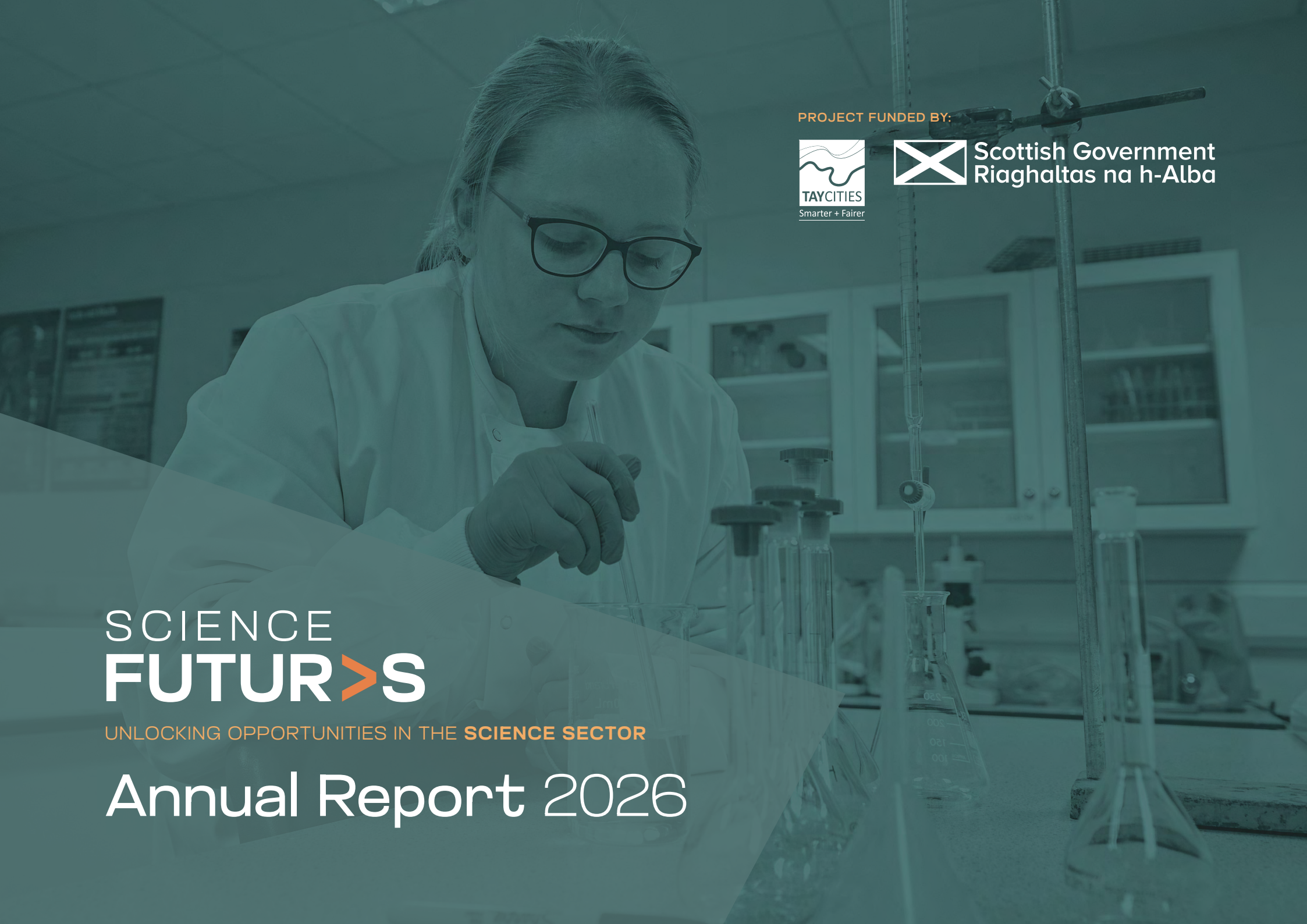


PROJECT FUNDED BY:

TAYCITIES
Smarter + Fairer

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

SCIENCE FUTURES

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE **SCIENCE SECTOR**

Annual Report 2026

Introduction

Science Futures is a **£1.975 million** collaborative project led by Dundee & Angus College, supporting the growth of the science sector across Tayside. The project is funded by the Scottish Government through the Tay Cities Region Deal (TCRD) Skills and Employability Development Programme.

Working with its partners, Science Futures will develop **new training programmes** and enhance existing courses across a range of SCQF levels, giving learners clear pathways into careers that meet the skills needs of Tayside's growing biotech, biomedical and agritech sectors.

Science Futures aligns with a range of other transformative regional initiatives, including Dundee University's Life Sciences Innovation Hub, which opened in 2025. Together with complementary programmes supporting innovation, skills development and sector growth, these initiatives form part of the Scottish Government's **£25 million Tay Cities Biomedical Cluster Project**, funded through the Tay Cities Region Deal. The programme is expected to support over **800 new life sciences jobs by 2053** and generate more than **£190 million for the local economy.**

OUR PARTNERS

Fife College

D&A College

UHI | Perth

University of Dundee

dundee science centre

Abertay University

The James Hutton Institute

Dundee has recently been named as

Europe's No.1 location for research impact

in biomedical and health sciences

Project aim

The aim of the project is to create and inspire new career pathways by encouraging young people to pursue science related careers, working with industry to provide apprenticeship opportunities and engaging with businesses to upskill or retrain their workforce to support the growth of the region's life sciences sector.

FIND OUT MORE

Left to right: Julia, Lorna & Gail

New project team

In August 2025, **Gail Singer** was appointed Project Manager, and **Lorna McIvor** joined **Julia Wright** as Project Officer.

INSPIRE
Encouraging young minds to pursue careers in science.

ASPIRE
Launching science careers through further education and work experience.

UPSKILL
Enhancing skills and expertise for the existing science workforce.

RETRAIN
Revitalising careers and exploring new science pathways.

Key Highlights

- **New project team.**
- New Introduction to **Good Manufacturing Practice Course** delivered.
- Developed targeted **Modern Apprentice** promotional content, including an employer focused brochure, a website blog, and student case studies.
- Approximately **100K** of equipment purchased across all 3 partner colleges, including a new **tissue culture suite** at D&A College.
- Reached more than **1,400 school pupils** through engagement activities, inspiring interest in science & future skills development.
- Introduced a **Power BI** dashboard to report current project data and monitor progress against targets.
- Intensive field-based PDA qualification in **ecological surveying** developed.
- New **business needs skills survey** launched to ensure curriculum development is aligned with industry needs.
- Filmed promotional content for the **Innovation Hub** at the University of Dundee, showcasing a flexible, state of the art laboratory and office facility designed to support the growth of life sciences companies.
- **16 work placements** secured for students from D&A and UHI Perth to begin in April 2026:
  - 7 at Dundee University
  - 3 at Abertay University
  - 2 at Dundee Science Centre
  - 4 at Thermo Fisher
- Successfully delivered **Essential Laboratory Skills** courses, supporting participants to develop practical lab competencies and workplace-ready skills.
- **Enrolment targets achieved in several priority groups**, including students with declared disabilities, ethnic minority backgrounds, and those from the 20% most deprived areas.

Project targets for 2030

110 HNC/D students

29 Modern Apprentices

71 Females

27 Students with a disability

40 Students from 20% most deprived areas

8 Ethnic minority students

56 Work placements

74 School engagements

8 Courses developed

Progress against targets to end March 2026

The project is making strong progress towards all of the 2030 targets.

Enrolment levels have already reached their targets across priority groups, including students with declared disabilities, students from ethnic minority backgrounds, and those living in the 20% most deprived areas.

While there remains significant work to do to ensure careers in science are truly accessible for all, the team remains fully committed to addressing these challenges and driving further progress. In addition, the project has achieved its target for school engagement; however, Science Futures will continue to work with schools to inspire the next generation of scientists and sustain momentum beyond the lifetime of the project.

AUDIENCE		TARGET	ACTUAL
HNC/D students		110	39
Females		71	11
Ethnic minority students	*	8	26
Students from 20% most deprived areas	*	40	40
Students with a Disability	*	27	58
Modern Apprentices		29	9
Work Placements		56	7
Courses Developed		8	5
School Engagements	*	74	112

*Targets reached

Student stories - Modern Apprentices

Ashleigh Davidson >

Adam Laidlaw >

Jake Barbour >

Abigael Lindsay >

Fraser Martin >

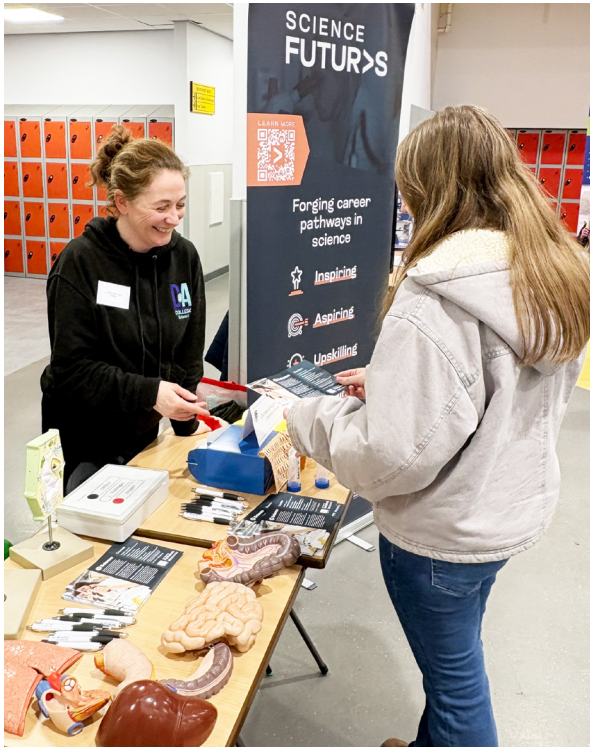
These case studies shine a spotlight on students and their real-life experiences to inspire the next generation of scientists. Discover how **Science Futures** has helped to transform their skillset and lead them to successful careers in Tayside's science sector.

School engagement

School events

Science Futures attended STEM career events at Brechin High School, Montrose Academy, Panbride ESP, Carnoustie High School, Websters High School, Lochgelly High School, and Rowantree Primary School, engaging with over 500 pupils.

At each event, the team delivered interactive STEM activities designed to inspire an interest in science and help pupils learn about the wide range of pathways and careers available in the STEM sector.

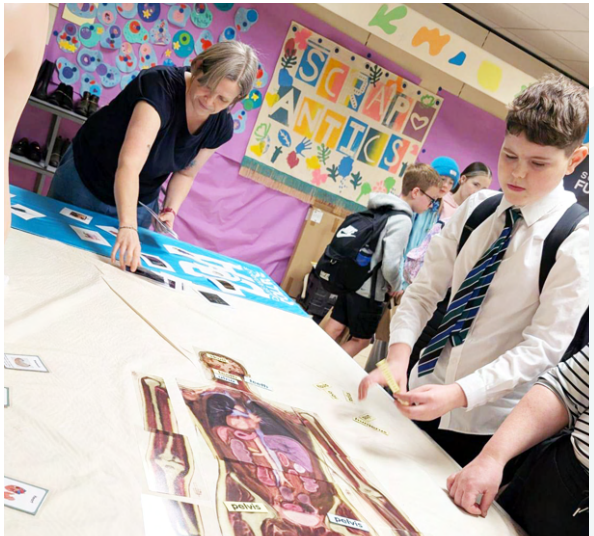


Young carers action day

The Young Carers Action Day took place on the 11th and 13th of March in collaboration with Carers of Dundee, with the Science Futures team engaging young carers from 15 local schools. Activities aligned with the Fair Futures for Young Carers theme, highlighting a call to action to ensure young carers have the same opportunities to learn, develop, and thrive as their peers.

Science Futures ran a hands on science workshop enabling carers to explore the organs inside a human model, and reconstruct a human skeleton from X ray and MRI images.

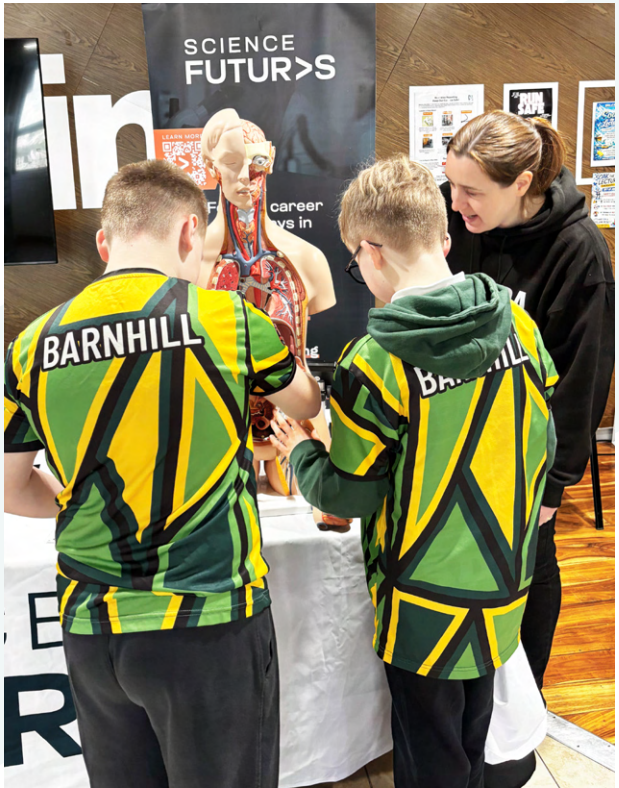
By giving them a positive experience, we hope to have inspired their interest in science and highlighted the pathways into science careers.



FIRST Lego League

The FIRST Lego League event took place on the 20th of March and was hosted across Dundee & Angus College and Fife College. A total of 20 schools participated, with 10 schools attending activities at Dundee & Angus College and a further 10 at Fife College.

The Science Futures team and partners from Dundee Science Centre delivered interactive activities in the STEM Zone, offering pupils engaging science experiences beyond the competitive elements.



School engagement

AH practicals at D&A and Fife College

Pupils attended Dundee & Angus College and Fife College to complete their Advanced Higher Chemistry and Biology practicals, gaining access to specialist equipment not available in schools and reinforcing the underpinning knowledge required for their studies.

> *I learned a lot about lab work and feel much more prepared to tackle my AH chemistry project.* Student from St Pauls RC

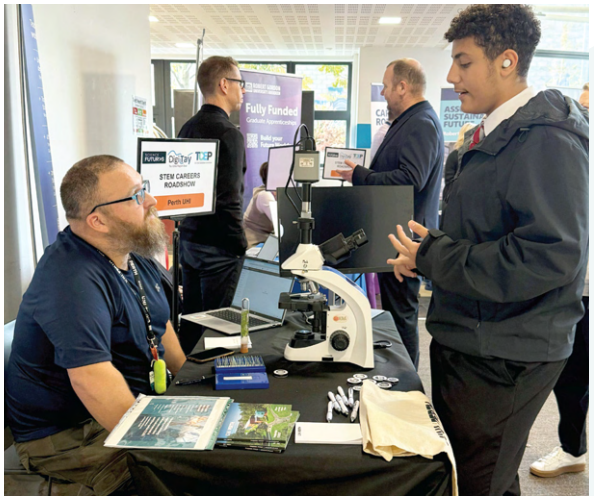
> *This course is very helpful as it deepened my understanding on chemistry. practicals.* Student from Morgan Academy

STEM careers at Gardyne

Science Futures co-hosted a STEM Careers Event with TCEP and DigiTay at D&A College in October. It was attended by pupils from five schools and D&A College students.

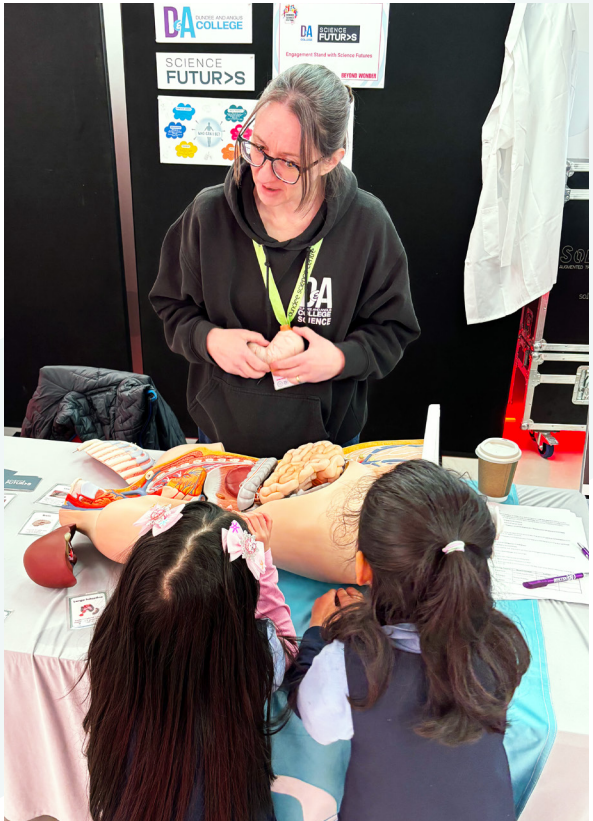
The event featured a Marketplace with 22 STEM organisations and employers, where pupils and college students had the opportunity to speak with college and university representatives as well as STEM employers within the region.

There were 10 presentations on careers in the STEM sector. Speakers from the science sector included Graham Christie from Dundee University, Claire Gammie from Abertay University, Kelly Connor from Leverhulme Forensic Research Centre, and Ciaran Richardson from the Medical Device Manufacturing Centre.



Dundee Science Festival and STEM Expo

As part of the Dundee Science Festival and STEM Expo, activities were delivered from the 2nd to the 6th of February, hosted by Dundee Science Centre. The programme engaged over 600 pupils from 14 different schools, providing hands-on, interactive STEM experiences designed to inspire curiosity and raise awareness of science pathways.



Events

D&A students visited the School of Life Sciences, University of Dundee

HNC Applied Science and Access to Life Sciences (SWAP) students at Dundee and Angus College had an exciting opportunity to tour the University of Dundee School of Life Sciences, a world class research hub and top UK institution for biological sciences.

They had the chance to:

- Discover cutting-edge facilities and equipment.
- Learn about degree pathways and career options in science.
- Be inspired by real-world applications of their studies.

One of the students, **Caitlyn**, wrote a little blog on her experience:

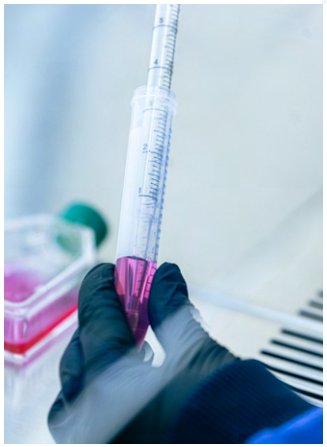
READ IT HERE

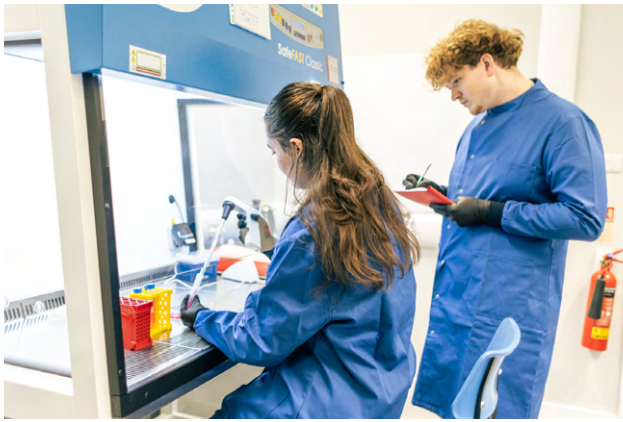
Tissue culture suite

The creation of a new tissue culture suite at Dundee and Angus College represents a significant investment in practical, industry-relevant training.

This specialist facility has enabled the reintroduction of the Animal and Plant Cell Culture unit within the HNC Applied Science curriculum, giving students hands on experience with techniques widely used across the life sciences sector.

By developing these advanced laboratory skills, learners are better prepared for progression into further study, apprenticeships and future careers across animal, plant and biomedical sciences.





Courses

Introduction to good manufacturing practice

An intensive one-day Introduction to Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) course was delivered at Dundee & Angus College in June 2025, with 14 participants attending.

The course was designed to introduce learners to GMP or to build on existing knowledge by further developing understanding of compliance and best-practice standards.

During the course, attendees learned about GMP policies and procedures, how organisations ensure compliance, and how GMP principles can be applied throughout their careers.

Essential laboratory skills

In January 2026, the Essential Laboratory Skills course was delivered for the second time at Dundee & Angus College in response to strong demand.

The course welcomed 15 participants, including technicians, students, and graduates, and provided hands on experience in key laboratory techniques such as pipetting, aseptic techniques, solution preparation, and the use of PCR machines and spectrophotometers. Participants completed the course feeling more confident and better prepared to thrive in a laboratory environment.

> *"Enthusiastic teachers who made the course enjoyable, content very relevant to my uni course and was a great refresher for the practical things I've not done in a while!"*

> *"Very useful to add to practical skills for use in my studies and at placement. Good addition to CV!"*

SWAP physical science

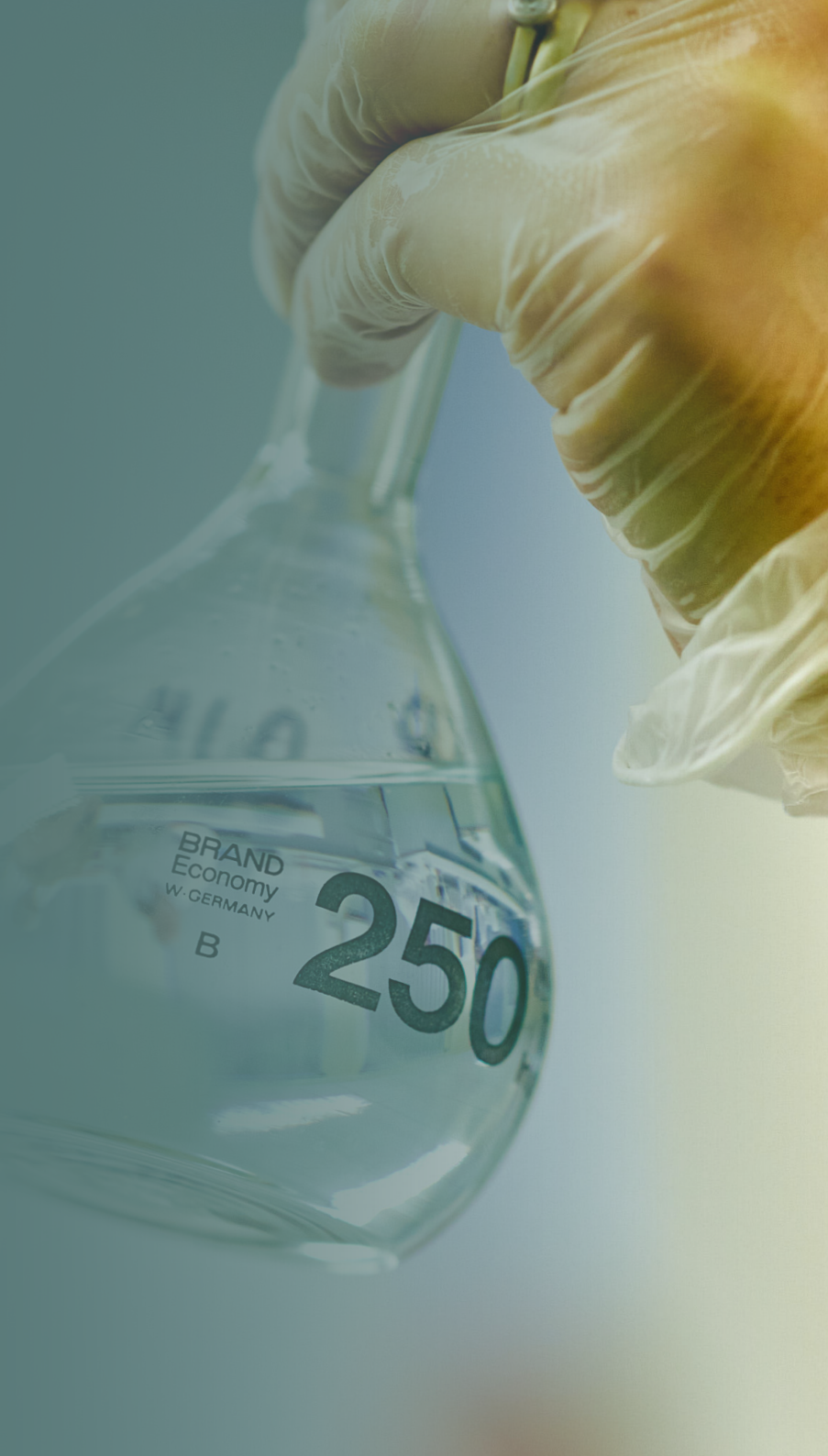
The SWAP Physical Science course, delivered by UHI Perth, commenced in August 2025 and is primarily delivered online, alongside a week of intensive, hands-on learning.

Held on campus at UHI Perth, the week allows students to develop essential laboratory skills, including accurate measurement, safe working practices, and the use of scientific equipment.

Engaging directly with staff and peers, this course helps build confidence and reinforce theoretical knowledge. For many, it is a key highlight of the course, supporting both skill development and progression to further study in science.

Curriculum development

- An online HNC Bioscience developed in collaboration with D&A and UHI Perth is nearing completion and is intended to be delivered by UHI Perth in August.
- A new online NPA in Applied Science is under development at D&A College. The NPA is being created to support new Modern Apprenticeships, and offering the qualification online will make the MA route more attractive to employers by removing the need for day release and reducing geographical barriers.
- An online Diploma in Horticulture continues to be developed in partnership with D&A College and Intelligent Growth Solutions to help upskill existing staff.
- A PDA in Ecological Surveying has been developed by UHI Perth. The programme is designed as an intensive, full-time course delivered over three to four weeks, with the majority of learning taking place in person and through fieldwork activities. UHI Perth is aiming to offer the course this year.



Marketing material

- Science Futures apprenticeships brochure
- How science apprenticeships solve real business challenges
- Empowering future scientists through industry placements

SCIENCE FUTURES

VISIT SCIENCEFUTURES.CO.UK

info@sciencefutures.co.uk | 01382 918005