MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

From Manchester for the world



Candidate brief

Director of the Photon Science Institute

November 2026

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Candidate brief
Director of the Photon Science Institute

Grade	Professorial - Competitive Salary and annual payment for the Director of PSI role.
Department	Faculty of Science and Engineering
Hours	35
Reports to	Professor Sarah Haigh – Vice Dean for Research and Innovation
Duration	Permanent
Location	Oxford Road, Manchester

Enquiries about vacancy shortlisting and interviews
Amy Tambyraja
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

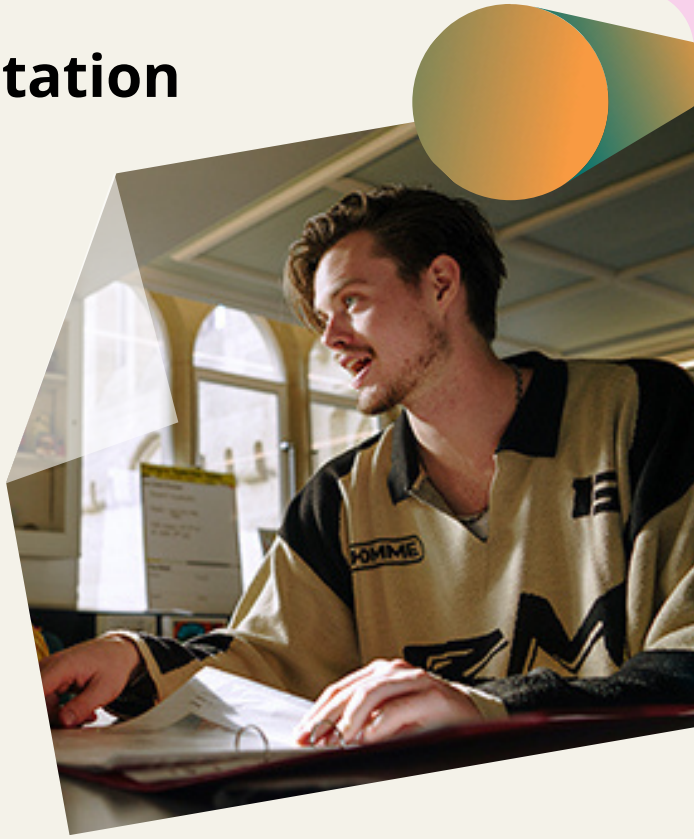
Manchester is the original modern city, birthplace of industrial and social movements that shaped the world. The University is a proud civic institution, central to the region's economic, social and cultural life, and a partner in Greater Manchester's Civic University Agreement.

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
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

Carol Prokopyszyn
Chief Financial Officer

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

Professor Nalin Thakkar
Vice-President for Social Responsibility

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 the Faculty of Science and Engineering



The Faculty of Science and Engineering is one of the UK's leading centres for science, engineering and technology education and research. Bringing together two outstanding Schools – Engineering and Natural Sciences – the Faculty provides world-class teaching, cutting-edge research opportunities and real-world impact to address global challenges.

The Faculty is structured into two Schools:

- **School of Engineering**

Home to the Departments of Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering and Management, Computer Science, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, and Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

- **School of Natural Sciences**

Home to the Departments of Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Materials, Mathematics, and Physics and Astronomy.

With more than 850 researchers and significant investment in facilities, the Faculty drives interdisciplinary research that tackles major societal challenges – from artificial intelligence and quantum technologies to advanced materials and energy solutions. This diverse academic portfolio equips students with robust foundational knowledge and specialist expertise.

Students benefit from a supportive and collaborative learning environment that blends theory with practical application. Programmes range from foundation, undergraduate and master's degrees to research degrees, all informed by leading research and delivered by internationally recognised academics.

Strong connections with industry help students gain practical experience and open pathways to careers in science, engineering, technology, research and beyond.

Faculty leadership team

Professor Sarah Sharples
Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering at The University of Manchester

Catherine Grills
Director of Faculty Operations

Heads of School

Professor Sarah Cartmell
Vice Dean and Head of School of Engineering

Professor Chris Hardacre
Vice Dean and Head of School of Natural Sciences

Vice Deans

Professor Lynne Bianchi
Vice Dean for Social Responsibility, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Professor Peter Green
Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering

Professor Sarah Haigh
Vice Dean for Research and Innovation

Professor Scott Heath
Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience

Professional Services leadership

Jo Couling
Lead People Partner

Chris Dolan
Head of Research and Business Engagement

Kay Hodgson
Director of School Operations – School of Engineering

Sarah Lister
Head of Teaching, Learning and Student Experience

Gemma Lyons
Head of Faculty Finance

Sam Ryder
Director of School Operations – School of Natural Sciences

Tom Saunders
Head of Planning, Compliance and Special Projects

David Weston
Head of Communications and Marketing

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



Thank you for your interest in the role of Director of the Photon Science Institute (PSI) at the University of Manchester. This is a significant leadership opportunity at the heart of The University of Manchester and the Faculty of Science and Engineering. The Director will provide strategic leadership across the Faculty and University, ensuring that PSI delivers against its mission to "foster an environment where world-leading facilities - including cutting-edge quantum devices, advanced characterisation techniques, and access to the full electromagnetic spectrum from DC through microwaves and optics to X-rays - enable researchers to explore phenomena from ultrafast processes to nanoscale materials interactions, and allow us to make measurements at the extreme using interdisciplinary problem-solving". The PSI's core research areas of Quantum Technology, Net-zero and Sustainability and Healthcare are central to addressing some of the most pressing challenges of our time, and this PSI brings together world-class facilities, exceptional academic talent and deep partnerships with industry and government.

We are seeking an outstanding academic leader of international standing who can bring scientific vision, strategic clarity and a collaborative, inclusive leadership style. The Director will work closely with the Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering, the University Vice Deans of Research and Innovation and the wider Faculty and University leadership to ensure that the PSI continues to thrive as a focus of excellence for research and innovation and contribute to the delivery of the Manchester 2035 strategy. This is an opportunity to shape the next phase of the PSI at scale, strengthening our interdisciplinary community, enabling impactful collaboration with industry and nurturing the next generation of leaders in science and engineering.

If you are excited by the prospect of joining the thriving University of Manchester's Faculty of Science and Engineering, leading Photon Science Institute at this pivotal moment, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Professor Sarah Sharples CBE FREng,
Vice-President and Dean Faculty of Science and Engineering

The role

Overall Purpose

As Director of the Photon Science Institute (PSI), you will provide leadership for one of the University's flagship research institutes and play a central role in advancing the Faculty of Science and Engineering's research and innovation ambitions.

Working across disciplines, schools and research communities, you will bring together people, ideas and expertise to create an environment in which ambitious research can flourish. Reporting to the Vice Dean for Research and Innovation, you will contribute to the University's wider research agenda, helping to shape priorities, build partnerships and support the development of major research initiatives.

You will work closely with academic leaders, researchers, professional services colleagues, external partners and funding organisations to identify emerging opportunities and strengthen the Institute's contribution to the University. Through collaboration, influence and strategic leadership, you will help create the conditions that enable researchers and research teams to deliver their very best work.

The breadth of the role provides significant scope for impact. You will support the growth of interdisciplinary research activity, help attract research funding and talent, and strengthen the Institute's ability to respond to new scientific challenges and opportunities. Your leadership will help ensure that PSI remains a collaborative, ambitious and sustainable research environment that supports excellence at every level.

The role

Overall Purpose

Success in the role will depend upon your ability to bring people together around a shared vision, build productive partnerships and create momentum behind new ideas and initiatives.

You will combine academic credibility with sound judgement, strategic thinking and a commitment to supporting the success of others.
For a research leader of international standing, this role offers a platform to influence research and innovation across the University, contribute to the development of future research priorities and support a community whose work delivers impact across academia, industry and wider society.

The PSI Mission is delivered through three core themes: **Quantum Technology**; **Net Zero and Sustainability**; and **Healthcare**.

Key accountabilities

This appointment comes at an exciting stage in the development of the Photon Science Institute. With an established international reputation, world-class facilities and a strong interdisciplinary research community, PSI is well positioned for its next phase of growth and development.
You will provide the strategic direction, scientific leadership and external profile needed to strengthen the Institute's position internationally, build on existing strengths and create new opportunities for research excellence, collaboration and impact.

In this role, you will:

- **Shape the future direction of PSI**. Develop and deliver a clear strategic vision for the Institute, aligning its ambitions with Faculty and University priorities while identifying opportunities for future growth, collaboration and impact.
- **Champion world-leading research**. Create the conditions for outstanding science to thrive by supporting researchers, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and strengthening PSI's reputation for research excellence.
- **Grow research income and opportunity**. Support the development of major funding proposals and collaborative programmes, helping to secure investment from research councils, government, industry and international partners.
- **Strengthen partnerships and influence.** Build relationships across academia, industry, government and funding organisations, creating opportunities for collaboration, innovation and impact.
- **Enhance PSI's international profile.** Represent the Institute and the University nationally and internationally, helping to attract leading researchers, strategic collaborators and new opportunities for investment and growth.

Key accountabilities

- **Maximise the impact of world-class facilities.** Work with colleagues to ensure PSI's research facilities and infrastructure continue to support internationally leading science and provide a platform for future discovery.
- **Build a thriving research community.** Foster a collaborative, inclusive and ambitious environment where researchers, technical specialists, students and professional services colleagues can contribute and succeed.
- **Develop future talent and leadership.** Support the development of researchers and colleagues at all career stages, helping to build a sustainable and successful research community for the future.
- **Lead through partnership and influence.** Bring together expertise from across disciplines and organisational boundaries, creating a shared sense of purpose around the Institute's ambitions and priorities.

Person specification

We are seeking an internationally recognised research leader with the credibility, ambition and vision to shape the future direction of the Photon Science Institute and strengthen its position as a globally significant centre for interdisciplinary research.
You will be motivated by the opportunity to lead a major research institute at one of the world's leading research-intensive universities. You will recognise the power of interdisciplinary science to address complex challenges and will be excited by the prospect of bringing together talented researchers, advanced facilities and strategic partnerships to create meaningful impact.

Research Excellence and Academic Standing
You will have an outstanding international reputation in a field aligned with the activities of PSI. Your career will demonstrate a sustained record of research excellence, influential research outputs and success in securing significant external funding. You will bring the academic standing and credibility to engage with leading researchers, institutions and funding organisations across the UK and internationally.
You are likely to have experience leading major research programmes, centres, institutes or interdisciplinary initiatives, and will be recognised for your ability to shape research agendas and create opportunities for future growth and impact.
We are particularly interested in candidates who can further enhance PSI's international profile, attract significant research investment and contribute to the University's wider research ambitions through scientific leadership and external engagement.

Strategic Vision and Leadership
You will be a strategic thinker who can identify emerging opportunities and translate them into a compelling vision for the future. Comfortable operating within a complex environment, you will bring sound judgement, intellectual curiosity and the ability to influence at senior levels across the University and beyond.
You will understand how successful research institutes create impact through collaboration, partnership and shared ambition. Your leadership style will be collegiate and inclusive, bringing people together around common goals and creating an environment where individuals and teams can thrive.

Person specification

Collaboration and Partnership
You will have a track record of building productive partnerships and developing relationships that create opportunities for research, innovation and impact. Whether working with researchers, industry, government, funding bodies or international collaborators, you will demonstrate the ability to bring people together and develop successful long-term relationships.
You will value interdisciplinary working and understand the importance of connecting expertise from different disciplines, sectors and communities to address increasingly complex scientific challenges.

Research Environment and Infrastructure
Experience of working within major experimental research environments, scientific facilities or research infrastructure will be highly beneficial. You will appreciate the importance of world-class facilities in enabling scientific discovery and will be committed to supporting their effective development, management and use.

Motivation and Approach
Above all, you will share our commitment to scientific excellence, collaboration and creating an inclusive research environment in which colleagues and students can succeed. You will be motivated by the opportunity to help shape the future direction of the Institute, contribute to the University's strategic ambitions and support research that delivers meaningful benefits for society.

You will bring the energy and ambition to build on PSI's strong foundations while creating new opportunities for discovery, innovation and impact in the years ahead.

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

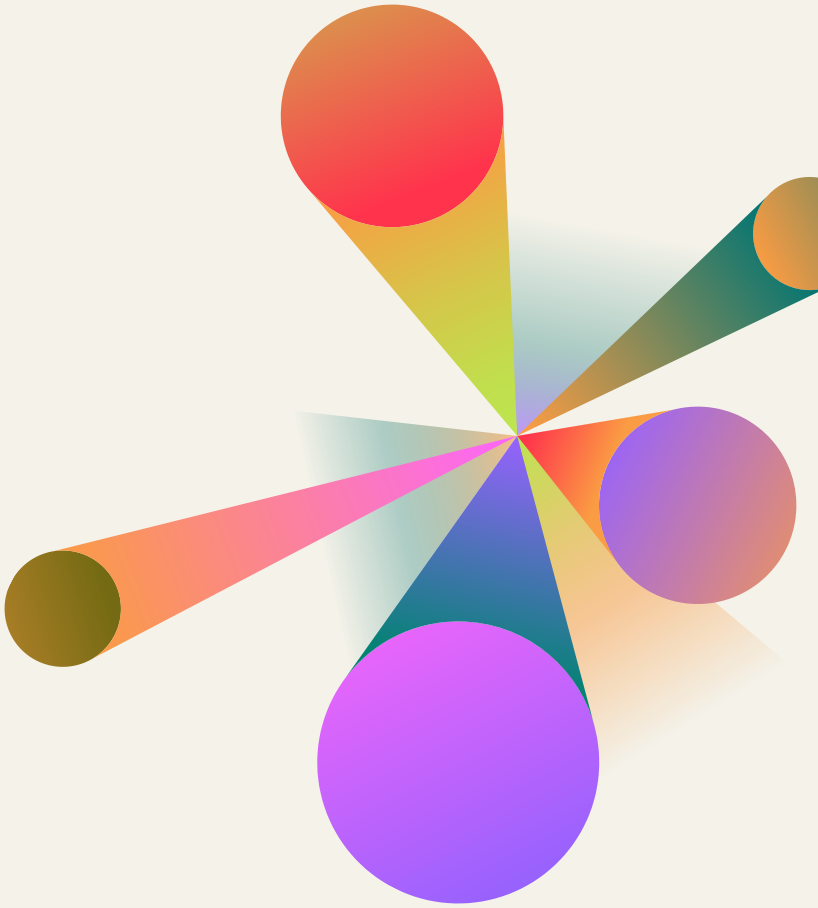
Promote and champion the University's social responsibility ambitions to advance social inclusion, prosperous communities, better health and cultural engagement.

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

Candidates should apply for this role via the job advert on the University website, reference **SAE-032530**

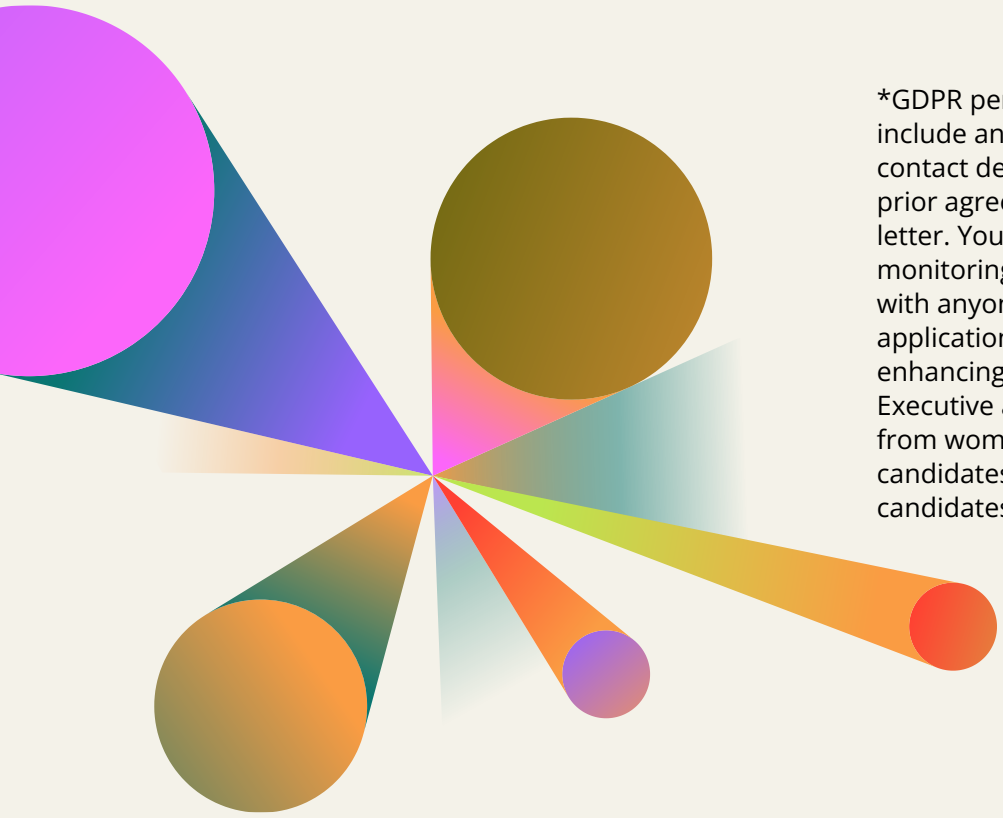
The closing date for applications is **Thursday 7th January 2027** at **23:59**.

Interviews are expected to take place in late January 2027.

For informal enquiries please contact Amy Tambyraja:
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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