



AMERICAS ASIA PACIFIC EMEA



UCC

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
University College Cork, Ireland



Appointment of

Chief People & Culture Officer

April 2026



Chief People & Culture Officer

Shape the culture. Power the strategy. Deliver the transformation

This is an exciting time to join UCC, and we are seeking an exceptional Chief People and Culture Officer (CPCO) to lead the University's people strategy and organisational capability at a pivotal point in its evolution.

This is a strategically significant leadership position and as the University's most senior people leader, the CPCO will be a strategic advisor, culture shaper, and operational executive ensuring that UCC has the workforce, leadership capability, service model and organisational agility to deliver on UCC's [Strategic Plan](#). This is an opportunity to make a lasting impact.

The role reports to the President, you will be a member of the University Leadership Team (ULT) and lead a People and Culture team of over 58 employees.

You will work closely with the President, the University Leadership Team, the Governing Authority and its People, Culture, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee. You will also collaborate with University committees, working groups, and external partners across the higher education sector in Ireland and internationally. These partners include the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Research Ireland, the Department of Health, and other relevant bodies in Ireland, Europe and internationally, as well as our Trade Union representatives.

In addition, you will serve as the HR Business Partner to the President.

The role is responsible for leading both organisation wide cultural evolution and organisational change across the university, alongside delivering a step change in the design, structure and delivery of a People and Culture function so that it is high performing, digitally enabled, leading best practice and delivering measurable impact against the UCC Strategic Plan goals.

This role is framed by a clear timeline for success, aligned to the UCC Strategic Plan and the UCC People and Culture Plan.





What you will lead

The CPCO leads the People and Culture function and is accountable for the University-wide people agenda – spanning strategy, organisational effectiveness, transformational operations, culture, talent, and people governance. The role requires the ability to translate strategic ambition into practical, high-quality people operations and services, ensuring the People & Culture function enables institutional transformation, operational excellence, and an exceptional staff experience.

Strategic Leadership & University Contribution

- Provide visionary leadership for the development and delivery of UCC's People and Culture Plan as an integral enabler of the University's Strategic Plan.
- Serve as a ULT Member, contributing to organisation-wide strategy, performance, financial sustainability and enterprise risk to create the conditions for staff to thrive and contribute to UCC's strategic ambitions.
- Provide expert advice to the President, ULT and Governing Authority on people related strategy, risk, compliance and organisational capability and effectiveness.
- Contribute to the University's strategic transformation agenda by leveraging data, digital capability and emerging technologies, including AI, to strengthen organisational performance, workforce capability and service delivery.
- Ensure the People and Culture strategy aligns with the University's ambitions for innovation, digital transformation and a modern, responsive organisational culture.

Culture, Engagement & Organisational Change

- Champion and embed a values led culture that advances inclusion, wellbeing, psychological safety and high performance.
- Build change capability across the University – equipping leaders with frameworks, tools and coaching to deliver sustainable transformation.

- Lead employee engagement and communications approaches that connect strategy to lived experience and strengthen trust, and enhance the overall employee experience across the organisation
- Foster a service-oriented culture that recognises the experience of staff and students as central to organisational effectiveness and institutional reputation.

Organisational effectiveness, Resourcing & Financial Sustainability

- Lead workforce planning, organisational design and change programmes that optimise structures, roles and resourcing in line with academic and service priorities.
- Partner with Finance and senior leaders to align workforce strategy with budget planning cycles, ensuring affordability, productivity and value for money.
- Oversee reward, pay policy implementation and people cost governance within public sector frameworks, ensuring appropriate controls and transparency.
- Drive efficiency in People and Culture operations through standardisation, automation, shared services and clear service accountability.
- Develop future-focused workforce strategies that prepare the University for evolving ways of working, digital transformation, and the changing skills requirements of higher education.





What you will lead *cont.*

Talent & Attraction

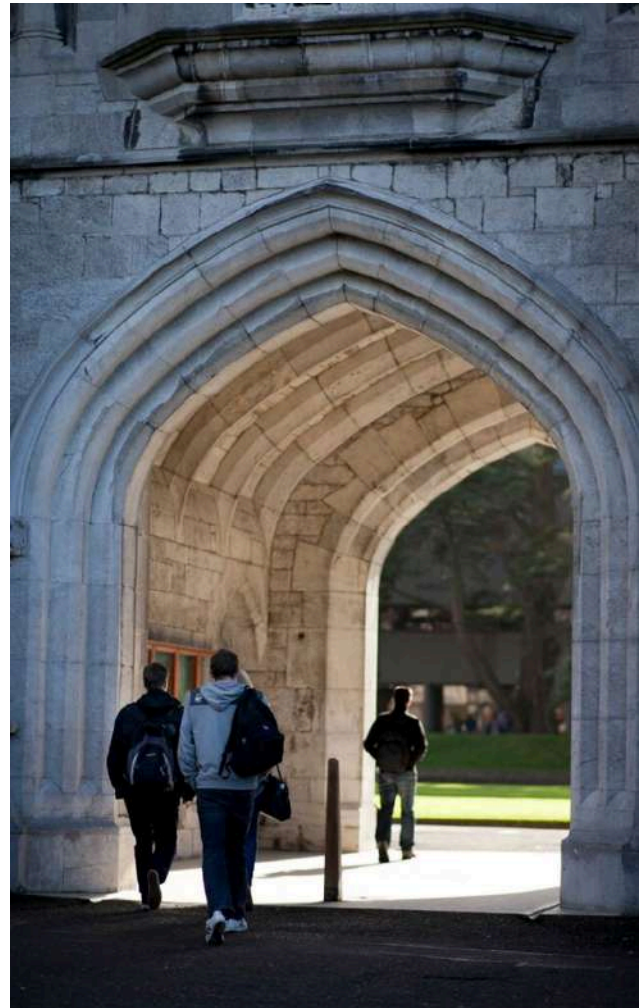
- Deliver integrated strategies for talent attraction, retention, succession and leadership development, ensuring UCC remains an employer of choice with a compelling employee value proposition.
- Develop workforce skills and capability for the future, including digital literacy, data fluency, AI awareness, research and teaching excellence, professional services capability and leadership pipelines.
- Enable career growth, skills development, and high performance across all levels.
- Continue to elevate professional standards and capability within the People & Culture team.

Operational Excellence

- Ensure high-quality customer-centred people operations, policies, systems and services across the employee lifecycle, delivering an efficient and positive experience for staff and leaders.
- Embed user-centred service design and continuous improvement practices to enhance the experience and effectiveness of People & Culture services.
- Identify and implement opportunities where automation, AI and digital platforms can streamline processes, enhance decision-making, and improve service delivery.
- Embed modern, efficient, digitally enabled processes supported by workforce analytics, AI-enabled insights and evidence-based practices.
- Maintain strong governance and compliance across employment law, industrial relations, public sector requirements and HEA obligations.
- Drive consistency and professional standards across People & Culture teams.
- Provide regular insights on workforce trends, organisational capability, and people-related risks; set and monitor KPIs to evidence impact.

Stakeholder Engagement & Influence

- Ensure constructive employee and industrial relations, building credible partnerships with representative bodies and ensuring fair and consistent outcomes.
- Represent UCC externally on people, workforce and sector policy matters; build partnerships that strengthen talent pipelines, professional practice and institutional reputation.
- Role-model UCC's values through authentic, ethical, and inclusive leadership.
- Build strong internal partnerships to ensure People & Culture services are trusted, responsive and aligned with the needs of academic and professional communities.





About You

Essential Qualifications

- Degree-level education or equivalent professional experience.
- CIPD Chartered Fellow (or equivalent) with evidence of ongoing CPD.

Essential Experience

- Senior People/HR leadership experience typically 10+ years in within a large, complex organisation (e.g., higher education, public sector, or similarly regulated environment).
- Demonstrable track record leading enterprise scale transformation and organisational change with measurable outcomes.
- Proven capability in operating model design, service delivery improvement and driving efficiency through process, technology and shared services.
- Strong understanding of Irish Higher Education/public sector governance and employment context, including pay frameworks and relevant regulatory requirements.
- Excellent knowledge of employment law and industrial relations practices.
- Proven experience advising executive teams, boards, or governing authorities; confident working in complex governance environments.
- Evidence of effective industrial/employee relations leadership, including constructive engagement with representative bodies and complex casework, unions, government departments, agencies, and sector bodies.
- Strong data, analytics, and performance orientation—using insights to shape strategy, manage risk and evidence impact.
- Demonstrated ability to lead, inspire, and develop high-performing teams and senior leaders.
- Experience leading digital transformation within people functions, including the effective use of workforce technologies, data analytics, automation or AI-enabled solutions.

Skills, Knowledge & Behaviours

- Strategic and financially astute mindset; able to connect people strategy to institutional performance, resourcing, and sustainability.
- Excellent judgement, resilience, and ability to lead through ambiguity and complexity.
- Advanced influencing, negotiation, and communication skills; credible with diverse audiences.
- Values-led, inclusive leadership; strong commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing.
- Demonstrated ability to lead digital and AI-enabled transformation, translating technological opportunity into measurable organisational and service improvements.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to inspire confidence and credibility and with significant experience influencing executive teams, senior leaders, boards, or governing authorities.

Desirable

- Experience implementing or optimising HRIS and digital employee self-service platforms, and workforce analytics capabilities at scale.
- Qualification in coaching, leadership development, or organisational psychology (or equivalent).



What we offer

- Permanent whole-time role (subject to probation).
- Salary: €145,800 – €184,250 per annum (Scale B) - Salary placement on appointment will be in accordance with public sector pay policy, new entrants to the public sector will generally be at first point of scale.
- 30 days' annual leave, exclusive of public holidays and Good Friday.
- Pensionable public service employment under the Single Scheme (for those starting on/after 1 January 2013).
- Access to comprehensive sick leave, Income Continuance Plan, Specified Illness Cover, Employee Assistance Service (for employees and family), Supplementary Life Assurance, Group Personal Accident Scheme, and voluntary health insurance group schemes.
- A vibrant campus community: leisure centre, clubs and societies, subsidised staff restaurants, cafés, shops, social spaces, and flexible work initiatives.
- Progressive learning and development opportunities.



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Grafter House
Suite 101, 10 Ely Place
Dublin 2
D02 HR98

perrettlaver.com