

WE STAND FOR AMBITION.

University of
Kent

DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, INSIGHTS & IMPROVEMENT

Candidate brief – April 2025



Message from Interim Chief Operating Officer John Duffy

We are delighted that you have expressed an interest in the post of Director of Planning, Insights & Improvement, at the University of Kent.

As part of our transformation, we are setting up a new function to focus our approach to strategic planning and delivery and appointing a Director to lead it. Through this focus we will embed evidence-based decision making to shape the University's long term direction. The Director will provide leadership on a broad range of activities and initiatives that support institutional decision making and ensure the University is best placed to deliver against its aims and ambitions.

They will lead the development of strategic insights through data analytics, forecasting, and performance measurement to inform strategic direction, short and long term plans, portfolio and decision making. They will help us scan the external environment for trends and shocks that may create opportunities or risks for the University, undertake scenario planning and recommend responses. We will expect the Director to drive the creation of a culture that is highly performance and contribution focused, built on a foundation of equality, diversity, belonging and inclusivity and that inspires people to bring their best every day. They will need to understand the wider picture and how policies and procedures need to align and interact efficiently and effectively and help ensure they do so.

The Director will work with the Executive Group and University Council and will have the expertise and range of communications skills necessary to influence decision making at the highest level of the organisation and to build confidence in the new functions and its outputs.

This is a great opportunity to bring your analytical and insight skills to impact on a change of culture at Kent.



John Duffy
Interim Chief Operating Officer



The University of Kent

The University of Kent is moving forward, working to deliver our ambitious Kent 2030 strategy. We are building on our world-class teaching and research reputation to become a leading civic university, supported by progressive courses that place us at the heart of public and intellectual life.

We are a university embedded in our community at a regional, national and global level. We build relationships, connections and partnerships, bringing the University's skills and expertise to make a difference in the world.

We strive to be a community that empowers students from a wide range of backgrounds to find and shape their place in the world, where academics are free to explore and deepen our understanding of it.

Canterbury, our historic base, has been a hub of learning for centuries, while our Medway campus is at the heart of its region's cultural aspirations. We are proudly international in outlook with our Kent International College supporting international recruitment and partnerships with more than 300 universities worldwide.

We are determined to build on this to meet local, national and international needs. The Kent and Medway Medical School will bring vital skills to the region, while a growing Institute for Cultural and Creative Industries will support the fastest growing sector of the UK economy.

Our students are diverse, passionate and independent. They are thoughtful leaders, volunteers and co-creators. They decolonise curricula and help shape their communities.

Our highly rated, inspirational teachers, work with award winning staff to ensure everyone reaches their potential. We actively seek new ways to open up education, from online learning to apprenticeships, to support personal and community development as well as business growth.

We are home to some of the world's most influential thinkers, with recent biology research named among the UK's best breakthroughs of the last century. We are establishing an internationally renowned knowledge base in key areas including cyber security and digital accessibility.

By 2030, the combined talents of our students and staff will ensure we are known for our transformative student experience, groundbreaking discoveries and the significant role we play in wider society.



The Adair and Sarah Kammur FIRE



The context

As we work towards delivering our Kent 2030 strategy, we continue to put our students at the heart of all we do: offering courses that inspire and meet employer needs; providing facilities that add another dimension to their studies and a window into future career options; creating an environment where students are supported and challenged by academics at the top of their field.

The Director of Planning, Insights & Improvement will lead on the development of the University wide approach to planning, performance, continuous Improvement, and project and programme management. This will include policy analysis and horizon scanning, monitoring and reporting in performance, and preparing reports on progress (e.g. benefits realisation; return on investment; performance and benchmarking) for the University Council, Executive Group, and other Boards/Committees and stakeholders.

The Director will ensure evidence based decision making by integrating analytics, foresight, and planning to shape the University's long term direction. The role will deputise for the Chief Operating Officer as required.

The Director of Planning, Insights & Improvement will operate with a high degree of independence and will have substantial authority to make decisions, using judgement and extensive experience to resolve complex situations and issues.

Commending high stakeholder engagement and confidence in the University's approach to data, insights, and strategic planning process, the Director will promote a culture of continuous improvement.

The Planning, Insights & Improvement function will also provide the highest quality project and programme management including supporting with assessments of project feasibility, resourcing, milestones and due diligence, and ensuring business cases are developed with clear parameters and an emphasis on delivery of measurable success.

The team will work collaboratively with other professional services and academic schools, ensuring there is clear coordination to deliver on the University's priorities and that appropriate governance is in place.





The role

The Director of Planning, Insights & Improvement will support and guide senior leaders to achieve strategic initiatives.

The Director will identify future short and long term issues within the sector, coordinate possible responses working with the Policy Adviser and other key individuals, to understand Kent's specific position and ability to respond. This is within the context of a complex external context, in an increasingly competitive and financially challenging environment which may at times come into conflict with and work against University objectives.

Key accountabilities

- Lead on the development, implementation, monitoring and refining of a robust annual planning process which is integrated with student number planning and budget modelling, aligning University activities and resources to strategic plans and external regulatory requirements.
 - Lead the development of strategic insights through data analytics, forecasting, and performance measurement to inform strategic direction, short and long term plans, portfolio and decision making. Recommend and maintain KPIs and other measures to assess strategic and operational performance and advise on performance improvement, potential risks, and proposals for specific projects.
 - Scan the external environment (including, but not limited to the political, demographic and regulatory environment) for trends and shocks that may create opportunities or risks for the University, undertake scenario planning and recommend responses.
 - Ensure the provision of high quality management reports for Council, Executive Group, senior leaders and external stakeholders, to drive critical analysis of performance, promote continuous improvement, and to command confidence and buy in of managers and stakeholders.
 - Lead the University's work on improving data, business intelligence, and management information to ensure data quality, data reporting and data governance is fit for purpose and can underpin robust strategic planning and forecasting.
 - Provide oversight to the Project and Programme Management Office to ensure its activities and approach complement strategic planning and deliver necessary assurance on key projects to the Executive Group and Council.
 - Drive forward and embed process and continuous improvement across the university ensuring productive interactions and collaboration between different departments and teams across the institution to deliver business improvements.
- Collaborate with senior leadership to facilitate cross-functional working in delivering strategic initiatives.
 - Actively monitor trends in the HE sector and beyond, to identify opportunities and risks to inform the University strategy and performance, advise senior management accordingly, and coordinate the University's response.
 - Represent the University in discussion with external organisations to develop strategic partnerships and joint ventures and to ensure that the University's reputation is enhanced.
 - Lead, motivate and develop relevant staff, providing clear objectives and managing performance against these, to ensure that staff are appropriately motivated and trained to carry out their responsibilities to the required standards.
 - Support the creation of a coaching culture that is focused on continuous improvement. Demonstrable understanding that a foundation of equality, diversity, belonging and inclusivity is what inspires people to bring their best every day.

Salary

Attractive salary based on Senior Professional Services scale

Contract

Full-time and ongoing

Location

Canterbury campus; with work at other campuses including Medway

Responsible to

Chief Operating Officer

Responsible for

Planning, data insights, performance monitoring, project and programme portfolio management (PMO), continuous Improvement

Person specification

Leading with empathy, emotional intelligence, drive and collaboration, the Director of Planning, Insights & Improvement will bring experience of managing and implementing large scale projects and initiatives.

You will be able to demonstrate the following skills, experience, abilities and personal interests:

The person specification details the necessary skills, qualifications, experience or other attributes needed to carry out the job. Applications will be measured against the criteria published below.

Selection panels will be looking for clear evidence and examples in an application, CV and/or cover letter, which backup any assertions made in relation to each criterion.

Essential

- Degree in a relevant field, or equivalent (A)
- Substantial experience of strategic planning and management relevant to academic strategy, planning, and performance, translating strategic plans and decisions into operational practice (A, I)
- Experience of managing large scale projects and initiatives and their implementation in a large and complex environment (A, I)
- Ability to effectively navigate continuous change and uncertainty by challenging status quo to drive continuous improvement, balancing long term goals and tactical execution, and acting decisively in the face of incomplete information and limited resources (I)
- Values collaboration, breaks down siloes, and promotes cross synergies, shared decision making and co-consultation/engagement with diverse stakeholders and team members, to achieve Directorate and University goals collectively (I)
- Leads with empathy and emotional intelligence especially in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, nurtures an open, trusting team environment and drives team and individual performance through coaching and co-development (I)
- Excellent and effective negotiation, influencing and communication skills, with the ability to deal confidently and diplomatically with a range of people (I)
- Ability to use sound evidence and insights to generate buy in and confidence of stakeholders and translate complex data to concise management reports (I)
- Strong financial acumen with experience managing budgets and resource allocation (I)
- Ability to think and act strategically working both consultatively and at pace (I)
- Firm commitment to achieving the University's vision and values, with a passion for a transformative student experience and outstanding research and innovation (I)
- Commitment to deliver, promote and champion equality, diversity and inclusivity in the day-to-day work of the role (I)
- Commitment to deliver and promote equality, diversity and inclusivity in the day to day work of the role (I)

Desirable

- Project management qualification (e.g., APM, PRINCE2) (A)
- Experience of working within, and substantial knowledge of, the Higher Education sector; cognisant of the challenges and strategic issues facing higher education (A, I)

Assessment stage: A = Application/CV/Letter; I, T = Interview/presentation/test (after shortlisting stage)

Additional information

Annual leave: The annual leave entitlement for full-time staff on this grade is 30 working days and 8 public and other holidays. There are also 5 additional days, which are taken between Christmas and New Year when the University closes.

Pension: You will be automatically enrolled to become a member of USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme).

Location: The primary location is at the University's Canterbury campus with regular working at our Medway campus, although the post-holder may be required to work from time to time at other campuses and centres, both nationally and internationally.

Relocation: You will be required to live near enough to Canterbury to perform the duties of the post fully. The University offers assistance with relocation expenses for those who have to move to the vicinity.

UK Visa & Immigration: You will be required to meet the current UK Visa and Immigration requirements for this position. Further information on Certificate of Sponsorship requirements can be found at www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk

Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity: We are proud to be a Disability Confident employer, supporting and promoting disabled people in the workplace. We welcome applications from disabled people and we will:

- ensure our recruitment and selection process is inclusive and accessible

- communicate our vacancies through a range of different channels
- offer an interview to applicants with a disability who meet the minimum essential requirements of the role as detailed within the person specification (Guaranteed Interview Scheme)
- anticipate and provide reasonable adjustment as and when required
- provide support to any existing employee who acquires a disability or long term health condition.

All University staff are expected to be aware of, comply with, and support the University's policies with regards to ensuring and promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity. Relevant training and development should be undertaken, as required. Further information about EDI is available from the University's website at: kent.ac.uk/hr-equalityanddiversity/

Childcare: The Oaks Nursery based at the Canterbury campus is an excellent benefit for staff and a great asset to the University.

Places are offered on a first come first served basis and baby places are particularly limited so staff may wish to make contact as soon as their pregnancy is confirmed.

Healthcare Plan: A corporate employee-funded healthcare plan partnered with Benenden Health is open to all staff.



The city of Canterbury

The University's main campus is in Canterbury; a vibrant, exciting and well-connected city with a world-famous cathedral. One of medieval Europe's great places of pilgrimage and knowledge, it has a distinctly cosmopolitan feel thanks to its international visitors and the students and staff from its three universities. Less than an hour from London, it takes little more than that to visit France.

People come to Canterbury from across the globe for its world-class heritage, for culture and festivals.

The city and its immediate area have an increasingly rich cultural offer. Turner Contemporary, the nationally acclaimed art gallery, is within easy reach. The Marlowe Theatre is one of the country's leading regional theatres complemented by the rich offering of the Gulbenkian Arts Centre with its cinema, theatre and a powerful youth programme. The Curzon Canterbury showcases independent films from around the world and the Sidney Cooper Gallery is a contemporary arts space in the heart of the city. The nearby Beane House of Art and Knowledge is an art museum and library.

Canterbury Festival, the Whitstable Biennale and the Folkestone Triennial are just some of the regular events taking place in the region.

Kent is often described as the Garden of England and you will find local produce in cafés, pubs and restaurants: Romney Marsh lamb, cherries, ale from local hops and award winning wine from Kentish vineyards.

Canterbury is surrounded by some of the country's most attractive landscapes. To the north of the city is one of England's largest ancient woodlands, the Blean, and a few miles away there is the seaside town of Whitstable. Dover Cliffs offer one of the most iconic views in the country.





APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications are to be submitted via the University's online recruitment system: <https://jobs.kent.ac.uk/vacancies.aspx>

You will be required to complete and submit the application form and upload a CV detailing career and achievements and a cover letter of no more than two pages that addresses your motivation and suitability for the role.

Deadline

The closing date for applications is 11 May 2025.

Interviews are expected to be held late May or early June.

If you need this document in another format to meet accessibility needs, please request this by email to: E.L.Milton@kent.ac.uk

University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NZ

kent.ac.uk

University of
Kent