







Head of Tax

Finance Division

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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Head of Tax

Salary:
The salary for this post is between £84,591 - £107,109 negotiable, commensurate with experience and subject to approval. Plus, excellent benefits and 41 days of annual leave.

Contract:
Permanent

Location:
Cambridge.

Department:
Unified Administrative Services.

Faculty / Department:
Finance Division.

Responsible to:
Heather Davis,
Head of Specialist Services and Group Treasury

Working Pattern:
This is a full-time position. Our approach to flexible working values both face-to-face engagement and personal freedom and reflects contemporary practices. You and your manager will be able to tailor an arrangement that best suits your preferences and our business needs.

Closing date for applications:
Thursday 10 December 2026

The Role

This role provides strategic leadership for tax policy, compliance, governance, and planning across the University Group, overseeing complex UK and international tax matters. It is responsible for developing and implementing tax strategy, managing tax risk, ensuring compliance with significant tax obligations, and supporting major activities including VAT, PAYE, international operations, and a capital programme exceeding £100m annually.

The postholder leads the Academic University's Tax Team and works collaboratively with tax colleagues across the wider University Group, including Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press, to optimise tax structures and maintain a consistent approach to tax management. The role also oversees relationships with HMRC and other tax authorities, manages external tax and legal advisers, and leads the resolution of tax disputes, regulatory issues, and litigation where required.

Role Purpose

To ensure the University Group meets its statutory obligations across UK and international direct and indirect taxes, including VAT, employment taxes, corporation tax, and other international tax requirements. The role is responsible for identifying and applying available tax reliefs and implementing appropriate measures to minimise tax risk and optimise tax efficiency across the Group.

The postholder is responsible for developing and implementing the overall tax strategy and associated policies for both the academic University and the wider University Group. This includes providing strategic leadership on tax matters, ensuring a consistent approach to tax governance, compliance, and risk management across the organisation.

A key aspect of the role is leading and developing the academic University's Tax Team while contributing to the broader professional tax capability of the University Group. The role also oversees the development of the wider tax function, including collaboration with and indirect management of tax colleagues within Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press.

The position manages the University's relationships with HMRC, overseas tax authorities, and other regulatory bodies, acting as the principal point of contact on tax matters. It also builds and maintains strong networks across the devolved University, influencing stakeholders to promote effective compliance and the proactive management of tax risks and opportunities.

In addition, the role provides strategic tax input into major University developments, including capital projects, commercial ventures, and other significant initiatives. By ensuring that tax and wider corporate finance considerations are identified and addressed at an early stage, the postholder helps optimise financial outcomes and support the University's long-term strategic objectives.



The Finance Division

The Finance Division promotes good practice in Accounting, Reporting, Planning, Procurement, Taxation, Insurance and Pensions and is also responsible for maintaining the integrity of the accounting records, facilitating financial transactions, establishing best practice and for producing both the statutory accounts and management information to assist in decision making at all levels of the institution.

Our staff promote the effective use of Cambridge's financial resources by providing professional advice across the University and Group entities when appropriate. We supply financial information to the Council and other bodies to enable them to make informed decisions.

We also ensure Cambridge's financial compliance with the Office for Students (OfS), UKRI, HMRC and other funding and regulatory bodies, in addition to preparing the University's annual statutory financial statements.

The Finance Division comprises 290 staff working across three main sites in Cambridge. Around 250 of these colleagues make up the central team, alongside an extended finance presence embedded within departments, forming an expansive and collaborative finance community across the University.



Main Duties and Responsibilities

Tax Strategy, Policy and Procedures

- Devising and proposing the overall tax strategy for the University for approval by the University's Finance Committee. Responsible for ensuring that the Tax Team, Finance Division and other parts of the UAS develop and promote policies and procedures which support the overall strategy.

Compliance and Mitigation

- Ensure that the University complies with tax legislation both in the UK and overseas. This includes:
  - Ensuring that the compliance obligation is understood and embedded across the University;
  - Proactively managing the relationship with HMRC representatives and negotiating with them and presenting facts in the best light to demonstrate compliance and achieve a row risk profile;
  - Developing and setting out policies and procedures which deliver compliance with tax rules whilst minimising the administrative burden for the University;
  - Managing any audit conducted in respect of tax;
  - Providing support and evidence to the Finance Director so that s/he is able to sign annual certificates to HMRC confirming compliance across the whole University group;
  - Reviewing current or proposed activity in the University against current or emerging case law and legislation;
  - Developing new ways to reduce tax liability;
  - Recommending to Finance Committee plans which will reduce the tax burden whilst remaining within the University's overall approach of non-aggressive compliance;
  - Commissioning advice from external advisers and tax lawyers as appropriate;
  - Working with other universities and with the colleges, disseminating good practice and common approaches.

Projects and Substantial Transactions

- Lead in managing substantial projects in the University across the whole range of taxes, devising innovative approaches where appropriate. This includes:
  - Ensuring that any VAT reliefs have been correctly applied to new building projects (with more than £20m at stake on some projects);
  - Devising tax strategies for major developments (such as the Old Press Site, North West Cambridge, commercial research);
  - Devising and implementing an appropriate tax strategy for establishments created overseas;
  - Leading projects to adapt University and Group procedures to accommodate substantial changes in tax legislation;
  - Managing the process of tax disputes, including negotiating with tax authorities, managing advisory input to proceedings, briefing lawyers and instructing counsel.

Leadership and Team Management

- Provide leadership to the Tax team, creating a high-performing, customer-focused service that promotes continuous improvement, operational effectiveness and the consistent application of good financial governance and compliance practices across the University.
- Lead and directly manage staff within the Tax function, undertaking performance and development reviews, supporting staff wellbeing, identifying development needs and fostering a culture of accountability, collaboration and professional growth.
- Develop and maintain workforce and succession plans to ensure the service has the capacity, capability and resilience required to meet current and future business needs.
- Recruit, develop and retain high-performing colleagues, establishing clear objectives, development opportunities and career pathways that support both individual growth and organisational priorities.
- Promote a culture of continuous learning and professional development, ensuring the team maintains up-to-date knowledge of legislative, regulatory and sector developments relevant to tax.

Collaboration

- Work in collaboration with equivalent roles in Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press to provide effective international tax management across the Group entities. To be first among equals in considering future arrangements with group entities.

Specialist Services Leadership Team & Extended Finance Division Management Team

- To sit on the Specialist Services Leadership Team and Finance Division Extended Management Team and actively participate in all aspects of driving the Specialist Services and general Finance functions of the University forward.



Person Specification

Essential Experience

- Substantial experience of dealing with the tax affairs of a large corporate body/charity, either gained within the business or within a professional firm.
- Experience of leading, managing, and developing a small team.

Essential Skills

- Strong ability to interpret and analyse complex legislation and translate its effect into a practical application and the ability to look at complex multi-faceted problems and come up with a reasoned solution.
- Effective communicator with good influencing skills
- Innovative and creative.
- Strong technical knowledge of VAT and other indirect taxes and experience of VAT in the education, charity and property sectors.
- Good understanding of UK Corporation Tax and a broad grounding in international tax principles and frameworks, including double tax treaties.
- Solid knowledge of PAYE and other employment tax issues, particularly IR35 and off payroll worker rules.

Qualifications

- Professional qualification: ACCA with CTA (Chartered Tax Advisor), ACCA with tax specialism, or CIOT (Chartered Institute of Taxation).
- Educated to degree level or equivalent.

Additional Requirements

- Ability to motivate, develop and inspire staff
- Excellent negotiation skills
- Resilience to challenge
- Good presentational and communication skills
- Thorough and methodical
- A credible “trusted advisor”





Introduction to the University

The University of Cambridge is consistently ranked as one of the best universities in the world, achieving academic excellence through its Schools, Faculties, Departments and other Institutions, together with the 31 Colleges.

The University is renowned for its record of discovery and innovation. It is one of the great institutions, with a regional, national and global reach, attracting the very best and brightest minds. Our staff and students shape the world around us for the better: we attract and partner with like-minded people.

Whether contributing to the development of new anti-cancer drugs, adding to the understanding of how black holes are formed, revolutionising the study of ancient settlements, convening academic expertise to offer solutions to the climate crisis, or analysing public attitudes towards democracy around the world, the University's research is remarkable in its breadth, quality and impact. The University also sits at the heart of Europe's largest technology cluster and has catalysed more than 1,500 high-tech companies. And yet what inspires our 24,000 students and 12,500 staff is not what has already been achieved, but what is possible in the future.

The education and experience of our students, based on a partnership between the University's academic Departments and Faculties and the 31 Colleges, is second to none. Every student is a member of one of the Colleges, each a community of students, academics and staff drawn from across the University's comprehensive range of subject areas.

The University is an academically-led democratic institution, its ultimate decision-making body being the Regent House, which comprises more than 7,000 members of academic and senior administrative staff. Each Department and Faculty is part of one of six academic Schools, but each of them, and each individual academic, has a great deal of autonomy. The Colleges are independent and self-governing, working in a symbiotic relationship with the University.

The University also has a number of Institutions that are independent of any Faculty or Department and are not part of the academic Schools.

These include the Professional and Continuing Education (which provides high-quality education to adults throughout their lives), the Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettle's Yard (a historic house and gallery that holds important collections of modern art) and the University Library. In addition to their diverse contributions to University and public life, these non-School Institutions are also important centres of teaching and research.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment provides academic publishing, examinations and learning materials worldwide, supporting dissemination of research, academic development at school and in higher education, and international student mobility. Legally, Press & Assessment is a department of the University. It provides very important funds that are invested in the academic work of the University.

The University has made truly remarkable contributions to the sum of human understanding, with breakthrough ideas and discoveries that have changed the way we understand ourselves, our planet and its place in the universe. Yet the global and national contexts in which the University operates are fast-changing and increasingly filled with uncertainty. In a world that is becoming - politically, economically, socially, and technologically – ever more interconnected but ever less equal, the University's mission – "to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence" - has never been more relevant.



General Information about the University

The Governance and Structure of the Collegiate University

At the head of the University's governance structure are the Regent House, the University Council and the General Board. The sovereign body of the University is the Regent House, which exercises deliberative, electoral and legislative powers. It has more than 7,000 members, including academic staff, heads and other members of the governing bodies of the Colleges, and senior research and administrative staff. It is the embodiment of the University as a self-governing community, a concept that is of considerable importance to understanding the culture and values of the collegiate University. The University Council is the principal executive and policy-making body of the University, and its members are the charity trustees. The General Board is responsible for the University's academic and educational activities and policies.

The Colleges

The Colleges are self-governing, separate legal entities that appoint their own staff (although many members of Colleges are Fellows appointed to University positions). Intercollegiate matters are conducted via various committees, among them the Colleges' Committee, the Bursars' Committee and the Senior Tutors' Committee. The Colleges are regulated by the Charity Commission.



The Collegiate University

The University and the Colleges are intertwined in a symbiotic relationship and are often referred to as the collegiate University.

The University awards degrees and conducts examinations and assessments. Its Faculties and Departments provide lectures and seminars for students, determine the syllabi for teaching and conduct research. Colleges admit undergraduate students, deliver supervisions (small-group teaching), and provide student accommodation and pastoral care.

Structure of the University

Schools, Faculties and Departments

The teaching and research activities of the University are conducted through six major groupings of institutions called Schools. Each School has considerable delegated powers for academic policy and financial budgeting.

The Schools are:

- Arts and Humanities
- Biological Sciences
- Clinical Medicine
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Technology

Non-School Institutions

The University Library (UL) is one of the world's oldest university libraries and home to one of the world's great collections of cultural treasures and research materials, including the archives of Newton and Darwin, and the Cairo Genizah (the world's largest and most important collection of medieval Jewish manuscripts). In addition to its physical collections numbering more than eight million items, the UL provides access to tens of millions of electronic articles, books, journals, music scores and other e-resources. It has a particular focus on growing its digital collections and increasing the range of its digital services.

Students are additionally supported in their studies with access to a wider range of Departmental and College libraries. The Botanic Garden and the University of Cambridge Museums have internationally significant collections of more than five million artworks, artefacts and specimens.

They represent the greatest concentration of 'designated' research, teaching and cultural collections, identified as internationally significant under a national scheme, within any single organisation in the UK.

The Botanic Garden and the eight University of Cambridge museums represent the UK's most significant concentration of internationally important collections outside London.

These include the Fitzwilliam Museum and Kettle's Yard (both of which are Non-School Institutions), and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the Scott Polar Research Institute, the Museum of Zoology and the Whipple Museum of the History of Science (each of which is embedded in one of the six academic Schools).

Professional services

Professional services are provided both centrally and within Schools, Faculties, Departments and within other institutions, notably 'Non-School Institutions', ensuring a balance of support across the University. As with our academic staff, we aim to attract the brightest and the best.

There are ambitious plans for our professional staff and the services they provide through the change and transformation programmes already underway across the academic University. These programmes will deliver more integrated and streamlined processes and systems, while at the same time providing a considerate working environment where there is a strong shared sense of community.



Teaching and Student Life

The collegiate University provides an outstanding education and student experience by focusing on each student as an individual, nurturing their talents and supporting them to take full advantage of the opportunities the collegiate University has to offer.

The cornerstone of the University's education is its degree programmes (undergraduate, master's and doctoral), which are provided in the distinctive environment of the collegiate University. Here, nearly 25,000 students receive intensive, personalised education and opportunities for research within a residential setting that offers extensive opportunities for cultural, social and sporting enrichment, as well as a superb system of pastoral support.

The heart of undergraduate teaching is the supervision system, organised and run by the Colleges. Supervisions require students to prepare thoroughly on individual topics for small-group study and discussion with their supervisors and fellow students on a regular basis.

Our students are academically excellent, but more than that, they are remarkable for their engagement, their motivation and their sense of purpose and responsibility. The student body is diverse, with more than 40% coming from overseas, more than 25% from a minority ethnic background, and over 25% of UK undergraduates from the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Postgraduate education is also of exceptional quality, with more than 300 postgraduate courses on offer, including taught and research opportunities across a broad range of disciplines. We are currently expanding the range of these courses to respond to the new challenges and opportunities that our graduates will face, whatever their chosen career path. We are launching new multi-disciplinary courses combining science and the humanities as well as developing new pathways to a research career.



The University and the Colleges are strongly focused on attracting even more of the very best students from across the world, and from all ethnic and economic backgrounds.

The collegiate University invests £5 million a year in widening participation initiatives, and a further £7 million a year in undergraduate bursaries. In the Postgraduate space, we are running a major new recruitment drive to grow numbers of international applications and developing a programme of initiatives in collaboration with other UK universities to widen participation in postgraduate education, particularly doctoral studies from under-represented groups and communities.

Another distinctive feature of the collegiate University education system is its strong emphasis on welfare and pastoral support. Despite the challenging nature of courses, student drop-out rates are incredibly low. Colleges provide frontline pastoral support through regular meetings with academic tutors and access to welfare support.

This is supplemented with comprehensive student welfare services, including mental health and wellbeing support, an Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre, Careers Service and signposting and connection to other services provided by the central University.

The University also provides significant opportunities for learners outside of the full-time degree programme, including lifelong learning. Undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas can be taken, including fully online, and are popular with those who cannot commit to a full-time degree. There are also a growing number of students enrolled on professional courses, and the University has exciting ambitions to expand this offering. This will generate income and technology infrastructure to bring the University to new audiences across the globe.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University aims to be a leader in fostering equality and inclusion, and in promoting a sense of belonging for all.

We are committed to the University being a kind, compassionate working environment where people are valued as individuals for the unique experiences and perspectives they bring, and where there is a strong shared sense of community.

It is vital that our staff and students can participate fully in University life, question and test perceived wisdom, and express new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions in an environment that encourages respectful challenge and discussion. The University recognises that its various and sometimes overlapping duties provoke strong and impassioned debate – both within the collegiate University, across the higher education sector and in wider society.

We have an Equal Opportunities Policy, along with a range of diversity groups, including the Women's Staff Network, Race Equality Network and LGBT+ Staff Network.

The University has a bronze Race Equality Charter award, with a framework for improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. Furthermore, the University's silver Athena Swan award recognises and celebrates good practice in recruiting, retaining and promoting gender equality.

The University of Cambridge is committed to a pro-active and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity. The University is particularly focused on increasing diversity among staff on higher grades and especially encourage women and candidates from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to apply for these vacancies.



Terms of Appointment

Tenure and probation Appointments will be made on a permanent basis. Appointments will be subject to satisfactory completion of a nine-month probationary period.

Hours of Work and Working Pattern This is a full-time position. However, we are open to considering part-time or compressed working arrangements. Our approach to flexible working values both face-to-face engagement and personal freedom and reflects contemporary practices. You and your manager will be able to tailor an arrangement that best suits your preferences and our business needs.

Pension You will automatically be enrolled to become a member of USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme) – a defined benefits pension scheme. For further information please visit: www.pensions.admin.cam.ac.uk

Annual leave Full time employees are entitled to annual paid leave of 41 days inclusive of public holidays. For new part-time employees, annual leave will be pro rata'd based on days worked.

Equality and Diversity We particularly encourage candidates from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background to apply for this vacancy as they are currently under-represented at this level within our University.

Information if you have a disability The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities. We are committed to ensuring fair treatment throughout the recruitment process. We will make adjustments to enable applicants to compete to the best of their ability wherever it is reasonable to do so and, if successful, to assist them during their employment.

Information for disabled applicants is available at http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/staff/disabled/

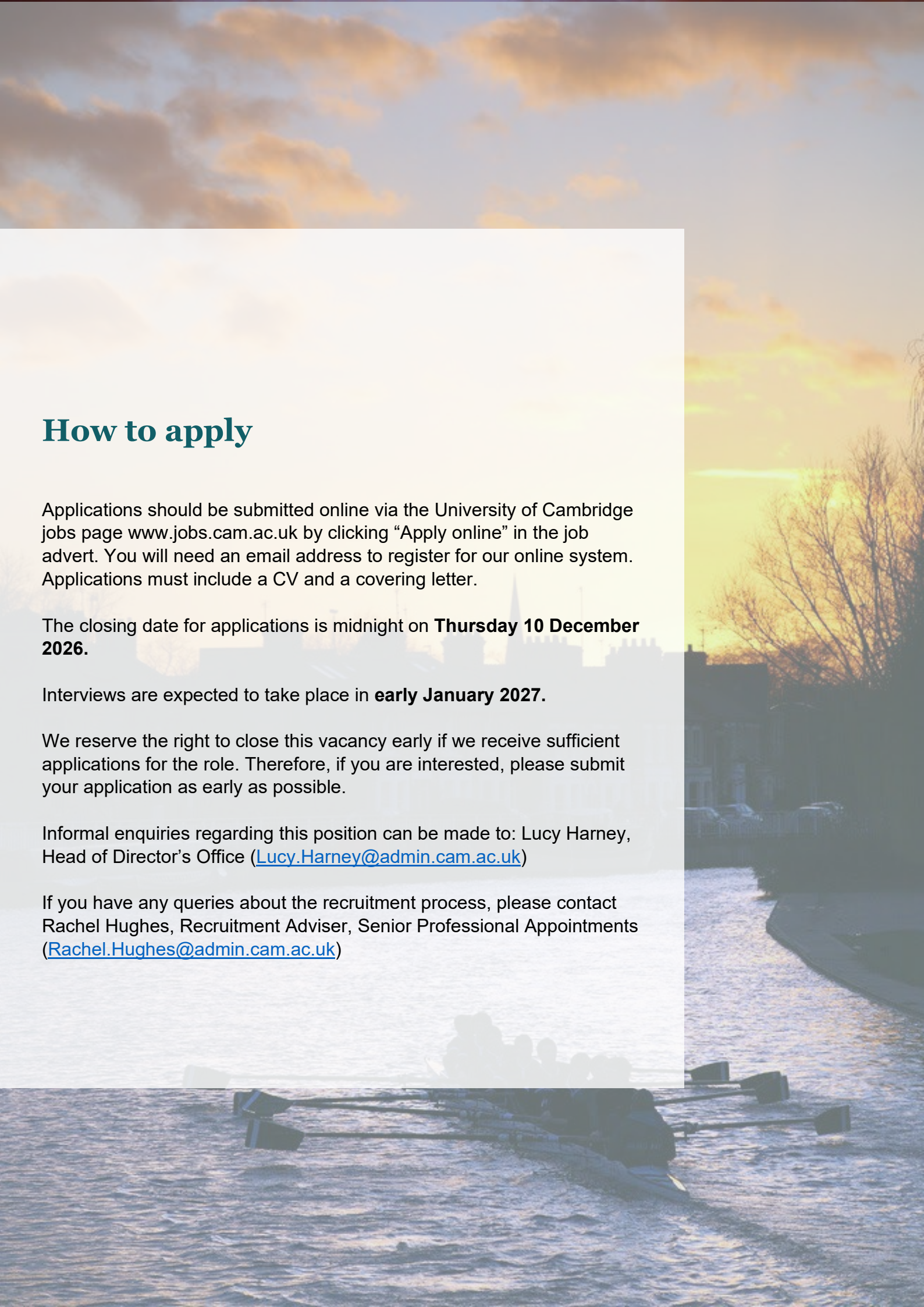
General Information Pre-employment checks Right to work in the UK - we have a legal responsibility to ensure that you have the right to work in the UK before you can start working for us. If you do not have the right to work in the UK already, any offer of employment we make will be conditional upon you gaining it.

Screening Checks This role requires a basic disclosure and a security check. Any offer of employment we make to you will be conditional upon the satisfactory completion of these check(s); whether an outcome is satisfactory will be determined by the University.

Qualifications The person specification for this position lists qualifications that are essential and/or desirable. Please note that if you are offered the post you will be asked to provide your relevant original certificates of these qualifications.

References Offers of appointment will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

We encourage you to declare any disability that you may have, and any reasonable adjustments that you may require, in the section provided for this purpose in the application form. This will enable us to accommodate your needs throughout the process as required. However, applicants and employees may declare a disability at any time. If you prefer to discuss any special arrangements connected with a disability, please contact, Rachel Hughes (Rachel.Hughes@admin.ac.uk), who is responsible for recruitment to this position.



How to apply

Applications should be submitted online via the University of Cambridge jobs page www.jobs.cam.ac.uk by clicking “Apply online” in the job advert. You will need an email address to register for our online system. Applications must include a CV and a covering letter.

The closing date for applications is midnight on **Thursday 10 December 2026.**

Interviews are expected to take place in **early January 2027.**

We reserve the right to close this vacancy early if we receive sufficient applications for the role. Therefore, if you are interested, please submit your application as early as possible.

Informal enquiries regarding this position can be made to: Lucy Harney, Head of Director’s Office (Lucy.Harney@admin.cam.ac.uk)

If you have any queries about the recruitment process, please contact Rachel Hughes, Recruitment Adviser, Senior Professional Appointments (Rachel.Hughes@admin.cam.ac.uk)