



University of  
**Kent**

# Final Year Projects in Science Communication: why and how?

Dan Lloyd

Department of Biosciences

Frankenstein foods?



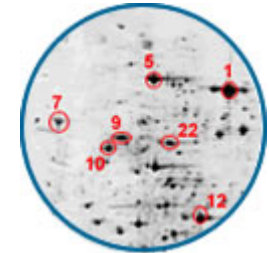
Destruction of life?



Designer babies?

Why?

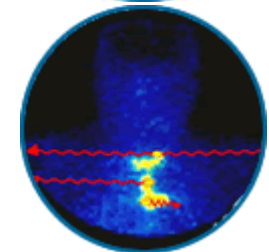
- Recent surveys demonstrating an appetite for science in the public



- Lack of skills/confidence scientists have in dealing with the public



- Developing an appreciation that science communication is part of a scientist's role in society

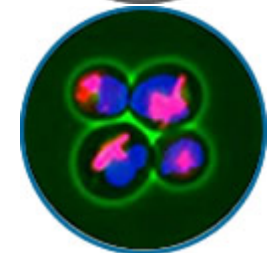


- Diversity of student intake



- Recognition of careers in which communication skills more valued than bench skills

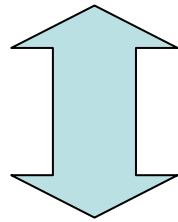
- Emerging careers in science communication (public and private sector)



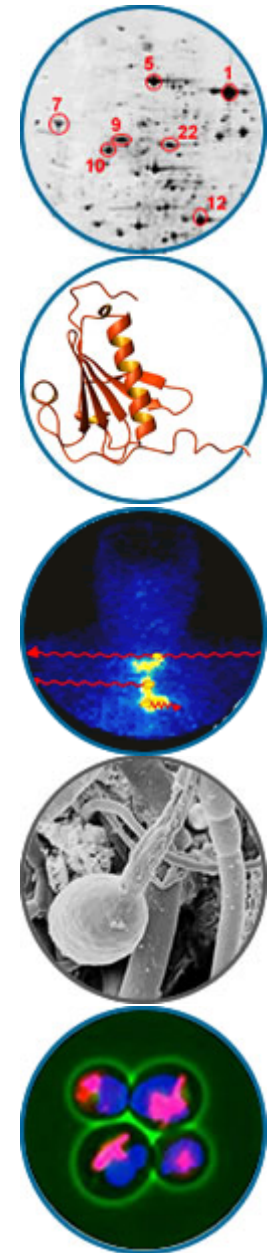
How?

# Communication project

Dissertation  
(*in-depth scientific research*)



Oral presentation and  
Communication “report”  
(*science communication*)



## Examples:

The use of stem cells in medical research

Biological warfare: real threat or scare story?

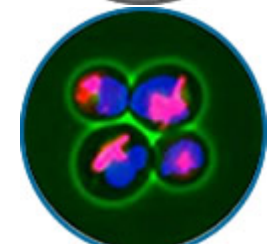
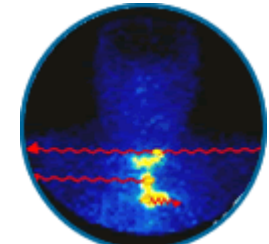
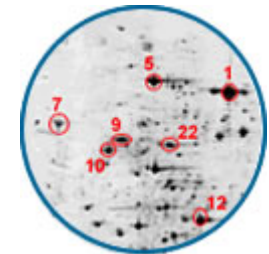
HIV – the perfect pathogen?

Obesity – nature, nurture or nutrition?

Gene doping: the bleak future of elite sport?

Herceptin – a drug for the wealthy few?

Xeroderma pigmentosum – children of the dark

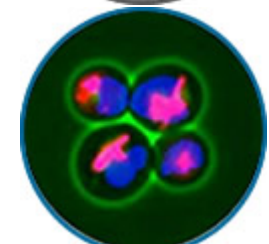
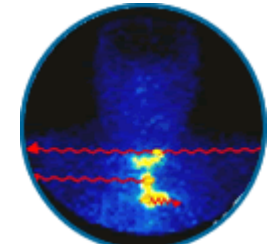
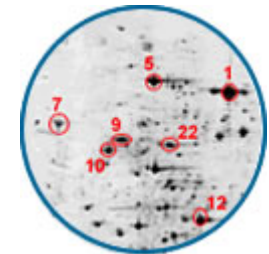


### ***Autumn term:***

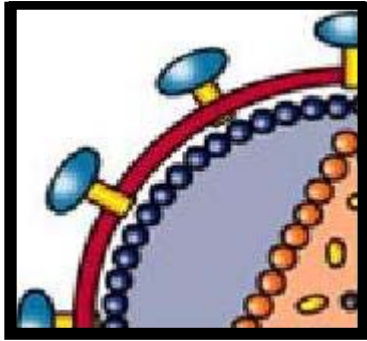
- Project selection and assignment
- Two meetings with supervisor
- Preliminary literature searches

### ***Spring term:***

- Preparation of dissertation
- Weekly meetings with supervisor
- Liaison with schools/community groups/WVP office
- “Communicating science” workshops
- Peer review sessions
- Oral presentation (mid-March)
- Final hand-in (end of term)







# WHY CAN'T WE CURE **HIV**?

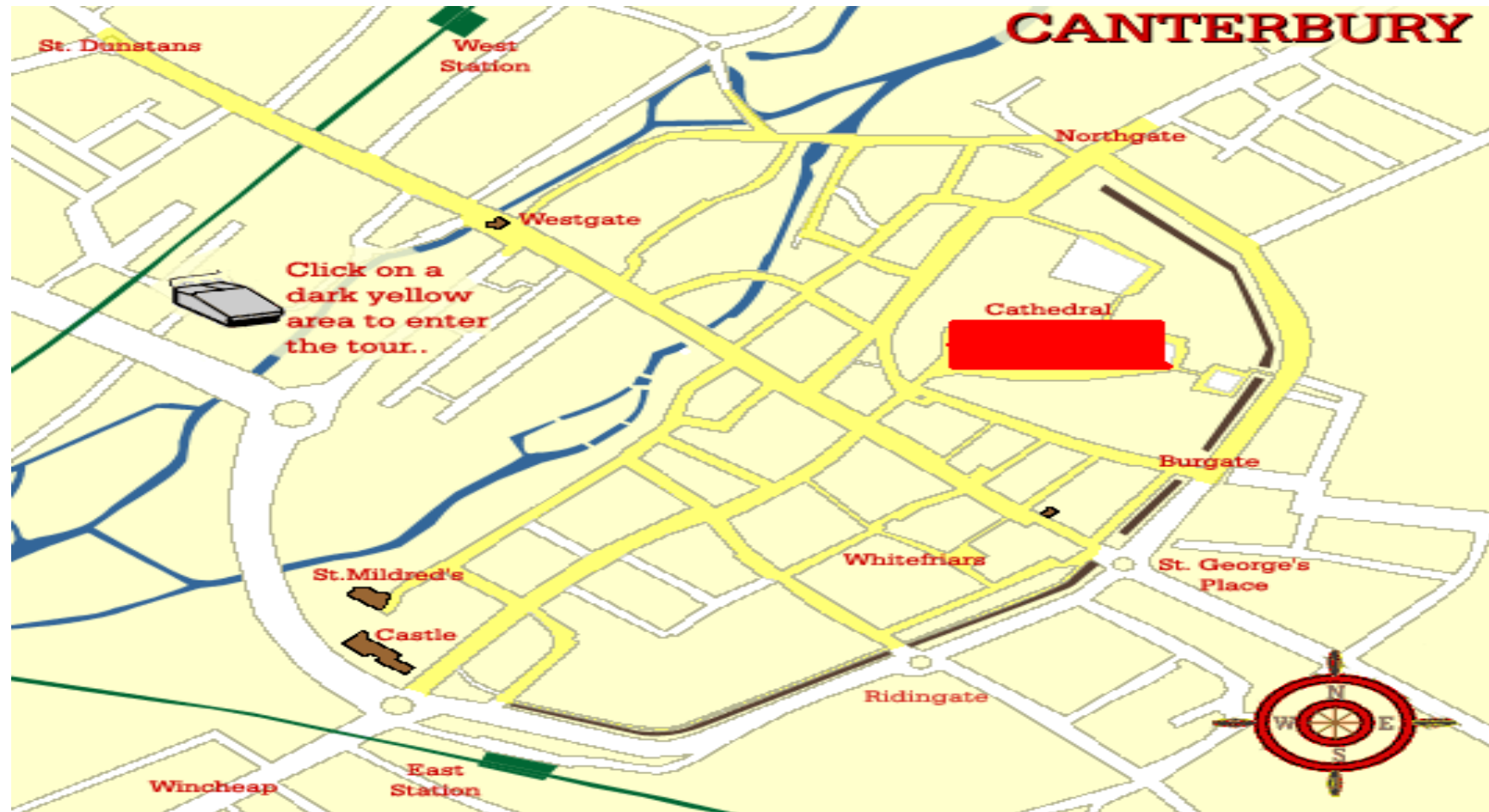


Strain

1. THE **CAT** SAT ON THE MAT
2. THE CTA MAT      THE SAT
3. EHT CTA MAT      SAT THE
4. HET TAC MAT      TAS THE



# Planting Anthrax in the Cathedral



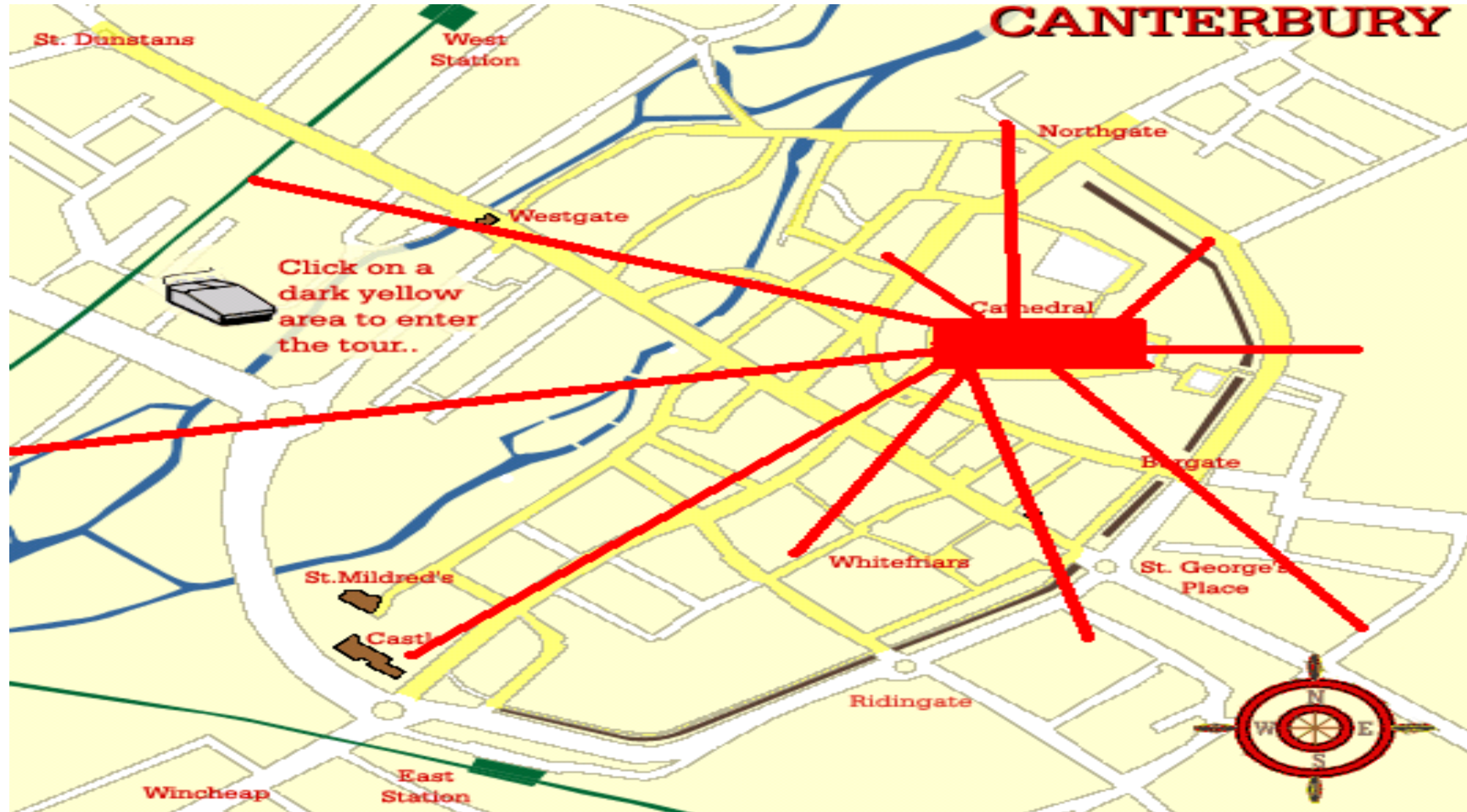
Courtesy of Chris Francis

# Smallpox in the Cathedral



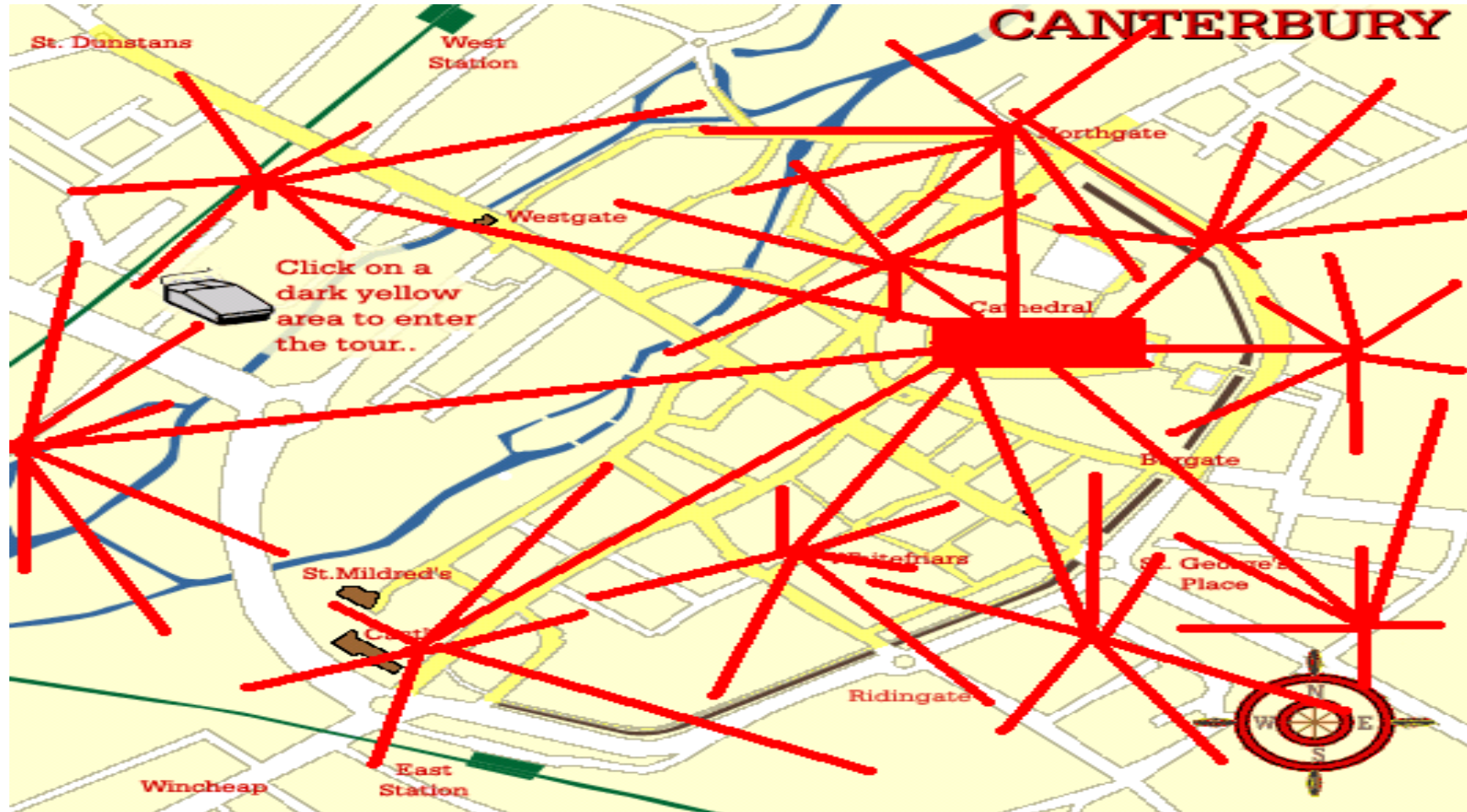
Courtesy of Chris Francis

10 people infected with smallpox in cathedral.



Courtesy of Chris Francis

60 people infected with smallpox.



Courtesy of Chris Francis

360 people infected with smallpox.



Courtesy of Chris Francis

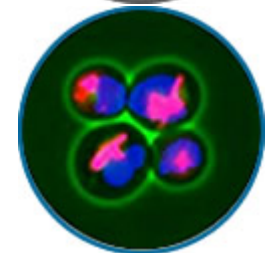
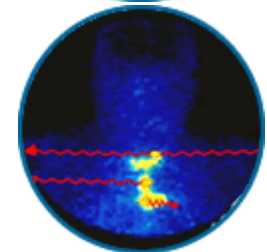
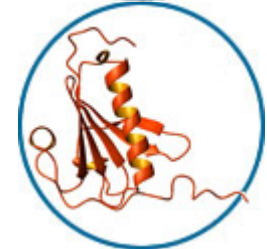
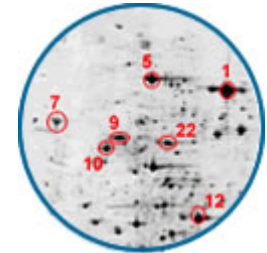
# Epidemic!

**SMALLPOX  
EPIDEMIC**

**Courtesy of Chris Francis**

# Problems?

- Liaison with schools can be difficult
- Getting students to engage with scientific literature
- Do we want all students representing the department?
- “Communication report” too vague?
- Becoming an easy target for “outreach” activities at departmental/university level

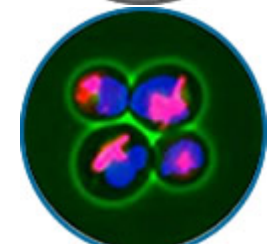
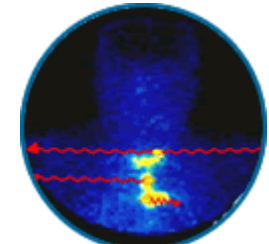
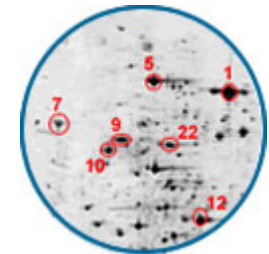




# Outcomes

Now in their fifth year of operation, communication projects:

- are selected by 20-25% students
- Less labour and resource-intensive than laboratory-based projects
- develop enthusiasm and reward students with the communication skills needed in graduate scientists
- increase awareness of the need for communicating science across the student cohort
- Graduates now in public engagement roles in public and private sector



# Outcomes

For *schools*:

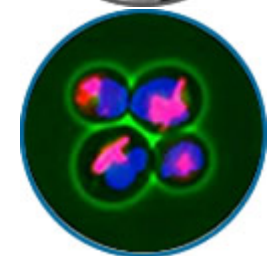
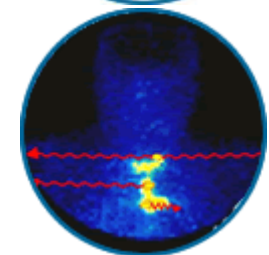
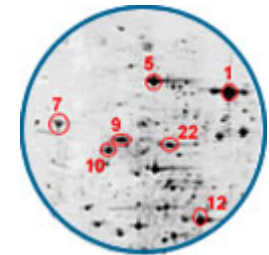
exposure to material outside curriculum and debate on topical issues; work with “non-traditional” feeder schools to promote widening participation

For *department*:

increased local profile and UCAS applications; increased conversion of applicants to registrants? Students act as ambassadors before and after their assessed presentations

For *science*:

increased understanding, awareness and enthusiasm among an important target group





University of  
**Kent**

**MSc Science, Communication and Society**

[www.kent.ac.uk/bio/communication/sc/](http://www.kent.ac.uk/bio/communication/sc/)

# Acknowledgements

Dr. Kay Foster

Dr. Richard Williamson

Biosciences colleagues

Higher Education Academy

University of  
**Kent**

