

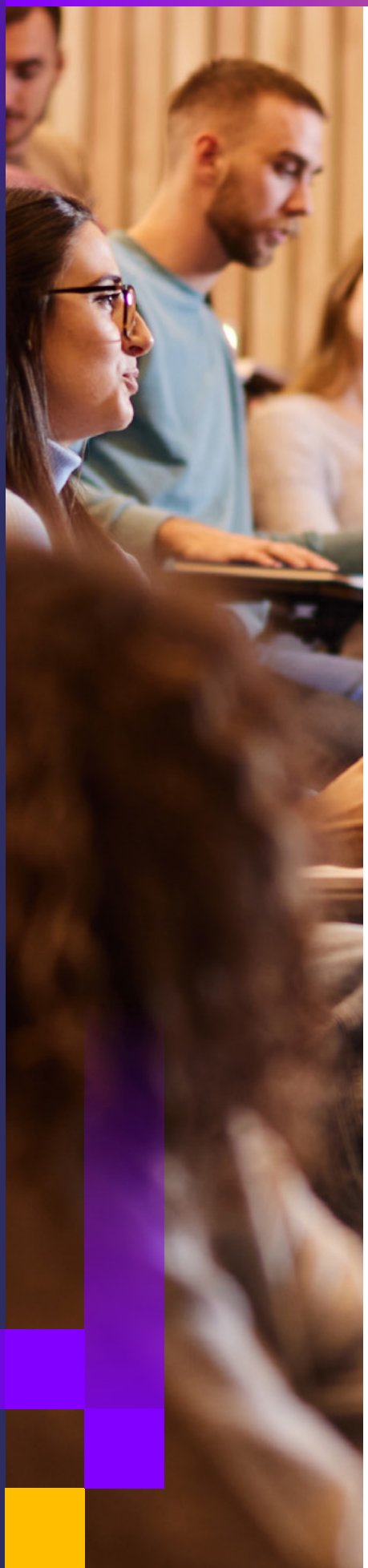
Arts and Humanities Research Council

Arts and Humanities Research Council Executive Chair

Candidate Prospectus
November 2026



About AHRC

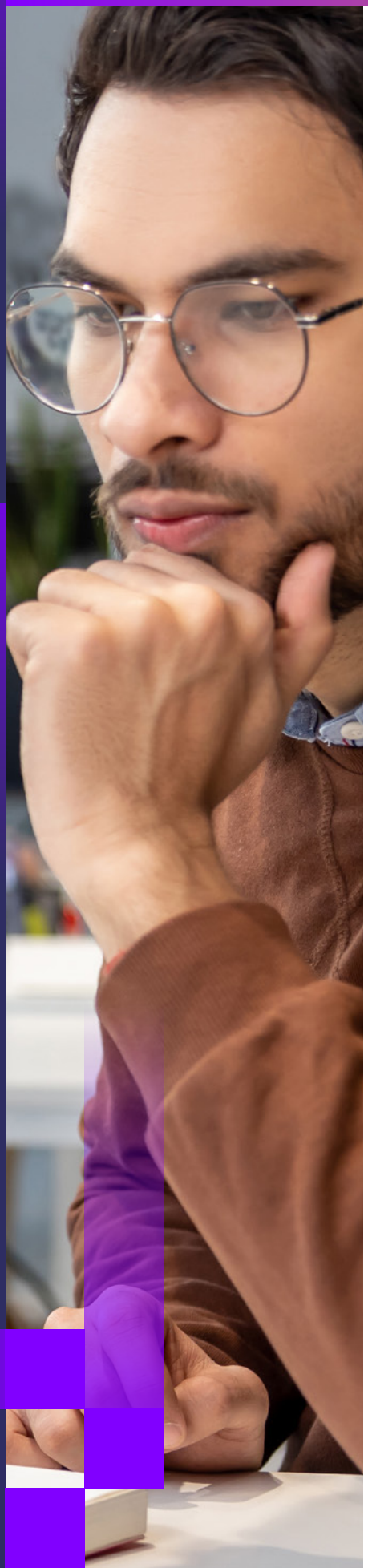


The AHRC is the UK's largest investor in research and innovation and advanced skills development across the range of arts and humanities.

Our ambition is to sustain a rich, diverse, and powerfully creative research ecosystem, which will engage across research and innovation disciplines and with stakeholders in the UK and globally. The AHRC is committed to a holistic vision of science, in which humanities and arts research is enriched and emboldened by engagement with technology, medicine and our environment, and informs and enriches those disciplines in turn. AHRC plays a fulsome role in delivering UKRI's overall mission to advance knowledge, to improve lives and to drive economic growth.

The AHRC reflects and supports a hugely diverse research community. AHRC invests in world-class research in all regions and nations of the UK, distributing funds with excellence at its core, and deeply committed to international connectivity. AHRC has spearheaded a successful collaboration of public and private partners in the Creative Industries, drawing on the strength of content and creativity among our researchers and our delivery partner organisations to provide outcomes that improve the lives of the UK public and enhance their economic opportunity.

About the role



The Executive Chair of AHRC will be an innovative, distinguished research and/or innovation leader with international standing who can drive forward world-class independent R&I across the full range of disciplines in which we invest. AHRC's research addresses some of society's biggest challenges, such as tackling modern slavery, exploring the ethical implications of artificial intelligence and understanding what it is to be human.

What sets AHRC apart is the scale and ambition of the projects supported, their appetite for innovation across disciplinary and sectoral boundaries, their global reach and the leadership offered to UK arts and humanities research as a whole.

Leading a team of over 100 staff across multiple locations, the Executive Chair, working with the AHRC council, is responsible for setting the strategic vision for AHRC and investing a record UK budget for arts, humanities and creative industries to maximise the output achieved for the UK public.

The Executive Chair is also a full participant in the leadership of UKRI. As a visible and credible leader of both AHRC and UKRI, you will provide direction, ensuring delivery of far-reaching research, skills development and infrastructure investment goals with demonstrable outputs and outcomes.

You will also be responsible for delivering on the government's priorities for R&I contribution to the Creative Industry Sector Plan

As a member of UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Executive Committee, the Executive Chair of AHRC will be accountable to, and work closely with, the UKRI CEO and the wider Executive Committee, contributing to the collective leadership of the wider organisation. The AHRC's Executive Chair will also be responsible for leading and delivering one or more cross cutting areas for UK R&I.

Key responsibilities



UKRI's nine Executive Chairs have two overarching responsibilities.

Ensuring the health and vibrancy of their domain

Executive Chairs have delegated responsibility and accountability for a budget set through recommendations to the Secretary of State from the UKRI Board, which is in turn advised by the UKRI Executive Committee.

They have freedom to operate to deliver output from this budget, including through collaborative programmes with other councils, with advice from their council's council and aligned with the UKRI strategy.

Executive Chairs are also encouraged to work closely with, and expand their connections within, their domain community. This enables Executive Chairs to harness the strategic insight they gain to build key relationships across the R&I system and foster engagement.

Health and vibrancy of the entire UK R&I system

Executive Chairs should recommend a strategy to the UKRI Board, including making recommendations about, and holding responsibility and accountability for:

- the UKRI strategy
- collective UKRI budgets
- the leadership and delivery of collective UKRI activities

The following responsibilities will be key to ensuring delivery of AHRC and UKRI's objectives:

Delivery

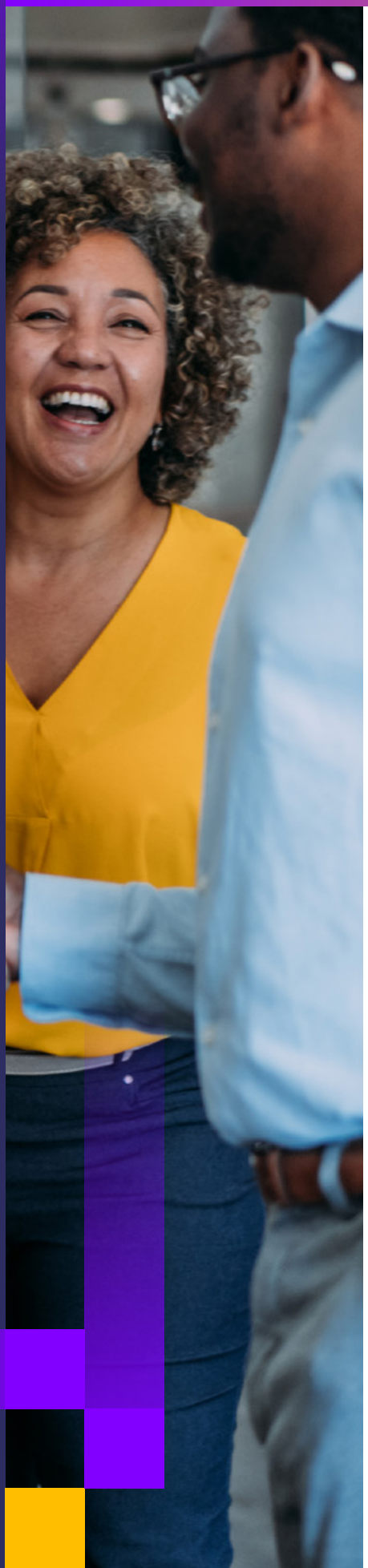
Executive Chairs should lead and manage the AHRC and its staff in the successful delivery of its objectives, providing the inspirational and inclusive leadership and vision to maintain and develop the quality, outputs and impacts of its research, skills and capital investment portfolio.

They should be a core member of the UKRI Executive Team to deliver best value from the overall R&I funding and policy system and actively contribute to the development and implementation of the strategy for UK R&I.

They will work collaboratively across UKRI's councils to foster interdisciplinary work and a whole system approach, and build on collective capabilities, providing support and challenge when required.

They will work with the Executive Committee, the Senior Independent Member of the AHRC and other council members to lead and develop AHRC's strategic approach:

Key responsibilities



They will work with the Executive Committee, the Senior Independent Member of the AHRC and other council members to lead and develop AHRC's strategic approach:

- To the funding of R&I, in relation to both directed and applicant-led programmes.
- To the funding of postgraduate and skills training and its investment in major longer-term capital projects.
- To ensure that the UK develops its world class position in arts and humanities R&I.

Stakeholder engagement

Executive Chairs should actively engage and consult with the academic community, business, charities, investors, government and industry to develop and catalyse new ideas and communicate the strategic outputs.

This will involve close engagement with the full range of stakeholders interested in arts and humanities R&I, including the creative industries and the design community.

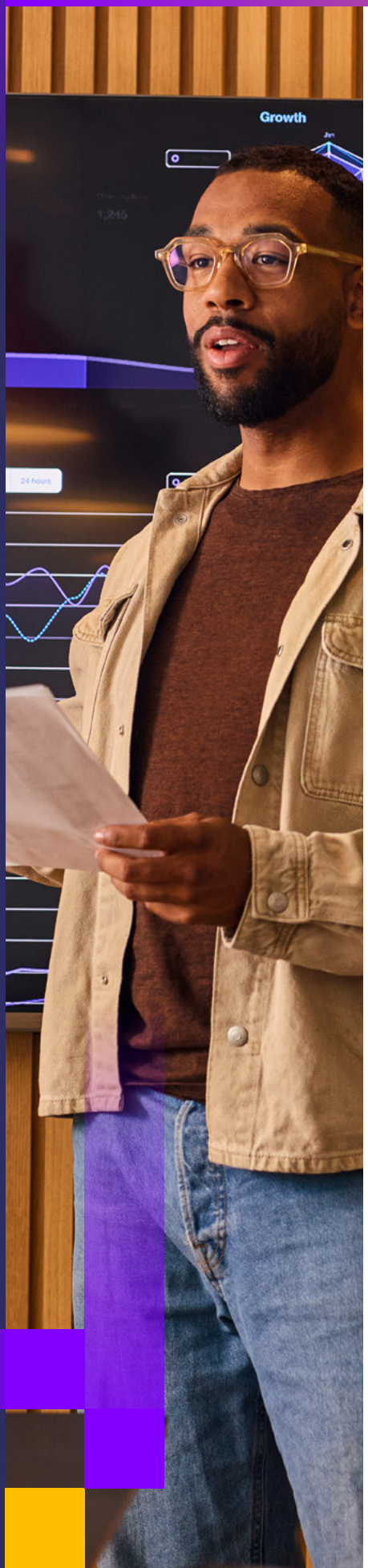
They should act to ensure UKRI provides a strong, unified voice for R&I in the UK and globally, both in facilitating the dialogue with government and partners on the world stage

They will represent and develop positive relationships between AHRC and its numerous and diverse stakeholders in government and public funding agencies, charities, business, higher education institutions, galleries, libraries and museums, academic and wider R&I communities, and the public at large and internationally

Finance, planning and analysis

- Maximise efficiency and ensure value for money from public investment.
- Ensure robust budget planning and financial control.
- Ensure robust analysis underpins decisions, evidences outcomes and maximises synergy between AHRC's objectives and the overall UKRI strategy.
- Ensure maximum synergy and value for money across the full investment portfolio.

Skills and experience



UKRI wishes to attract the highest calibre of candidates with the appropriate standing for this role. The successful candidate will be able to command confidence and represent the AHRC with its many stakeholders at the highest level, being able to demonstrate the following:

Skills, experience and standing

- A highly respected arts and humanities leader of international standing with a consistent track record of excellence in research and/or innovation.
- Politically astute with excellent interpersonal skills, able to influence, build and maintain strong working relationships with a wide range of partners demonstrating a collaborative and consultative approach.
- Commitment to the overarching goals of UKRI, and the health of a wider and more integrated R&I landscape.
- An ability to develop, lead and manage a clear and strategic vision for arts and humanities R&I through the development of high quality, value for money programmes built on a thorough understanding of AHRC's objectives and engagement with the partner landscape.
- A demonstrable ability of having translated research into application and economic benefit.

Leadership and management

- Demonstrable leadership and management skills within a complex organisation, able to evidence having successfully led cultural change and organisational development.
- Experience of managing and building capability of a cadre of skilled employees and programme managers and able to encourage and motivate colleagues at all levels in the organisation.

Breadth of understanding

- An ability to understand and demonstrate the highest standards of arts and humanities R&I and its wider relevance to and impact on the cultural, social and economic wellbeing of the country.

Terms of appointment

This role is offered on a permanent, open-ended basis. Whilst this role is offered on a permanent basis, we would consider secondments – should you wish to apply on a seconded basis please make this clear in your application.

Salary: £160k – £170k (based on experience). Plus an opportunity for performance related pay.

Hours: Full time. However, the role could be reduced to four days per week to allow for research activity to be maintained.

Location: Nationwide office locations available (subject to business requirements). Please note, this role includes regular travel to sites across the UK and international travel on occasion.

Nature of appointment: This is a ministerial appointment made by the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology. The post-holder would be an office-holder and an employee of UKRI.

Availability: Successful candidate/s will be encouraged to take up their appointment as soon as possible, following successful completion of pre-appointment checks and security clearance.

Indicative Timeline

The selection process will include an interview and a presentation, along with additional fireside discussions. Candidates may also be asked to complete psychometric testing as part of the assessment.

As these roles are subject to pre-appointment scrutiny, the successful candidate may be subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee.

Interviews will be in-person and will take place in London.

Please note that the timeline for this campaign is indicative and therefore subject to change.

Process	**Date**
Closing date	3rd January 2027
Shortlisting	W/C 4th January 2027
Interviews	W/C 18th January 2027

Please note that the role holder will be required to have the appropriate level of security screening/vetting required for this role. UKRI reserves the right to run or re-run security clearance as required during the course of employment.

How to apply

Please submit your application via the Careers Portal by 23:55 on Sunday 03 January 2027.

You will need to supply:

- A CV
- A supporting statement

You should aim for your CV and supporting statement to be no longer than two to three pages each.

Your statement of suitability should provide the following:

- Specific information about why you believe you would be suitable for appointment into the Arts and Humanities Research Council Executive Chair role and your vision for the role if successful
- Think about your knowledge, skills, experience and personal attributes, and take full advantage of the space available.
- Use practical examples where possible and ensure you refer to the essential criteria for this role.

Should you have any problem with submitting your application via the UKRI Careers Portal, please do send an email to publicappointments@ukri.org with 'AHRC Executive Chair' in the subject heading. A member of our team will be in touch.

General information

Equality, diversity and inclusion

UKRI believes that everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be provided with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed within an ethical and trusted working environment that is attractive and accessible to everyone who is interested in developing their career with us.

We are committed to increasing the diversity of our board and executive positions and bringing in talent, regardless of its origins. We encourage applications from all candidates regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity. We also value diversity of thought and experience and are committed to creating systems that value difference so that everyone can feel welcomed, included and nurtured throughout their time with us.

As a Disability Confident Leader, UKRI will offer interviews to disabled candidates who meet the published minimum requirements for a job or role. Whether you choose to apply under the Disability Confident scheme or not, you can still ask us to make particular adjustments for you when attending an interview.

We know actions speak louder than words. For further information, please visit the UKRI web page: How we support EDI in the workforce

Pre-employment screening

To enable us to hire the very best people and to safeguard our people and our assets, we will conduct comprehensive pre-employment screening on successful applicants as part of the recruitment process.

UKRI supports research in areas that include animal health, agriculture and food security, and bioscience for health which includes research on animals, genetic modification, and stem cell research. Whilst you may not have direct involvement in this type of research, you should consider how this aligns with your personal values or beliefs. Our pre-employment requirements include a security check and an extreme organisation's affiliation check.

The role holder will be required to have the appropriate level of security screening/vetting required for the role. UKRI reserves the right to run or re-run security clearance as required during employment.

In addition, and as part of the overall recruitment process, the successful candidate will also be required to register their Declarations of Interest.

Standards

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way.

Consistent with the Commissioner's Code of Practice, applicants will be assessed on merit, and all candidates will need to uphold the standards of the UKRI Code of Conduct and conduct set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are:

Selflessness

Holders of Public Office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

General information

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

Carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Complaints procedure

If you feel you have reason to complain, you should direct your concerns in the first instance to the Senior Appointments team (SeniorRecruitment@ukri.org) who will make every effort to deal with this and respond to you within 48 hours.

If your complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily, you can find information about the steps you can take under UKRI Complaints Procedure.