

CANDIDATE BRIEF



HR
Director

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

Thank you for your interest in working at ARU.

ARU is a global university transforming lives through innovative, inclusive and entrepreneurial education and research. We hold a Gold award for the quality of our education, awarded through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and are the Times Higher Education University of the Year 2024.

ARU's research institutes and four faculties bridge scientific, technical and creative fields. We deliver impactful research which tackles pressing issues and makes a real difference to our communities. Our academic excellence has been recognised by the UK's Higher Education funding bodies, with 16 of our research areas assessed as including world-leading research in REF2021.

We are the largest provider of Nursing, Midwifery, Health and Social Care students in the East of England, and we are also among the UK's leading universities for degree apprenticeship provision, working with hundreds of employers across the UK.

Our student population is vibrant and diverse, putting us in an excellent position to respond to the various challenges facing the sector. At the same time, as a civic institution with campuses across the East of England we are committed to working with others to enhance the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of our region.

This is an exciting time to join ARU and an outstanding opportunity to drive innovation across ARU and our educational offer. You will shape and deliver ARU's People Strategy, working closely with senior leaders to drive transformation. You'll lead HR Services, promote inclusive practices, and foster a culture of wellbeing and engagement. You'll act as a trusted adviser on employment law, manage employee relations, and represent HR within internal and external professional communities.

"I look forward to welcoming the successful candidate to our University"

**Professor
Roderick Watkins**

Vice Chancellor



ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

ARU's story starts in 1858, with the opening of Cambridge School of Art. Over the years a number of colleges and higher education institutions have come together to form what is now Anglia Ruskin University. Our most recent milestones include the creation of ARU Peterborough in 2022 and ARU Writtle in 2024.

Our focus has always been on transforming lives through innovative, inclusive, and entrepreneurial education and research – and this still underpins our vision and values today. Our over-arching vision is supported by our ten-year strategy, [Designing our Future 2017-26](#).



As a university, we're managed by a Board of Governors and a Senate. Our Vice Chancellor, Professor Roderick Watkins, is responsible for the day-to-day leadership of ARU. The Vice Chancellor is supported by the Vice Chancellor's Group (VCG) which consists of two Deputy Vice Chancellors (Education and Research & Innovation), plus the Chief Operating Officer, Director of Finance and the Secretary and Clerk to the Governors.



We have four faculties at ARU, each providing students, industry and the academic community with professionally focused and world-leading courses and research.

The four Pro Vice Chancellors/Deans of Faculties all report directly to the Vice Chancellor and are members of the University Executive Team (UET), the University's executive decision-making body. The Heads of Schools report into the Pro Vice Chancellors/Deans.

OUR MISSION AND VALUES

Our mission at ARU - transforming lives through innovative, inclusive and entrepreneurial education and research – guides everything we do. And our values – ambition, innovation, courage, community, integrity and responsibility – set out how we act, seeking to promote public good and serve our students and the communities in which we are based.



We seek colleagues who are committed to our values and who will play a leading role in ensuring we deliver on our mission.

Our values

- **Ambition:** We are determined to achieve our goals and continually strive to enhance our university for the benefit of all.
- **Innovation:** We will apply our collective and individual creativity to conceive and develop new ideas, implementing them for the benefit of the communities we serve.
- **Courage:** We are bold in taking the decisions we feel are right, even when it is difficult to do so.
- **Community:** We greatly value working collaboratively, supporting each other and helping everyone to achieve their potential.
- **Integrity:** We do what we say we will do and are fair and transparent in our decision-making and actions.
- **Responsibility:** We take decisions and act in a way which respects environmental, societal, and economic considerations, and which best supports those who study and work with us.

OUR STRATEGY

In 2017, we published our institutional strategy, [Designing our Future 2017–2026](#). On the 25th anniversary of our achieving university status, it set out our vision, priorities and ambitions for the next ten years, built around three themes:

1. Creating a leading learning and innovation ecosystem
2. Building and nurturing vibrant university communities
3. Strengthening the underpinning operations of the University



The delivery of our overarching strategy is supported through the implementation of three underpinning strategies for Education, Research & Innovation and Operating. The diagram below illustrates how the three strategies intersect to deliver the institutional strategy.

EDUCATION STRATEGY

2022 - 2027

ARU's outstanding and transformative education will support students at all levels to achieve their full potential and create a positive impact on their lives and work.

Our students have diverse backgrounds, interests and styles of learning. This diversity informs the way we will deliver our education and support our graduates and alumni to achieve their full potential, excel in their chosen careers, and tackle environmental and societal challenges. We will develop life-long partnerships with our students, pooling our knowledge and experience to address the challenges we face today, together.



To achieve this we will:

Deliver an inclusive and transformative education

ARU courses create space for students to work in partnership with businesses and organisations to tackle societal challenges and enhance their employability.

- Our flexible courses reflect the variety of needs and ambitions of our diverse student cohorts.
- We are a leader in innovative degree apprenticeships where education and employment are closely integrated.
- Our students engage in active, interdisciplinary curricula, tackling societal and environmental challenges with our local, regional and global communities.
- Our graduates have the skills, capabilities, and mindsets to contribute positively to their environment and communities.

Foster a research-rich educational environment

Our students receive – and contribute to – an education underpinned by sector-leading research.

- Engaging in and advancing research is an integral part of all our students' education, enhancing their employability and enabling them to contribute positively to a sustainable future.
- We deliver sector-leading pedagogic research and practice with our students to enhance their education.
- Our graduates are creative problem-solvers, prepared for wide-ranging careers.

Create vibrant living and learning communities

All our students connect to one another and our wider communities in ways that enhance their belonging and recognise their contributions.

- We focus on providing an excellent student experience within and around our courses.
- We recognise that no two members of the ARU community are the same and each student and staff member's contribution is valued.
- ARU students receive unique opportunities to engage in knowledge exchange outside of their course.
- Students engage with global communities through ARU's international connections and partnerships.



Offer innovative and flexible learning for life

- We create opportunities for prospective students and our alumni to grow and learn together throughout their lives.
- We create pathways to higher education for the diverse communities across our regions.
- We continue to learn from and educate our alumni throughout their lives, including a 'Learning for Life' offer for our alumni and local communities.

RESEARCH AT ARU



The overarching aim of our Research and Innovation Strategy is 'to deliver transformative benefits locally and globally'.

We are passionate about research at ARU: its potential to innovate, and its power to enhance social, cultural and economic well-being at national and global levels.

Discover more about our world-leading and impactful research, including case studies from our ARU-wide [Research, Innovation and Impact Themes](#): Sustainable Futures, Safe and Inclusive Communities and Health, Performance and Wellbeing. You can read more about our multi-disciplinary institutional research environment [here](#).

In summer 2022 we published our new Research and Innovation Strategy and are currently working on its implementation. Our research excellence has been recognised by the UK's Higher Education funding bodies, with all 16 of our research areas assessed as having world leading areas in REF2021.



ABOUT Human Resources Services

At Anglia Ruskin University our vision 'Transforming lives through innovative, inclusive and entrepreneurial education and research' is achieved by working together and supporting each other to be the best we can be.

This means making sure we model our values of ambition, innovation, courage, community, integrity and responsibility every day. Key to enabling us to achieve our vision is having excellent underpinning services like HR.

Our mission is to enable our people to reach their full potential by helping them model our values and feel supported in their day-to-day work so that they feel part of our ARU community. We make sure we provide the best training and development opportunities so that everybody has the skills and confidence to carry out their work to the highest standards, as well as helping everyone understand how their work contributes to achieving ARU's vision. HR Services are trusted partners to everybody working here at ARU; we work with people across our organisation every day to make sure everybody has access to a wide range of responsive and timely, relevant and reliable, high-quality HR services that are rooted in best practice.



REWARDS & BENEFITS

We are committed to our staff and have an agile working culture to support individuals to work flexibly and balance the demands of their role with their personal circumstances. As well as a competitive salary and a generous relocation package, you'll have access to an attractive pension scheme, generous annual leave, learning and development support to ensure you thrive at ARU, and to a comprehensive suite of wellbeing resources designed to support your physical, mental, and emotional health.

Click [here](#) to find out more about our rewards and benefits offer.

HOW WE RECRUIT

We are excited that you're considering joining ARU! We are committed to attracting the best talent and ensuring that every candidate has a positive experience. We understand that the application process can be both exciting and challenging, and we aim to support you every step of the way.

We value transparency and want to make sure you know what to expect as you navigate our recruitment process, from submitting your application to going through interviews and eventually onboarding; we also provide resources and tips on effective interview techniques to help you prepare and present your best authentic self.

Click [here](#) if you wish to find out more.



**ACHIEVE
YOUR
EXCELLENCE,
TOGETHER**



Discover excellence like you've never known it before. At ARU, you'll be part of a community that celebrates who you are, champions new ideas, and inspires greatness. Combining individuality with collaboration, you'll be given the tools and support to achieve your aspirations, all whilst making a collective impact on the world around you.

HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES

Job Description

Job Title:	HR Director
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Grade:	Senior Management (SMG)
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Job Family:	Senior Management (SMG)
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Work Base:	Chelmsford or Cambridge (with travel between campuses)
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Hours of Work:	Full time (37 hours)
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Responsible to:	Chief Operating Officer
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Responsible for:	Assistant Directors (x3), Personal Assistant
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Relationships and Contacts:	Vice Chancellor's Group (VCG), University Executive Team (UET), Trade Unions, Students Union, External Bodies and Agencies (e.g. UCEA, UHR, OfS), Other Universities
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Job Purpose:	Contribute to the strategic leadership of the University as part of UET, helping to develop and implement ARU's Strategy, vision, and values - with a focus on staff matters. Ensure ARU remains a high-performing institution, attracting and retaining top talent. Provide strategic leadership for HR Services, taking full accountability for a customer-focused, efficient, and effective portfolio, delivered within budget.
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Principal Accountabilities

Develop, deliver and implement ARU's strategy, with a focus on people matters. Work with the Chief Operating Officer and key stakeholders, and drawing on best practice from across sector, so that ARU continues and enhances its organisational development programme and activities. Monitor and review key performance indicators.

Develop ARU's employer brand and reputation, as part of the broader brand development, so that we have a positive, high profile that attracts and retains the best possible talent from within and outside the HE sector.

Develop and review of HR policy, practices and procedures in all areas concerned with employment and people management, to ensure that our University is able to recruit, retain and develop a diverse, high calibre and motivated workforce using inclusive approaches which aim to add maximum value with minimum complexity.

Lead delivery of HR Services, managing the service efficiently and effectively so that it is continually and demonstrably supportive, customer-focused and responsive to current and planned activities needs, underpinned by accessible, transparent staff management information available to faculties and services. Continuously strive to improve service performance and promote and disseminate good practice.

Manage the human, financial and physical resources of HR Services in accordance with agreed budgets and operational plans. Motivate and develop staff within HR Services.

Play a lead role in the development and delivery of our University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives and actions plans, ensuring that HR aspects are delivered and contribute to the achievement of external charter marks where appropriate.

Take a lead role in shaping and delivering a solution-focused organisational culture which values employee performance, health and well-being and employee engagement as a prerequisite to high levels of staff satisfaction.

As part of the university's ongoing change (eg ARU's efficiency programme), develop and implement initiatives which align staffing to business needs. Build the University's capacity and capability to deliver agile services through robust performance management systems. Deliver

a new HR IT system which underpins more efficient operations, better processes and more insightful management information.

Build relationships of mutual trust with PVC/Deans of Faculty, Directors of Professional Services and other senior colleagues, maintaining and enhancing the Service reputation as a trusted partner.

Act as internal expert and lead adviser on employment law matters and HR practice.

Proactively lead on the development of positive and effective employee relations including with our local, regional and national recognised trade unions which deliver meaningful and impactful positive outcomes for students and staff.

Ensure that employees have access to and are up to date with relevant learning and development, responsive to need, to enhance personal and career development to support the delivery of the strategic plan. Develop and support those in leadership roles and aspiring leaders to build high quality people management and employee engagement skills.

Act as an ambassador for the HR service and the university more widely locally and in the wider professional community. Maintain an effective professional network, including influential working relationships with peers across higher education, and beyond, on matters of mutual interest.

Undertake development projects as agreed from time to time.

Responsible for data protection, Health and Safety and other compliance matters within HR Services, in accordance with University policies.

Such other duties temporarily or on a continuing basis, as may reasonably be required, commensurate with your grade.

Comply with Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR requirements in all working practices maintaining confidentiality, integrity, availability, accuracy, currency and security of information as appropriate. Take personal responsibility for all personal data within own working environment.

Comply with Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Sustainability responsibilities as detailed in our policies and procedures.

Such other duties temporarily or on a continuing basis, as may reasonably be required, commensurate with your grade.

This is a description of the job as it is presently constituted. It is normal practice to review periodically job descriptions to ensure that they are relevant to the job currently being performed, and to incorporate any changes which have occurred or are being proposed. The review process is carried out jointly by manager and employee and you are therefore expected to participate fully in such discussions. In all cases, it is our aim to reach agreement to reasonable changes, but where it is not possible to reach agreement, we reserve the right to make reasonable changes to your job description which are commensurate with your grade after consultation with you.

August 2025

HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES

HR Director

Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Academic/ Professional Qualifications	Higher Degree and/or relevant professional qualification at post-graduate level Chartered (MCIPD)	Chartered Fellow (FCIPD)
Experience	HR Experience in Higher Education (HE) Considerable senior HR management experience within a large, complex organisation, and evidence of working across the organisation to deliver outcomes that benefit the organisation Substantial experience in developing, shaping and leading the implementation of the HR/People strategy ensuring effective operational delivery Proven track record of successfully leading and motivating a professional HR team Experience in consultations and negotiations with trade unions Delivery of successful change management in a complex environment HR policy development over a broad range of areas Experience of preparing and managing budget and resources Significant and recent HR experience in HE	Commercial skills
Knowledge/ Skills	Strong leadership skills Excellent listening, communication, interpersonal and presentation skills	Awareness of strategic, policy and financial issues facing Higher Education

	Essential	Desirable
	<p>Excellent influencing and negotiation skills with the ability to persuade others at all levels</p> <p>Excellent planning and organisational skills, being able to anticipate potential problems and challenges</p> <p>Strong understanding and knowledge of contemporary, sector-leading, practice in HR</p> <p>Thorough working knowledge of employment legislation and dealing with related issues</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of compliance and regulatory issues affecting the HR function</p> <p>Proven ability to develop successful strategic business plans</p> <p>Ability to lead successful change and to deliver best practice services, including process reengineering and digitisation</p>	
Personal Attributes	<p>Ability to engage and work with others at all levels of the organisation building trust and purposeful direction for the future</p> <p>Lead, motivate and develop staff</p> <p>Flexible and adaptable</p> <p>Ability to engage effectively with and influence all stakeholders, both internal and external</p> <p>Self-assured and resilient. Able to handle conflict and lead difficult conversations</p> <p>Forward thinking with the ability to challenge and suggest innovative solutions</p> <p>High and demanding expectations of self and others in service delivery</p> <p>Work under pressure and to tight deadlines</p>	
Other	<p>Willing and able to travel between sites as required</p> <p>Committed to our equity diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, health and safety,</p>	

Essential

Desirable

and sustainability policies and procedures
and our University's [values](#)
Compliance to Data Protection Act 2018 and
GDPR principles/ requirements

HOW TO APPLY

Dixon Walter has been retained by Anglia Ruskin University to provide executive search and advisory services for the role of HR Director.

For further information please visit:

<https://www.dixonwalter.co.uk/opportunities/aru-hrd/>

Or to discuss this opportunity, please contact [Simon Critchley](#)

Your application should include on separate documents:

- a letter of application setting out your interest in the role and details of how you match the requirements in the Person Specification (no more than two pages of A4.)
- a comprehensive Curriculum Vitae
- a completed Personal Details Form
- details of three referees and your notice period (referees will not be contacted without your permission.)

Applications should be emailed to simon@dixonwalter.co.uk at Dixon Walter by midnight on Sunday 21st September 2025.

Longlist interviews are expected to be held with Dixon Walter via Microsoft Teams in the weeks commencing the 29th September and 6th October 2025.

Final interviews are expected to take place in person on Thursday 30th October and Friday 31st October 2025