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YORK  
ST JOHN  
UNIVERSITY

# Appointment of Chair of Governors

March 2026  
Project code: VBYLA

Saxton Bampfylde

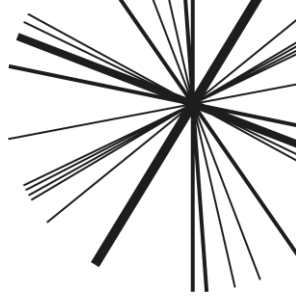
THE TIMES  
THE SUNDAY TIMES

GOOD  
UNIVERSITY  
GUIDE  
2025

UNIVERSITY  
OF THE YEAR  
FOR SOCIAL  
INCLUSION

# Introduction from the outgoing Chair of the Board of Governors

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Hello, welcome, and thank you for your interest in becoming Chair of the Board of Governors at York St John University.

Across this institution's 184 years of history and impact, there has rarely been such a significant time to be joining us. Amidst so much change and turbulence in the Higher Education sector and society generally, universities need Governors with the experience, wisdom and foresight to guide, shape and support them, helping to navigate new challenges and realise their full potential. By applying for this role, you are stepping up to the opportunity to help thousands of people change their lives through education and contributing positively to the wellbeing, prosperity and progress of our city and region.

I was delighted to take on the role of Chair of the Board of Governors in August 2020 because I share the University's values and sense of purpose in striving for social justice and ensuring that more people of all ages and backgrounds have access to higher education. The University faces a multitude of choices about its future strategic direction, its priorities, and its positioning in a

competitive and complex Higher Education market.

As Chair of Governors, you will help to lead the Board, and the sub-committees that support it, monitor and support that strategy. You will help the University to adapt to an evolving regulatory framework and an emerging policy agenda that blur conventional boundaries of institutional autonomy. You will provide the critical-friend challenge to underpin robust financial reporting, monitoring, and management.

In my time as Chair, I have been inspired by how much the University has achieved, and by the talent and commitment of its community. York St John has all the potential to achieve incredible things in the coming years. You could play an important role in making that possible.

Dame Julia Unwin  
Outgoing Chair of the Board of Governors



# Our history

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York St John University has a long and rich history of serving the needs of society. Founded in 1841 as a teacher training college by the York Diocese, its commitment to widening access to education has endured for nearly two centuries. In its early years, the college remained rooted in its region, addressing a pressing need for schoolteachers across York, and, later, Ripon, where a second training college was established in 1862. An early advocate of the education of women, York St John founded a Diocesan institution for female teachers in 1846, embedding a commitment to inclusion that continues to shape the University's identity today.

As the needs of its communities continued to evolve, so too did York St John. During the 1960s and 70s the institution broadened its academic portfolio, fostering a diverse and dynamic learning environment for students across the region and beyond.

The turn of the 21st century brought about a defining moment for York St John. It consolidated its colleges, following the closure of its Ripon site, positioning itself for future growth in the heart of York. The institution's impressive development and ambition was recognised in 2006 as it gained taught degree awarding powers, becoming York St John University. This was followed by the attainment of research awarding powers in 2015.

The University's geographic footprint has grown to match its academic ambitions. A London campus opened in 2018, relocating in 2022 to the Export Building at East India Dock. Today, the university recruits talented students from across the globe to both award-winning campuses, with international recruitment forming a vital and growing part of its community.



Now a thriving institution of over 13,000 learners, York St John delivers provision across the full academic spectrum — undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research and degree apprenticeships — with a curriculum shaped by the demands of the modern workforce and a continued commitment to meeting regional and national skills needs.

That scale has been achieved alongside delivering quality for its students: the University holds a TEF Gold rating for student experience, a Silver rating overall, and an 83.5% positivity score in the National Student Survey. In 2025, The Times and The Sunday Times named York St John University of the Year for Social Inclusion, recognition that speaks directly to its founding values.

Today, York St John is an institution where learning, research and knowledge exchange are closely connected. Strong partnerships with employers foster opportunities for students to engage with real-world challenges, while the knowledge and expertise within the University is shared more widely for public benefit.

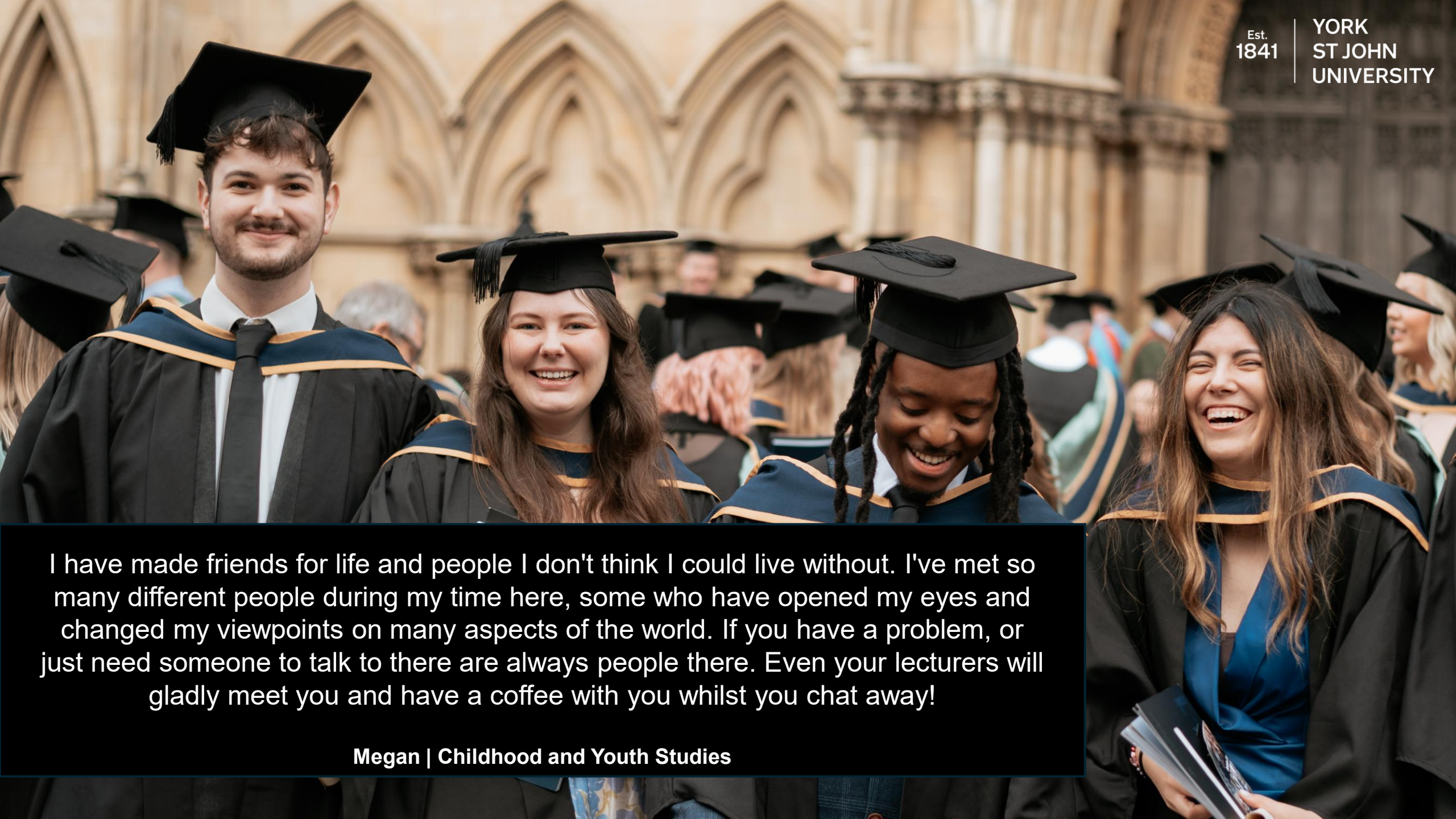
Its founding commitment to social justice continues to shape and inform a developing research culture with three research Institutes focused on addressing the needs of society; the Institute for Social Impact, Institute for Health and Care Improvement and Institute for

Cultural Innovation. With world-leading research in every academic school, the University is strengthening its reputation for impactful and collaborative research.

Anchored in the historic city of York, the university remains deeply connected to its home region. Accredited to the Good Business Charter, it works alongside individuals, charities, schools and community groups across North Yorkshire, and its staff and students are active participants in initiatives that remove barriers to participation in education. Its London campus is based in the Export Building at East India Dock, ideally placed for access to east London's rich and diverse amenities. Close to Canary Wharf, the campus is an integral part of London's creative, technology and business ecosystem.

From a teacher training college to a global university with campuses in two of England's great cities, York St John continues to grow — and to do so on its own terms.

The University is a company limited by guarantee (Company Number: 4498683) and an exempt charity (regulated by the Office for Students). Governors are consequently Directors and also Charitable Trustees.



I have made friends for life and people I don't think I could live without. I've met so many different people during my time here, some who have opened my eyes and changed my viewpoints on many aspects of the world. If you have a problem, or just need someone to talk to there are always people there. Even your lecturers will gladly meet you and have a coffee with you whilst you chat away!

**Megan | Childhood and Youth Studies**

# Our Strategy

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York St John University launched its most recent strategy in 2024, setting out our future direction as the University for Social Impact. Through our aims and indicator of success, we articulate who we are and what we do as an institution, reflecting our long history of creating positive change.

Our vision is simple. Through our excellent education and research, we will be a catalyst for change that creates a fair future. That change is happening right now, driven by our talented community of students and staff who are creating positive social impact through their work.

From our Law Clinic, offering free legal advice and assistance to those in need, to the work of our Institute for Social Justice and Institute for Health and Care Improvement, we aim to remain at the forefront of meeting the most pressing needs of our society.



# Our Strategy

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## Our Strategic Aims

York St John will:

- \* Celebrate our locations in York and London whilst being global in outlook.
- \* Enrich our research and the experience of students, staff and communities through transformational partnerships.
- \* Be a truly inclusive and equitable organisation.
- \* Collaborate with confident, authentic, resilient, enterprising and professional students and staff.
- \* Offer a future-focused, high-quality academic portfolio with distinctive learning and teaching.
- \* Provide all students with a personalised learning journey underpinned with technology.
- \* Produce conscientious graduates who fulfil future skills requirements both domestically and internationally.
- \* Be a sector leader in environmental sustainability with a whole-university approach.
- \* Innovate through impactful research and knowledge exchange.
- \* Demonstrate local, national and international social impact.



# Leadership & Governance



The Chancellor of the University is BBC presenter, journalist and campaigner Reeta Chakrabarti.

The Board of Governors is led by the Chair and has collective strategic responsibility for oversight of the University's activities. Governors are the stewards of the vision and purpose of the University, and constructively hold the University to account for its decisions. This includes statutory responsibilities to oversee various elements of the University's work, including as directors of the institution.

The Board has 17 members, bringing together appointed people from different backgrounds, including the public and private sectors, the Church, education, and the voluntary and community sector. It also has representatives drawn from the University's staff, and its student body.

The University's Vice Chancellor & Chief Executive is Professor Karen Bryan OBE. Professor Bryan is the principal academic and administrative officer of the University. She reports to the Board of Governors and is accountable to them for the University's overall progress, public impact and financial sustainability.

To support this role and the operational management of the institution, Professor Bryan chairs the University's Executive Board, which consists of the University Secretary & Registrar, Chief Operating Officer, Pro Vice Chancellor: Education, and Pro Vice Chancellor: Research & International.

The senior team at York St John works closely with leading representative bodies in Higher Education, such as Universities UK, to help shape and inform the voice of the Higher Education sector in policy, political and wider developments.

As a proudly civic university, our leaders also play an active, strategic role in many of the partnerships that steer the direction of York and the wider region. This helps to ensure that the University's decision-making is guided by a broader understanding of the context in which we are operating.



# Chair of the Board of Governors

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## Role description

### Key objectives:

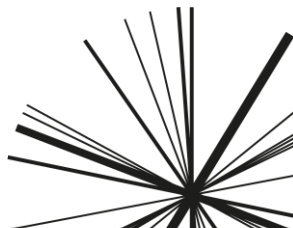
- \* Provide exceptional leadership of the Board of Governors in accordance with our Leading YSJ Framework, ensuring the Board can deliver its remit effectively, appropriately and in accordance with best practice.
- \* Support the Vice Chancellor in facilitating and maintaining an institutional culture that demonstrates accountability, leadership, integrity, trust, inclusion, collaboration and wellbeing.
- \* Chair meetings of the Board of Governors effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision-making process, and facilitating constructive challenge to promote high quality discussion, analysis and decision-making.

### Principal responsibilities

#### *Strategic leadership*

- \* The Chair will provide steady leadership during periods of organisational transition, ensuring the Board remains focused on long-term objectives despite external volatility. They will be adept at facilitating high-level debate and mediating complex viewpoints to

- ensure a unified strategic direction
- \* Establish a Board culture that demonstrates accountability, leadership, integrity, trust, inclusion, collaboration and wellbeing.
- \* Ensure the Board of Governors provides clear and effective strategic direction to the Vice Chancellor and Executive Board to achieve agreed objectives, providing support and challenge where appropriate and monitoring the implementation of agreed decisions.
- \* Ensure the Board of Governors has oversight of the risk management system to ensure it can review major risks and how they are managed and mitigated.
- \* Ensure the Board of Governors fulfils its duties to ensure the sound financial health of the University, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability.
- \* Ensure the Board of Governors dedicates sufficient time to horizon scanning and to consideration of future opportunities.
- \* Take responsibility for addressing concerns, conflicts or disagreements robustly and ethically, whilst providing supportive and constructive feedback to enable development and growth.
- \* Make room for constructive and respectful challenge where there are differences in lawful views.
- \* Model active listening and two-way communication.



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## ***Governance***

- \* Ensure the University operates within its charitable objectives in a manner appropriate for the proper conduct of public business, and that members fulfil their duties and responsibilities as trustees and directors.
- \* Ensure the governance arrangements are working in the most effective way for the University and in line with best practice.
- \* Ensure Board membership is regularly refreshed and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience needed to govern and lead the University effectively.
- \* Encourage all Board members to contribute and engage effectively, to utilise their skills and expertise as relevant and to take decisions in the best, long-term interests of the University.
- \* Appraise the performance of Board of Governors members and specifically the Committee Chairs on an annual basis.
- \* Develop the knowledge and capability of the Board of Governors as appropriate.
- \* Work within any agreed policies adopted by the University.

## ***External relations***

- \* Act as an ambassador and spokesperson for the University where appropriate.
- \* Maintain close relationships with key stakeholders and influencers whilst ensuring appropriate management of any conflicts of interest.

- \* Represent the University at external functions, meetings and events where appropriate.

## ***Relationship with the Vice Chancellor and the wider Executive Board***

- \* Establish and build a strong, effective and constructive working relationship with the Vice Chancellor and the Executive Board, ensuring they are held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives and to ensure the Chair maintains an overview of the University's affairs.
- \* Ensure regular contact with the Vice Chancellor and develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship within which each can speak openly about concerns, worries and challenges.
- \* Ensure regular contact with the University Secretary and ensure open communication on matters of relevance to the Board.
- \* Ensure that the Vice Chancellor has the opportunity for professional development and has appropriate external professional support.
- \* Conduct an annual appraisal and remuneration review for the Vice Chancellor in consultation with other members of the Remuneration Committee.

## ***Additional information***

- \* The above list is indicative only and not exhaustive and the Chair will be expected to perform all such additional duties as are reasonably commensurate with the role.
- \* The Deputy Chair acts for the Chair when the Chair is not available and undertakes assignments at the request of the Chair

# Person Specification

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The Chair should demonstrate all or most of the following:

## ***Experience***

- \* Experience as a Non-Executive including time spent as a Board Chair or Committee Chair with significant experience of chairing meetings and events.
- \* Experience of thinking and acting strategically.
- \* Experience of successfully leading within a large, complex organisation through complex periods of change and ambiguity.
- \* Highly developed interpersonal skills with the ability to manage diverse opinions and navigate sensitive stakeholder landscapes. Experience of external representation and managing stakeholders.
- \* Successful track record of career achievement.

## ***Knowledge and skills***

- \* Understanding of the dynamics of large, complex organisations.
- \* Understanding of good corporate governance.
- \* Highly developed interpersonal skills with the ability to manage diverse opinions and navigate sensitive stakeholder landscapes.
- \* Understanding of financial management and business strategy.
- \* Significant negotiation and communication skills.



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### ***Personal qualities***

- \* A visible passion and commitment to the University, its strategic objectives, mission and values.
- \* Exceptional leadership qualities.
- \* The personal gravitas required to lead a significant local, regional, national and international organisation.
- \* The inter-personal and relationship building abilities required in a Chair role.
- \* Tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively.
- \* Effective networking capabilities.
- \* The ability to foster and promote a collaborative team environment.
- \* Values and understands the University's church foundation.
- \* The commitment to set aside the time required to conduct the role well, including attendance at agreed events.





# Terms of Appointment

## **Time commitment**

The time commitment for this role is envisaged to be around 3-4 days per month. This will include attendance at:

- Three Board meetings (Chair)
- Three Finance and Capital Development meetings (member)
- Two Remuneration Committee meetings (member)
- Three People Committee meetings (member)
- Three Governance and Nominations Committee meetings (Chair)
- Two Foundation Committee meetings (member)
- Two development days
- University graduation ceremonies (in November and March) and have regular meetings with the Vice Chancellor and the University Secretary.

As well as ad hoc interaction with the University including authorising and signing contracts in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and representing the University at various events and meetings with key stakeholders.

## **Remuneration**

£20,000 per annum

## **Term**

Initial three year term. Members are eligible for re-appointment for two additional terms of three years, to a maximum of nine years.



# How to apply

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**Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to York St John University on this appointment.**

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

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 **Monday 27 April 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.

## **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.

# 93%

positivity score

York St John University students responded with a 93% positivity score for how good teaching staff are at explaining things

(National Student Survey 2025)

# 10<sup>th</sup>

For overall satisfaction

York St John was rated 10<sup>th</sup>, out of 102 institutions, for overall satisfaction (Postgraduate Teaching Experience Survey 2025)

# Gold

TEF Gold award for Student Experience

Silver overall Teaching Excellence Framework rating

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