

Job Description

Title	Details
Job title	Director of the Centre for Environmental Futures
Job Type	Fixed term for 6 years
Grade	Grade 7
Accountable to	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

Purpose

We are seeking an exceptional and ambitious founding Director to provide strategic leadership for the Centre for Environmental Futures as the University's flagship vehicle for advancing environmental sustainability research. Working across disciplines, Schools and institutes, the Director will convene and enable collaborative research that builds on Reading's existing strengths, increases research intensity and impact, attracts major external funding and partnerships, and strengthens the University's global reputation for environmental sustainability research and innovation. The role is centred on delivering the University's strategic ambitions through collective research leadership, creating the conditions for researchers to work together on ambitious challenge-led programmes, rather than developing a separate vision, strategy or individual research agenda.

Team/ Governance Structure

The Director will lead the Centre for Environmental Futures team, through a matrix management structure, where key individuals will work closely with and be accountable to the Director to support the delivery of the Centre's Strategic Plans. The Team will include a Specialist Research Project Manager, a Policy Lead, a Communications and Engagement officer, and have business support. In addition, we expect to appoint an Advisory Group* to support the Director in developing and delivering a strategic plan for the Centre. The Director will be expected to engage with a wide spectrum of academic colleagues across all Schools and research areas to deliver agreed outcomes for the Centre.

**The Advisory Group will be made up of internal and external members, the exact composition to be determined by the Director; they will support strategic thinking and horizon scanning.*

Main duties and responsibilities

Strategic leadership

- Shape and drive the strategic direction of environmental sustainability research at the University of Reading, working in partnership with senior research leaders, including

Associate PVCs, Research Development Leads and Heads of School, to develop and deliver an ambitious, institution-wide research vision.

- Lead the Centre for Environmental Futures, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation that harnesses expertise across the University to accelerate research excellence, growth in funding income, and long-term global reputation.
- Secure and enable major research opportunities by building strategic partnerships, engaging influential stakeholders, and catalysing high-value, interdisciplinary funding initiatives. Use established networks to convene key collaborators and influence future research and funding priorities.
- Champion the University's environmental sustainability research on the global stage, enhancing its profile, influence and impact while shaping national and international research agendas and policy discussion.

External positioning, profile and partnerships

- Provide proactive, high-level leadership by driving impactful engagement with influential research, government, and industry stakeholders. Strengthen Reading's position at the forefront of national and international environmental sustainability research and innovation, strengthening our reputation, extending our influence, and forging strategic partnerships in the UK and globally.
- Lead the community of strong external voices and amplify their impact across a breadth of expertise and in line with our whole-system approach; shaping and championing our position across international and national research, policy, and environmental sustainability communities.
- Champion the translation of world-leading research into economic and societal impact by driving knowledge exchange, policy engagement and 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 researchers across all disciplines to develop the skills and expertise required to transform Reading's capability in environmental sustainability.
- Work with research leaders to champion a culture of research excellence, collaboration and innovation to equip emerging researchers to address complex challenges and to deliver transformative impact at scale.
- Play a strategic leadership role in enhancing the University's REF performance across relevant Units of Assessment, shaping the Environment sections and working closely with the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellors for Research and Innovation (APVCs R&I) and UoA leads to maximise submission quality.

Accountability

- Accountable to the Research and Innovation Committee and the University Executive Board for the successful implementation and delivery of the University of Reading Centre for Environmental Futures, driving performance against agreed KPIs and building a sustainable model for the future of the research centre.
- Accountable to the University Executive Board and Council for securing a portfolio of major funding for large scale research bids and investments and ensuring a return on investment.
- Accountable to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation for driving and delivering the research centre's contribution to delivering the Institutional Research and Innovation Strategy, demonstrating impact against institutional R&I KPIs.

- Responsibility for the effective financial management and oversight of resource decisions for the University of Reading Centre for Environmental Futures, ensuring that resources are deployed in a cost effective manner to achieve the objectives of the centre and the University. Ensure compliance with governance requirements
- Work with Heads of Schools and Departments, APVCs R&I, Research Division Leaders, other research leads, and appropriate Professional Service Leads to align strategic plans and priorities.

Professorial duties and responsibilities (if appropriate):

Where appropriate, there is an option for this role to include a 0.2fte allocation for academic research. This would be agreed on an individual basis.

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 Director will not have any direct line management responsibilities. They will lead the wider University of Reading Centre for Environmental Futures Professional Services team via the matrix team management structure outlined above, with the Policy Lead and the Specialist Research Project Manager accountable to the Director.

Contact

The postholder will 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.

Terms and conditions

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 the possibility of an allowance of up to 0.2 FTE academic research or external roles, if 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.

Person Specification

Job Title	School/Department
Director of the Centre for Environmental Futures	

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Skills and Attainment	• 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 senior stakeholders through written, oral and interpersonal	• Leadership and/ or management qualification.

	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. • Post-doctoral degree or equivalent. • If a Professorial applicant: Internationally distinguished research profile in environmental sustainability, with a proven track record of world-leading contributions, academic impact and/or policy influence in the environmental sustainability sector. • Experience of securing and/or administering and managing significant external research funding from national or international sources.	
Knowledge	• Strong understanding of the external research, innovation and policy landscapes relevant to environmental sustainability, including their intersections with 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.	
Relevant Experience	• 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. • Significant experience and/or deep understanding of the ecosystems required for securing and managing large-scale external research funding, including leadership of multi partner bids aligned with funder priorities. • 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	• Experience of developing, implementing or leading a research centre or similar organisation.

	opportunities, and strategic risks to inform long-term planning and competitive positioning.	
Other	• Ability to travel nationally and internationally as required which may require flexibility in relation to days and times of work to facilitate this.	•