

JOB DESCRIPTION & PERSON SPECIFICATION

1. **Job title:** Trainee Technical Specialist, Agricultural Crop Characterisation (ACC)

Centre: Cambridge Crop Research

Grade: Technical

Location: Park Farm, Cambridge

Reports to (Job title): Technical Manager

Line Manages (Job titles): N/A

2. **Main purpose of role:**

Team focus

Within the Cambridge Crop Research Centre at NIAB, the Agricultural Crops Characterisation Team (ACC) carry out technical services and contract research relevant to plant varieties and seeds. The main focus of the ACC team is the delivery of regulatory services, primarily for government (Animal and Plant Health Agency – APHA and Defra) or international governmental organisations/ agencies such as OECD. Within ACC, these statutory services include:

- The distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS) testing of new varieties of agricultural crop plants for the granting of intellectual property rights (Plant Breeders' Rights, PBR).
- DUS testing for the purposes of National Listing (NL) of agricultural species as required under EU Directives.
- The activities of Seed Certification carried out to ensure compliance with regulatory standards as defined in UK legislation (principally the Seeds Regulations, 2011).
- Providing advice to APHA, Defra and the seeds industry in relation to the activities described above.

Services for clients (both internal and external to NIAB) are primarily focused on the physical characterisation, analysis and/or description of plant materials and plant products, using high throughput systems.

In addition, a wide range of training, both for national and international clients, is provided as commissioned, primarily in the areas around the development or the implementation of the regulatory services mentioned above.

The main crops are cereals, oilseeds, herbage, sugar beet and pulses, although the range of crops and balance of workloads can vary from year to year.

Main function of the job

Trainee Technical Specialists have responsibility for delivering the day-to-day laboratory and fieldwork tasks associated with the DUS testing and seed certification programmes. Each member of the team will have the capability to work across all crop species and across all DUS/Cert activities.

The Trainee Technical Specialists will work within ACC as part of the Technical Support Team (TST) to assist with the following tasks, as organised and prioritised via the weekly TST meeting:

- Sample handling and processing
- Preparation of seeds and materials ready for drilling and drilling itself
- Trial protection against birds/insect pests
- Plot recording/assessments for all crop species both outdoors and in the laboratory
- Collecting data using data loggers/tablets
- Crop inspecting after suitable training and gaining appropriate APHA Licences
- Assisting with data checking and summarising results
- Specific individual duties as allocated according to need and defined via annual objectives.

Trainees will follow a prescribed development plan with a view to become a Technical Specialist in a key area of work within ACC.

3. **Financial authority/responsibility** (e.g. delegated budget, authorisation level, approx value of contracts etc):

No specific responsibility, but all staff are expected to use resources efficiently and within budget.

4. Key relationships (external and internal):

This post is line managed by one of the Technical Managers, but as one of a team, the post-holder will work across all crop areas at different times, depending on the time of year/tasks required.

The post holder is expected to take an active part in TST meetings where the week's work is organised and provide feedback on progress. After appropriate training, the post holder will be expected to work unsupervised when necessary and undertake individual responsibility for certain tasks.

There is no direct line management although there may be some supervision of student/temporary workers at times.

5. Tasks/responsibilities (in order of priority)	Approx % of time
Carry out the recording of DUS and Certification trials using predefined protocols to accurately assess plants. The work is on a range of agricultural species, and may include: Oilseed Rape, Cereals, Field Beans and Peas, Sugar Beet, Kale, Linseed and Herbage	35
Seed crop inspections, throughout at least the south east of England and beyond where necessary, using valid inspection licences.	5
Certification and DUS sample handling and processing, including sample registration and packetting ready for drilling and/or long-term storage.	20
Drill preparation for Certification and DUS trials, including putting seed in order for a pre-defined plan, use of the barcode system for traceability, planning in line with current protocols and procedures	10
Carrying out and assisting with laboratory tests to establish varietal identity and purity. Tests may be visual e.g. sample examinations or established using other laboratory techniques.	5
A share of Team tasks which may include: Image analysis, recording preparation, sample harvesting, various crop husbandry requirements, administrative work, temporary staff supervision, assisting with courses, and other trials related work.	25

6. Working conditions:

Office based, but extensive fieldwork will be required under all weather conditions and at all times of year. Glasshouse and laboratory work are also essential components of this role. Occasional weekend working will be required as the season dictates. Due to peaks in workload, it may not be possible to take holiday at certain times of the year.

The post involves constant contact with plants throughout the year. Sufferers from hay fever and/or other plant allergies could experience some problems.

7. PERSON SPECIFICATION

Education/Qualifications:

Essential:	Desirable:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good general level of education (at least A levels or equivalent in biological/science subjects, or demonstrable equivalent experience) and proven numeracy and literacy skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree or other professional qualification in agriculture, agronomy or biological sciences.

Experience:

Essential:	Desirable:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer skills are essential, ability to use Windows-based software (primarily Word and Excel). • A current, clean driving licence and the willingness to work away from NIAB HQ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in field trials would be an advantage. • A demonstrable strong interest in plants and agriculture. • Familiarity with use of data loggers/tablet PC's or similar devices for in field data collection. • Experience working with protocols.

Specialist Training (criteria to be held or achieved within a reasonable period. Full training can be provided):

Essential:	Desirable:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current APHA Crop Inspection Licences. • UPOV Distance Learning courses DL205 and DL305. 	

Personal Qualities (skills, behaviours and competencies):

Essential:	Desirable:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication skills and the ability to work in a team. • Ability to cope with high workloads and constantly changing priorities/deadlines. • Ability to work unsupervised. • Ability to make impartial and independent decisions, and to handle confidential information appropriately. • A willingness to work to very specific protocols, with a high degree of accuracy and good record keeping, combined with a consistent approach and an eye for detail. • Ability to be self-motivated, to take a flexible and proactive approach. • Willingness to work outside in all seasons to carry out a range of duties, some of which can be physically demanding. • Due to the nature of the work, normal colour vision is essential, and this will be tested. 	

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Compiled by: CT/MW/HM
Revised by: VM and MW