



## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Title of the post:** Farm Secretary  
[Permanent, Full Time]

**Department:** Harper Adams University Farm

**Reporting to:** Farm Manager

### **The University**

#### **Background**

Harper Adams University is the leading UK Higher Education (HE) institution focused on the land-based and food supply-chain sectors with an important national role in these subject areas.

Situated on a single campus in rural and scenic Shropshire, the University, and its surrounding area, provide an excellent working and living environment for staff and students alike, yet the University campus is only one hour from the UK's second city of Birmingham. Around 3,000 HE students attend the University, primarily on sandwich courses which include a year-long industrial placement. Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are offered. The University also welcomes individuals who wish to undertake CPD or similar professional training to support their careers in the agri-food chain and rural industries.

The University was founded by Thomas Harper Adams in 1901 on the original farmland of the Harper Adams Estate. The University estate includes amenity areas, woodland, and a commercial farm of 205 hectares; with rented land the total area farmed is approximately 640 hectares, spread over several locations with cereals, potatoes, forage maize and grassland carrying a dairy herd, sheep, beef, pig and poultry units.

The Privy Council awarded taught degree awarding powers to Harper Adams in 1996 and research degree awarding powers in 2006. Full University Title was granted by Her Majesty's Privy Council in December 2012. The University changed its legal status to that of a Company Limited by Guarantee in July 2012 and remains one of a small number of Universities which are Registered Charities. Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal became the University's first Chancellor in 2013.

#### **Academic Provision**

The University offers a wide range of courses including Foundation and Honours degrees, in addition to shorter awards designed to meet the continuing professional development needs of those already in the workplace. The subjects are wide ranging and cover Agriculture, Animal Studies, Business, Countryside, Engineering, Food and Land & Property Management. The University has also focused on developing its postgraduate education and research and there are a growing number of postgraduate students at both diploma, masters and PhD level.

Harper Adams has built up an international reputation for the quality of its courses and has achieved the highest possible ratings in recent Quality Assurance Agency reviews, and holds a Gold Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award. There is active encouragement of research and the University took part in the last Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise. 56% of our submitted research was rated either internationally excellent or world leading and 100% was rated of international quality. Our extensive programme of research and education for professionals in the land-based and food chain sectors supports a high profile of business and community reach-out work, short course delivery for businesses and technology

transfer activities supported by strong industry links and partnerships with companies such as JCB and Marks & Spencer amongst many others.

## **Recognition**

Harper Adams is consistently positioned highly in a range of national ratings, performance measures and league tables.

In the period since 2011, Harper Adams has won six Times Higher Education Awards including Outstanding Fundraising Initiative (2014), and has been shortlisted for fourteen other THE awards. In 2018, the Times Higher has shortlisted the university for the prestigious title of University of the Year, putting Harper Adams in the top six universities in the country. The finals are in June 2018.

In the 2016 and 2017 Whatuni? Student Choice Awards, based on student reviews, Harper Adams took the title of University of the Year and won the Student Support and Job Prospects gold awards, plus silver and bronze in further categories. In 2018 the University was runner up for the University of the Year title and won 3 gold awards, 3 silver and 3 bronze. It is the only University to win Student Support since the awards began four years ago and has won the category for best job prospects for three years running and best courses and lecturers for two years running.

Harper Adams ranked second in the 2016 Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey. In the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2017, the University was ranked 36th, the highest position yet achieved by a post-1992 university, and was awarded the title of Modern University of the Year. In 2017 it was the highest ranked modern University for the second year in a row. In the QS World Rankings for Agriculture and Forestry published in March 2018, Harper Adams was ranked second in the UK for academic reputation and second in the world for its reputation with employers.

## **Facilities**

Harper Adams has extensive, well-equipped facilities and is constantly investing in its campus. Facilities include a range of modern teaching facilities and an extensive library, a variety of IT suites including an engineering design centre, newly extended laboratory facilities, a field laboratory and a livestock project centre, a glasshouse complex, an agricultural engineering unit with a large covered soil working area and a number of sustainable technology installations. In 2013 a new teaching building and a new agricultural engineering innovation centre opened. In 2015/16 these were followed by two further buildings, one for veterinary services and one for entomology, and new halls of residence. Further new facilities opened in the period since 2017 include new laboratories, an Agri-Tech Innovation Hub and SMART Dairy Unit. Capital funding to support the development of many of these facilities has been provided through the work of the Development Trust. The University provides a range of training and professional development opportunities via its staff development programme.

## **Catering and Sports Facilities**

The University's Students' Union operates a small gym and squash courts that staff may use on the payment of a nominal fee. The University has an open-air swimming pool and bowling green that are available for staff use during the summer period and new tennis courts have recently been developed. A variety of University catering outlets provide access to lunch facilities on campus.

For further details about the University, please visit our website:

<http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk>

## **The Harper Adams University Farm**

The University was founded in 1901 as a result of a bequest from Thomas Harper Adams. The campus and the main farm area sit within the original estate farmed by Mr Harper Adams.

The main objectives of the University farm are:

- In operating a profitable commercial business, we can also provide resources for teaching and research, linking policies and principles with profitable commercial practice.
- In assisting students, the farm supplies management information, a diverse range of enterprises, material for tutorials and practical's and working units on which to undertake research in crop, animal, business and estate management subject areas.
- In welcoming visitors, the farm illustrates commercial and research activities of interest to farmers, advisers, business and the general public.

The University estate consists of amenity areas, woodland, and a commercial farm of over 640 hectares. Cropping is based on cereals, oilseeds, forage maize, Lucerne and grassland. Livestock enterprises on the estate include a dairy herd, sheep flocks, beef herds, pig and poultry units. In addition, neighboring farms are contracted to produce additional forage crops.

The farm exhibits a range of soil types, taking a North/South line through the main farm; the University site is situated in a shallow basin, with land rising gently to the South where the poultry unit is located. To the North the land is relatively level, the lower ground is mostly heavy clay with a large peat basin on the western edge of the farm. This land has a short machinery working season and is liable to structural instability. Considerable care is taken to minimise winter traffic of farm machinery on these fields. As the land rises to the South the soils become increasingly lighter and sandier over shallow sandstone. The farm is made up of a number of blocks; the main estate owned by Harper Adams University surrounds the campus along with a further parcel of owned land less than five miles away. In addition to the core area there are a number of blocks ranging from a few hectares to 50 hectares located within a few miles of the main farm. Approximately 66% of the area farmed is the result of various tenancy and contract farming arrangements. In 2018 the University purchased an additional 92-hectare block on its southern boundary further adding to the land resource.

## **The Dairy Herd**

The dairy herd some years ago has expanded to 380 cows and moved to a Greenfield dairy unit. The University dairy herd operates commercially, alongside farm-based research and teaching facilities. The unit features a comprehensively equipped 40-point internal rotary parlour (GEA), backing gate, segregation gates and a viewing gallery. Housing consists of two spacious, light and airy cow buildings. One building is entirely cubicle based the second building is half cubicles and half straw yard. In addition, the new dairy development includes a new silage pit, slurry system and dedicated food storage facilities together in addition there has been a general refurbishment and improvement to field infrastructure. Within the dairy there is also a dedicated trials facility which allows up to 60 cows to be individually fed and monitored for research and development purposes.

The dairy herd is largely a pedigree Holstein Friesian herd. The herd's objective is the efficient production of milk with careful attention to animal health, target yields are 10,000 litres per cow. Cows are housed throughout the transition period on straw (3 weeks pre-calving and 3 weeks post calving). Post calving cows are checked daily to ensure they are in suitable condition to be transferred into the high yielding group or into a dedicated Heifer group. Cows in the high yielding group are fed indoors and given access to a loafing paddock. Cows and heifers are then transferred into a low yielding group once they are confirmed in calf and their yield has fallen below 22 litres. During this time a greater emphasis is placed on producing milk from forage with cows being grazed during the summer and fed a low concentrate TMR during the housing period.

All replacement animals for the dairy herd are reared on site. Animals unsuitable for breeding replacements are bred to Hereford or continental bulls to generate beef animals a proportion of which will be used to stock the University beef unit. Surplus calves are sold direct to a TB isolation unit.

Calves are reared using a hutch-based system through to weaning at approximately 6 weeks thereafter the calves are transferred to group hutches until approximately 3 months of age. From this point young stock go to grazing or a dedicated young stock rearing building which is a combination of straw yards and cubicles. .

Key to success of the young stock rearing enterprise is the continuous monitoring of animals throughout the two-year rearing programme; this is achieved through continuous growth monitoring and rigid implementation of rearing protocols. The target is to generate well grown healthy animals which enter the dairy herd at two years of age.

In 2018 an additional dairy unit opened, this is a 60-cow unit that is used to support research work particularly precision dairy technology. The cows are milked by a robot and other automatic equipment such as robot scraping and feed pushing feature.

## **The Sheep Flock**

The flock is kept on two rented farms close to Wellington and Telford. The grazing extends to approximately 184 ha most of which was reclaimed after open cast coal mining.

The flock was started in 2008 using 100 ewes (genetics from Lleyn flock 619), 100 additional ewes were purchased in 2009 from flock 1547. Since then home bred replacements have been retained and the flock has steadily increased to 1000 ewes mated in 2020.

The flock has been performance recording through Signet for 4 years which includes birth weight, lambing ease, birth date, sire and dam, 8 week and 21 week weights and fat and muscle depths. HAU is a member of the Performance Recorded Lleyn Breeders Group (PRLBG) – a progressive group of Lleyn breeders who are committed to breed improvement.

All animals are EID recorded. In 2020 the flock was divided into three groups:

1. 300 ewes lambing in February
2. 180 ewes lambing in March
3. 520 ewes lambing in April (including 65 ewe lambs)

The ewes are single sire mated so that dam and sire information is accurate. The ewes have been divided into two key groups – Flock A – selected on superior maternal EBVs (top 50% of the flock) and flock B which have poorer EBVs. The A flock are mated to pure-bred Lleyn rams selected on EBVs and the B flock are either mated to Lleyn or Charollais rams. Lambs are weaned at about 14 weeks of age and the majority finished off grass or stubble turnips.

The flock is MV accredited and EAE monitored. All ewes are vaccinated against toxoplasmosis and are in the Heptavac P + system and parasite control is monitored through FEC testing. Liver fluke has just started to cause problems. A comprehensive health plan is formulated and reviewed with the farm vet each year.

Facilities at the farm do not allow for detailed scientific research but the flock has been used for two feeding trials in the last two years (a yeast derived additive included either in feed blocks or compound feed, and a super level of trace elements in a compound feed).

Currently there are two projects underway:

1. Worm resistance in sheep (funded by European Innovation Partnership)  
This project is in collaboration with the PRLBG, Signet and Glasgow University and is investigating the use of FEC and immunoglobulin A in saliva as indicators of an animal's resistance to worms.
2. Challenge Sheep (supported by AHDB Beef and Lamb)  
The HAU flock is one of 13 commercial flocks taking part in this project and the aim is to increase understanding of whether first mating as a ewe lamb (around 7 months of age) or as a shearling (around 18 months of age) is more cost effective (lifetime productivity).

## **Cropping**

Cropping is a combination of forage crops for the livestock enterprises and combinable crops these are roughly split 60:40 forage and arable. Combinable crops are principally wheat, barley and oilseed rape, additionally a significant area is devoted to a range of research and trial crops each year. The farm carries out all its own field operations other than combining, cultivation systems are a combination of minimum tillage and ploughing largely dictated by previous cropping.

Forage production is a critical element of the farm, forage is principally in the form of Grass, Lucerne, Maize

and Red Clover, quality is paramount and consequently a lot of attention is paid to forage production, all operations including harvesting are carried out in house. Aspects of forage production are also a major theme in research projects and consequently the farm frequently work with academic staff to generate very specific forage crops.

## **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

The Farm Secretary has responsibility for the business side of our farm and for coordinating financial, legislative and management processes and records. This is a varied role in which the post-holder will play an important part in helping to support the work of the Farm Manager, farm staff, students, researchers and teaching staff. The specific duties associated with the post may therefore vary from time to time, according to the requirements of the role. It is essential for the post-holder to be flexible and willing to respond positively to new challenges.

The role of Farm Secretary reports to the Farm Manager and the main duties and responsibilities are;

1. Support the Farm Manager in developing the farm business plan and budget. Review farm accounts and budgets to ensure they are accurate by enterprise. Monitor the farm budget to ensure that targets are met. Arrange cross-departmental charges. Enter financial transactions in financial recording systems and establish enterprise costings. Generate enterprise gross margins and performance data. Analyse and provide performance data and historical financial data, as required by the Farm Manager.
2. Set up new suppliers. Raise purchase orders. Code and reconcile invoices. Authorise departmental payments within the threshold of responsibility on behalf of the Farm Manager. Manage and reconcile farm procurement cards. Administer contract farming agreements including reconciling invoices, contract charges and crop purchase transactions.
3. Manage the procurement and distribution of fuel, including monitoring usage by other departments and arranging cross charging. Manage other procurement operations as directed by the Farm Manager. Manage farm staff accommodation, including the provision of utilities and rents.
4. Code remittance of sales and raise invoices.
5. Arrange and coordinate stocktakes. Manage the register of assets for financial management, insurance and servicing purposes to include provision for the recording of asset disposals.
6. Represent the farm at internal and external network events, obtain current farm health and safety information and provide updates to the Farm Manager and staff. Report accidents and near misses. Provide and record PPE and clothing issued to staff.
7. Coordinate short courses, industry events, visits and other activities hosted by the farm.
8. Arrange and deliver department inductions for new employees. Maintain a central register of staff training and licenses. Organise staff travel and accommodation.
9. Prepare and collate papers and data for committee meetings, including the Governor's Farm Strategy Committee. Provide and collate data to support the activities of the four farm environmental action groups.
10. Collate and compile field soil analyses, ensuring all results remain valid and are available to all stakeholders. Analyse and report application data and trends. Curate the farm data archive and make it available for staff and student enquiries.
11. Collect and record technical performance data, including field operations, yields, inputs, outputs. Prepare and provide data to support research projects and teaching demands. Work with colleagues across the University to provide access to farm data and resources.

12. Ensure overall institutional compliance (i.e. all livestock departments) with livestock movement legislation. Complete all livestock registration, recording and identification processes, including maintaining BCMS records, pre-movement testing, food chain information forms, passports, and TB movement licenses. Procure and distribute animal identification tags. Ensure all temporary land use registrations are maintained and renewed when due. Apply for both sheep and cattle pedigree registrations. Maintain the DEFRA sheep inventory.
13. Ensure that the farm remains compliant with various assurance schemes applying to enterprises on the farm. Maintain own CPD on changes to assurance schemes and ensure any additional requirements are communicated to staff.
14. Support the recruitment, appointment and induction of placement students. Coordinate the use of casual workers in accordance with legislation and university policies, including the administration of timesheets. Ensure compliance with working time and right to work legislation.
15. Manage the Farm Manager's electronic and desk diary and coordinate meetings, committees and events that involve the Farm Manager. Source, collate, analyse and summarise data relating to the farm's metrics and benchmark against internal and external performance indicators on behalf of the Farm Manager. Create documents for the Farm Manager, including letters, reports, spreadsheets and presentations.
16. Maintain the farm's insurance policy, provide relevant records to the farm's insurers and manage any claims. Liaise with University Insurance officer to ensure cover is complete and not duplicated.
17. Administer the portfolio of farm land tenancies and contract farming arrangements to include ensuring rent payments, contract renewals and appropriate notices are adhered to.
18. Collate meter readings and returns in accordance with boreholes and reservoir abstraction licences.
19. Be a first point of contact for all farm enquiries, both externally and internally.
20. All other duties and responsibilities commensurate with the post and the salary range of the grade.

The University has a positive policy on staff development and the appointee will be encouraged to undertake any additional training relevant to the post.

### Personal Specification

	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
Experience	<p>Experience of working within a complex agricultural and/ or farm management environment where a high level of attention to detail is required</p> <p>Experience of working flexibly and taking responsibility for delivering high quality work, where requirements may be subject to change and deadlines may be challenging at busy times of the year.</p> <p>Experience of delivering work accurately and on time, including the provision of reports with demonstrable attention to detail and maintaining accurate records and information.</p> <p>Experience of data input/ management,</p>	<p>Experience of working in Higher Education or an understanding of higher education</p> <p>Experience of working in a customer facing role requiring interpersonal skills, diplomacy and effective problem solving</p>

	curating and presenting historical and contemporary data.	
Knowledge/Skills	<p>Understanding of basic financial systems and budgeting.</p> <p>Excellent written and oral communication skills</p> <p>Computer literate, and able to use the full range of Microsoft Office products (particularly Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and Adobe Acrobat Reader).</p> <p>Understanding of UK agriculture.</p>	<p>Graduate-level qualifications in agriculture and/ or business administration, or equivalent experience</p> <p>Understanding of the university environment.</p> <p>Understanding of employment legislation, policies and systems in a progressive work environment.</p> <p>Knowledge of farming funding and schemes</p>
Personal Qualities	<p>Proactive with a high level of motivation, enthusiasm and drive to create an efficient and capable farm office.</p> <p>The ability to work independently, and use their own initiative to ensure the completion of tasks.</p>	<p>An ability to create a positive team environment and proactively engage the team to achieve the farms objectives.</p>

## Conditions of Service

The national recommendations which have arisen from the negotiations between UCEA and the unions recognised at national level, the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES), directly affect the terms and conditions insofar as they have been adopted by the Board of Governors.

<b>Salary</b>	The commencing salary will be within the range £27,511 to £30,046 per annum. The point of entry will be dependent upon relevant qualifications and experience. Salaries are paid monthly, in arrears, by credit transfer on the 28 <sup>th</sup> day of the month.
<b>Contract Term</b>	This is a permanent, full time role. The employment may be terminated during the course of the contract by either party giving one months' notice in writing.
<b>Hours of Work</b>	The routine working week is 37 hours over Monday to Friday, inclusive. There may be a requirement for overtime working from time to time and time off in lieu may be allowed for agreed hours worked in excess of 37 per week.
<b>Holidays</b>	The annual holiday entitlement is 22 working days, plus 3 University closure days and Bank Holidays. Annual holiday entitlement rises to 25 working days with 5 years' service. The holiday year runs from 1 August to 31 July and in the holiday year in which the employment commences or terminates the holiday entitlement will accrue on a pro-rata basis for each complete week of service. The timing of holidays is subject to the agreement of the Line Manager.
<b>Sick Leave</b>	During periods of certified sickness the post-holder will be eligible to receive sick pay in accordance with the University Sick Pay Policy. The payment of sick pay is subject to compliance with the University rules for the notification and verification of sickness absence, details of which will be provided to the successful applicant upon commencement of employment.

**Pension** The post-holder will be entitled to join the Harper Adams Group Pension Scheme and details will be provided to the successful applicant upon commencement of employment.

**Exclusivity of Service** You are required to devote your full-time attention and abilities to your duties during working hours and to act in the best interests of the University at all times. Accordingly, you must not, without written consent of the University, undertake employment or engagement including external consultancy, which might interfere with the performance of your duties or conflict with the interests of the University.

It follows that, regardless of whether you are employed on a full-time or part-time contract, you are required to notify your line manager of any employment or engagement which you intend to undertake whilst in the employment of the University (including any such employment or engagement which commenced before your employment under this contract). Your line manager will then notify you within 10 working days whether such employment or engagement is prohibited.

**Application Procedure:**

Applications should be made by sending a full Curriculum Vitae and supporting statement, which clearly highlights how your skills and experience match the requirements of the role, to Jayne Weaver, HR Administrator via email at [vacancies@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:vacancies@harper-adams.ac.uk). Candidates should ensure that they provide full details of the name, postal address, email address and telephone number of two referees, including present or most recent employer.

**Closing Date for Applications is midnight on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021**