

Independent Governors

Candidate Information Pack – September 2021



A welcome from the Vice-Chancellor



We have been developing leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators at the Royal Agricultural University ever since 1845. The RAU was established at a time of great famine in Ireland when enlightened individuals, and members of agricultural societies, recognised that the transformation of UK agriculture – needed to increase food production – could only be achieved through education, and the application of science and innovation.

Our mission today bears testament to the foresight of our founders as we aim to equip a new generation of graduates to meet the most pressing challenges that face us in the world today – climate change, food security, sustainable land use, biodiversity, heritage management and so on. Put simply, the RAU's raison d'être is the survival of humankind, and there is no higher calling than that.

If you share our passion and commitment to the land-based sector - to agriculture, food and the environment; real estate land management; rural business and entrepreneurship; cultural heritage and equine management and science – then we would be delighted to hear from you as a prospective member of our university governing council.

Thank you for your interest in the Royal Agricultural University.

Best wishes

Professor Peter McCaffery

Vice Chancellor & Governor

About the Royal Agricultural University

The Royal Agricultural University has been at the forefront of agricultural education and a key contributor to the land-based sector for over 175 years.

Our heritage

The Royal Agricultural College (RAC), now the Royal Agricultural University (RAU), was the first agricultural college in the English-speaking world. The first 25 students were admitted in September 1845.

From our early days, we were staffed with innovators and pioneers and made a considerable impact on farming practice and agricultural science. In 2013, the Privy Council awarded us full University Status with Taught Degree Awarding Powers, in recognition of our long record in the provision of higher education.

The present

We have some 1,200 students studying a range of subjects, including agriculture, animal science, business, environment, equine science, farm management, food, real estate and rural land management. Set on the edge of Cirencester in the beautiful Cotswold countryside, our small size provides an exceptional sense of community amongst students and staff, which supports, develops and encourages students from all backgrounds to achieve their ambitions.

Our motto is 'Arvorum Cultus Pecorumque', a quotation from Virgil's Georgics, meaning 'Caring for the Fields and the Beasts'. This maxim has been enduringly relevant for a University which, in every area of our activity, has worked to promote sustainable use of the land, safeguard the environment and animal welfare and the wellbeing of rural communities. We pride ourselves on combining subject expertise with industry connectivity and an innovative, forward thinking, enterprising approach. This opens doors for students, and RAU graduates are well prepared for successful careers in their chosen field, whether that be leading innovation and change in industry, informing future land-based policy, or setting up their own businesses.





The future

Since 2016, we have achieved significant progress against our strategic plan and have delivered transformation and change. We redefined our purpose as "to cultivate care for the land and all that depend on it".

Core elements of the strategy include:

- Growing and diversifying the student community by providing an outstanding student experience and excellent employment outcomes. Innovative programmes will be informed by the evolving needs of industry and designed for learners at all stages of life, delivered via traditional and online learning platforms.
- Establishing a Knowledge Hub that will help industry navigate change and uncertainty making it possible to tackle big challenges more effectively, thereby delivering societal benefit and impact. The Hub will provide a focus to catalyse farmer-led innovation, act as an accelerator of rural enterprise and become a centre for thought leadership for development of evidence-based policy and strategic thinking.
- Becoming a sustainable, efficient organisation that can fund a continuing investment in its physical, digital and human infrastructure, ensuring a continually improving and excellent experience for students and staff.
- Partnering with land-based colleges and schools to extend and diversify the student community. We will foster thriving linkages to a variety of localities and communities across the UK, thereby extending the reach of learning opportunities we offer and the impact of our research.
- Developing sustainable partnerships with industry and research-leading institutions to provide a wider perspective, ensuring that what we teach is relevant, improves student employment outcomes and enables sustainability-oriented innovation.
- Building on existing and successful international partnerships, among which a prominent feature has been teaching partnerships with Chinese universities.

"The RAU's mission is to equip a new generation to thrive through change"

Select highlights

We have achieved significant progress against our strategic plan. Recent successes include:

- Ranked one of the UK's Top Ten Universities in the Whatuni Student Choice Awards, both 2019 and 2020: www.whatuni.com/student-awards-winners/university-of-the-year/. We were also top 10 for job prospects in both years.
- Enterprising Learning Provider of the Year 2019, IOEE Celebrating Enterprise Awards 2019: ioee.uk/2019/10/07/celebrating-enterprise-awards-2019/. Awarded Centre of Excellence by the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE) in the same year.
- Winning £1.1m of Catalyst funding to develop the next generation of agri-food/tech leaders and to create new industry-led programmes that aim to position us as a thought leader post-Brexit.
- Addressing highly relevant global grand challenges – such as climate change, food security and urbanisation – through the [Rural Knowledge Hub](#), which initiates thought leadership activities and accelerates the growth of rural enterprises through the Farm 491 agri-tech business incubator based in the new Alliston Centre and also the new [National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise](#).
- Increasing the percentage of state school entrants, launching two new bursary schemes with a specific focus on widening participation and getting involved in two national outreach programmes and the Agrespect rural LGBT+ network.
- Securing a £2.2m endowment from the John Oldacre Foundation to support applied research, and PhD students. Current PhD projects include crop science, land values in London boroughs and equine nutrition.
- Expanding our CPD offer via the [John Oldacre Rural Innovation Centre](#), which is based at Harnhill and offers a large range of practical, industry-facing courses that teach rural skills.
- Establishing new and mutually beneficial academic partnerships with further education providers, such as the validation arrangement with Plumpton College and the urban farming focus afforded by the link with Capel Manor College in London.
- Becoming the first small specialist university to be authorised by the China Ministry of Education to establish a Joint Institute in Advanced Agri-Technology, which now offers 4 double degrees with Qingdao Agricultural University.
- Further information on other initiatives and successes can be found [here](#).

Academic structure and offering

Delivery of the University's academic offering is structured according to five broad programme areas:

- **Agriculture, Food and Environment**
- **Cultural Heritage**
- **Equine Management and Science**
- **Real Estate and Rural Land Management**
- **Rural Business and Enterprise**

The portfolio of courses has been specifically designed to help students realise their potential, whether they have their sights set on further study or a career in the land-based professions.

Our academics care about their subjects and their students. Working alongside business leaders and employers, they deliver courses that provide students with the tools, mindset and networks they need to embrace the opportunities ahead and play essential, leading roles in shaping the future of the industry. The reach and influence of our alumni network worldwide is extraordinary.

Teaching and learning

We are engaged in a review of the curriculum to ensure that our programmes are delivered through innovative and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, by academics with a passion and commitment to land based subjects.

Student experience



A key strategic priority for us has been improvement in the student experience.

We ranked in the top ten at the Whatuni Student Choice Awards in 2019 and in 2020 in both the Job Prospects and University of the Year categories, based on feedback from our students.





Enterprise and entrepreneurship

We place a strong emphasis on entrepreneurialism, creating opportunities for students to develop their own business ideas and receive tailored support. From student societies to workshops and awards, budding entrepreneurs can benefit from the knowledge and experience of their lecturers and the strong industry links we have carefully cultivated over the years.

With the aim of developing the leaders of tomorrow, adding value to students' degrees and providing better graduate employment to the students, we promote Student Enterprise projects such as the 'Grand Idea', which engages external business people and entrepreneurs to mentor and advise budding student entrepreneurs at the RAU. These projects are designed to improve the life skills of our graduates, allowing them to contribute to the local community and wider society.

Guided by lawyers, insurers, marketing professionals and accountants, students from all courses and years have the chance to realise their aspirations in a professional and rewarding environment.

"The award-winning Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Programme (EEP) provides an inspiring and supportive environment in which students can share, develop and launch their ideas."

As well as acting as a springboard for the business leaders of tomorrow, this celebrated programme has attracted the support of business leaders and PR sponsors across the UK, enabling us to organise networking events, enterprise workshops, mentoring services, work placements and inspirational talks.



Employability

We aim to ensure that all our students maximise their ability to secure satisfying, meaningful and rewarding careers and to make an effective contribution to the economic and social wealth of society. Graduates continue to enjoy excellent employment rates according to the annual national survey by HESA (the Higher Education Statistics Agency).

On average, based on 2016/17, over 93% of RAU undergraduates are in employment or further study within six months of leaving us. Our employability statistics are strong and bear out the educational merit and value its courses deliver to society. The provision of a steady stream of high-calibre graduates benefits not only the industries we serve, but also employers and the economy. As well as fostering a community-based learning environment which supports a range of students from more than 45 different countries, we actively encourage interaction with business and social enterprises.

Widening participation

We encourage social mobility by raising aspirations to enter higher education. We tackle issues of social exclusion by providing an extensive outreach programme. This draws on best practice from UK and overseas, to widen participation in higher education and to stimulate interest in further study. This includes visits to schools and colleges, and strong links with collaborative partner colleges.

We aim to offer programmes of study that are attractive to a diverse range of potential students, have fair and transparent admission policies and provide financial support to low-income students. We mitigate the financial barriers to students accessing education by offering bursary schemes and fee waivers that are particularly targeted towards those from low income backgrounds who are assessed as eligible for state support.



Research and knowledge exchange

From its inception, our express aim was to deliver what is now termed translational research. Our academic staff hold true to that mission today, and work on applied research projects across sustainable agriculture, agribusiness, real estate and land management, animal and equine science. We expect to submit to the next Research Excellence Framework. With its close links to industry, many of our research projects are done in collaboration with commercial businesses and thus have genuine impact. Recent work has focused on product development for improved health and welfare in horses, improved crop management systems to reduce inputs, novel methods for insect control and development of new feedstuffs all of which contribute to a more efficient and sustainable industry.

Finances

Total income for the year was £17.8m (2019: £21.0m), a decline of £3.2m. In 2019 we were fortunate to receive a generous donation of £2.2m, compared to £267k in the current year. The remaining reduction was largely due to a fall in tuition fees of £0.6m and a drop in other income of £0.7m principally resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Total expenditure for the year was £19.7m (2019: £20.2m), a saving of £0.5m. This comprised a saving in finance costs of £0.16m, with the remaining savings arising from reduced operating expenditures following the Covid-19 'lockdown'.

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the financial results for 2020, and this is expected to continue into the 2021 financial year. Covid-19 had an immediate impact on the RAU's revenue streams: first, the University received no student accommodation fees for the third semester; second, the RAU lost essentially all commercial revenue from the initial 'lockdown' in March through to the end of the financial year.

Financial statements can be viewed [here](#).

The Role

We are looking to recruit Independent Governors to its Governing Council. Of primary importance is a strong personal commitment to higher education and to the environment and land-based economy, as well as to the vision, mission and purpose of the University.

Applications would be particularly welcomed from candidates with any of the following:

- Experience of any of: land/estate management; agricultural technology; food production/processing; farming and sustainable land use
- International business experience
- Legal knowledge and experience in relation to higher education and/or not for profit sectors
- Expertise in digital/data strategy or cyber security
- Marketing and communication skills
- Fundraising or philanthropy experience

We strive to be a diverse and inclusive place where everyone is welcome and we can all be ourselves. We particularly encourage applications from people who identify as Black, Asian or from a Minority Ethnic background, who are currently underrepresented.

The Purpose

The main purpose of the role is to ensure that the Governing Council sets a clear vision, mission and strategy for the University and monitors the implementation of the University's strategic plan by the Vice Chancellor and the Executive Team.

Independent Governors are expected to play an appropriate part in ensuring that the business of the Governing Council (and any Committees to which they are also appointed) is carried on efficiently, effectively and in a manner appropriate for the proper conduct of public business.

To accomplish this, an Independent Governor will need to build strong and effective working relationships with fellow Independent Governors, the Vice Chancellor, the Executive Team and University staff and students, whilst avoiding involvement in the day-to-day executive management of the University.

All Independent Governors are required to act fairly and impartially at all times, in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate. They should question intelligently, debate constructively, challenge rigorously and decide dispassionately, and listen sensitively to the views of others, inside and outside meetings of the Board.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

Key duties and responsibilities include:

- Complying with our governing documents, the requirements of the Office for Students and the CUC Code of Governance, and other relevant legislative and regulatory requirements including charity and company law.
- Ensuring that we pursue our objects as defined in our governing documents and applies our resources exclusively in pursuance of those objects.
- Contributing actively to the Governing Council in the development of our strategic direction, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets and evaluating performance of the Vice Chancellor and the Executive Team against those agreed targets.
- Actively seeking and receiving assurance that delivery of the strategic plan is in line with legislative and regulatory requirements, institutional values, policies and procedures, and there are effective systems of control and risk management in place.
- Safeguarding our reputation and values and acting ethically in line with the Nolan Principles on Public Life.
- Complying with our policies and procedures including those relating to conflicts of interest, health and safety, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and “fit and proper” persons (as defined by the Public Interest Governance Principles).

Required skills and attributes

Candidates should be able to demonstrate the following skills and attributes:

- Commitment to our vision, mission and purpose.
- Willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to discharging the key duties and responsibilities and to achieving the main purpose of the role.
- Understanding of the external context in which we are operating.
- Independent judgement.
- Ability to think creatively and strategically.
- Willingness to speak their mind.
- Understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.
- Ability to work effectively as a member of a team.
- Understanding of the Nolan Principles of Public Life

General Information

- Independent Governors are expected to attend all meetings of the Governing Council and any Committees of which they are a member, or to give timely apologies if absence is unavoidable.
- Independent Governors must participate in procedures established by the Governing Council for the regular appraisal/review of the performance of individual members.
- Independent Governors should attend any induction and/or training activities arranged by us, and contribute to regular reviews of Board effectiveness.
- The likely overall time commitment required of Independent Governors is approximately 10 days per year, including preparation for and attendance at Governing Council and any relevant Committee meetings. There is also an annual Away Day and optional events such as Graduation and Governing Council Breakfast Briefings.
- Membership of the Governing Council is not remunerated, but Independent Governors are entitled to reclaim all reasonable travel and similar expenses incurred in the course of University business in accordance with our expenses policy.

How to apply

If you would like any further information before deciding whether or not to submit an expression of interest, please email: governance@rau.ac.uk

If you would like to express your interest in becoming an Independent Governor at the Royal Agricultural University, please send your **CV**, a **covering letter** and an [Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form](#) to:

- governance@rau.ac.uk
- by no later than the end of 31st October 2021.

We are not worried about the format or length of your letter, but we would encourage you to be clear and concise, so that we can easily recognise your skills and strengths.

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will be held on **10th December 2021**.



General Data Protection Regulations: Applicant Privacy Notice

The Royal Agricultural University collects and processes your personal data so that it can meet its statutory and legal obligations, and when it has a legitimate interest in processing personal data before, during and after the end of the employment relationship.

The data which forms part of your job application (for example, application form, CV, references, Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, shortlisting and interview records) will be stored in a range of different places, which will include the University's HR and recruitment management systems (electronic and paper based), and in IT systems (including the University's email system). Your information may be shared internally with the HR Department and with employees who are involved in the recruitment and selection process, but only if access to your data is absolutely necessary for the performance of those roles.

The University may share your data with third parties in certain circumstances. Personal data that the University uses for the purposes of equal opportunities monitoring and reporting is anonymised or is collected with the express consent of applicants, which can be withdrawn at any time. Applicants are entirely free to decide whether to provide such data and there are no consequences of failing to do so.

The University takes the security of your data seriously and has internal controls in place to try to ensure that your data is not lost, accidentally destroyed, misused or disclosed, and is not accessed except by the above employees in the performance of their duties. If your application is unsuccessful, your applicant data will be destroyed 6 months following the advertised closing date of the post you have applied for. If your application is successful, your applicant data will be retained during your employment and for 6 years following your leaving date. You can access and obtain a copy of your data on request and you can ask the University to change incorrect or incomplete data.

In certain circumstances you can ask the University to stop processing your data, or you can object to the processing of your data. If you believe that the University has not complied with your data protection rights, you can complain to the Information Commissioner. Further information about your rights in accordance with Data Protection and the GDPR Regulations can be obtained from the University Data Protection Officer. A detailed Employee Privacy Notice is available to view [here](#).

