



## **Building the Future: Skills Frameworks in the Life Sciences**

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On 5th June 2025, the University of Glasgow played host to the **Future Skills Frameworks in the Life Sciences** event. With support from Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA) and the School of Infection and Immunity at the University of Glasgow, the event brought together a mix of educators, students, and industry professionals to explore how we can better prepare students for the rapidly evolving demands of the life sciences sector.

### **Aims and Vision**

The event was designed to spark a national conversation around the use of skills frameworks; structured tools that help students reflect on and develop transferable, technical, and professional skills. The goal was to share best practices, strengthen collaboration across institutions, and ensure that skills development in further and higher education is not only visible and accessible but also aligned with the real-world needs of employers.

### **Attendees, Organisers and Sponsors**

A total of 54 attendees participated, representing nine Scottish universities (University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde, University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Robert Gordon University, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, Stirling University and Glasgow Caledonian University), alongside industry partners BioAscent, Sygnature Discovery, SGS Vitrology, IQVIA, Causeway Therapeutics, RLCX consulting and RSK Biocensus. The event also welcomed undergraduate and postgraduate students, academics, careers professionals and support services staff, ensuring a rich diversity of perspectives.

The event was led by Dr Laura McCaughey, Senior Lecturer in Microbiology at the University of Glasgow, with a dedicated organising committee comprising representatives from across the participating institutions. The event was generously sponsored by SULSA and the School of Infection and Immunity at the University of Glasgow, both of which are committed to advancing research, innovation, and education in the life sciences.

## Keynotes and Invited Speakers

The day opened with a welcome from Laura McCaughey, followed by keynote addresses from Sarah Hunt (Skills Development Scotland) and Yvonne Bayne (Fife College), who offered high-level insights into Scotland's skills landscape. Industry speakers from BioAscent, Sygnature Discovery, RSK Biocensus, IQVIA and SGS Vitrology shared their views on the skills most needed in the sector, while students from six universities reflected on how well their current education aligns with their future aspirations. The day was wrapped up by Prof Claire Garden, chair of the SULSA Skills Committee, who aligned the Future Skills Frameworks in the Life Sciences Event to the previous, and upcoming Scottish Life and Chemical Sciences Skills Summits.



Sarah Hunt, Claire Garden, Yvonne Bayne & Laura McCaughey

## Workshops and Themes

Two interactive workshops formed the heart of the day. The first explored best practices in implementing skills frameworks, including how to embed them into curricula and align them with accreditation requirements. The second focused on industry alignment, examining how higher education can better prepare students for the evolving demands of the workplace.

## From these Discussions, Three Key Themes Emerged:

1. **Supporting Student Engagement** – Skills frameworks should be empowering, not intimidating. They should celebrate individuality, build confidence, and be embedded meaningfully into the curriculum.
2. **Aligning with Industry** – There is a need for clearly defined skills language usage, stronger links between accreditation requirements and employability, and greater visibility of how academic skills translate into real-world roles.
3. **Adapting for the Future** – Frameworks must evolve to address current and emerging skills gaps, including AI literacy, project management, and practical lab competencies.



## Looking Ahead

The event concluded with a call to action: to continue the conversation, share best practices, and work collaboratively across institutions and sectors. The report produced from the event offers ten practical recommendations to guide this work, all centred on the idea that contextualising skills development i.e. helping students understand the “why” behind their learning, is key to meaningful engagement and long-term success.

As Laura McCaughey noted, “Skills development is as much a part of the academic journey as knowledge acquisition.” This event marked a significant step forward in ensuring that journey is as inclusive, empowering, and future-ready as possible.

If you would like to read the report you can download it at [www.sulsa.ac.uk/sulsa-reports](http://www.sulsa.ac.uk/sulsa-reports). If you implement any of the recommendations into your course/programme/institute we would love to hear about it. Or if you would like to get involved in future events in this area of research please email [laura.mccaughey@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:laura.mccaughey@glasgow.ac.uk).