



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

le.ac.uk



Director of External Relations



We are Citizens of Change





Contents

Welcome from the President and Vice-Chancellor	4
About the University of Leicester	6
External Relations Division	8
The role	12
Living in Leicester	18



Welcome from the President and Vice-Chancellor

Diverse in our makeup and united in ambition –
we pursue excellence in knowledge and learning to
transform our community, our world and beyond.
We are Citizens of Change.



PROFESSOR SIR NISHAN CANAGARAJAH
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in this exciting opportunity to help shape the future of one of the UK's most ambitious and forward-thinking universities.

The University's Citizens of Change strategy continues to guide our direction, with its commitment to research inspired education, world changing research, and a strong focus on people, partnerships and impact. As we look ahead, we are actively refreshing our strategy to build on our progress and ensure we remain responsive to a rapidly evolving higher education landscape.

At the heart of our approach are three enduring values, inclusive, inspiring and impactful, which define who we are and the University we aspire to be.

We believe equity, diversity and inclusion are fundamental to creating a thriving environment for work and study. With staff and students from over 100 countries, we benefit from a rich diversity of perspectives that strengthen both our University community and our city.

Our recent achievements reflect this strong foundation. Leicester has been named Daily Mail University of the Year 2025 and shortlisted for Times Higher Education University of the Year 2024 and The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2025. We now rank 28th in The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026 and have risen to 33rd in the Complete University Guide. We are also proud to be in the top 15 for student satisfaction in the 2025 National Student Survey, and to have been ranked 26th globally for Research Quality in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026.

Our academic excellence is further reflected in a Gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework and a top 30 performance in the Research Excellence Framework, with REF 2021 marking our strongest ever result and a significant rise in national rankings.

We are also responding decisively to the financial challenges facing the higher education sector, including constrained funding, rising costs and global uncertainty.

We continue to deliver impact at scale. Over the past three years, we have secured more than £100 million

in research funding on multiple occasions, including a landmark £10 million award from the Leverhulme Trust to establish the Leverhulme Centre for Humanity and Space. We are also advancing major international partnerships, including our collaboration with Apollo Hospitals in India through the Centre for Digital Health and Precision Medicine, and expanding our global footprint across Asia through strategic partnerships and recruitment initiatives.

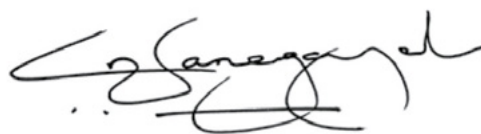
Against this backdrop, Leicester continues to strengthen its position, with sustained improvement in league tables, strong National Student Survey outcomes and excellent performance in the Knowledge Exchange Framework, reflecting the commitment and talent of our staff and students.

We are seeking an exceptional candidate to join us as Director of External Relations to develop and deliver an integrated strategy to strengthen the University's reputation, brand and student recruitment performance. Working across Professional Services and the Colleges, you will drive sector-leading domestic recruitment activity and ensure progress toward the University's five-year student number targets within a competitive and evolving regulatory environment.

Reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professional Services you will provide strategic leadership for the University's end-to-end external relations activity, including marketing, communications, domestic student recruitment and the Attenborough Arts Centre.

This is a significant and challenging role for a candidate of the highest calibre – someone with vision, drive, and the ability to leave a lasting legacy of achievement.

If Leicester sounds like the place for you, and you have the skills, experience, and ambition to make a difference, we look forward to hearing from you.



PROFESSOR SIR NISHAN CANAGARAJAH
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR



Our reputation speaks for itself, with global recognition for our discoveries and contributions to advancing knowledge.

About the University of Leicester



The University of Leicester is a dynamic and inclusive institution, celebrated for our inspiring academic programs, ground-breaking research, and supportive community.

Founded over 100 years ago as a symbol of hope for the future, we are the only university in Europe established by its community as a living legacy to those who made sacrifices during the First World War. This is reflected in our motto, *Ut vitam habeant* – ‘so that they may have life.’

Based in one of the UK’s and Europe’s most culturally diverse cities, our identity and mission have been shaped by this rich tapestry. Students and staff from around the globe come together to engage here, contributing an incredible array of perspectives, beliefs, and approaches that enhance both our university and the vibrant city of Leicester.

We play a vital role in the regional economy, serving as a leading employer and an active supporter of music, arts, sports, and culture. Each year, we contribute over £360 million to Leicester’s economy, underscoring our commitment to the community.

Our commitment to excellence is evident in our recent investment of over £500 million, which has transformed our campus into a world-class environment with state-of-the-art facilities designed for the future. This includes the newly developed Freeman’s neighbourhood – a lively space for students to live, learn, and connect.

As Citizens of Change, our researchers are dedicated to tackling some of today’s most pressing challenges, from combating viruses and diseases to improving air quality, protecting our natural environment and promoting social justice. The diversity of our research reflects the rich variety of our community, creating a broad impact on society.

Our reputation speaks for itself, with global recognition for our discoveries and contributions to advancing knowledge. Our standing in the league tables positions us among the leading universities in the UK.

While we take pride in our heritage and accomplishments, the University of Leicester is resolutely focused on the future. Our spirit of discovery inspires innovative thinking, empowering us to seize new opportunities as we embark on our second century.

16,860
undergraduate
students



£340 million
research portfolio (live grants)
from over 250 funders



4,638
postgraduate
students



4,215
staff



30%
international
students



£396 million
turnover



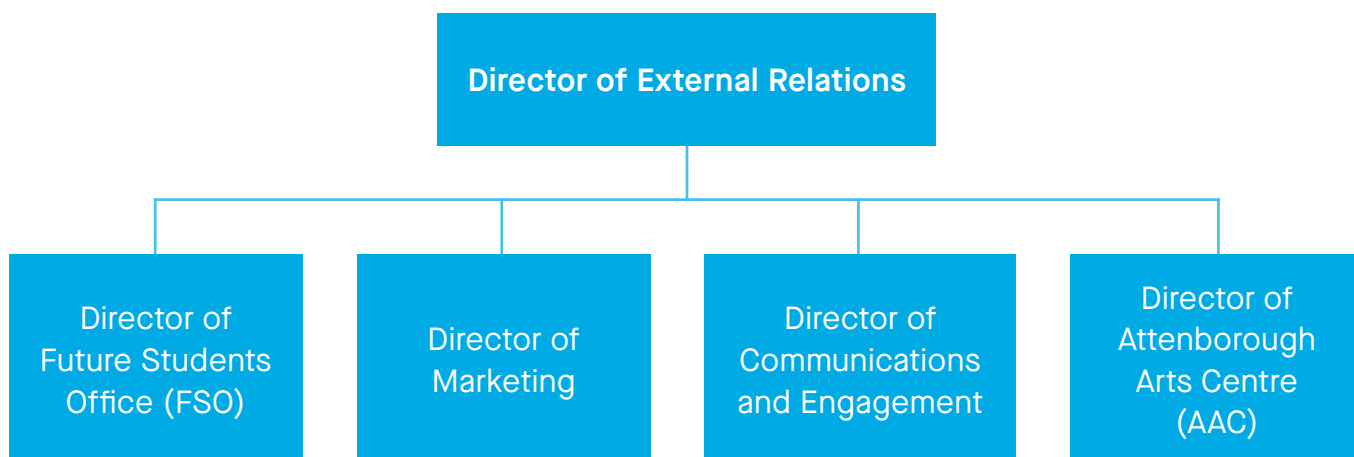
2025 Statistics



External Relations Division

The External Relations Division (ERD) is responsible for enhancing the University's profile and reputation, meeting our student recruitment and fundraising targets, promoting our research and ensuring that we engage with all University stakeholders – internally, locally, nationally and internationally.

ERD includes the Future Students Office, Marketing, Communications and Engagement and Attenborough Arts Centre.



Future Students

Future Students are a dedicated group of teams providing advice and guidance to students, teachers, advisors and parents around the UK.

The Future Students Office consists of the UK Student Recruitment and Outreach, the Pathways, the Admissions and Applicant Experience.

The UK Student Recruitment and Outreach team is responsible for delivering undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment throughout the UK, and for meeting the University’s widening access targets. We work with students of all ages and backgrounds, teachers and careers advisers, parents and carers, as well as members of the community to encourage participation in higher education and to recruit and convert undergraduate and postgraduate students to the University.

The Pathways team work across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and is one of 29 partnerships across England funded by the Office for Students as part of their Uni Connect programme. Pathways brings together the University of Leicester, Loughborough University and

De Montfort University, as well as Leicester College and Loughborough College, with the aim of supporting more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach their full potential through higher education.

The Admission and Applicant Experience team manage enquiries, communications and admissions to campus based and distance learning courses at Leicester. This includes processing undergraduate and postgraduate applications, handling admissions enquiries, sending all communications, making offers, undertaking fee assessments, issuing official documentation to support our applicants’ visa applications, and managing and maintaining the University’s central admissions systems, policies and procedures.



Marketing

The Marketing division consists of the Recruitment Marketing, Creative and Video, Marketing and Insight, Digital Engagement, Corporate and Research Marketing teams and the College Recruitment and Marketing teams.

The Recruitment Marketing team delivers key student recruitment campaigns and events to support recruitment to undergraduate, postgraduate and distance learning courses attracting prospective students to come to Leicester to study from the UK and from locations around the world.

The Creative and Video team are responsible for marketing the external profile of the University across a range of channels. This involves the development of the University's brand identity including the creative, content and design elements, as well as overseeing marketing campaigns and events for student recruitment and research reputation campaigns. The team also offer a professional design and artwork service including print and digital communications, as well as audio and video production.

The Marketing and Insight team provides vital intelligence and insights across Brand, Marketing and Digital Engagement, to achieve key institutional objectives. The team predicts market opportunities through monitoring and analysing upcoming trends, and horizon scanning. They devise data driven marketing strategies

that are applied within and outside of the team across a broad range of projects including course launch. Additionally, they provide guidance and support around best practice for market research.

Our Digital Engagement team is responsible for the performance and effectiveness of the University's digital engagement channels, including our website, apps, social media channels and other emerging digital platforms. The team offers in-house expertise in user experience, digital accessibility and optimisation, architecture and system management, as well as user support and training.

The Corporate and Research Marketing team is responsible for showcasing the University's world-changing research portfolio to build reputation and profile and to develop and deliver key campaigns to showcase the education, teaching and student experience here at Leicester.

The College Student Recruitment and Marketing Team support academic schools within each of our Colleges, leading on College-specific marketing campaigns and activities in order to support student recruitment targets across all our channels and modes of study. The purpose is to deliver innovative and ground-breaking marketing and recruitment initiatives to ensure we grow our market share across the globe.

Communications and Engagement

Communications and Engagement are responsible for telling stories to our internal and external audiences. Together, they produce communications plans, promote positive messages about the University, organise high-profile events, avoid crises, and much more.

The Communications and Engagement office consists of the Internal Communications, Corporate Communications, Press and Events teams.

The Communications teams are responsible for external and internal communications, including corporate, student and staff communications across an array of channels.

The Press team provide a central source for media enquiries, both proactively by contacting journalists about our latest news and research and also reactively by providing expert commentary on a daily basis.

The Events team is responsible for a range of high-profile, public facing corporate and student engagement events. These include lifecycle welcome events and Graduation ceremonies every year. The team also deliver various lecture series', staff awards, building openings, ministerial visits, summertime and Christmas on campus activities, alongside providing expert guidance to students and staff on delivering events.



Attenborough Arts Centre

Attenborough Arts Centre is Leicester's contemporary arts hub and one of the UK's leading university arts centres, engaging more than 100,000 people including students and staff annually with our cultural programme. Public funding from Arts Council England is received, as one of 987 National Portfolio Organisations nationally.

Attenborough Arts Centre promotes inclusive culture and creativity for everyone, with socially- and civically-engaged, visual arts, live performance, learning and community programmes.





The role

Job title:

Director of External Relations

Grade:

10

Department:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professional Services

Hours/Contract:

Full-time, permanent

Role purpose

The Director of External Relations reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professional Services. The post holder provides strategic leadership for the University's end-to-end external relations activity, including marketing, communications, domestic student recruitment and the Attenborough Arts Centre.

The post holder is accountable for developing and delivering an integrated strategy to strengthen the University's reputation, brand and student recruitment performance. Working across Professional Services and the Colleges, they will drive sector-leading domestic recruitment activity and ensure progress toward the University's five-year student number targets within a competitive and evolving regulatory environment.

The Director of External Relations leads the University's reputation and brand strategy, ensuring impactful national and international visibility for its research, education, regional engagement and global partnerships. The post holder provides senior oversight of communications and reputation activity to support long-term institutional success.

The post holder also holds strategic responsibility for the externally facing Attenborough Arts Centre, aligning its work with the University's community engagement, research impact, health and wellbeing and partnership priorities.



Resources managed

The Director of External Relations line manages four direct reports; the Director of the Future Students Office (FSO), Director of Marketing, Director of Communications and Engagement and the Director of the Attenborough Arts Centre (AAC). The Division has approximately 160 staff in total, with a pay budget of £6m and a non-pay budget of £4m.

Main duties and responsibilities

Strategy

- Play an active role in assisting the Executive Board in achieving the University’s Strategic Plan and goals, contributing to University planning and financial sustainability.
- Formulate a strong strategic vision and direction for the Division that delivers tangible University-wide outcomes and impact.
- Recommend and drive the delivery of domestic student number growth targets.
- Deliver student number growth and achieve annual recruitment targets for domestic HE students through highly effective and innovative marketing campaigns and student recruitment initiatives.
- Ensuring that marketing and recruitment strategies are innovative and swift to respond to changes in the political or regulatory environment as well as sufficiently agile to take advantage of new market opportunities and recruitment trend.
- Ensure Access targets are achieved in the University’s Access and Participation Plan (APP) and Pathways objectives are achieved.
- Build and manage the University’s brand equity and implementation of institution-wide marketing communications efforts, including the development of a comprehensive strategy to define and build our brand and global reputation as one of the UK’s top universities.
- Ensure that all related activities are integrated to maximise income generation and domestic student attraction and the global reach of our brand and reputation.
- Drive a digital first approach to external relations activities to deliver greater efficiency and process improvement across all activities using AI/automation.



Leadership and management

- Lead the University’s domestic student recruitment programme and be an authoritative source of advice and guidance to senior staff and major committees throughout the University on domestic recruitment issues.
- Lead the University’s plans to drive forward high-quality, effective and systemic improvements to capturing leads, improving applicant experiences and student recruitment outcomes – including responsibility for the University CRM system (recruitment) and website.
- Lead, direct and plan the activities of the Division and to track, measure, assess and report on the performance of the Division.
- Lead on providing strategic marketing guidance and services to the wider University including international student recruitment and reputation building campaigns.
- Lead on budget setting, with overall responsibility for the monitoring, planning and delivery of the Division’s budget, ensuring that financial targets are met and savings are delivered.
- Lead the External Relations Division, providing opportunities for enrichment and development, instilling a culture of proactivity and innovation and

supporting it to operate as a modern, dynamic and high-functioning team.

- Lead on staff recruitment and development for the team. Improving diversity and ensuring career progression opportunities are supported appropriately and that professional development plans are created to reflect the changing expertise and specialisms required within each team.
- Lead in the development of effective and influential business cases, strategy papers and consultations as well as audits, reviews and procurement.
- Establish effective monitoring and reporting processes to assess performance and drive improvements. Build successful partnerships and relationships with Colleges and other professional services divisions and external stakeholders and deliver a high standard of services to these groups.

Portfolio oversight

Provide strategic leadership and oversight of:

- Future Students Office (includes Admissions team)
- Marketing (includes marketing staff based in Colleges)
- Communications and Engagement
- The Attenborough Arts Centre

Internal and external relationships

- Work closely with senior leadership colleagues across the University, including Executive Board members, Academic departments and professional services.
- Liaise with external bodies such as UCAS, OfS, UUK.
- Take an active interest in and maintain up-to-date knowledge of the HE sector, to advise on how the University can best react or seize opportunities in a changing environment.
- To quickly develop and maintain highly effective and productive relationships with the academic community and other Professional Services Divisions.
- Engage with key bodies and organisations as well as developing relevant informal networks and relationships.
- Develop and nurture strong networks across relevant media and external organisations, as well as businesses and agencies to enhance the University's profile.
- To represent the University at appropriate local and national events.
- To participate in appropriate professional groups to develop networks and share good practice.
- Sit on relevant Boards and Committees as appropriate.

Planning and organising

- To undertake long term planning and organising for the External Relations Division.
- To lead on institutional strategic planning particularly in student number planning and growth strategies (including Clearing).
- To oversee the selection and ongoing management of relationships with external media and creative agencies for the execution of impactful student recruitment and reputational campaigns.
- To underpin all planning and strategy with key performance metrics to ensure strategic effectiveness and evaluate target segmentation, tactics and channels in accordance with levels of effort and financial investment.

Qualifications, knowledge and experience

Essential

- Significant experience in the leadership of Marketing, Communications and Student Recruitment at an organisational strategic level in the University sector*.
- Proven track record of providing strategic leadership in a senior role, shaping organisational direction, influencing high level decision making and delivering outcomes across complex, multi-disciplinary portfolios*.



- Demonstrable experience operating effectively within executive governance structures, building productive senior-level relationships and leading through ambiguity and change to drive institution wide improvement.
- A first degree or very substantial relevant professional experience combined with a professional or relevant postgraduate qualification*.
- Experience of developing and managing global reputation strategy and associated marketing strategies and campaigns for a major brand*.
- Proven experience in delivering student recruitment growth and reaching/exceeding targets in the HE Sector*.
- Proven success in achieving an outstanding level of stakeholder engagement*.
- Commercial experience to maximise income generation from across the postholder's areas of responsibility*.
- Proven experience of managing complex and nuanced relationships which require a bespoke approach and a high level of judgement*.
- Experience of having successfully mentored, coached and influenced others to achieve results and lead a team of the very best specialists in their chosen fields.
- Experience of successful budget setting, cost management and procurement.

Desirable

- Individual membership of relevant professional bodies such as CIPR, CIM, CASE or IoF.
- Understanding and knowledge as to how arts and cultural facilities can add value to a University brand.

Skills, abilities and competences

Essential

- Able to work in a fluid and fast-changing environment.
- Proven ability to drive change through others through influence as well as through digital technologies.
- Strategic and tactical problem-solving skills, and direction setting abilities, with proven capability to

shape and develop policy and process, gained in the higher education environment or multifaceted businesses of similar size and impact.

- Possess the confidence and ability to sell ideas to the University Senior Leadership Team and wider community.
- Ability to build trust and confidence across all levels of an organisation.
- A growth mindset with a positive and engaging approach to leading across an organisation.
- Possess high levels of creativity, resourcefulness and resilience.
- Possess outstanding communication skills.
- Strong facilitative style of leadership with track record of developing, motivating and mentoring staff to perform at their best.
- Team working and collaboration as a member of a management team to support the delivery of broader organisational objectives and targets.
- Ability to identify, leverage and maximise on potential engagement opportunities.
- Strong commercial acumen with the ability to work at strategic level.

Desirable

- Understand the techniques of fundraising.

*Criteria to be used in shortlisting candidates for interview

Criminal declaration

If you become an employee, you must inform your manager immediately, in writing, if you are the subject of any current or future police investigations/legal proceedings, which could result in a criminal offence, conviction, caution, bind-over or charges, or warnings.

Supporting university activities

As a University of Leicester citizen, you are encouraged to support key university activities such as clearing, graduation ceremonies, student registration and recruitment open days. We encourage all staff as citizens to work flexibly across the University if required. If supporting these activities is likely to affect your workload, please speak to your line manager in the first instance.



University values

Inclusive – We are diverse in our makeup and united in ambition. Our diversity is our strength and makes our community stronger.

Inspiring – We are passionate about inspiring individuals to succeed and realise their ambitions. We challenge our community to think differently, to get involved, and to constantly embrace new ideas.

Impactful – As Citizens of Change we will generate new ideas which deliver impact and empower our community.

Equity and diversity

We believe that equity, diversity and inclusion is integral to a successful modern workplace. By developing and implementing policies and systems that challenge stereotypes across all aspects of our work, we have a culture that recognises and values the diverse contributions of our staff which benefits everyone. Our strong values of inclusivity and equality support our efforts to attract a diverse range of high quality staff and students, and identify our University as a progressive and innovative workplace that mainstreams equality, diversity and inclusion.

How to apply

For further information and details of how to apply, please contact Alan Walter at alan@dixonwalter.co.uk or on 07876 766972. Further details can be found at: <https://www.dixonwalter.co.uk/opportunities/director-of-external-relations/>

Applications should be made via email to alan@dixonwalter.co.uk by **Sunday 26th July 2026** and must include on separate documents:

- A letter of application setting out your interest in the role and details of how you match the person specification.
- A comprehensive curriculum vitae (CV).
- Details of three referees (including current or most recent manager and notice period, referees will not be contacted without your permission).
- A completed Personal details form (available from the email above).

The closing date for applications is **Sunday 19th July 2026**. Initial discussions with Dixon Walter will take place week commencing 20 July 2026. First stage interviews will be held on 19 August 2026 and final stage interviews on the 2 September 2026.

In making an application for this role we ask you also to view our Privacy Notice which outlines our compliance to General Data Protection Regulations and the use and storage of your data. Personal Data is held and processed on the lawful basis that such action is in the Legitimate Interest of the company in pursuing the purposes described and has been considered through the use of a Legitimate Interest Assessment utilising the Balance Test to not be outweighed by risks to the rights, freedoms and interests of the Data Subject.

Please visit the following link in order to find more information about the use of personal information provided by candidates to the University of Leicester. le.ac.uk/ias/data-protection



Living in Leicester

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are rich in culture, heritage, and leisure activities, from our vibrant multicultural city, to the beautiful market towns and rural villages.

Often described as the heart of rural England, the area features beautiful country villages, the National Forest, great rivers and castles and a cosmopolitan city centre, making it an exciting and diverse place to live and work.

Leicester is one of the UK's ten largest cities and represents the largest economy in the East Midlands region. It has a bustling and diverse atmosphere and recent regeneration (to the tune of £3 billion) has made this cosmopolitan city even more exciting. Leicester is home to the state-of-the-art Curve theatre, as well as large and multicultural festivals. It is famous for its diversity and offers an amazing chance to dive into many different cultural

celebrations. Leicester celebrates Diwali (the Festival of Light) with spectacular lights, stunning street parades and dazzling fireworks. This is attended by 35,000 people and is the largest celebration of the festival outside of India. The city also hosts an annual Pride Parade (Leicester Pride), a Caribbean Carnival and the largest comedy festival in the UK.

The University, working in close partnership with the city, has been the inspiration behind two of Leicester's most famous tourist attractions. The award-winning National Space Centre – the UK's largest attraction dedicated to space exploration – and the King Richard III Visitor Centre which retells the dramatic story of the University's discovery of England's most infamous King. Leicester is well-known as a sporting capital – hosting the country's best-supported rugby team the Leicester Tigers as well as Leicester City Football Club and Leicestershire County Cricket Club.

The city benefits from a large number of public parks including Abbey Park and also Victoria Park which is adjacent to the University. Leicester is steeped in history, dating back to the original Iron Age settlement which was to become an important Roman trading centre with a commanding position on one of Britain's



Leicester represents the largest economy in the East Midlands region.

most important routes – the Fosse Way. Leicester’s manufacturing industry reached its height in the 20th century, driven by world-renowned hosiery, textile, and footwear enterprises that shaped the city’s identity and powered its economic growth.

On Leicester’s doorstep is the National Forest, offering cycling, riding and walkways, adventure activities and some of the most impressive landscapes in the region, including Charnwood Forest and Swithland Reservoir. To the east is Rutland Water, one of the largest man-made reservoirs in Europe, which supports a wide range of water sports. Leicester and the surrounding region offer a wide choice of property to buy or rent. In the city itself, there is a diverse mix of housing and apartments. Both new and older properties, including substantial homes, can be found in leafy parts of Leicester within easy reach of the University. Alternatively, there is property available in the attractive villages and market towns in Leicestershire and Rutland such as Market Harborough and Oakham. House prices are markedly less than those in London.





UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

le.ac.uk

University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester, LE1 7RH, UK

e: recruitmentg10@le.ac.uk



[/uniofleicester](#)



[uniofleicester](#)



[@uniofleicester](#)



[university-of-leicester](#)