

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

From Manchester
for the world



Candidate brief

Executive Director of Communications, Marketing & Engagement

October 2026

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Executive Director of Communications, Marketing & Engagement

Directorate	Communications, Marketing & Engagement
Reports to	Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer
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 £1.4bn 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.



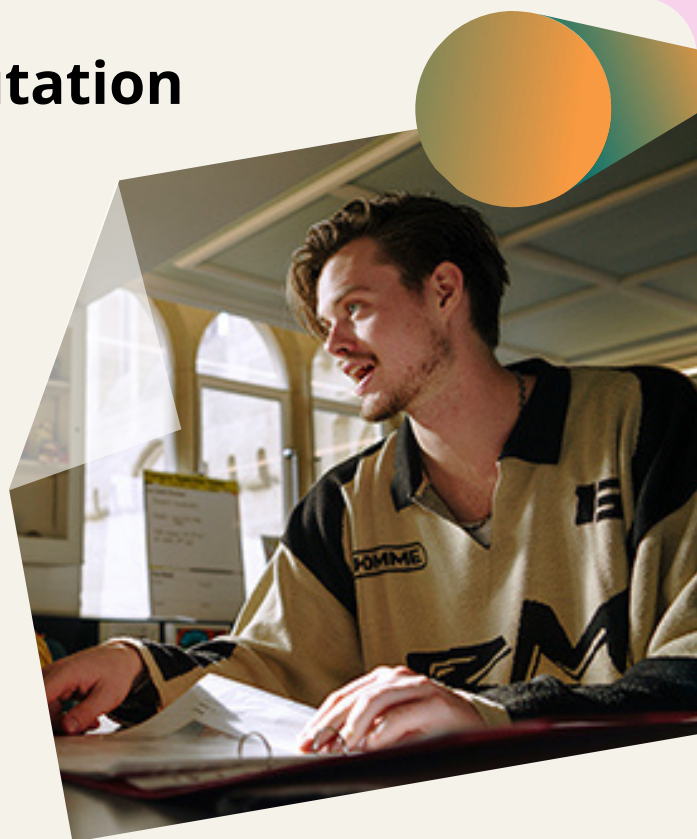
Global rankings and reputation

The University has a global reputation for excellence in research, teaching and civic engagement. We rank 40th 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 Higher 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.”

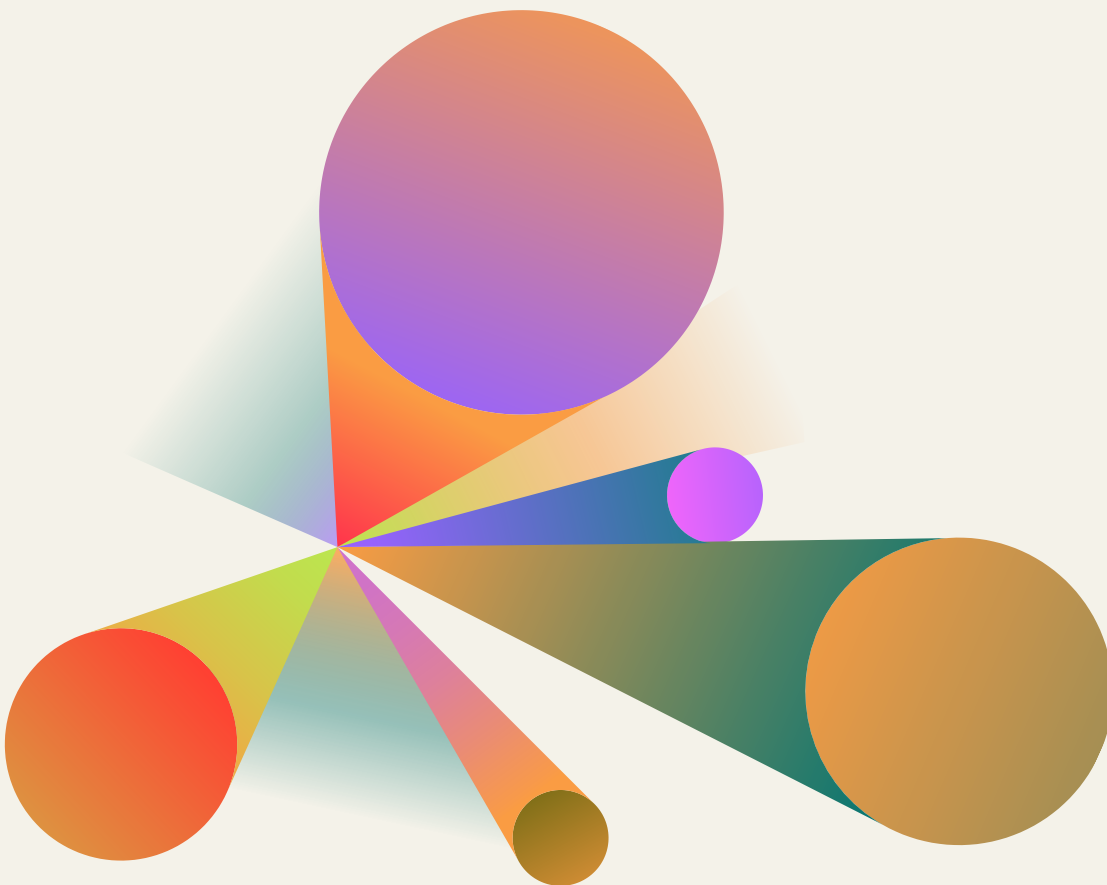
Professor Duncan Ivison
President and Vice-Chancellor.



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

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 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 Engagement
- 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.



Overall purpose

This is an opportunity to shape how the world sees The University of Manchester — and how we engage with the world.

As Executive Director of Communications, Marketing & Engagement, you will lead a portfolio at the heart of the University's ambitions. Bringing together brand, reputation, communications and marketing, you will help translate From Manchester for the World, our Manchester 2035 strategy, into a compelling story that inspires our communities, attracts talent and strengthens our influence.

You will work in close partnership with the President and Vice-Chancellor and their office, with access to and influence across the University's senior leadership. Working alongside the University Executive, Professional Services Leadership Team and Faculty and School leaders and regularly engaging with the Board and its committees, you will help shape the decisions, priorities and positioning that define Manchester's future.

As the University's senior adviser on communications, engagement and reputation, you will bring an external perspective, deep audience insight and sound judgement to our most important conversations. Your advice will help leaders anticipate opportunities, navigate sensitive issues and respond confidently to a complex and changing environment. You will ensure that reputation and engagement inform our thinking from the outset.

The breadth of this role offers substantial scope for impact. Your portfolio will span internal and external communications, student and University marketing, media relations, public affairs, brand, campaigns, social media and creative services, including editorial, design and video. You will lead a large team of communications and marketing professionals, creating a shared sense of purpose and the confidence, capabilities and ambition to deliver outstanding work.

You will have the opportunity to modernise how the University communicates and connects. Building on your track record of delivering leading technology-enabled social media activity and campaigns, you will champion creative, insight-led approaches that reach audiences, encourage participation and achieve measurable results.

Externally, you will strengthen the Universities visibility, reputation and influence. You will bring our research, education, innovation, people and partnerships to life, demonstrating their significance and contribution to society. Through relationships with the media, government, policymakers and other influential stakeholders, you will position Manchester as an authoritative voice in the debates that matter and a compelling place to study, work and collaborate.

Internally, you will lead an approach to communication and engagement that helps students and colleagues feel connected to the University's future and have a role in shaping it. By strengthening leadership communication and fostering meaningful dialogue, you will ensure that our communities feel informed, involved and empowered to contribute their ideas and perspectives

You will also set the strategic direction for student and University marketing, ensuring that Manchester offers a distinctive and persuasive proposition in an increasingly competitive UK and international environment. Connecting audience insight with compelling campaigns and experiences, you will help the University attract and engage the people who will contribute to its future success.

At the centre of your work will be the University of Manchester brand. You will lead its strategic development and stewardship, bringing together our identity, voice, content, campaigns and experiences to express what makes Manchester distinctive and why it matters.

For an ambitious and influential leader, this is the chance to shape a major institution's voice, build an exceptional team and make a lasting contribution to Manchester's next chapter.

Key accountabilities

This appointment comes at a defining moment for The University of Manchester. Our Manchester 2035 strategy sets a clear direction and creates an opportunity to reimagine how one of the UK's largest and most influential universities communicates, connects and builds influence.

You will bring together communications, marketing, brand, public affairs, digital and creative expertise around a shared ambition: to make the Universities voice as powerful as its contribution. Leading a senior team and providing professional leadership across the wider University, you will build an integrated, audience-led approach that connects institutional priorities with the people and partnerships essential to their success. Your ability to navigate complex stakeholder relationships and unite colleagues behind a common purpose will be central to your impact.

You will have an extraordinary foundation to build on: research and academic expertise that changes lives; a globally recognised name; deep roots in Manchester and the wider region; a diverse international community; and a wealth of stories about people, ideas and discoveries shaping our world.

Your opportunity is to connect these strengths, amplify their reach and ensure that the University of Manchester's reputation reflects the scale of its ambition and impact.

In this role, you will:

- **Turn Manchester 2035 into a compelling shared story.** Develop an integrated communications, marketing and engagement strategy that advances our ambitions and strengthens our brand, reputation and influence.
- **Inspire people and transform how we work.** Lead and develop a talented team, creating a culture of creativity, collaboration and accountability, with expertise and resources focused where they can make the greatest difference.
- **Build strong relationships with students and the Students' Union.** Create opportunities for genuine dialogue with students, ensure that the student voice is heard and informs our decision making, and foster a sense of belonging that inspires a lifelong connection to the University.
- **Amplify our research and innovation on the global stage.** Develop compelling narratives that showcase our academic community's discoveries, expertise and impact, strengthening the University's profile and reputation among international audiences, partners and opinion formers.
- **Shape the Universities brand.** Define our institutional positioning and narrative, bringing coherence and distinction to our visual identity, voice and audience experiences, supported by clear brand governance and meaningful reputation measurement.
- **Grow our profile and authority.** Lead an ambitious external communications and media strategy that brings our expertise into public debate, builds thought leadership and strengthens the profile of our academic and institutional leaders.
- **Provide trusted counsel when it matters most.** Anticipate reputational risks and guide the University through complex, sensitive and fast-moving issues with sound judgement, clear advice and confident communication.

Key accountabilities

- **Connect our communities with the University of Manchester's future.** Strengthen communication and engagement with colleagues and students, making leadership more visible, priorities more accessible and opportunities to listen and contribute more meaningful.
- **Make the University a leading choice.** Bring together audience insight, market intelligence and creativity to strengthen student and University marketing, attract outstanding students and engage priority audiences in the UK and internationally.
- **Extend our influence through public affairs and partnerships.** Build relationships with local and national government, policymakers, political leaders, Greater Manchester and civic partners, sector bodies and other influential stakeholders.
- **Deliver campaigns that capture attention and inspire action.** Unite institutional campaigns with outstanding editorial, design, video and social media, creating work that connects with audiences and delivers measurable results
- **Put insight at the heart of decision-making.** Strengthen audience understanding, horizon scanning and evaluation so that priorities are informed by evidence and success is judged by impact.
- **Lead the next chapter of digital engagement.** Champion effective and responsible use of digital technologies, data and AI, responding to changing audience behaviour and setting an ambitious standard for technology-enabled social media and campaigns.
- **Build a connected professional community.** Establish shared standards, develop capability and shape an operating model that enables central and local communications, marketing and engagement teams to work effectively together.
- **Transform the directorate for Manchester's future.** Shape its structure, capabilities and ways of working to deliver Manchester 2035, bringing colleagues through change and building a more integrated, agile and ambitious function.
- **Turn technological opportunity into impact.** Bring practical expertise in digital platforms, data, automation and AI to strengthen campaigns, social media and audience engagement, building the team's confidence and capability to innovate.



Person specification

We are looking for an exceptional leader who combines strategic judgement with creative ambition, brings credibility at the highest levels and knows how to turn an organisation's strengths into a compelling reputation.

You will be energised by the University's scale, complexity and potential, and by the opportunity to bring talented people together around a shared ambition. Your experience may come from higher education or another complex, knowledge-intensive, highly scrutinised or internationally focused organisation. Higher education experience is welcome, but not essential.

Knowledge and perspective

You will understand how reputation is built across an organisation: through its communications, media presence, brand and marketing, but also through its relationships, behaviour and the everyday experiences of its communities.

You will bring sophisticated political and external awareness, recognising how government, public policy, media and public opinion shape the environment in which major institutions operate. Alongside this, you will have a strong grasp of modern communications and marketing, including digital and social media, audience insight, data and emerging technologies, and how to use them to create meaningful engagement and measurable impact.

Experience and impact

You will bring substantial senior leadership experience in communications, corporate or external affairs, marketing, reputation or a related discipline, with a track record of delivering strategies that have strengthened organisational profile, reputation and engagement.

You will have worked alongside chief executives, boards and senior leadership teams as a trusted adviser, helping them navigate complex decisions and operate effectively under scrutiny. Your experience will demonstrate an ability to lead change through partnership and influence, securing commitment across organisational boundaries.

You will have reshaped and developed multidisciplinary teams, modernised ways of working and strengthened organisational capability, bringing colleagues through change while maintaining momentum and delivering results.

You will also bring practical experience of using digital platforms, data, automation and AI to improve communications and marketing, including successful technology-enabled social media activity and campaigns.

Skills and leadership

You will combine sound strategic judgement with the credibility and confidence to contribute at the most senior levels of a large and complex institution. An outstanding communicator and relationship builder, you will engage academic and professional colleagues, earn the trust of external stakeholders and bring people together around shared priorities.

You will be adept at building support through influence, recognising that success at the University depends on collaboration, strong relationships and collective ownership. When issues are sensitive, ambiguous or moving quickly, you will offer calm, authoritative advice and a clear sense of direction.

Person specification

Technologically confident and curious, you will recognise where new tools can add value, make informed decisions about their adoption and build digital capability across your teams. You will translate institutional ambition into clear priorities and a practical programme of transformation, aligning people, structures and technology to deliver lasting improvement

Motivation and approach

You will share our ambition for the University and our belief in the contribution a university can make to society. You will appreciate our intellectual strengths, our deep connections to our city and region, and the opportunities created by our international reach.

You will bring the energy to challenge established approaches and the inclusive leadership to take people with you. By building trust, encouraging experimentation and creating shared purpose, you will enable colleagues across the University to achieve more together.

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

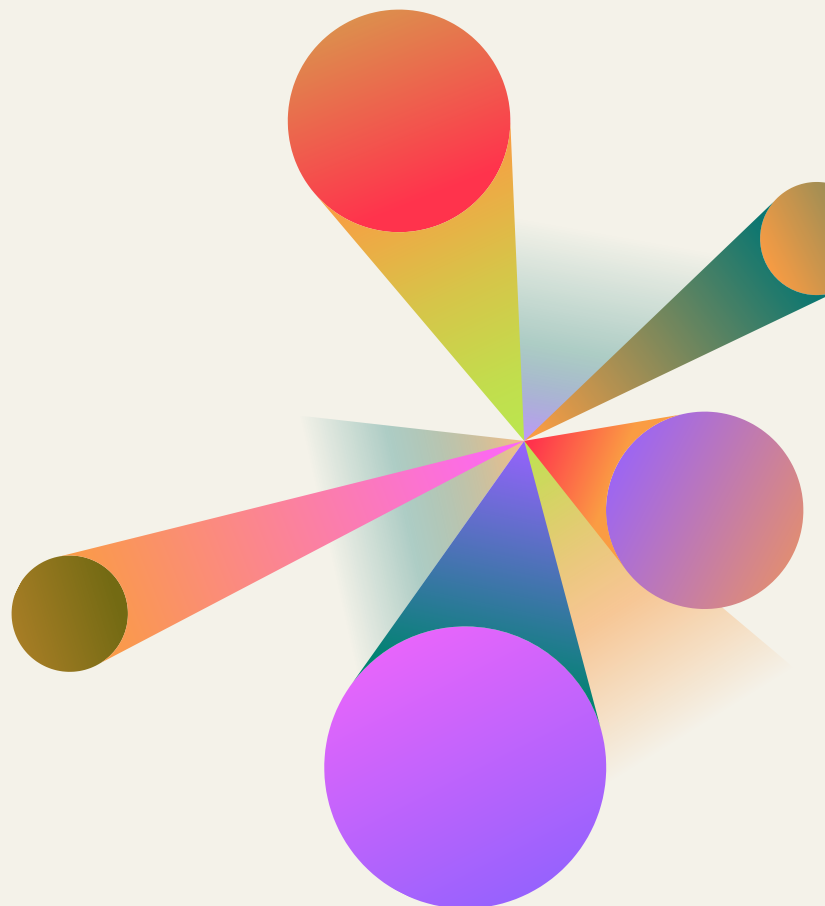
Promote and champion the University's social responsibility ambitions to advance social inclusion, prosperous communities, better health and cultural engagement.

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

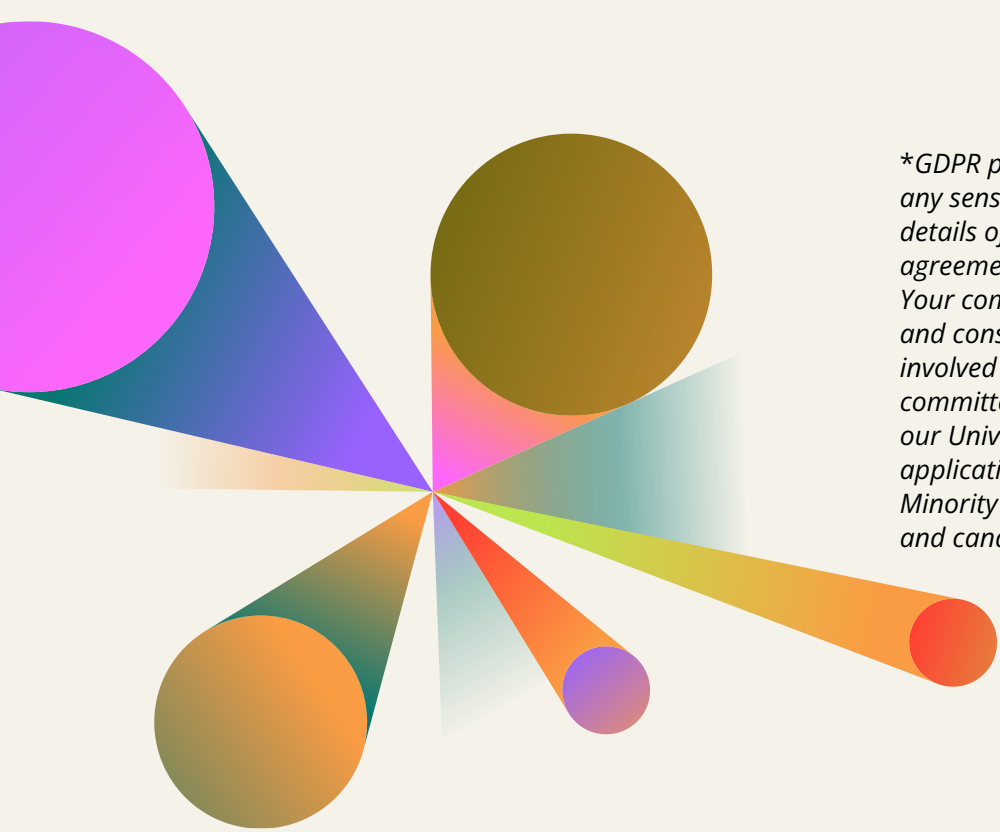
To apply, please visit the job advert on the University of Manchester website and search for reference PSX-032598. Applications close at midnight on 15th November 2026.

For informal enquiries or to arrange an exploratory conversation with Patrick Hackett, Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, or Duncan Ivison, President and Vice-Chancellor, please contact Vicky Roth at talent.attraction@manchester.ac.uk.

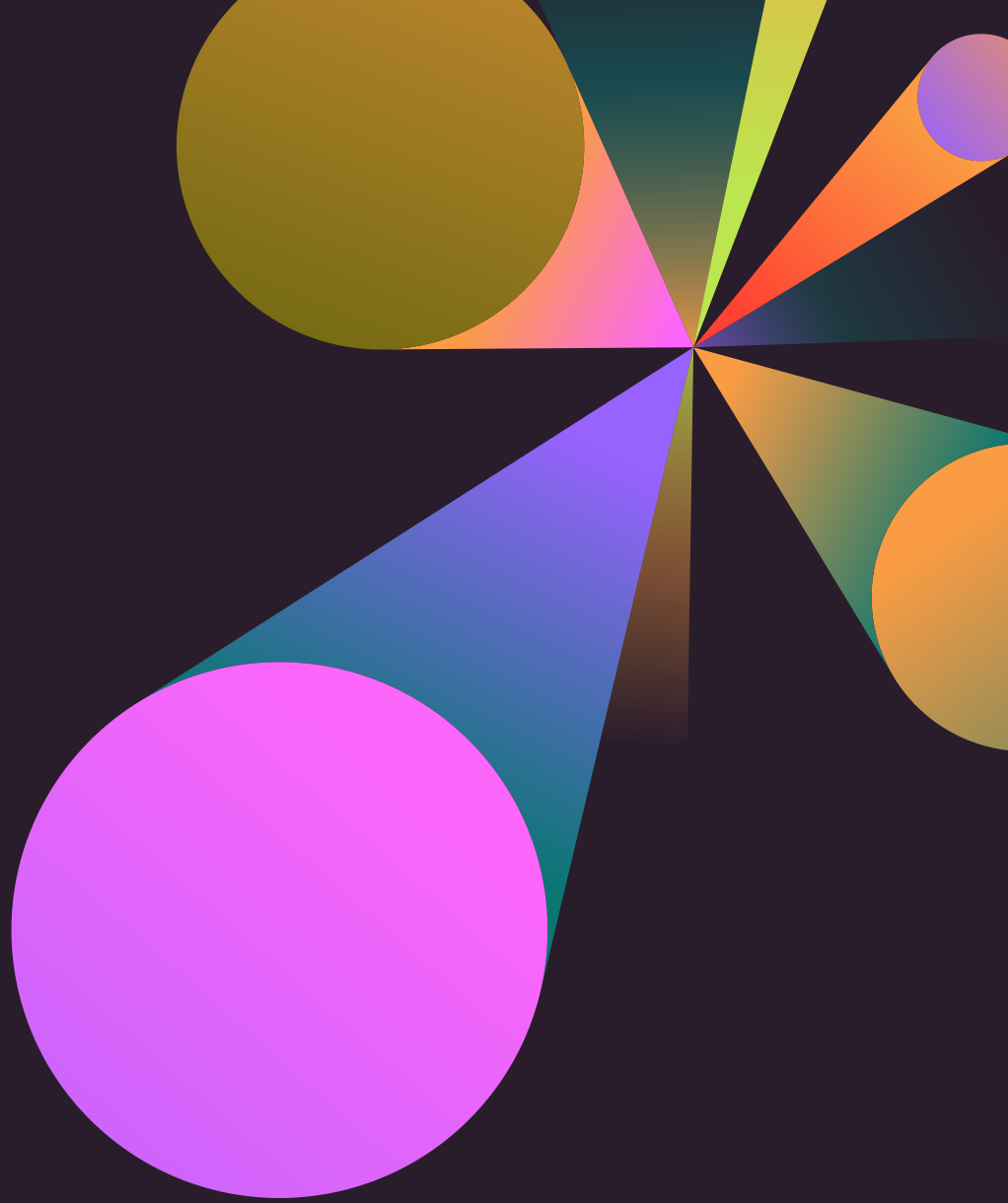
Please note that interviews will be held on 4th December 2026.

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.](#)

The University of
Manchester Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Royal Charter Number
RC000797