

Executive Head Chef

Job Description

The Role

Job title:	Executive Head Chef
Department:	Campus Experience
Responsible to:	Director of Campus Experience
Responsible for:	Kitchen team and supporting staff
Location:	Cirencester, Gloucestershire
Salary:	Grade 8: starting at £38,784 and progressing to £46,049 per annum <u>Please note:</u> it is the University's policy to appoint new staff at the bottom of the pay scale, unless there are demonstrable exceptional skills and experience the candidate brings with them.
Term:	Permanent, full time, averaging 35 hours per week, with flexibility required for weekends and weekends, hospitality functions, conferences and special events
Relationships with:	Food & Beverage Operations Manager, Conference & Events Business Manager, Students' Union, Accommodation, Hospitality, Café Retail, Marketing, Finance, Academia, University Farm, Vineyard, suppliers, local producers, commercial partners and industry bodies.

Purpose

To lead, develop and manage the University's food operation, ensuring the delivery of a commercially successful, operationally excellent and sector-leading food service that enhances the student, staff and visitor experience.

The post holder will provide both strategic and operational leadership across all food production activities, including student dining, retail catering, hospitality, conferencing and special events. The role is accountable for culinary standards, financial performance, sustainability outcomes, team development and customer satisfaction.

The post holder will work collaboratively with the Food & Beverage Operations Manager and Conference & Events Business Manager to develop integrated food and beverage concepts, menus, hospitality offers and event experiences that enhance customer satisfaction, maximise commercial performance and support the University's strategic objectives.

As a member of the Campus Experience leadership team, the post holder will champion a culture of culinary excellence, innovation, sustainability and continuous improvement whilst ensuring food services contribute positively to both financial sustainability and the University's reputation and brand.

The Executive Chef will:

- Lead the development and delivery of the University's food strategy, aligning culinary provision with Campus Experience objectives and University priorities.
- Establish and embed high standards of food quality, consistency, safety and innovation across all food operations.
- Act as the culinary ambassador for the University, championing excellence, sustainability, provenance and customer engagement.
- Ensure food services contribute positively to both financial sustainability and the University's reputation and brand.
- Use customer insight, operational data and market intelligence to drive continuous improvement, innovation and commercial performance.

The role requires the ability to lead a diverse team, influence stakeholders across departments and make decisions that directly impact customer satisfaction, financial performance and operational effectiveness.

Key Responsibilities

1. Provide leadership and line management to the kitchen and food production teams, ensuring clear accountability, high performance standards and a culture of continuous improvement.
2. Develop and deliver the University's food strategy, ensuring alignment with Campus Experience objectives, commercial priorities and student experience ambitions.
3. Lead the development and continuous improvement of menus and food concepts across student dining, retail catering, hospitality, conferences and events.
4. Act as the University's culinary ambassador, promoting excellence, innovation, provenance and sustainability throughout all food operations.
5. Work collaboratively with the Food & Beverage Operations Manager and Conference & Events Business Manager to develop integrated food and beverage offers, hospitality packages, event propositions and seasonal promotions.
6. Ensure a consistent, high-quality customer experience across all food service operations, responding to customer feedback and changing market demands.
7. Use customer insight, operational data and market intelligence to inform decision-making, drive innovation and improve operational performance including engaging with organisations such as TUCO and CUBO.
8. Lead the implementation of sustainable food practices, including responsible sourcing, seasonal menu planning, waste reduction and environmental improvement initiatives.

9. Work with the University Farm, Vineyard, local producers and external partners to showcase the University's agricultural heritage through food and hospitality experiences.
10. Drive revenue growth, profitability and participation across catering, hospitality and event catering operations through effective menu and product development.
11. Manage food production budgets, purchasing, stock control and food costs, ensuring delivery against agreed financial and commercial targets.
12. Produce and analyse operational, financial and customer performance data, identifying opportunities to improve efficiency, quality and profitability.
13. Build and maintain effective relationships with suppliers and partners to ensure quality, innovation, sustainability and value for money.
14. Lead workforce planning, recruitment, succession planning and professional development activities across the culinary teams.
15. Support the successful planning and delivery of conferences, graduation ceremonies, VIP functions, hospitality events and other key University activities.
16. Ensure effective collaboration and communication with Food & Beverage, Events, Accommodation, Marketing and other operational teams to deliver a seamless customer experience.
17. Maintain accountability for food safety, HACCP compliance, health and safety standards and all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements ensuring best practise is embedded.
18. On occasion the role holder may be asked to assist in the facilitation of career and professional development activities. This will form part of their substantive role and they will not receive additional payment for these activities.
19. Undertake any other duties commensurate with the level and responsibilities of the post.

General responsibilities:

- The University is committed to equality of opportunity. All staff are required to comply with current legislation, University policies and good practice guidance.
- All staff are required to act in a way that safeguards the health and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults at all times. The post holder must be familiar with and adhere to appropriate safeguarding policies and guidance and participate in related mandatory/statutory training. Managers have a responsibility to ensure their team members understand their individual responsibilities with regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- All staff are required to participate in the University appraisal process and should ensure they are familiar with the process and plan time to prepare for their appraisal. Following the appraisal, staff are expected to undertake in any necessary learning and development and work towards the objectives that have been set.
- The University expects staff to attend any training designated as mandatory and to undertake learning and development activities to support their role. Managers must facilitate learning and development within their teams.
- It is a condition of employment that staff will not disclose any information obtained in the course of their duties other than to those entitled to receive it. The post holder must ensure that the confidentiality of personal data remains secure and that restricted information or highly restricted information to which they have access remains confidential during and after

their employment at Royal Agricultural University. All staff must undergo appropriate data protection training as required.

- All absence from work must be reported in accordance with the University's absence procedures and recorded on iTrent.
- The University acknowledges its responsibility to provide a safe, smoke free environment, to its employees, service users and visitors. It is the policy of the University not to allow smoking on University premises other than in specifically designated areas.

Person Specification

Qualifications	Essential (E) or Desirable (D)	Measured by; A – Application form B – Interview C - Presentation
Professional Cookery qualification (Level 3 or equivalent professional qualification) or appropriate level of Industry experience	E	A
Intermediate or Advanced Food Safety qualification	E	A
Degree, Foundation Degree or equivalent qualification in Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management or related discipline	D	A

Knowledge, Skills & Experience	Essential (E) or Desirable (D)	Measured by; A – Application form B – Interview C - Presentation
Significant experience in a senior culinary leadership role within a complex catering, hospitality or food service operation	E	A, B, C
Demonstrable experience managing multiple food outlets, production areas or service streams	A	A, B
Demonstrable track record of delivering commercial performance, income growth and cost control	E	A, B, C
Experience of developing and implementing food strategies, menus and service improvements	E	A, B, C
Strong understanding of food cost management, budgeting, forecasting and financial reporting	E	A, B, C
Demonstrable track record of leading and developing teams within a multi-functional environment	E	A, B
Excellent knowledge of food safety, HACCP and health & safety legislation	E	A, B

Knowledge and experience of sustainability, ethical sourcing and responsible food production practices	E	A, B, C
Demonstrable experience using operational and financial data to improve performance and inform decision making	E	A, B, C
Excellent communication, stakeholder engagement and influencing skills	E	A, B, C
Experience delivering hospitality, conferences, events and high-profile functions	E	A, B
Knowledge and recent experience of the Higher Education sector and an understanding of student catering environments	D	A, B
Experience of achieving industry accreditations, awards or recognised quality standards	D	A, B
Strong IT skills including Microsoft Office and catering or stock management systems and CRM booking systems	E	A, B
Flexibility and adaptability with the ability to manage competing priorities and deadlines	E	B, C
Strong customer focus and commitment to service excellence	E	A, B, C

Other requirements	Essential (E) or Desirable (D)	Measured by; A – Application form B – Interview C - Presentation
The post holder will be required to work weekends and evenings as part of a flexible rota.	E	A, B
The post holder will be required to travel; visiting suppliers and other institutions for benchmarking/collaboration/networking visits.	E	A, B

Application Procedure

If you are interested in applying for this role, please send:

- University [Application Form](#) together with the [Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form](#) available on the University website www.rau.ac.uk) – you may attach your up to date CV if you wish to add additional information.
- Details of two referees who must be people who can comment authoritatively on you as a person and as an employee in relation to the level of the post, and must include your current or most recent employer or their representative.
- Please forward to the HR Team, Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS or via email to jobs@rau.ac.uk stating where you saw the advert for the role
- Informal enquiries can be made to Ryan Hanson, Director of Campus Experience, email: Ryan.hanson@rau.ac.uk
- **Closing date:** 23 September 2026 with **Interviews on:** 7 October 2026
- We acknowledge receipt of all applications within two working days. If you do not receive an email from us after submitting your application, please let us know by sending a new email **without any attachments** to Human.Resources@rau.ac.uk so we can check if your application has reached us.
- Should you be selected for interview please be aware that we are unable to reimburse interview expenses.
- **Please note:** it is the university's policy to appoint new staff at the bottom of the pay scale, unless there are demonstrable exceptional skills and experience the candidate brings with them.

The RAU is an equal opportunities employer and we particularly welcome applications from black and minority ethnic candidates as they are underrepresented within the RAU at this level