



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

CANDIDATE BRIEF

Operations Director, National Centre for Atmospheric Science



Salary: Minimum £75,912 plus market supplement

Reference: ENVNC1039

Closing date: 25 September 2026

We will consider flexible working arrangements

Operations Director National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS)

Are you ready to help shape the future of an internationally leading atmospheric and environmental science research organisation? Are you an exceptional operational leader with the ability to translate the NCAS strategy into practical organisation-wide outcomes? Do you have experience operating at a senior level, working with Executives, Boards and senior external stakeholders?

The National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS) is a world leading research centre funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). We are a global leader in atmospheric research and innovation, working to understand our atmosphere by examining the past, observing the present, and predicting the future. Our vision is to advance the understanding of our changing environment and enable society to adapt for the future by creating cutting-edge scientific insights, developing new and sustainable research techniques, and empower people to drive innovative and ethical environmental solutions.

NCAS pursues long-term research delivered through our four science programmes: Climate and Global Change, Weather Science, Air Pollution and Digital Atmosphere. In addition, NCAS provides UK research scientists and others with training, services and facilities in atmospheric science through the Atmospheric Measurement and Observations Facility), the Centre for Environmental Data Analysis, the Computational Modelling Services and our Scientific Training Programme.

NCAS is a distributed organisation that currently partners with ten host institutions, mainly universities, with principal sites at Leeds, York, Manchester and Reading, which act as employers for the workforce. This adds to its complexity in terms of communication, governance, finance, sustainability, people and demonstrating impact. A key part of this role is to ensure effective communication and consistent performance across the whole organisation.

NCAS works alongside NERC's other five research centres: the (British Antarctic Survey, British Geological Survey, National Centre for Earth Observation, National Oceanography Centre and UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology). For more information about NCAS see our website at <https://ncas.ac.uk/>.



This is a high-profile role within NCAS and the wider atmospheric science and environmental research communities. We are therefore seeking an exceptional leader capable of operating in a complex organisation and able to translate the NCAS vision into practical organisation-wide outcomes through, for example, making a key contribution to the NCAS strategy.

The role is a varied one and no two days are the same. As part of a small organisation the role holder must be willing and able to take on a range of tasks to support and deliver for the organisation. This can range from representing the organisation in meetings with senior stakeholders to providing hands on support at events and everything in between.

The successful candidate may come from a range of backgrounds, including the commercial, public, not for profit, research or academic sectors.

Main duties and responsibilities

As NCAS Operations Director, your main duties will include:

- Line management of NCAS Operations Heads of Service and Managers;
- Directing and managing the work of NCAS Operational Services -including finance management, governance management, People services, Environmental Sustainability, IT and communications;
- Oversight of operational budgets on behalf of the NCAS Management Board;
- Regular reporting to the NCAS Management Board and the setting of appropriate goals and metrics;
- Responsibility to the NCAS Management Board and Executive Director for all resource management, with a portfolio that includes Finance, People, Risk, Communications, Environmental Sustainability, Information and Operational Functions;
- Managing the NCAS risk register and to ensure the NCAS Management Board is appraised of changing risks in a timely manner.

As a member of the NCAS Management Board you are responsible for:

- Leading and supporting organizational change such as for personnel, communication, premises and governance;
- Providing top-level cross-organisation management and decision making,



working with other NCAS Directors to ensure that all organisational needs are met;

- Taking the leading role for developing and implementing the NCAS Communications and Engagement Strategy;
- Taking a proactive approach to engaging positively with external stakeholders at all levels, as a persuasive advocate for NCAS, to ensure that stakeholders' and partners' requirements are met and to maximise the benefits from external advice;
- Providing coordination and management of the NCAS external advisory structures, including the NCAS Science Advisory Committee and the external advisory groups for NCAS services and facilities;
- Acting as the senior external representative of NCAS on all matters of management, legal, financial and contractual relationship importance including the proactive development and maintenance of a close working relationship with NERC as the principal funder of NCAS and with the NCAS universities as research collaborators;
- Maintaining an effective and constructive working relationship with all other members of the NCAS Management Board, maintaining and promoting the NCAS values, culture and reputation.

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.

Skills and experience

As NCAS Operations Director, you will have:

- Highly developed emotional intelligence, political awareness, diplomacy and flexibility, with the ability to drive a culture of excellence and innovation;
- Substantial stakeholder-management experience;
- Experience operating at a senior level within a successful organisation, including working with Executives and Boards;
- A demonstrable and deep working knowledge of a range of operational disciplines, including finance and people management; A good understanding of the operational requirements of an organization aiming to achieve financial sustainability through innovation and commercialisation;
- The ability to assemble and motivate high performing and self-managing



individuals and professional teams;

- A proven ability to operate and deliver in a highly visible, senior and pressurised role;
- Excellent communication skills at all levels, including the ability to communicate with conviction the NCAS mission, vision and outcomes to stakeholders and be an advocate for the wider societal benefits of NCAS;
- An extensive understanding of modern equity, diversity and inclusion principles and practices;
- A persuasive leadership style, using coaching, support and communication as essential tools.

Personal attributes will include:

- Self-confident but approachable and grounded;
- Able to influence – including the insight to adapt as necessary;
- Ability to operate in complex, matrix organisations; exerting influence and authority;
- Ability to quickly understand the vision of the NCAS Management Board and translate into practical work streams and outcomes.

You may also have:

- Experience in a scientific research centre or managing research scientists in an academic institution;
- A relevant level 7 qualification such as MBA, ILM, CIPD or similar;
- Experience in supporting environment sustainability;
- Experience of Health and Safety responsibilities.

How to apply

You can apply for this role online; more guidance can be found on our [How to Apply](#) information page. Applications should be submitted by **23.59** (UK time) on the advertised closing date.

Your application should include the following:

- An uploaded **supporting statement** (maximum of two sides of A4) explaining why you are interested in NCAS and the role of Operations Director;
- An uploaded copy of your **curriculum vitae** giving full details of qualifications and experience.



Please note: If you are not a British or Irish citizen, from 1 January 2021 you will require permission to work in the UK. This will normally be in the form of a visa but, if you are an EEA/Swiss citizen and resident in the UK before 31 December 2020, this may be your passport or status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

Contact information

To explore the post further or for any queries you may have, please contact either:

Paul Monks, Interim Executive Director

Email: paul.monks@ncas.ac.uk

Additional information

As part of the role you will be required to travel regularly around the UK, including overnight stays. Whilst there is a degree of flexibility it is important that the role holder spends the majority of their working time in person in the office.

The role is based at NCAS Headquarters, Fairbairn House, Leeds. The University of Leeds hosts NCAS HQ which means that all NCAS staff based at Leeds are employees of the University.

This post currently attracts a market supplement. Further details will be discussed with candidates during the recruitment process.

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 under the 'Accessibility' heading on our [How to Apply](#) information page or by getting in touch by [emailing HR via hr@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:emailing_HR_via_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.



The National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS) is one of the six research centres of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). NERC supports its own research centres because it recognises the enduring need for long-term, sustained research programmes, infrastructure and associated expertise in environmental science. NCAS works alongside NERC's other five research centres (British Antarctic Survey, British Geological Survey, National Centre for Earth Observation, National Oceanography Centre and UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology).

NCAS pursues long-term research in Climate and High Impact Weather, Air Pollution and Long-Term Global Change. In addition, NCAS provides UK research scientists and others with services and facilities in atmospheric science through the Atmospheric Measurement and Observations Facility (AMOF - providing major ground-based observing systems such as radars), the Centre for Environmental Data Analysis (CEDA - providing data management and analysis services) and the Computational Modelling Services (CMS - providing access to computational models and analysis tools).

NCAS research programmes, services and facilities are provided by a dedicated team of around 120 permanent staff and a further 110 staff on shorter contracts.



The annual budget consists of approximately £15m from NERC for long term research and services, plus a further £15m from NERC and other funders supporting shorter projects.

NCAS is embedded within several universities and other organisations, including the universities of Leeds, Manchester, York and Reading along with the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory.

NERC contracts the University of Leeds to provide the NCAS Headquarters and to act as the lead organisation, with the other organisations operating under sub-contracts. A collaborative research agreement between NERC and the University of Leeds recognises the enduring need for a research centre in atmospheric science and consequently sets out NERC's long term commitment to NCAS.

The NCAS Headquarters in Leeds provides the organisational services, coordination and management to enable NCAS to be delivered by the consortium of institutions distributed around the country in a way which also emphasises the collaboration between NCAS and its members, at staff and institutional levels.

The roles of NCAS are wide-ranging and diverse. They include research into the most challenging questions in environmental and climate science, provision of major infrastructure such as aircraft, radars, high performance computing and large computational models, and expert advice to the UK government, industry and society more widely. For example, NCAS leads a long-term programme of research into the changing climate of the North Atlantic and the impacts of these changes on the UK.

NCAS manages and carries out large observational campaigns internationally, often deploying its aircraft and major ground-based observing systems around the world. From time to time NCAS supports the response to national emergencies such as the volcanic ash threat to aviation in 2010 (deploying its observational and modelling capabilities) and more recently in providing support in the form of advice and data services as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NCAS is also active in communications, training and outreach in atmospheric science at all levels, ranging from early career research scientists to schools and the general public.



The principal management group for NCAS is the Management Board. The existence of this board, chaired by the NCAS Executive Director, is mandated by NERC in its collaborative research agreement. The NCAS Management Board assists the Executive Director in all aspects of the operation of NCAS; it is composed of three other directors with executive responsibilities and four non-executive directors, three of whom are recruited externally. The Executive Director roles are: Science Director, Scientific Services, Facilities and Training Director, Deputy Director and Operations Director.

For more information, visit [the National Centre for Atmospheric Science Website](#).

Read our [NCAS Strategy 2020-2025](#).

Read about [equality, diversity and inclusion at NCAS](#).

