



OAKLANDS  
COLLEGE

# Candidate Brief

## Executive Director of Innovation & Commercial Growth

### Oaklands College

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DODD PARTNERS

— BOARD & EXECUTIVE SEARCH —

## About Oaklands College

Oaklands College is a large further education college in Hertfordshire with more than 8,000 students. Established in 1921, Oaklands College has a proud heritage in providing responsive, transformational education set across three main campuses in Welwyn Garden City, St Albans and Borehamwood, with a growing online presence and arable farm. Throughout its rich history, Oaklands College has developed and supported its students, providing them with the knowledge and skills to achieve their individual ambitions and enabling them to make their own contributions to the wider community. Oaklands College has always expected the best for and from its students whilst at the same time working closely with staff to have an innovative and collaborative educational community.

Oaklands College offers a wide range of learning opportunities, offering courses across a diverse range of subjects at different levels, ranging from vocational courses with strong links to employers through elite sports, to creative industries, engineering, construction and business, as well as A-level provision. Oaklands College is also nationally recognised for its outstanding provision for learners with mild and severe learning difficulties, with 27% of its provision in this area and 40% with an identified learning need. Oaklands College provides a wonderful community that drives aspiration and provides support and opportunities for its students in equal measure, so that every individual can reach their full potential and progress to high-quality destinations.

For over 100 years, Oaklands College has been a cornerstone of further education in Hertfordshire. Since its establishment in 1921, the College has had a proud heritage of providing responsive education. We opened our doors to men and women in 1921 and have since built a rich history of delivering innovative and transformative education. As a leading provider of further education, Oaklands operates campuses in St Albans and Welwyn Garden City, along with training facilities in Borehamwood.

Serving more than 8,000 students, it offers over 300 vocational and academic courses, including apprenticeships, online learning and higher education programmes. Oaklands College is driving the skills of the future. We are ambitious and continually seek to expand our reach and reputation, enabling more adults, young people, and apprentices to access outstanding learning opportunities; whether to enter new employment sectors, reskill, or upskill. This ambition underpins Oaklands College's commitment to maintaining high standards of education and support, ensuring that every student is well-prepared for success in their chosen field. Recently, Oaklands College received two excellent Ofsted judgements for both its study provision and residential provision.



Whilst the operating environment for further education remains challenging, we are confident that our history of seizing opportunities and working closely with our partners puts us in a good position to ensure our continued success. Oaklands College is a rich and vibrant community, with teaching, learning and assessment at our heart and forming our core business.

Oaklands College provides a wonderful community that drives aspiration and provides support and opportunities for its students in equal measure, so that every individual is able to reach their full potential and progress to high-quality destinations and is proud to be ranked the 7<sup>th</sup> College nationally for the achievement of young people and in the top 10% overall.

## The Future

As Oaklands College expands to become Oaklands Educational Group, it is entering a pivotal phase of growth and transformation as it builds on over 100 years of educational excellence in Hertfordshire. With a clear mission to prepare every learner for work, rewarding careers and life's opportunities, Oaklands College is evolving into a Group to meet the needs of a rapidly changing economy and skills landscape

At the heart of its future strategy is a commitment to becoming a sustainable, innovative and outward-facing educational leader, one that inspires learners, employers and communities to achieve their full potential. This is being realised through a bold strategic plan focused on outstanding teaching and learning, deep employer partnerships, and curriculum design that responds directly to local, regional and national skills priorities.



Oaklands College is investing significantly in its estate and digital infrastructure, creating modern, flexible and technology-enabled learning environments that support high-quality delivery, innovation and growth. Major redevelopment plans will establish world-class facilities and a cohesive, student-centred campus experience aligned to future industry needs.

A defining feature of Oaklands College's future is its integrated model bringing together further education, higher education, apprenticeships, and professional training alongside elite sport and commercial activity. Through strong employer engagement and initiatives such as Local Skills Improvement Plans, Oaklands College will play a central role in aligning education with labour market demand and driving regional economic prosperity.

Looking ahead, Oaklands College will continue to expand its reach locally, nationally, and internationally while maintaining a strong community ethos. Its ambition is to be recognised not only as a leading college, but as a dynamic educational group that shapes future talent, supports industry growth, and delivers meaningful social impact.

## Mission, Values & Strategic objectives

Oaklands College has a robust and embedded Strategic Plan. The College's Vision is: "To be a sustainable educational trailblazer, inspiring learners and the wider community to achieve their potential in a changing world." Oaklands College nurtures ambition, providing tailored educational programmes and support to enable students of all ages to reach their full potential. By equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their personal and career goals, Oaklands College positively impacts communities and the economy.

### The Mission

"To prepare every learner for work, a rewarding career, and life's opportunities."

Oaklands College has made significant progress towards being a respected and aspirational brand underpinned by its strong values.

### Values

- Excellence and Innovation – Delivering outstanding results, sustainable careers, and future leaders;
- Collaborative Learning – Developing knowledge and skills to prepare students for life and work;
- Inclusion and Happiness – Celebrating the achievements and successes of all communities;
- Integrity and Accountability – Striving for excellence in all endeavours;
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion – Ensuring fairness, accessibility, and an inclusive environment.

Throughout 2024-25, Oaklands College has made significant progress towards the strategic aims and objectives set out in the 2023-27 strategic plan.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- Deliver continuous outstanding teaching, learning and assessment to all learners and employers.
- Create mutually beneficial partnerships to deliver the highest quality educational offer to increase economic prosperity.
- Create our estate so that it is recognised as world-class in terms of quality, sustainability and the promotion and practice of evolving leading-edge technologies.
- Create a caring, accessible, inclusive, and thriving college community, committed to fairness, health, and success.
- Deliver good or outstanding long-term sustainable financial health, through growth, that enables reinvestment in our students, staff, and estate to support our aspirational goals.

Oaklands College integrates its core themes - Sustainability and the Environment, SMART Digital, Happiness and Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - into all its developments, including new buildings, policies, and strategies.

Oaklands College remains committed to placing students at the heart of everything it does, working closely with stakeholders, employers, and the community to create a collaborative learning environment. Curriculum innovation and design is supported by members of our Corporation and regular reviews of the College's curriculum are undertaken by the Corporation and its committees, thus ensuring its currency and readiness for future skills needs.

In response to local needs and resulting from the Local Needs Duty to review key sectors including digital, health, sport, engineering and construction, these have been prioritised within our strategic objectives, annual operating plan, and future strategic investment plans.

As Oaklands College embarks on its next century, it is ideally positioned to respond to current challenges and opportunities, particularly the need for a high quality, career-focused further education system. Oaklands College is recognised at local, regional, and national levels and is strengthening its international links to contribute to an outward-looking and globally connected Britain. It is also well aligned with the government's key missions, to grow the economy, have an NHS fit for the future, safer streets, opportunity for all, and making Britain a clean energy superpower.

### **Purpose & Key Priorities**

#### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

Our focus is to create a caring, accessible, inclusive and thriving college community, committed to fairness, health and success.

At Oaklands College, we take individual's needs into consideration to ensure that you have a successful and happy learning experience.

We therefore uphold an Equal Opportunity policy that states that every individual will be treated fairly and as equals.

For more information, please visit: [www.oaklands.ac.uk](http://www.oaklands.ac.uk)

# Job Specification

**Job Title:** Executive Director of Innovation & Commercial Growth  
**Reports:** Chief Education, Performance & Growth Officer and Deputy CEO

## Summary of Post

The Executive Director of Innovation & Commercial Growth provides senior executive leadership for transformational growth across the Oaklands Educational Group, driving sustainable increases in income, market reach and organisational resilience. This supports the group's ambition to increase annual turnover through growth in student numbers, brand strength and diversified commercial income streams.

Operating at the intersection of commercial strategy, innovation, estates, brand and place-making, the role translates strategic ambition into investable, deliverable growth. This includes the development and scaling of commercial enterprises, external investment, sponsorship, international activity and flagship initiatives that strengthen Oaklands' reputation and long-term financial sustainability.

As a senior organisational leader, the Executive Director shapes the Group's growth narrative, ensures commercial activity is governed and values-aligned, and positions Oaklands as an ambitious, distinctive and future-facing organisation.

## Executive Scope & Accountabilities

The Executive Director holds executive accountability for:

- Group-wide growth and commercial strategy.
- Business and commercial development, planning, investment appraisal and growth delivery.
- Multi Academy Trust development.
- Estates-led commercial development and enterprise activity.
- External investment, sponsorship and strategic partnerships.
- Marketing, brand, admissions and market positioning.
- International operations and global growth.
- Oaklands Wolves and associated flagship brands.
- Innovation, new enterprise and diversification activity.



## Key Responsibilities

### Strategic Growth & Commercial Leadership

- Lead the development and delivery of a coherent Group Growth Strategy, to increase annual turnover, driving sustainable increases in income, learner numbers, diversification and market presence.
- Ensure growth activity is aligned to the Strategic Plan, Estates Masterplan, market demand and regional and national priorities.
- Provide clear senior leadership oversight of partnership development, commercial business growth and performance, investment impact and delivery confidence, taking corrective action when there are risks.

### **Estates-Led Commercial Development**

- Provide senior leadership for the commercialisation of the Estates Masterplan, transforming land and capital investment into sustainable, sponsored and income generating enterprises.
- Identify and develop key estates-led commercial ventures, including (but not limited to) a commercial Zoo, Farm and sports village with strong visitor, education and community offer.
- Work closely with Planning, Estates, Finance, and senior leaders to manage delivery risk, planning considerations, environmental constraints, and reputational impact, ensuring developments are compliant, sustainable, and publicly defensible.
- Oversee investment performance, reputational impact and long-term value generated through commercial development.
- Provide clear reporting and assurance to the Executive and Corporation on investment performance, commercial return, risk, and long-term value generated through estate-led development.

### **External Investment, Sponsorship & Partnerships**

- Provide senior leadership and accountability for securing significant external investment, sponsorship and strategic partnerships, supporting large-scale capital development, growth, and long-term financial sustainability across the Group.
- Personally lead senior relationships with investors, sponsors and strategic partners, ensuring propositions are compelling, investable and values aligned, including relevant national, regional and sector-based organisations.
- Oversee the negotiation and delivery of agreements within robust commercial and governance frameworks, ensuring investment propositions are compelling, investable, and commercially robust.
- Provide clear reporting and assurance to the Executive and Corporation on investment pipeline, secured commitments, delivery milestones, and associated risk.

### **Marketing, Brand & Admissions**

- Provide senior leadership for Group-wide marketing, brand and admissions, using insight and data to drive growth, reputation and market differentiation.
- Position Oaklands as a nationally and internationally recognised organisation across education, commercial enterprise, sport and global markets.
- Hold senior accountability for brand performance, market penetration, and recruitment outcomes, providing clear assurance to the Executive and Corporation on impact, return, and risk.

### **International Strategy & Global Growth**

- Lead the development and delivery of the International Strategy, embedding international activity as a core driver of Oaklands growth and reputation.
- Oversee expansion of international programmes and partnerships (including transnational initiatives and global education services), ensuring quality, regulatory compliance, safeguarding and alignment to Oaklands' mission.
- Drive diversification of international income and learner opportunities through scalable global programmes and talent pathways, ensuring long-term viability and alignment with the College's values.
- Lead the development of international elite athlete and talent pathways, aligning sport, education and high-performance opportunities to build globally recognised routes for learners and partners.
- Represent Oaklands at senior level in key international markets, cultivating high-value partnerships and enhancing the College's global profile.

## Oaklands Sport & Oaklands Wolves

- Provide senior leadership for Oaklands Wolves as a nationally and internationally significant, commercially sustainable sport and education brand, ensuring strong governance and values alignment.
- Position and grow Oaklands Wolves as the flagship brand for sport within Further Education, strengthening Oaklands' reputation as the national institute for sport in FE, and a credible partner for elite athletes, governing bodies, and global brands.
- Maximise the commercial value of Oaklands Wolves, ensuring it delivers a significant and growing financial contribution through sponsorship, partnerships, academy fees, events, retail, media and associated commercial activity.
- Maximise the commercial income, reputational and recruitment impact of Wolves through strategic partnerships, sponsorship and brand leverage across education and elite sport.
- Oversee the strategic development of performance, participation and talent pathways, ensuring coherent progression across elite, professional and academy provision.

## Innovation & New Enterprise

- Lead the identification, incubation and scaling of new commercial and educational ventures that support long-term diversification and resilience.
- Lead exploration of new enterprise models, including the potential establishment of a Multi Academy Trust and the targeted acquisition of private training organisations.
- Adopt an ambitious but disciplined culture of innovation, entrepreneurial thinking and opportunity realisation.

## Digital, Data & AI-Enabled Practice

- Lead the effective use of digital systems, data and insight to strengthen growth planning, investment appraisal and commercial performance.
- Model the responsible, authentic and effective use of AI within the role to enhance efficiency, ensuring ongoing awareness of developments, risks and best-practice guidance.

## Senior Leadership & Contribution

- Provide visible, values-led leadership and management of a dedicated team and across the Group to deliver priorities through accountability and collaboration.
- Hold responsibility for budgets within the role's remit, ensuring robust financial planning, monitoring and control in line with Financial Regulations, and strategic deployment of resources to achieve sustainability and value for money.
- Act as Deputy for senior postholders as required, exercising delegated authority within agreed reporting lines and the Group Scheme of Delegation, and providing leadership continuity and assurance in alignment with the Chief Education, Performance & Growth Officer and Deputy CEO.
- Represent the Group externally as a senior leader, acting on behalf of the Chief Education, Performance & Growth Officer and Deputy CEO and, where appropriate, the Principal & CEO, in line with Group values and strategic priorities.



# Person Specification

## Qualifications

Degree-level qualification with a track record of continuous professional development

## Essential Criteria

- Significant senior leadership experience within a complex service-led organisation.
- Proven track record of delivering organisational growth, income diversification or commercial transformation at scale.
- Strong commercial and financial acumen, with experience of business planning, investment appraisal and value generation.
- Experience leading estates-led, place-based or asset-driven commercial development.
- Proven ability to write business plans, incubate and launch new commercial ventures.
- Senior-level experience of marketing, brand, market positioning and customer acquisition.
- Experience securing and managing external investment, sponsorship or strategic partnerships.
- Experience leading or contributing to international strategy and global growth.
- Financially astute, with experience managing substantial budgets and resources.
- Strong entrepreneurial mindset with the ability to translate innovation into sustainable delivery.
- Credible senior leader with strong influencing, negotiation and stakeholder management capability.
- Proven ability to lead large, diverse, multidisciplinary teams.
- Demonstrable understanding of how to use AI tools appropriately and effectively within the role, with a commitment to keeping knowledge up to date.
- Values-led leader with strong commitment to ethical governance, inclusion and public accountability.

## Desirable Criteria

- Postgraduate or executive-level qualification (e.g. MBA).
- Experience operating within a group or multi-entity organisation.
- Experience of large-scale capital investment, joint ventures or public-private partnerships.
- Experience in place based or estates led regeneration projects.
- Experience negotiating complex commercial agreements.
- Experience of securing levy contracts, public sector funding or large-scale tenders.
- Experience contributing to international or transnational education or training activity.
- Experience leading innovation, new market entry or product development.
- Experience repositioning or significantly growing a major brand.
- Experience of elite sport, flagship brand development or nationally recognised initiatives.
- Experience of operating in high profile, political or international environments.

The post-holder will carry out all duties in accordance with the College's core values, policies and procedures – especially those relating to Health & Safety, Safeguarding & Prevent, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Data Protection, and will undertake any other duties commensurate with this senior post, as required by the reporting manager, Principal & CEO and/or the Governing Body. This job description reflects the broad scope of responsibilities at the time of writing but may be amended in consultation with the post-holder, to meet the evolving needs of the College's Group Operating Model and strategic objectives.

# Terms

## Remuneration

The remuneration for this role will be circa £90,000, dependent on relevant experience, plus a performance-related bonus.

## Annual Holidays

The annual leave entitlement is 35 days per annum, plus recognised public holidays.

## Pension Scheme

The holder of this post will have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme, a defined benefit pension.

## Relocation

The College will pay an allowance of up to £8,000 for relocation costs in line with HMRC rules, if required.

## Checks

This appointment is subject to satisfactory pre-employment references and DBS clearance.

# Timeline

The following timeline is indicative and should only be used as a guide. It may be subject to change.

Process	Date
Close for Applications	9.00am Monday 8th June 2026
Interviews with Dodd Partners	w/c 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2026
Shortlist Meeting	Thursday 25th June 2026
Interviews with Oaklands College	Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2026

# How to Apply

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Dodd Partners on behalf of Oaklands College. If you wish to apply for this position, please supply the following:

- A covering letter highlighting your suitability and how you meet the essential experience within the Person Specification, along with your current remuneration details.
- A comprehensive CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- All applications should be emailed to Dodd Partners at your earliest convenience to [contactus@doddpartners.com](mailto:contactus@doddpartners.com)

Should you wish to have an informal discussion about the role, please contact John Dodd on 07545 431 848 or 01244 738 450. Alternatively, email: [johndodd@doddpartners.com](mailto: johndodd@doddpartners.com)