

Harper Adams University

Dean of Agriculture and the Built & Natural Environment

November 2026



Harper Adams University

Overview

In 2026 Harper Adams is celebrating 125 years since its foundation, combining that depth of experience and established quality with the ambition and agility of an institution that gained university status 14 years ago. Its distinctive rural campus near Newport in Shropshire remains central to its identity, but the University is neither small in outlook nor confined to one location. It also delivers education at The Quad in central Telford and in Birmingham, and has long-standing international partnerships, including with Beijing University of Agriculture. More ambitious than ever, its national and international reputation continues to grow: Harper Adams is ranked 87th in the world for Agriculture and Forestry in the QS World University Rankings 2026, and among the UK's top 40 institutions in the Complete University Guide 2027.

Our Mission

Our mission is to advance knowledge, to inspire and equip learners in our specialisms to deliver real change, and contribute to a sustainable future for the inhabitants of and habitats across our living planet.

Our Vision

By 2030, Harper Adams will have realised its vision to combine being regarded as the UK's leading specialist institution with being an internationally recognised university for food production and technology, animal health and wellbeing, and their contribution to sustainable, living environments for our planet's inhabitants.

Specifically, we will have:

- Diversified our education offer and attracted talented and more diverse learners from both rural and urban backgrounds to qualifications from undergraduate to doctoral level in our specialist areas.
- Strengthened and extended our determined, optimistic culture as an evidence-led, practically oriented university, applying Harper Adams innovation and knowledge to generate purposeful curricula, skilled and valued students and alumni, and impact-driven partnerships with businesses and other organisations across our specialist domains.
- Become an increasingly distinctive and highly regarded voice in national and international debate and relevant policy issues within food, farming, sustainability, and education in general.
- Become a more globally connected university, with increased numbers of learners from overseas and meaningful collaboration through a network of carefully selected partnerships with like-minded universities and other impact organisations worldwide.

The complete Harper Adams 2030 Vision can be found here.

The Appointment

Harper Adams is creating a new Faculty of Agriculture and the Built & Natural Environment to bring together disciplines at the heart of its identity and future. The appointment of its first Dean is a unique opportunity to shape the next stage of development from an unusually strong foundation in sustainable agriculture, food security, supply chain management, land management and environmental sciences.

The Faculty will comprise three Schools: Environmental and Ecological Sciences; Agricultural Sciences; and Land and Property Management. Its breadth creates the potential for new combinations of education, research and professional practice: from sustainable land use, food security and climate resilience to rural economies, planning, valuation, environmental management and the future stewardship of natural resources. The Dean will preserve disciplinary excellence whilst overseeing the identification of interdisciplinary opportunities and maximising collaboration across boundaries.

This is not a role concerned with keeping a successful faculty operating smoothly; Harper is asking where it goes next, with growth a priority. Traditional rural student populations are changing, while the relevance of food production, land use, environmental sustainability and natural resources continues to increase. The successful candidate will develop and extend the existing offer, reach broader and more diverse communities in the UK and internationally, and make the University's expertise more accessible through flexible, online, hybrid and employer-based learning. Growth will include taught postgraduate provision, apprenticeships and industry-facing CPD alongside new undergraduate recruitment, strengthening both the Faculty's reach and its financial contribution.

The research platform is formidable. Harper Adams is ranked 87th globally for Agriculture and Forestry in the QS World University Rankings, having climbed more than 100 places in less than five years. Its Future Farm, specialist facilities, research centres and partnerships provide a living environment in which ideas can be developed, tested and translated into practice. A Dean is sought with the imagination and ambition to utilise those advantages to create greater impact and significant growth.

This Faculty will sit alongside two others: Business, Engineering and Society, and Veterinary Sciences. Reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Dean will join the Vice-Chancellor's Delivery Board, a new and deliberately flat leadership team bringing together the current Vice-Chancellor's Group and the new Deans. The Dean's team of direct reports will comprise a Deputy Dean and Heads of School, enabling an appropriate balanced approach to strategic and operational leadership. The Dean will be an active contributor to the University's leadership and must be comfortable working across structures and Faculty boundaries.

A University-wide transformation programme is already reshaping curriculum design and delivery. The Dean is therefore not being asked to initiate change from a standing start, nor to manage its detail. The task of the successful candidate will be to bring vision, direction and growth: aligning people behind the next phase, making choices and ensuring that strategy becomes delivery.

Together, the three Deans will lead the University's Growth Group, providing a dynamic forum in which new ideas are tested, enablers secured through robust business cases and agreed plans put into action, with delivery assessed against clear KPIs and reported to the Vice-Chancellor's Group.

This is a rare opportunity to join an institution whose standing in its specialist field is already firmly established but where there is an appetite for significant long-term growth and a genuine openness to new ideas. Candidates must bring the imagination to identify what is possible, the confidence to make choices and the practical leadership to convert ambition into results.

Responsibilities

The Dean will provide strategic leadership for the Faculty and hold overall responsibility for its academic direction, performance, reputation, sustainability and development.

The successful candidate will build on Harper's established strength in sustainable agriculture, food security, supply chain management, land and the environment to shape the Faculty's next stage of growth. The Dean will develop the student offer, reach new audiences through flexible programme delivery and grow the Faculty's activities to strengthen research, professional practice and external impact.

Strategic Leadership and Faculty Development

- Develop and lead the Faculty plan in alignment with the University's strategy and institutional priorities.
- Provide visible and inspirational academic leadership across the Faculty.
- Shape the long-term direction, sustainability and growth of the Faculty, including academic portfolio development and future growth opportunities.
- Ensure the Faculty delivers the contribution rate defined through annual financial target setting.
- Ensure the Faculty contributes effectively to institutional objectives relating to education, research, enterprise, civic engagement and student success.
- Monitor external trends, policy developments, sector changes and market opportunities to inform Faculty planning.
- Foster innovation, collaboration, inclusion, accountability and continuous improvement, including interdisciplinary and cross-Faculty working.
- Be an active contributor to the University's leadership, working confidently across institutional structures and Faculty boundaries.
- Contribute actively to the University's philanthropic engagement, Development Campaign and alumni engagement.

Academic Leadership and Educational Excellence

- Champion and ensure the delivery of excellence in teaching, learning, assessment and the overall student experience.
- Ensure effective governance and oversight of academic quality and standards in line with regulatory and professional body requirements.
- Promote innovation in curriculum design, pedagogy, digital learning and assessment.
- Support the development of inclusive, accessible and industry-relevant curricula.
- Promote enhancement initiatives that improve continuation, completion, progression, graduate success and wider student outcomes.
- Lead strategic oversight of curriculum planning to ensure alignment with institutional priorities and market demand.

Research, Innovation and Enterprise

- Support Directors of Research and Knowledge Exchange Champions in leading research, scholarship, enterprise and knowledge exchange within the Faculty.
- Develop a high-performing academic culture that encourages innovation and external impact.
- Develop and secure strategic partnerships with industry, employers, professional bodies, funding agencies and other external stakeholders.
- Encourage entrepreneurial activity, income generation and collaborative research and commercial partnerships.

Leadership and People Management

- Lead, support and develop the Deputy Dean and Heads of School.
- Promote effective leadership, accountability and succession planning across the Faculty.
- Role model positive, respectful and inclusive leadership and engagement, fostering a culture that supports staff engagement and wellbeing.
- Support organisational change and strategic transformation programmes.
- Ensure effective workforce planning and organisational development, promoting high performance, professional development and continuous improvement.

Financial and Resource Management

- Hold strategic accountability for Faculty financial performance, growth, contribution and sustainability.
- Contribute to institutional financial planning and resource allocation.
- Ensure effective use of staffing, estate, equipment and other resources.
- Support financially sustainable growth and portfolio development, identifying and mitigating strategic risks affecting Faculty performance.

Student Recruitment, Marketing and Reputation

- Lead strategic activity to enhance the Faculty's reputation, external profile and market positioning.
- Support the development of student recruitment strategies and growth plans.
- Ensure the Faculty remains responsive to changing student and employer demand.

Stakeholder Engagement and External Relations

- Represent the Faculty internally and externally at senior level.
- Create a culture in which colleagues develop effective relationships with professional bodies, funding agencies, employers, regulators and sector partners.
- Promote the Faculty's achievements and reputation nationally and internationally.
- Contribute to institutional committees, working groups and governance arrangements.

Governance, Compliance and Risk Management

- Ensure compliance with University policies, statutory obligations, regulatory frameworks and sector expectations.
- Maintain oversight of academic governance and assurance processes.
- Ensure effective management of strategic and operational risks within the Faculty.
- Ensure respect, safeguarding and ethical standards are embedded within Faculty activities.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- Promote a strong culture of health, safety and wellbeing across the Faculty.
- Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for managing health and safety risks and that Faculty leaders fulfil their responsibilities.
- Support wellbeing initiatives for staff and students.

The Person

The successful candidate will bring vision, dynamism and a commitment to growth. This is a unique opportunity to shape a brand new Faculty in a strategically critical role, placing the postholder at the heart of the future of Harper Adams as a key member of its leadership team.

Candidates must be able to evidence success in the leadership of people, strategy, transformation and delivery. They will understand the academic and professional worlds represented within the Faculty without assuming that its future should look like its past.

Professional attributes

- Significant senior leadership experience within higher education or a comparable environment, including strategic leadership, organisational development and the delivery of change.
- A strong understanding of higher education, including regulatory and quality assurance frameworks, and experience of leading academic excellence and student success.
- Experience of leading within collaborative leadership structures and growing finances and resources through contribution-generating activities and collaborations, supported by strong financial acumen.
- A proven ability to build effective external partnerships and stakeholder relationships.
- The ability to shape growth from established academic and research strengths, developing the student offer, reaching new audiences and considering flexible approaches to learning.
- A doctoral qualification or equivalent professional standing, together with fellowship or recognition within a relevant professional or academic body.
- The capability and appetite to support fundraising and steward donor relationships.

Personal attributes

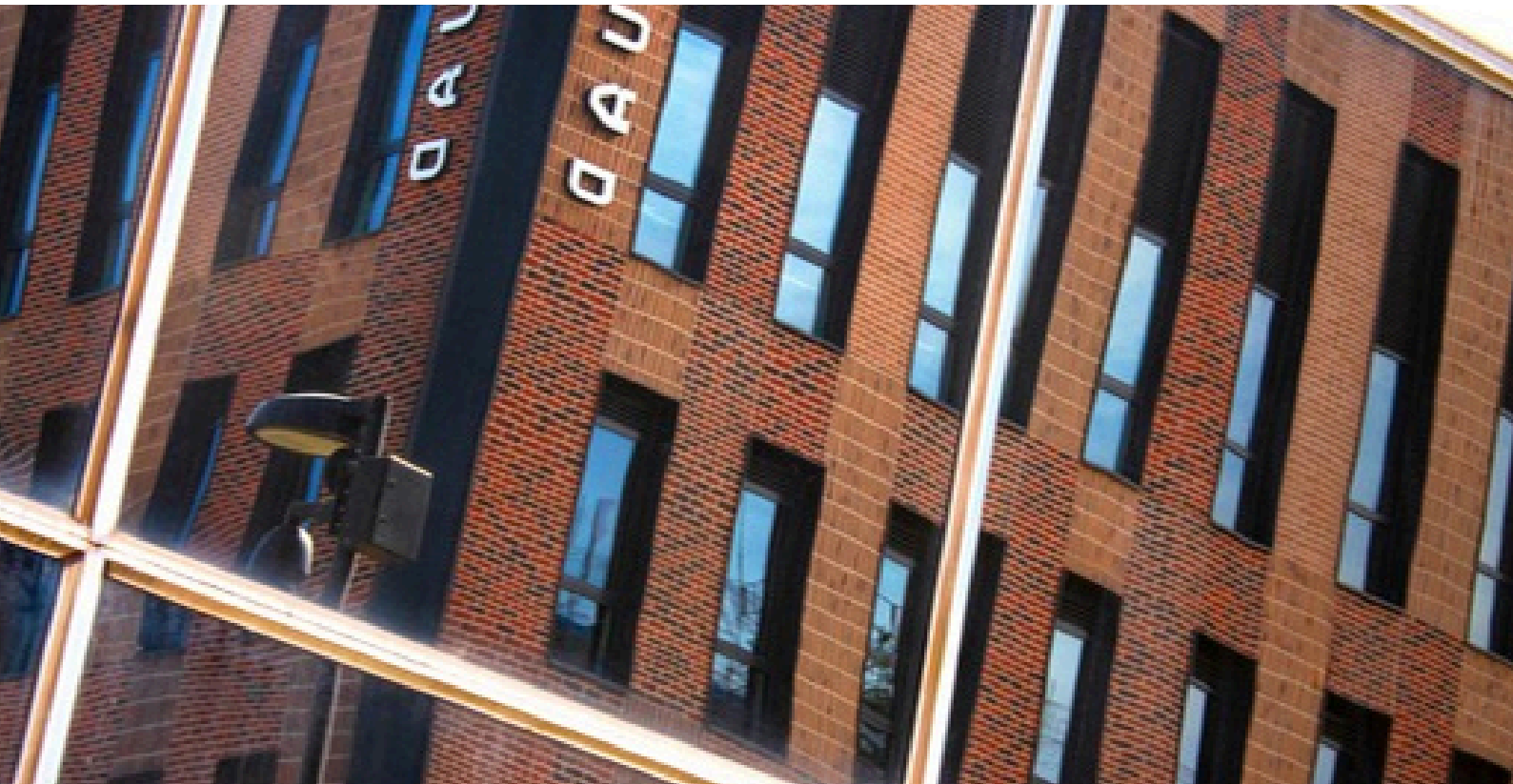
- Strategic thinking, imagination and a clear orientation towards growth, with the ambition to innovate from an established and successful base.
- Strong communication and influencing skills, with the professional credibility and integrity to represent the Faculty internally and externally.
- The ability to inspire, motivate and develop others, building shared purpose and an effective leadership team.
- Strong analytical and decision-making skills, with the ability to manage complexity and competing priorities.
- Visible, collaborative leadership and a commitment to working in a smaller specialist university, remaining close to colleagues and delivery while maintaining a strategic focus.



Terms and conditions

Further information about Harper Adams University can be found at https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk.

An excellent remuneration package, reflecting the seniority of this role, will be available for the successful candidate. An excellent benefits package includes support for hybrid working.



How to Apply:

Candidates should apply for this role through our retained advisors Networked at https://www.networkedpeople.com/harper-dean-ABNE/

The deadline for receipt of applications is midnight on Monday 21st December 2026.

Please send applications to harperadams@networkedpeople.com. Applications must include a full CV and a letter of application setting out your interest in the role and details of how your knowledge, skills and experience match the person specification (no more than two pages).

Informal questions regarding the post should be directed to Hamish Laing at Networked via hamish.laing@networkedpeople.com or +44 (0)7861 329463.

