MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

From Manchester for the world



Candidate brief

Director of Reward, Benefits & Recognition

October 2026

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Grade	9
Directorate	People
Reports to	Executive Director of People
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.



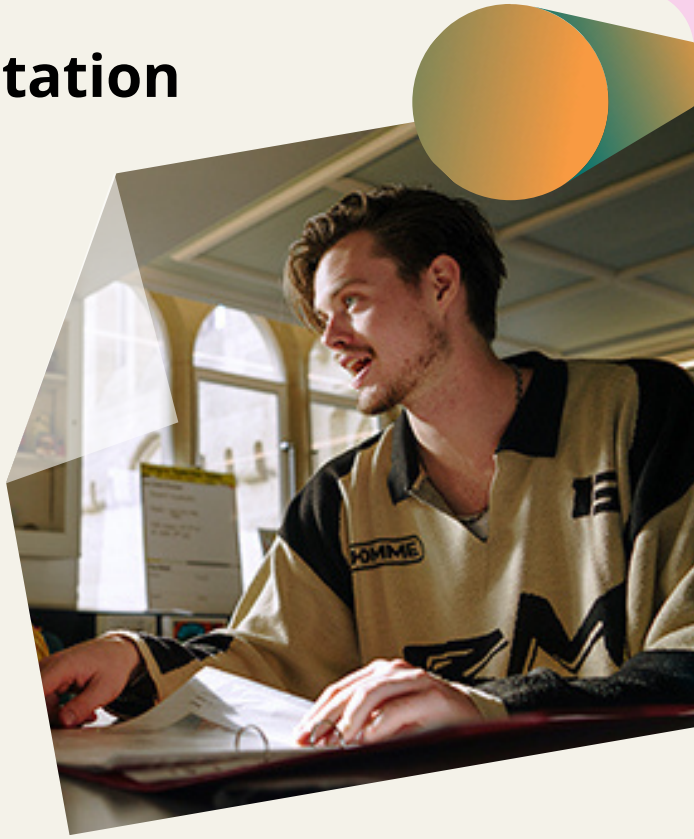
Global rankings and reputation

The University has a global reputation for excellence in research, teaching and civic engagement. We rank 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 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
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
Executive 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
- Planning
- Development and Alumni Relations
- Social Responsibility
- 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

This is an opportunity to shape how Manchester rewards, recognises and supports the people who make our ambitions possible.

As Director of Reward, Benefits & Recognition, you will lead the development of a modern, inclusive and competitive reward offer that helps the University attract and retain outstanding colleagues. You will bring together strategic ambition and practical delivery, ensuring our approach reflects the diversity of our community, responds to changing expectations and supports our long-term financial sustainability.

Leading our Reward, Benefits and Recognition Centre of Expertise, you will have responsibility for reward strategy, benefits, recognition, pensions and job frameworks, alongside the University's annual performance review cycle. You will help shape an environment where colleagues understand how their contribution is valued, can develop their careers and are supported to perform at their best.

Working across the University and contributing to the People & OD Leadership Board, you will build the relationships and shared commitment needed to turn strategy into meaningful improvements in colleagues' experience.

Key accountabilities

You will shape an approach to reward, benefits and recognition that reflects Manchester's ambitions and the contribution of our people. Combining strategic leadership with a focus on delivery, you will work across the University to strengthen our offer, build confidence in fair and transparent decisions, and ensure our frameworks respond to changing organisational and colleague needs. Leading a specialist Centre of Expertise, you will translate these priorities into meaningful improvements that help us attract, retain and recognise talented people.

In this role, you will:

- **Shape a reward offer that supports Manchester's ambitions**. Develop and deliver an evidence-led reward strategy that strengthens our ability to attract and retain talented people across regional, national and international markets, balancing competitiveness, fairness and affordability.
- **Make benefits and recognition meaningful to our people.** Listen to colleagues and evolve an inclusive offer that reflects different needs, recognises contribution and strengthens Manchester's employee value proposition.
- **Provide confident leadership of pensions**. Lead the pensions service and oversee the University's pension and related schemes, supporting effective governance, reliable delivery and clear communications that help colleagues understand their provision.
- **Put fairness and insight at the heart of decisions**. Use workforce data, market intelligence and clear measures of success to inform reward decisions, address pay gaps and equal pay risks, and evaluate the impact of our approach.
- **Build job frameworks that enable change and progression**. Evolve job evaluation, job families and role architecture to support organisational priorities, provide greater clarity and respond to changing roles and skills.

Key accountabilities

- **Connect performance, development and recognition**. Lead the University's annual performance review cycle, ensuring it supports meaningful conversations, clear expectations and colleague development, and contributes to an inclusive culture of high performance.
- **Provide trusted advice on complex reward decisions.** Bring sound judgement and specialist expertise to senior discussions, supporting the Remuneration Committee with clear recommendations, robust analysis and relevant market evidence.
- **Build partnerships that turn ambition into action**. Work collaboratively with leaders, colleagues and recognised trade unions, building confidence in our approach and securing engagement with changes to policies and practice.
- **Lead a capable and ambitious Centre of Expertise**. Develop an inclusive, high-performing team with clear priorities and a strong service ethos, ensuring effective use of resources and continually improving the Centre's impact and value.
- **Contribute to the University's wider people agenda.** Play an active role in the People & OD Leadership team, bringing a reward perspective to organisational transformation and helping shape joined-up approaches to culture, performance and colleague experience.

Person specification

You will be an experienced reward leader with the strategic judgement, professional credibility and collaborative approach to make an impact in a large, complex and unionised organisation.

You will bring substantial experience across reward strategy, policy, benchmarking, job frameworks and benefits, alongside an understanding of pensions provision and governance. Your track record will demonstrate an ability to turn strategy into measurable improvements while maintaining effective day-to-day services.

You will understand that reward decisions shape trust, opportunity and colleagues' experience of work. You will be confident using data and market insight to assess options, address inequalities and balance competitiveness with financial sustainability.

An effective communicator and relationship builder, you will be comfortable advising senior leaders, working with governance committees and engaging constructively with recognised trade unions. You will bring the judgement to navigate sensitive issues and the influencing skills to build support across organisational boundaries.

You will have experience of organisational transformation and understand how reward, performance and recognition can support changes in operating models and culture. As a people leader, you will set clear direction, develop capability and create an environment in which colleagues can contribute and succeed.

You will also bring sound commercial and financial management skills, a degree and CIPD qualification or equivalent professional experience, and an understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing higher education.

Above all, you will demonstrate a clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to the University's values.

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

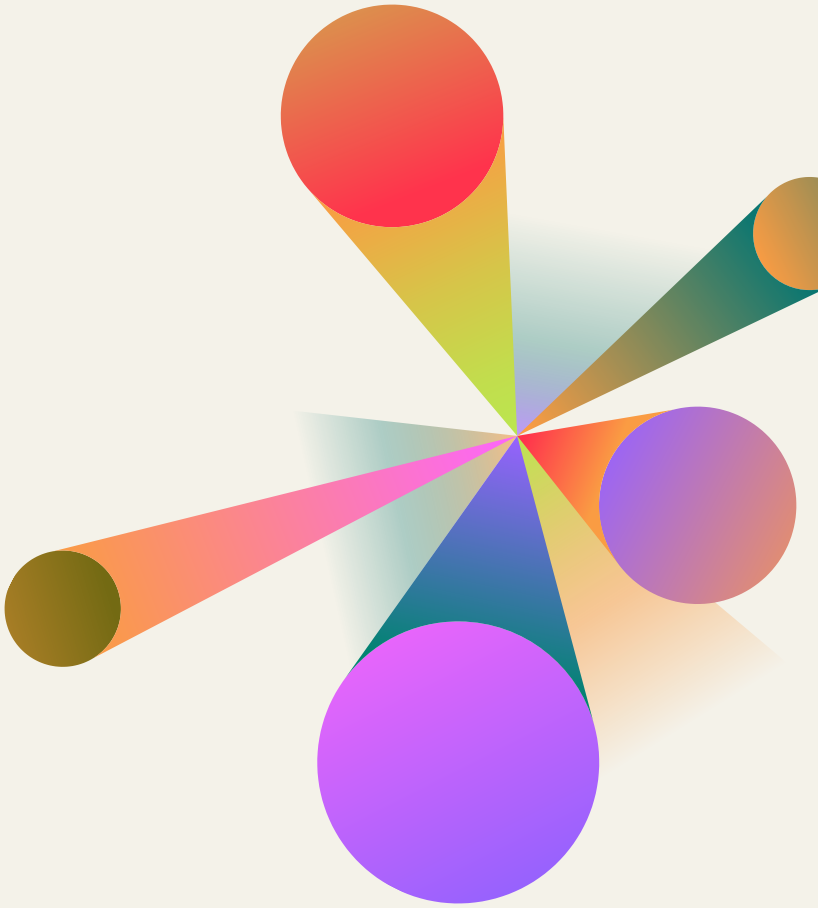
Promote and champion the University’s social responsibility ambitions to advance social inclusion, prosperous communities, better health and cultural engagement.

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.



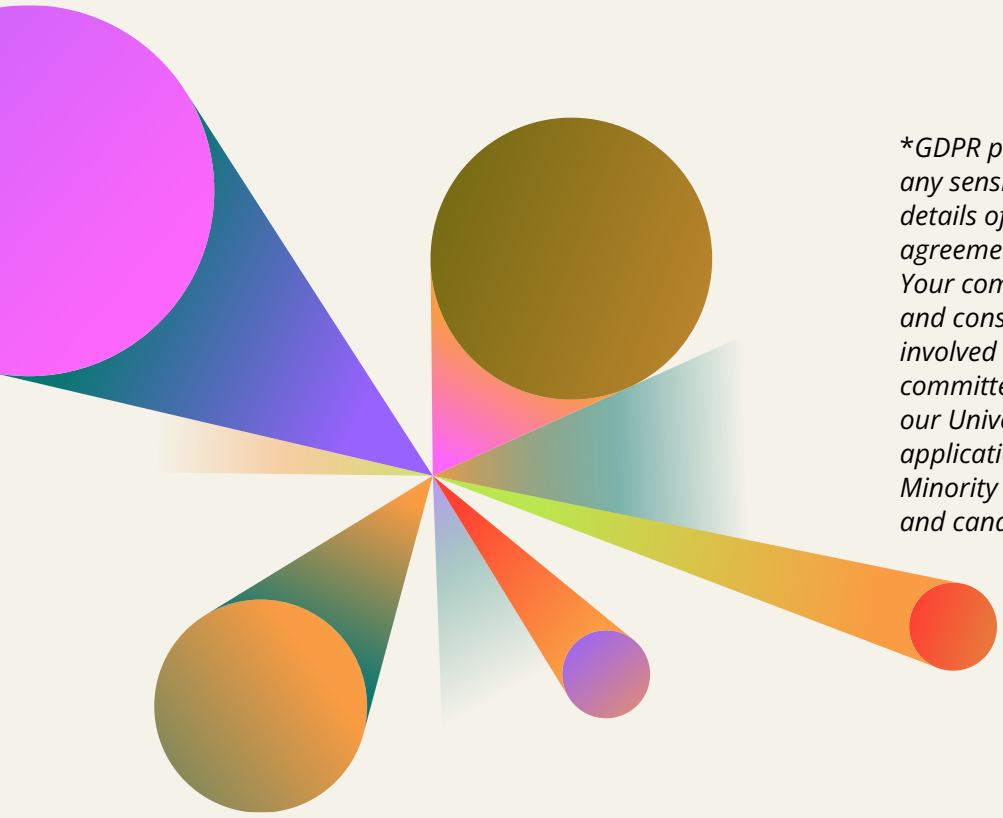
How to apply

To apply, please visit the job advert on the University of Manchester website and search for reference PSX-032683. Applications close at midnight on 22nd November 2026.

For informal enquiries, please contact Lewis Burne at 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.

The University of
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