

UCAS



UCAS CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Candidate pack

LETTER FROM THE UCAS BOARD



Thank you for your interest in the role of UCAS Chief Executive.

We are looking for an exceptional candidate to accelerate UCAS' commercial and digital growth, enabling UCAS to position itself as the primary place for students to discover options and make aspirational choices about higher education and learning.

Whether you've been a customer of UCAS yourself or not, you will undoubtedly know of us and may have friends or family who have used our services. What you may be less aware of is that, in service of its charitable aims, UCAS has a diverse business model that is based on income from its customers and users, as well as our commercial subsidiary, which has huge opportunities ahead.

Our impact is significant. UCAS is the UK's shared admissions service for post-secondary education and is the single largest channel for international students entering the UK's universities and colleges, a key sector in the UK's economy and society. As highlighted in our **Impact Report**, UCAS brings annual benefits worth £3.3bn to the UK economy by matching students to courses through personalised information and advice to students, making it easier for students to navigate to their chosen destination – whether that be a university course or apprenticeship.

Our future untapped potential is also significant. We are a trusted national brand, instantly recognisable to over one million students every year who use our services, with applicants stating they would trust UCAS with their data ahead of high street banks. This connection to students creates a rich array of commercial opportunities that not only add value to all our customers through the creation of new products, services, and data insights, but also works to keep the charges to applicants and university and college customers low. Through our commercial services, we provide higher education providers, industry clients and partners with trusted data, research-based insights, strategic data-led consultancy, and creative marketing to reach potential customers and their influencers.

Importantly, beneath these customer-focused services and commercial ambitions, beats the heart of a technology company that is progressively run on modern, cloud-hosted, digital platforms that are trusted and secure, and becoming increasingly personalised. Our digital solutions need to be innovative and delivered at an accelerated pace and, like all businesses, run with its customers' interests front of mind. UCAS also collaborates with its stakeholders to ensure the users of our digital services have a real stake in what we do.

Encompassing universities and other higher education providers, schools and colleges, advisers, parents, exam boards, industry, government and, of course, students, relationships are nurtured and managed to ensure that we're highly connected and balance the sometimes-conflicting demands of different customer groups with insight, expertise and sensitivity.

The successful candidate will enjoy the opportunity to participate in an endeavour which underpins the value of higher education for individuals, for the education sector, for society and for the wider economy. The successful candidate will also need to be excited, energised and un-phased by the opportunities and need for accelerated commercial growth and the digital capability required to expand UCAS' place in the market.

In the rest of this pack, you will find information about our work, our corporate strategy and the significant opportunities ahead. You'll also find specific details of our requirements and information about how to apply for this exciting role.

I look forward to receiving your application.

Trudy Norris-Grey
UCAS Board Chair



WITH UCAS YOU CAN DISCOVER YOUR FUTURE

ABOUT US

UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, is an independent charity, and the UK's shared admissions service for higher education. It has a turnover of around £55m.

Our services support young people making post secondary choices, as well as mature learners, by providing information, advice, and guidance to inspire, discover and facilitate educational progression to university, college or an apprenticeship. We manage almost three million applications, from around 700,000 people each year, for full-time undergraduate courses at over 380 universities and colleges across the UK.

We deliver a tailored experience to students based on who they are and their desired pathway, supporting them throughout their journey with high quality, engaging and personalised information, advice, and guidance, with ucas.com receiving over 135 million page views from around 22 million users in the last year.

UCAS' current strategy (2020-2025) '**Discover your Future**' sets an ambitious vision for UCAS as the go-to place for UK higher education, technical education, apprenticeships, and lifelong learning. This ambition includes connecting the world to UK higher education and training, by using UCAS as the gateway to study in the UK. 2023 has seen acceleration of this ambition, with UCAS announcing its transition to become the '**one stop shop**' of all post-secondary routes.

UCAS' influence and insight is far reaching. UCAS has been a leading voice on student progression issues, using its data and research capabilities to produce research and recommendations to improve the experience of students who are care leavers, identify as LGBTQ+, have a disability and those with mental health challenges. More recently, UCAS has led a debate on how to increase the number and range of higher education opportunities in light of the increasing 18-year-old population.

Through UCAS Media (UCAS' commercial subsidiary), we connect clients to our engaged audiences and offer data-led consultancy and insight services as well as marketing solutions, to the education and industry markets. With our highly engaged audience, we're in the perfect position to support our customers with what they need to identify, engage, and convert. All our profits are gift-aided back to UCAS, the charity (income currently in excess of £20m).

The charity also generates income through the application fees paid by individuals and a fee paid by universities and colleges for students placed.

UCAS' has a workforce of c.550fte with a strong emphasis on the culture being 'UCASUnited'. There is a resolute focus to managing the capacity and capability of the workforce whilst also creating an inclusive working environment that promotes wellbeing and enables colleagues to perform and flourish.



WITH UCAS YOU CAN CONNECT TO MORE POSSIBILITIES

OUR NEAR-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

With 50% of people under the age of 30 in the UK progressing to higher education and using UCAS services, few other brands could claim to have such deep insight into the population. It provides an unrivalled platform on which to grow UCAS' product and service offering.

Our projections show our core customer group, the UK 18-year-old population, progressing to higher education, will continue to grow through to 2030. However, there are other opportunities for growing UCAS' reach in service of its current and potential customers; through expanding into apprenticeships, lifelong learning, developing services for schools and advisers and addressing the needs of an increasingly mobile and global student population.

We have set the ambition to transform UCAS from a student 'apply' service, to a discovery platform that delights students, their advisers, education providers and one that employers use to recruit new talent; and that brands see as an indispensable part of their insight and marketing spend.

Capitalising on these opportunities has the potential to drive significant double-digit growth in commercial income, therefore allowing UCAS to inject and sustain investment in the business to achieve its ambitions in an increasingly competitive set of markets.

To ensure success in maximising these opportunities, UCAS must continue to drive rapid development, delivery and growth of new and improved products and services. Digital and data transformation is of particular importance: it will ensure the delivery of excellent, transparent, trusted and efficient services valued by all customers and stakeholders.



WITH UCAS YOU CAN FLOURISH, PERFORM, ACHIEVE AND BELONG

OUR CULTURE

In recent years UCAS has invested in its workforce, increasing its capacity and driving a culture of high performance to enable delivery of its ambitious plans. We developed a determinedly modern, dynamic and commercially astute work environment. UCAS has also recently invested in refurbishing the Cheltenham offices, investing in collaboration spaces and new technology to enable our shift to hybrid working. We embrace diversity in our Board, leadership team, and colleagues alike, and take a commitment to high performance, personal development, and personal wellbeing very seriously.

In our recent staff survey, 88% of UCAS colleagues would recommend us as a great place to work, with over 90% of UCAS colleagues saying they are proud to work for UCAS. Managers genuinely care about their teams' wellbeing (87%) and 90% of colleagues believe our approach to flexibility helps them to do their job in a way that best suits them and the organisation.

Although we promote flexibility in our ways of working, UCAS places great emphasis on the quality and robustness of its environmental, social and corporate governance framework, as befits an organisation that delivers a public service.

We are shaped by our values – be ambitious, be smart, be inclusive, and be trusted.



WITH UCAS YOU CAN CONNECT THE WORLD TO UK HIGHER EDUCATION

OUR GOVERNANCE

UCAS is governed by a **Board of Trustees**, made up of a balance of senior leaders from higher education backgrounds, as well as independent trustees and an independent chair.

Our Board is supported by four Committees and the UCAS Council. The Committees - **Audit, Finance, Nominations, and Remuneration** - comprise a majority of Trustees and also Co-opted Committee members, who have also been selected and appointed based on their specific skills, experience, and expertise. The **UCAS Council** represents UCAS' customers and other key stakeholders, and advises the Board of Trustees.

UCAS Media Ltd is governed by its own board which comprises of Trustees of the UCAS Board, Executive Directors and non-Executive Directors based on their specific skills and expertise.

UCAS is led by the **Chief Executive** and the rest of the **Executive Team**, but with a shared ownership with the **Senior Management Group** to lead UCAS, formulating its future direction and business strategy to optimise the value created for customers and stakeholders and through innovation and growth secure a sustainable future.



WITH UCAS YOU CAN SHARE OUR SENSE OF PURPOSE

THE ROLE

The Chief Executive is responsible for the overall success and growth of UCAS.

The key accountabilities are as follows:

- Provide, strategic, and operational leadership to the organisation, and with support of the UCAS Board, develop and implement an aspirational vision and set of objectives that drives accelerated growth.
- Ensure that healthy, appropriate, and productive relationships are developed, sustained and further enhanced with all key stakeholders - including with HE/FE Providers, HE/FE organisations, employers and Governments.
- Develop information, products, and services that delight and inspire key customers, particularly students, universities, colleges, and employers, as well as schools, advisors and agents, leading to UCAS expanding its place in the market and maintaining a competitive advantage.
- Drive the future development of the business and with support from the Board, make crucial investment decisions to promote ambitious growth and enhanced value, through new product development and market penetration.
- Secure operational delivery of the core admissions and related services ensuring a leading-edge approach to continuous improvement and reform that adds future value to UCAS customers.
- Ensure that UCAS' technology and operations are aligned to and architected for, its strategic aspirations for change, facilitating a sustainable, trustworthy, reliable and dynamic digital capability and platform.
- Secure and utilise UCAS' data assets for the development of products and services that thrill UCAS customers, and leverage insight and research that drives thought leadership.
- Significantly expand the opportunity of UCAS Media, particularly within the industry sector, in a way that allows for investment in the future of UCAS services which support UCAS' charitable aims.
- Further enhance UCAS' public reputation, profile and brand both nationally and internationally.
- Steer and enhance the organisation's commitment and capability to delivering public benefit.
- Champion UCAS' values and strategic purpose, and ensure that our people are motivated, fulfilled, and productive in a work environment that inspires excellence, embraces diversity, and drives high performance.
- Ensure that the Governance of UCAS is fit for purpose and that the Board and individual Trustees can fulfil their responsibilities.



WITH UCAS YOU CAN SHARE OUR SENSE OF PURPOSE

PERSON SPECIFICATION

UCAS is seeking to appoint an outstanding leader with a strong commercial acumen and a deep commitment to the value of education. The individual will be motivated by delivering outstanding products and services, and who can demonstrate:

- a track record of transformative leadership at Board level in a complex commercial organisation with high growth outcomes.
- a proven ability to set an aspirational vision, conveying a persuasive message of the future that inspires the organisation, its customers, and stakeholders.
- a strong track record of negotiating, influencing, and persuading others, both internally and externally, and translating this into results.
- an evidenced target driven high achiever with an entrepreneurial flair, commercial mindset, and proven ability to work and lead under pressure.
- demonstrable experience of working in a digital environment with a tested ability to use digital capability to maximise service delivery and innovation.
- substantial experience of using data, insight, and contextual understanding both organisationally and nationally to maximise opportunity and growth.
- significant experience in influencing and articulating complex concepts, putting forward compelling arguments and rationales to external stakeholders and public bodies.
- visible evidence of extensive networks that can be positively exploited for the benefit of UCAS (for both commercial growth and stakeholder and customer engagement).
- a leadership style that capitalises on the value of a diverse workforce, with an ability to drive engagement, collaboration, and accountability throughout the organisation.
- an approach that exudes passion and an unshakeable commitment to meeting the needs of an ever-expanding customer base.
- press and media skills gained in a national context in order to further unlock opportunities and impact for the organisation.
- the ability to contribute to and work within a strong governance framework, and with demonstrable respect for governance structures and their purpose.



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HOW TO APPLY

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to UCAS on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through their website at: www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **FBJQA**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter, outlining why you wish to apply to UCAS, and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on Monday 31st July 2023.

Please note final interviews are likely to be held in mid September 2023.

The appointment will be made subject to satisfactory references and other appropriate due diligence including a declaration of any relevant interests you hold.

*The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR PERSONAL DATA NOTICE

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.