



# TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

## Technically Speaking Issue 5

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*Here you will find news & updates from members of the Harper Adams Technical Community. This is a fun, informal newsletter aimed at showcasing our skills & the hard work that is shared by many across campus. Thank you to all of those who have contributed to this edition!*

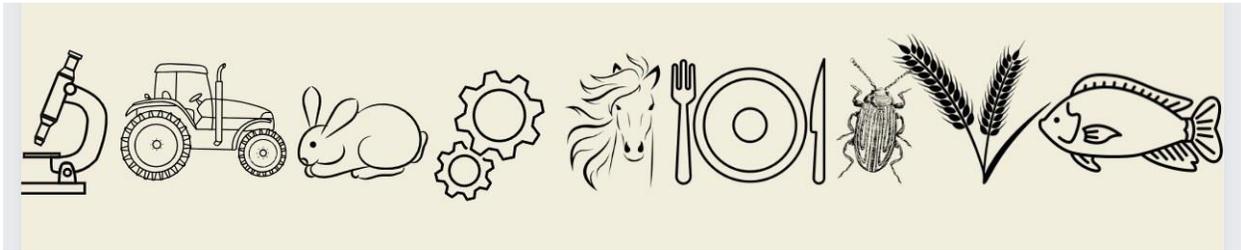
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**Please contact us if you would like to add anything to the next edition- it really can be anything!**

**Many Thanks,**

**The 'Technically Speaking' Team (Jane Cooper, Eleanor Clowes, Ashlea Hoang, Sarah Icely, Anya Paggett and Katy Eardley)**

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## Guest Editor Note



Hello Everyone,

It's a pleasure to guest-edit this edition of *Technically Speaking* and to share a little about the Centre for Crop and Environmental Sciences (CCES) here at Harper Adams University. I'm Dr. Nyambura Mwangi, a Research Assistant and Facility Manager within CCES. I am also a trained nematologist and recently completed my PhD here at Harper Adams, within the Nematology research group. Having transitioned from student to staff, it's both rewarding and humbling to now serve in the same environment that supported my own research journey. CCES brings together a range of specialist facilities within the Agriculture and Environment Department, including our glasshouses, crop science and nematology laboratories, polytunnels, net tunnels, and controlled environment cabinets. Together, these spaces support a diverse range of research projects in crop science, soil science, nematology and entomology. My role focuses on managing these facilities and supporting researchers to ensure smooth, safe, and efficient operations. I'm passionate about helping others achieve their research goals and continuing to strengthen the technical backbone that underpins Harper's research excellence. We have also

taken steps toward modernising access and management, with all our facilities now available through the ClusterMarket online booking platform. This system will simplify scheduling and improve visibility of facility availability. Looking ahead, I'm eager to see further automation and digital integration to make our services even more accessible and researcher friendly. The work within CCES represents a vital bridge between research, practice, and innovation and I'm proud to be part of the technical community driving that mission forward.

Best regards,

Dr. Nyambura Mwangi Research Assistant & Facility Manager Centre for Crop and Environmental Sciences (CCES)





## Celebrating Our Farm Technicians: The Backbone of Future Farm



At Future Farm, our technicians play a vital role in every aspect of our operations — from hands-on livestock care to supporting world-class research. Working alongside students, academics,

researchers, and visitors, our farm team bridges the gap between science and practice, ensuring excellence in animal welfare, production, and education.

Within the ruminant sector, led by Section Manager Kate Robinson, the team cares for a 400-cow pedigree Holstein herd, 550 breeding Lleyn ewes, 200 head of youngstock, 180 beef cattle, metabolism research cows, and a teaching flock. The team includes four deputy section managers, one shepherd, eight technical scientific officers, and one placement student — all bringing unique expertise to the farm.

While many of our staff might not immediately describe themselves as “technicians,” their work truly defines the role. From blood and rumen sampling to locomotion scoring and milk testing, our technicians perform critical regulated procedures under Professor Liam Sinclair’s Home Office project licence, as well as a wide range of essential farm management tasks. Even the less glamorous jobs, like penning livestock for tutorials or the all-important pressure washing, are carried out with pride and professionalism.

Our technical staff also play an instrumental part in research and trials, supporting ongoing Home Office studies in dairy and sheep, as well as a variety of PhD, Master's, HRP, and commercial projects. Beyond the science, the team leads over 60 farm visits each year — welcoming students, schools, industry partners, and community groups. A highlight of our outreach calendar is Open Farm Sunday, where we share our passion for British farming and inspire the next generation to consider careers in agriculture.

This year has been especially memorable, as Future Farm proudly received the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers (RABDF) Gold Cup — the highest honour in British dairy farming. From over 1,250 eligible farms, we were humbled to be named the 2024 winners. The achievement reflects the collective skill, dedication, and teamwork of everyone involved. July’s Gold Cup Open Day welcomed over 1,000 visitors and 60 trade stands, transforming the farm into a vibrant showcase of innovation and excellence.

As we continue striving toward Net Zero by 2030, the ruminant team is driving progress through sustainable practices such as wintering cattle on fodder beet, growing turnips for sheep forage, and establishing new herbal leys. We’ve also celebrated the first crop of home-bred Aberblack × Lleyn lambs and are preparing our first ProCross F1 heifers to join the milking herd in 2026.

From supporting national events like the National Young Farmers’ Club Stock Judging Finals to hosting visits from organisations including Tesco, Muller, Morrisons, the NFU, and the RSPCA, the farm remains a hub of learning and collaboration.

None of these achievements would be possible without the commitment, expertise, and hard work of our technical team. Our technicians are the unsung heroes of Future Farm — delivering innovation from the ground up, every single day.











## Engineering Tour



On Tuesday 16th September, staff were invited to coffee and cake, followed by a tour of engineering and finished off with an optional off-roading experience in the staff jeep.

Starting at 11am, attendees were welcomed to help themselves to tea, coffee and cakes whilst having a quick chat and catch-up with colleagues.

Shortly after this, everyone was led into the lecture theatre where they picked up a high-vis jacket and took a seat ready for a quick 10-minute overview of the engineering department and what it's been up to, presented by Ian Moorcroft (head of engineering).

Followed by a quick Q&A whilst everyone finished their teas and coffees. Once done, the group were split into two, office staff and technical staff (as this pretty much divided everyone up equally).

The office staff followed Ian Moorcroft for their tour of the engineering facilities. The technical staff followed David Clare, what ensued was a highly interesting and thorough display of the department. Including guest segments provided by Andy Jones and Tom Williamson in the STEM area and electronics area, respectively.

The whole tour lasted for just over an hour and at the end was the option to hop into a jeep and take a wild and exciting tour of the off-roading track, driven by Thomas Howes.

The whole event was a great success, those who attended were latter sent an optional form for feedback and the unanimous feedback was positive, with the only sticking points being the limited amount of promotion, being the same week as graduation and the short-notice between invites going out and the actual event taking place.

After the success of the engineering tour there is now an interest in tours of other departments. The hope is to offer tours out for all departments in the future. If your department is interested, please reach out to Victoria Talbot via email [vtalbot@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:vtalbot@harper-adams.ac.uk)<sup>1</sup>

## **Feedback Snippets**

*"The tour was fantastic - really interesting. As a new member of staff it really showcased the work done, the commercial relevance and the resources available."*

*"I really enjoyed seeing what the department as a whole do, and what the students work on during their different years. It was great to see the outreach work being done with schools too. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed it, and I hope more departments do similar tours."*

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<sup>1</sup><mailto:vtalbot@harper-adams.ac.uk>

*"Really interesting, very impressed with the level of work the students do. Good to see the whole range from tractors to drones and 3D printers"*

*"The tour was fantastic, very informative, interesting and engaging. Thank you for the opportunity to take a look around!"*











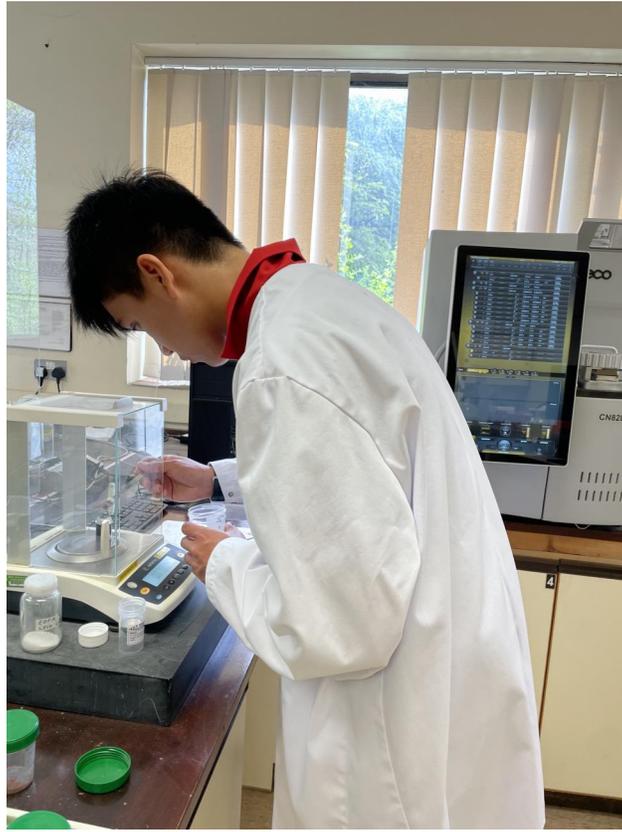


## HARP and Colloquium



Earlier in the year, Harper welcomed nine students from Haberdashers Adams Grammar School for to take part in the inaugural HARP (Harper Adams Research Projects), devised by Jane Cooper, Ellie Clowes and Tom Leigh. The students spent two weeks in the labs carrying out supervised research projects and we are very grateful to Joe Roberts, Sarah Icely, Ben Clunie and Alex Watson-Lazowski, Keir Flowerdew and Emily Wells for their support with this. Projects included looking at DNA genotyping in wheat, investigating meat quality and fat content of economy, premium and organic labelled steaks, the bioactive effects of various essential oils against the greater wax moth and moth sampling to find differences in species in canopy and ground level. All students carried out their research and wrote a detailed scientific report, before returning on September 19th to present their findings at the HARP colloquium! We are grateful to George Baker, Labs Placement Student for chairing the colloquium for us. The audience included HARP staff, technicians and supervisors as well as members of the students' family, HAGS teachers and technical staff as well as Kate Brown; Head of Education Improvement Services for Capita, Entrust. Special thanks also go to Stephen Evans, Sebnem Kurhan, Jamie Cundy and Todd Jenkins for critically assessing the spoken presentations. Each student received an award for

successfully taking part in the scheme. There were additional awards for the highest achiever (donated by Global Impact) and the Mark Robinson award in recognition of dedication, positive attitude and engagement with the scheme. A huge thanks also goes to Rachel Brookes, Widening Participation Lead for all of her support in organising the project and the colloquium, also to Nikki Fletcher, Head of Biology, HGS and the Ruth Crichton, Deputy Head HGS for giving the vote of thanks.















## Placement Students Graduate!

Congratulations to all of our placement students from 2023/24 who graduated in September - we are very proud of you all!



1 - Shayna Cooke (Companion Animal House placement student) - BSc (Hons) Veterinary Bioscience



2 - Sam Buck (Laboratories placement student) - BSc (Hons) Veterinary Bioscience



3 - Erin Spruce (Companion Animal House placement student) - BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour and Welfare (Non-Clinical)

And not forgetting congratulations to Alexandra Balogh (Laboratories placement student) - BSc (Hons) Veterinary Bioscience who didn't make it to the ceremony.

## Technicians attend HAU Conferences



4 - Some of the Technicians in attendance at this years Harper Research Conference in September 2025.

Many technicians made it to the HAU Research Conference on Tuesday 2nd September 2025, it was great to hear about the many different areas of research taking place across campus, and also a great opportunity to network and chat. Many of the presentations and posters this year

included fair attribution to technical support which was fantastic to see - thank you to Becca Collier, Alex Smart, Bonaventure Ufitinema, Ashley Garrison, Jamie Cundy, Ronald Manjoro, Dr Hannah Shaw, Dr Max Davis, Dr Sarah Morgan, Nupur Tailor, Dr Hattie Roberts and Dr Sarah Icely.

Some members of staff also attended the Teaching and Learning Conference on Wednesday 10th September. Lots of ideas were gained from this and attendance by technical staff would definitely be recommended for future events. This was the first time that HAU have put on a session specifically with technicians/TAs/CEs in mind - Tim Savage (who was Director of Technical Learning at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and also 'Outstanding' TEF outcome in 2022 for staff professional development) spoke about 'sharing best practices in technical teaching and support of learning'. The 'Pass the Practice' session was also really useful - some of the 'PgC-ers' shared their practical approaches to teaching - members of the Technically Speaking team were especially interested in George Aspey's session on Podcasting.

## Technicians win T&L Awards!

This month we've interviewed Danielle Henderson-Holding from the Elizabeth Creek Laboratories and Charles Wright from Engineering, regarding the awards they won at the Learning + Teaching Conference last month.

### **Danielle Henderson-Holding**



1. What is your name, job title and the department you work in?

*Danielle Henderson-Holding, Senior Microbiology, Molecular Biology and Clinical Chemistry technician*

2. What inspired you to become a technician in this field?

*My dad was a lab manager at Wolverhampton for 15 years so always been around science*

3. What's the most rewarding part of your job?

*When a student gets the results, they were hoping for*

4. What award did you win?

*Hidden Gem*

5. Why did you win the award?

*Explaining the process of PCRs thoroughly and making the student feel confident when they start their work that they will have the knowledge needed and I will be available to help.*

6. How do you build strong relationship with students in your role?

*I always say that nothing is 'the end of the world' even when experiments need repeating it's not a catastrophe, so then they feel the pressure has been lifted.*

7. How did it feel to be nominated by a student?

*Lovely!*

8. Can you tell us about a memorable moment working with this student that may have encouraged them to nominate you?

*When they saw the DNA bands appear on the gel and new the PCR had worked.*

**Charles Wright**



1. What is your name, job title and the department you work in?

*Charlie Wright, Engineering Technician & Rallying the Wright Way Team Principle*

2. What inspired you to become a technician in this field?

*Inspiring students into motorsport careers*

3. What's the most rewarding part of your job?

*Seeing progression from students that come into the team with little to no experience becoming capable*

4. What award did you win?

*Student Collaboration Award*

5. Why did you win the award?

*Enabling students to run the team with all the tools and capability they require and collaborating to improve our processes and performance*

6. How do you build strong relationship with students in your role?

*Build up trust and respect - I don't ask anything that I wouldn't do myself, if they can't you show them how*

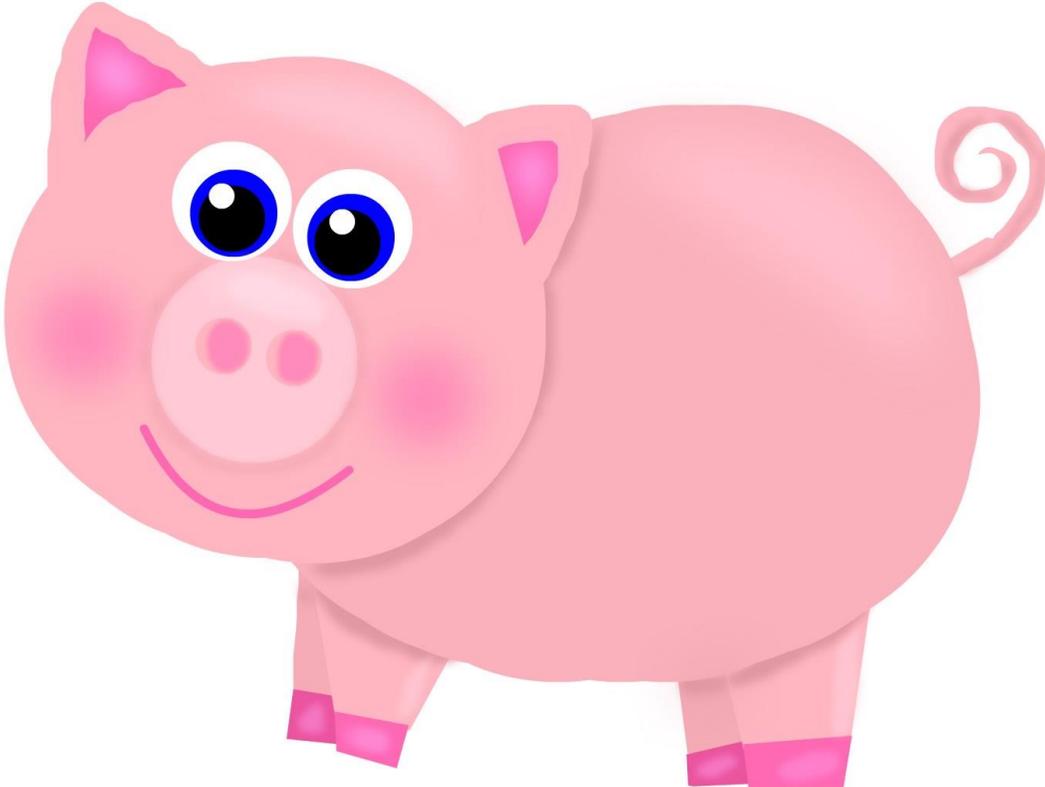
7. How did it feel to be nominated by a student?

*It felt great, this is what we spend countless hours towards is the students achieving something*

8. Can you tell us about a memorable moment working with this student that may have encouraged them to nominate you?

*Many! Aha, maybe the late nights in the workshop with a takeaway or trophies we have won together!*

News from the Pig Unit





Sarah and George did an introductory MIG welding course a couple of weeks ago, which will be very useful as the pigs seem to know exactly which bits of metal are getting old and worn!

There will be a new member of the pig unit team starting on Monday 20th October. **Lynne Shakeshaft**, who is a former HAU student will be joining us from JMW farms where she ran their farrowing house, so the pig unit are really looking forward to welcoming her to the team.

### **Future Farm's Pig Unit shortlisted for series of national awards**

An award-winning Pig Unit at Harper Adams University has once again been shortlisted for series of National Pig Awards.

The Unit and team members on the University's Future Farm<sup>2</sup> are shortlisted in four separate categories at this year's awards, set to be held in November.

Monogastric Sector Manager Matt Swaine is one of three people shortlisted for Unit Manager of the Year, while the Unit is shortlisted in the Indoor Pig Producer of the Year and Herd Productivity categories.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.futurefarm.zone/>

The unit and team are also one of four shortlisted finalists for the NPA Allied Industry Member of the Year category – which will be voted on by members of the public.

Matt said: “To be nominated in the National Pig Awards again is a great honour - we are very proud of the sows as they do most of the work, with their remarkable performance.

“It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all the members of the Pig Team, their attention to detail and care and welfare of the pigs is outstanding.

“We all share the same goal - to succeed and thrive to get the best performance we can from the unit.

“Indeed, one of the main attributes to the success of the unit is the team and their dedication to the animals to get the best from them.

“The sows are very placid, always wanting a fuss.

“For the unit to thrive we need the herd to retain the high health status we have - this means high welfare, the right nutrition, biosecurity, our cleaning and disinfection and vaccination programmes, and great attention to detail.

“With all this in place, we have healthy happy pigs that keep performing.”

Reflecting on both his own award and on the NPA Allied Industry Member of the Year award, Matt added: “It’s a great honour to be in the finals - being nominated for the award means a lot to me as I have been working with pigs for more than 30 years.

“To be recognised nationally is great, after 30 years working with pigs it still fascinates me seeing what these animals can achieve.

“Meanwhile the award for allied industry member isn’t just about the success of the Pig Unit: it is for all the work Harper Adams University do to help the allied industry.

“That means things like the Pig Industry Scholarship programme in partnership with AHDB, the work the university does for placement students in the pig sector, the knowledge exchange we offer to industry, the research work that we do - the list is endless!

“If we are successful in winning this award, it all be an award for the whole University to be proud of.”

## News from the Companion Animal House

New Animal additions:

Last week we collected three new Persian Jirds. They have settled in really well so far and we are starting to see their personalities coming through.

Kristoff & Sven - new rats who were born here in January came back to us.

And three new Axolotls: Gamora, Drax and Axl.

Also, here is a welcome note from our new placement student for this academic year, Alex Harris!

*I am currently studying BSc Zoology at Harper in which I am on placement (3rd year) at the CAM house.*

*In the future I hope to either work as a vet or in animal training as that is what I am most passionate for. I enjoy learning about animal behaviour and how we can shape it and use it for a purpose, as well as learning how different drugs can produce a certain behaviour.*

*At home I currently have four budgies, in which I have trained to perform different tasks.*

*My research aims are to understand whether an animal's natural behaviour is more important or if the environment matters more in captivity.*











## News from the Library

### **Celebrating Student Satisfaction**

We're delighted to share that Harper Adams University Library has achieved a fantastic result in the 2025 National Student Survey (NSS). With a 95.1% positive rating for how well our resources support student learning, we ranked **7th among university libraries in the UK**. This places us in excellent company and reflects the hard work and commitment of our team to providing high-quality support, resources, and spaces for our students. A huge thank you to everyone who helps make the Library such a welcoming and valuable part of campus life.

### **Library 'On Tour'**

This term, we're launching a new initiative: the Library is going *on tour*! Our aim is to raise student awareness of the wide range of resources and support we offer - especially among those who might not usually visit the Library. By meeting students where they are, we hope to make our services more visible and accessible. Keep an eye out for Michael, who'll be popping up around the Edgmond and Telford campuses, ready to chat and answer questions.

### **Wellbeing Collaboration**

Welcome Week gave us a brilliant opportunity to collaborate with the Vet Nursing and Vet Physio teams. Together, we offered new students a variety of engaging activities designed to promote wellbeing and help them build connections. It was fantastic to see colleagues combining their skills to enhance the student experience - and I was more than happy to share my love of yoga!









## Sustainability News



5 - Congratulations to Elizabeth Creak and Princess Margaret Labs sustainability team

The Elizabeth Creak and Princess Margaret laboratories have undergone a sustainability audit using the LEAF framework devised by UCL. Following extensive work by a sustainability team (Ellie Clowes, Anya Paggett, Rachel Cope, Ashlea Hoang, Li Oldershaw, Danielle Henderson-Holding, Jane Cooper, Sinead Hall and George Baker) the labs are pleased to reveal they have been awarded a BRONZE LEAF award

## LEAF HELPING TO MAKE SCIENCE SUSTAINABLE

LEAF is an easy to use programme to help you integrate sustainability practices into your lab; supporting you to do your science in a climate friendly way.

"LEAF enables scientists to reduce waste, save money, and reduce the carbon emissions of our research"

Saroj Saurya  
Postdoctoral Laboratory  
Manager,  
University of Oxford

By taking part in the programme, laboratories will reduce their carbon emissions and create an environment that supports research quality. To learn more, visit [www.ucl.ac.uk/sustainable/staff/leaf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sustainable/staff/leaf) or contact us at [LEAF@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:LEAF@ucl.ac.uk)

You can see a few example actions below

CATEGORY	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Waste	Provide recycling bins in the lab	Single-use plastic waste has been reduced (guidance provided)	Recycling rates have been increased, or overall waste produced has been decreased
People	Samples owned by departing staff are cleared or tracked	The lab has engaged other labs on LEAF and sustainability	One action to reduce travel has been implemented
Sample & Chemical Management	Labels are legible, and there's a common labeling system in place	Procedures are in place in case cold storage equipment breaks down	At least 80% of all samples and/or chemicals are clearly catalogued
Equipment	Equipment is turned off when not in use	There is a system in place for communal equipment booking	Excess equipment is repaired, sold, and/or donated
Ventilation	There is a clear reporting system for building issues	Fume cupboard sashes are kept closed when not in use	Solvent vapours are condensed and disposed and not released into the atmosphere

The labs sustainability group will be continuing to maintain their bronze status and be working towards a silver level. If you would like to be involved on the committee you would be very welcome. We are hoping other facilities will also join the LEAF registration.

## Knowledge exchange visit with laboratory manager from Plumpton College



A commitment to technicians at Harper Adams has led to the University hosting a knowledge exchange for a Laboratory Manager from Sussex.

Declan Axon, who manages the laboratories at Plumpton College, was invited to take part in the exchange after meeting Harper Adams' Senior Laboratory Technician and Labs Outreach Officer Jane Cooper at a networking event hosted by the Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy (ITSS).

He said: "It was very much by chance.

"I was looking for ways I could develop my career and skills and I was searching for contact details for my former course leader when I was doing my masters - and I found a section of their website dedicated to the Technician Commitment.

"Through that, I found the ITSS just in time to sign up for some of their SpringFest CPD sessions including their session Networking for Technicians who hate networking.

“I just happened to be sorted into a breakout room with Jane Cooper and it was the first time I had talked with another technician covering the same topics I did. This led to a very helpful online meeting between me, Jane and Dr Victoria Talbot, after which we agreed to apply for the ITSS funded knowledge exchange.”

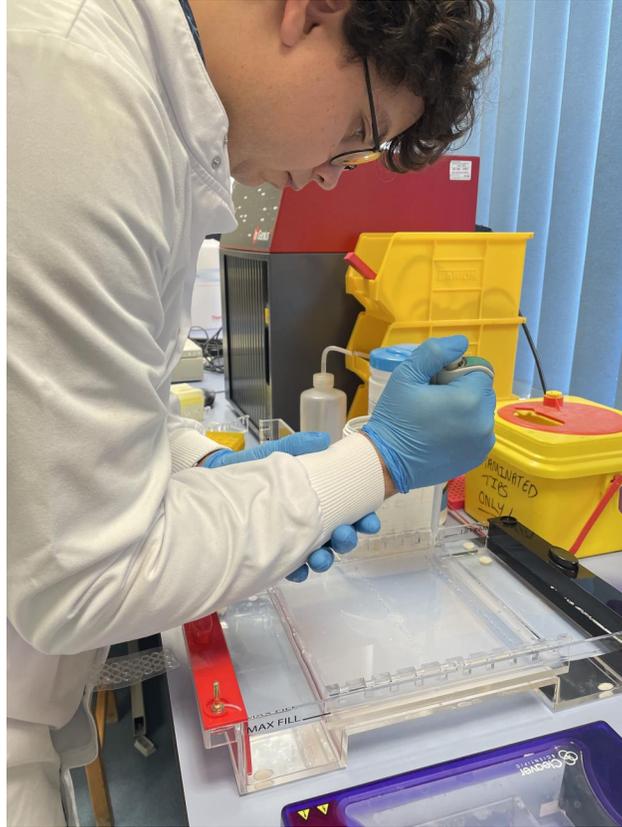
During his packed visit, Declan was able to immerse himself in the work of the Laboratories team – as well as discover more about research, teaching and learning at Harper Adams.

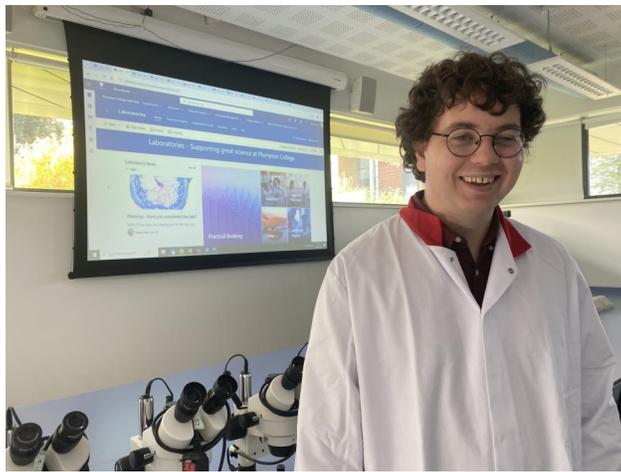
He said “I observed processes, facilities and equipment to find ways that I can more efficiently manage our labs at Plumpton, as well as ways we can develop our lab provision. I also practiced certain lab techniques such as PCR and gel electrophoresis to improve my abilities.

“I visited attended the Teaching and Learning conference to attend sessions such as Best Practices in Technical Teaching and Pass the Practice to discover practices we can implement in the labs I manage.

“Finally, I gave a presentation to the Laboratory Team on effective SharePoint and Microsoft Power Automate/Power Apps usage in technical management and training. I have quite a few bespoke systems I have developed to give me more time away from the computer and demonstrated to the team at Harper how they work and the basics of how to make their own.

“I am very impressed by the facilities and the overall staff commitment to research. The grounds and locations are both very scenic and every member of staff I have interacted with were extremely welcoming and helpful and made me feel at home – and the food was also top notch!”







Would you like to add some news?

Contact us on teams -

HAU Technical Network | General | Microsoft Teams<sup>3</sup>

or email-

- Jane - [jcooper@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:jcooper@harper-adams.ac.uk)
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- Katy - [keardley@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:keardley@harper-adams.ac.uk)
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- Anya - [apaggett@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:apaggett@harper-adams.ac.uk)

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<sup>3</sup><https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3Aj5CXP-wKybzqwxlgAbIVUteQMigvqzYLZeFDblTU8Os1%40thread.tacv2/General?groupId=a21e3842-8b5a-437e-a9cb-9c630b6d4dd5&tenantId=>