



## Job Description

<b>Job title</b>	Plant Science Research Assistant	<b>Location</b>	NIAB, East Malling
<b>Team</b>	N/A	<b>Job group</b>	Technical
<b>Department</b>	Crop Science and Production Systems	<b>Post ref.</b>	SV/A1301-01 SV/A1306-01
<b>Reports to</b>	Specialist	<b>Line manages</b>	N/A

### 1. Team overview

*The role fits within NIAB's Crop Science and Production Systems (CSPS) Department. The CSPS programme focuses on the complete production-to-supply chain and tackles challenges associated with climate change, food security, food chain quality and resource use efficiency, to optimise economic and environmental sustainability.*

### 2. Purpose of role

The purpose of the role is to provide technical support to research and commercial projects within the Crop Science and Production Systems Department. Working in the Research and Development vineyard, in our soft fruit polytunnels, in our controlled environment rooms, and in our new total controlled environment agriculture (TCEA units), the role is focused on helping to develop new growing practices and systems that utilise resources more efficiently, reduce waste and emissions to land air, and water, and improve productivity and product quality.

We are keen to employ a good team worker with an interest in horticulture/plant sciences who is willing to learn and develop new skills. A good eye for detail is essential, along with the ability to follow protocols and some experience of working in a laboratory. The postholder will oversee the day-to-day running of experiments and will be responsible for the collection, preparation, and analysis of soil samples, maintenance of sensor technologies and systems, and making detailed measurements of plant and fruit physiology.

The role offers an opportunity to develop a range of practical and professional skills in team working, time management, communication, and practical problem-solving. Please note that the work is often physically demanding with a range of daily physical activities required – walking, standing, bending, and manual handling of items up to 20 Kg. It will be necessary to work flexibly in response to fluctuations in workload.

### 3. Financial authority/responsibility

Authority to raise Purchase Orders within defined limits.

### 4. Key relationships

**Internal** Line manager; project leaders; junior staff members; students and casuals within the CSPS department and the Farm and Glasshouse support teams.

**External:** External clients; suppliers of equipment and consumables; service contractors; farmers / growers;

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## 5. Key tasks and responsibilities

Tasks and responsibilities	% of time
Setup experimental areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and understand research objectives, approaches, and protocols, and consult with Specialists before beginning</li> <li>Set-up and maintain experimental areas both at NIAB East Malling and at off-site locations as and when needed</li> <li>Ensure all experimental areas are tidy and ready to receive funders/sponsors/visitors</li> </ul>	20%
Conduct experimental work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect, prepare, and analyse samples in our laboratories</li> <li>Carry out routine plant physiological and fruit analytical measurements to a consistently high standard</li> <li>Oversee experiments ensuring plants are growing and cropping as expected through daily monitoring and recording of data and as well as monitoring and reporting on plant health and nutrition to senior members of staff</li> </ul>	55%
Data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare and collate data, create templates for data entry using spreadsheets, and input data into the relevant project files in the format required for analysis by researchers or reporting to customers</li> </ul>	10%
Reporting of results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in preparation of technical reports, summaries, protocols, and quantitative analyses of results</li> </ul>	10%
Assisting and guiding colleagues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take an active role in the practical aspects i.e., supervising temporary junior staff and students</li> </ul>	5%

Note that the postholder may also be asked to undertake other appropriate duties as required.

## 6. Working conditions

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to stand and walk (including on uneven surfaces), for extended periods of time; use hands to handle or feel; reach with hands and arms and stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl.

Working outdoors in any weather condition at all times of the year, meaning exposure to sunlight and rain. Working in glasshouses and polytunnels in occasional high temperatures

Regular Visual Display Unit usage.

Due to peaks in workload, it may not be possible to take holiday at certain times of the year unless pre-arranged with sufficient notice.

The post-holder will be required to travel within the UK and spend nights away.

Manual handling – occasional handling items of up to 20 Kg.

Regular exposure to plant material, pathogens, pollen, bees, and other insects.

Regular exposure to dust e.g., soil particles, from milled plant tissue.

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Possible occasional exposure to chemicals e.g., those used to fertilise and treat plants.

Lone working in field, polytunnel, and laboratory may be necessary.

## Person Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
<b>Qualifications</b>		
BSc in crop science, plant breeding, agronomy, botany, or other relevant experience/qualification	X	
<b>Knowledge and skills</b>		
Good verbal and written communication skills	X	
Excellent interpersonal skills	X	
Good IT skills – email, word processing, spreadsheets, document sharing	X	
Excellent numeracy and data handling skills	X	
Good organisational skills and ability to plan and prioritise amidst conflicting demands.	X	
Good understanding of experimental design, replication, blocking etc.		X
Good analytical and problem-solving skills		X
Ability of supervising, motivating and mentoring staff		X
<b>Experience</b>		
Experience in the horticultural industry and direct experience working with plant material		X
Experience in developing and deploying precision technologies in horticulture and/or agriculture		X
Skills in the operation and maintenance of various lab. and field equipment	X	
Experience in following protocols and SOPs and to ensure consistency and reproducibility of work.		X
Experience in using statistical and graphic packages		X
<b>Attributes</b>		
Accuracy and attention to detail.	X	
Must be able to work independently, and as part of a team	X	
Able to multi-task and work effectively in fast-paced environment	X	
Able to quickly acquire new skills	X	
Willingness to work flexibly to deal with fluctuations in workload and requirements to meet deadlines - including occasional weekends	X	
<b>Other</b>		
A driving licence or access to independent means of travelling, enabling regular travel to experimental locations and occasional travel to NIAB sites elsewhere in Great Britain.	X	