



Lay Council Member Recruitment 2025

Candidate Pack – Role Description
and Person Specification

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Introductory Letter from the Chair of the University Council

Dear Applicant,

I am delighted you are interested in joining the University Council.

The University of Leeds is one of the UK's largest, most prestigious and diverse universities with over 39,000 students and 9000 staff, a turnover of over £1bn and contributing £1.3bn annually to the UK economy. The University's new Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Shearer West CBE, took up her post in November 2024, and will lead the next phase of the University's ambitious strategy.

The University is a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities, and our excellence in research, education and knowledge exchange is reflected in a number of institutional awards and in our international standing and reputation – including being in the top 100 universities in the world (QS World University Rankings 2025), and having won the Queen's Anniversary Prize three times. You can read a copy of our latest Annual Report [here](#).

We seek to appoint exceptional lay members to the University Council, the governing body of the institution, who share our ambitions and values, and can make a significant contribution to ensuring our continued success. In particular, we are currently seeking someone with specific skills in IT and Digital Transformation to complement and strengthen the existing skills and profile of our membership.

Thank you once again for your interest in the role, and we look forward to receiving your application.

Alastair Da Costa

Chair of Council

The University of Leeds

The University was founded in 1904, but our origins go back to the nineteenth century with the founding of the Leeds School of Medicine in 1831 and the Yorkshire College of Science in 1874. Today, we are one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK, and globally renowned for the quality of our teaching and research.

We are a member of the Russell Group of research intensive universities, and part of the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), which comprises 23 research-intensive institutions spanning six continents.

The strength of our academic expertise, across a wide breadth of disciplines, offers a wealth of opportunities for our students and staff, and has a real cultural, economic, societal, and environmental impact around the globe.

Our institutional strategy, 'Universal Values, Global Change' 2020 – 2030, sets an ambitious, transformative roadmap over 10 years. It is a blueprint for a values driven University, rooted in our desire to make a difference in the world. Our University harnesses expertise in research and education to help shape a better future for humanity, working through collaboration to tackle inequalities, benefit society and drive change. We are currently undertaking a mid-term review of our Strategy and you would join the Council at this exciting stage of its delivery.



Our Core Values

The University's core values are:

Integrity

We are open and honest in our words and actions.

Inclusivity

We are a community where everyone is welcomed and belongs.

Compassion

We are caring and considerate in our words and actions.

Collaboration

We work together to achieve our goals and ambition.

Our Strategy

Further information about the University and our Strategy 2020-2030, can be found [here](#).

Our Strategy identifies three core areas of focus:

- **Culture** – recognising that collaboration rather than competition is fundamental to yielding excellence in research, education and societal impact.
- **Community** – recognising the importance of diversity, partnership and innovation in forging strong communities internally and externally.
- **Impact** – recognising the need to develop the next generation of global citizens and to focus our research efforts on areas in which we can be truly globally leading, while harnessing the potential of digital innovation to enhance both.





Student Education

We have a clear and committed focus on meeting the needs and aspirations of our global student community.

We provide a distinctive, research-based education for high quality students from diverse backgrounds and nationalities – equipping them with the knowledge, skills and experience to be successful and make an impact in an increasingly complex world.

Our Student Education Strategy builds upon our international reputation for academic excellence. We aim to deliver a world class education with an exceptional student experience by having a student-focused approach, grounded in active learning and supported by ambitious digital transformation.

Highlights

- We have an enduring commitment to widening access and participation right across the student life cycle, from primary school to graduation, and our contextual admissions programme – Access to Leeds – is the largest in the sector.
- The High Fliers Survey has ranked Leeds in the top 5 most targeted universities by graduate recruiters.
- Leeds University Union was the first students' union in the UK to be awarded 'excellent' status under the National Union of Students' Quality Accreditation Scheme, and is the first to retain this hard-won accolade.
- Many of our courses have a study abroad option, and we have more than 300 partnerships with universities worldwide.

Research

Research is at the heart of university life.

We are an outstanding research university, in the UK's top 15 and achieving significant increases in research quality, income, and impact, building on existing research strengths and our commitment to interdisciplinary working.

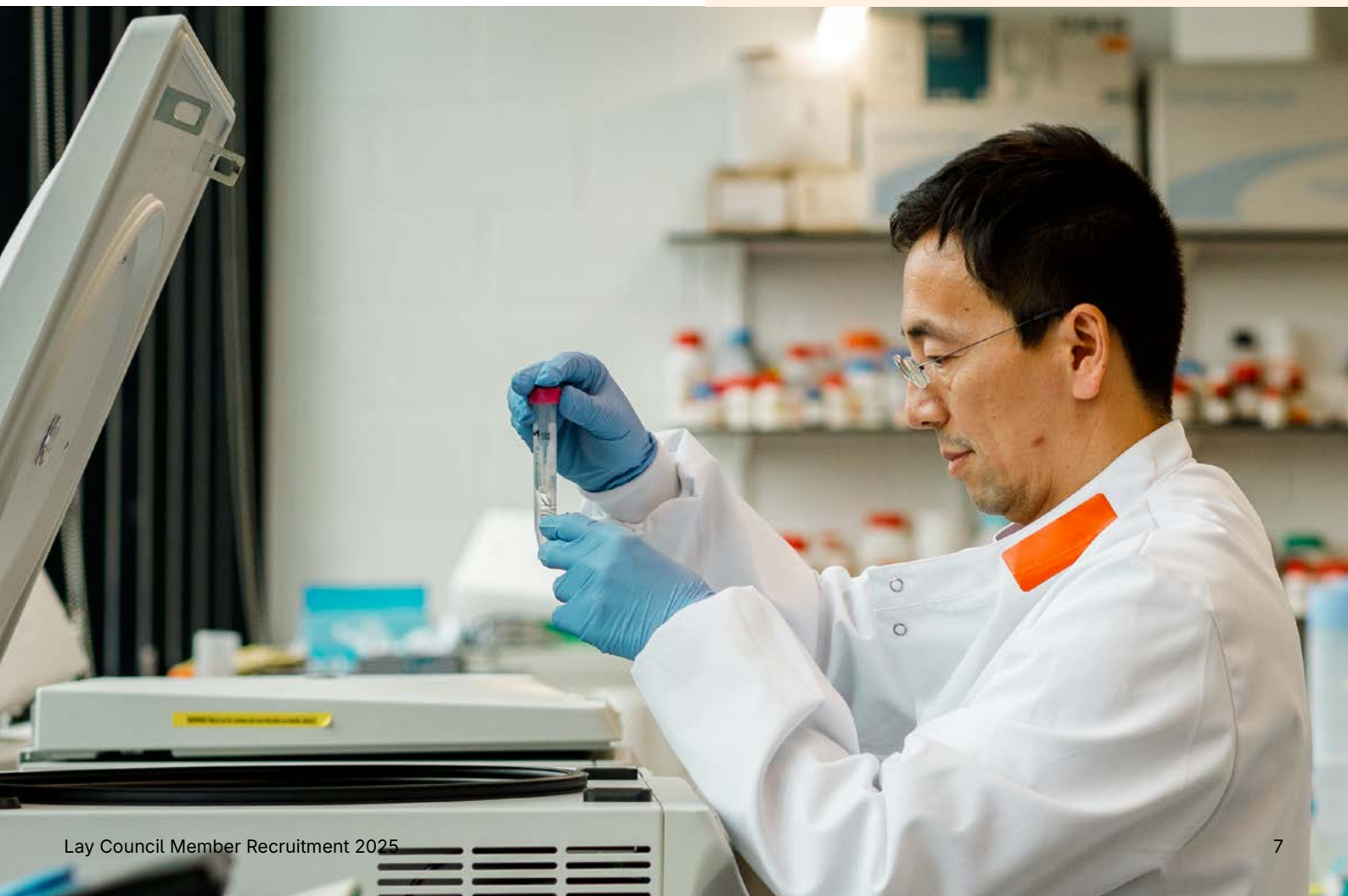
Excellent research takes place in every part of our campus; the breadth of subjects studied, the possibilities for interdisciplinary working and the quality and impact of our research are all contributing to the needs of the wider economy and society.

We are active in the main national institutes, have an outstanding track record of success in the government's Global Challenge Research Fund, industrial strategy and nationally funded doctoral training centres, all resulting from our own investment in technology and talent and a strong University-wide commitment to interdisciplinarity.

Highlights

Our research highlights include:

- A Queen's Anniversary Prize – the UK's highest accolade for universities and colleges – for research into tropical weather systems and climate science.
- A total of £185m in new research awards.
- Lead for The Alan Turing, Rosalind Franklin and Henry Royce Institutes on urban analytics, high throughput drug discovery, and atoms and devices, respectively.
- A range of flagship partnerships, including with the Met Office on atmospheric science and climate impacts and National Centre for Atmospheric Science.





Business Engagement and Enterprise

Business Engagement and Enterprise is a fundamental strategic priority for the University of Leeds and underpins our vision to positively shape our world, reducing inequalities and delivering positive impact.

Our ambition is to transform how we work with partners to drive innovation and enterprise, working effectively with other universities, businesses and organisations to solve pressing global challenges.

The breadth and excellence of our research means that we are ideally placed to help organisations from all sectors solve their business challenges. We have an impressive track record in working with business ranging in size from start-ups to multinationals.

Through research collaborations, consultancy, knowledge transfer, access to facilities, and professional learning we are able to offer a comprehensive approach to address business challenges. We aim to build on existing strengths and enhance our partnership model, identifying new and exciting opportunities for strategic partnership working.

Being at the heart of the Leeds city region, we have benefited from being located within a strong performing economy, with the complexity and density to attract human capital, industry and investment

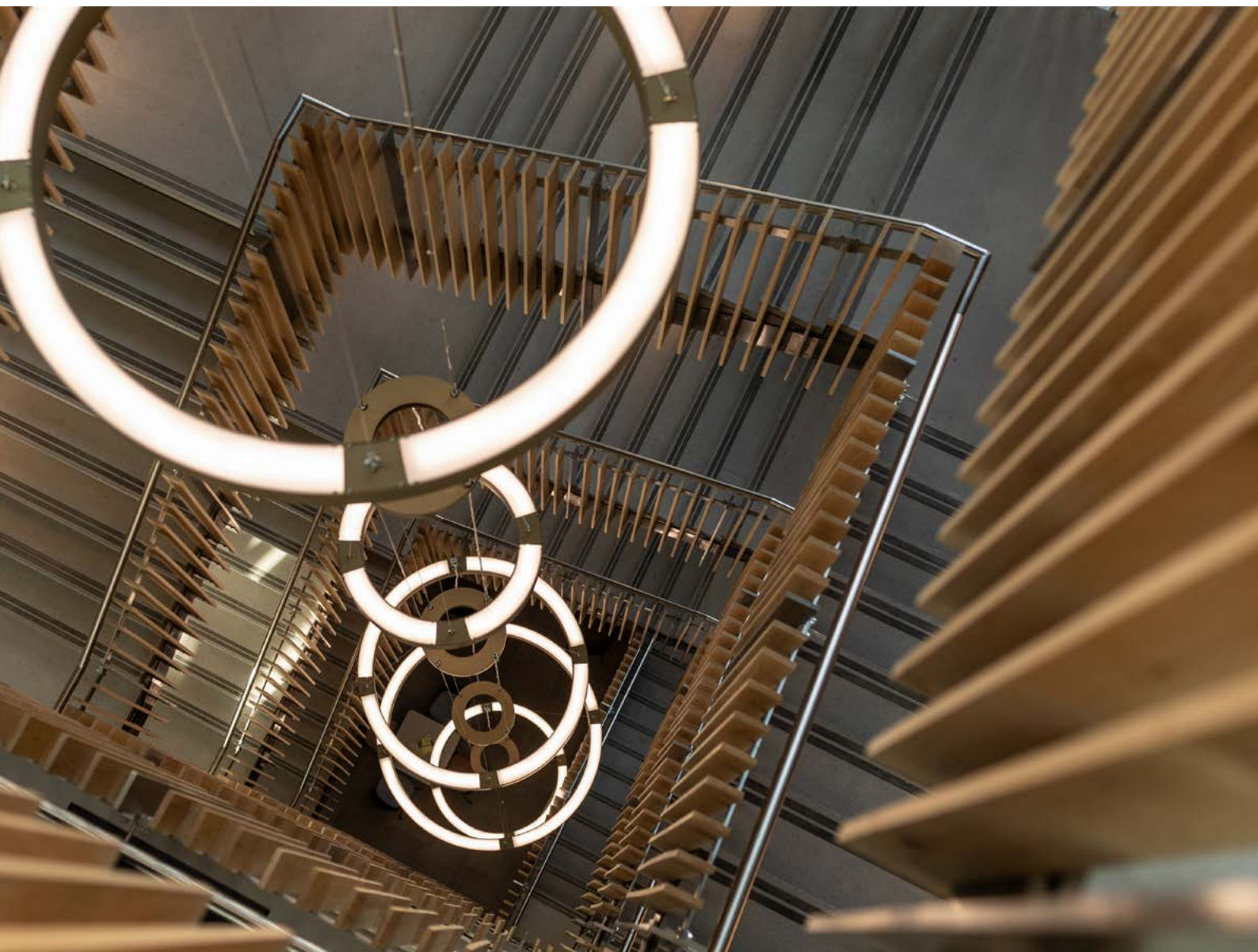
Central to the University's Business Engagement and Enterprise Strategy is Nexus, our innovation hub and community. Located on the University campus, Nexus is a vibrant community for innovators and entrepreneurs.

It provides bespoke support to its member businesses, helping them to stimulate innovation and deliver rapid commercial impact facilitating seamless connections and access to research, talent and facilities across the University and City Region. Nexus also provides incubation facilities and professional support for students, graduates and staff.

Our university enterprise ecosystem is supported through development opportunities such as:

- the Michael Beverley Innovation Fellowships, where we work with Early Career Stage Researchers to equip them through taught modules and mentoring to think about translation of concepts and ideas and to give them the tools and skills to work more effectively with industry;

- the SPARK student enterprise programme that supports around 55 student businesses every year, generating nearly £2.5m in revenue and £500k external funding;
- the Northern Gritstone investment company, set up by the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester to deliver a £500m investment fund that will be one of the largest investors into academic spin-outs in the United Kingdom.





Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is central to everything we do as an institution and community, and is a vital and inseparable component of our University Strategy.

As a community of knowledge producers and educators, our ambition is to be thought leaders in the EDI field, and to build exemplary EDI structures, systems, programmes and cultures within our own organisation.

Our ten-year EDI Strategy approved by the University Council in 2022, and supported by an implementation plan, recognises that crucial to its delivery will be ensuring that the pernicious effects of bias and discrimination are better understood and that counterbalancing bias and discrimination, and taking preventative and remedial steps to address it, will

- improve student outcomes;
- benefit the wellbeing of the University community; and
- enhance our research and student education.

Our EDI implementation plan identifies specific areas of work that are critical to the delivery of our ambitions and address the interconnections across the University's strategic activities critical to enable a consistent, more joined-up approach to EDI and delivery of our objectives.

Our EDI strategy works in three ways:

- **Internally** – it guides how we operate as an organisation, our systems, processes, policies and procedures, and the positive impact that this can bring to our students and staff, the institution itself and the wider University community.
- **Externally** – it reflects our ambition to have a civic and global impact and be a driver of social change beyond the walls of the University, locally, regionally and globally.
- **Academically** – in the course of our work as creators of knowledge and evidence on bias and discrimination, and through the dissemination and application of this knowledge and evidence.



Digital Transformation

Digital Transformation is a fundamental strategic priority for us. Our ambition is to become a global leader in the use of digital technologies, to support student education, global lifelong learning, research and innovation and ways of working.

We have a track record in digital transformation, but there are many more opportunities for us to advance this.

By digital transformation, we do not just mean technology or data, but critically encompassing culture, people, processes and impact. Digital transformation will be crosscutting across our core business of education and research, and our ways of working.

In education, it is about understanding and harnessing the potential affordances of digital technologies to enhance and enrich the education and experience we offer to students studying on campus, in hybrid modes and online, and offering learning opportunities to individuals globally, to support lifelong learning and professional learning.

Online education increases access to learning opportunities for people around the world and is a powerful force to enhance lifelong learning for all. Growing our online education portfolio will help to support global lifelong learning, and to support realisation of the UN's Education Sustainable Development Goals.

In research, it is about ensuring we have best in class technologies and platforms to support cutting-edge activities, provide an environment where we can innovate, co-create and embed new and emerging technologies to:

- solve global challenges;
- build strong bridges between research and education; and
- create a research-informed evidence-base of the positive and negative impacts of digital technologies.

Underpinning this is the transformation of our ways of working to ensure that effective use of digital technologies, data and approaches improves our operational processes. Beneath all of that is transformation of our culture to embrace digital technologies.

Digital Transformation will also have a major impact on our campus and the way that we use our space. We will need to increasingly adopt 'Smart' technologies so that we can drive better utilisation, improve building performance and utilise 'App' driven services (for example) to provide students with an integrated way-finding and timetabling system.



International

Leeds is a truly global university.

We contribute most effectively to sharing knowledge, innovation and education worldwide by building productive, mutually beneficial relationships with researchers, universities and other organisations in key countries. This helps us create opportunities to widen horizons and bring new perspectives to education, and to generate opportunities for academic staff and students at all levels to collaborate on new frontiers of research.

We have made significant progress in recent years towards achieving our ambitious international objectives, evidenced by the University having risen rapidly to be one of the top most international universities in the world in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings.



Investments in People and Facilities

World-leading education and research requires world-leading people and facilities. We have invested substantially in both.

We have made significant investments in our people, recruiting and supporting world class academics, top-performing researchers and leaders of the future; and made significant investments in PhD student support. We host a significant number of doctoral training centres, and a dedicated Doctoral College which creates a sense of community and shared endeavour amongst our sizeable postgraduate community.

The University has undertaken an ambitious £520m capital investment programme to further strengthen our position as a leading UK university. This included £40m for the Nexus, £24m for the Laidlaw Library and £25m in the Edward Boyle Library, which together have increased the number of study spaces to c. 4,500; a £98m integrated site for engineering and physical sciences that houses our cutting edge

Bragg Centre for Materials Research; and a major investment to provide state-of the-art Business School teaching facilities.

We are also committing significant investment into the digital transformation of the University across education and research. We are investing in new and emerging technologies, to enhance our digital capabilities and to support us to improve our students' learning opportunities.

An example of this is HELIX, the University's learning innovation hub for students, staff, and the local community. This offers cutting-edge digital provision including immersive technologies and cutting-edge multimedia production studios, as well as a physical makerspace.

Located in the heart of the University campus, HELIX enables staff and students to come together to collaborate on creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial projects based on their own initiatives and ideas.

Financial Position

The University has grown considerably in the past decade and is in good financial health.

We have shown our ability to strike an appropriate balance between the management of significant financial risks and progressing at pace with the development of the University's 2020-2030 Strategy, including the prioritisation of critical strategic investments.

The University receives income through various sources, including student fees, government research and other grants, commercial activities, catering and conferences, and through philanthropic donations. We also attract research grants from research charities, companies and other organisations.





Governance and Leadership

The Council

The Council comprises 23 members, the majority of whom are lay (external) members and also includes staff and student members. For the purposes of charities law, members of the Council are the trustees of the University.

The Council is committed to upholding the highest standards of corporate governance, and meeting its obligations as an exempt charity and body in receipt of public funds.

Its collective responsibility is to promote the University's wellbeing and ensure its sustainability. Its specific responsibilities include:

- corporate strategy, plans and budgets;
- corporate policy and major business decisions;
- the framework for governance and management;
- monitoring institutional and executive performance.

The Council normally meets eight times a year (six business meetings and two Strategy away days) and is chaired by Alastair Da Costa.

The Council fulfils its responsibilities through a number of Council committees including the Audit and Risk Committee, Strategy and Investment Committee, Nominating and Governance Committee, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee, Remuneration Committee and Ethics and Values Committee.



The Senate

The Senate is the University's primary body for ensuring academic governance. It also has a broader advisory role and advises the Council on academic and related strategies.

Senior officers and executive management

As the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) the Vice-Chancellor and President is responsible to the Council – within a prescribed framework – for the operational management of all aspects of the University's work.

The University Executive Group (UEG) consists of the Vice-Chancellor and President, the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor; two portfolio Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Executive Deans of the faculties, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief People and Culture Officer and the University Secretary and Registrar. UEG's role includes promoting and protecting the interests of students; supporting staff; academic development and institutional sustainability; formulating and implementing the University's Strategy; and resource allocation.

Additional information

Further information about the University Council and its key committees can be found on the University's website at <https://secretariat.leeds.ac.uk/governance-support/main-university-committees/>.



Role Description

The Council is the University's governing body and ensures that it meets the obligations placed on the University as a charity, and as a body in receipt of public funds.

The Council also has a responsibility to promote the University's wellbeing and to ensure its sustainability.

Individual members of the Council contribute to the governance and wellbeing of the University mainly by participation in meetings of the Council. It is part of their role to ensure that the Council:

- exercises responsible stewardship for the University's assets and reputation;
- fulfils its responsibilities carefully, prudently and responsibly, in accordance with the University's constitution and its charitable status; and
- strives at all times to secure the University's academic and financial sustainability.

Members are expected to abide by the accepted standards of behaviour in public life, which encompass selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership; and to take decisions only in the interests of the University as a whole, rather than advance the interests of one particular part of the institution or of an external constituency or private individual.

All members of the Council need to meet the test laid out by the sector regulator the Office for Students and the Charity Commission that they are fit and proper persons to serve as members of the governing body. They will also need to complete an entry in the University's Register of Interests.

This is a particularly exciting time to join the University, as it takes forward the implementation of the institutional strategy, built around the three core areas: community, culture and impact, and designed to help the University make a positive difference in the world.



Person Specification

Personal qualities

We look to appoint to the Council, high-calibre individuals who have broad leadership qualities and can add value across a range of topics within the Council's remit.

We are currently seeking someone with specific skills in IT and Digital Transformation to complement and strengthen the existing skills and profile of our membership. We are keen to hear from people who can demonstrate a depth of experience and up-to-date expertise in the following areas:

- IT infrastructure and systems
- Cyber security
- Data management and governance
- Digital innovation and transformation

Key additional attributes that we are looking for in a candidate are:

- a broad general understanding of and belief in the aims and values of higher education;
- able to operate at board level in a significant organisation and committed to being an active Council participant
- affinity with the University's culture, values and strategy, and its ambitions to make a societal impact locally, nationally and globally;

- a personal commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion;
- the ability to think strategically and to absorb, evaluate and question oral and written material on a wide range of matters;
- willingness to participate constructively in discussion and debate;
- a commitment to exercising standards of good conduct in public life;
- sound and independent judgement and a belief in collective responsibility and decision making; and
- an understanding of, and respect for, the distinction between governance and management.

An interest in Higher Education and the University of Leeds is critical to all appointments, as is a commitment to the values, aims and objectives of the University.

Whilst many Council members are resident in the Leeds region, this is not a prerequisite. The University is proud to be a multi-cultural community and values diversity. The University welcomes applications from all sections of society and would especially encourage individuals from under-represented groups to apply. We are committed to diversity across our Council membership; this is reflected in our current membership and through our appointment process.



Period of appointment

We are seeking to make appointments to start in August 2025 for a period of up to three years which may be extended for up to two further terms of three years each.

Support and preparation

We have a well-developed induction programme to welcome and support new members of the Council. Networking and attending a wide range of University events, including those showcasing the University's education and research and celebrating its achievements, are some of the other opportunities that members might find helpful in supporting the discharge of their responsibilities.

Members can also seek help, advice, guidance and information from each other and from the University's executive, in particular from the University Secretary and Registrar, who acts as Secretary to the Council.

Members of the Council have responsibilities analogous to those of the trustees of a charity. Assuming that they act in accordance with the precepts set out in guidance given to members on appointment, it is unlikely that any personal liability will arise for members; however the University has an insurance policy against the costs of any claims of negligence that might be made against members of the Council in carrying out their duties.

Council meetings

The Council currently holds six business meetings (at approximately two-monthly intervals beginning in January) and two Strategy away days (usually in April and November) each year. Business meetings are held in person and begin at 1.30 pm and usually last for up to three hours.

Lay members are also expected to serve on at least one of the committees of the Council. There may also be occasions when members might be asked to serve on ad hoc panels established by the University.

In total, lay members may expect to dedicate up to ten days a year to the University's affairs.

Between and ahead of meetings, members are able to seek any information or clarification they need from the University Secretary and Registrar, relevant executive officer, or the Chair of Council.

Expenses

The appointments do not carry any fees or other remuneration but all reasonable travel and other expenses incurred in connection with Council and other University business can be claimed.

Contact information

To explore the role further or for any queries you may have, please contact governance@leeds.ac.uk



Accessibility

If you would like the candidate pack in an alternative format, for example, paper; large print; or audio, please contact **governance@leeds.ac.uk**

If you would like to discuss and arrange any reasonable adjustments to enable you to apply for a role with us, please let us know via **governance@leeds.ac.uk**. We will be more than happy to help.

You are not obliged to inform us of any disability, but you will still be covered by the Equality Act (2010) if that disability becomes known to us.





How to apply

Please send a CV and letter of application to governance@leeds.ac.uk by noon on Friday 28 March 2025

We are planning to hold interviews in w/c 5 or 12 May 2025

Please also consider completing the **online diversity monitoring form**. (The form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application.)