



AHUA

Aspiring Registrar & COO Programme

Who Should Attend

The Aspiring Registrar and COO Programme is designed for professional services leaders who are considering the next step in their career. It prepares participants for the most senior professional services roles within a university, whether titled Registrar, Chief Operating Officer, University Secretary or Head of University Administration. The programme offers a unique opportunity to explore this diverse and challenging role and to reflect on your readiness for this or other leadership positions.

The programme is suitable for those currently working at the level of Director/Head of any of the principal Administrative and Professional Service functions or Deputy Registrar/COO/University Secretary. The nature of this programme means it will appeal to those who wish to take stock of their career and maximise their potential.

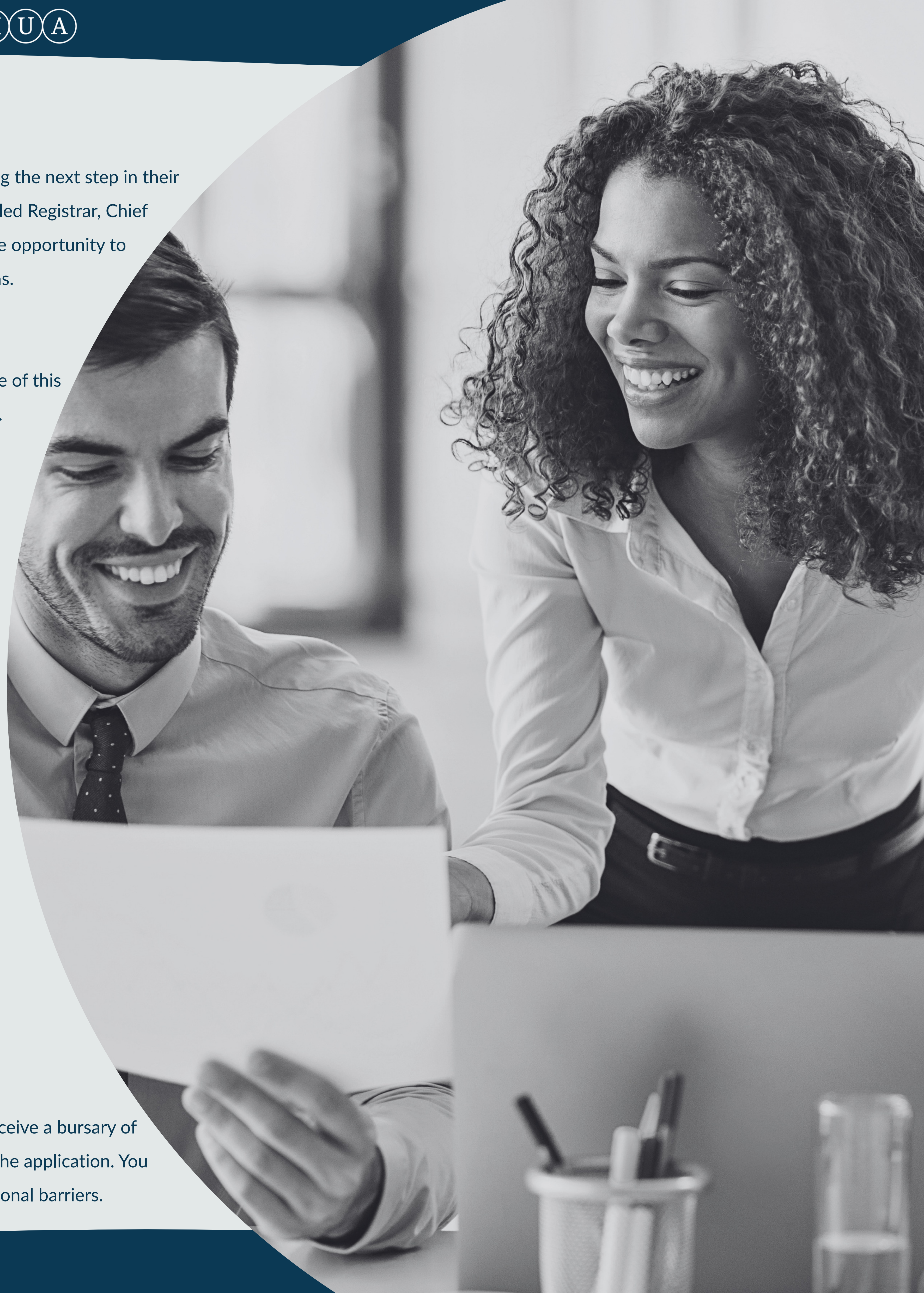
Participants are likely to have been operating at their current level for three to five years, be reporting to the Registrar/COO, and be on the cusp of applying for a more senior role. Applicants will also need to have the confirmed support of a member of their Executive team.

"The level of trust that was developed through this programme would not have happened without the brilliant facilitation from Kim and Rachel. The balance of content in the programme with Action Learning Sets, provided a broad perspective on which I still reflect. I often recommend this programme!"

Lesley O'Keeffe
Interim Academic Registrar
SOAS

Bursaries for Black/Global Majority/Diaspora members of staff

The AHUA is offering four applicants, who identify as Black/Global Majority/Diaspora, the opportunity to receive a bursary of £1,000 (realised as a reduction in the course fee). If you are eligible, please complete the bursary section of the application. You will be asked to briefly explain how a bursary would support your participation and help address any institutional barriers.



Sessions and dates

Programme Structure

The programme runs over 12 months, combining individual coaching, peer learning and practical development across eight days. It begins with an online Welcome Event, followed by an individual coaching session with one of the Programme Directors and personalised psychometric feedback to help you identify your strengths, development priorities and goals for the year ahead. You will then take part in a two and a half day Residential, four facilitated Action Learning Sets and an Aspiring to Applying Workshop, designed to help you prepare confidently for senior leadership opportunities.

Programme Focus

Throughout the programme you will:

- develop a deeper understanding of the diverse Registrar, COO and University Secretary roles across the higher education sector;
- explore what successful leadership looks like in different institutional contexts and assess your own readiness for these roles;
- strengthen your understanding of the relationships, influence and dynamics at the most senior levels of university leadership;
- increase your self-awareness, build on your strengths and identify priorities for your continued development.

The Programme Includes

- an online Welcome Event with your cohort and Programme Directors;
- three individual coaching sessions with a Programme Director;
- personalised psychometric profiling and feedback;
- a two and a half day Residential combining expert input, practical learning and reflection;
- insights from experienced Registrars, COOs, Vice-Chancellors and other sector leaders;
- four facilitated Action Learning Sets (one half-day and three full days);
- an Aspiring to Applying Workshop covering executive search, applications, CV development, interviews and recruitment insights.

26 January 2027	10.00-12.00	Welcome session	 Online
w/c 8 February 2027	One hour	One-to-one session	 Online
16 - 18 March 2027	13.00-16.30	Residential at Edgbaston, Birmingham	 In-person
28 April 2027	09.30-13.00	Action Learning Set 1	 Online
30 June 2027	19.30	Optional dinner	 In-person
1 July 2027	09.00-16.00	Action Learning Set 2	 In-person
July 2027	One hour	One-to-one session	 Online
8 September 2027	19.30	Optional dinner	 In-person
9 September 2027	09.00-16.00	Action Learning Set 3	 In-person
10 November 2027	19.30	Group dinner	 In-person
11 November 2027	09.00-16.30	'Aspiring to Applying' Workshop, Birmingham	 In-person
12 January 2028	19.30	Optional dinner	 In-person
13 January 2028	09.00-16.00	Action Learning Set 4	 In-person
w/c 1 February 2028	One hour	One-to-one session	 Online

“ It was an opportunity to really understand not only the different strands to these roles but also the flexibility of leadership approaches, personal characteristics and ways of working that are needed to be successful when navigating complex strategic and operational environments. It was also a great opportunity to hear the personal experiences of senior leaders and network with peers.

One of the strengths of the course is that it is a chance to explore options and even if you ultimately decide these kinds of roles are not for you, there is still so much personal learning and insight you can take away to support your own leadership practice and career development.”

Jo Horsburgh
Chief Operating Officer
Harper Adams University

Fee

£5,500 for AHUA member institutions;

£6,500 for non-member institutions.

This includes accommodation and dinners during the Residential at Edgbaston only.

The AHUA is VAT exempt so no VAT will be added to the above.

How to apply

The deadline for applications is Thursday 19 November at 5pm.

When submitting the application we will also require:

1. one page personal statement outlining your experience and motivation for seeking to join the programme;
2. copy of your CV;
3. letter of commitment from a member of the University Executive confirming that the time and funding needed are available.

Please note that entry to the programme is on a competitive basis.

[Apply here](#)



As an AHUA Development Partner, Perrett Laver makes a valuable contribution to our programmes. If you would like further information about their experience and current vacancies for which they are recruiting, please contact their team [here](#).

Contact details

✉ info@ahua.ac.uk

[in](#) [association-of-heads-of-university-administration-ahua](#)

[ahua.uk.bsky.social](#)

[ahua.ac.uk](#)

Programme Directors

Rachel Holmes

Rachel is a coach, facilitator and leadership development consultant with over 30 years' experience in the private and public sectors. After an early career with a major publisher of psychometric feedback tools, providing accreditation and support to clients across a wide range of organisations, Rachel established her independent consultancy in 2001. Originally a team development specialist, she now offers 1-1 coaching, team and event facilitation and bespoke leadership programmes focused on enabling people to enjoy their work, collaborate effectively and have greater impact. Having worked with clients in the H.E. sector since 2007, Rachel is a member of the pool of AHUA registered coaches providing support to both newly appointed and experienced COOs, Registrars and Secretaries, through coaching and facilitated Action Learning Sets. Rachel is also a co-director of the AHUA's other flagship development offering, the Professional Service Directors' Programme.



Kim Newton-Woof

After a decade working in higher education, Kim now operates as an independent leadership consultant, facilitator, executive coach and supervisor. While remaining a trusted partner within the university sector, she also works with leaders across health, finance, media, charity and further education. Kim designs and facilitates coaching, leadership and team development that helps people better understand themselves, their situation and the choices available to them. Taking a human-first approach, she creates practical, reflective spaces where leaders can navigate complexity, strengthen their judgement and make meaningful change. An AHUA Associate based in Southampton, Kim provides coaching for newly appointed AHUA members, facilitates the Association's Action Learning Sets and is co-director of the Professional Service Directors' Programme.

