

Candidate Information

Position: Head of School
School/Department: School of Biological Sciences
Reference: 25/112657
Closing Date: Monday 14 July 2025
Salary: Salary will be commensurate with stage of career, aligned with the professorial salary scale. An honorarium of £10,000 per annum will be payable for the additional responsibilities associated with the role of Head of School.
Anticipated Interview Date: Tuesday 12 August 2025

JOB PURPOSE:

This role will provide an exciting opportunity to join the leadership team of a Russell Group University and to innovate in highly successful education and research programmes across the breadth of the Biological Sciences, also encompassing agriculture, food and sustainable development. The Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (MHLS) has exceptional performance in external assessments of esteem and is responsible for significant new investment in infrastructure through the Belfast Regional City Deal which has a major focus on Health and Life Sciences.

The School of Biological Sciences (SBS) has over 220 staff and 1400 students, it was ranked Number 1 in REF 2021 for Agriculture, Food & Veterinary Sciences with 94% of research classified as world leading or internationally excellent. SBS is also ranked 1st in the UK for Agriculture and Forestry, 1st for Food Science, 10th for Animal Science and 15th for Biological Sciences in the UK by the Complete University Guide 2025. The School holds an Athena SWAN Gold award for its sustained commitment to gender equality.

The Head of School will report to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Medicine, Health and Life Sciences) and will play a key role in providing effective academic leadership and management of the School of Biological Sciences. The School Head will ensure that SBS continues to grow and drive forward from its current position of excellence as well as providing strategic direction to wider interdisciplinary opportunities across MHLS and the other University Faculties.

Supported by a Deputy Head of School and working alongside the Director of the Institute for Global Food Security (IGFS), the Head of School will lead the School Leadership Team which has responsibility for the development and implementation of the School's strategic priorities in education, research, innovation and internationalisation, which are aligned to Faculty and University strategy. The School Manager and a professional services support team will provide comprehensive operational support. The Head of School will represent SBS the Faculty and QUB locally, nationally and internationally and carry significant accountability for providing a coherent academic vision and direction for SBS as well as responsibility for financial sustainability and for the School's academic staff and student body.

MAJOR DUTIES:

1. Developing and articulating a coherent academic vision and direction for the School. They will lead on the development and implementation of integrated School planning, develop and support cross-School and cross-Faculty collaborations in research, innovation and education.
2. Provide academic and strategic leadership to SBS, working with and supporting the Deputy Head of School, Director of IGFS and Directors of Education, Research and Internationalisation to establish and maintain an environment of excellence and collaboration that enables education, research, innovation, internationalisation and scholarship to flourish.
3. Manage and monitor School progress against agreed key performance indicators and be responsible and accountable for all SBS operations, ensuring the effective management of all aspects devolved to Schools, to include academic, financial, personnel and health and safety matters.

4. Build, with their School Leadership Team, a vibrant, collegial School community and establish effective communication channels within the School and with Faculty and University as appropriate. They will encourage and support inter-disciplinary and collaborative working in education and research, with a commitment to improving the effective translation of innovative research and pedagogy towards real-world impact, both nationally and internationally.
5. Oversee the planning and delivery of education, research and outreach programmes including delivery of high-quality curricula, embracing innovation to deliver future ready graduates, promoting widening of access and ensuring that all programmes satisfy the requirements of relevant professional accrediting bodies. They will ensure that student wellbeing and student experience is at the core of School activities.
6. Develop a comprehensive people strategy to ensure the recruitment, support and development of high calibre academic and research staff to the School, with the proactive development of future leaders and succession planning as appropriate. They will ensure an environment of excellence which facilitates and encourages the development of all staff. They will be the accountable line manager of all academic staff within the School and will work with the Deputy Head of School and Directors within the School to ensure there is an appropriate allocation of workloads and academic contributions, to deliver the School's research, education, impact, internationalisation and other activities.
7. Collaborate with key stakeholders such as the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), the associated Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) and related governmental and industry partners to identify the actions and resources required to support the delivery of the education and research portfolios, ensuring that graduates address workforce needs and deliver societal impact.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:

1. A degree and postgraduate doctorate (or equivalent) in a relevant discipline.
2. Evidence of high-quality delivery of education and/or research and innovation at a senior level in an academic institution with a strong academic record and a recognised research or professional profile in one of the disciplines represented within the School.
3. Successful track record of academic leadership, team building and performance management with a leadership style that engenders a positive collaborative culture.
4. Sustained record of having a major contribution and leading in successful bids for competitive, peer-reviewed national or international grants or other awards as Principal Investigator, as appropriate to the discipline.
5. An established record of impactful teaching.
6. Demonstrable alignment with Queen's core values to enhance the reputation and performance of Queen's in local, regional, national, and international settings.
7. Demonstrable ability to undertake a representational role, both within the University and externally, and to communicate with people and organisations at all levels and in particular with policymakers and bodies in the public, private and community sectors and elsewhere.
8. A strong interest in the policy and management processes within the University and a thorough knowledge of current issues in higher education more generally.
9. Ability to identify, create and articulate a coherent academic vision for the School.
10. Skills in effective creation and leading multi-disciplinary teams and ability to motivate academic staff.
11. Demonstrable ability to think creatively.
12. Self-reliant and the ability to cope with pressure and conflicting demands.
13. Demonstrate commitment to developing the role of Head of School.
14. Excellent presentation, communication, analytical and problem-solving skills.
15. Excellent interpersonal, social, negotiating and team-building skills and evidence of ability to effectively chair committees and working groups.
16. Commitment to equality of opportunity for students and staff and to the development of Queen's as a pluralist institution.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA:

1. Demonstrable evidence of individual contribution, or as part of team, to the management of change within a university environment.
2. Demonstrable evidence of successful resource management.
3. Demonstrable evidence of leadership in the successful identification, development and implementation of initiatives and policies.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Queen's University Belfast is a diverse and international institution which is strongly committed to equality of opportunity and to selection on merit therefore we welcome applications from all.

Workload Allocation/Anticipated Commitment: The Head of School role requires a time commitment of approximately 4/5 days per week. We welcome applications from those wishing to work on a full and part time basis and are happy to discuss how the role can be undertaken alongside flexible working patterns.

The Head of School will become a member of the Faculty Management Committee and will participate as required in any relevant groups/committees on behalf of the Pro Vice Chancellor.

Informal enquiries can be directed to: Prof Alberto Longo - a.longo@qub.ac.uk.