MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

From Manchester for the world



Candidate brief

Director of Future Students

October 2026

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Department	Directorate of Student Experience
Reports to	Executive Director for the Student Experience
Duration	Permanent
Location	Oxford Road, Manchester

Enquiries about vacancy shortlisting and interviews
Email: Talent.attraction@manchester.ac.uk

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in this role at The University of Manchester.

Since 1824, our University has been defined by discovery, social change and a pioneering spirit. Today we are one of the UK's largest single site universities, recognised globally for excellence in teaching, research and impact.

In 2025 we launched our new strategy, *From Manchester for the world*, setting out what it means to be a great civic university in the 21st century, creating knowledge for the public good, locally and globally.

We look forward to meeting you.

Patrick Hackett
Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer





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About the University

The University of Manchester is recognised globally for our pioneering research, breadth of teaching and learning and for our commitment to social responsibility.

The world's big challenges demand urgent action – we're working across boundaries and disciplines to create healthier, more equal futures; helping to eradicate poverty; ensuring energy supply for future generations; and protecting our planet for the years to come.





Our history

The University of Manchester was England's first civic university, built for an industrial age. We trace our roots to 1824 with the Manchester Mechanics' Institution and the Manchester Royal School of Medicine. The modern university was formed in 2004 through the merger of the Victoria University of Manchester and UMIST.

We have a rich history of attracting brilliant minds, with 26 Nobel laureates among our current and former staff and students, including Ernest Rutherford, Arthur Lewis, and most recently, Andre Geim, Kostya Novoselov and Simon Johnson.



The present

Part of the Russell Group, The University of Manchester is one of the UK's largest single site universities, spanning STEM, the arts and social sciences. With a £1.35bn turnover, major capital investment and more than 500,000 alumni, we are a global institution recognised for excellence in education and innovation.

Our strategy to 2035, launched in 2025, focuses on five areas to go further and faster, driving innovation, skills and good jobs in the region and country, while addressing global challenges. These priorities build on our firm foundations of teaching and research excellence, values-led social responsibility, deep civic roots with global reach, and a culture with equity, diversity and inclusion at its heart.

Manchester and the region

Manchester is the original modern city, birthplace of industrial and social movements that shaped the world. The University is a proud civic institution, central to the region's economic, social and cultural life, and a partner in Greater Manchester's Civic University Agreement.

We contribute to the city's rich cultural landscape through institutions such as Manchester Museum, the Whitworth and Jodrell Bank.

Manchester, ranked in the top three of *Time Out*'s World's Best Cities, is a cosmopolitan, globally recognised cultural centre, home to leading theatres, orchestras and major developments like MediaCityUK, Aviva Studios and HOME.



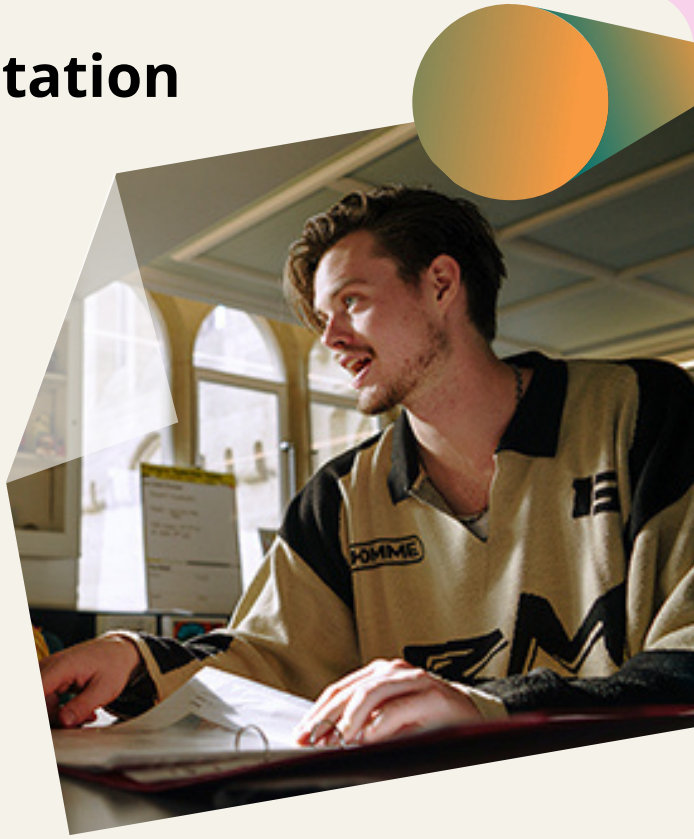
Global rankings and reputation

The University has a global reputation for excellence in research, teaching and civic engagement. We rank 35th in the world (QS 2026), with 93% of our research rated world leading or internationally excellent (REF 2021).

We are first in the UK and Europe, and second globally, for social and environmental impact (*Times Higer Education* Impact Rankings 2025) – the only university to place consistently in the global top ten since the rankings began.

Manchester's expertise supports partners worldwide and our campus brings together students from more than 170 nationalities, making us one of the world's most international universities.

Learn more about our rankings and reputation: manchester.ac.uk/about/rankings



From Manchester for the world

***From Manchester for the world* is our strategy to 2035, defining our ambition to be a great civic university for the 21st century.**

Our strategy focuses on five priorities: flexible, digitally enabled learning; accelerating research impact; driving innovation; strengthening partnerships; and modern, data driven services.

Realising the ambitions of our strategy will define our next decade and beyond, and work to achieve this is already underway. In 2026, we partnered with Microsoft, becoming the first university in the world to provide Microsoft 365 Copilot access and training to all students and staff.

Read our full strategy – *From Manchester for the world:* manchester.ac.uk/about/manchester-2035/full-strategy

"As we enter our third century, we stand at a pivotal moment. *From Manchester for the world* means working with our city and region deeply, to develop the ideas and solutions our communities and the world urgently need."

Professor Duncan Ivison
Manchester's President and Vice-Chancellor.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

From our earliest days, we've worked to break down barriers and improve lives. Today we are committed to building a truly inclusive university where equity, access and belonging shape our work. We invest in leadership, programmes and data to support this ambition and report our progress annually.

We are committed to meeting and exceeding our obligations under current legislation and by doing more, we build on Manchester's existing reputation for rich diversity. Recognising, embracing and valuing difference leads to improvements for all.

University leadership



Professor Duncan Ivison
President and Vice-Chancellor

Professor Ashley Blom
Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health

Professor Fiona Devine
Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities

Professor Colette Fagan
Vice-President for Research

Patrick Hackett
Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer

Professor Jenn Hallam
Vice-President for Teaching, Learning and Students

Professor John Holden
Vice-President for Civic Engagement and Innovation

Ele Morrissey
Director of People

Professor Sarah Sharples
Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering

Professor Nalin Thakkar
Vice-President for Social Responsibility

George Whalley
Interim Chief Financial Officer

Read detailed biographies of the University's senior officers:
www.manchester.ac.uk/about/people/university-executive-team/

Governance

The University of Manchester's governance structure reflects the principles of good governance in higher education. Responsibility is held by the following bodies:

Board of Governors

The University's governing body, chaired by Philippa Hird. Its 23 mostly lay members hold ultimate responsibility for strategic direction and financial oversight.

General Assembly

A two-way forum through which the University shares achievements and receives feedback from its wider constituencies. It has around 100 members.

Senate

The University's principal academic authority, responsible to the Board of Governors for promoting research and maintaining academic standards in teaching.

About Professional Services



Professional Services (PS) play a critical role in ensuring The University of Manchester can achieve its strategic goals, with more than 5,000 PS colleagues providing vital support across a great range of services.

PS colleagues are crucial in ensuring the highest standards of teaching and research take place at the University, and key to the successful delivery of our strategy to 2035, *From Manchester for the world.*

They work to make a consistent, positive difference to our entire University community – from students to alumni and partners – both within our central Directorates and as non-academic colleagues across our Faculties and Schools.

Our PS comprise:

- Compliance and Risk
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Estates and Facilities
- Finance
- Governance Office
- History and Heritage Office
- People
- Learning and Organisational Development
- Legal Affairs
- Library
- IT Services
- Research and Business Engagement
- Student Experience
- Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment
- Teaching and Learning Support Office
- Development and Alumni Relations
- Social Responsibility
- Planning
- University of Manchester Worldwide

PS colleagues lead and facilitate negotiations with partner organisations and key stakeholders, act as the strategic lead in many areas, and provide specialist advice and support across a variety of different functions.

They span a vast range of services and comprise a swathe of professions, from accountants, IT specialists, administrators and technicians to marketers, careers advisers and manual support colleagues.

The role

The Director of Future Students is a new leadership role responsible for shaping how the University understands, attracts, supports and enrols its future students. Working across academic and professional services communities, the Director will bring together portfolio development, student recruitment, conversion, admissions and enrolment around a coherent University-wide strategy.

A key early priority will be to lead and embed PACE. PACE (Product, Attraction, Conversion and Enrolment) is a new strategic institutional initiative designed to transform how the University plans, attracts, converts and enrols students in support of its Manchester 2035 ambitions. Bringing together expertise from across academic and professional services communities, PACE seeks to create a more integrated, evidence-led and student-centred approach to growth, portfolio development and student recruitment.

PACE is at an important stage in its development. While significant foundations have been established, the operating model, governance arrangements, ways of working and institutional partnerships continue to evolve. This creates a unique opportunity for the successful candidate to shape the future direction of PACE and help define how the University delivers sustainable growth and an outstanding student experience.

This is a high-impact leadership opportunity to shape both the future of the University and the future development of PACE itself. As a newly established institutional leadership role, you will help define the next phase of PACE, building the partnerships, governance, operating model and performance culture required to deliver the University's ambitions for sustainable growth, portfolio development and student recruitment.

You will lead institutional recruitment, conversion and enrolment performance, ensuring a seamless journey from prospect to student. You will drive excellence across admissions and enrolment operations, enhance the applicant experience, and use data, insight and digital innovation to support informed decision-making, forecasting and continuous improvement.

Working across the University, you will establish clear governance, accountability and performance frameworks to deliver measurable outcomes and maintain regulatory compliance. As a leader of a large and integrated function, you will build high-performing teams, champion collaboration and lead the transformational change required to realise the University’s PACE ambitions.

Read more about our Directorate for the Student Experience: https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/dse/

Key accountabilities

Shape the future of student recruitment at Manchester

As Director of Future Students, you will shape how the University of Manchester connects with, attracts and welcomes its future students. Bringing together our approach to PACE, you will lead a University-wide strategy that connects our academic strengths with the aspirations of prospective students.

This is an opportunity to influence what we offer, how we reach new audiences and how we support applicants from their first interest through to enrolment. Your leadership will contribute directly to Manchester 2035, strengthening our reputation, supporting sustainable growth and creating an outstanding experience for future students.

Your opportunity to make an impact

- **Set the direction for future student recruitment**. Lead an ambitious, integrated strategy, translating market insight into clear priorities and delivering on the University's recruitment, conversion and enrolment ambitions.

- **Help shape tomorrow's academic offer.** Work with Faculties and academic leaders to develop a distinctive, market-responsive portfolio, informing programme development, positioning and investment.

- **Extend Manchester's reach**. Bring together marketing, communications, digital engagement, recruitment and partnerships to strengthen our visibility, engage diverse audiences and inspire prospective students to choose Manchester.

- **Create an exceptional applicant journey**. Champion timely, personalised engagement, connecting communications, events, academic involvement and applicant support with efficient, welcoming admissions and enrolment services.

- **Connect expertise across the University**. Unite academic and professional services colleagues around shared ambitions, building the relationships and collective ownership needed to deliver across a complex institution.

Key accountabilities

- **Turn insight into better decisions**. Strengthen market intelligence, user research, data and digital capability, enabling the University to anticipate demand, target investment and continually improve its approach.

- **Build a team and service equipped for the future**. Develop an integrated, high-performing PACE function, empowering colleagues, leading change and establishing clear accountability for performance, resources and delivery.

As a senior University leader, you will combine strategic ambition with a commitment to inclusive, student-centred practice. You will represent Manchester externally, respond to a changing sector and ensure that quality, compliance and responsible stewardship underpin our ambitions.

Person specification

What you'll bring

We are looking for a strategic, collaborative leader who can connect insight, ambition and delivery to shape the future of student recruitment at Manchester. You will bring the credibility to influence across a complex organisation, the curiosity to challenge established approaches and the leadership to turn shared priorities into meaningful results.

Experience and insight

You will have a strong record of senior leadership in a complex organisation, aligning strategy with institutional ambitions and responding confidently to changing markets. Your experience will include shaping portfolios, products or academic propositions, working with academic leaders to develop a compelling, market-responsive offer.

You will understand UK and international student recruitment markets and how to engage different audiences through effective channels and partnerships. Alongside this, you will bring experience of improving the applicant journey through personalised, insight-led engagement, supported by a sound understanding of fair, efficient and student-centred admissions and enrolment.
Confident using data, analytics and digital tools, you will translate evidence into better forecasting, informed investment and measurable improvements. You will also have demonstrated your ability to build partnerships across organisational boundaries and secure collective ownership of results.

Leadership and approach

- **Strategic judgement and focus**: the ability to navigate ambiguity, make clear choices and turn long-term ambitions into achievable priorities.
- **Influence and collaboration**: the communication and relationship-building skills to engage senior stakeholders, work effectively with governance groups and bring colleagues together around a shared direction.
- **Change and innovation**: a record of leading transformation, improving services and connecting teams to deliver a more integrated approach.

Person specification

- **Commercial and operational discipline**: strong financial judgement, with experience of managing budgets, prioritising resources and delivering at scale.

- **Inclusive people leadership**: the ability to inspire and develop teams, build capability and create a culture of trust, high performance and accountability.

- **Responsible decision-making**: an analytical, practical approach that embeds fairness and relevant recruitment, admissions, consumer protection and data requirements into delivery.

You will combine resilience and personal drive with a reflective, open approach to leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Key behaviours

One University

A ‘One University’ approach, whereby we break down silos and work collaboratively towards furthering the University’s strategic goals, vision and values.

Service excellence

Committed to prioritising service excellence and high performance to deliver great people-centred experiences.

Agility

Demonstrate a commitment to agility and continuous improvement by embracing change, championing innovation, and being flexible and forward thinking to adapt.

Sustainability

A sustainable approach that safeguards our future university by championing environmental practices, advancing digital capability, and supporting financial stability and philanthropic initiatives.

Inclusion

A commitment to furthering equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing to create a positive work environment and culture.

Social responsibility

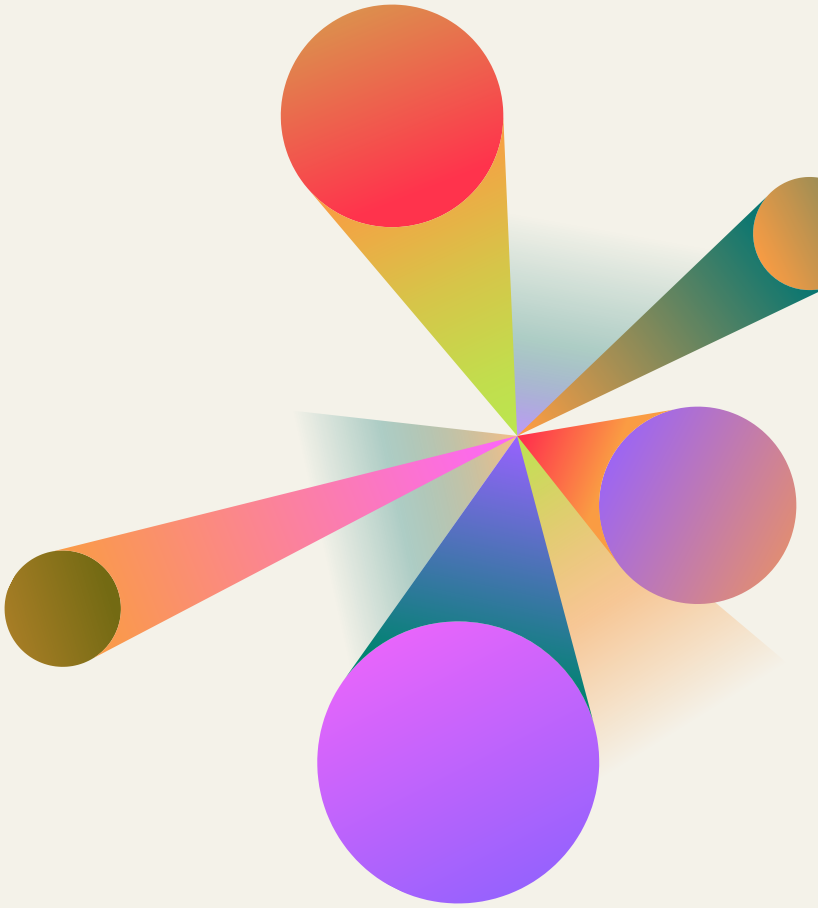
Promote and champion the University’s social responsibility ambitions to advance social inclusion, prosperous communities, better health and cultural engagement.

Freedom of speech and academic freedom

Support the University’s commitment to securing and actively promoting the importance of free speech and academic freedom within our community.

People leadership

Demonstrate effective leadership by empowering, motivating and developing teams to achieve high performance. Build a collaborative and inclusive work environment and provide clear direction, support and feedback.



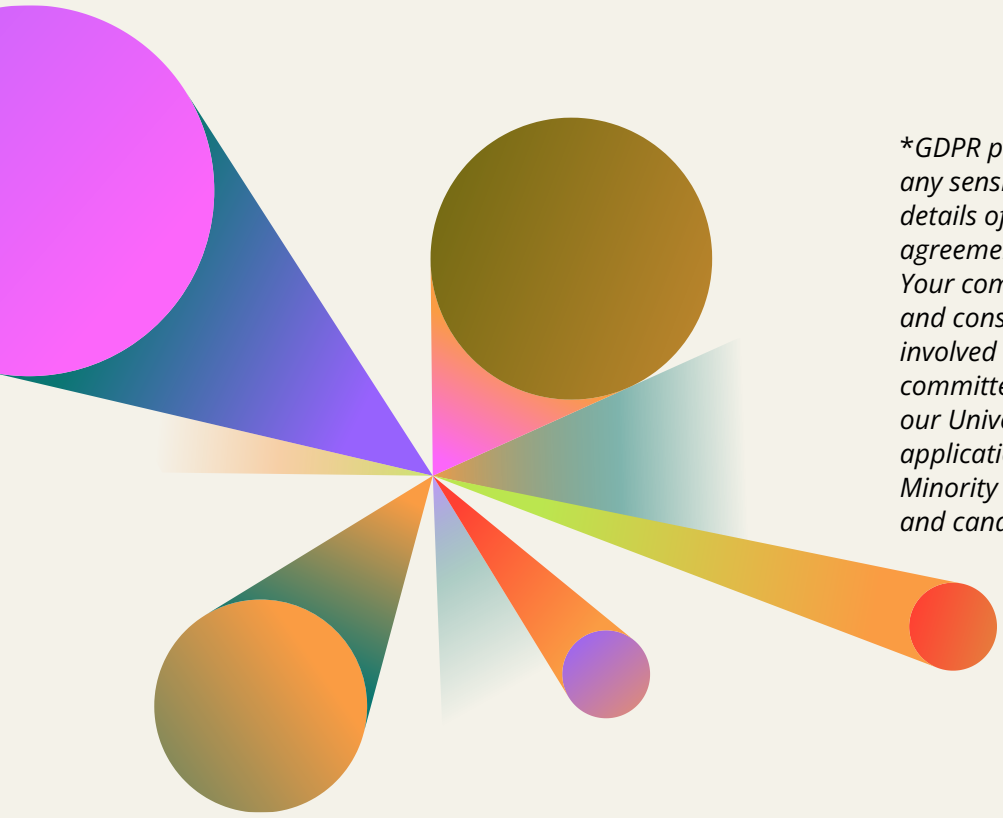
How to apply

To apply, please visit the job advert on the University of Manchester website and search for reference PSX-032625. Applications close at midnight on 15th November 2026.

For informal enquiries please contact Andrew Dixon: talent.attraction@manchester.ac.uk

We want every candidate to have the opportunity to perform at their best. If you would benefit from reasonable adjustments at any stage of the recruitment and selection process, please contact talent.attraction@manchester.ac.uk. We will work with you to understand your needs and agree appropriate support, treating any information you share sensitively and confidentially.

In accordance with GDPR guidelines*, we are only able to process your sensitive personal data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life or sexual orientation) with your express consent.



**GDPR personal data notice – please do not include any sensitive personal data, including the contact details of your chosen referees (without prior agreement), within your CV and covering letter. Your completed 'equal opportunities monitoring and consent form' will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. We are committed to further enhancing the diversity of our University Executive and particularly welcome applications from women, Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority candidates, candidates with disabilities and candidates with other protected characteristics.*



We are an open place of enquiry and challenge. We embrace and celebrate difference, diversity and debate, and we pride ourselves on being a place of education, learning and community where we are able, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, express new ideas and explore controversial or unpopular topics and opinions. Find out more from our Policy on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom.

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