



Brief for the position of
**CHIEF PEOPLE
OFFICER**



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A WARM WELCOME



WELCOME MESSAGE

from the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Julie Sanders

Dear candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief People Officer (CPO) at Royal Holloway at what is a dynamic and exciting time for our amazing University.

As Vice-Chancellor and Principal, I am proud to be responsible for a team of dedicated colleagues, working together across academic and Professional Services teams, and an astonishing global community of students, past, present and future.

We are striving to be a University of Social Purpose, dedicated to making a positive impact in everything we do across local, national and global contexts, working ‘together for what matters’.

It is my privilege to be in a community where colleagues and students are involved in such a phenomenal range of innovative activities – from creative educational opportunities to discovery-led endeavours in our performance spaces, sound studios and research laboratories. Across our beautiful leafy campus in Surrey and our central London spaces – where we are making exciting changes to our portfolio of programmes and building our partnership work as a member of the globally-recognised University of London federation – we know there is so much opportunity.

I’m so excited to invite applications for this newly scoped role. This is a strategic leadership opportunity which reflects our deep understanding that our people are right at the heart of who we are – and who we seek to be in the future.



We are looking for someone who will bring ambition, a global outlook and genuine care to our People and Culture work; someone who takes pride and passion in unlocking potential and finding innovative, future-facing solutions to the challenges we face; and who will embrace, champion and extend the impact of our four, co-created Values on all we do. We are looking for someone who can enable strategic transformation in partnership with leaders from across the University by developing their team and through their own direct contributions.

We are hugely ambitious for the future of Royal Holloway and for all that our brilliant people are capable of. I really hope that you will want to join us and shape this journey, and I look forward to speaking with you about the opportunity.

Julie

Professor Julie Sanders
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

OUR HISTORY

Today's Royal Holloway is formed from two colleges, founded by two social pioneers, Elizabeth Jesser Reid and Thomas Holloway. They were among the first places in Britain where women could access higher education. We have gone from strength to strength and are now proud to offer inclusive education and research to over 12,000 students across our two sites in Surrey and central London.



Elizabeth Jesser Reid



Thomas Holloway



Jane Holloway

Original colleges founded by social pioneers, Elizabeth Jesser Reid and Thomas and Jane Holloway.

• **1800s**

• **1886**

• Royal Holloway's iconic Founder's Building was opened by Queen Victoria, allowing the use of 'Royal' in our title.

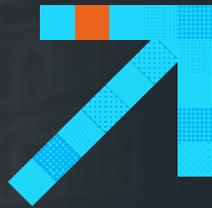


Queen Victoria



• **1900**

We joined the University of London.



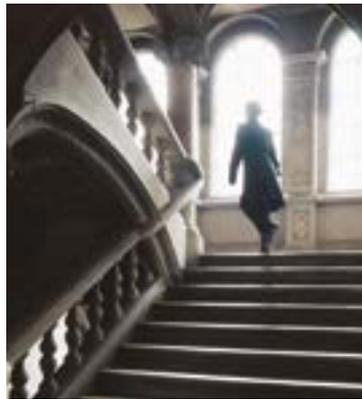
History shows that we have been brave from the very beginning. Royal Holloway and Bedford Colleges established an environment that was enabling for those who dared to step beyond what society laid out for them.



Professor Julie Sanders,
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Both colleges became fully co-educational.

1965

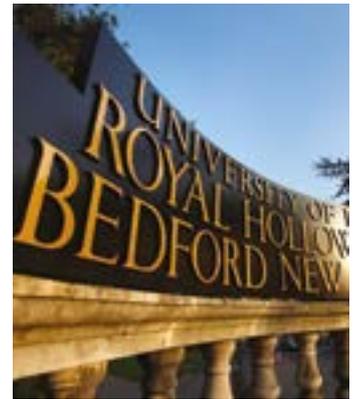


1985

Bedford College and Royal Holloway merged.

Emily Wilding Davison building in Egham is opened by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, Chancellor of the University of London.

2017



2024

We celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of Bedford College.

ROYAL HOLLOWAY IN NUMBERS

Royal Holloway, University of London, is in the top 35 of all UK universities*. We were founded in the 19th century to provide equity in opportunity, to transform lives through education and create positive change – doing this with bravery, curiosity and care. We have the courage and conviction to think differently, providing a platform to challenge conventions.

With combined and integrated strengths in innovative education and transformative research, we have a passion to create, teach and share knowledge in both established and emerging areas. Through our impactful research, we seek creative solutions to complex challenges to make a real difference in the world. We are a place for growth. We aim to empower individuals and transform lives through inclusive education, an active, and close-knit community, and partnerships that link us with local and global industry and culture.

We are a University of Social Purpose, creating positive change, for what matters – for our students, for society and for the world.



TOP 25%

of all UK research in Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021



15TH IN THE UK

for the overall quality of our research outputs - Times Higher Education's (THE) analysis and rankings of the REF 2021 results (May 2022)



32ND

The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026



41ST

(UK), top 500 (world) - Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2025



41ST IN THE UK

in the category of 'International Outlook', Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2026 recognising our broader outlook as a global university



12,356

Students*

2,232

International students

10,696

Undergraduate students

1,128

Postgraduate taught students

532

Postgraduate research students



79%

of recent graduates in graduate level employment or study**



OVER 110,000

alumni of Bedford College, Royal Holloway College and Royal Holloway, University of London and Bedford New College worldwide



2

CAMPUSES

Surrey and Central London



CONTRIBUTES £657.1M

to the UK economy***

* Correct as of February 2025.

** The Guardian University Guide, 2026.

*** Biggar Economics, 2019/2020.

RH2030s: OUR UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

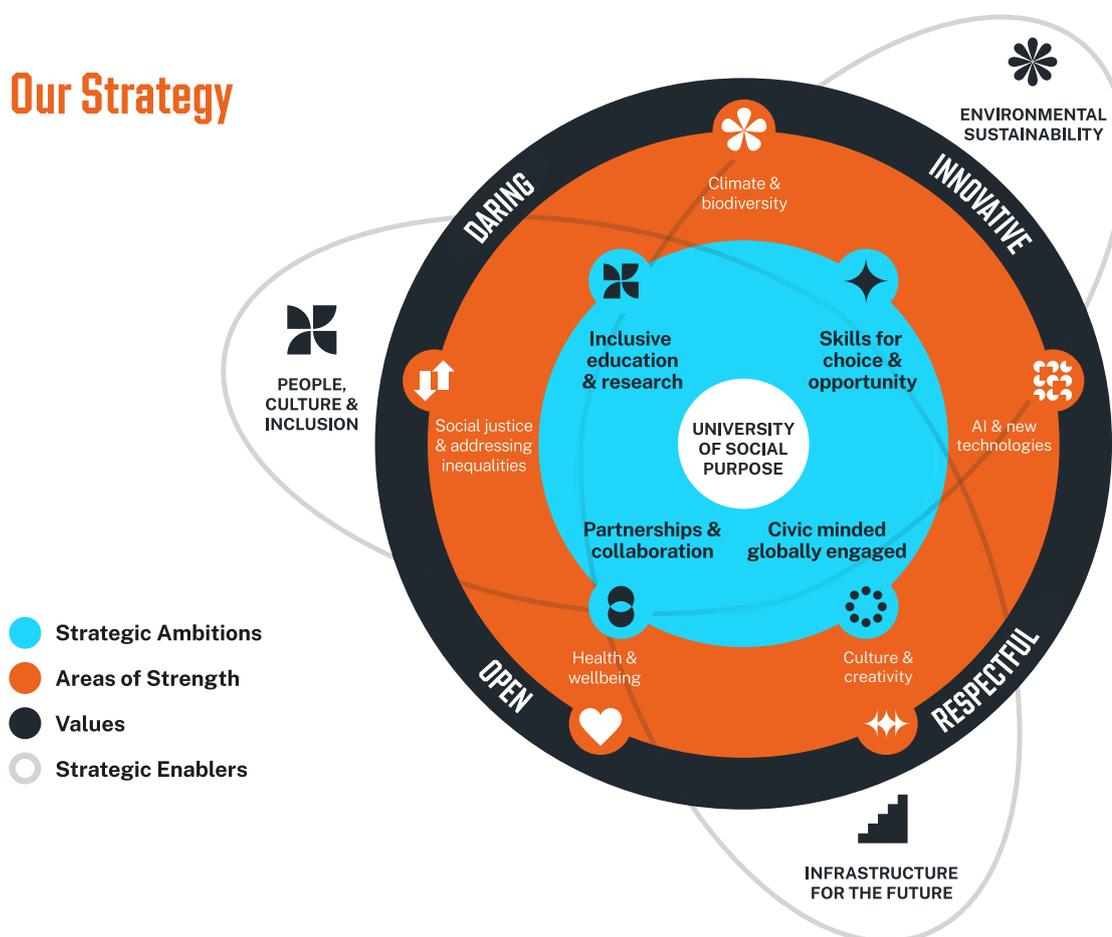
RH2030s outlines our ambitions reaching into the next decade and how we will respond to global needs and challenges, building on the incredible platform of outstanding research, education, and civic and global engagement that is already taking place at Royal Holloway and in the context of an ever-changing world.

Royal Holloway has a proud history of being at the forefront of social change, equality, and inclusion. Our RH2030s strategy aims to carry this ethos

forward with energy and ambition, helping us take advantage of emerging opportunities to make an ever-greater positive impact on the individuals and the communities we serve.

Our vision is to be a forward-thinking University of Social Purpose: one that is committed to enabling outstanding educational and student experience; research and innovation; and local and global engagement with partners to drive social change for a better, more inclusive future.

Our Strategy



Our Values

We are a values-led organisation, with a clear sense of who we are and what we stand for. Our values guide us in being a University of Social Purpose in all we do.

Respectful: An inclusive community built on kindness, trust and understanding.

Innovative: Relentlessly curious and ambitious.

Daring: Challenging ourselves and others to make a positive difference in the world.

Open: Working collaboratively with integrity, honesty, and transparency.

Our Strategic Ambitions



Inclusive Education and Research

We will be a research-intensive University that fosters ambition and innovation. We will provide our students and colleagues with exceptional opportunities to grow and lead, tackling global challenges through inclusive education and socially impactful research, and developing inclusive leaders for the future.



Skills for Choice and Opportunity

We will provide tailored learning experiences that combine research and practical knowledge, fostering a supportive community where students and colleagues develop skills, confidence, and values to shape their futures and positively impact the world.



Civic Minded, Globally Engaged

We will celebrate and build on our global community by connecting with our international alumni, and global and local partners across industry and other sectors. Our University will contribute to economic and societal wellbeing through world-leading research and by supporting and enabling our global student community.



Partnerships and Collaboration

We will develop future-facing, inclusive partnerships that enhance our social purpose. We will utilise our global reach and our status as a University of London federation member to tackle societal challenges and improve the quality, scale, and relevance of opportunities for all those we work with.

Our Strategic Enablers

Our strategic enablers are the three core inputs that will contribute to the successful delivery of the RH2030s strategy. They will be embedded throughout our strategic ambitions and everyday activities.



Infrastructure for the Future

We will provide adaptable, high-quality learning and research spaces, both physical and virtual, fostering a sustainable and inclusive environment. We will enable seamless, user-centred digital experiences and an environmentally sustainable infrastructure to support net zero targets and remove outdated spaces and technology.



Environmental Sustainability

We will be one of London's most sustainable universities, embedding environmental sustainability in all aspects of our operations and empowering our community through research, education, and partnerships to mitigate climate and biodiversity crises, and reduce our environmental footprint. We will empower our students, colleagues, and partners to be environmental game-changers, drawing on our creative strengths and leveraging the decarbonisation of our estate.



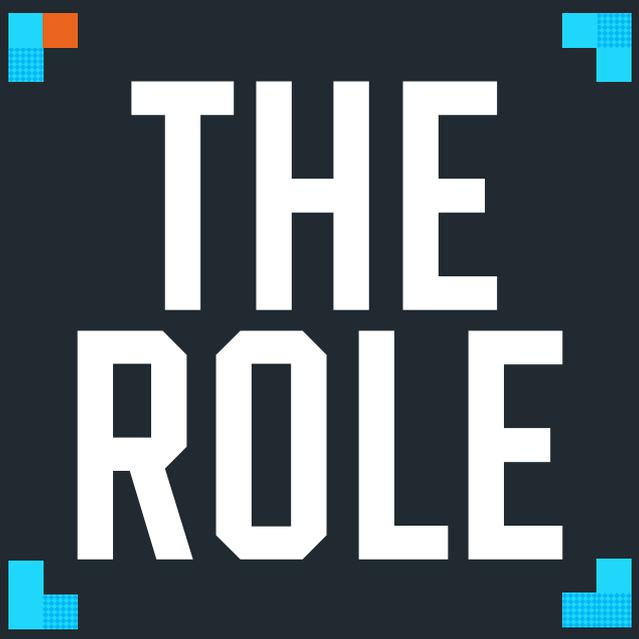
People, Culture, and Inclusion

We will foster a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive community where everyone feels empowered and valued. We will inspire everyone to reach their potential and have a positive impact on both local and global communities.

Our Areas of Strength

As a University of Social Purpose, we have identified five areas of interdisciplinary strength which thread through our work, from the skills that our graduates will be able to demonstrate to the world to the challenge-led research and impact we undertake with partners, locally and globally.





THE ROLE

Main purpose

At a pivotal moment in Royal Holloway's evolution, the Chief People Officer will play a transformative role in shaping the University's future. As a senior leader reporting to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, this Executive Board role is central to delivering the RH2030s strategy — a bold vision for a university of social purpose, local and global engagement, and inclusive excellence.

The Chief People Officer will lead the newly formed People, Culture and Transformation (PCT) division, driving a step-change in how the University attracts, develops, and supports its people. This is not simply a leadership role in HR — it is a strategic position that will influence every part of the University's operations, culture, and long-term success.

Strategic Impact

The postholder will be responsible for designing and delivering a strategic plan for People, Culture and Inclusion that aligns with the RH2030s strategy and reflects the University's values: Respectful, Innovative, Daring, and Open. They will lead cultural transformation, modernise relevant governance and employment practices, and embed inclusive, values-led approaches across the institution.

Working in partnership with academic and professional service leaders, the Chief People Officer will ensure that Royal Holloway is a place where people thrive — where leadership is inclusive, performance is recognised and rewarded, and wellbeing is prioritised. They will champion equity, diversity, and belonging, ensuring these principles are embedded in every aspect of the employee experience.

Transformation and Delivery

The role is framed by a clear timeline for success, aligned to the University strategy. The previous HR function is in the process of being reorganised to provide a foundation for the Chief People Officer to build upon. In their first two years, they will oversee the completion and refinement of the new structure evolving into a People, Culture and Transformation division, embed transformation into business-as-usual, and lead the revision of People statutes and policies. By Year 3, the PCT division will be a high-performing, digitally enabled service, leading best practice and delivering measurable impact against RH2030s Strategic and Key Performance Indicators.



MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership

- Provide visionary leadership for the People, Culture and Transformation (PCT) division, ensuring its strategic alignment with the RH2030s institutional strategy and values.
- Build on the foundational work of the interim HR Director to refine and embed a forward-looking People Strategic Action Plan that supports the University's ambitions for academic excellence, social purpose, and local and global engagement.
- Act as a trusted advisor to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Executive Board, and Council, offering expert insight on People-related matters and contributing to the University's strategic direction.
- Lead the development of a values-led institutional culture that fosters inclusion, innovation, and collaboration across all colleague communities.
- Champion the University's values — Respectful, Innovative, Daring, and Open — ensuring they are embedded in leadership behaviours, People policies, and institutional practices.

Institutional Change and Transformation

- As part of a hub and spoke model, lead a dedicated people-focused change team to support and enable institutional transformation across academic and professional services.
- Work in close partnership with senior leaders to design and deliver people-focused change programmes that enhance organisational effectiveness, agility, and resilience.
- Build institutional capability for change by developing frameworks, tools, and training that support leaders and managers to lead change confidently and inclusively.
- Ensure that relevant change and improvement initiatives are aligned with RH2030s priorities and are underpinned by robust governance, stakeholder engagement, and impact evaluation.
- Act as a visible and influential leader of change, modelling the behaviours and mindset required to embed a culture of continuous improvement.



Operational Excellence

- Through line management of their deputy, oversee the delivery of high-quality, efficient, and customer-focused People services across the full employee lifecycle, including recruitment, onboarding, employee relations, reward, wellbeing, and compliance.
- Ensure that all service lines are underpinned by clear service standards, measurable KPIs, and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Lead the digital transformation of HR systems and processes, enabling data-driven decision-making, automation of routine tasks, and improved user experience.
- Ensure compliance with employment law, regulatory requirements, and sector standards, maintaining the University's reputation as a fair and responsible employer.

People and Culture Development

- Embed inclusive and equitable practices across all People policies, processes, and programmes, ensuring that diversity and belonging are central to the University's culture.
- Lead the development and implementation of talent acquisition and retention, succession planning, and leadership development strategies that build institutional capacity and future readiness.
- Oversee the design and delivery of performance management, recognition, and reward frameworks that support high performance, collaboration, and colleague engagement.
- Ensure that colleague wellbeing is prioritised through proactive policies, support services, and a culture that promotes psychological safety and work-life balance.

Stakeholder Engagement and Influence

- Provide institutional leadership for industrial relations; build and maintain constructive relationships with recognised trade unions, staff networks, and employee representatives, fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and shared purpose.
- Represent Royal Holloway in national and sector-wide forums (e.g. Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and Universities Human Resources (UHR), contributing to policy development and bringing back insights to inform institutional practice.
- Actively engage with external partners, including the University of London federation and other Higher Education providers, to explore opportunities for collaboration, shared services, and innovation in People practice.
- Work closely with senior colleagues to ensure alignment between People-facing policies, institutional planning, and resource allocation.

Performance and Impact

- Deliver against the Vice-Chancellor and Principal's timeline for PCT success, including:
 - Full implementation of the People, Culture and Transformation division.
 - Embedding transformation into business-as-usual.
 - People and related statutes and policy reform.
 - Development of a strong business partnering model.
 - AI-enabled systems and data-driven decision-making.
 - Embedded succession planning and leadership development.
 - Constructive industrial relations and refreshed governance frameworks.
- Monitor and report on progress against Strategic Performance Indicators and division level KPIs, using People analytics to inform decision-making, evaluate impact, and drive continuous improvement.
- Ensure that the PCT division is recognised as a centre of excellence, delivering high-impact, cost-effective services that support the University's long-term success.

Values-Led Leadership and Executive Responsibilities

- To represent and embed values-led working and to champion Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion informed approaches across all areas of responsibility.
- Manage senior postholders as delegated by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.
- Contribute to the overall leadership of Royal Holloway, particularly through membership of the Executive Board and other committees.
- Any other duties as required by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

The above list of duties may be adjusted in the light of the expertise of the appointed candidate.

Other Duties

As a campus-based university, we believe campuses should be thriving environments for students and colleagues alike. Everyone has a part to play in active campus life. To this end, as a senior leadership team we are committed to a minimum 4-day a week presence on our campuses. Whilst most meetings and activity you may be involved with will be situated at Egham, there will be regular attendance required at the central London campus too.

As the needs of Royal Holloway change so the above job profile, duties, and location of the role within the University will be adjusted accordingly. The role is part of the University emergency response roster on a rotational basis.

Internal and external relationships

The following list is not exhaustive, but the post holder will be required to liaise with:

Your key contacts will be the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, the Executive Board, and the wider Senior Leadership Team, Faculty Deans and their leadership teams, Directors of Professional Services, sabbatical officers and the Students' Union, as well as the University's recognised trade unions.

In enabling the delivery of institutional change and transformation, you will be expected to work closely with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Strategy, Planning and Resources who chairs the Transformation Committee, and the Director of Strategic Planning who co-ordinates project management across the University.

It will be important to maintain an effective internal and external network, as well as interaction with equivalent role-holders at other Higher Education institutions.

THE PERSON

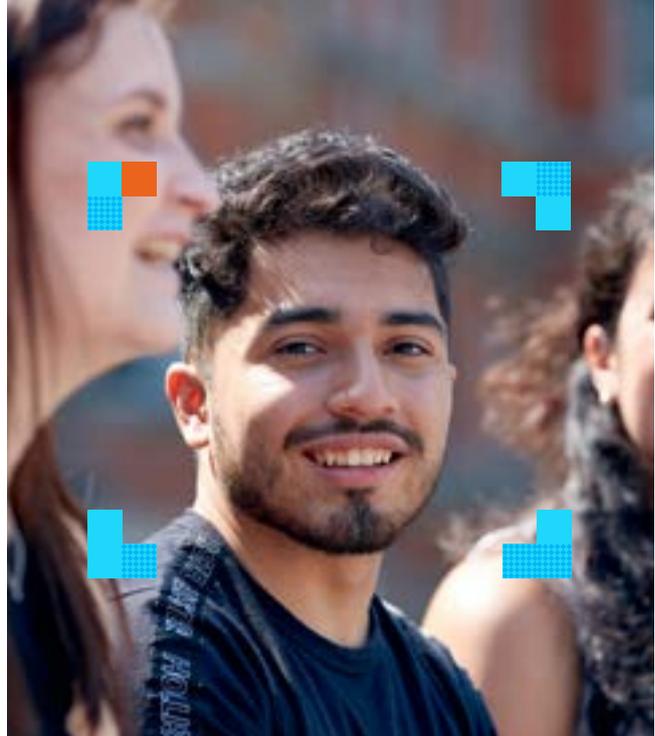
We are seeking a strategic and values-driven leader who can champion Royal Holloway's core principles while driving people transformation across the University. You will show unwavering commitment to creating and sustaining a working environment with equality, diversity, and inclusion at its heart; and have a deep understanding of how to embed these values into organisational culture and practice. Your leadership will reflect dedication to people and community, unlocking potential and enabling change. You will share our sense of social purpose, commitment to sustainability, and ambition to enhance the University's reputation locally and globally. Above all, you will combine resilience with the ability to lead complex people change and inspire innovation.

Knowledge, Education, Qualifications and Training

- Degree-level education or equivalent professional experience.
- Chartered Fellow or Member of CIPD (or equivalent) and evidence of ongoing CPD.
- In-depth understanding of UK higher education issues and policies.
- Excellent knowledge of UK employment law, Human Resources and Organisational Design best practice, including industrial relations legislation and practice.
- Expert knowledge of the Higher Education sector, or similar complex, policy-driven environments, to ensure understanding of the imperatives, drivers and barriers for change.

Experience

- Significant senior leadership experience in HR or People and Culture facing work within a large, complex organisation preferably within Higher Education or equivalent.
- Proven track record of leading organisational change and transformation with clear evidence of success and ability to learn from failure.
- Experience of developing and delivering inclusive people strategies and modern HR services.
- Strong background in employee relations, governance, and compliance.



- Experience of operating effectively in unionised environments.
- Experience of being a 'customer' of HR Services through senior responsibility for other functional areas.

Skills and attributes

- Strategic foresight and ability to align people strategy with institutional goals.
- Strong digital and data literacy, with experience in HR systems and analytics.
- Commercial acumen and sound financial management skills.
- Collaborative and consultative approach to stakeholder engagement.

Values-led leadership and interpersonal skills

- High emotional intelligence, resilience, and authenticity.
- Inclusive leadership style with a commitment to equity and belonging.
- Ability to lead and inspire high-performing teams.
- Outstanding interpersonal, influencing, communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to engage effectively with diverse stakeholders and build networks internally and externally.
- Commitment to transparent and inclusive decision-making.

HOW TO APPLY

We have engaged the services of Odgers, to whom applications should be sent at your earliest convenience but no later than **Friday 9 January 2026**.

In order to apply, please submit a comprehensive CV along with a covering letter setting out your interest in the role and details of how you match the required criteria. Please include in a separate document, the names and addresses of three referees. Referees will not be approached until the final stages and not without prior permission from candidates.

In line with GDPR, Odgers ask that you do NOT send any information that can identify children/family members or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious, or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and/or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data in your CV/application documentation will be understood by Odgers as your express consent to process this information.

The preferred method of application is online at www.odgers.com/94112.

If you are unable to apply online, please email your application to 94112@odgers.com. All applications will receive an automated response. All candidates are also requested to complete an online Diversity Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process.

This will assist us in monitoring selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. Any information collated from the forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

Timeline

- Closing date for applications is 9 January 2026.
- Preliminary interviews with Odgers will take place **w/c 2 and w/c 9 February**.
- Virtual informal conversations with Royal Holloway will take place on **Thursday 5 March**.
- Stakeholder meetings at the University in Egham will take place on **Wednesday 11 March**.
- Final panel interviews at the University in Egham will take place on **Thursday 12 March**.

For a detailed conversation about this opportunity, please contact:

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