

FUTURE LEADERS – FAQs

Frances Metcalf-Head, current graduate, answers all of your questions about our Genus Future Leaders Graduate Programme...

Why did you apply for the Genus Graduate Scheme?

I was looking for a role that used my experience working in a human fertility clinic within the animal breeding industry when I stumbled on the Genus graduate scheme. I thought it was a great opportunity for me to change industries, but it also gave me the option to start a career with potential to develop. When applying, all I knew was that I wanted a challenge and I wanted to use more of my Animal science degree! So, I went for it! I had limited experience within agriculture apart from a week's work experience at a dairy farm 10 years ago and a couple of livestock modules at university! I have not regretted changing my career path and I still get to wow people with sperm facts!

What is your favourite thing about working for Genus?

My favourite thing about working for Genus is the variety of areas you get to learn about and the specialists you learn from. When I first started at Genus, I had no idea about how many different areas of the company there are to explore and learn about! Each person who works for Genus is a specialist in their area, so it is an amazing opportunity to get to learn from them. Everyone is incredibly supportive whatever their role is within the business!

Which experience stands out to you the most so far and why?

The experience that stands out so far during the graduate scheme was when we as graduates got to visit one of our facilities in Warwick. It was a really interesting day as we got to see the research the beef team were doing in the field. It was also the first time the four of us (cohort 3) graduates got together in person due to Covid-19.

How is your performance and success monitored on the graduate scheme?

We all have different managers local to our region who we are in regular contact with. These managers are here not only to monitor your performance, but also to support you. We have all been set 5 or 6 goals to complete within our first rotation and these will be reviewed at our end of rotation review with our managers. However, the real target is just to learn!

Not many other graduate schemes will allow you the opportunity to learn and explore a business, like Genus does! Throughout the first 6 months of the scheme I have completed two live projects and presentations. By live, I mean presentations that will make a difference to the company – not just a research activity for the sake of it! The first presentation was targeted to what we learned in our first month. Our second presentation was a larger research project that we worked on as a group. We presented these to the Regional Director of EMEA and other key members of staff, so your voice can really make a difference!

I have not yet started my Promar rotation, but we will be participating in training in different aspects of the Promar business. At each learning milestone, tasks will be assigned and completed. A project presentation will also form a part of our performance assessment towards the end of the rotation.

The main thing is how much work you put in determines what you get out of the scheme! You don't feel you are being specifically monitored, but it is important you represent the company well especially when on farm visits!

What challenges have you faced and how did you overcome these?

I think for us (the cohort that started in September 2020), one of the challenges has been the social side of the role that we have missed out on. We have only met each other in person once and this could have affected our bond as a cohort. Despite this, we are a strong unit and I think this comes from our regular Friday "elevenses" and having a group chat. Reaching out is really important, as sometimes working from home can be lonely.

The other challenge from remote working is being brave enough to just pick up the phone and call a colleague. For me, this has always been a daunting exercise but everyone at Genus has always been so welcoming. During this unusual time people appreciate a friendly voice, even if you are asking for something!

Knowing what you know now, what do you wish you had prepared before starting the graduate scheme?

Personally, for my own learning I wish I had gone back over some of my university notes on dairy cows. You will be taught everything you need to know, but I would have felt more comfortable if I had a quick look through, so it was fresh in my mind.

Do not panic though if you have never studied anything on dairy cows before! One of my fellow graduates did a Genetics degree and he has been just fine! In terms of other preparations, before joining we had welcome chats with current graduates about their experiences and top tips which really helped me.

What advice would you give to somebody in their first week in the role?

My advice would be to take lots of notes. It can be a bit overwhelming starting a new job. That way, if you haven't absorbed something that you later might need, you can always go back to it another time. Also, note down names of any individuals within the company you may want to follow up with a call or an outing.

How many graduates are taken on each year? (this varies depending on the quality of candidates)

Every year there has been a different number of successful candidates, it is usually between 3-6. In my year (2020), 4 graduates were taken on but it will vary depending on the quality of the candidates.

Where do I need to be based to complete the graduate scheme?

For UK candidates, you can be anywhere in the UK if you are willing to travel (Covid-19 dependent). Some regions have more cows than others! Travel expenses are covered by Genus – you will be given a company car and hotels will be booked for you with a meal allowance. For any applicants from Europe, you may need to relocate to a UK location for the Promar rotation, as Promar is based in the UK.

How has the scheme been adapted due to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Like a lot of companies there has been an increase in remote working. We all have laptops and second screens to enable us to work from home in a safe and comfortable manner.

A lot of our learning which would have been in person has been done remotely using Microsoft Teams, so we have not missed out. We have been involved in projects within the company that can be done from home. These are things we might not have had the opportunity to be involved in if we had been out on the road.

When safe to do so, farm visits have been a part of our experience and a valuable learning tool. There has been a lot of communication about only doing visits if we feel comfortable and when safe to do so following government guidelines.

Of course, our experience has been different to other cohorts. Every effort has been made to ensure we have continued to develop! When it's possible, opportunities we have missed out on (e.g. visiting farms abroad) will be done at a later stage in the graduate scheme.

When is the application deadline?

The application deadline is 14th February if based in the UK, but 14th March if you are based in mainland Europe.

To be eligible to apply, do I need to graduate in 2021?

No, not at all! I was also worried about this before I applied. I graduated from my undergraduate degree in 2015 and completed my Masters in 2017. I applied to be a part of the 2020 cohort.

On the interview day there was a mixture of ages of graduates – some had graduated a couple of years ago and some were due to graduate that year. In all three cohorts of the graduate program there has been a mixture of ages and years of graduation.

Don't be afraid to apply if you graduated a couple of years ago and would like a career change, that's exactly what I did!

Do you have any other questions before you apply?

Get in touch with us at Genus.Graduates@genusplc.com!