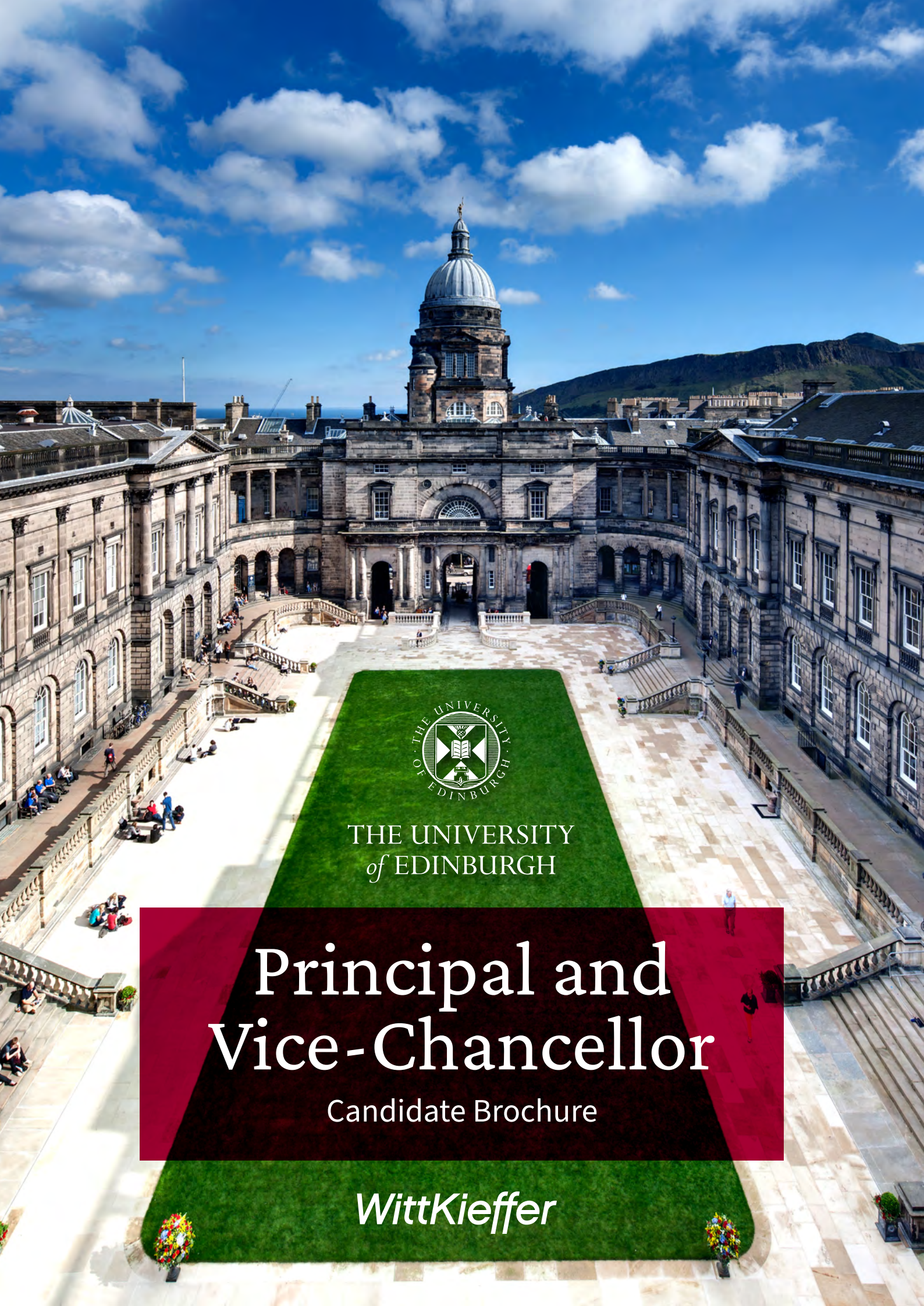


THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Candidate Brochure

WittKieffer

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Welcome
from the Senior Lay Member



Dear Candidate

I am delighted that you are interested in becoming the University of Edinburgh's next Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

The University of Edinburgh is one of the world's great universities, and this is an exceptional opportunity to make a significant contribution to global higher education from one of the UK's most influential and international cities. The successful candidate will lead a world-leading, research-intensive institution renowned for excellence in teaching, research and innovation.

In recent years, Edinburgh has demonstrated remarkable ambition and impact. We have invested in areas that will shape the future, including data science, artificial intelligence, health innovation and the transition to a more sustainable world. Landmark developments such as the Edinburgh Futures Institute, the Bayes Centre, the Usher Institute and the development of the UK's new £750m national supercomputer have strengthened our capacity to deliver world-leading research, attract exceptional talent and contribute to economic and social prosperity. Our partnerships with government, industry, the NHS and communities across the UK and around the world, position the University at the forefront of addressing society's most pressing challenges.

The exceptional renovation of Teviot, the world's oldest purpose-built students' union, alongside our significant investment in student wellbeing and support, exemplifies our unwavering commitment to fostering an outstanding environment in which those who study here can flourish and fulfil their potential.

At the same time, higher education is facing profound challenges. Edinburgh has taken significant steps to address financial pressures facing many across the sector, while ensuring that our institution continues to thrive and become a University of the future. The next Principal will harness the University's considerable strengths to secure its success in an evolving higher education environment.

We are looking for a values-led leader with exceptional communication and networking skills and a demonstrable commitment to the University's mission of advancing education, research and knowledge for the benefit of society. Resilience, ambition, sound judgement and the ability to inspire others will be important attributes, alongside experience of leading complex organisations through meaningful change. The successful candidate will also have the credibility and presence to represent the University on the global stage and further Edinburgh's international reputation.

Above all, our next Principal and Vice-Chancellor will share our commitment to ensuring that Edinburgh remains a university that transforms lives through education, advances knowledge through discovery and serves society through meaningful engagement and partnership.

This is a rare opportunity to shape the future of one of the world's great universities. If this resonates with you, I hope you will be inspired to explore the role further.

Yours sincerely,

Frank M Armstrong
Senior Lay Member
The University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh



At Edinburgh, we've been *influencing the world* for almost 450 years.

At Edinburgh, we've been influencing the world for almost 450 years. Founded by the town council of Edinburgh in 1583, the University was the first true civic university in the UK.

Work carried out at the University has always expanded the depth of human knowledge. It laid the foundations of modern economics and sociology, the Scottish Enlightenment, geology, English literature, quantum mechanics, electromagnetism, thermodynamics, antiseptic surgery, nephrology and the theory of evolution.

Today it continues its commitment to improving lives around the world. The University's research led to the discovery of carbon dioxide, latent and specific heat, chloroform anaesthesia, SARS, and the Higgs boson particle. It developed the Hepatitis B vaccine, the hypodermic syringe, the kaleidoscope, the vacuum flask, the ATM, the diving chamber and in-vitro fertilisation. It has advanced the public understanding of how our behaviours affect ageing, protected forest ecosystems, and helped bring broadband to remote communities.

Our community has long enjoyed a spirit of innovation and continues to do so today. Working with our partners and building on our strengths in data science, we have set out to establish our region as the data capital of Europe. We are entrusted to house the UK's national supercomputer. We are also working towards other historic firsts including new treatments for major diseases such as multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease and cancer; and doing innovative work to tackle climate change.

Our worldwide reputation for teaching and research attracts the international research community's sharpest minds, which in turn means excellent teaching.

We live in a complex, fast-changing world and we are honest about the significant challenges facing us all. We believe education is vital to solving those challenges and we relish our responsibility to respond to them.

As we all adapt to global challenges, the University continues its commitment to being open and inclusive. On campus and online, we widen access to higher education and bring people together from a range of backgrounds and experiences. We welcome people with new outlooks and perspectives into an international community that nurtures and values each individual and the contribution they make. Working collaboratively, we are open to change, leading in new technologies and committed to methods that can disrupt the status quo and overturn established ways of thinking. We do this without boundaries, in facilities where our students, academics and researchers come together with the public and private sectors to learn from each other and work in tandem to create new solutions.

Scotland's inspiring capital plays an important backdrop to all of this. Well known for its friendly people, its safe, green environment and its compact size, it is easy to get around and also get away from it all. One of Europe's great cultural hubs, made up of two UNESCO heritage sites and the first UNESCO city of literature, Edinburgh is large enough to offer something for everyone, but small enough to feel like home.

Facts *and* Figures

Founded by the city of Edinburgh in 1583, we were the first true civic university in the UK and one of the four ancient universities of Scotland.

4th IN THE WORLD
(QS Sustainability rankings)

50,000 STUDENTS

£1.48BN INCOME

£370M ANNUAL **RESEARCH** INCOME

35th IN **THE WORLD**
(QS rankings)

£7.5BN ANNUAL **ECONOMIC IMPACT** IN THE UK
(London Economics)

TOP **10** IN THE UK FOR THE **EMPLOYABILITY** OF OUR **GRADUATES**
(THE, Global Employability University Rankings 2026)

1st IN THE WORLD
FOR **CONTRIBUTION** TO **INDUSTRY, INNOVATION** AND **INFRASTRUCTURE**
(Times Higher Education (THE) Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026)

GRADUATES RANKED **33rd** IN **THE WORLD** BY EMPLOYERS
(QS World University Rankings 2026)

6th **BEST** STUDENT CITY IN EUROPE
(QS Best Student Cities 2025)



Leadership *and* Governance



The University Court

The University Court is the University's governing body and is the legal persona of the University. The Principal is an ex-officio member of the University Court. The Court includes a majority of external independent members alongside staff and student members.

More information can be found at **governance-strategic-planning.ed.ac.uk/governance/university-court**

Senatus Academicus ('Senate')

The Senate regulates the teaching and student discipline of the University and promotes research. The Principal is the President of the Senate.

While most Senate members are academic staff it also includes student and professional services staff members. A majority of members are elected to Senate whereas others are ex-officio members (Principal, Provost, Vice-Principals and Heads of College etc).

More information can be found at **registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/committees/senate**

The General Council

The General Council consists of graduates of the University, along with many current and former staff, the University Chancellor and University Court members.

It has a statutory advisory role to consider "the well-being and prosperity of the University" and can make representations on these to the University Court. The General Council elects the University Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, and three positions on the University Court are reserved for its members.

More information can be found at **general-council.ed.ac.uk/**

University committees

The University's committee structure is an important part of its governance processes.

More information on university committees can be found at **governance-strategic-planning.ed.ac.uk/governance/university-committees**

Edinburgh's Three Colleges

The University of Edinburgh's academic structure is based on three Colleges containing a total of 25 Schools.

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)

CAHSS offers one of the broadest ranges of academic choice in the UK, attracting students at undergraduate and postgraduate level from over 160 countries. Its student community is made up of over 18,000 undergraduate students, over 7,800 postgraduate taught students, and over 2,400 postgraduate research students. It also provides various pathways into undergraduate study, short courses and seasonal provision for approximately 2,600 students.

CAHSS is a vibrant and diverse community, committed to producing outstanding research and teaching that enriches culture and society, and enhances justice, well-being and sustainability across the globe. It has around 3,700 academic staff and more than 1,300 colleagues in professional services roles across 11 academic schools, the Centre for Open Learning, the Edinburgh Futures Institute and the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities.

It is ranked 9th in the world and 4th in the UK for Arts and Humanities, and 41st in the world and 8th in the UK for Social Science and Management (QS World University Rankings 2026).

College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)

CMVM brings people together from all over the world to learn to become biomedical scientists, doctors, vets, or to simply explore new ways of learning. It is a place where scientists have the facilities they need to explore the most challenging research questions, where clinical trials explore new treatment options and new ideas get tested every day. CMVM prides itself on being a place where ideas can grow, and people are given opportunities to flourish.

Its staff of over 3,330 delivers and supports research and teaching that earned a strong return in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework. Almost 8,500 people are studying in the College across post and undergraduate programmes in the medical school, vet school and biomedical teaching organisation. More than 3,000 are upskilling on postgraduate taught degrees, a further 1,300 are leading their own postgraduate research and 3,800 fill lecture theatres and teaching labs as undergraduates.

It is ranked 20th in the world for the overall subject area of life sciences and medicine, 6th for veterinary science and 22nd for medicine (QS World University Rankings 2026).

College of Science & Engineering (CSE)

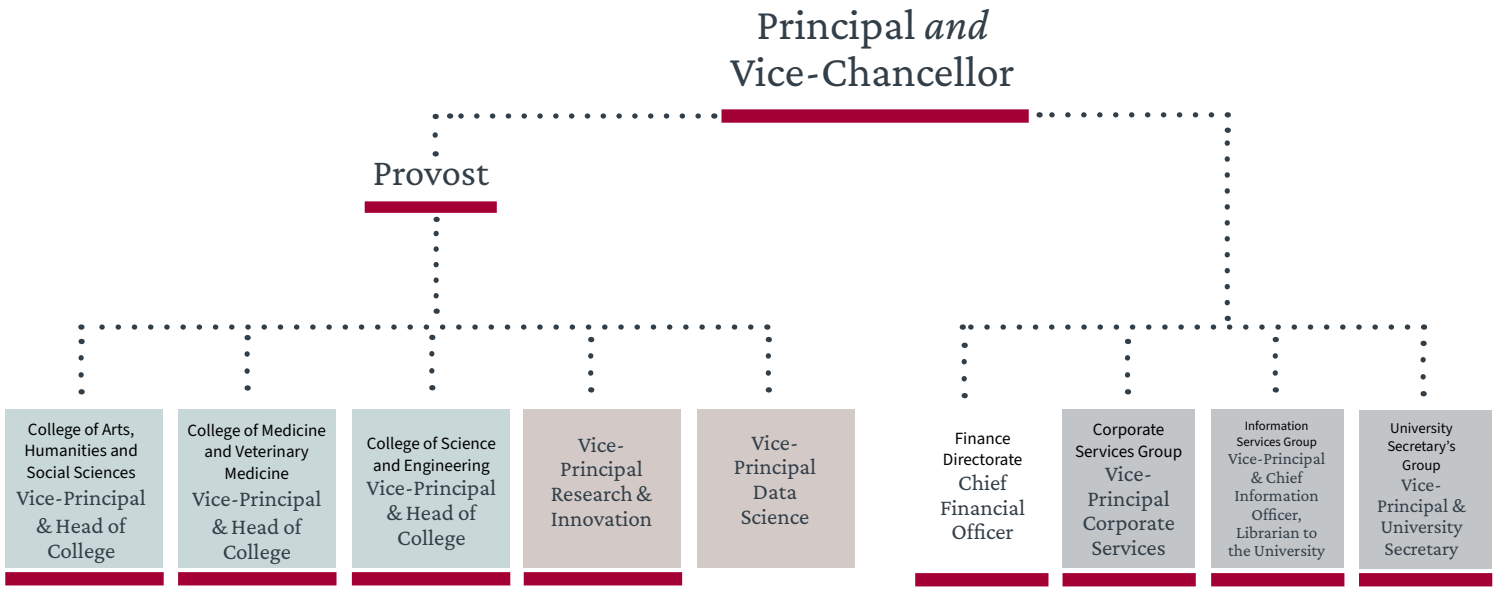
With more than 4,200 staff and over 11,000 students, CSE is one of the largest science and engineering groupings in the UK, and a major contributor to the University's global reputation and strategic ambition.

CSE conducts research of the highest standard across a broad spectrum of disciplines. Discipline specific research is impressive, but the College also focuses on interdisciplinary endeavour, creating transformational discoveries that enrich society. EPCC's designation as the UK's first National Supercomputing Centre, the donation of Peter Higgs' Nobel medal to the University and Royal Society of Edinburgh Research Awards granted to CSE staff are among the recent highlights.

In REF 2021, CSE's results were outstanding: 96% of research was classed as either world leading or internationally excellent, with 55% at the highest 'world leading' level. No university outside the Oxford-Cambridge-London 'golden triangle' achieved this level of performance across all schools and college centres. Two units of assessment ranked at the very top in the UK for research power (Times Higher Education rankings).



University Senior Leadership Team and Vice-Principal *Reporting Structure*



More detailed information can be found at

principals-office.ed.ac.uk/senior-leadership-team.

Key

- Senior Leadership Team Member
- Head of College
- Head of Professional Services Group
- Thematic Vice-Principal



Strategy *2030*

Vision

Our graduates and the knowledge we discover with our partners make the world a better place.

Purpose

As a world-leading research-intensive University, we are here to address tomorrow's greatest challenges. Between now and 2030, we will do that with a values-led approach to teaching, research and innovation, and through the strength of our relationships, both locally and globally.

Values

- We aim to achieve excellence in all that we do, always being principled, considerate and respectful.
- Our teaching and research are relevant to society and we are diverse, inclusive and accessible to all.
- We are ambitious, bold and act with integrity, always being willing to listen.
- We foster a welcoming community, where staff, students, alumni and friends feel proud to be part of our University.
- We celebrate and strengthen our deep-rooted and distinctive internationalism, attracting the world's best minds and building innovative global partnerships for research, teaching and impact.
- We sustain a deep allegiance and commitment to the interests of the city and region in which we are based, alongside our national and international efforts, ensuring relevance to all.
- We are a place of transformation and of self-improvement, driven to achieve benefit for individuals, communities, societies, and our world.

Strategy 2030 focuses on 4 key areas, each shaped by our values:

- People
- Research
- Teaching and Learning
- Social and Civic Responsibility



Our University in 2030

By 2030, we will be able to demonstrate the success of our strategy in the following ways:

- The undergraduate curriculum will support breadth and choice, preparing students, graduates, and alumni to make a difference in whatever they do, wherever they do it.
- We will be leading Scotland's commitment to widening participation.
- We will see our research having a greater impact as a result of partnership, international reach and investment in emergent disciplines.
- Improved digital outreach will see us enabling global participation in education.
- We will be a global leader in artificial intelligence and the use of data with integrity.
- We will be a destination of choice, based on our clear "Edinburgh Offer". All of our staff and students will develop here, whether they are from Leith, Lisbon, Lahore or Lilongwe.
- Edinburgh will become the Data Capital of Europe.
- We will deliver inclusive growth, provide data skills to at least 100,000 individuals, and create new companies and solutions for global challenges.
- We will be on track to be a Carbon-Zero University by 2040.
- We will have created opportunities for partners, friends, neighbours, and supporters to co-create, engage with the world, and amplify our impacts.
- We will see integrated reporting of our whole organisational impact against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Our estate will be fit for purpose, sustainable and accessible. We will support learning, research and collaboration with our neighbours, businesses, and partners.
- We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work.
- Multidisciplinary postgraduate education pathways will support flexible whole-life learning.

More information on our Strategy 2030 can be found at **strategy-2030.ed.ac.uk/**.

Global Edinburgh

Vision

We celebrate our internationalism, create transformational partnerships, strengthen our international research impact, support our diverse communities and increase international opportunities.

Global Action Plan 2026-2028

The University's Global Action Plan coordinates delivery of our international strategic priorities as outlined within our core missions of Learning and Teaching, Research and Innovation and Civic Mission. The Global Action Plan is overseen, reviewed and monitored by the Global Partnership Group, which is chaired by the Provost. The Plan can be viewed at **edglobal.egnyte.com/dl/xVHvTwTBdCjW**.

Key strategic partnerships

The University has partnerships with over 300 higher education institutions worldwide to collaborate on research, teaching and innovative projects. We have a further 190 global partners who we work with to offer our student exchange and mobility opportunities. Key strategic partners include the University of Toronto, Cornell University, KU Leuven, UCD, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, the Mastercard Foundation and Gujarat.

Networks and alliances

We have a long history of global collaboration and partnership across our teaching and research activity. We collaborate daily with university colleagues around the world - researching, teaching, reviewing academic papers, organising conferences and giving seminars. Our network and alliance memberships including Universitas 21, Una Europa, Coimbra, LERU, UNICA, U7+ and UArctic.



Research *and* Innovation

The University of Edinburgh is one of the world's top research-intensive universities, ranked 4th in the UK based on the quality and breadth of its research – known as research power – and is Scotland's top ranked institution, according to Times Higher Education's REF 2021 power ratings. In 2025 the University achieved £375m in research income.

Nearly 90 per cent of the University's research activity is in the highest categories – 4 star and 3 star – which are classified respectively as 'world leading' and 'internationally excellent'.

Three quarters of the research areas in which Edinburgh was assessed in REF 2021 – 21 disciplines out of 28 – were judged to be in the top five in the UK.

Based on our established excellence in discovery science and ambitions for our research, we have three areas where we aim to make a significant difference: shaping the future of health and care; harnessing data, digital and AI; and tackling the climate and environmental crisis.

> These are our research missions, full of stories of how our extraordinary research is *advancing knowledge, breaking barriers* and *unlocking innovation*.



Shaping the Future of Health and Care

We are empowering people to enjoy healthier, longer and more fulfilling lives, through innovation in physical and mental health and care.

Harnessing Data, Digital and AI

We are marshalling cutting edge data, digital and AI technologies to unlock solutions to a range of environmental, social and economic challenges.

Tackling the Climate and Environmental Crisis

We are helping tackle the climate emergency, marshalling our research to understand the causes and effects of climate change, and to help communities adapt to and mitigate its impact.

EDINBURGH INNOVATIONS

Edinburgh Innovations is the University of Edinburgh's commercialisation service.

It brings world-leading research to industry, working to identify ideas with value, and facilitating the process of bringing them to life in real-world applications. The University is ranked 1st in the world for industry, innovation and infrastructure by the Times Higher Education for a third consecutive year.

The University is recognised as a leading socially responsible and sustainable institution in the UK's HEI sector. We support the University's Social Responsibility and Sustainability commitments through our business practices as demonstrated by the University's Sustainability silver offices award.

We provide access to world-leading sustainability expertise at the University and are committed to working with partners to develop new solutions to help address the global climate crisis and deliver long-term sustainability for business.

The University is at the heart of the Edinburgh AI startup and spinout ecosystem. Activity is led by the Bayes Centre, the University of Edinburgh's Innovation Hub for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, in partnership with Edinburgh Innovations. Bayes hosts the AI Accelerator and Venture Builder Incubator.

Teaching *and* Learning

Our teaching connects academic excellence with experience, employability and an understanding of the value of creativity, curiosity and even failure. Edinburgh celebrates its students and the contributions they make to the world around them. The University attracts ambitious students and supports them in maximising their potential, preparing graduates to achieve success in whatever they do and wherever they go.

Recent National Student Survey results demonstrate sustained improvements in the student experience, with positive movement across all key themes, including teaching quality, academic support, learning resources and student engagement.

The University is committed to widening participation so that students from any background can come to study with us. We offer accessible, responsive and efficient educational services as well as personal, pastoral and professional support. We foster a culture of lifelong learning and attachment to our University community, letting every student know how much we value them, from the first time we meet them, to their graduation and for the rest of their lives.

We place the quality of the student experience above growth for the sake of growth and aim to keep our undergraduate community at a stable size. Our education provision increasingly draws on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary postgraduate and digital education.

Complex problems are rarely addressed from a single perspective, so we have created a radically different space as a home for shared thinking, teaching and action. At the Edinburgh Futures Institute we collaborate across disciplines, work with communities, businesses, non-government organisations, governments and other universities to plan for the future, and find ways to tackle the needs of our society.





Social *and* Civic Responsibility

Our vision is to make the world a better place, so we ensure that our actions and activities deliver positive change locally, regionally and globally.

Small changes to the way we work can make a big difference. We are going to reduce our climate impact, and buy locally when we can. We are going to support volunteering, build public engagement, and be a good and welcoming neighbour. We can also make a difference to individuals and communities in a number of ways; from tackling climate change, global justice and water safety to sustainable food production, information security and the impacts of rare diseases.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide a meaningful and comprehensive manifesto to which we will contribute.

City Region Deal

Our integral role in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal is a key aspect/strand of our commitment to civic responsibility. We are collaborating with local schools, colleges and universities, public authorities, industrial and business partners, and governments, to support the City Region Deal's ambition for Data-Driven Innovation and inclusive growth.

Working with partners, attracting investment, fuelling entrepreneurship and delivering inclusive growth are our City Region Deal aims.

Edinburgh *and* Scotland

Edinburgh is one of the world's great cities that has something to offer everyone. Whether you are seeking culture, history, diverse restaurants or a vibrant atmosphere, you are bound to find it in Edinburgh. Regularly ranked as the ***"Best Place to Live in the UK"***, Edinburgh is a city with character and elegance.



Culture and Entertainment

Home to the largest arts festival in the world, The Edinburgh Fringe Festival brings the month of August alive in the city where residents are spoilt with first class theatre, music, performance art and comedy all on their doorstep. The abundance of galleries and museums such as The Museum of Scotland, Scottish National Gallery and Scottish National Portrait Gallery to name but a few, means that there is always opportunity to soak up some culture all year round.

Edinburgh boasts the highest number of Michelin starred restaurants in Scotland and has more restaurants per head of population than any other UK city outside of London. The historic appeal of the city has led it to become renowned for its monuments and attractions including the Scott Monument, National Monument on Calton Hill and of course Edinburgh Castle which is particularly spectacular during Hogmanay with the world's biggest street party and fireworks extravaganza to match.



Transport

Air links – Edinburgh Airport is served by major airlines with direct flights to principal European cities, North America, the Middle East and Africa.

Rail links – Travelling to Edinburgh from other parts of the UK is easy by train and both Waverley and Haymarket stations are centrally located with support routes provided by the bus and tram networks.

Transport around Edinburgh – Edinburgh has an excellent level of public transport provision compared to many cities in the UK. The University is home to its own Transport and Parking Department and they can provide lots of advice on getting around the city, plus details on staff parking facilities on campus.

Edinburgh Districts

Edinburgh is a highly sought after place to live. Its beautiful city centre covers the Georgian splendour of the New Town, with its grand terraces, crescents, gardens and upmarket shopping boutiques and bars, and the narrow closes, winding stairways, and historic charms of the Old Town. Nearby communities such as Morningside, Bruntsfield, Stockbridge and Newington remain in easy reach of the city centre as well provide a local community feel. Explore all of Edinburgh's districts on our website.



The *Role*

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor will:

- Provide leadership and strategic vision with commitment to world leading excellence in research and innovation, learning and teaching, social and civic responsibility and to our people who deliver these.
- Lead the Senior Leadership Team to deliver the vision with a values-led approach.
- Drive a positive culture of collective achievement for the University's communities, creating an environment in which all of our people can thrive and where they are encouraged and supported to make their best contributions to our work.
- Lead a culture which strives for excellence in research ensuring we attract and develop outstanding staff to address tomorrow's greatest challenges.
- Ensure that excellence in education and the broader student experience is at the centre of decision making, working in partnership with the University's Students' Association and the entire student community.
- Engage all colleagues within the University community, inspiring academic and professional services staff to see their contribution as critical to the University's mission.
- Be a highly visible, compelling and persuasive advocate for the University, its achievements, contribution and priorities with a wide range of key external stakeholders and influencers promoting the University regionally, nationally and globally.
- Enhance relations with our large and growing alumni community and lead on securing philanthropic and charitable gifts from individuals and organisations to enhance the University's research, teaching, student experience and reputation.
- Lead the effective, long term and strategic management of our financial resources, people, estate and other assets to deliver financial sustainability and to support the University's long-term ambitions.
- As the University's Accountable Officer and member of the University Court, President of the Senate and head of the Senior Leadership Team and the University Executive, uphold excellent standards of governance and regulatory compliance.



The *Person*

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor will possess:

- Strong personal values and a values-led approach to leadership.
- Demonstrable personal and professional commitment to the University's purpose to advance education and knowledge for the benefit of society.
- An outstanding track record of strategic, dynamic, entrepreneurial, collaborative and emotionally intelligent leadership at a senior level at significant scale and within a multi-faceted and complex environment.
- The ability to develop and deliver a clear vision and strategic direction for the University
- A track record of delivering world leading research.
- Significant experience and a demonstrable positive track record in financial management and income growth.
- A commitment to excellence in student experience and in teaching and learning to deliver the highest levels of student satisfaction and attainment.
- The ability to engage positively with staff and students and to communicate decisions effectively with courage, honesty and empathy.
- The skills, judgement, resilience and sensitivity to enhance the University's global influence and to represent the University externally at the highest levels locally, nationally and internationally.
- A track record of leading transformational change and delivering measurable organisational improvements and outcomes.
- Experience in creating structures and processes which deliver risk management, financial control and accountability whilst allowing for agility, autonomy and empowerment in a large and complex institution.

How to *Apply*

The University is partnering with the executive search firm WittKieffer to support the selection committee in the appointment of the next Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

Applications should consist of:

- An up-to-date curriculum vitae demonstrating key responsibilities and achievements.
- A supporting statement (ideally no longer than two pages) explaining how your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role with reference to the criteria in the person specification.
- Completed applications should be submitted electronically to **gdrummond@wittkieffer.com**.

Search Timeline

The closing date for applications is 4 December 2026.

Further Information

For a confidential discussion about the role and expectations, please contact:

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T: +44 (0) 7408 834 744
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We are committed to ensuring that anyone can access our application process. Should you require access to this document in an alternative format, wish to apply in a different format or need any other reasonable adjustments made for you (including at interview), please contact pmcclellan@wittkieffer.com.

We value your privacy and want to be transparent, accountable and fair to you in the way that we collect and use your personal information.

*Our online privacy policy describes how Witt/Kieffer, Inc. and its affiliates and subsidiaries collect, use, disclose and secure the personal information we gather about you through our website, **https://wittkieffer.com**, when you use our site, apps and when you otherwise interact with us.*

*More information on our privacy policy can be found here: **https://wittkieffer.com/privacy-and-cookies-policy**.*



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