



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

CANDIDATE BRIEF

**Head of the School of Earth, Environment and Sustainability
Faculty of Environment and Social Sciences**



Salary: Grade 10, Competitive salary

Reporting to: Executive Dean of Faculty

Reference: ENVEE1862

Closing date: Monday 16 March 2026

We will consider flexible working arrangements

Overview of the Role

You will lead and manage the School of Earth, Environment and Sustainability (formerly known as the School of Earth and Environment), maximising strategic opportunities arising from the changing landscape of higher education and the University's strategic plan, whilst leading and delivering excellence in research and education.

You will be an active member of the University's Leadership Forum and of the Faculty Executive Team of the Faculty of Environment and Social Sciences promoting a coordinated approach to delivering innovative strategic academic development. You will be taking on a significant and complex leadership role in the Faculty, and must be able to lead with a clear vision, engaging others across the School, Faculty and University.

You will have the leadership skills, ambition and creativity to take forward the development and delivery of the School's academic strategy and objectives. You will thrive on working collaboratively in a busy and dynamic environment to enhance the reputation of the School with a focus on quality and excellence.

Academic credibility is essential. You will have a sustained track record of excellence in research and/or student education, combined with excellent skills in team working and collaboration.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

University and Faculty Responsibilities

As Head of School, you will:

- Actively contribute to the University's strategy and performance through membership of the Leadership Forum, University level committees and groups, and the Faculty Executive Committee, with a direct reporting line to the Executive Dean of the Faculty;
- Work collaboratively with your Faculty leadership colleagues to ensure decisions and strategic planning are made in the best interest of the University and Faculty as a whole;



- Consistently promote and deliver on Faculty agreed strategies and objectives both internally and externally;
- Work in partnership with the Faculty Pro-Deans (for Student Education, Research and Innovation, and International), the Deputy Dean, other Heads of School and Professional Service leads to develop and deliver the Faculty's academic strategies;
- Lead programmes of work to successful delivery as requested by the Executive Dean, and Deputy Dean and act for the Executive Dean as necessary;
- Represent the University and Faculty regionally, nationally and internationally, influencing external developments and sustaining partnerships to enhance our external profile and generate benefits for the University as a whole;
Actively role model courageous, values-driven leadership and lead a culture that enhances staff and student wellbeing and shapes a community where all feel that they belong.

School Leadership

As Head of School, you will:

- Provide strategic vision, direction and inspirational leadership for the academic development and delivery of the School's plans;
- Support and promote collaboration across all academic activities;
- Promote excellence in student education with a focus on the student experience and measurable outcomes;
- Support and encourage excellence in research, innovation and impact, providing an enabling environment;
- Support and deliver the international strategy and objectives through engagement in building a strong international profile for the School and promoting its reputation and impact;
- Take responsibility and accountability for the overall performance of the School through its finances and cost control, staff and structures, processes and procedures, monitoring performance against plans;
- Lead, manage and support the development of all School staff, ensuring that talent management and succession planning are delivered, and promoting service excellence and quality enhancement;
- Promote and deliver continued improvement in equality and inclusion, including engagement with external bodies;
- Work collaboratively with professional service leads to ensure the delivery of high quality student and staff experiences;



- Ensure that appropriate structures and mechanisms are in place for the effective leadership of the School, and lead the School Management Team comprising academic and professional service leads;
- Ensure the effective implementation of the University's health, safety and wellbeing policies and management systems within the School and support our sustainability agenda.

These duties provide a framework for the role and should not be regarded as a definitive list. Other reasonable duties may be required consistent with the grade of the post.

Qualifications and skills

As Head of School, you will have:

Essential

- Experience of academic leadership, with a clear vision and the ability to engage others in that vision;
- A PhD in a relevant discipline or have equivalent research or teaching experience;
- The ability to respond flexibly and with resilience to the demands of delivering a complex leadership role, and respond positively to changing priorities;
- A breadth and depth of academic expertise in research and teaching to build credibility and influence at all levels, internally and externally;
- Experience of developing and implementing strategy, demonstrating an ability to think and plan strategically, articulate priorities and imperatives, engaging a range of stakeholders to deliver change;
- A highly developed awareness of internal and external political issues, and higher education regulation with proven ability to operate effectively within these different environments;
- Evidence of effective and appropriate delegation, providing and responding to constructive feedback, monitoring and addressing performance, dealing with inappropriate behaviour and building trust and teamwork;
- Evidence of success in delivering results, effectively managing people, finances, and other resources to achieve these.

Key Attributes

- Significant creativity and judgement and the willingness to suggest and try new and creative approaches to problems;



- Proven ability to communicate difficult, challenging or sensitive information with tact and diplomacy across all staff levels, and to handle these interactions with respect and dignity;
- Highly developed communication skills with the ability to build and maintain effective and productive working relationships internally and externally;
- A commitment to creating an environment for staff and students that is actively inclusive, promotes equity, and supports diversity.

Terms of Appointment

As part of our ongoing recognition of, and commitment to, leadership roles at the University of Leeds, senior leadership appointments are made on an ongoing (not termed) basis. These roles require significant focus and will require the post holder to use their judgment as regards the allocation of their time. However, we would ordinarily expect leadership responsibilities in such senior roles to absorb circa 0.8 FTE, leaving the remainder of time for the pursuit of your academic activity. Any additional support will be by negotiation with the Faculty Executive Dean.

How to Apply

For an informal, confidential discussion, please contact Professor Paul Johnson Executive Dean Faculty of Environment, Faculty of Social Sciences at p.j.johnson1@leeds.ac.uk.

To apply for the role, please submit:

- A supporting statement (no more than 3 sides of A4) providing your vision for the School and how your knowledge and expertise equip you to carry out the role set out in the role profile.
- A curriculum vitae, detailing your qualifications, experience and most recent publications.

Closing date for receipt of applications: Monday 16 March 2026.



Additional Information

The University of Leeds

The University, established in 1904, is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK. We are renowned globally for the quality of our education and research. The strength of our academic expertise combined with the breadth of disciplines we cover, provides a wealth of opportunities and has a real cultural, economic, societal and environmental impact.

The University strives to achieve academic excellence within an ethical framework informed by our values. Leeds is truly a community, with more than 38,000 students from 170 different countries, over 9,000 staff of 100 different nationalities and we are in touch with more than 281,000 alumni in 190 different countries. A member of the Russell Group of universities, we are one of the UK's top ten research institutions and one of the UK's most prestigious and diverse universities.

Highlights include:

- Leeds is ranked 86th in the QS World University Rankings 2025.
- The High Fliers Survey has ranked Leeds in the top 5 most targeted universities by graduate recruiters.
- Leeds has a range of flagship partnerships, including with the Met Office on atmospheric science and climate impacts and National Centre for Atmospheric Science.
- We contribute £1.3 billion every year to the UK economy and students add close to £200m of international revenue into the City Region each year.

Our Strategy

Our institutional strategy, 'Universal Values, Global Change' 2020 – 2030, sets an ambitious, transformative roadmap over 10 years. It is a blueprint for a values driven University, rooted in our desire to make a difference in the world. Our University harnesses expertise in research and education to help shape a better future for humanity, working through collaboration to tackle inequalities, benefit society and drive change. We are currently undertaking a mid-term review of our Strategy and you would join the University at this exciting stage of its delivery.



Further information about the [University and our Strategy 2020-2030](#).

Our Core Values

The [University's core values](#) are as follows:

- Collaboration: We work together to achieve our goals and ambitions.
- Compassion: We are caring and considerate in our words and actions.
- Inclusivity: We are a community where everyone is welcome and belongs.
- Integrity: We are open and honest in our words and actions.

The Faculty

The Faculty of Environment and Social Sciences will be a new faculty in the University from September 2026. It will comprise the current [Faculty of Environment](#) and [Faculty of Social Sciences](#).

The School of Earth, Environment and Sustainability

As Head of School, you will lead one of the largest and foremost academic groups dedicated to a vision “to be a world-leading centre for high impact research and education in all areas of the earth and environment”.

The School continues to perform extremely strongly on the world stage, as evidenced by our exceptional performance in international rankings at the subject specific level. For example, in the QS World Rankings 2025 the School is placed 20th for Earth and Marine Sciences, 59th for Environmental Sciences, 15th for Geology, and 14th for Geophysics.

The incoming Head of School will be responsible for the leadership of the School's Strategy aimed at ensuring continued academic excellence and financial sustainability aligned to key societal grand challenges and the strengthening of external partnerships.

The school is formed of five institutes that act as academic homes for staff and PGR students:

- Sustainability Research Institute
- Earth Surface Science Institute
- Institute of Applied Geoscience
- Institute of Geophysics and Tectonics



- Institute for Climate and Atmospheric Science

Each institute hosts academics, PGR students, several research clusters, active seminar series and social events. Research and student education are carried out within five institutes which represent our core research areas, but much of our research and education is cross-cutting, tackling complex global challenges.

Student Education and Training

The School has a highly diverse learning environment offering a variety of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary perspectives across and within degrees. A research-based learning pedagogy infuses all our degrees, with all programmes including field courses and development of research skills to prepare students to produce investigative final year projects. Our students develop academic and professional skills in a supportive environment that builds up vibrant academic communities. The school has had NSS scores consistently above the University average for teaching.

The student education portfolio in the School covers three broad areas at undergraduate and postgraduate level: Environmental sciences, Geo-sciences, and Sustainability.

The school hosts six undergraduate programmes:

- Geology BSc
- Geophysical and Atmospheric Science BSc
- Environmental Science BSc
- Sustainability and Environmental Management BSc
- Environment and Business BA
- Environmental Geoscience BSc

and eleven in-person masters programmes including:

- Exploration Geophysics MSc
- Engineering Geology
- Climate and Atmospheric Science MRes
- Climate Change: Science, Society and Policy MSc
- Sustainable Cities MSc
- Sustainable Food Systems and Food Security MSc
- Sustainability and Consultancy MSc
- Sustainability and Business MSc
- Sustainability, Environment and Development MSc



- Ecological Economics MSc

In addition, the School provides a degree apprenticeship Geotechnical Engineering MSc, as well as hosting one strand of the cross-university natural sciences programme. The School is a leader in Sustainability education and has led cross-university programme development in areas of significant global challenges such as sustainable food systems and food security, sustainable cities and climate futures as well as helping to shape the University's sustainable curriculum strategies.

We have strong international partnerships underpinning our postgraduate offer including international partner universities (e.g. Nanjing University, University of Pretoria and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology); robust industrial links inform degrees including sustainability consultancy, and engineering geology with focus on the transition to a low carbon future.

Research & Innovation

We are a major international powerhouse for Earth, Environmental and Atmospheric sciences, and Sustainability solutions that has wide-ranging and positive impacts on the world that we live in. We are a large, research intensive, school with a supportive and friendly community of over 140 academic staff, over 160 research staff, a large number of professional support staff, and over 250 postgraduate students.

The School hosts the Yorkshire Environmental Sciences NERC DTN and has a leading role in the Understanding Uncertainty to Reduce Climate Risks NERC CDT, as well as being active partners in the White Rose ESRC DTP and several EPSRC CDTs hosted by other schools. Additionally, SEE hosts the directorates for national research centres: NCAS (NERC National Centre for Atmospheric Science); COMET (Centre for the Observation and Modelling of Earthquakes, Volcanoes and Tectonics), and we are founder members of the UK Met Office Academic Partnership. The School also co-hosts the EPSRC/ESRC Centre for Research on Energy Demand (UKCREDS).

School staff lead a number of initiatives supporting the university climate plan including the Priestley Centre for Climate Futures, a living lab, rewilding the university owned Gair Wood; the Leeds city climate commission and the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission, and Geosolutions, an initiative supporting an on campus geothermal project and research for the low-carbon transition. Moreover, the school leads or participates in several cross-faculty research initiatives including the Global Food and



Environment Institute (GFEI); Leeds Institute for Fluid Dynamics (LIFD); Leeds Institute for Data Analytics (LIDA), energy@leeds and water@leeds.

In REF2021 the school achieved the highest power index score of any submission in UoA7, reporting 9 impact case studies and over £100M in research income (from UK Research Councils such as NERC, ESRC and EPSRC, from the EU Government, the Royal Society, Industry and Charities). As a University, we are the recipient of the largest amount of competitive NERC funding in the UK (based on data from 2015-2019). The University and School have invested significant funds in our physical research environment, organisational infrastructure and facilities.

The School hosts a number of key research laboratory facilities including:

- Cohen Geochemistry Laboratory - An integrated laboratory suite designed and built for geochemical research in all areas of environmental geosciences.
- Ice Nucleation Laboratory - a range of instruments and facilities focused on measuring properties of atmospheric aerosol in the laboratory and the field.
- Sorby Environmental Fluid Dynamics Laboratory - which enable a wide interdisciplinary community to experiment upon a range of simulated natural processes, from flow-sediment transport links in alluvial channels, through to the dispersal of sediment in the deep oceans.
- Wolfson Multiphase Flow Laboratory – which has state-of-the-art facilities for investigating the multi-phase flow properties of fault rocks.

A diverse workforce

As an international research-intensive university, we welcome students and staff from all walks of life. We foster an inclusive environment where all can flourish and prosper, and we are proud of our strong commitment to student education. Within the Faculty of Environment, we are dedicated to diversifying our community and we welcome the unique contributions that individuals can bring, and particularly encourage applications from, but not limited to Black, Asian, people who belong to a minority ethnic community; people who identify as LGBT+; and disabled people. Candidates will always be selected based on merit and ability.

The Faculty of Environment has received a prestigious Athena SWAN silver award from Advance HE, the national body that promotes equality in the higher education sector. This award represents the combined efforts of all schools in the Faculty and



shows the positive actions we have taken to ensure that our policies, processes and ethos all promote an equal and inclusive environment for work and study.

Working at Leeds

We are a campus-based community and regular interaction with campus is an expectation of all roles in line with academic and service needs and the requirements of the role. We are also open to discussing flexible working arrangements. To find out more about the benefits of working at the University and what it is like to live and work in the Leeds area visit our [Working at Leeds](#) information page.

Information for disabled candidates

Information for disabled candidates, impairments or health conditions, including requesting alternative formats, can be found on our [Accessibility](#) information page or by getting in touch with us at hr@leeds.ac.uk.

Criminal record information

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

A criminal record check is not required for this position. However, all applicants will be required to declare if they have any 'unspent' criminal offences, including those pending.

Any offer of appointment will be in accordance with our Criminal Records policy. You can find out more about required checks and declarations in our [Criminal Records](#) information page.

