



## Academy of Social Sciences

### Appointment of President: Role Description

#### Introduction

The appointment of the President to succeed Professor Roger Goodman FAcSS comes at a vital time for the Academy and for the social sciences. The Academy has a new strategy that is outward-looking, a committed, high profile board of Trustees and effective leadership in its Chief Executive. It seeks to build on the regard in which it is held, to realise more fully its potential. The President will play a vital role in that, embodying the Academy's collaborative and consensual style.

Rarely has there been a time when the social sciences are more needed than now and when the opportunity to ensure they are championed, understood, valued and used has been as great. We are seeking a President who identifies with the challenge and the opportunity that faces the social sciences over the coming years, and who will contribute significantly to the profile and impact of the social sciences as well as the Academy.

The Academy of Social Sciences is the National Academy of Academics, Learned Societies and Practitioners in the Social Sciences. Its charitable purpose is to 'promote the social sciences in the UK for public benefit'. The Academy has recently undertaken a major strategic review and that will guide our development, growth and work over the coming three years.

The Academy's vision is that the social sciences flourish across the UK and sustain their world leading stature. They are widely valued for their contributions to society, economy, environment and well-being; and led by confident and capable communities of academics and other professionals, learned societies and students.

We interpret our mission as enhancing and safeguarding the social sciences in research, professional practice, and education; and championing and fostering the understanding and application of social sciences in policy, business and public life.

We are a membership-based organisation, currently comprising 46 learned society members and approximately 1400 individual Fellows, leading social scientists from both academic and other sectors. We are funded largely through membership subscriptions, and increasingly attract grant funding to support projects in line with our strategy. We are a lean organisation that makes the most of limited current resources, independent of core funding from government. We have a substantial, expert resource in our Fellows and member societies.

The coming three years are an especially important and exciting time for the Academy as it embarks on its new strategy for the benefit of the social sciences and, through that, seeks to raise its own profile and impact. It is also a time of external challenge and opportunity in terms of the context within which academia and the social sciences are likely to be operating, including Covid-19, Brexit and government reviews of higher education policy.

The Academy's governance structure comprises a President, Council, various committees of Council, a small core staff team of seven, and three project-based staff, headed by the CEO, Dr Rita Gardner, appointed in January 2019.

The current President, Professor Roger Goodman, Warden of St Antony's College, Oxford and an Oxford University PVC, was appointed at the AGM in June 2015. He stands down at the AGM in June 2021, having completed a maximum term of six years (3 + 3). A comparable term is on offer to his successor, to be appointed at the Academy's AGM in June 2021, following approval by the Academy's Council.

The Academy is currently a virtual organisation with registered offices in the City of London.

## **Role Description**

The role of the President is an active one, and while the President acts as a figurehead for the Academy, the role goes beyond that. We are seeking a President whose standing, expertise and influence will significantly further the Academy's strategy at this most important time in its development.

S/he will act as a strong advocate and ambassador for the social sciences and be influential with government and others, whilst having the support of the fellowship and social sciences community as a whole. S/he may have a background as an academic or applied social scientist from any sector or have a track record of using or championing social science at high levels.

The President heads the Council which is the Academy's governing body and chairs the (3 times per year) meetings of the Council and of the Learned Society Chief Executives, and the annual AGM.

As a charity, the Council comprises the body of trustees who hold ultimate responsibility and strategic decision-making for the Academy. Constitutionally, there are twenty-one members of Council. Seven members are elected by the body of individual Fellows, seven by the member learned societies and seven are appointed on recommendation of the Council.

An Executive Committee comprises the President, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Chair of the Campaign and the Director. It fulfils a number of functions, including as an informal advisory group for the Director; to consider any pressing trustee-level matters that arise between Council meetings; and, from time to time, to lead strategic planning. These are typically virtual, monthly meetings of one hour.

In line with charity best practice, the President is a non-executive position. The role of the Council is to agree strategy and annual implementation plans, and to support and monitor the CEO and her team in delivering the strategy. Decision making among trustees is normally on a consensual, collegiate basis. The President does not direct either the Council or the Executive Committee.

The President generally engages with the CEO on a weekly or fortnightly basis, as required. The relationship is an important one in underpinning the smooth running of the Academy

and the relationships more generally between the trustees and staff. It is vitally important at this time of strategic growth and development.

The Academy is both a registered charity and an incorporated company limited by guarantee. Council members sit both as trustees and company directors.

## Strategic Background

The Academy was established in 1999. Its roots were in the Association of Learned Societies in the Social Sciences (ALSISS), which was set up as a promotional and defensive body in the 1980s. The Academy and its learned society members have retained strong, close and mutually supportive links ever since. Individual Fellowships of the Academy were introduced at the time of establishment.

In 2011, the Academy raised its sights and established the Campaign for Social Science (CfSS). The purpose was to raise the public profile of the social sciences, particularly in relation to public policy making. Broadly, it was modelled on the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) which was set up 35 years ago and has been successful in making science strategic in public policy terms.

The Campaign has its own Board, reporting to the Council, that oversees and helps to implement its activities. The Chair, currently Professor Bobby Duffy FAcSS is (by appointment) a member of Council, which also nominates two other members of the Campaign's Board.

The activities of the CfSS are set out more fully on the Campaign website: <https://campaignforsocialscience.org.uk/>

The CfSS relies on sponsorship funding, currently largely by universities. A full list of current sponsors can be found here: <https://campaignforsocialscience.org.uk/supporters/> although this is changing all the time.

In 2013, Council adopted the strapline of The National Academy of Academics, Learned Societies and Practitioners in the Social Sciences to reflect its breadth of stakeholders and its positional aspirations.

In Autumn 2019, the Academy embarked on a major strategic review which set out to re-define objectives through which to deliver its charitable purpose, and to prioritise a plan of work under those objectives for the three years, 2020-2023.

In drawing up the strategy the Academy consulted widely with Fellows, committees, Campaign supporters and external stakeholders. The finalisation of it was delayed deliberately so that the Academy could take stock of the emerging implications of the Covid pandemic on us and on our community.

The strategy was approved by the Council in early October 2020, and already there are a number of new activities commenced or fundraised for in recent months that are aligned with the priorities. <https://www.acss.org.uk/vision-statement/>

The strategy sees the Academy taking a more active and effective role in publicly championing and raising awareness of the social sciences through its Campaign for Social Science. Its focus will be on demonstrating how social science enhances decision-making, society and lives, and raising awareness of what the social sciences are. This is illustrated by its new initiative from May 2020, the social science Covid hub, showcasing the contributions of the UK social sciences to handling the pandemic and to the re-emergence of society and economy in a Covid-19 era. <https://campaignforsocialscience.org.uk/hub-of-hubs-social-sciences-responding-to-covid-19/>

A second priority for the Academy is to sustain the health of the social sciences across the UK by influencing policy, and decision-makers' understanding of the social sciences. This includes the publication and dissemination of timely reports, advocacy, and responses to consultations; and is exemplified by our recent new report 'Vital Business'.

<https://www.acss.org.uk/publications/latest-report-vital-business-the-essential-role-of-the-social-sciences-in-the-uk-private-sector/>

We have also recently secured ESRC grant funding, in collaboration with the University of Lancaster, for a new programme to monitor the health of the social sciences in HE at this critical time. <https://www.acss.org.uk/news/academy-teams-up-with-lancaster-university-to-deliver-new-health-of-social-sciences-project-funded-by-esrc/>

We will continue to recognise excellence through the award of Fellowships and are unique in recognising both academic scholarship and professional practice in so doing, across the full breadth of the social sciences.

We will continue to work actively on the skills agenda and extend this to help widen participation and diversity in the social sciences over the coming years.

An entirely new strand of work, across the breadth of our professional communities, sees the Academy fostering innovation, networking, and the application of the social sciences to the multi-disciplinary challenges of our time. This also provides an opportunity for the Academy to take a leadership role in defining research agendas relating to those challenges.

There is much scope, recognised in the strategy, for the Academy to bring a more powerful voice to bear, drawing on our Fellows, their excellent networks and in collaboration with our learned society members, and to build our own profile at the same time.

As a modestly funded organisation, the Academy has to manage carefully the success and impact of achieving its objectives, with the income required. Hence our need to prioritise our activities. Volunteers also play a key role, and we will be engaging our Fellows in more actively promoting the social sciences, among other ways.

## **Key Requirements**

The key requirements of the President are therefore to:

1. Be a leading public voice of the Academy
2. Be able and willing to engage in advocacy for the social sciences with government, including drawing on existing networks and relationships
3. Provide leadership to the Academy in undertaking its core mission; giving support in particular to the strategy and its implementation priorities
4. Promote the Academy to a variety of external audiences
5. Chair Council, AGM and selected other meetings
6. Develop a strong working relationship with the CEO and trustees
7. Support fundraising from major donors and trust and foundations

## **Person Specification**

This is a high-profile role internally and externally.

1. A passionate supporter of the social sciences and the Academy's role and strategy.
2. Profile and credibility to be a strong advocate/ambassador for the Academy and social sciences and to be influential with decision makers in government and beyond
3. Presence and stature to represent the Academy externally.
4. Standing and ability to command the confidence of Fellows across all sectors, based on a distinguished career as a social scientist in one or more of the academic, public or private sectors, or as a user and champion of social science at high levels
5. Understanding of, and empathy with, the wide diversity of social science disciplines.
6. Innovative and commercial, willing to promote and support new approaches to fund raising.
7. Focused at the strategic level and understanding of the difference in roles of trustees and executives.
8. Widespread experience of chairing meetings, to achieve desired outcomes and in a consensual and timely manner.
9. A team player: collegiate, consensual style, able to build support for decision making and to work well with other senior trustees and the CEO and other staff.
10. A sense of humour is always helpful.

The time requirement is variable, but equivalent to 2 to 3 working days a month, with flexibility as to how they are spread throughout the month.

The position is unremunerated. However, legitimate expenses incurred in carrying out the role are paid in accordance with the Academy's policies.

For candidates without their own office support, a small Secretariat support facility can be made available to attend to administrative matters.

### **Next steps**

The Appointments Committee is chaired by Dame Jil Matheson, former National Statistician and current Honorary Secretary at the Academy. It is this committee which is overseeing the search and selection processes to recommend a new President to Council. The Academy has appointed GatenbySanderson to assist in the search, led by Julia Roberts.

The Academy values diversity and encourages applications from all sections of the community.

For an informal confidential discussion about the role, please contact our advising consultants at GatenbySanderson, Michelle Sander or Julia Roberts (07341 773 817).

Interested candidates should apply via the link below, providing:

- A CV or biography which confirms why you might be the right person (4 pages max)
- A covering letter (maximum of 2 pages) which tells us why you are interested in becoming our new President and what you will bring.

**The closing date for expressions of interest is 25 January 2021.**

<https://www.gatenbysanderson.com/job/gse68929>

Shortlisted candidates will be notified by 5 February 2021.

Shortlisted candidates will have the opportunity for an informal discussion with either the current President, Professor Roger Goodman, or with the nominated member of Council and Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, Professor Tony McEnergy.

The Academy and GatenbySanderson will respect the privacy of any initial approach or expression of interest in this role, whether formal or informal.