



University of  
Reading

Appointment of  
**Agrifood Futures Director**



Saxton Bampfylde

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# Foreword from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

We are excited to be recruiting an Agrifood Futures Director, who will play a pivotal role driving forward the delivery of our new ambitious strategy for agriculture and food research.

Agrifood Futures builds on the University of Reading's long-standing reputation for world-leading research in agriculture and food. It sets out the opportunities through which our research will make a major contribution to addressing the challenges facing the global food system of 2050.

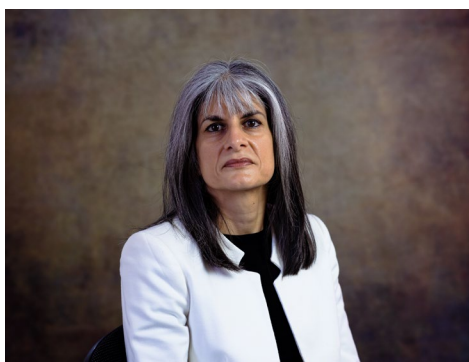
At a time when financial constraints are re-shaping the higher education landscape, the University of Reading stands apart. Thanks to anticipated growth in the ring-fenced assets of a Trust for food and agricultural research, we are in the exceptional position to make significant forward-looking investments in our people, infrastructure and capability. We are seizing this opportunity to reinforce our position as a global leader in food and agricultural research, while also addressing critical gaps in agrifood research capacity at both national and international levels.

Recruiting an outstanding leadership team to drive our Agrifood Futures strategy has unlocked a step-change in implementation. The appointment of a team of internationally recognised Directors to lead the three Priority Research Areas at the heart of the strategy and the cross-cutting Systems and Futures Hub is well advanced. The Directors work in partnership with a team of dedicated professional services experts who bring the skills and capability to drive implementation.

The next key step is to appoint an Agrifood Futures Director to provide integrated, transdisciplinary leadership across the breadth of Agrifood Futures, driving a step-change in research and innovation through a distinctive whole-systems approach.

The Director will raise the University's global profile in agrifood research, acting as a prominent external voice and building influential partnerships across academia, industry and government. We are seeking an exceptional leader with extensive experience in the agrifood sector, who may come from academic, commercial, policy or other relevant backgrounds. They will combine strategic vision with the credibility and influence required to lead a major research and innovation programme of national and international significance.

This is a defining moment to join the University of Reading in our centenary year. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to shape the future of agrifood research, helping to create a world in which every person has access to a healthy, sustainable diet.



**Professor Parveen Yaqoob OBE**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research  
and Innovation)

# The University of Reading

## Pioneers of people and sustainability

The University of Reading has been at the forefront of UK higher education for a century. Home to innovation, the University pushes academic boundaries and leads social change, both locally and internationally.

Our four guiding principles form the foundation of our strategy:

- a genuine love of learning
- creating new knowledge
- embracing and celebrating diversity of people and ideas
- and caring for our environment.

Steeped in history, the University of Reading is among the top 30 UK universities in the world\* and is home to over 27,000 students from over 160 countries. Our award-winning green campuses are at the heart of our university community, providing world-class facilities alongside a sustainably-conscious backdrop of nature. In 2025, our

Whiteknights campus received its 15th Green Flag Award in a row, and we are considered one of Britain's top green spaces.

Our support for sustainable global development has been recognised by the Times Higher Education in their [Impact Rankings 2025](#), with the University ranked in the top 50 universities worldwide and 6th in the UK.

We continue to be one of the most popular higher education choices in the UK. Our programmes range from the pure and applied sciences to languages, humanities, social sciences, business and arts. New research and the latest thinking continually feed into our teaching, with our academic staff working at the forefront of their fields of expertise.

\*The University of Reading is ranked joint 27th in the UK, according to the [Times Higher Education \(THE\) World University Rankings 2026](#), (9 October 2025).





**In the top 200 world institutions.<sup>1</sup>**



**University of the Year for Scholarships and Bursaries 2026.<sup>2</sup>**



**Top 50 in the world for action to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>3</sup>**



**Ranked 4th in the UK for environmental and ethical performance.<sup>4</sup>**



**27,330 students from around 150 countries.<sup>5</sup>**



**93% of graduates are in work or further study within 15 months of the end of their course.<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> The University of Reading was ranked =194th out of 1,503 institutions in the QS World University Rankings 2026

<sup>2</sup> The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026

<sup>3</sup> Ranked =50th, from 2,318 participating institutions, in the Times Higher Education Global Impact Rankings 2025

<sup>4</sup> People and Planet University League Table 2025/26

<sup>5</sup> HESA 2024/25 Student Record and Aggregate Offshore Record, figures rounded to the nearest five

<sup>6</sup> Graduate Outcomes Survey 2021/22





# Agrifood Futures

**Agrifood Futures is a new, ambitious research strategy. It will be a major driver of change in the way we produce, consume and think about food as we move towards 2050. It builds on the University of Reading's reputation for research excellence in agriculture and food and our work with global partners.**

Already ranked in the QS global top 20, and 1st in the UK, for Agriculture and Forestry, Reading is building from a position of established excellence. The Agrifood Futures initiative takes this further, aligning with government and global priorities around food system resilience, sustainability, climate impact and human health. The Strategy comprises three interconnected Priority Research Areas, each shaped to deliver long-term, challenge-led programmes of research and innovation:

1. A resilient food system for everyone
2. Farming systems that work with nature and our climate
3. Food that nourishes people and the planet

At the heart of the strategy is a commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration, global partnership and systems transformation.

New nationally significant infrastructure is planned, including a state-of-the-art innovation farm, advanced food processing facilities, and a participatory research platform focused on nutrition and consumer behaviour. We have

already invested in the Systems and Futures Hub, which brings together and strengthens our distinctive capability for research using systems methods and futures approaches. These investments are designed not only to support world-class research but to act as magnets for further external partnership and co-funding.

Recruiting a world-class leadership team has represented a significant step change in the implementation of Agrifood Futures. Recruitment of the Agrifood Futures Team is well advanced, with many posts now in place. The Team includes international experts to direct each of the Priority Research Areas and the Systems and Futures Hub, alongside professional services specialists who will drive implementation.

The next stage in implementation is to recruit the Agrifood Futures Director to provide strategic leadership across the breadth of Agrifood Futures, lead the growing Agrifood Futures team, and build on Reading's national and global leadership in agrifood research. We are seeking an outstanding leader with a global reputation who can bring strategic clarity, experience with large-scale investment, influence and an inclusive leadership style.

More information about Agrifood Futures can be found here:

<https://research.reading.ac.uk/agrifood-futures/>

# Agrifood Futures

## A resilient food system for everyone

Creating an adaptable food system that meets our needs in the face of shocks and stresses.

## Farming systems that work with nature and our climate

Leading innovation in responsible food production while protecting and enriching our natural resources.

**AGRIFOOD  
FUTURES**

## Food that nourishes people and the planet

Transforming our global food system to deliver desirable, healthy and sustainable food for everyone.

# The role – Agrifood Futures Director

## **Purpose**

To provide visionary and strategic leadership for Agrifood Futures, driving the University of Reading's ambition to be a global leader in future-focused, systems-led agrifood research and innovation.

Accountable to the University Executive Board, the postholder will provide integrated transdisciplinary leadership across the three Priority Research Areas, enabling a step-change in research and innovation and embedding a distinctive and whole system approach to agrifood research.

The role will hold overall accountability for the successful delivery of major research infrastructure investments, providing leadership to and line managing the Professorial Directors who are responsible for their implementation.

The postholder will play a pivotal role in elevating the University's external profile and reputation, positioning it as a global leader in agrifood research and innovation. Acting as a prominent external voice and convener for the wider agrifood

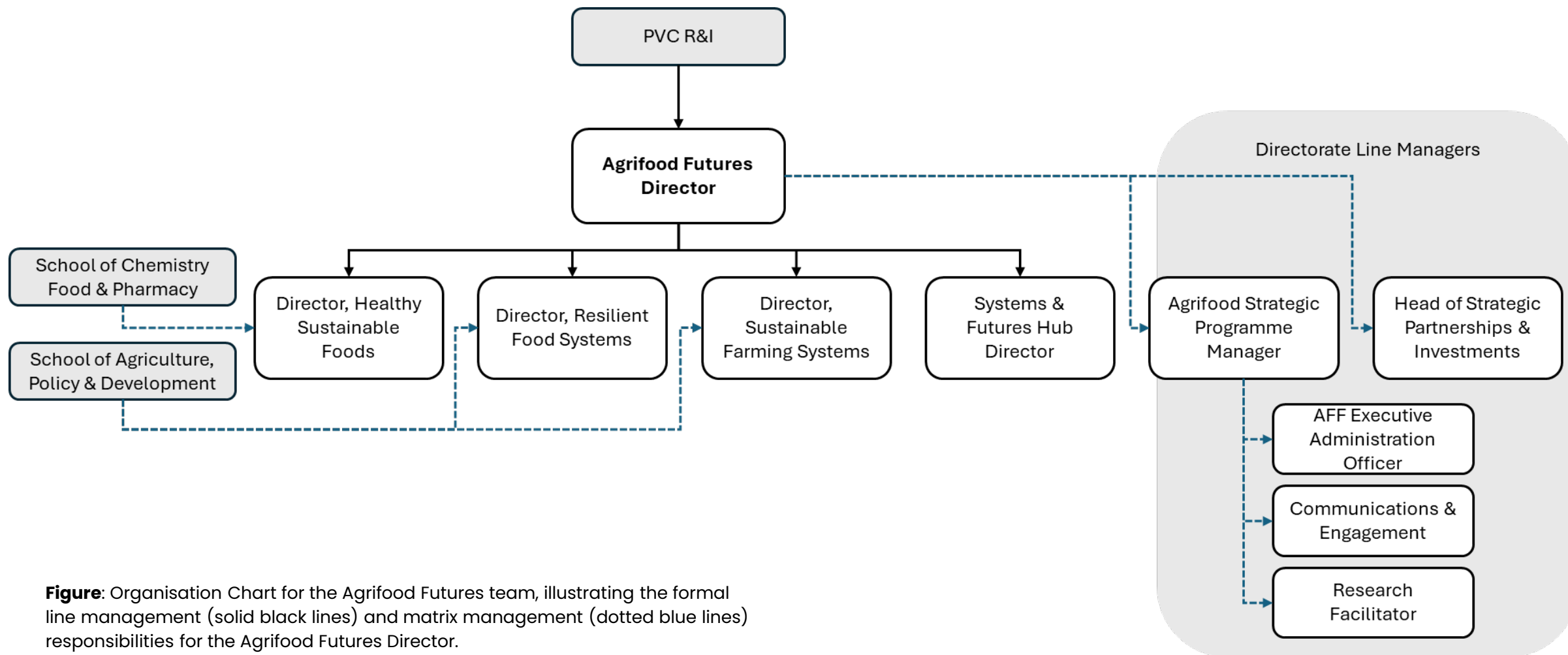
sector, they will build and lead influential partnerships across academia, industry and government. Through their leadership, the postholder will foster a collaborative and inclusive research environment.

We are keen to seek applications from candidates from a range of career backgrounds, academic, commercial, policy or other relevant agrifood organisations. In the case of a Professorial appointment, the postholder would be expected to maintain an internationally outstanding personal research profile.

## **Team Structure**

This post will lead the Agrifood Futures team that includes 3 Professorial Directors for each of the Priority Research Areas, the Systems and Futures Hub Director, the Agrifood Strategic Programme Manager, Head of Strategic Partnerships and Investments, an Executive Administration Officer, and two posts that are yet to be appointed (research facilitation, and communications and engagement post).





## **Director duties and responsibilities:**

### ***Strategic leadership***

- Provide strategic leadership across Agrifood Futures at the University of Reading, with responsibility for shaping, delivering and evolving the Agrifood Futures Strategy.
- Provide overall strategic leadership for the Agrifood Futures team, setting direction and driving alignment across all Priority Research Areas and enabling investments. Work in close partnership with the team of Directors to ensure synergy, clarity and complementarity across the Priority Research Area and Hub activities. Build and lead a high-performing, cohesive team that positions Agrifood Futures to deliver outcomes beyond the sum of its parts by harnessing opportunities at the intersections of the Priority Research Areas and the University's wider Research Themes, drawing on diverse disciplinary expertise.
- Provide strategic oversight for development and successful delivery of major investments in infrastructure for agrifood research at Reading. Leverage own networks to convene and shape high-impact partner consortia, ensuring investments meet future sector needs and are positioned as distinctive, in demand components of national and international agrifood research capability.

### ***External positioning, profile and partnerships***

- Provide visible, high-level leadership across the agrifood sector by driving impactful engagement with influential research, government, and industry stakeholders. Champion Reading's position at the forefront of national and international agrifood research and innovation, strengthening our reputation, extending our influence, and forging strategic partnerships in the UK and globally.

- Serve as the principal ambassador and authoritative voice for Agrifood Futures and the University of Reading, shaping and championing our position across international and national research, policy, and agrifood communities.
- Champion the translation of world-leading research into economic and societal impact by driving commercialisation, knowledge exchange and large-scale collaborative R&D with industry partners.

### ***Research culture***

- Provide visionary leadership in cultivating an ambitious, inclusive, forward-looking research environment that empowers the next generation of agrifood research leaders. Champion a culture of research excellence, collaboration and innovation to equip emerging researchers to address complex challenges across food systems, sustainability, climate resilience and food security, and to deliver transformative impact at scale.
- Play a strategic leadership role in enhancing the University's REF performance across relevant Units of Assessment (particularly UoA6), shaping the Environment section and working closely with the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation (APVC R&I) and UoA leads to maximise submission quality, mitigate risks and strengthen outputs, impact and the development of a vibrant interdisciplinary research environment through capacity building, mentoring and research development.
- Provide strategic leadership in embedding research excellence and innovation into the student experience, ensuring our graduates are equipped to lead as future agrifood system professionals. Collaborate with key stakeholders to maximise student engagement with cutting-edge research facilities, external collaboration, and professional enriching opportunities such as placements and on-campus roles.



### **Accountability**

- Accountable to the University Executive Board for the successful implementation, delivery and long-term sustainability of Agrifood Futures, driving performance against agreed KPIs.
- Accountable to the University Executive Board and Council for securing a portfolio of major co-funding for large scale infrastructure investments. Oversee a programme of partnerships and bids to achieve a minimum target of 50% matched funding and ensure value for money for the NIRD Trust and the University.
- Accountable to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation for driving and delivering the Agrifood Futures' contribution to delivering the Institutional Research and Innovation Strategy, demonstrating impact against institutional R&I KPIs.
- Line management responsibility for the Priority Research Area Professorial Directors and Systems & Futures Hub Director, ensuring alignment, performance and delivery across all Priority Research Areas, and setting clear priorities across the portfolio.
- Responsibility for the effective financial management and oversight of resource decisions for Agrifood Futures, ensuring that resources are deployed in a cost-effective manner to achieve the objectives of Agrifood Futures and the University. Ensure compliance with governance requirements.
- Liaise with Heads of Schools and Departments, APVCs R&I, and Research Division Leaders to align strategic plans and priorities.

### **Professorial duties and responsibilities (if appropriate):**

- Lead a world-class programme of agrifood-related research, maintaining an internationally outstanding profile through high impact research outputs, significant research income and meaningful contribution to global challenges, while shaping the strategic direction of the field.
- Provide intellectual leadership and mentorship to research staff and PhD students, fostering a thriving, inclusive and innovative research culture.
- Drive research impact through active engagement with external stakeholders, including industry, government and international partners, ensuring influence and visibility.
- Forge and lead strategic collaborations across disciplines, Schools, and global networks to enhance the University's research capability and reputation.

### **Supervision received**

This post will be line managed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation.

If a Professorial appointment, the postholder will be an academic member of the most appropriate academic School (determined by the appointee's research profile).

### **Supervision given**

The postholder will have direct line management responsibility for the Director, Resilient Food Systems; Director, Sustainable Farming Systems; Director, Healthy Sustainable Foods and Director, Systems and Futures Hub. They will also lead the wider Agrifood Futures Professional Services team via the matrix team management structure outlined above, with the Agrifood Futures Strategic Programme Manager and the Head of Strategic Partnerships and Investments accountable to the Agrifood Futures Director.

### **Contact**

The postholder will work closely with the Professorial Directors and the wider Agrifood Futures team to drive the delivery of the Agrifood Futures Programme.

They will also work closely with academic and Professional Services colleagues in relevant Schools/ Departments and Professional Services Directorates.

They will be expected to have extensive senior level external engagement via a network of external professional contacts for the purposes of understanding and sharing best practice and external intelligence gathering. It is expected that this network will be extended over the course of the appointment. This should include senior representatives of funding agencies, industry, government bodies, NGOs and charitable organisations.



# Person specification

## Skills and personal qualities:

- Strategic and intellectually agile leader, with the ability to rapidly assimilate complex information, distil key insights and identify strategic, high-impact opportunities.
- Ability to shape and deliver strategic solutions to complex challenges through innovation, foresight and collaborative influence.
- Exceptional relationship builder, skilled at engaging diverse stakeholders across sectors and disciplines. Proven ability to quickly assess strategic priorities and mobilise partnerships that deliver tangible outcomes at institutional, national or international levels.
- Able to convey complex ideas with clarity and authority across a range of audiences. Confident and effective in influencing with senior stakeholders through written, oral and interpersonal communication at the highest level.
- Proven senior leadership presence, with the ability to lead through influence.
- Skilled in negotiating and navigating complex environments, demonstrating sound judgement, political acumen, and emotional intelligence to drive high-level decisions and institutional change.
- Confident change leader with a strong track record of driving transformation in complex academic and research environments. Able to challenge the status quo constructively and inspire others around a shared vision.
- Ability to travel nationally and internationally as required which may require flexibility in relation to days and times of work to facilitate this.



# Person specification

## Knowledge and experience:

- Post-doctoral degree or equivalent.
- If a Professorial applicant: Internationally distinguished research profile in agrifood, with a proven track record of world-leading contributions, academic impact and/or policy influence in the agrifood sector.
- Sustained record of securing, leading and managing significant external research funding, including leadership of complex large-scale multi-partner grants from national and international funders.
- Authoritative knowledge of global food systems and the complex real-world challenges that influence and shape them.
- Strong understanding of the external research, innovation and policy landscapes relevant to agrifood, including their intersections with environmental sustainability, economic development and social equity.
- In-depth knowledge of the strategic priorities of UKRI, government departments, international funders and philanthropic organisations, with demonstrated ability to align research vision with emerging funding opportunities and to lead successful external income generation.
- Proven track record of strategic research leadership, demonstrated through successful development of interdisciplinary research cultures and cultivation of high-impact external partnerships across academia, industry, government and third sectors.
- Extensive experience in leading and delivering large, complex trans/interdisciplinary research programmes involving multiple institutions and stakeholder groups.
- Demonstrated ability to set and execute strategic direction in a senior leadership role, making high-level decisions, managing risk and being accountable for delivering transformative research outcomes.
- Established track record of impactful engagement with policy makers, industry leaders and other end-users of research, resulting in demonstrable influence on policy, practice or innovation.
- Proven track record of shaping the strategic design of research infrastructure through engagement with external stakeholders.
- A strong track record of building and sustaining diverse, high-performing research teams and collaborative partnerships, working effectively across disciplines, sectors and cultural contexts.
- Experience of national and international horizon scanning, identifying emerging trends, funding opportunities, and strategic risks to inform long-term planning and competitive positioning.
- A leadership and/or management qualification is desirable.



# Terms of appointment

Fixed term post for 6 years in the first instance with the potential opportunity for extension, based on organisational need and postholder's ability to meet the role requirements.

This is a full-time role, with up to 0.2 FTE personal research time available for professorial appointees, where appropriate.

This document outlines the duties required for the time being of the post to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list and the line manager may vary duties from time to time which do not change the general character of the job or the level of responsibility entailed.

- **Location:** Reading
- **Salary:** Competitive
- **Pension:** USS (the Universities Superannuation Scheme) with employer contribution of 14.5%
- **Annual leave:** 26 days per year plus public holidays and additional days (normally 6 in total) when the University is closed around Easter and Christmas.

For further benefits details, please visit:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/human-resources/working-life/employee-benefits>

Information on relocation assistance can be found here:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment/relocation-assistance>

## **Due diligence**

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.



# How to apply

**Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the University of Reading on this appointment.**

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at [roles.saxbam.com](https://roles.saxbam.com) using code **IBVXA1**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring\* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Friday 29 May 2026**.

\* 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.



# University of Reading

Saxton Bampfyld