



**University of Suffolk  
Recruitment of Independent  
Non-Executive Directors**

Candidate brief  
April 2026



# Welcome

Dear Applicant

Thank you for your interest in joining our Board at the University of Suffolk. We are unique and proud to be different. Our identity and our proposition have always been founded on a bold vision for change: as a newer kind of higher education establishment, we are open-minded and custom built for today's modern and fast-moving world. Our purpose is simple: to change lives of individuals and communities - for the better.

On a personal note, my first experience of the Higher Education sector was when I joined University of Suffolk Board. I am a huge supporter of creating opportunities for everyone to access education and, to make inclusion a reality for individuals who might not have previously considered higher education. I am also intuitively aligned to skills development for all at whatever stage of career, including changing and learning new skills. In my experience the University of Suffolk adds value to all of its students and stakeholders while delivering high standards of teaching and learning as well as academic research.

The University of Suffolk believes in transformation - whether for individuals, our community, our region and beyond. We have absorbed the best traditions in higher education and aligned them with the modern world of employment and entrepreneurship. We are a distinctive, thriving academic community making a clear and immediate impact. We embrace change and both prepare and invest in our students for whatever the future may bring, supporting them to succeed in a world where the only constant is change.

We also have a clear vision: by the end of this decade, we will be recognised as an empowering force for individual and community growth and development. At the heart of that mission lies our responsibility to be a model for a newer type of civic university: to embrace aspiration, become one of the key business support agencies in the region, helping to regenerate our local economy, and being provider of choice.

Achieving our vision requires an engaged and versatile Board who can support our Vice-Chancellor and her executive team. At an unpredictable time in the UK, in global affairs, and in Higher Education, our Non-Executive Directors are focused on innovation, partnership and on achieving the long-term financial sustainability necessary to sustain our impact.

The challenges of the Higher Education sector must not be underestimated. It is an area buffeted by an absence of funds and government priorities, challenged by unfounded concerns about the efficacy of courses, impacted by a constantly evolving approach to immigration and overseas students and, for the University of Suffolk, surprisingly by a retrenchment to traditional university models by Government. This is all despite the critical national need for skills and skill development which are not usually found at traditional universities and are the key to many civic universities, ourselves included.

# Welcome

Therefore, this role is not for the faint hearted or those seeking a sinecure. The future of the University sector and the University of Suffolk needs to be secured, and this will require Board members who champion the University, think laterally, apply pragmatic yet strategic thought and are not afraid to drive change.

We are seeking up to seven new independent Non-Executive Board Directors to succeed colleagues who reach the end of their term in Autumn 2026 and March 2027.

New Directors will bring with them new skills, knowledge and perspective, ensuring that together we achieve the performance and diversity of thought needed to address an unprecedented range of needs and opportunities. We are looking for specific backgrounds, including audit and risk, estates and property management, legal, people and culture, and HE Research and Development. As new and emerging technologies play a fundamental role in University life, we're also interested in people who have expertise in digital innovation and AI and those with a strong connection to business circles and networks in Ipswich and Suffolk.

We want to attract people to a university where ambition and innovation are key measurements of success and we continue to positively our diversity and welcome applications from all communities.

If you want be part of our exciting journey and believe you have the qualities we need, I very much look forward to hearing from you.



**Ian Ailles**  
Chair of the Board of Directors

# University of Suffolk: a university for a changing world

The University of Suffolk was originally established as University Campus Suffolk (UCS) in 2007 to transform the provision of higher education in Suffolk and beyond before gaining independence in August 2016 to become the University of Suffolk. We are one of the newest UK universities; that means we do not just rely on our heritage, but we focus on making history and making our name. This can be seen in recent successes and accolades including being named University of the Year at the What Uni Awards 2025 and runners up for Teaching Quality and Student Experience in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026.

The University's mission has been to transform lives and our region, through education, training, research, business and community engagement and as we approach our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary milestone, we believe we have built a strong foundation to achieve this. We are currently working with our staff, students and stakeholders to review and update our strategy to ensure we can face the challenges in the Higher Education sector for the next 10 years and beyond. We will be looking to our new directors to be part of this journey, helping us embrace new opportunities and ensuring the new strategy will be embedded across all areas of our work.

Our core values define us and provide a framework for the way that we deliver for our students, partners and the wider community:

- **Transformational.** We believe in the power of education to deliver positive changes for the individuals and communities we work with.
- **Inclusive.** We are a community built on respect, fairness, and compassion, we debate our differences sensitively and celebrate the strength and creativity that a diverse community gives us.
- **Creative.** We dare to challenge established beliefs, generate new ideas and strive to change the communities we serve. We are innovative in finding new ways and solutions to advance the boundaries of knowledge and address real-life issues.
- **Empowering.** We inspire our students and staff to be the best they can be and support them to realise their potential and goals.
- **Collaborative.** We thrive through inclusive, trusting, and supportive relationships building a sense of community and mutual responsibility, helping us to achieve our shared goals.
- **Professionalism and service.** We strive to deliver the highest standards of service and scholarship, both internally and between academics and professional services colleagues, and externally between all University staff and members of our wider community.

We are committed to putting students at the centre of our thinking and the strong partnership between students and staff at the University is central to our achieving our ambitions. We were created to provide higher education to the people of Suffolk, and while the reach of the University has grown, we remain committed to working with our local communities.

Our aim is to increase participation in higher education, by raising the aspirations and expectations of all potential students, ensuring both young and mature students alike are aware of their local opportunities for studying.

**We deliver transformative education.**

We provide opportunities for all, and we are proud to educate more than double the national average of students from deprived backgrounds. Not only do we score highly for teaching satisfaction (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in The Guardian University Guide 2026), we also score well for individual courses such as ranking 3<sup>rd</sup> overall for Physiotherapy in the Daily Mail University Guide 2026, noted as second for career opportunities in health courses (Radiography, radiotherapy and paramedic science) in The Guardian University Guide 2026 and 8<sup>th</sup> for student satisfaction in art and design in the Complete University Guide 2026.

**We are proudly modern and innovative.**

Our compact Waterfront Campus is home to bespoke, modern facilities and placed 2<sup>nd</sup> for ‘Best Facilities’ in the UK WhatUni Student Choice Awards 2025. We continue to develop excellent teaching facilities with a new industry standard eSports lab and new laboratories for Pharmacy (launching September 2026). We are currently investing in new library and study spaces in the Waterfront Building, and new student social spaces and the revamped Students’ Union opening for the 2026 academic year. Through a unique partnership with a world-leading telecommunications company in BT, we offer the DigiTech Centre - a £9.6 million research and engineering facility at BT’s Adastral Park.

**We are international-class and committed to our region.**

We offer world-class research and achieved an ‘outstanding’ award in the REF 2021 for producing world-leading and internationally excellent research. We provide global consultancy and knowledge transfer services to businesses throughout our region and across the world, including places such as Peru, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. The implementation of our international strategy has increased the number of international students on our Ipswich campus. We make a significant contribution to the local economy, in 2018 an economic impact analysis estimated the University of Suffolk generated over £100 million Gross Value Added (GVA) and supported 2,270 across the region and wider UK.

**Find out more**

You can find out more about the University of Suffolk by visiting <https://www.uos.ac.uk/>



## Main responsibilities of the role

The role of the Board is set out in the University's Articles of Association and in the Board's Terms of Reference. All directors of the University of Suffolk are expected to conduct themselves in their role in accordance with the seven principles of public life as defined by the Nolan Committee and in line with the core values set out in the Higher Education Code of Governance.

All directors have a responsibility to accept collective responsibility for decisions made by the Board and do not have authority to act outside of the Board's constituency. There is an expectation that directors will have a sufficient level of IT competency to allow them to comfortably engage with systems such as a secure University email account, an online repository for meeting papers and a hybrid meeting platform such as Microsoft Teams.

The key responsibilities applying to all board directors are set out in the terms of reference of the Board. In summary, these cover:

- the business strategy and management of the institution
- proper oversight of financial reporting and control, investment and expenditure
- ensuring good and rigorous governance
- preserving the academic character of the institution through final approval of the overarching institutional strategies
- quality assurance through ensuring appropriate mechanisms and procedures are implemented as required by Senate
- nominations to ensure adequate succession planning for the Board and the management structure of the company, and
- approval of key company policies.



## Who we are looking for

### Part One

#### Your knowledge, and experience

- A background in at least one of the following areas of interest is essential:
  - estates and property management
  - legal
  - people & culture
  - Research & Development (in HE)
  - data / data management
  - digital / emerging technologies / AI
  - audit & risk (eg experience in P, VC, finance and accounting)
- Board level experience gained in a large-scale, commercially-oriented organisation ideally with emphasis on innovation and risk; this will ideally include some experience of transition and development to achieve significant scale and visibility.
- Appreciation of the positive impact of education on the economy, society and communities, and of the pressures and complexities inherent within the Higher Education system itself.
- Experience or insight into the broad field of education - or transition to employment - such as FE, HE, apprenticeships, life-long learning or an employer. (Please note that prior experience within HE is not necessary for the role.)
- International expertise or partnership connections relevant to the University.
- Understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of the role of Independent Non-Executive Director.

## Part Two

### Your skills and personal attributes

- Sharp commercial thinker with an inquisitive and open-minded style: you are willing to consider a range of options, to contribute to generative debate and offer constructive challenge.
- Personally credible and influential: you demonstrate effective interpersonal, communication and networking skills.
- Sound judgement: you are someone who secures trust and respect quickly.
- You are committed to Diversity and Inclusion.
- Personal flexibility and willingness to participate in Board business, including attendance at meetings held on campus.
- You have a personal connection with Ipswich or the County of Suffolk, as a resident, business person, or somebody with a strong affinity with the town who is proactive in shaping the region's trajectory.

Note: We are interested in hearing from applicants from all communities and backgrounds. While some experienced Non-Executives are required, we will also consider first-time Non-Executives with the experience sought.





# Terms of Appointment

## Remuneration

This appointment is unremunerated but all reasonable travel expenses incurred on University business will be fully reimbursed.

## Start dates

We are looking for up to seven new Directors in total, with 3-4 taking up post in September 2026 and the remainder starting in March 2027.

## Time commitment

This role requires up to two days per month. Candidates must be willing to visit the University at least four times a year and to proactively engage with discussions and agenda items.

The Board Strategy Day is an additional meeting where there is opportunity for extended discussions on major strategic issues, with a focus on particular areas of risk. Further additional meetings may be called on an exceptional basis, to deal with matters requiring the immediate attention of the Board.

There are three sub-committees of the Board: the Audit and Risk Committee; the Remuneration Committee, and the Nominations Committee. While we try to keep the time commitment of individual members manageable, you may be asked to join one or more of these committees which meet up to four times a year.

Attendance at other events such as graduation ceremonies and stakeholder events both internally and on occasion externally in an ambassadorial capacity for the University, is expected, promoting its activities in the wider community.

## Location

The University is based at the Waterfront Building, 19 Neptune Quay, Ipswich IP4 1QJ. Board meetings are held in person with some remote attendance at committee / ad hoc meetings.

## Length of Appointment

Normally three years, to be determined by the Board on the recommendation of the Nominations Committee. This post is eligible for re-appointment, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, to serve for up to a maximum of three terms.

## Annual Review

The Chair will hold an annual review with each Director to provide an opportunity to talk about how the Board works as a whole and their own contribution, and to raise concerns or development needs.

# Terms of Appointment

## Confidentiality

During your time as a Director you will receive information which is confidential. Papers which are confidential will be marked as such (and will remain confidential after the business is concluded unless stipulated otherwise) and some decisions and minutes (particularly where they refer to named or identifiable individuals or are commercially sensitive) may also be confidential. You may not, as required by law, save or disclose such information to any third party without prior clearance from the Board Secretary.

## Register of Members Interests

All directors are expected to declare proactively any potential conflict of interest arising out of business relating to the Board or sub-committee's agenda or from changes in your personal circumstances. The Chair of the Board (or Deputy Chair if it concerns the Chair) will then determine the appropriate course of action.

## Method of Appointment

The Nominations Committee will make a recommendation to the University of Suffolk Board who will grant final approval.



## How to Apply

To make an application, please click on the apply button, with the following prepared:

- your CV or equivalent biographical information
- a covering letter that sets out your motivation for applying for this appointment, and why you think your knowledge and experience make you suitable

We would be grateful if you would also complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Closing date is: **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

### **Recruitment timetable**

The closing date for applications is Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

Informal discussions with Starfish Search for selected applicants will take place in w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

Agreement of the final shortlist will be by the second week in July 2026.

Formal interviews for shortlisted candidates are likely to take place in mid July or early September. Some posts will require an immediate start; three will begin in March 2027.

