



**Harper Adams
University**



**Information for
prospective Governors**

Welcome and Introduction from the Chair of the Board of Governors

Harper Adams University has an enviable reputation in the field of higher education and has also remained true to its core values in agriculture, whilst meeting ever increasing challenges faced by rural areas nationally and internationally.

The University provides specialist higher education across a broad range of subjects relating to the land, food and environment and the businesses associated with them.

It has just over one-fifth of all undergraduate agriculture students in the UK and the only undergraduate provision in agricultural engineering. It is developing its postgraduate and research capabilities, with significant recent growth in applied research projects and associated income. It also has sound relations with selected international partners that are helping to develop the global profile of the institution.

Closer to home, the University's estate has seen significant investment and plans are in place for further exciting developments that will keep Harper Adams at the forefront of provision for its students and staff.

This is an institution that is close to the industries with which it works and is heavily involved in far reaching developments in the rural sector. Our founder wanted to support practical and theoretical education, which we still deliver today

and, in some respects, our provision is unique within the UK higher education system.

We have a strong reputation for our organisational management, governance and academic performance which has led to external recognition in several arenas. Our ground-breaking and innovative work has resulted in Times Higher Education and Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Awards in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019. We have won a number of other national industry awards over the same period.

We are a strongly independent institution with taught and research degree awarding powers, but at the same time we work collaboratively with a range of university and college partners. Our latest initiative is the development of the UK's first Joint Veterinary School, in collaboration with Keele University. The Harper Keele Vet School welcomed its first students in autumn 2020.

We have maintained a satisfactory financial performance, and intend to continue to work towards meeting stretching academic targets as part of our new Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2025.

The role of Governor is critical to ensuring that we are able to respond to the challenges that face all higher education institutions in an environment where there will continue to be rapid changes in funding and in the shape of the sector.



The Board of Governors supports the University to meet its objectives by providing robust critical and challenging governance, which is at the same time supportive and constructive in its approach.

The Board is responsible for all aspects of the work of the University and for holding the Vice-Chancellor and other senior staff to account for delivering a sustainable institution that meets its charitable objectives. All Board members have a key role in approving strategic decisions and in overseeing policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation through the work of the Board and its committees.

A key aim of the Board is to ensure that students have the best possible experience and are successful in their careers on graduation. The Board is also mindful of the need to ensure that staff are also considered and provided with appropriate support and information to enable them to undertake their roles as effectively as possible.

The Board plays a role in engaging with and reporting to a wide range of other stakeholders including the Office for Students, the Charity Commission and other professional, regulatory and statutory bodies.

Members of the Board are not remunerated, but are able to claim reasonable travel expenses and the University can arrange overnight accommodation where necessary to facilitate attendance of members at Board or Committee meetings or to attend key events held on campus.

Virtual and in person arrangements are made for meetings as required. The Board meets four times a year and members are usually expected to also serve on a Committee and/or to take on a "lead governor" role for an area where they can offer particular expertise or insight.

The role involves working effectively with other members of the Board and with members of the senior management team. It also involves engagement with staff, students and other stakeholders in a range of informal and formal ways.

We hope that the information provided within this document will be helpful to those considering expressing an interest in this important role and, should you decide to apply, we welcome the opportunity to engage with you further.

When submitting an expression of interest, please include information on whether you feel you meet any of the particular areas of expertise/skills being sought on this occasion, and/or whether you can offer other skills/expertise that you feel are relevant to the role of Governor.

Mr Peter Nixon
Chair of the Board of Governors



Harper Adams Past and Present



Brief History

Harper Adams was established in 1901 following a major bequest by local landowner, Thomas Harper Adams. Throughout its history it has been dedicated to the founding principle of 'teaching practical and theoretical agriculture', bringing these traditions together in academic practice whilst serving the needs of rural businesses and communities.

Combining applied scientific investigation with the provision of support to industry, from short courses to consultancy, has remained a feature of all the activities the University has developed over the years and has resulted in strong relationships between the institution's academic activities and the business world and its position as a leading UK academic institution in its field.

Today, Harper Adams has an enviable reputation within the higher education and rural sectors as a centre of academic excellence.

Size

The University has a headcount of nearly 5,000 students, just under 600 staff, a third of whom are academic staff, and a turnover of over £41 million in 2019/20. The University has a national recruitment base and has maintained student intakes over the last few years. Further growth in student numbers is projected as part of our Strategic Plan, focusing in particular on

UK students, a small number of international partnerships, and maintenance of our workforce development programmes and growth of our postgraduate community.

National Profile and Reputation

Harper Adams is the leading specialist institution of its kind within the UK, as measured by scale and through a number of key indicators and league tables across the higher education sector. It was ranked in the top 20 HEIs in the UK in the 2020 Sunday Times University Guide, a significant achievement given that this was only the 12th time the University had been included in the full league table. This was also the highest position yet achieved by a post-1992 university.

Academic Quality

The last 10-15 years have been immensely important in the evolution of the institution. Harper Adams became a University College in 1999 and was granted research degree awarding powers in 2006. During this period the institution grew in stature and reputation through the high quality of its teaching activities and the relevance of its research.

We were awarded the only Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning for the land based HE sector. A major development programme for workforce development, starting in earnest in 2008/09 and financially supported by the Higher

Harper Adams Past and Present *continued*

Education Funding Council until 2012/13, evolved from our Employer Engagement activities. This continues to be one of the key ways that Harper Adams supports its industry partners to remain abreast of innovation and best practice.

Harper Adams gained University Title in December 2012 and has since developed rapidly as a centre for research with impact and as a major contributor to the supply of graduates for the agri-food chain and related sectors.

Student Experience

Harper Adams, by virtue of its campus and rural location, offers a great experience for its students, whether domestic or from overseas. With some of the strongest ratings in the National Student Survey (sixth in the HE sector in 2019) the community feel of the University underpins its ethos and its student-centred approach.

Whilst Harper Adams has a relatively high proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups in the UK, it also has some of the highest continuation rates and is routinely within the top 20 institutions in sector employability performance indicators.

Broadening the Academic Base

Although its roots lie firmly in the world of agriculture, the University has sought to ensure that it tackles a wider range of subjects of importance to the well-being of rural businesses and communities whilst maintaining its distinctive character and mission. As such the traditional subject mix has been broadened with new areas such as food, off-road vehicle design, veterinary nursing and, most recently, environmental science, veterinary physiotherapy, mechanical engineering and applied zoology. The University is widely regarded as a centre of excellence in land based and rural higher education, as witnessed by the institution being ranked 'Best Modern University' by the Sunday Times University Guide in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 along with its 2014 and 2019 shortlistings for the title of University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards.



Harper Adams has also sought to extend the international scope of its work at a time when high-quality applied science is a critical factor in addressing global problems relating to food supply, environmental management and climate change. Courses are structured to make the most of the University's multidisciplinary environment, and each involves a sandwich placement period in a relevant business.

Investment in the Estate

The University farms a 635ha estate in rural Shropshire, made up of owned and leased farmland, all in the local area. The central campus is surrounded by the University Farm, which is an important resource for the institution's academic activities.

The original purpose-built facilities have been complemented by major recent investments in halls of residence, a new Student Centre in the heart of the campus, a modern dairy unit, the Bamford Library and new teaching facilities such as the Weston Building, the Elizabeth Creak Laboratories and the Agricultural Engineering Innovation Centre. A Regional Food Academy and a Postgraduate and Professional Development

Centre were opened in 2009/10 and other smaller capital developments have included additional veterinary nursing facilities and a new Entomology laboratory. Other parts of the University farm and academic facilities have recently been refurbished or are scheduled for medium-longer term investment.

The University partnered with Dairy Crest (now Saputo) in the creation of its £4m Innovation Centre on our campus. The Innovation Centre is the home of Saputo's 40-strong R&D and new product development team, and is providing a route to collaboration with the company in a variety of fields.

The new Harper and Keele Veterinary School has seen a major capital development. The first veterinary medicine students were welcomed in autumn 2020.

Development of Research

Harper Adams receives funding for its research from industry sources as well as from other funding bodies including Innovate UK, the Research Councils and, recently, European research programmes.

In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, all of the University's submitted research was rated

as internationally important and 56% was rated as internationally excellent or world leading. Preparations for the 2021 Research Excellence Framework are in hand.

Our research strategy is based on the theme of sustainable agri-food and land systems with particular strands in livestock and crop production and engineering and precision farming and their impact on, and relationship with, the food supply chain, food security, land use and natural resource management.

The University has excellent infrastructure to support its research including modern laboratories, engineering facilities and ready access to the University Farm, as well as technical staff and a thriving community of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers. We have also successfully recruited researchers from a number of other leading universities.



Mission, Vision and Values

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide: World leading higher education and research for the delivery of sustainable food chains and the protection of rural resources for future generations.

Our Vision

Our vision for 2025 is that Harper Adams University will be:

- Engaged with the industries, professions and organisations that comprise the global agri-food chain, closely related industry sectors and the UK rural economy, to deliver an outstanding, practice-based and inclusive learning environment that enhances personal development and employability;
- A recognised centre of research excellence, especially in the application of science and technological advances and;
- A trusted source of independent and authoritative commentary to inform public and policy debate on agri-food, animal wellbeing, land, environmental and rural business matters.

Our Values

Harper Adams has a strong set of values that have underpinned its development since its foundation almost 120 years ago. The four core values are that we will be

- outstanding,
 - inspirational,
 - distinctive
 - and inclusive
- in all that we do.

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Harper Adams University wishes to support inclusive working practices, so during the application process it commits to:

- Paying for dependent care whilst you are at interviews where these take place in person.
- Paying for your travel costs to the University office and back for interviews held in person.
- Making any reasonable adjustments – for example ensuring we have a sign language

interpreter organised in advance if you'd like them or arranging documents in alternative formats.

- Providing this document in a Word document format readily available to download.
- Offering a guaranteed first stage interview with Inclusive Boards for disabled candidates who meet the minimum requirements for the role.

About the Role/Responsibilities

The Board of Governors is the University's governing body and has overall responsibility for the strategic direction and financial health of the institution.

The Board of Governors exists to ensure that the mission of the University is fulfilled. To do this, members of the Board need to keep themselves informed of developments in the University, and in higher education, and of the performance of the University. Members of the Board are expected to participate fully in the development of the University's corporate and operating plans and to ensure the proper allocation and use of the University's resources in meeting the objectives of those plans.

Members of the Board must be able to work with the Chair, Vice-Chancellor and other senior staff who act as University officers. At the time of their appointment, and throughout their role as a member of the Board, Governors must meet the "fit and proper" definitions set by the Office for Students for members of governing bodies and should also meet the requirements of the Charity Commission with regard to being a Trustee of a registered charity.

Key responsibilities of Board members are:

- To provide vision and strategic direction for the development of the University's work
- To act impartially and in the best interests of the University at all times
- In conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive, to provide advice, guidance and support to University officers to ensure the successful delivery of the University's mission
- To monitor that key decisions are implemented on a timely basis
- To help the University liaise with key stakeholders, and to ensure that internal liaison between the Board and the staff and students of the University is effective
- To ensure that the University's financial resources are being used sustainably, prudently and effectively
- To ensure that the University complies with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements
- On occasion, to represent the University at external functions
- To ensure that the Board delivers effective governance for the University in relation to guidance provided for the Higher Education sector on governance issues
- Commitment to the Nolan principles of public life.
- To engage with an annual review of their performance as a Board member and to engage with effectiveness reviews of the governing body and its committees

We are particularly interested to hear from candidates who have experience in ONE or more of the following areas:

- Commercial finance, including audit & risk management.
- IT and Data.
- Agri-tech.



Additional information

Time Commitment:

It is anticipated that the role will require an average of 12 days a year, plus reading and travelling time, to include:

- Regular attendance at Board meetings in person at the University or virtually via MS Teams. Board meetings take place 4 times per year, 3 meetings of 3-4 hours duration each and 1 day meeting where a shorter business meeting held in the morning is followed by a planning session usually finishing around mid-afternoon
- Members are also normally expected to serve on a least one Board committee, working group or occasional task force during their period of office. Board committees usually meet 3-4 times a year at the University or are held virtually.
- Members are invited to attend other events and activities held by the University, including Graduation Day, usually held in mid-September.
- Occasional attendance at the University may be required for special activities such as audit visits by external agencies.

Term Length:

Members are appointed for a four year term which is renewable for a second four year term. The number of terms may be extended if an independent member is elected Chair or Vice Chair of the Board.

Professional Development: All members of the Board are expected to meet with the Chair at least once annually to discuss their own performance and contribution to the work of the Board and to feedback any suggestions for their own effectiveness/development and/. or ways in which the Board as a whole might be able to enhance its effectiveness. Governors are actively encouraged to take part in training and development events organised by AdvanceHE (usually in London or other regional city locations or held virtually). Other opportunities to engage in development are offered by the University itself and by and other external organisations.

Conflicts:

The University publishes the register of interests of members of the Board of Governors on its website. Members of the Board are expected to discuss with the Clerk any potential interests or conflict of interests that may need to be declared in the Register, and to keep their entry in the Register up-to-date and complete. Guidance from the Clerk is available on matters that might need to be entered into the Register of Interest.

Remuneration:

The position of Governor is voluntary and is not remunerated. Reasonable (standard fare) travel and subsistence expenses are paid in accordance with University Financial Regulations.

How to apply

The search process is being supported by Inclusive Boards.

If you wish to apply please supply the following:

- A detailed CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- A covering letter (maximum two sides) highlighting your suitability for the role and how you meet the person specification. Please note that the covering letter is an important part of your application and will be assessed as part of your full application.
- [Diversity Monitoring Form](#)
Your data will be stored securely and separately from your application.
- Please provide details of two professional referees together with a brief statement of their relationship to you and over what period of time they have known you. Referees will not be contacted without your prior consent.
- If you would like to discuss this role informally before applying, please call 0207 267 8369 to leave a message for Ieva Gruzdyte or send an email to HarperAdams@inclusiveboards.co.uk.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an interview with at least two Board members.

Successful candidates will then be forwarded to the University Secretary who will make the necessary arrangements for a formal nomination to be prepared and considered/approved by the Board.

At the point of Board consideration it is necessary for the University to conduct due diligence checks in relation to the "fit and proper person" definitions set by the Office for Students and those set for Trustees by the Charity Commission.

The University Secretary will keep in touch with the nominee so he/she is aware of the process that is underway.





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Front and back covers: The University Mace.