

# DIRECTOR AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Applicant Brief



University of  
**CUMBRIA**



# WE ARE THE UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA



**“We are the University of Cumbria, for and from Cumbria and our localities, rooted in and serving our communities and reflecting the unique environment of the Lake District. We are a university for our region with people, place and partnership at our heart. We are also a young university that is growing and evolving.”**

Providing diverse routes into higher education, into and through employment, and across and into the region is an important part of our offer for future generations from Cumbria and beyond. We specialise in portfolio and programmes aligned to a range of learner needs and types – on and off campus – delivered with and through a range of strategic employer, educational and stakeholder partnerships. With an emphasis on work-based and flexible learning options, we expect to deliver an excellent learning experience, environment, and outcomes for all our students, underpinned by our applied research and professional practice.

As well as the creation of new university campuses we are very excited to have formed a strategic partnership with Imperial College London to open a new medical school to develop and deliver the Pears Cumbria Medical School from our Carlisle campus. We will apply our experience in training nurses, midwives, and other professionals allied to medicine, alongside Imperial College London’s expertise in medical education to produce doctors who are ready to contribute to vital services across the region.

We are investing and being invested in. With £63 million capital funding from the Borderlands Growth Deal Initiative, Carlisle Town Deal, and Barrow Town Deal we are transforming our university presence, visibility, and impact in Carlisle and Barrow. Increasing participation, access, and routes into higher education, addressing skills and productivity needs across Cumbria and the Borderlands region, and making a demonstrable impact to place, vibrancy and to local economies and communities.

With more than 15,000 students, we have plans in place for growth to 20,000 by 2030. One key driver for recent and projected student number increases is our expanding higher-level apprenticeship activity, training which provides fresh opportunities for the university to engage with and support businesses in providing training in Cumbria, North Lancashire and, where appropriate, nationally in focused, niche areas of activity. We expect 2,500 such students to be registered annually by 2025. We work closely with further education colleges in Cumbria and beyond and have a small number of international partners in Europe and Asia.

The university aims to be a catalyst for individual and regional prosperity and pride, raising the aspirations and attainment of young people within the region and providing routes into and through higher education to address current and future skills needs. The university is committed to collaborative working and partnerships, with academic portfolio and related activities increasingly shaped by, and through, partnership with regional and national employers. We work closely with Enterprising Cumbria, strategically focused on delivering higher-level skills needs (new, upskilling and reskilling) in our region. As the only university in Cumbria, and as the lead provider for higher-level skills within the county, the university works in partnership with education providers and employers to raise aspirations and to address gaps in educational achievement and provision, across Cumbria and into North Lancashire.



Our apprenticeship portfolio continues to grow and is contributing to the national effort to train and have more qualified frontline professionals including police officers, nurses, and paramedics remains a key focus.

With a growing profile and reputation in the region and beyond, we are one of the largest providers of teacher education in the UK, a major provider of healthcare education and are working with employers developing and delivering higher-level apprenticeships.

We are proud to have been recognised as a silver-rated university by the Teaching Excellence Framework 2023 (TEF) for the quality of our teaching and student outcomes. We are amongst the best in the UK for graduate employment and one of the top two universities in the Northwest, with 92% of our students getting a job or going on to further study within 15 months of graduating (HESA 2023).

In the 2023/2024 academic year, more than 3,800 students were studying full-time at one of our campus locations and a further 4300 were engaged in part-time study, which was largely workplace-based, in areas such as healthcare, education, and project management. Our apprenticeship delivery has continued to significantly expand, with significant contracts in place with a range of employers, with over 2,300 students enrolled on this type of provision in 2023/24. Over 5,400 students studied for a university award at one of our partner institutions.

The full-time undergraduate student body is predominantly female (66%); 60% are 21 years or older on admission. 14% of these students identify themselves with Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds; 12% had a declared disability on entry, and 17% are from low participating neighbourhoods.

The University employs around 1000 staff (850 FTE) and has, when compared with the sector, a high proportion of part time staff (42%).

# WHAT DRIVES US

## Our vision and strategic intent

**We are the University of Cumbria, a place where people are at the heart of all we do, where enriching the lives of our students, staff and the communities we serve means we make a difference that matters.**

The institutions that came together in 2007 to create the University of Cumbria had a proud history of empowering students with the tools, attributes and opportunities to maximise their potential to be more than they thought they could be. This continues to be at the heart of all that we do.

Now is a very exciting time to be joining us as we continue to implement and reflect on the early years of our Towards 2030 strategy, looking to see how we can make the most of our three most valuable assets; people, place and partnerships, to further our role as a catalyst for economic well-being for our region, nationally and internationally.

Our professional and practice-based focus is one of our great strengths. We are passionate about sharing knowledge and have confidence in what we do: our students learn from some of the best in their field. We care and are committed to engaging and inspiring future generations. We embrace inspiring teaching, lifelong learning and creative innovation, enabled and enriched by research of international standing. All this takes place across five, soon to be six campuses with approximately 15,000 students, 1,000 staff and a turnover of around £78m. The diversity of our locations, landscape and heritage provides inspiration, challenges and potential in equal measure.

The University Strategy can be viewed here: [cumbria.ac.uk/t2030](https://cumbria.ac.uk/t2030)

### Our Strategic Focus Towards 2030

We fulfill our local and global roles and ambition to positively impact on our students, to increase higher education participation in our county, to address higher-level skills and sector needs, to co-create and apply new knowledge and to positively embrace our civic responsibilities through our students and graduates; our academic and applied research focus; people, practice & place.

Informed by our cross-cutting themes covering digital; sustainability & carbon reduction; health & wellbeing; and partnerships.

### The University's Vision

Transforming lives and livelihoods through learning, applied research and practice – for now and for our future generations.

### The University's Mission

Inspiring and equipping our graduates, communities, economy and environment to thrive.





# OUR LOCATIONS

We have campuses in the historical, cultural and vibrant cities of Carlisle and Lancaster, our Ambleside campus sits in the heart of the Lake District National Park, recently awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status, and we have a further site in London. In addition, the University will be opening its new campus in Barrow-in-Furness in 2025 and has a teaching site at Workington. Our London campus is close to Canary Wharf.

All of our north-west campuses are easily accessible by rail, car or air – within easy reach of major cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

We are committed to maintaining our footprint as the geographical location of our campuses offers the University a unique opportunity for developing our curriculum in line with the needs of the regional economy.

Place is, and will be, increasingly important to support us in the delivery of our plans and ambitions with our partners.



# FINANCE AND ESTATE

**Key components of our ongoing strategy are to rationalise and improve the quality of the estate, and to ensure that our infrastructure supports our future strategy.**

The University was formally established in 2007 with an ageing estate. It has taken the University some years to find its niche in the competitive Higher Education market. Following the appointment of Professor Julie Mennell as Vice-Chancellor in 2016, the University focused on reversing the decline in income through an academic portfolio review; identifying areas of growth; and aligning the cost base to more appropriate income projections.

The latest accounts show good financial performance, highlighting the appropriateness and benefits of our strategy to address region and sector higher-level skills needs. This has seen us diversifying income streams through commercial contracts, and a focus on up-skilling and reskilling in the workplace, complementing the more traditional academic delivery based on our campuses. As we continue to deliver our financial strategy this year and beyond, we have a central focus on growth, responding effectively to opportunities and risk, effective cost management and creating capacity to invest significantly in our infrastructure.

Key components of our estate strategy are to improve the quality of the estate and to ensure that our infrastructure supports the delivery of our overarching strategy. Our financial progress has allowed the university to commit to inputting finance into major estate developments in Carlisle and Barrow.

In Carlisle, the university will be creating a new campus in the historic Courts buildings in the centre of the city, supported by funding from the Borderlands Growth Deal Initiative. Town Deal funding is supporting the development of a Learning Quarter in Barrow, working with the local authority, Furness College and British Aerospace.

# GOVERNANCE

**The University, a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, has a Board consisting of 15 Directors, which has overall responsibility for the strategic direction, mission and educational character of the University.**

The University Board is responsible for the overall strategic control and governance of the institution. It approves budgets and expenditure; determines the educational character and objectives of the institution as well as ensuring the effective and efficient use of the University's resources.

### **The Board is constituted as follows:**

The Vice Chancellor of the institution;

An elected representative from the Students' Union;

An elected University of Cumbria staff member;

5 Directors are nominated by the Church of England;

7 Directors are independent appointments recruited through an open application process and cannot be University of Cumbria staff or students.

### **Legal Documentation**

The University's key legal documentation, including the Articles of Association, can be found here:

[cumbria.ac.uk/legal-status](http://cumbria.ac.uk/legal-status)

## **Management**

The University's Vice-Chancellor is Professor Julie Mennell, who took up the post on 1 August 2016.

The senior executive team is as follows:

**Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive**  
**Professor Julie Mennell**

**Deputy Vice Chancellor**  
**Professor Brian Webster-Henderson OBE**

**Chief Transformation Officer**  
**Tracey Slaven**

**Finance Director**  
**Andrew Heron**

**University Secretary**  
**Dr Jean Brown**

# APPOINTMENT OF UNIVERSITY BOARD DIRECTORS AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

## Board Directors

Must be able to provide high-level thinking, advice and leadership on the strategic development and performance of the institution, together with a firm commitment to the mission and values of the University. Applicants should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the legal responsibilities of Directors.

## Associate Directors

Although not formally directors of the institution, and not carrying the legal responsibilities associated with being a company director or charity trustee, role holders are expected in other respects to fulfil the role and responsibilities of University Directors.

Associate Directors are not members of the Board; they are there to augment the effectiveness of the committee and/or advisory group of which they are a member. Discharging responsibilities by providing specialist knowledge, expertise and/or experience in a specific area relevant to the remit of the committee and/or advisory group.

**Directors and Associate Directors serve in a voluntary capacity and are non-remunerated.**

## About You

You will be a current or recent senior manager or have board experience.

We value and promote diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity for all: appointments will be made on merit. We believe the best Boards are those that are balanced and reflect the communities that they serve.

The current Board has limited representation from minority groups. We would especially welcome applications from people from black and minority ethnic communities, or from disabled applicants, who can make a real contribution to this organisation and who can contribute to shaping our strategic direction.

The Board has scope to use a **wide range of skills and experience among Directors and Associate Directors**, including:

- Senior Academic Higher Education experience
- Experience of learning and pedagogy
- Experience of the Office for Students

- Cyber security
- Accountancy, finance or auditing
- Legal
- Well-being (staff / student)
- Carbon reduction

This list is not exclusive, and anyone who believes that have useful skills and experience is encouraged to apply.

There are several examples of Associate Directors moving in due course to full Board membership, depending on individuals' preferences and aptitudes.

## Church Nomination

The University has five Directors nominated by the Church of England. Candidates with involvement with the Church of England are encouraged to include this within their letter of application.

## Overall skills and attributes

There is a general set of requirements, which all Directors must demonstrate, as follows:

- High-level and board management experience, both strategic and operational, in a complex organisation
- The willingness and ability to constructively challenge the executive across a broad range; not limited to a single specialism
- A sense of commitment to the local and regional community, and to the provision of quality higher education provision within it
- A genuine interest in the University, sympathy with its mission and values and a willingness to engage with the development and culture of HE nationally
- Previous experience of working in a non-executive role at board level in the private, public or not-for-profit sectors would also be an advantage

## 'Fit and Proper'

There is a requirement from the sector's regulator, the Office for Students, that all directors are 'fit and proper' persons.

As such an essential requirement for the appointment is that individuals can be classed as 'fit and proper' as set out in the regulatory documentation available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/qzqblugo/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england-2022.pdf>  
(see page 197/198)



# EXPECTATIONS

## Primary responsibilities

Directors have a primary responsibility for ensuring that the University is developed in accordance with the objects set out in the Articles of Association. As part of this work Directors are responsible for ensuring that the work of the University reflects the agreed Vision and Mission of the University.

Further information will be supplied on appointment, however the key responsibilities include:

## Educational character of the University

Directors have a primary responsibility for determining the 'educational character' of the University. They exercise this responsibility through an ongoing dialogue with the Academic Board, which is responsible for general issues relating to research, scholarship, learning and teaching, and for academic standards and the validation and review of courses. Directors need to ensure that they are sufficiently well informed on academic developments to challenge and support the management of the University in implementing the academic aspects of the University Strategy.

Directors delegate aspects of this responsibility to the Academic Governance Committee.

## Strategic Planning

Directors should actively contribute to the strategic planning process through which the University's Strategy is developed, implemented and performance reviewed and measured. Their role is to constructively challenge, and to contribute ideas, experience, and fresh thinking to the strategy as it is developed by the executive. They are then responsible for making sure that key strategic choices and priorities for investment are fully debated before decisions are made and they formally approve the University's strategy. Directors also have an oversight role in relation to ongoing monitoring of delivery against the Strategy, and the Annual Operating Plan that sits underneath it.

## Finance and Audit

The Directors' key financial responsibilities are:

- ensuring the solvency of the University and safeguarding its assets
- approving the financial strategy to deliver the overarching University Strategy approving annual operating plans and budgets
- ensuring the quality and integrity of financial control systems and monitoring these through the Board's Audit and Risk Committee
- receiving and approving annual accounts
- directing and overseeing the University's arrangements for internal and external audit.

Directors delegate aspects of this responsibility to the Finance and Resources Committee and to the Audit and Risk Committee.

## Risk

Directors must satisfy themselves that the systems and processes for identifying and managing key risks to the development and reputation of the University are robust and defensible. They should monitor the effectiveness of these systems regularly. Risk management systems should cover financial, operational and reputation risks.

Directors delegate aspects of this responsibility to the Audit and Risk Committee.



## Estate Management

Directors oversee the strategic development and management of the University's land and buildings. They ensure that the University has an Estate Strategy which clearly identifies the property and space requirements of the University Strategy, and that these are 'fit for purpose' in relation to the student experience, modes of educational delivery and academic portfolio which the University will provide, and aspires to provide, over the period of the plan. Directors should also ensure that the estate strategy provides for a proper planned maintenance programme.

Directors delegate aspects of this responsibility to the Finance and Resources Committee.

## Human Resource Management

The Directors have overall responsibility for the University's employment policy and strategy. This includes ensuring that the University has a people strategy in place to underpin the University Strategy, and that the staff base of the University is properly skilled, trained and developed to deliver the Strategy effectively. Directors need to ensure that the overall pay and conditions of employment in the University are fairly and properly determined; they are also responsible for appointing and setting the remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the Vice Chancellor and other designated senior post holders.

Directors delegate aspects of this responsibility to the People Performance and Culture Committee and to the Remuneration Committee.

## Equality and Diversity

Directors should ensure that non-discriminatory systems are in place to provide equality and diversity of opportunity for staff and students and other stakeholders as relevant.

## Health and Safety

The Board carries ultimate responsibility for the health and safety of employees, students, and other individuals while they are on the University's premises and in other places where they may be affected by its operations. Directors should ensure that the University has a written statement of policy on health and safety, and arrangements for implementing the policy effectively.

## Students' Union

Directors are required to 'take such steps as are practicable' to ensure that the Students' Union operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances.

## Effectiveness of the Board

Directors are responsible for keeping the effectiveness of the Board under regular review.



## Behaviours

Directors need to bring particular behaviours to the Board. They should question intelligently, debate constructively, challenge rigorously and decide dispassionately, and they should listen sensitively to the views of others, inside and outside meetings of the Board. Directors nominated by particular constituencies should not act as if delegated by the group they represent. No Director can be bound, when speaking or voting, by mandates given to him/her by others.

## Advisory and representational responsibilities

- Directors are actively encouraged to spend time understanding the academic work and profile of the University.
- They are also encouraged to make and sustain links with the Vice Chancellor and senior executive team to offer their experience and advice on an informal basis.
- Directors may also provide introductions and links externally to other sources of expertise and advice in support of the work of the University.
- Directors are expected to act as ambassadors for the University in the region and to contribute to raising the regional profile and understanding of the work of the University.
- Directors may also be asked to take part in debates and discussions at the national level, and to influence the national higher education agenda in the interests of the University.
- Directors are expected to attend key University functions.

## Time commitments

The Board will normally meet five times a year on a regular schedule from 1 August to 31 July. There is also an annual strategy conference. Directors are also expected to be members of Board Committees. These Committees typically meet between three and five times per year. Meetings are held in mornings and afternoons. There is also likely to be a requirement for some additional ad-hoc meetings. The majority of meetings are held in Carlisle or Lancaster, although on occasion are held at other campuses or locations.

Full Board meetings are generally held in-person, with some Committee and other meetings held remotely. Where meetings are held in person, attendance is expected in person wherever possible.

Directors may also be asked to contribute their expertise and ideas to working groups or task forces on issues, particularly strategic issues in respect of the development of the University, and be called upon to read, comment and advise on documentation and developments outside the normal Board meeting schedule.

# HOW TO APPLY

**For an informal discussion about the role, please contact Dr Jean Brown, University Secretary; potential applicants are also welcome to contact the Chair of University Board, Martin Williams.**

### Email addresses:

[jean.brown@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:jean.brown@cumbria.ac.uk)

[martin.williams@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:martin.williams@cumbria.ac.uk)

The appointments will be made through a selection process, overseen by the University of Cumbria Nominations Committee.

**Applications to be submitted via a letter of application and a CV, including the names of two referees to:**

Dr Jean Brown

**Email:** [jean.brown@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:jean.brown@cumbria.ac.uk)

Closing date for applications is  
**Tuesday 10 June 2025**



