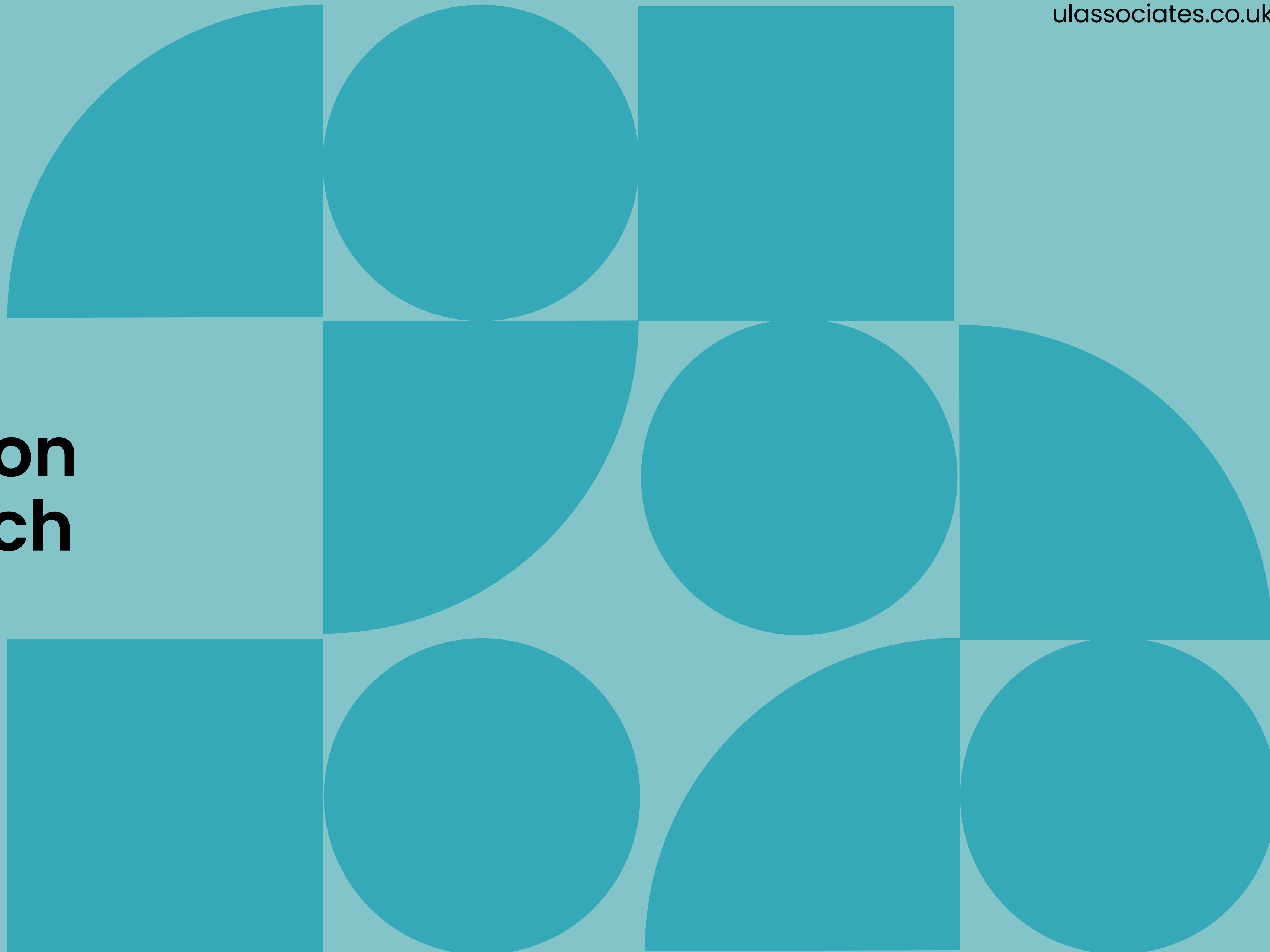


Higher Education Executive Search

Expert Search.
Extraordinary Care.

Leadership search with value,
service and partnership.



About



**A new search firm
from a trusted name**

University Leadership Associates (ULA) is the higher education arm of FE Associates, a market leader in executive search and strategic consultancy for the Further Education sector since 2004.

Our deep roots in post-compulsory education give us unique insight into leadership through transformation, reform and strategic change. These are areas increasingly relevant to universities. At ULA, we bring this depth of experience into the HE sector, with a dedicated focus on executive-level appointments, senior academic appointments and professional services leadership roles.

We work across the full spectrum of higher education: research-intensive universities, civic institutions, specialist providers, international campuses and collegiate environments and we understand the distinct cultures and leadership needs of each institution.

Our team combines expert search experience and deep HE expertise, ensuring every appointment is high quality, inclusive and strategically aligned. We celebrate the life-changing work that higher education delivers, transforming lives through education, driving innovation through research and supplying the talent pipeline that powers every sector of society.

Our values



Integrity

We deliver on our promises and we don't promise what we can't deliver.



Diversity & Talent

We aim to attract and support the best diverse team of people.



Client Focus

We have a relentless client focus and the needs of our clients come first.



Excellence

Whatever we do, we aim to do it best.

Executive Search Services



At **University Leadership Associates** our mission is to help you appoint leaders who **stay, thrive** and make a **lasting impact**.

We work with universities and higher education providers to attract the best talent to senior leadership roles across C-suite, academic and professional services roles.

Our unique approaches to attracting and securing leading talent are built around our core strength – our team. Our consultant team work on all aspects of your search assignment, delivering the full breadth of service from candidate attraction through to selection support.

We specialise in high-quality, bespoke leadership search that combines boutique-level care with pricing that reflects real value. Whether you are appointing a new member of your executive team or making a senior-level academic or professional services appointment, we offer a straightforward, effective search process to deliver diverse, capable and values-aligned individuals. We are proud to work across all mission groups and we bring a genuine appreciation for lived experience, civic purpose and inclusive leadership. Our networks span sectors and our candidate care is second to none.

Executive Search+

Because brilliant search doesn't end with a brilliant shortlist.

Most search firms stop at the shortlist – we don't. We know that senior appointments take time, coordination and care. We recognise that many HR teams are stretched and that's where we come in.

Executive Search+ is our enhanced service, which also includes designing and coordinating a thoughtful, inclusive and well-run selection process.

With **Executive Search+** we work as an extension of your HR team. We work with you to design the selection process, support logistics and attend in person to care for candidates and ensure everything runs smoothly. We bring expertise in inclusive selection design and we tailor this to the role and your institution.

Executive Search+ offers the depth and care of a premium-level service with pricing that reflects true value for money.

Our Approach



01 →

Growing Our Networks

We are always building the talent pipeline for universities and HEIs. We do not wait for a brief to arrive and we are constantly engaging with people across the HE sector and beyond to ensure we have a strong pipeline of leadership talent.

02 →

Bespoke Search

Each search assignment is unique and despite our growing candidate networks, we never assume we know the right people for you at the outset. We recognise the importance of place, values and institutional journey. We listen carefully and work in partnership to match the right people to the right moment in your leadership story.

03 →

Candidate Care

The level of support candidates receive before they join an institution is a key part of promoting a positive leadership culture. For that reason, we are thoughtful about how we support and prepare candidates to help them understand both the opportunity and the requirements.

Our Promises to You



Promise 01



We tell your compelling story, engage your audience sensitively and bring back market intelligence while caring for candidates at every stage of the process.

Promise 02



We aim for every person who enters the process to leave stronger than when they entered it.

Promise 03



We go the extra mile by adding value and offering insightful and purposeful support.

Why Choose University Leadership Associates?



We have over 20 years of specialist education sector search experience, a well-established support infrastructure and an excellent track record in supporting executive and senior-level appointments.

We build a deep understanding of your organisational and leadership priorities at the outset of each search.

We are committed to providing excellent value through highly competitive pricing and excellent service.

We promote and protect your brand and reputation by providing first-class levels of care.



Our Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

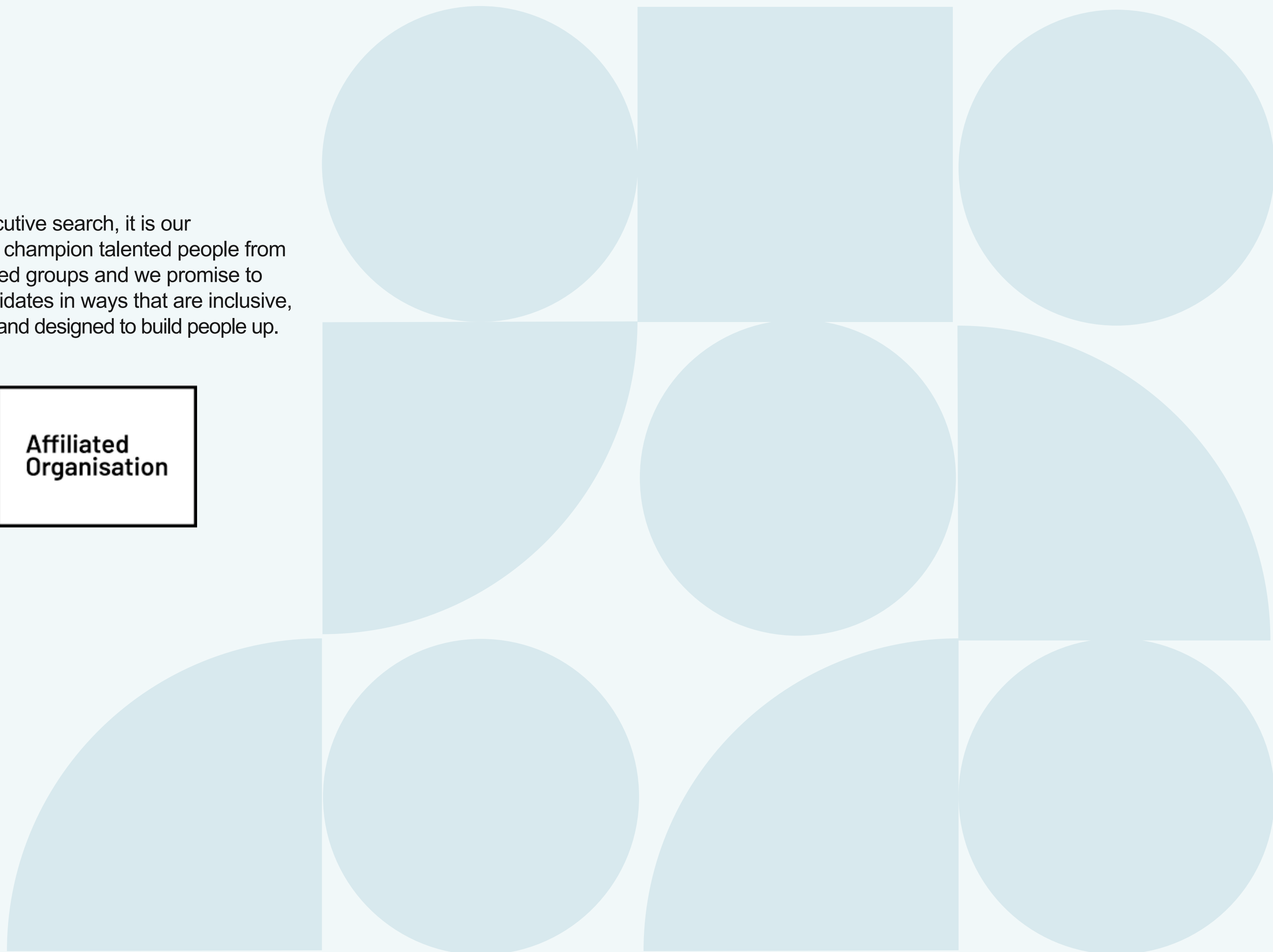


We believe in equity, not just equality and in genuine care, not just compliance.

The case for diversity in leadership teams is not just moral, it is strategic. Our commitment to inclusion sits alongside a single overriding aim, to secure the right appointment by searching far and wide to ensure the fields we present are as strong and diverse as the market allows. This means searching beyond the obvious pools and using targeted networks that reach underrepresented leaders. It also means shaping a fair brief so that excellent candidates are not missed.

We are proud to be an affiliate member of the Black Leadership Group, working toward anti-racist practices across the education sector. We are constantly engaging with research and we are committed to intersectional inclusion because individuals are not one-dimensional.

Working in executive search, it is our responsibility to champion talented people from underrepresented groups and we promise to work with candidates in ways that are inclusive, human-centred and designed to build people up.



Our Key People



Our team have a shared passion for the vital work of Higher Education Institutions, which drives our client-first approach. Together, we bring a blend of search expertise, in-house talent acquisition and wider educational leadership experience. We combine this to strive for excellence and inclusion in everything we do.



Elle Hurst
Senior Consultant

Elle leads on executive and non-executive search for ULA. She specialises in assignments that need a high level of skilled search, candidate care and relationship building.

As well as working as a university in-house search lead, Elle has previously worked at Gatenby Sanderson and Minerva specialising in HE appointments.



Jo Johnston
Managing Director

Jo has extensive leadership experience of search and recruitment across education and the private sector. Jo heads up all search-related services across ULA and our parent company FE Associates.

As MD, Jo is highly focused on ensuring ULA represents each client with absolute professionalism and that we provide excellent levels of support and care to clients and candidates.



Amanda Hart
Senior Consultant

Amanda has worked in senior-level search since 2021 and, prior to this, served as an HR Director for a large nationwide education group.

Amanda's areas of expertise are in the recruitment of senior level professional services leaders and she is able to leverage her high level sector experience to ensure the skills and values of candidates are well aligned to the needs of client organisations.

Case Studies



Provost



In 2025 we were engaged by BSBI to lead the search and recruitment process for a new Provost - an appointment critical to the continued growth and academic leadership of the institution.

Central to our approach was developing a deep understanding of BSBI as a dynamic and internationally focused organisation. From the outset, we prioritised building strong relationships with key internal stakeholders and through a series of in-depth consultations, we gained a clear picture of the institution's vision, strategic priorities and the cultural and leadership qualities required of the next Provost.

Armed with this insight, we were able to shape a compelling candidate proposition that resonated with high-calibre leaders in the global education sector, which resulted in the appointment of a highly experienced leader with an excellent track record in international higher education leadership.

Dean of Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation



Canterbury Christ Church University Dean of Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Mobilisation, a newly created role to lead cultural change in research, mobilise practitioners and non-research-active staff and deliver ambitious REF and income growth objectives. We engaged deeply with the market, connecting with over 200 research leaders and potential candidates and meeting around 50, resulting in a high-quality shortlist of 10.

The appointing panel faced a genuine challenge in selecting four for interview, ultimately choosing between two outstanding final candidates. Working closely with the PVC Research and Director of People, we co-designed a distinctive, innovative interview process that gave candidates insight into the institution and marked the start of onboarding. Candidate feedback was unanimously positive, with the successful appointee already benefiting from early relationship building and integration into the role.

Head of Business Development, Apprenticeships and Skills



Ravensbourne University London sought a highly commercial and strategic Head of Business Development to establish and grow a new Apprenticeships and Skills business unit and appointed ULA to support them with this search. We conducted a cross-sector search spanning Independent Training Providers, Further Education and Higher Education, focusing on business acumen, apprenticeship expertise and strategic leadership. Ten strong candidates from diverse backgrounds were progressed, all of whom were carefully assessed and informally referenced. Four were taken for interview and all were found appointable, making the decision difficult for the panel. The successful candidate was selected for bringing fresh thinking and energy alongside the essential commercial and technical expertise.

Our Non-Executive Search Practice



Alongside our work supporting universities and HE providers appointing executive leaders, University Leadership Associates also provides search support for non-executive roles to support effective governance.

Whether you are appointing council members or committee chairs, or refreshing your governance team, we offer search support to secure non-executives who are diverse, highly capable and well aligned with your values.

Get in touch



Ready to strengthen your leadership by appointing exceptional individuals to deliver on your ambitions? Let University Leadership Associates demonstrate our approach rooted in value, service and partnership.

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