



Learning Key
TRAINING ACADEMY

For school leavers, career changers and anyone already working in IT who wants the certificate to prove it. Nothing in here needs you to have decided anything yet.

LEARNER PROSPECTUS · 2026/27

Start the career, not just the course.

Apprenticeships and industry certifications in IT, delivered from Middlesbrough, on-site at your workplace anywhere in the UK, or live online. Six apprenticeship standards. Nine technology partners. One twenty-minute conversation to find out which of them is yours.

2,500

certified graduates

200

apprentices graduated

95%

student satisfaction

69 Newport Road, Middlesbrough TS1 1LA

01642 800 881 · hello@learningkey.co.uk · learningkey.co.uk

Three ways in, and one way to find out which

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Most people arrive knowing what they want to be and not what to do on Monday morning. This prospectus is arranged the other way round: by route, so you can find the one that fits the life you already have.

ROUTE ONE

An apprenticeship

You are employed, you earn a wage, and roughly six hours of your working week are yours for training. Twelve to fifteen months to a nationally recognised qualification. Best if you want to change career and cannot afford to stop working to do it.

ROUTE TWO

A professional certification

You study for a specific industry certification – CompTIA, AWS, Cisco, Microsoft and others – with up to twelve months to complete it and a free resit on most exams. Best if you are already working and want a credential that moves you.

ROUTE THREE

A conversation first

Twenty minutes, free, no pressure, in person or online. You leave knowing exactly what your next step is – even if that step turns out to be somewhere other than here.

You do not have to know which one you want

Plenty of people call us with “I want to get into IT” and no more than that. The consultation exists precisely for that conversation – and if the right answer turns out to be a university course, a different provider or waiting six months, we will tell you so. Page 15 has the three ways to book it.

An academy at the centre of a growing tech region

“Our mission is to be a leading force in IT education — empowering the next generation of skilled professionals through flexible, hands-on training that’s aligned with industry needs and accessible to all.”

Learning Key Training Academy

What that looks like in practice

- **We do not award our own qualifications.** Independent awarding organisations — City & Guilds, NCFE, BCS, Pearson VUE and others — set the assessment and issue the certificate. That is what makes it worth something to your next employer.
- **We are an accredited examination centre.** You can sit the exam in the room you studied in, rather than travelling to a strange building on the worst morning of the year.
- **Support does not stop at the certificate.** CV review, interview practice and career progression are part of the offer, and some of our first graduates are still in touch.
- **You are not a cohort.** Weekly check-ins, one-to-one tutor time, and a training centre you can work from Monday to Friday if home is not where you concentrate.

Our values, in short

The academy publishes eleven. These four do most of the work:

Learner-centred — “This is about you, not us.”
Courses are designed around what learners need.

Accessibility — “We all have to start somewhere.”
Learners from all backgrounds and levels.

Experiential — “We teach you to understand, not just to remember.” Hands-on labs and real scenarios.

Your future first — everything is driven by helping students succeed in the path they chose.

Where we are, where we teach

The academy is in Middlesbrough, at the heart of one of the fastest-growing tech clusters in the region. Teaching happens in the centre, at your workplace anywhere in the UK, or live online — and on most programmes you can move between the three as your circumstances change.

About the numbers on the cover

2,500 certified graduates, 200 apprentices graduated and a 95% satisfaction rate are the academy's own figures, published on learningkey.co.uk — ours, not an inspector's.

The practical details, before the prospectus gets excited

WHERE

Three modes

In the Middlesbrough centre, on-site at your workplace anywhere in the UK, or live online with an instructor.

WHEN

Mon–Fri, 09:00–17:00

Full access to the course and materials, with the flexibility to work from home or from the training centre during opening hours (excluding bank holidays).

HOW LONG

Up to 12 months

Certification courses run up to twelve months.

Apprenticeships run twelve to fifteen. Both are checked against your own pace, not a fixed cohort date.

What comes with every course

- **Facility access.** Desktops, application software, training simulations and specialised technical hardware at the academy — included, not an extra.
- **A free resit.** Every exam includes one free resit, so a bad morning does not become a bill.
- **Official vendor material.** Curriculum developed, maintained and awarded by the technology partner whose name is on the certificate.
- **Exam preparation.** Exam tips, practice questions and study guides run through every programme.
- **CPD confirmation.** Courses carry continuing professional development recognition; the team will confirm the position for the specific course you are considering.
- **Learner support throughout.** The eleven things on page 12.

Free resits and vendor discount vouchers vary by partner. Microsoft is the one exception to the free-resit position; ask the team for the current terms before you book.

Do I need qualifications to start?

For most certification courses, no. Where a certification has a prerequisite — a Cisco CCNP needs the CCNA first, the PMI professional certification needs the associate one — it is stated on the course page. Where nothing is stated, anyone can enrol.

Apprenticeship entry requirements

These are set nationally, not by us. To be accepted onto any of our apprenticeships you must:

- **Age** — be 16 years old or over.
- **Residency** — live in England and have the right to work in the UK.
- **Education status** — not be in full-time education.
- **Employment** — be employed in a contract that allows for training.

Meet all four and you are eligible. Not employed yet? Say so at the consultation — finding the employer is a normal part of the conversation.

Paid work, real qualification, no student debt

An apprenticeship is a job with structured training attached. You are employed and paid from day one, and an average of six hours of each working week is protected for learning. At the end you hold a nationally recognised qualification that belongs to you for life.

01

Earn while you learn

You gain skills and real work experience while earning a wage. Apprentices are entitled to the National Minimum Wage for apprentices — many employers pay above it.

03

A nationally recognised qualification

Awarded by City & Guilds, an awarding body of 150 years' standing. Our team stays alongside you throughout, helping you get past whatever gets in the way.

02

Supercharge your learning

On-the-job and off-the-job training combined. As a full-time apprentice, an average of six hours a week is dedicated to off-the-job learning — the part that turns doing the job into understanding it.

04

Career prospects that stick

Employers retain the large majority of apprentices who complete their training, and many of those people go on to new responsibilities, promotions and pay rises.

A note on off-the-job hours

You may still see “20% of your time” quoted elsewhere. Since 1 August 2025 the requirement is a published minimum number of hours for each apprenticeship standard rather than a flat percentage. Our programmes work to an average of six hours a week, which is what your employer needs to plan around. Ask us for the current published figure for the standard you are considering.

An apprenticeship suits you if

- You need an income while you retrain.
- You learn better by doing the job than by reading about it.
- You already have an employer — or are willing to look for one with us.

A certification may suit you better if

- You are already employed and want a specific credential.
- You are in full-time education, or outside England.
- You need it done in months rather than a year.

The six standards

Every one of these runs twelve to fifteen months, is awarded by City & Guilds, and requires over 450 hours of real-life application and experience. What differs is the work you will be doing at the end of it.

IT Systems Support Technician

LEVEL 3

Keeping systems and users running. IT support is not “fixing computers”. It is the frontline function that keeps an organisation running: when systems fail the impact is immediate, and technicians stop that becoming a business-wide problem.

You will learn: Hardware, software, networking and troubleshooting; the regulations and laws around IT systems; fixing PCs, laptops, printers, tablets and smart devices; resolving network problems such as DNS and DHCP; repairing underlying application faults.

WHERE IT LEADS

IT Systems Support · Cybersecurity Associate · Systems Administrator

Digital Applications Technician

LEVEL 3

Supporting digital tools and platforms. UK employers report real difficulty recruiting for roles that need digital capability. A technician who can make the tools a business already pays for actually work is immediately useful.

You will learn: Microsoft 365 including Power Automate, Google Workspace, and AI tools such as Copilot and Gemini; the law around using software applications; information systems and business process; building and configuring AI agents and automated workflows; training colleagues to adopt them.

WHERE IT LEADS

Digital Applications Technician · Business Analyst · Digital Transformation Officer

Artificial Intelligence

LEVEL 3

Applied AI in the workplace. AI is moving from novelty to infrastructure across almost every sector. The scarce skill is not research — it is people who can put these systems to work safely inside a business.

You will learn: Machine learning, deep learning, neural networks, computer vision, natural language processing, transformers and large language models; the regulations around using AI lawfully; Copilot, Gemini and ChatGPT in business settings; building AI agents and connected, AI-enabled workflows.

WHERE IT LEADS

AI Administrator · AI Engineer · AI Developer (the last two with further training)

The six standards / continued

Data Analysis & Statistics

LEVEL 3

Turning data into decisions. Every organisation now collects more than it understands. The person who can turn that into a decision somebody acts on is the one who gets listened to.

You will learn: Data structures and variables; extraction, transformation and loading; visualisation and formatting; the law around handling data safely; Excel, Power BI, Tableau, SQL, Python and R; presenting and communicating findings.

WHERE IT LEADS

Data Analyst · Business Intelligence Analyst · Data Scientist (with further training)

Network Engineering

LEVEL 4

Design, build and maintain networks. Network engineers build the invisible highways everything else runs on. It is fast-paced, deeply technical, and full of moments where your problem-solving brings whole systems back to life.

You will learn: LANs, WANs, MANs, WLANs and VLANs; managing networks lawfully; Cisco Packet Tracer simulations, IP scanners, cable testing and the command line; software-defined networking across multiple sites; configuring real devices in lab conditions.

WHERE IT LEADS

Network Administrator · Network Engineer · Cybersecurity Engineer (with further training)

Software Development

LEVEL 4

Code, test and ship software. AI-assisted development has changed what a junior developer is expected to do on day one — less repetition, more judgement. This standard is built around that shift rather than around it.

You will learn: Designing, planning, developing, testing and deploying software; developing lawfully; source control with GitHub; Python, Java, C# and JavaScript; web technologies including HTML5, CSS3 and React; SQL, PHP and APIs on the back end.

WHERE IT LEADS

Programmer · Software Developer · Software Engineer

Level 3 or Level 4?

Level 3 is broadly A-level standard and is where most people start. Level 4 sits above it, closer to the first year of a degree, and generally suits someone who already has relevant experience or a Level 3 behind them. If you are not sure which you are ready for, that is a five-minute part of the consultation, not a barrier.

What finishing one actually involves

Who supports you

- **Your training provider** — us. We check in on you regularly.
- **Your tutor** — regular one-to-one meetings you are expected to attend.
- **Your employer** — required to give you the time to complete the apprenticeship.

The qualification

Awarded by City & Guilds and held for life. It does not expire, and it does not need renewing.

Four things to complete

- 01 Summative portfolio**
A document evidencing the knowledge, skills and behaviours that meet the standard. You build it as you go — it is not something to be assembled the week before.
- 02 Final project**
A piece of work of your own choosing that demonstrates the standard in practice. Most people pick something their employer actually needed doing.
- 03 450 hours of on-the-job training**
Completed with your employer, logged as you go. This is the part that turns the qualification into experience an interviewer can ask you about.
- 04 End-point assessment**
You present your final project to an independent examiner. Not us — which is exactly why the result means something.

Roughly how the year runs

WHEN	WHAT IS HAPPENING
Before you start	Eligibility check, employer agreement, and a plan that says which six hours a week are yours
Months 1–3	Induction, the foundations of the standard, and the first entries in your portfolio
Months 4–9	The bulk of the technical content, taught against work you are actually doing; regular tutor one-to-ones
Months 9–12	Final project chosen and built; portfolio gaps identified and closed
Months 12–15	Gateway review, then end-point assessment with an independent examiner
Afterwards	Alumni membership, and a team that will still take your call

Indicative. Your tutor will agree the actual plan with you and your employer at induction, and it moves when your circumstances do.

Nine technology partners, one standard of delivery

A certification is a credential the industry already recognises, awarded by the organisation that made the technology. You study with us, you sit the exam with us, and the certificate comes from them.

What every certification course includes

- Full access to the official course and materials for up to twelve months.
- The flexibility to study from home, or in the training centre Monday to Friday, 09:00–17:00.
- Access to academy facilities: desktops, application software, training simulations and specialised hardware.
- One free exam resit on most programmes.
- Exam tips, practice questions and study guides.
- Continuing professional development recognition.
- Ongoing access to your vendor account after you finish.

Vouchers and bundles

Several partners run discount schemes we can put you into — seasonal Cisco and CompTIA vouchers, PMI membership and promotional discounts, Pearson VUE vouchers for IT Specialist, and an AWS voucher for anyone who has been an Amazon employee for a year or more. Ask before you book; they are not always advertised.

Before you enrol, check the exam version

Vendors retire and replace exam versions on their own schedule, sometimes at short notice. The certifications on the next two pages are named rather than coded for exactly that reason. Confirm the current exam version with the team when you book, and you will study for the one you will actually sit.

How a certification course actually runs

STEP ONE

Scope the exam

You and an advisor agree the certification, confirm the current exam version, and set a target date you can hit around your job.

STEP TWO

Study and practise

Official material, at home or in the centre, with the labs and hardware to try things on. Instructor time whenever you get stuck.

STEP THREE

Sit it here

We are an accredited exam centre, so you sit it in the room you studied in — with a free resit behind you on most programmes.

Where to start, and what comes next

Certifications are listed by the organisation that awards them. Anything without a stated prerequisite is open to anyone.

CompTIA

A+, Network+ and Security+ — the standard first rungs

ITF+ · A+ Core 1 & Core 2 · Network+ · Security+ · CySA+ · CASP+

START WITH ITF+ if IT is new to you, A+ if you already tinker.

IT Specialist

Entry-level foundations for a first role in IT

Networking · Network Security · Device Configuration & Management · Cloud Computing · Databases · Computational Thinking · Software Development · Python · Java · JavaScript · HTML5 Application Development · Artificial Intelligence

START WITH Networking or Computational Thinking — both assume nothing.

Amazon Web Services

Cloud practitioner through to solutions architect

Cloud Practitioner · Developer Associate · Solutions Architect · SysOps Administrator

START WITH Cloud Practitioner. Nobody sensible starts anywhere else.

Cisco Networking Academy

Routing, switching and modern network infrastructure

CCNA · CCNP Enterprise · CCNP Security (*both CCNP tracks require CCNA first*)

START WITH CCNA — it is the prerequisite for everything above it.

Microsoft

Azure, 365 and platform fundamentals

Azure Fundamentals · Azure Data Fundamentals · Azure Administrator Associate · Azure Architect Technologies · Hybrid Administrator, and a wider Microsoft catalogue — ask for the current list

START WITH Azure Fundamentals, then the associate track your job needs.

If you are starting from nothing

CompTIA ITF+ or A+ and the IT Specialist certifications are the two genuine standing starts on this page. Everything else assumes you already know what a subnet is. There is no prize for starting higher than you are.

Where to start / continued

EC-Council

Ethical hacking and defensive security

Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)

START WITH CEH, but bring some networking and security grounding with you.

ISC2

Cyber security leadership and governance

CISSP

START WITH CISSP is a senior certification — talk to us about timing.

VMware

Virtualisation and infrastructure

vSphere 8.x Professional

START WITH vSphere Professional, once you are comfortable with servers.

Project Management Institute

Project management for technical delivery

Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) · Project Management Professional (PMP) (*PMP requires CAPM first*)

START WITH CAPM if you are early-career, PMP once you have led delivery.

Four routes people actually take

IF YOU WANT TO

A SENSIBLE ORDER

Get a first IT job

ITF+ or IT Specialist foundations, then A+, then Network+

Move into cyber security

Security+, then CySA+, then CEH or CISSP once you have the experience

Move into cloud

AWS Cloud Practitioner or Azure Fundamentals, then an associate-level certification

Move into networks

Network+, then CCNA, then a CCNP track

Two things worth knowing before you book

Certifications stack. Bundling changes the order you take them in and what it costs, and is far easier to arrange at the start than halfway through.

Which one is yours depends on the job, not the technology. A twenty-minute conversation, not a decision from a list — see page 15.

Eleven things you get that are not the course

"We believe every individual is equally important and their concerns matter to us. We heavily invest in supportive programmes to ensure we cater to the needs of our learners." – and here is what that actually buys you.

"How are you getting on?"

Weekly catch-ups

We check in on your progress to make sure you have enough support before it becomes a problem.

"I'm stuck on something, can you help?"

Professional support

That is what we are here for. We put you in touch with the right instructor to get over the learning curve.

"I failed my exam, what do I do?"

A free resit

You get a free resit with our courses. Exams are stressful; this is the part that takes the money out of it.

"How should I prepare for an interview?"

Interview practice

Interviews are nerve-wracking without preparation. Come and practise with us until you are ready.

"What's an alumni?"

Alumni membership

Graduating makes you a member: invitations to exclusive training, benefits and networking events hosted by major UK companies.

"Do I have to go?"

Always here for you

Not at all. Some of our first graduates are still with us. Ongoing support and training whenever you need it.

"Where do I feel like studying today?"

Flexible learning

Both, whenever. Study online from home and in the training centre – you do not have to pick one.

"Where should I do my exam?"

Examination centre

We are an accredited examination centre. Take the exam right where you studied for it.

"I wish my CV was better"

CV review

Our team reviews it, corrects it, and shows you how to polish it so it reads professionally.

"I passed! What now?"

Career progression

Aiming higher is a plan, not a hope. Our team knows the routes onward from where you have just arrived.

"It's optional, but it's exceptional"

Bonus recognition

With your permission we promote your achievement on our website and social channels, where potential employers can see it.

If something is getting in the way

Learning rarely fails for academic reasons. It fails because of a shift pattern, a caring responsibility, a laptop that died, or a fortnight where nothing went right. Tell your tutor early rather than late – the timetable, the study location and the exam date are all things we can move, and none of them can be moved retrospectively.

The certificate is the start of the conversation

Where our routes lead

IF YOU FINISH	YOU CAN GO ON TO
IT Systems Support	Systems administration, cyber security associate roles, or a Level 4 standard
Digital Applications	Business analysis, digital transformation, information systems
Artificial Intelligence	AI administration now; AI engineering or development with further training
Data Analysis	Business intelligence analysis; data science with further training
Network Engineering	Network engineering, then cyber security engineering or cloud
Software Development	Developer and engineer roles across web, back end and AI-assisted delivery
CompTIA A+ / ITF+	Network+, Security+, then CySA+ or a vendor track
Cisco CCNA	CCNP Enterprise or CCNP Security
AWS Cloud Practitioner	Developer Associate, Solutions Architect, SysOps

Alumni membership

Graduating from the academy makes you an alumnus. That is not a certificate on a wall – it is standing invitations to training, benefits and networking events hosted by some of the largest companies in the UK, and a door that stays open when you want to move again.

“Some of our first graduates are still with us. We’re not going anywhere, because we’re here to help our students reach the lifestyle they want.”

Learner support, Learning Key Training Academy

Learner stories

We publish graduates’ stories in their own words, with their permission, at learningkey.co.uk/success-stories. We do not write them for people.

Who assesses you, and who assesses us

Awarding organisations

They set the assessment and issue the certificate. They are independent of us — which is precisely what makes the qualification worth something. We cannot pass our own learners.

City & Guilds — an awarding body for 150 years.

NCFE — recognised by Ofqual, established 1981.

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT — established 1957.

Pearson VUE — 21 million exams a year across 5,500 test centres.

Certiport — foundation-level IT and digital literacy.

CIMA — the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

Technology partners

Their curriculum, their labs, their exam objectives. We are authorised to deliver it and held to their standards to keep that authorisation.

Amazon Web Services

Cisco Networking Academy

Microsoft Learn Academy

TP-Link Learn & Training Centre

Accreditors and quality bodies

Organisations that assess us rather than our learners: they inspect how the centre is run, and their accreditation is a judgement on us.

The CPD Certification Service — established 1996, present in over 100 countries.

The Digital College — accredited online vocational training.

NC Group — workforce development partner delivering Ofsted “Outstanding” apprenticeships.

Pitman Training — established 1837; over a million courses completed worldwide.

Clinical and public sector

Not IT, and worth saying plainly: these relationships sit behind the clinical and public-sector training the academy also delivers.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine

NHS

Why the distinction matters to you

A training provider that also marks its own work is not offering you very much. Here the teaching and the judgement are deliberately in different hands: we prepare you, an independent body assesses you, and a third set of organisations inspects how we run the centre. If any of the three is unhappy, you find out — which is the whole point.

Founding dates, member counts and country counts are as published by each organisation. Partner and vendor names and logos are the trademarks of their respective owners.

Three steps, and the first one is free

01 Tell us your goal

A first role, a promotion, or a specific gap you know you have. You do not need to arrive with a course in mind – most people do not.

02 We map the route

Twenty minutes with an advisor, free and with no pressure: apprenticeship, certification, or something we do not offer and will point you at instead.

03 You start

In Middlesbrough, on-site at your workplace anywhere in the UK, or live online.

Book a free consultation

Online learningkey.co.uk/career-consultations

Phone 01642 800 881

Email hello@learningkey.co.uk

In person 69 Newport Road,
Middlesbrough TS1 1LA

Questions people actually ask

How do I enrol?

Online through our secure portal, or by contacting the support team by phone, email or in person at the Newport Road centre.

Are there prerequisites?

Prerequisites are stated on each course page. Where none are stated, anyone can enrol.

How long will it take?

Certification courses run up to twelve months and vary with the syllabus. Apprenticeships run twelve to fifteen months. Check the specific course before you commit.

Can I access materials afterwards?

Yes – ongoing access to digital resources through your vendor account. If the account plays up, our IT support team sorts it.

What should I bring?

Nothing at all. It helps if you can say what you have done before and what your week looks like, but there is no form to fill in first.

What does it cost?

It depends on the route, and for apprenticeships much of it may not fall to you at all. We would rather quote you accurately than print a number that turns out to be wrong for your situation. Ask at the consultation.



Learning Key
TRAINING ACADEMY

Twenty minutes, free, no pressure.

You will leave knowing exactly what your next step is. Book at learningkey.co.uk/career-consultations, call 01642 800 881, or walk into the centre on Newport Road.

01

Apprenticeships

Six standards, 12–15 months, awarded by City & Guilds. Earn while you learn. Pages 5–8.

02

Certifications

Nine technology partners, up to twelve months, free resit on most exams. Pages 9–11.

03

Support

Weekly check-ins, CV review, interview practice, an exam centre and alumni membership. Page 12.

VISIT

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69 Newport Road
Middlesbrough TS1 1LA

TALK TO US

01642 800 881
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learningkey.co.uk

Course content, delivery arrangements, entry requirements and partner information in this prospectus were correct as published at learningkey.co.uk in August 2026. Exam versions change on vendor schedules — confirm the current version when you book. Graduate and satisfaction figures are the academy's own.