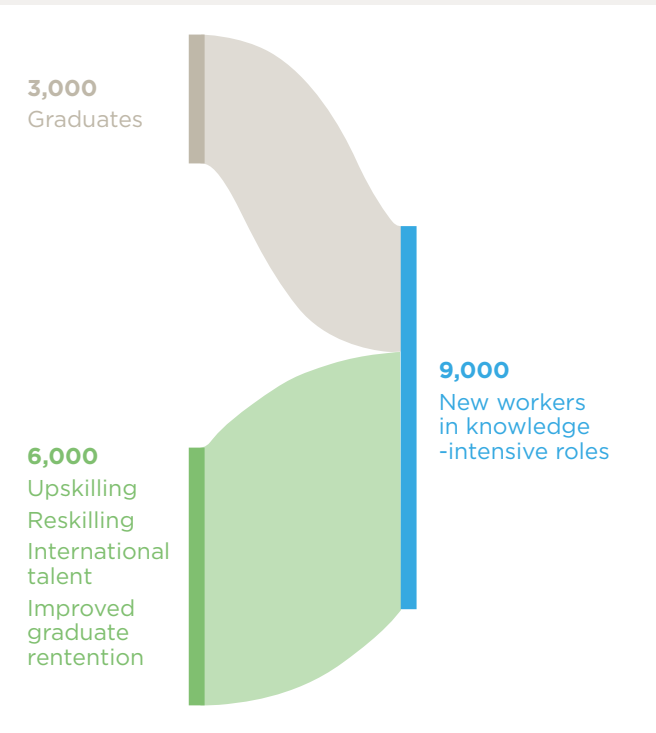


AVAILABILITY AND AWARENESS OF FUNDING IS PATCHY

While strides have been made to diversify vocational training and the avenues through which this is accessed, there is still a lack of awareness about the variety of apprenticeships, formal education and qualifications available for the untrained and retraining.

THE SKILLS MISMATCH

Across the UK, a skills mismatch in the labour market is evident. Using national data as a general proxy, roughly 36% of graduates and the mature workforce are overqualified for their roles, raising serious concerns that skills are either sub-optimally allocated, or higher education is not appropriately meeting industry demand.



Public First, 2025



BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP

Transforming the Workforce

From the variety of challenges facing the skills agenda in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, it is clear that no single reform will close the skills gap. As with the very idiosyncratic nature of the advanced skills required to power the growth of region, what is needed is a coordinated, data-driven approach that brings together education, business and government.

What we can say is that we will need flexibility in the skills system. We need to encourage transferable skills – leadership, project management and commercial skills. We need a system that is about skilling and reskilling throughout careers, a culture of life-long learning, training and development that moves with the individual as they move through their career.

Insofar as Government has sought to reform skills in a root-and-branch way, perhaps most profoundly by its intention to introduce sector-specific vocational qualifications (“V-Levels”), many more layers of education and training must follow to build coherence into this transformation.



Prof Claire Pike, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Education and Experience, University of East Anglia

- Automation and AI, which are reshaping roles faster than education systems can adjust.
- Cost of living and limited housing supply stifle retention.
- An uncoordinated jobs market means employers struggle to find the skills they need locally.

It is with this in mind that we put forward the following recommendations appropriate to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor that we believe will be critical to its long-term success.

Knowledge-intensive ecosystems in the Growth Corridor have a very strong track record of discovery-based research, but have not fully exploited the translational benefit of those discoveries at the levels achieved by our international competitors. The skills offer within innovation-rich regions such as Oxford and Cambridge does not lack activity and enthusiasm, but these need greater connectivity and cohesion. Simultaneously, opportunities to prosper from innovation and growth in the region should be equally dispersed among sections of local and regional populations.

Prof. Claire Pike



1. CREATE A SKILLS COMMISSION TO LEAD AN OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE GROWTH CORRIDOR SKILLS STRATEGY

- The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is home to some of the UK's largest organisations. Establishing a Skills Commission by these key industry players, could provide influential leadership to shape and inform a forward-looking skills strategy.
- This initiative should unpack and rank the advanced skills required to accelerate the region's growth, underpinned by a structure that aligns with LSIPs and other such mechanisms.
- The Skills Commission should have ownership and oversight of a 'Skills for Growth' strategy, driven by business need, real-time data and strong employer engagement (via mechanisms such as the Supercluster Board and the Reference Boards and Growth Hubs).
- The commission will provide educators at every level with clear insights into current trends, gaps and emerging skills requirements.

2. IMPROVE SPINOUT GENERATION AND SCALE UP SUPPORT

- Increase the number of university spinouts to boost university finances and improve graduate retention in the region by emulating the Oxbridge model.

To close this gap, universities could:

- Establish university partner funds to attract and manage private investment.
- Access matched public funding through initiatives like the University Partner Fund Accelerator, which supports regional institutions in creating their own investment funds.
- Collaborate with the Universities to adopt best practices and strategies.

3. DEVELOP THE OPPORTUNITIES HUB MODEL

- Develop a dynamic database that tracks business skills needs, job vacancies, and future workforce trends, enabling high-quality data-driven strategic decision-making.
- Create a central hub for engagement between universities, schools, colleges, businesses and adults to boost aspirations, raise awareness of available courses, provide career support and guidance, assist with curriculum planning and improve access to learning opportunities.
- Develop different points of engagement for the three sectors and geographies to work with businesses across the knowledge intensive industries.
- Establish a mentorship hub and experience hub to inspire the next generation of spinouts and support successful businesses in scaling beyond the initial start-up phase, helping them grow into world-leading organisations.
- Utilise case studies and copy the strengths of other models that have been set up around the world.

The Commission should then consider the implementation of a shared Opportunities Hub, connecting learners, providers and employers across the Corridor, aiming to integrate and coordinate existing provision from levels 1-8, with four key parts:

- **Intelligence Hub:** a data-driven observatory to identify and quantify current and future labour market needs, informing the creation of targeted educational provision.
- **Multi-Mentoring Hub:** Targeted support for successful start-ups to scale up, rather than seek market exit, to maintain talent within the region.
- **Talent Hub:** a brokerage service, staffed by experts, the right ladders and bridges between employers, education providers and learners for a connected system.
- **Experience Hub:** to improve spin out generation and scale up support. The Hub should offer new support for university spinouts and scale-ups, enabling high-growth firms to expand in-region.

Universities, business and Government could work together to:

- Establish university partnership funds to attract and manage private investment.
- Access and leverage private funding through initiatives such as the University Partner Fund Accelerator, which could support regional institutions to develop their own investment funds.



Shaun Grady

We need to bring the whole ecosystem together to be successful.

Shaun Grady
UK Chair, AstraZeneca

ASSESSING IMPACT

Why this Matters

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor already leads the UK and Europe in research intensity. Without a matching skills system, that competitive advantage will erode.

How Success is Measured

- Growth in high-skill employment and average regional wages.
- Reduction in skill-shortage vacancies.
- Increased participation in lifelong learning.
- Improved inclusion and mobility across counties.
- Greater private co-investment in training and R&D.

Who Needs to be Involved

Government: enabling funding flexibility and data-sharing.

Universities and Colleges: co-designing curricula with employers.

Enterprise: committing to long-term training partnerships.

Local Authorities: delivering long-term plans for housing, transport and skills planning.

THE END GOAL

Enhancing access to and distribution of advanced skills in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor would deliver £78bn additional GVA by 2035, create 403,000 high-value jobs by 2050, and establish a global model for skills-led regional growth for others to follow.

For New Labour it was education, education, education. For Newer Labour, it might be skills, skills, skills. If together we get the opportunity to do only one thing, and to do this well, it should be the formation of a Skills Commission. Get this right and everything else will flow.

Alistair Lomax
Director, Arc Universities Group

CONCLUSION

An Imperative for a New Age

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor's success has never been accidental. It has been built through deliberate, concerted investment in knowledge, people and ideas.

For the reasons outlined in this report, however, the pace of technological change now demands a new relationship between business, universities, and government. One that treats skills alongside critical infrastructure and investment, on an equal footing, in the overall blueprint for development in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.

If the region's universities are its generators of knowledge, its skills system must be the grid that distributes this power. The recommendations in this report provide a practical route to achieving that coordinated, data-driven and open to all sectors.

The task now is to move from strategy to sustained action, embedding lifelong learning, supporting creative and technical talent alike, and ensuring that the Corridor's growth remains inclusive, productive and globally relevant.

THE ARC UNIVERSITIES GROUP

Formed in 2018, we collaborate with partners to harness the strengths of the ten universities across the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, driving sustainable and inclusive economic growth throughout the region. In 2024, the Arc Universities Group joined the Supercluster Board, strengthening our strategic role in regional innovation. We are now based at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, chaired by Prof Roderick Watkins, Vice-Chancellor, with Prof Dave Phoenix, Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, serving as deputy chair.



The blueprint set out in this report is just the beginning. To ensure the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor's success continues to lead in innovation, we invite organisations across the region to register their interest in ongoing discussions about skills and workforce development.

To stay connected or express interest in the Skills Commission: please contact us via www.arcuniversities.co.uk

STEERING GROUP

- **Prof. Kamil Omoteso** – Deputy Vice Chancellor, Anglia Ruskin University (Chair)
- **Anne Bailey** – Form the Future
- **Melanie Collins** – Skills England (Observer)
- **Stuart Edwards** – East West Rail
- **Adam King** – England's Economic Heartland
- **Dr Rhidian Lewis** – University of Bedfordshire
- **Alistair Lomax** – Director, Arc Universities Group (Project Lead)
- **Prof. Claire Pike** – University of East Anglia
- **Robin Webber-Jones** – The Bedford College Group
- **Dr Megan Wilkins** – Cambridge University Health Partners

SECTOR LEADS

- **Sarah Haywood** – Managing Director, Advanced Oxford (Technological skills)
- **Prof. Aled Jones** – Director, Institute for Global Sustainability Technology, Anglia Ruskin University (Green skills)
- **Dr Stephen Partridge** – Dean of the School of Creative Arts, University of Hertfordshire (Creative industries)

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