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T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

**LABORATORY GROWS THE NEXT
BIG THING IN SCIENCE: A NEW
GENERATION OF TECHNICIANS.**

T-LEVELS

ARE THE NEW QUALIFICATION DESIGNED BY BUSINESS TO ENSURE STUDENTS HAVE THE SKILLS EMPLOYERS REALLY NEED.

THE SAINSBURY LABORATORY NORWICH (TSL) IS CURRENTLY HOSTING TWO T LEVEL STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT. WE CAUGHT UP WITH THE TEAM TO FIND OUT WHAT IMPACT THEY'D MADE ON THE ORGANISATION.



↑ **What work does the Sainsbury Laboratory do?**

Nick Talbot, Executive Director and Group Leader:

We're a molecular genetics and genomics laboratory. The Sainsbury Lab as a whole is devoted to the study of plant disease, plant immunity and microbial pathogenesis.

We use a range different approaches around one common aim. Understanding and curing plant diseases.

↑ **What are your current recruitment pipelines and challenges? Do you think T levels will help build your workforce?**

Nick: Research technician posts are often funded through fixed-term grants, with jobs going to university graduates. They tend to be in the role for just a few years before moving on. That has left a big, big gap. So I'm quite an enthusiast for **T Level** training because there's a whole generation that's sort of missing now across UK R&D.

Simon Foster, Laboratory Manager:

In the laboratory support teams we have struggled with recruitment and with finding people who want to do technician roles, but also that are actually trained in technician roles.

T Levels gives us early access to that pool of people that are genuinely interested. And the guys that are here were so keen and so appreciative.



WE SEE THE STUDENTS COMING TO US ON PLACEMENT AS POTENTIAL FUTURE EMPLOYEES.

Kim Wood, HR Manager.



Kim Wood, Human Resources Manager:

We see the students coming to us on placement as potential future employees.

One of them is interested in going to university afterwards whereas the other wants a job. I think he's keen enough that I would actually talk to him about opportunities even immediately beyond the placement.

T Levels allow us to identify candidates for upcoming roles and gives the team an opportunity to build a relationship with the college too.

What do you hope you'll gain from T Levels and industry placements?

Nick: What we're going to gain is people who are very, very well qualified across a broad range of areas and that's quite rare these days.

Hopefully that would enable them to take on more senior technician type roles because they'll have that broad range of skills from the very start of their career and then begin to specialise afterwards. Some will become part of our staff and might progress to have long term careers with us.

What the students will gain is going to be huge. We'll teach them a broad range of skills so they'll become very employable as a consequence, which is great.

What do industry placements at TSL look like?

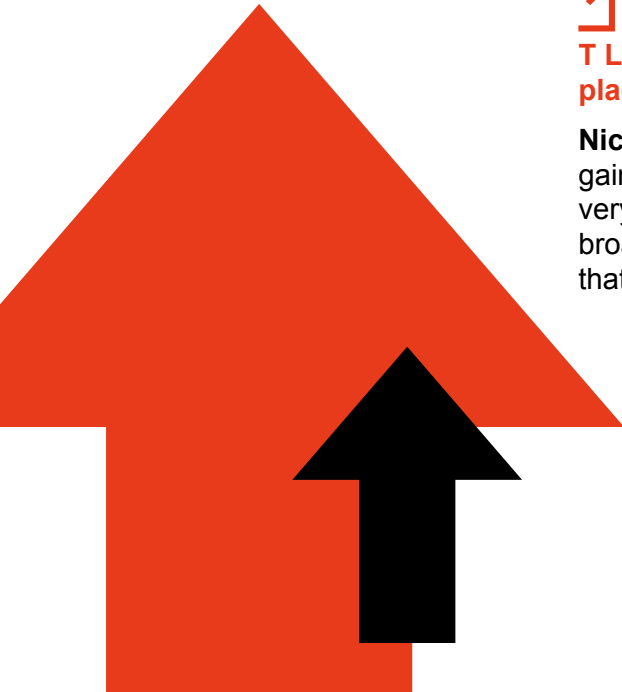
Simon: I felt that given the breadth of opportunities we have here, it would be good for the students to move around a little bit. They're in the laboratory support team and the Synthetic Biology team at the moment.

Kim: The teams have really taken them under their wing and just accepted them as they would any other team member. It's been really good to see actually.



T LEVELS HAVE GIVEN JUNIOR MEMBERS OF THE TEAM SOME EXPERIENCE IN MANAGING PEOPLE, WHICH HAS BEEN INVALUABLE.

Simon Foster, Laboratory Manager



Simon: And it's given junior members of the team some experience in managing people, which has been invaluable.

↑ **How did you find the process of setting the placements up? Were there any additional health and safety requirements, for example?**

Kim: From an HR perspective it wasn't onerous at all. The college was very responsive. And the tutor, Robin, has been brilliant.

The college sent over somebody to audit our health and safety systems before the students started.

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THE ROLES THESE STUDENTS ARE TRAINING FOR ARE ESSENTIAL TO EVERYTHING WE'RE TRYING TO DO IN SCIENCE.

*Nick Talbot,
Executive
Director and
Group Leader*

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Because of the type of work that we do, all of our health and safety procedures are very nailed down, so there weren't any concerns

Anybody here is covered under our general insurance anyway.

The students sign a document and receive the same induction from an HR perspective as would any other employee and that includes intellectual property as well.

Nick: All of our work has to be authorised by the Animal and Plant Health Agency of DEFRA. So we're under strict containment for many of the diseases that we work on. And also there are rules around manipulation of genetically modified organisms, so there's quite a lot of containment and regulation associated with the work that we do here.

↑ **What preparation would you like the students to have before they come to you on placement?**

Simon: Having seen the course specifications, I was keen to take somebody in the second year. I think most of the stuff that they cover in the first year **T Level** curriculum – including chemical safety and molecular cloning – sets them up very well for a placement in their second year.

Nick: **T Levels** emphasise English, maths, and digital skills along with science – all the areas that we want our people to be good at.

But really, the most important thing is that they are keen and they come with a really positive attitude.

↑ **Any final thoughts?**

Nick: I'm really hopeful that **T Levels** will be a qualification that people are really proud of. The roles these students are training for are essential to everything we're trying to do in science.

Kim: I'm also trying to promote the scheme around the Norwich Research Park and we've got several other institutes so hopefully we'll get a bigger cohort on site.

