



# CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Applicant Brief



University of  
**CUMBRIA**





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# 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. We are a university for our region.**

**We were established in Cumbria for a reason, and this drives us: to increase higher education participation in our county, to address higher-level skills and sector needs and most importantly to positively impact on the lives and livelihoods of individuals across our communities.”**

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 be working with Imperial College London to open a post-graduate medical school in Carlisle from 2025. In addition, we are establishing a Centre for Digital transformation to help us realise our digital ambitions.

We are investing and are 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 over 13,000 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, up from 1,000 in 2021. We work closely with Further Education Colleges in Cumbria and beyond, and have a small number of international partners in Europe and Asia.

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. 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.

Through a working partnership with three other universities, we deliver the Police Degree Apprenticeship. The Police Education Consortium (PEC) has been providing Police Constable Degree Apprenticeships and Degree Holder Entry Programmes to new police recruits joining Surrey, Sussex, and Hampshire Constabularies, welcoming the 1,000th trainee police officer in 2021.

We also deliver a Paramedic Science (Apprenticeship) Degree. And by the end of this academic year, the University will be delivering to around 600 new recruits across seven of



England's ambulance trusts – including over 260 in London.

We have 5 institutes - Education, Health, Arts, Business, Industry & Leadership, and Science & Environment. Applied Research is a part of what we do and we have a number of research centres and networks growing across our University.

We are delivering new and innovative programmes in health, education, national parks and protected areas, project management, army medical services, policing and a varied range of bespoke employer-focused workforce development.

Our locations make us distinct and contribute to the vibrancy of place and meeting market demands. Our campuses in Carlisle, Ambleside, Barrow, Lancaster and London, and our presence on the West Coast of Cumbria, provide us

with the physical environment, digital infrastructure and geographical reach to deliver our strategic aims. We are currently developing ambitious plans to create new university campuses in Carlisle and Barrow, with support from private and public sector partners.

Our University's future is a bright one. We need a motivated and values-driven individual to work with us and for us to deliver this; for the benefit of the region and communities we serve.

# 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.**

Now is a very exciting time to be joining us. As the country comes out of the Covid19 pandemic we are well placed to make a significant contribution to the success of our students and region, with our newly approved strategy setting out our ambitions for the years ahead. We will be making 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. 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.

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 campuses with approximately 13,500 students, 1,000 staff and a turnover of around £60m. The diversity of our locations, landscape and heritage provides inspiration, challenges and potential in equal measure.

Following the approval of our new University Strategy: Towards 2030, we are developing the supporting strategies and plans to deliver for the years ahead: we look forward to the future with confidence.

The new University Strategy is yet to be published but a text version can be found [here](#).

### Our Strategic Focus Towards 2030

We fulfil 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.





# STUDENT PROFILE

**In the 2020/21 academic year, the University had around 13,500 students, either based at one of our campuses, in workplace settings or at a partner colleges in the UK and overseas.**

In 2020/21 the University had 4,800 students studying full-time at one of our campuses locations and a further 3,200 were engaged in part-time study, which was largely workplace based, in areas such a healthcare, education and project management. Our apprenticeship delivery has continued to expand, with significant contracts in place with a range of employers, with 1,000 students enrolled on this type of provision in 2020/21. Just under 4,500 students studied for a University award at one of our partner institutions.

Of our undergraduate student body;

- 22% of our students are on courses which lead to qualified teacher or registered healthcare professional.
- 11% are studying courses related to paramedic science or practice.
- 11% are studying courses linked to art, design and the performing arts.
- 21% are studying subjects related to business, project management, law, criminology and policing.

The remaining 35% are studying subject areas such as Forestry, Conservation, Outdoor Studies, STEM, Psychology, Education Studies and Social Work, Children and Families.

The full-time undergraduate student body is predominantly female (69%); 53% are 21 years or older on admission. Around 30% of the full-time students are from Cumbria. Of our total students, 13% identify themselves with black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds; 17% had a declared disability on entry. 17% of full-time young entrants on first-degree programmes are from low participating neighbourhoods.







# 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 has teaching sites at Barrow-in-Furness and 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, including learning from the Covid19 pandemic.**

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 Financial Statements for 2019/20 and 2020/21 set out how the University stabilised its finances and went on to consolidate this position in 2020/21. Forecasts for the current and future years show continued progress with the benefit of, for example, new multi-year employer-based training contracts.

Key components of our estate strategy are to improve the quality of the estate and to ensure that our infrastructure supports 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 development of a Learning Quarter in Barrow, working with the local authority, Furness College and British Aerospace.



# THE ROLE

## Responsible to:

Vice Chancellor

## Current Reports:

- Deputy Chief Operating Officer/Director of Finance and Resources (with management of Information Services, Human Resources and Organisation Development, Estates and Campus Services)
- Deputy Director of Finance and Planning
- Strategic Projects Manager

## Location:

Carlisle - with regular presence required across all campuses

## Role Purpose:

To lead the short to long term strategic enablement and implementation of the Towards 2030 strategy.

To lead on key strategies driving innovation, effectiveness and efficiency across the University in support of the University's Strategic Plan, Annual Operating and Strategic enabling plans.

To lead on the development of university's operating model, systems and processes.

To lead the annual operating planning activity.

To align the University's workforce capability, capacity and profile to address short to long-term drivers and goals.

To support the Vice Chancellor with the leadership and management of the University as communicated through the University's Mission and Vision.

To establish the University as a digitally-led and engaged university, demonstrating and supporting sustainable practices.

As a member of the Vice Chancellor's Executive to advise the Vice Chancellor and other colleagues on strategy as well as collective responsibility for performance.

## Key Responsibilities:

Executive responsibility and strategic oversight for:

- The enablement and implementation of the Towards 2030 Strategy and goals, supported by members of the Vice Chancellor's Executive,
- Supporting the Vice Chancellor to ensure medium to long term strategic (including financial), operating and investment plans, align to and, facilitate delivery of the Towards 2030 Strategy,
- Implementation and coordination of major capital projects such as Citadels campus (inc. Carlisle Business Exchange and Imperial College collaboration aspects) and Barrow Learning Quarter,
- Development of the Estates strategy and student accommodation plans,
- Development and implementation of the University's operating model(s) to include:
  - Business and corporate structures
  - Campus governance and operations including student and staff value propositions, business model, and estates plan (including student accommodation)
  - Subsidiary structures and operations
  - Delivery of high quality and timely customer services across and off campuses
  - Expanding breadth, relevance, and utility of management information and reporting (in liaison with VCE and Finance & Planning colleagues)
  - Business systems and processes and their improvement
  - Automation of activities and processes
- Development and oversight of a business and partnership framework for commercial activities including apprenticeships, employer partnerships, transnational education and further education partnerships,
- Student recruitment covering: to campuses, collaborative partnerships, distance learning provision and employer-based collaborations,





- Development of university workforce to include workforce profile (shape, roles, competencies, and skills), talent pipeline, new, up and re skilling needs,
- Development of the university as a digitally-enabled and connected organisation, in line with Digital Strategy,
- Development of the University's Carbon Reduction and Sustainability strategy,
- External engagement with key business, stakeholder and place partners

Following appointment, the COO will be encouraged and supported to review the structure and the roles reporting to it.

It is the University's intention that this job description is seen as a guide to the major areas and duties for which you will be accountable. However, the business requirements of the University will inevitably change over time and the job description should be seen as a guide and not as a permanent, definitive or exhaustive statement.

## Other

As a Senior Post Holder you are required to work within the values of Towards 2030 strategy and the University's People and Culture strategy at all times, role modelling appropriate inclusive behaviours and leadership.

You will at all times operate within established University regulations and procedures and will need to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of a large, complex, multi campus University.

As a Senior Post Holder, you will be expected to work flexibly in discharging duties. The normal working week is defined in the contract of employment but because of the nature of the post, you will be required to work flexibly and for such hours as are necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the post.



# THE PERSON

## Qualifications & Training

### Essential

A professional track record with evidence of delivering substantive performance improvements commensurate with a senior leadership role.

### Desirable

Chartered status and/or equivalent professional qualifications

## Knowledge and Experience

### Essential

Evidence of providing strategic and visionary direction in the development and implementation of strategies related to the cross-institutional portfolio.

Proven skills in building, supporting and maintaining a high performing executive management team and supporting a structured approach to strategic and operational planning.

Proven engagement with corporate strategic matters as relating to business performance and sustainability.

Strategic understanding of the broad context of Higher Education and government policy in the UK, and the current and forthcoming drivers, challenges, risks and opportunities this presents, to the sector and specifically the University.

Strategic insight into the role of universities in fuelling regional economies and place transformation.

Experience of providing strategic leadership and oversight of commercial, employer and place-based partnerships.

Experience of leading digital innovations.

Experience of leading sustainable practice improvements.

### Desirable

Nuanced knowledge, insights and understanding of the global context of Higher Education and the opportunities and challenges this presents.

## Competencies

### Essential

Ability to provide high-performance leadership on policy and strategy in the COO portfolio.

A proven track record of achieving performance targets and supporting others to meet their performance targets.

Ability to lead, inspire, develop and manage staff, with proven track record of managing complex projects and engaging staff and stakeholders through this process.

Proven influencing skills and the ability to position and represent the University's interests in policy debates at local, regional and national level.

### Desirable

Ability to draw on and translate innovative approaches out with the University and HE sector for the benefit of the University's operation and outcomes.

## Leadership, Management & Teamwork

### Essential

Inspirational leadership and management skills, including a commitment to excellent performance and continuous improvement.

Have a highly visible and accountable leadership style which is underpinned by strongly held values with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Demonstrable ability to focus on key priorities and deliver results.

## General Attributes

### Essential

Demonstrate highly developed interpersonal and communication skills and the ability to influence, collaborate and interact effectively with a range of stakeholders including staff (at all levels), students and other stakeholders.

A positive energy capable of uniting diverse stakeholders to deliver common goals and a creative and innovative approach to problem-solving

Demonstrable contribution to equality, diversity and inclusion and embedding of such in the current or previous organisation and/ or community.

Ability to cultivate strong networks and build links with the wider community and with business, industry and other stakeholders and represent the University nationally and internationally.

Be able to demonstrate necessary financial acumen to increase and/or develop significant and additional sources of income.







# HOW TO APPLY

**For an informal discussion  
about the role please contact  
Mike Dixon at Dixon Walter  
Search and Selection at:**

**mike@dixonwalter.co.uk  
0787 6751896.**

## **To apply please submit:**

- An up-to-date CV with details of your current or last remuneration.
- A covering letter of no more than 2,000 words that addresses the requirements in the person specification on page 12.
- Details of three referees (one of whom should be your current employer), including name, nature of your relationship, position and contact details. References will not be taken up without prior consent.
- A completed equal opportunities and diversity form (also available to download from the campaign site).

## **These documents should be emailed to:**

**mike@dixonwalter.co.uk**

## **Key dates for your diary**

- The closing date for applications is Thursday 9th June 2022
- Final stage assessment and selection will be held on Monday 11th July 2022