

Candidate Information

Position: Director of Rugby
School/Department: Queen's Sport
Reference: 26/113439
Closing Date: Monday 29 June 2026
Salary: £51,016 - £62,695 per annum
Anticipated Interview Date: Friday 10 July 2026
Duration: 12 months

JOB PURPOSE:

To provide strategic leadership, management and development of the Queen's Rugby performance programme, delivering a high-quality, innovative and sustainable rugby environment that enhances the University's sporting reputation. The postholder will apply specialist expertise to design, implement and continuously improve a high-performance system, integrating coaching, athlete development, partnerships and commercial activity, while ensuring alignment with Queen's Sport, Ulster Rugby and wider University strategy.

MAIN ACTIVITIES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Strategic Leadership and Programme Development

- Lead the design, implementation and continuous enhancement of a high-performance rugby strategy aligned to Queen's Sport and University priorities.
- Identify trends, opportunities and areas for innovation to ensure the programme remains competitive within the UK and Irish higher education sector.
- Contribute to wider sport and institutional strategy through participation in relevant committees and planning processes.

2. Performance Programme Management

- Oversee and deliver an integrated rugby performance programme across all teams (men's and women's), ensuring excellence in coaching, competition and athlete support.
- Establish, monitor and evaluate performance standards, ensuring delivery against agreed objectives and benchmarks.
- Ensure professional standards and quality of service delivery across all aspects of the rugby environment.

3. Athlete Recruitment, Development and Pathways

- Lead the strategic recruitment of high-calibre student-athletes, promoting Queen's as a destination for dual career success.
- Design and implement structured player development pathways that integrate performance, academic progression and wellbeing.
- Develop and manage relationships with feeder schools, clubs and governing bodies to strengthen talent pipelines.

4. Partnership and Stakeholder Management

- Develop and manage key strategic partnerships, particularly with Ulster Rugby, ensuring alignment of performance objectives and athlete pathways.
- Build effective relationships across the University, alumni networks and external stakeholders to enhance programme impact and reputation.
- Represent the University externally, promoting QUB Rugby at regional, national and international levels.

5. Coaching and Workforce Leadership

- Lead, manage and develop a team of coaches and support staff, ensuring effective delivery of services and alignment with programme objectives.
- Provide leadership, mentoring and performance management, fostering a high-performance culture and continuous professional development.
- Establish coaching frameworks, standards and succession planning processes.

6. Service Integration and Performance Environment

- Direct the integration of multidisciplinary performance services (e.g. strength & conditioning, medical, analysis) to optimise athlete performance.
- Ensure the effective coordination of services across Queen's Sport and partner organisations.
- Monitor service delivery and implement improvements to enhance efficiency, quality and athlete outcomes.

7. Commercial Development and Income Generation

- Lead the development of sustainable income streams, including fundraising, sponsorship and alumni engagement.
- Identify and develop new commercial opportunities to support programme growth and long-term viability.
- Contribute to wider business development initiatives within Queen's Sport.

8. Governance, Compliance and Risk Management

- Ensure compliance with University policies, governing body regulations and relevant legislation.
- Contribute to governance structures and decision-making processes within QUB Rugby and Queen's Sport.
- Manage risks associated with programme delivery, ensuring safe and effective operations.

9. Resource and Financial Management

- Manage allocated budgets and resources effectively, ensuring value for money and alignment with strategic priorities.
- Contribute to financial planning and resource allocation for the rugby programme.
- Monitor performance against financial and operational targets, implementing corrective actions where required.

10. Innovation, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

- Use data, performance analysis and stakeholder feedback to inform decision-making and programme development.
- Lead the identification and implementation of innovative practices to enhance service quality and competitive performance.
- Drive a culture of continuous improvement and excellence across all aspects of the rugby programme.

11. Any other duties that fall within the general ambit of the role.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:

1. Degree (OR substantial equivalent professional experience) in Sport, Coaching, Performance or related field.
2. IRFU Performance Coach Award (or equivalent high-level coaching qualification).
3. Evidence of continued professional development in high-performance sport.
4. Significant experience in a high-performance rugby environment, including coaching at senior level.
5. Proven experience of leading and managing teams, coaches, and multidisciplinary support staff.
6. Experience of designing and delivering player development pathways and performance programmes.
7. Experience of building and managing partnerships with external stakeholders (e.g. governing bodies, clubs, sponsors).
8. Demonstrable experience in commercial activity including fundraising, sponsorship or income generation.
9. Specialist knowledge of performance rugby and athlete development systems.
10. Strong strategic planning and programme development skills aligned to organisational objectives.
11. Ability to analyse performance data and use insight to inform decision-making.
12. Financial and resource management skills, including budget oversight and income generation.
13. Strong stakeholder management and influencing skills across internal and external partners.
14. Knowledge of relevant policies, governance, safeguarding and compliance requirements.
15. High level IT literacy including performance systems and standard office tools.
16. Ability to communicate complex information clearly to a range of audiences (students, staff, external partners).
17. Ability to represent the University professionally at external events and forums.
18. Strong written communication skills for reports, funding proposals and strategic documents.
19. Strong leadership skills with the ability to inspire, motivate and manage high-performance teams.

20. Strategic thinker with the ability to identify opportunities and drive innovation.
21. Excellent interpersonal and relationship-building skills.
22. High levels of initiative, judgement and problem-solving ability in complex environments.
23. Commitment to athlete wellbeing, development and academic success.
24. Resilient, flexible and able to operate in a fast-paced, performance-driven environment.
25. Flexibility to work evenings and weekends in line with training and competition schedules.
26. Willingness to travel nationally and internationally as required.
27. Compliance with safeguarding, health & safety and regulatory requirements within sport.
28. Eligibility to work in the UK.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA:

1. Postgraduate qualification in Sport Science, Performance, Leadership or Management.
2. Experience within a Higher Education sporting environment.
3. Experience of leading large-scale sport programmes (100+ athletes / multi-team structures).
4. Experience working within elite player pathways aligned to professional clubs or academies.
5. Experience representing organisations at strategic or partnership boards.
6. Experience managing multi-stream budgets and delivering financial targets.
7. Knowledge of dual career athlete support within HE sector.
8. Experience contributing to institutional or organisational strategy.
9. Knowledge of performance analytics systems.
10. Experience managing complex or multi-year budgets.
11. Experience working across multi-agency or cross-sector partnerships.
12. Knowledge of University governance structures.
13. Experience with athlete monitoring systems.
14. Experience delivering presentations to senior stakeholders or committees.
15. Public speaking or media experience.
16. Experience producing formal strategic reports.
17. Experience mentoring staff and developing future leaders.
18. Track record of introducing innovative programmes or services.
19. Experience managing complex stakeholder relationships.
20. Experience leading change or transformation.
21. Demonstrated commitment to dual career principles.
22. Experience managing competing priorities and pressures.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Informal enquiries may be directed to: Aidan O'Rourke at a.orourke@qub.ac.uk