



Pioneering Futures since 1898

**Chief Financial Officer
University of East London
Candidate information pack**

September 2026



Welcome from the Vice-Chancellor and President

Thank you for your interest in joining the University of East London as our Chief Financial Officer.

UEL is at a defining point in its development. Over recent years, Vision 2028 has driven a transformation in our student experience, graduate outcomes, enterprise activity and financial resilience. We are proud of our distinctive careers-first mission: creating opportunity, connecting education to employment and ensuring that talent, rather than background, determines what comes next.

We are now looking beyond the conventional boundaries of a single university. Forward to 2040 is intended to build on that progress and create a more global, connected and entrepreneurial education group: developing international hubs, new routes to market, technology-enabled propositions and commercial partnerships, while retaining the public purpose and inclusive mission at the heart of UEL.

The CFO will be one of the principal architects of that next phase. Reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Group Chief Executive, and working closely with me, our Board and colleagues across the organisation, they will bring the financial leadership, commercial judgement and group-building experience needed to turn ambition into sustainable delivery. This is a role for someone who enjoys creating as well as stewarding: building structures and disciplines that enable growth, challenging constructively, and operating with pace in an organisation that is prepared to test, learn and adapt.

I hope this pack gives you a sense both of the scale of our ambition and of the purpose that underpins it. I look forward to meeting candidates who are excited by the opportunity to help shape what UEL becomes next.

Professor Amanda J. Broderick
Vice-Chancellor and President



About the University of East London

The University of East London has been pioneering futures since 1898. Based in one of the world's most diverse and dynamic cities, UEL is a modern, inclusive university with a long-standing commitment to widening opportunity and transforming lives through education, research and enterprise.

UEL's ambition is to be the UK's leading careers-first university. Its educational model is designed around the future economy, embedding employability, professional experience, enterprise and employer engagement throughout the student journey. The UEL Careers Guarantee connects learning to opportunity from day one, while the Mental Wealth and Professional Fitness curriculum develops the digital, emotional, social and cognitive capabilities sought by employers.

The University operates from campuses in Docklands and Stratford and has a substantial international and partnership footprint. Its community is highly diverse, with students drawn from London, the UK and around the world.

University of the Year for Student Support 2027

Daily Mail 2027

University of the Year

for Teaching Quality

The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2025

1st in England for overall positivity

National Student Survey 2026 (Times Higher Education methodology / universities with over 1,000 survey responses)

Biggest rise of any UK university

Climbing 56 places in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2027*, ranking first among London's full-range modern universities and 58th nationally.

Top 40 UK university and top 6 in London

Guardian University Guide 2026

Fastest-rising university in London

for graduate employability

Graduate Outcomes Survey 2026

UEL today: scale and momentum

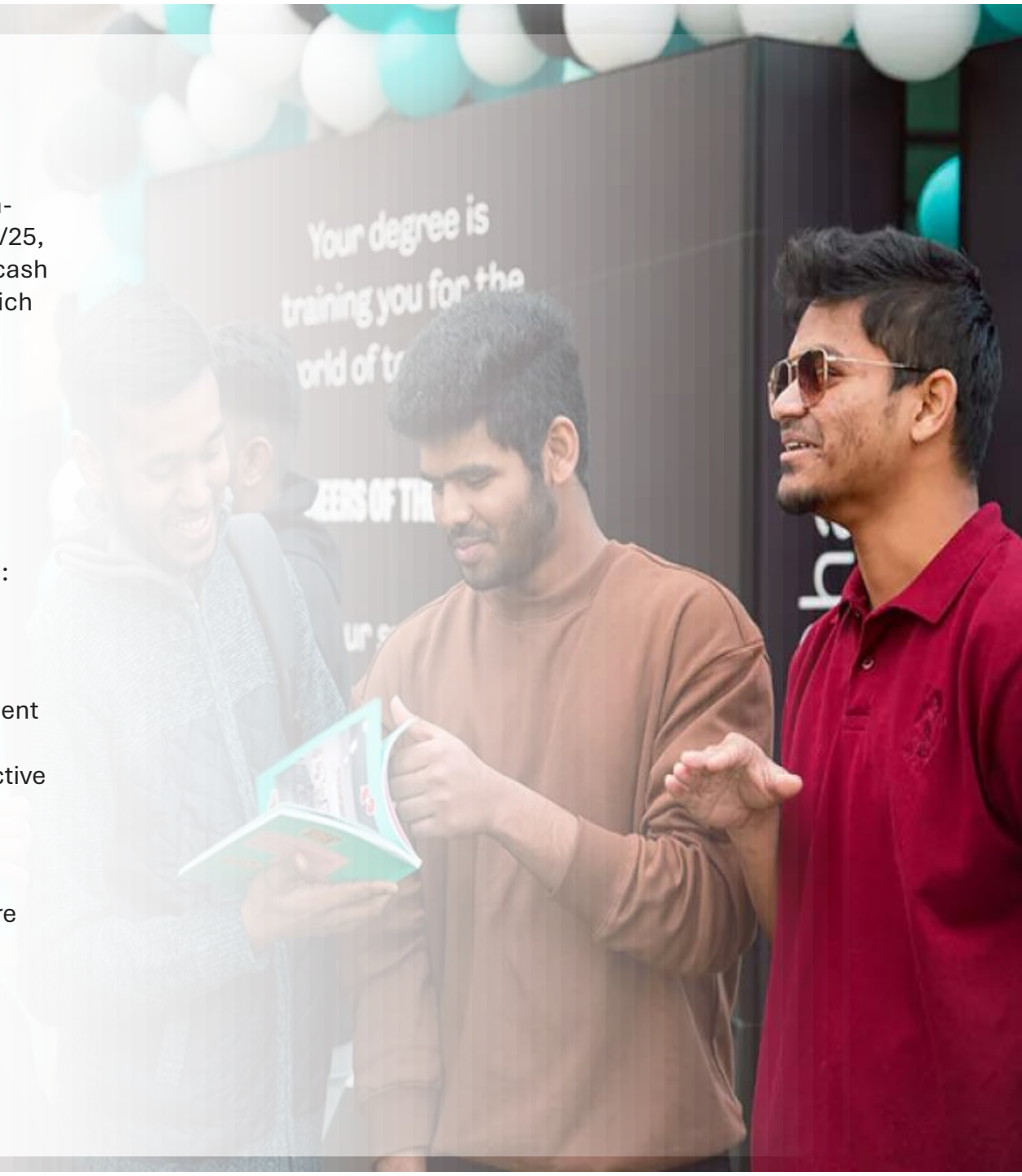
UEL supports over 2,000 staff and a student population of approximately 42,000 on-campus and through partnership provision. Total income reached £296.9m in 2024/25, up 6.2% year-on-year, with an operating surplus of £15.9m and year-end cash and cash equivalents of £81.8m. This financial resilience provides a strong platform from which UEL can pursue the next phase of its ambitions.

Vision 2028: the platform for growth

Vision 2028 is UEL's ten-year strategy and has provided the framework for the University's recent transformation. Its central proposition is careers-first education: preparing learners for the jobs and economy of the future while widening access to opportunity.

The strategy has combined student success with institutional renewal. UEL has successfully moved from a pre-Vision 2028 position of financial risk to a more resilient position with the capacity to invest in people, place and purpose. Employer connectivity has expanded materially: the University now offers more than 2,500 active employer partners, alongside strong growth in enterprise and student start-ups.

As Vision 2028 draws to conclusion, Forward to 2040 represents the emerging next horizon: taking the capabilities and confidence built through Vision 2028 into a more ambitious group model.



Forward to 2040: the next horizon

Forward to 2040 is the next phase of UEL's development, building on the transformation achieved through Vision 2028. It is centred on three long-term ambitions:

- to expand the reach and significance of UEL's charitable purpose;
- to realise annual Group turnover exceeding £1 billion by 2040; and
- to lead innovation in higher education, delivering outcomes of demonstrable value for learners, employers and communities.

To achieve these ambitions, UEL intends to evolve from a London-based university into a global, multi-entity education group. This will be more than conventional campus expansion. The emerging model is modular, technology-enabled and marketplace-based, designed to serve school leavers, working professionals, lifelong learners and employers through different forms of provision and routes to market.

Integrated data and technology will connect the Group, improve experiences and decision-making, and support the development of new educational and commercial propositions.

International hubs in the United States, Egypt and India are central to the early phase. Each will reflect its market and purpose: a predominantly digital model in the United States, a stronger physical presence in Egypt with reach across Africa and the Middle East, and a hybrid model in India. These hubs are intended to form part of an integrated UEL Group rather than operate simply as extensions of the existing University.

Alongside this international growth, UEL is developing CareerVerse, a technology-enabled proposition connecting students - and, over time, alumni - with employers and opportunities. UEL is also exploring new models for delivering corporate services, including the potential to develop scalable propositions that can be offered beyond the University itself.



The Opportunity

UEL is a leading careers-first university, committed to ensuring that every student develops the skills, confidence, experience and networks needed to succeed in a rapidly changing economy and make a positive contribution to society.

Under Vision 2028, UEL has delivered sector-leading improvements in graduate outcomes, established a distinctive careers-first educational model and strengthened its financial resilience. Forward to 2040 now creates a different order of opportunity, and complexity. Growth and diversification are central to UEL's response to an environment characterised by pressure on student recruitment, funding and traditional university operating models. As UEL develops into a global, multi-entity education group, it will need the financial architecture to match its ambition: Group-wide governance, consolidated reporting, investment discipline, capital allocation, commercial insight, scalable systems and clear accountability across multiple entities, geographies and business models.

This is therefore an opportunity to build, rather than simply inherit, a Group finance model. The Chief Financial Officer will combine rigorous stewardship of the University's financial resilience with a central role in shaping its future structure and growth.

The successful candidate will influence how the emerging Group operates, how decisions are made and how capital and resources are deployed across an increasingly diverse portfolio. They will help UEL assess new markets, investments and partnerships; understand unit economics and returns; and build a finance function capable of enabling sustainable, entrepreneurial growth.

The role offers significant scope to help translate UEL's Forward to 2040 vision - including its ambition to achieve annual Group turnover exceeding £1 billion - into a deliverable, financially sustainable operating model.



The Role

Reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Group Chief Executive, the CFO will be a key member of the Executive Leadership Team and an important leadership appointment for the wider University. They will share responsibility for shaping and delivering UEL's financial strategy during a pivotal stage of its evolution, while acting as a strategic business partner to the Vice-Chancellor & President and the Board. This will include supporting entrepreneurial growth, capital allocation, operational performance and value creation across the Group, while ensuring that commercial decisions remain aligned with UEL's institutional purpose and long-term sustainability. UEL's ambitions are bold, with a determination to transform the experience of our students, staff and communities.

UEL is deliberately looking beyond conventional higher education profiles.

The successful candidate is likely to have operated in a complex group environment and will bring strong commercial judgement, an entrepreneurial mindset and experience of transformation, growth or organisational build. International and multi-entity experience will be particularly relevant, alongside exposure to corporate development, M&A, partnerships or expansion into new markets, and scaling financial systems and processes.

Cultural contribution will matter as much as technical capability. We foster a professional, positive, and inclusive work environment built on shared values of Passion, Inclusion, and Courage. UEL is an unusually entrepreneurial university: collaborative, ambitious and prepared to launch, test, learn and improve. The CFO will need to be comfortable operating at that pace, while bringing the financial discipline, constructive challenge and judgement required to translate ambition into sustainable growth.

That commercial ambition sits firmly alongside UEL's wider purpose. Its mission is rooted in social inclusion and economic opportunity, and the strongest candidates will be motivated by the combination of commercial challenge and public purpose: the opportunity to apply their experience to building a financially sustainable, internationally ambitious institution seeking to redefine what a modern university can be.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Partner with the Vice-Chancellor & President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Board to develop and execute the long-term strategic plan.
- Lead the financial transformation required to establish a high-performing group operating model.
- Develop a finance function capable of supporting multiple legal entities, business units and future acquisitions.
- Provide commercially focused insights to support strategic decision-making, investment opportunities and growth initiatives.
- Challenge assumptions and influence business decisions through robust financial analysis.

Commercial Leadership

- Act as the commercial conscience of the business, ensuring growth initiatives deliver sustainable returns.
- Lead the financial evaluation of new markets, products, acquisitions and strategic partnerships.
- Develop strategies to drive profitability.
- Drive commercial performance through meaningful KPIs, performance reporting and data-driven decision making.
- Partner with relevant Directors and leaders to improve business performance and resource allocation.
- Identify opportunities to increase value through productivity improvements, cost optimisation and investment prioritization.

Finance Transformation

- Design and implement the finance operating model appropriate for a growing group structure.
- Establish financial policies, governance and controls.
- Build consolidated financial reporting across multiple entities.
- Working with our delivery partner standardise, financial processes, systems and reporting frameworks.
- Lead finance systems development to support scalability and improved decision-making.
- Create a high-performing Finance function with clear roles, capabilities and succession planning.

Financial Strategy & Performance

- Develop and take responsibility for financial strategy.
- Lead budgeting, forecasting and long-range financial planning.
- Ensure robust cash flow management and working capital optimisation.
- Oversee treasury, funding and capital management.
- Deliver accurate and timely financial reporting to the Executive Team and Board.
- Monitor financial risks and develop mitigation strategies.



Governance, Risk & Compliance

- Establish appropriate finance governance frameworks as the organisation evolves into a group structure.
- Ensure compliance with all statutory, regulatory and tax requirements.
- Strengthen internal controls and enterprise risk management.
- Support the Board in maintaining effective financial governance.
- Lead relationships with external auditors, tax advisers, banks and professional advisers.

Mergers, Acquisitions & Corporate Development

- Evaluate acquisition opportunities and strategic investments.
- Lead financial due diligence and valuation activities.
- Support transaction negotiations and funding arrangements.
- Lead post-acquisition financial integration.
- Develop financial structures capable of supporting future inorganic growth.

Stakeholder Management

- Act as a trusted adviser to the Vice-Chancellor & President, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Board and Executive Leadership Team.
- Build strong relationships with relevant external partners.
- Present complex financial information clearly to both financial and non-financial audiences.
- Foster collaboration across all business functions to align financial and commercial objectives with the wider Group strategy.

Leadership Responsibilities

- Build and inspire a high-performing finance team.
- Develop finance capability across the Group.
- Promote a culture of accountability, transparency and commercial thinking.
- Coach leaders across the business to improve financial literacy and commercial decision-making.
- Lead organisational change associated with the Group's transformation.

Person Specification

Qualifications

- Qualified Chartered Accountant (ACA, ACCA, CIMA or equivalent).
- Relevant postgraduate or executive qualifications would be advantageous.

Essential Experience

- Previous experience as a CFO or Finance Director within a complex organisation.
- Demonstrated success in establishing or transforming a group finance function.
- Significant experience in supporting a complex organisation through periods of significant growth, restructuring and organisational change.
- Strong commercial leadership experience influencing strategic business decisions.
- Experience working closely with Boards and Executive Leadership Teams.
- Proven ability to improve business performance through financial insight and commercial challenge.
- Strong understanding of governance, risk management and corporate finance.
- Experience leading mergers, acquisitions and post-acquisition integration.
- Multi-entity or international group reporting experience.
- Experience implementing finance systems and digital transformation initiatives.

Essential Skills & Competencies

- Commercial acumen able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the commercial drivers for an organisation and consistently translates financial information into actions that improve growth, profitability and shareholder value.
- Strong financial expertise with exceptional commercial judgement and strategic leadership.
- Able to anticipate future opportunities and risks while aligning financial strategy with long-term business objectives.
- Ability to build high-performing teams and leads organisational change with credibility and influence.
- Develops trusted relationships across the organisation, constructively challenging and supporting leaders to improve decision-making.
- Ability to maintain the highest standards of financial integrity, governance and operational discipline.
- Comfortable operating in evolving environments, building and developing structure while maintaining pace and agility.
- A visionary leader with the ability to inspire institutional change.
- An innovative thinker who embraces technology and continuous improvement.
- Leadership style and approach which clearly reflects the values of equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.
- An influential communicator with outstanding verbal and written communication skills.
- Ability to cultivate strong and productive networks with business, industry, government and other relevant stakeholders for the tangible benefit of UEL.
- Demonstrated ability to turn strategy into reality with a proven track record of achievement.
- Resilient and clearly demonstrates the ability to thrive and succeed in a busy and challenging environment with a 'can do' attitude.

Appointment Process and How to Apply

Russell Reynolds Associates is advising the University of East London on this appointment.

The closing date for applications is 23:59 GMT on 25 October 2026.

Please submit your full application to responses@russellreynolds.com, quoting reference number 2609-063L in the subject heading. All applications will be acknowledged.

Your submission should include:

- A CV setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements. Please ensure you have provided reasons for any gaps within the last two years.
- A Statement of Suitability (no longer than two pages) explaining how you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role.
- A completed Diversity Monitoring Form available [here](#).

Please note the information you provide will help support monitoring UEL's recruitment processes to ensure they are fair to all and allow the institution to attract diverse and talented candidates. The diversity data in this section is collated in aggregate and will not be disclosed to anyone involved in assessing your application. You can see our [privacy notice](#).

Please note that due diligence will be carried out on shortlisted candidates. Candidates should expect this to include searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publicly available information. Should you wish to speak with someone before submitting an application, or if you have difficulty in accessing the online platform, please contact responses@russellreynolds.com in the first instance, quoting reference number 2609-063L.