Royal Agricultural University

Independent Governors

Candidate Information Pack

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A Welcome from the Vice-Chancellor

Professor Peter McCaffery, Vice-Chancellor

We have been developing leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) ever since 1845.

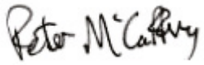
The very first agricultural college in the English-speaking world, the RAU was established at a time of burgeoning industrialisation and urbanisation when enlightened individuals, and members of agricultural societies, recognised that the transformation of UK agriculture – needed to increase food production – could only be achieved through education, and the application of science and innovation.

“Practice with Science” was the mantra of our founders, as indeed it still is, as we pursue our mission 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 loss, heritage management, and so on.

Our strategy rests on three pillars: Quality, Reach, and Sustainability. We want to be the very best in all that we do at a local level, a national level, and a global level, and to do so in as sustainable a way as possible. We aim to be a solution provider – the country’s leading, and indeed the UK’s global, university in sustainable farming and land management.

With a family of 17,000+ alumni world-wide, we are proud of our heritage and we aim to be as societally relevant in the future as we have been in the past. If you would like to play a leading role in shaping the future development of the RAU and 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 and Governor

About the Royal Agricultural University

Where Are We Now

We believe in the power of working together. We are stronger as a community of practice - inspiring each other, identifying shared goals, and providing reciprocal support leads to greater success.

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. A 'university without walls', science-based and practice-centred, with over half of our research adjudged 'world-leading and international in quality', we are the leading specialist university in England for research. We are one of only six universities (and the only small specialist provider) recognised as a National Centre of Excellence by the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, while our Farm 491 is one of the UK's leading agri-technology incubators and accelerators.

We are the leading supplier of rural chartered surveyors in the UK and our Rural Estate Land Management has been rated one of the top six business schools in Europe with 165 of our Alumni in Director roles in the major national and international firms.

Our Heritage

The RAU, formerly the Royal Agricultural College, was the first agricultural college in the English-speaking world and the first 25 students were admitted in September 1845.

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

The Present

The RAU has some 1,100 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, its 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.

The University 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 its activity, has worked to promote sustainable use of the land, and safeguard the environment, animal welfare, and the wellbeing of rural communities. The RAU prides itself on combining subject expertise with application in practice that makes a real difference on the ground.

The Future

Our vision is to be the UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management, enabling communities across the world to thrive in harmony with nature. We will pursue our vision by focusing on three outcomes which run through all we do:

Quality

A global reputation for excellence and leadership across our teaching, research and engagement.

Reach

A growing, diverse and inclusive community of students and partners in the UK and internationally.

Sustainability

A showcase for sustainable and resilient management, through our land and estate, our finances and our culture.

The RAU strategy is available here: https://www.rau.ac.uk/about-rau/our-vision and-strategy

University Values

As a University we have chosen five values to underpin our learning community. These are the values which we will all work by and for which we want the RAU to be known. We are:

- **Collaborative** - we believe in the power of working together. We are stronger as a community of practice - inspiring each other, identifying shared goals, and providing reciprocal support leads to greater success.
- **Open-Minded** - we are receptive to new ideas and we value the diversity of experiences and skills. We are committed to listening to everyone across the RAU community.
- **Resourceful** - we adopt creative approaches to achieve our goals while setting higher standards, promoting professionalism and sustainability.
- **Responsible** - individually and collectively we take accountability for our actions working with integrity to achieve the highest ethical standards.
- **Inclusive** - we acknowledge the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and are committed to maintaining an environment that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences.

Recent RAU Highlights

Quality: RAU Recognition

- Over the last 18 months there have been three national framework assessments – one in Research Excellence, one in Teaching Excellence, and one in Knowledge Exchange. That is, the REF, the TEF and the KEF – the so-called 3Fs of higher education.
- In the **Research Excellence Framework (REF)**, over half of our research was deemed to be "world-leading and international in quality" – we are the leading specialist university for research in England. Indeed, three members of our Professoriate were recognised in the 2023 Stanford University list of the top 2% of influential scientists in the world – an outstanding achievement.
- In the **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**, we were awarded a Silver Rating meaning that the student experience we provide, and the student outcomes we generate, are typically very high quality with outstanding features. The TEF Silver Award is a powerful endorsement of a Royal Agricultural University education.
- In the **Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)**, we came 'top of the class' in our cluster of STEM universities – that is, those institutions specialising in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. We exceeded others in our support for graduate start-ups and CPD, public and community engagement, working with the public and voluntary sector, and local growth and regeneration where we contribute over £50mto the local and regional economy.
- We were also short-listed in two categories – the Small or Specialist University Award and the special Submission Award – in the 2023 national **Whatuni** Student Choice Awards, the largest exclusively student-voted awards in the UK.

- We were re-accredited as **a centre of national excellence by the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs** (and the only small and specialist university in the UK to be so), our **Farm 491** was recognised nationally – through Guild HE - as a case study of high impact in agri-food and agri-technology, our **Wild Campus** initiative won regional environmental project of the year, while our **vineyard** producing award-winning wines is "a little gem" as the 'Hairy Bikers' put it! (BBC, January 2023)

Reach: RAU Global

- Our China programmes go from strength to strength. With over 2,100 students at our Joint Institute in Qingdao Agricultural University and Shandong University, we are **1 of only 5 'highly trusted' UK universities in China** – (and the only UK specialist university with a Joint Institute) - recognised by the Chinese Ministry of Education. We anticipate significant growth in post-graduate student numbers next year. We also enrolled a new intake (400 +) at the **International Agricultural University (IAU)**, Tashkent which we co-founded with the Uzbekistan Ministry of Agriculture in September 2022. All surpluses we generate from our overseas activity we use to enhance the student and staff experience at home.
- Working in collaboration with Royal Holloway, University of London, we established a new partnership in November 2023 with **Shenyang University, China** to deliver a Joint PhD Programme (c. 50 students a year) in Environmental Risk Management and Sustainable Development.
- Working in collaboration with the University of Bristol, we established a new partnership in May 2023 with **Sharjah** to deliver complementary programmes in Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine at the University of Sharjah's new Al Dhaid campus. The new programmes will help create more sustainable crop and livestock systems, while building critical agricultural and veterinary capacity, in their government's quest to produce the world's finest wheat.
- Our twinning initiative with **Sumy National Agrarian University (SNAU)** in Ukraine is now a role model for others in providing humanitarian, teaching, and research collaboration and support for "academics at risk" world-wide. We are also partnering on a major £400K+ project that examines the impact of war on farmland and farm security.

Sustainability: RAU Green

- We also launched, in January 2023 – with local and central Government support – our new £100m+ project to establish an Innovation Village that will support food producers, farmers, and land owners in developing sustainable solutions to food production while building resilience in rural communities. The design team preparations are well under way to submit an outline planning application to Cotswold District Council later this year that meets the requirements of the concept design phase (aka RIBA Stage 2) of the process. Centred on agriculture, food and land management our **Innovation Village @ RAU will be a first for the UK.**
- We are on schedule with the development of the **new state-of-the-art Land Laboratory Teaching Centre** for which we secured **£5.8m** – the maximum amount available to any university - from the Office for Students in its first capital funding round. Completion is expected in Spring 2025.
- We further launched – in the spirit that we should practice what we preach – our own ambitious **Food and Farming Strategy** in February 2023, aimed at producing as much of what we consume as sustainably as possible, with a view to establishing a profitable social enterprise business portfolio that reflects our sustainable food provenance ambitions.
- We are branching out into water (waste, management and security) through our new collaboration with the **Water Research Centre** (Swindon) which will enable us to develop research excellence in this area. A professorial post and a team of five postgraduate researchers will move to the RAU in the first instance, which will bolster our critical mass in seeking to secure research degree awarding powers (RDAP). Their work in Sharjah also aligns with our new collaboration with the University of Bristol there.
- We have created a “Regenerative Road Map” for our Cirencester campus that willhelp enable us to move towards a Net Zero Whole Life Carbon operational model.

Academic structure and offering

Delivery of the University's academic offering is structured according to five broad programme areas: As at our founding, our academic staff are housed within two broad subject areas – Agricultural Sciences and Practice, and Land and Property Management – each led by a Dean of Subject.

- 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

Teaching-led, research-informed, and enterprise-inclined, we are a University of Advanced Scholarship that celebrates scholarship in all its forms of teaching, discovery, application, and integration.

As a 'university without walls' where students can 'learn without boundaries', our students enjoy seamless access to the natural environment, through our unique (in the UK land-based sector) agreement with the adjoining 15,000-acre Bathurst Estate, the commercial entrepreneur (through their student membership of Farm 491), the laboratory, the classroom, and a resource-rich online learning environment.

All undergraduate modules follow a flipped curriculum structure whereby pre-reading is undertaken by students before attending the class. Then, during timetabled sessions, students explore the meaning and application of the relevant knowledge, testing their understanding with both peers and the class lecturer.

The RAU's annual staff skills workshops, and annual learning and teaching conference, help to further enhance our teaching practices and allow us to discuss ways in which new innovations in learning technology can be integrated into our practices. Our pedagogic model has facilitated enhancements in RAU teaching practices such as improvements in assessment that emphasise work-ready skills, decision making, leadership skills, and stimulating an enterprising market, to inspire rural entrepreneurship. Students, staff, and innovators also have access to the UK's only 'Living Land Laboratory', an open collaborative space that is used to conduct research-led teaching and problem-based learning.

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.

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

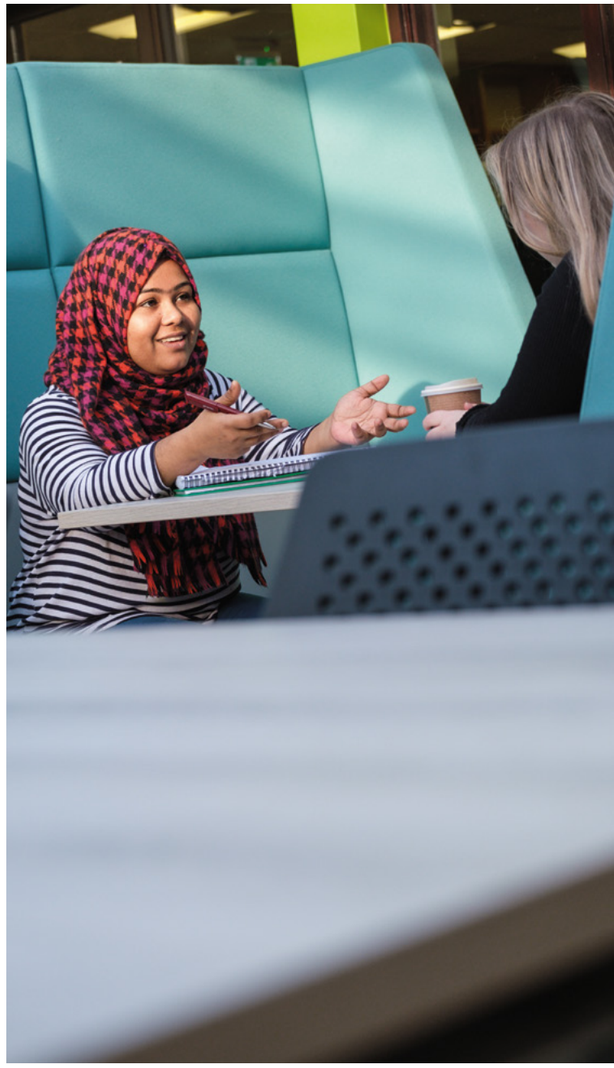
As well as acting as a springboard for the business leaders of tomorrow, this celebrated programme has attracted the support of business leaders and PR sponsors across the UK, enabling us to organise networking events, enterprise workshops, mentoring services, work placements and inspirational talks.

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, 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.

Starting salaries for RAU graduates are significantly higher than our peer competitors.



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, to have fair and transparent admission policies, and to 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

Our research is focused on three main goals:

1. Feeding the world in a changing environment
2. Sustaining and restoring the global environment
3. Enabling and revitalising Global Britain in a post-Brexit and post-Covid world

From our inception, our express aim has been 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, and animal and equine science. With close links to industry, many of our research projects are carried out 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.

Over three-quarters of our academic colleagues now have an earned doctorate and have been very successful in winning £1.4m in research grants – most of which were from highly competitive UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding rounds – and the largest sum so far raised by the University.

Our Professoriate was also pivotal to the development of the inaugural collaborative research strategy for the 16 UK universities of the Agricultural Universities Council (AUC). Launched at RAU Swindon in May 2023, this is the first time that agricultural research providers have joined up on this scale and demonstrates “the kind of strategic leadership called for by the deep and urgent crises in our food and farming” as Henry Dimbleby, who led the National Food Strategy (2020), put it.

Finances

The financial year 2022-23 delivered an improvement in financial performance; an operating deficit of £18k in 2022-23 compared to an operating deficit of £444k in 2021-22.

Global economic factors continue to present significant challenges to the University's operations, particularly with respect to student recruitment and operating costs.

Total income for the year was £20.3m (2022: £19.0m), an increase of £1.3m. Tuition fee income increased by £0.2m, whilst other income increased by £0.3m compared with the prior year, as commercial activity stabilised following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Total expenditure for the year was £20.4m (2022: £19.3m), an increase of £1.1m. This was largely driven by an uplift in operating expenditure of £1.2m due to inflationary pressures on expenditure, particularly to catering and utility costs.

Financial statements can be viewed here https://www.rau.ac.uk/financial-statements

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 knowledge and experience:

- Finance/accounting
- Land and estate management
- The higher education sector

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 Principleson 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 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

General Data Protection Regulations

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.

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