Appointment of Head of School for Computing & Communications

The Open University

2017
About the Open University

The Open University (OU) is one of the most important post-war innovations in higher education since its foundation in 1969. People of all ages and backgrounds study with the OU, for all sorts of reasons – to update their skills, get a qualification, boost their career, change direction, prove themselves, keep mentally active. The OU is open to them all.

Mission

The OU’s mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. The OU promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Through academic research, pedagogic innovation and collaborative partnership, the OU seeks to be a world leader in the design, content and delivery of supported open learning.

An outstanding student experience

The OU has become by far the largest university in the UK, offering almost 500 modules to more than 170,000 students, and making over 27,000 academic awards last year. It is now expanding its activities internationally, and its materials are used by other institutions in many parts of the world. The OU’s courses are intended mainly for employed adults seeking undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications studying part-time in their own homes or places of work, supported by personal tutors. Because the OU is a distance learning university, with the vast majority of students studying part-time for a degree, it does not appear in most league tables. However, since 2005 its students have consistently voted it into the top ten universities for student satisfaction, topping the chart several times. In the latest survey, the OU achieved an overall satisfaction rating of 86%; the Student Charter gives further insight into how the OU places its students at the heart of everything it does.

Open access to learning

Most importantly, however, the OU lives up to its name. It is the only university where no qualifications are required for entry to its undergraduate courses. It is a world leader in open access, supported open learning and open educational resources (OER) For example, 37,000 unique users a day use its Virtual Learning Environment, it has Europe’s largest presence on YouTube EDU, and there are now more than 80 iTunesU courses. The OU funds FutureLearn, a social learning platform that reaches 190 countries and territories and brings together free online courses from 70 leading international universities and cultural partners, with almost 3 million learners. The OU is playing a leading role in the transition to mass higher education by serving an increasingly large and diverse student body. It is also contributing to a widening of educational opportunities by making its programmes, courses and services available throughout the UK and beyond, and it uses distance-teaching methods, new learning technologies and new teaching techniques to serve the broadest cross-section of students. The OU is a vibrant academic community, dedicated to the expansion, refinement and sharing of knowledge and understanding.

A unique institution

The OU is special because it is unique. Its distance learning approach sets it apart from other universities. At the heart of the OU’s teaching are its faculties, schools and institutes producing high-quality courses underpinned by an internationally excellent research base. The innovative research to emerge from the OU influences policy and enriches lives, and the University secures some £20 million of external funding annually. Often called a ‘national institution’, the OU is the only university to receive funding from all four nations of the UK, and it remains resolutely committed to continuing to serve all nations. It also has a unique relationship with the BBC, with 300 million views of OU programmes annually and almost half the UK’s adult population watching at least one episode of the co-produced Frozen Planet documentary series.
Values

In all its work, the OU stays true to a clearly defined set of core values. First, it is inclusive, playing a unique role in society by making higher education open to all and promoting social justice through the development of knowledge and skills. Second, it is innovative, leading the learning revolution, placing innovation at the heart of its teaching and research, continuously seeking new and better ways to inspire and enable learning, and creating world class research and teaching. Third, it is responsive to the needs of individuals, employers and communities, and dedicated to supporting its students' learning success.

Students First

The University is approaching its 50th year and has recently announced the Students First Transformation Programme to review and recreate the University for the challenges ahead. The programme will deliver over the next two years:

- World leading part-time distance learning and teaching with digital innovation at its heart
- A streamlined curriculum shaped to students' needs and adaptable to change
- High quality research focused closely on the teaching curriculum to maximise its impact
- Close links to employers to ensure the curriculum reflects the skills they need
- A redesigned University fit for the future

Location

The University has its headquarters on a purpose-built campus of approximately 110 acres in the south-east of Milton Keynes. 4,500 staff are based at the Milton Keynes campus and across the four Nations of the UK and there are more than 5,000 personal tutors. Milton Keynes is a modern, vibrant city with excellent cultural and visitor facilities. One quarter of the city area is parkland and Milton Keynes is in close proximity to beautiful countryside and villages. The city boasts exceptional transport links. It sits alongside the M1 and A5 and is 30-45 minutes by rail from London Euston.
As part of a wider University restructuring, the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) launched on August 1 2016. Led by the Executive Dean, the Faculty strives to be world leaders in inclusive, innovative and high impact STEM teaching and research, equipping learners, employers and society with the capabilities to meet tomorrow’s challenges.

Thank you for showing an interest in this role. This is a really exciting time to join The Open University and the Faculty of STEM. There are challenges ahead and our Heads of School will be key senior leaders in developing and driving the strategic changes required. STEM is the research powerhouse of the OU and the School of Computing and Communications (C&C) is a strong research contributor in the Faculty. Alongside this C&C has exciting opportunities across apprenticeships, innovative teaching across cyber security subjects and the potential Institute of Coding to develop and grow. I am looking for someone with great leadership skills, who rises to a challenge, is confident to bring forward ideas and who has a genuine belief and care for the students who study with The OU.

STEM is a great place to work and I look forward to receiving your application.

Professor Josie Fraser, Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

The STEM Faculty is comprised of the Schools of Computing & Communications; Environment, Earth & Ecosystem Sciences; Engineering & Innovation; Life, Health & Chemical Sciences; Mathematics & Statistics; Physical Sciences; and the Knowledge Media Institute. STEM at the OU has 700 staff and 1,800 Associate Lecturers.

The Faculty delivers over 185 modules across undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum, supporting nearly 19,000 students (full time equivalents) which is 29% of the OU total.

The Faculty generates more research income (circa £17M) than any other Faculty in the University, supported by a comprehensive laboratory infrastructure.

We are proud of our distinctive values and capabilities underpinning our aspiration.
We are inclusive:
We transform people’s lives, ensuring STEM education is openly accessible to many thousands of students from diverse backgrounds – our students express high satisfaction with their study experience.
We engage the public in exciting citizen science and engineering, including through free open educational resources, multi-platform broadcasting, and outreach to inspire the next generation and with programmes to encourage more women into STEM.

We are highly innovative:
We are at the forefront of innovative developments in teaching practical science and engineering at a distance, through simulated and remote access laboratories and practical experimentation.
Our high quality teaching and curriculum are informed by world-leading research, strong links with professional bodies and communities of practitioners, as well as by scholarship focused on continuously improving our STEM pedagogy.

We deliver significant social and economic impact:
- We provide STEM higher education at a scale and reach unsurpassed in the UK, with a sizeable international reach and further growth potential.
- We inject transferable STEM skills and knowledge direct into the workplace for immediate employee and employer benefit, as students combine study while working.
- The employability value of our courses is underpinned by accreditation from leading STEM Professional Bodies and Learned Societies, as well as partnerships and sponsorship with leading employers.
- Our high quality, applied and academically relevant teaching and research addresses real-world issues, delivering impact for industry and society, including addressing pressing STEM skill-shortages across the UK.
The School of Computing and Communications has around 80 academic and research staff, and is also home for a number of visiting researchers and both full-time and part-time research students.

Our current school objectives are:

- Transforming students’ lives through innovative and dynamic teaching enriched by world-class research and scholarship.
- Developing graduates with technical, analytical and creative skills who meet the highest expectations of employers and who can make a difference in their workplaces.
- Leading and shaping the digital revolution through people-centred, inter-disciplinary, collaborative research and scholarship that transforms society.
- Looking outwards to engage with individuals and external bodies, sharing our knowledge and developing mutually beneficial partnerships, so together we can create a more technically and socially aware digital society.
- Being a vibrant, agile and inclusive academic community that promotes academic excellence in all areas of teaching, research and external engagement.

We teach a comprehensive range of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. We have approximately 4770 full-time equivalent students registered for our undergraduate BSc degree. An example of our innovative teaching is the Introduction to Cyber Security MOOC (http://bit.ly/1pMMKhk), hosted on Futurelearn, which has been studied by over 140,000 learners worldwide.

We have recently developed a new apprenticeship degree programme and have received some strategic University funding to develop teaching excellence, innovation and leadership in cyber security. In addition the School is a core contributor to a consortium application to develop an Institute of Coding recently shortlisted for funding by HEFCE.

The School’s research is:

- **Empowering**: placing people at the centre
- **Situated**: focusing as much on context as on technology
- **Disruptive**: creatively disrupting discipline borders to give fresh perspectives and solutions
In other words, we focus on the use of technology to enhance human experience. In particular, the School’s research themes include security/privacy, software engineering, communication technology, human-computer interaction, ubiquitous computing, Computer Science education, technology enhanced learning, computational linguistics, the history of technology, and critical information studies.

We aim for, and achieve, international excellence in research and teaching, leading on many projects including smart cities development. The OU’s Computing research performed strongly in the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014) assessment, with 75% of outputs rated world-leading or internationally-excellent (up from 70% in 2008), and an excellent research environment (100% rated world-leading or internationally-excellent).

The School of Computing and Communications holds the Athena SWAN Bronze Award and is committed to transforming gender equality. One aspect of our success in this area is that the School has more female professors than male, which is unusual for the discipline.

Our strong sense of collegiality and community continues to shape and direct the interdisciplinary approaches used throughout our work.
The Appointment

The successful candidate will be appointed to the role of Head of School for three years initially (with potential for extension), after which they will transfer to a permanent academic position within the School, equivalent to their current role. The Head of School post is 80%, so there should be some time to carry out academic activities such as teaching, scholarship, research and/or external facing work.

The Head of School is supported by a Senior School Manager and office team.

Overview of the Role of Head of School

The Head of School will lead the development of the School, providing the vision and leadership to achieve its objectives, establishing the curriculum, staff base, and meeting the internal business plan targets.

Main responsibilities

Reporting to the Executive Dean

- Be a member of the Faculty Executive Team, contributing to overall policy development and academic and business planning of the Faculty.
- Academic leadership of the School, and of the School’s Leadership Team, fostering a vibrant, shared sense of academic community and purpose.
- Responsible and accountable for advancing and/or setting the academic strategy and plans of the School in line with the Faculty’s Business Plan and University Strategic Framework.
- Accountable to the Executive Dean for delivery, and for regular performance review, against an agreed School Plan, budget and associated key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Responsible for staffing matters in the School: including line management, performance management and appraisal, workload and capacity planning, and career and professional development planning for academic staff in the School.
- Develop and sustain appropriate School structures and processes for management, consultation, decision making and communication with staff (including Associate Lecturers) and students.
- Accountable for the student experience in the School through the fulfilment of the University’s and the Faculty’s responsibilities, working in collaboration with the Executive Deanery and relevant others.
- Plan and manage income and expenditure in order to ensure financial and academic sustainability, and to be responsible for the optimum management and development of the resources (academic staff, finance and accommodation) made available to the School.
- Ensure all activities are carried out to the highest possible standards and put in place the necessary evaluation and monitoring procedures to ensure both compliance and improvement: such procedures will include teaching, research, scholarship, enterprise and management of all resources.
- Comply with auditing, quality assurance and risk management procedures both internal and external.
- Responsible for implementing the University’s quality assurance and enhancement processes to ensure the continual improvement of teaching quality and the School’s curriculum, and compliance with University and professional accreditation processes.
- Undertake duties on behalf of the Executive Dean as required.
Overview of the Role of an Academic

All academic staff are expected to undertake a combination of the following duties at a level appropriate for their career stage:

Teaching

- To contribute to the development, planning, implementation and updating of a high quality and successful curriculum at undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels.
- To contribute to the direction of teaching and assessment / examination by the University, monitoring of samples of marking by Associate Lecturers, and to act as a member of examination boards.
- To contribute to the assurance and enhancement of the quality of teaching, learning and research within the School of Computing & Communications and the wider STEM Faculty, and in line with University standards.

Research

- To undertake a self-directed programme of collaborative research and scholarship in field that will contribute to the strengths of the School of Computing & Communications and the wider STEM Faculty, and at a level commensurate with the current standards of excellence in the Faculty.
- To generate significant external grant income as appropriate.
- To undertake research that is internationally excellent and leads to high-impact publications.
- To attract and supervise postgraduate research students.
- To participate in and host School and Faculty seminars and workshops aimed at sharing research outcomes and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

Outreach and Public Engagement

- To contribute to the outreach activities of the STEM Faculty.
- To participate in the national and international STEM community and learned societies.
- To enhance the reputation of the School, the Faculty and the University through scientific meetings and other activities.

Enterprise and Impact

- To apply/bid for, deliver, and manage individual enterprise activities (e.g. academic supervision of knowledge transfer programmes, consultancy).
- To further Faculty interests by developing and maintaining a network of contacts and engagements with businesses and government bodies as appropriate.
- To initiate and sustain activities that enhance the impact of your research and scholarship.

Administration & Management

- To engage with appropriate administrative tasks (e.g. workload planning, Career Development & Staff Appraisal).
- To contribute effectively to relevant academic or management fora.
- To undertake a programme of continuous professional development.
- To co-operate with the Open University in ensuring as far as necessary, that Statutory Requirements, Codes of Practice, University Policies, and School Health and Safety arrangements are complied with.
Person Specification

The appointed candidate is expected to have the potential and/or experience to work towards the University’s leadership competencies at the highest level.

Candidates need to be at Senior Lecturer or above (or equivalent), hold a PhD (or equivalent) in a relevant discipline, and evidence an appropriate academic record across teaching and scholarship, which includes research. The role holder will demonstrate the following core competence:

Management Capability
- Ability to provide exceptional and skilled leadership and management along with strategic direction to the School.
- Demonstrable exceptional team leadership and management skills.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Ability to delegate effectively.
- Demonstrable experience of line management.
- Demonstrable experience of financial management.

Collaborative
- Committed to the mission and values of The Open University and to achieving positive results for the University.
- Integrity and professionalism.
- Strong interpersonal skills, able to work effectively with diverse groups and individuals.

Change oriented
- A desire for new challenges with a high energy level.
- A strong record in the delivery of change with the ability to drive change across the different areas of the School.
- Ability to adapt and operate in an ambiguous, unstructured environment.

Influencing:
- Ability to influence policy-making and decisions within and outside the School.
- Manages and responds quickly to changing and, at times, conflicting priorities.

Strategic Focus
- Ability to develop a sound understanding of the University’s strategic priorities and how the School can assist in delivering these.
- Strong analytical and evaluative skills and experience and ability to use these, and contribute to strategy formulation and implementation at a senior level.

Relevant Experience:
- A strong record of academic leadership with the ability to contribute to teaching in the fields covered by the School.
- Good understanding of the UK higher education sector, including all of the four nations and international trends in higher education policy, as well as open, distance and e-learning.
- Good understanding of market conditions and trends in the cognate discipline areas together with the role of organisations, professional bodies and the activities of competitors in that field.
- Experience in the leadership/management of a range of senior and junior academic staff.
- Understanding of the principles and practice of effective resource and project management at a strategic level, including the coordination of the work of other staff and effective deployment of resources.
- Experience of institutional representation at a senior level.
- Experience of innovation and of creative development activity.
- Evidence of applying for and obtaining external funding, taking into account stage of career.
- A strong record of demonstrable internal and external impact, commensurate with stage of career.
- Ability to develop new partnerships within the University and with external organisations.
- A strong publication record in mid to top-ranking conferences and/or peer reviewed journals, commensurate with stage of career.

Education, qualifications and training:
- A PhD or equivalent in a relevant discipline.
- Evidence of business/management/leadership training and/or qualification, or comparable successful leadership experience.
How to Apply

If you would like to discuss the particulars of this role before making an application or for a confidential discussion please contact Michelle Leonard, Personal Assistant to the Executive Dean, to make an appointment on +44 (0) 1908 655034 or email: STEM-EXEC-DEAN@open.ac.uk.

If you have any questions regarding the application process please contact Andrea Barkham, Secretary to the Appointment Committee on +44 (0) 1908 659108 or email: STEM-Recruitment@open.ac.uk. How to apply guidance can be found: http://www.open.ac.uk/about/employment/how-apply-general-vacancies.

Applications should consist of a full curriculum vitae along with a covering letter of application (maximum 2000 words) addressing the role and person specification, and a completed short application form.

Completed applications should be emailed to STEM-Recruitment@open.ac.uk quoting reference 14065.

We promote diversity in employment and welcome applications from all sections of the community.

The closing date for applications is, Friday 10 November 2017, at midday GMT.

Please be aware that the Head of School post is a temporary role. You will be appointed to a permanent substantive academic post within the Faculty from which you will be seconded to the post of Head of School for a period of 3 years with opportunity to extend.

The substantive appointment salary will be offered according to skills and relevant experience and will be within the salary scales of Senior Lecturer starting from £50,618, and Professor starting from £65,229. An additional allowance will be paid during the appointment to the role of Head of School in the range of £12,000 per annum.

An appointment Committee chaired by the Executive Dean will consider applicants against the person specification, and shortlist for interview the candidates who meet the criteria for appointment.

Candidates selected for interview will be required to provide a Vision Statement for the School. As part of the selection process shortlisted candidates will give a 20 minute presentation to the School outlining how they would deliver their vision. After the presentation there will be the opportunity for School colleagues to ask questions. A rapporteur will feedback from the presentation to the appointment panel at the end of the interview. Further details will be provided to shortlisted candidates.

It is anticipated that shortlisted candidates will be notified week commencing 19 November 2017.

Presentations and interviews are currently scheduled for 29 and 30 November 2017.