

January 2025  
Issue #1

# SAF Newsletter

The latest news, views and  
announcements

## Letter from the Forum

As we welcome the new year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we've shared through the world of science apprenticeships. Together, we've explored the pathways that connect passion to purpose, curiosity to discover, and learning to impact.

This year, we'll continue to spotlight exciting apprenticeship opportunities, share inspiring success stories, and provide practical advice to help you navigate your journey. Whether you're an aspiring apprentice, a mentor, or simply a champion of science education, this newsletter is here to support you through every step.

Let's keep nurturing the spark of discovery, challenging ourselves to grow, and continue to build this community that celebrates learning. We wish you a year filled with curiosity, growth and breakthroughs!

Best Wishes,  
*The Science Apprenticeship Forum Team*



**GIVING A VOICE TO  
SCIENCE APPRENTICES**

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## Call-to-Actions (CTAs)

### SAF TikTok Participation

We are seeking enthusiastic volunteers to feature in some Q&A style TikToks for our social media channels. This is a great opportunity to showcase who you are, what you do and the impact you have in your apprenticeship whilst gaining evidence towards your KSBs and contributing to STEM Outreach.

Reach out to **[scienceapprenticeshipforum@gmail.com](mailto:scienceapprenticeshipforum@gmail.com)** to learn more and get involved!



### Declaration of Interest

The S&A Academy are the UK leaders in professional career training courses and government funded apprenticeships in the Technology, Science & Business sectors across the UK.

They are gauging interest from members in a potential R studio workshop focused on data analysis. R is a powerful programming language and open-source software environment specifically designed for statistical analysis, data visualization, and data manipulation. Information on previous courses can be found here:

<https://sandaacademy.com/courses-tag/r/>

If you believe this workshop would benefit you or someone you know, please express your interest by contacting **[scienceapprenticeshipforum@gmail.com](mailto:scienceapprenticeshipforum@gmail.com)**



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## Apprentice of the Month

We're excited to introduce our new 'Apprentice of the Month' section, celebrating the hard work, achievements, and dedication of our amazing apprentices!

Each month, we'll feature a standout apprentice who has gone above and beyond in their role, whether through exceptional performance, great teamwork, or making a positive impact in the workplace.

Apprentices and line managers / mentors / work colleagues are encouraged to nominate someone deserving by sharing a brief story about their accomplishments.

Let's shine a spotlight on the incredible talent within our apprenticeship community and inspire others to reach new heights!

Use the QR code below to nominate now! Who knows, you could be the first winner!



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## Apprentice Spotlight

*In this exciting new segment, we shine a light on the voices of apprentices as they share their personal experiences, challenges, and triumphs throughout their course.*

*If there is a specific topic you'd like us to cover in future editions, please let the group know; and if you'd like to get involved, please get in touch via: [scienceapprenticeshipforum@gmail.com](mailto:scienceapprenticeshipforum@gmail.com) - we'd be delighted to hear your story!*

For January's edition, we have interviewed our very own Erin Maciejewski who is on the SAF team.

**Apprenticeship course:** Level 6 Laboratory Scientist (Chemistry)

**Completion Date:** September 2024

### **How did you find the overall experience of preparing for the EPA?**

I have completed two EPAs during the course of my apprenticeship experience; L5 Technician Scientist and L6 Laboratory Scientist. I found the first one more nerve-racking to prepare for than the second one but both of those experiences were a complete blur to me as I tried to complete both my EPAs as soon as possible. For me, the more I prepared for EPA the less stressful the process was.

### **Were there any specific tools, resources, or strategies that helped you to succeed?**

I had a few different resources and strategies which helped me to prepare for EPA:

- I made sure that I was super familiar with the assessment plan for my apprenticeship standard (these can be found on the EPAO's website) when I was starting to prepare for EPA.
- When I was putting together my EPA report (which was based off my final university project report) I took out anything which didn't fit in the marking criteria and asked colleagues to proof-read and make suggestions on where I could save on word count.
- I picked out a meeting room that I was already comfortable in to take my EPA in- for me this helped to lessen the exam anxiety (I also booked a slightly bigger room than I needed so it stayed comfortable as the day progressed).
- I also asked my internal technical assessor to do practice questions with me around my KSBs and on my project so I felt confident answering any questions which could come my way.

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### **What was the most challenging aspect of the EPA, and how did you overcome it?**

Making sure that I was giving detailed enough answers to the questions during the EPA without waffling and spending too long on one question. To make sure my answers were more direct but still detailed I focused on using the STAR interview answering technique where possible and gave myself a time limit of no more than 4 minutes a question (especially as your EPA assessor can ask clarifying questions).

### **What part of the EPA did you think directly related most to your current role?**

For me, the aspect of EPA which was most directly related to my current role was the Work-based project presentation as being able to present my science to colleagues is something I have to do on a weekly basis. So, for me it was helpful to have those pre-existing skills from my job role to help me with my EPA presentation- particularly in making sure that I was really telling the story of my project in an engaging way.

However, something that I have carried from my EPA into my current role is competency tracking. I find that it makes it easier to demonstrate to my manager and others in my organisation the progress I'm making in my role and where I'm developing. So, I make sure that I keep a log of new skills, work achievements as well as any areas where I have taken on more responsibilities which really comes in handy when quarterly progress reviews come around.

### **What advice would you give to apprentices preparing for their EPA?**

- Make sure to start reviewing your competency examples, project report and presentation a few weeks in advance of your EPA date- it's less overwhelming to break it up into a number of sessions over a few weeks.
- Have someone question you on your KSBs and examples to start getting you in the right headspace for the competencies assessment.
- Stay calm and remember that no one understands your job role, project or organisation better than you do!

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### **What are your plans now that you've completed your apprenticeship?**

To be honest, I don't really have a concrete plan for my next career steps and at the moment I'm very focused on building a solid foundation in my current role. I was really fortunate as I already had a permanent position in my current company before I undertook my EPA so finding a job wasn't a concern for me. Therefore, post-EPA I'm taking the opportunity to explore scientific areas outside of my own through work-shadowing days and undertaking as many mentorship sessions as possible in both soft-skills and technical areas with people I look up to so that when I figure out what my next career step is I'm in the best place possible.



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## Key Updates

### **Start date for apprenticeship UCAS points revealed**

- Apprenticeships will be allocated UCAS tariff points from 2025.
- Level 3 apprentices who want to apply for higher education courses will be awarded up to 112 points on the University and College Admissions Service applications system from May.
- Learners applying for university courses starting in September 2026 will be able to use UCAS points from their apprenticeship.
- The points will only apply to apprenticeships at level 3 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) at level 6. UCAS confirmed it currently has 'no plans' to broaden the scope of the tariff beyond level 3.
- To be eligible, apprentices must meet the conditions of their degree offer (e.g., passing their end-point assessment).

*For the full article by Anviksha Patel:*



### **Why apprentices are being pushed into the informal economy**

- In 2010, a dedicated apprentice rate was introduced, set significantly lower than the standard rates and beginning at just £2.50 per hour.
- The current rate sits at £6.40 an hour (rising to £7.55 in April 2025), leaving many struggling to cover basic living expenses, tools and materials required by their work.
- In the study, some participants shared that employers actively encouraged individuals to conduct informal work as a financial coping mechanism.
- "Ever since I started, there was always weekend work on the side (informal). This started whilst I was training."
- This may not only shape trainees' future attitudes towards informal work, but also create a cycle where informality becomes an accepted norm.
- To address these issues, the government could consider three things.

*For the full article by Dr Danny Buckley:*



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## Useful Links:

### **The Science Council:**

<https://sciencecouncil.org/careers-from-science/apprenticeships/>

### **Apprenticeship Vacancies:**

<https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch>

### **Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE):**

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/about/newshub/news-events/?category=&year=2024>

## Upcoming Events

***Apprenticeship Opportunities***  
***At: Darlington Job Centre Plus***

*Wednesday 5th February 2025*

***Degree Apprenticeships Open Evening***  
***At: Manchester Metropolitan University***  
***Business School***

*Wednesday 12th February 2025*

***National Apprenticeship Week 2025***

*Monday 10th - Friday 16th February 2025*



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## Any Other Business

### Feedback

We hope you enjoy the new format of our newsletter!

We're always looking to improve, so we'd love to hear your feedback. Are there any sections you'd like to see added, or changes you think would make it more useful or engaging?

Your suggestions are invaluable in helping us create a newsletter that truly works for you.

Drop us a quick message with your thoughts - we'd really appreciate it!