

# Bursar

## Candidate Information Pack





## Letter from the Master

Dear Prospective Candidate,

With the retirement of Michael Parsons, Christ's College is recruiting a new Bursar to start in January 2027.

The Bursar is the key non-academic job in the Fellowship: at some point, everyone who works, teaches and studies here relies on the good will, good sense, and professional acumen of the Bursar. The successful candidate will slot easily into a Fellowship of about 80, divided between Junior Research Fellows (about 16), Teaching Fellows (the majority) and Life/ Emeritus Fellows (who have been Fellows continuously for at least 25 years). Christ's has about 150 staff members, most of whom report – directly or indirectly – to the Bursar, and 700 students (440 undergraduates and about 250 postgraduates).

The College endowment is about £184 million. The Bursar must balance current (often urgent and always compelling) demands for spending with the need to protect and grow the endowment for the longer term.

Speaking with no objectivity at all, I think Christ's is a great community – unstuffy (while respecting tradition), relaxed (while expecting excellent performance), and kind. It's a wonderful place to work.

Best,

Simon

**McDonald of Salford**

## Key Dates

- **Application Deadline** –  
4 September 2026, 12 noon
- **Interviews** –  
30 September and 1 October  
2026

## Current Context

The College's current Bursar, Michael Parsons, retires in January 2027. The College now seeks to appoint an exceptional individual as his successor.

The Bursar is the lead Financial Officer for the College and has responsibility for managing the finances in an increasingly challenging financial environment for higher education generally. Income is derived from a proportion of the student University tuition fees, and from students for meals and room rents.

The College also derives income from its external catering and commercial business; outside of academic terms, the College operates commercially, hosting conferences, events, summer schools and a bed and breakfast operation.

Christ's is also fortunate to have investments that are currently valued at around £184 million, the revenue from which additionally helps provide funding for activities which contribute to the College's charitable and educational objectives.

However, recent years have seen increased cost pressures, particularly in maintaining the unique small group teaching that is so highly valued, whilst income from tuition fees for UK undergraduates has not increased.

Key to the College's finances are philanthropic donations, principally from alumni. The Development Office conducts the College's fundraising efforts in support of a wide range of activities and initiatives, communicating with more than 9,000 alumni, spread across the globe, and the Bursar plays an important role supporting these efforts.

Christ's aims to be a beautiful and functional College and one of its strategic aims is to make beautiful and functional those parts of College which are not. In support of this mission, Christ's is undertaking an ambitious Library+ Project. Underpinned by a major philanthropy campaign and inspired by the historic landscape of the city, this project will provide the College community with a new library, social and study spaces. Alterations to the kitchens, Upper Hall and adjacent areas will include new plant and access improvements as well as a new Servery.

The newly configured space and library will:

- Provide additional study space and an extended working library including an informal study hub and a multi-faith room.
- An accessible run of buildings which address the needs of disabled people.
- Help to meet the College's updated sustainability and environmental targets on the pathway to net zero carbon emissions.



The incoming Bursar will take a pivotal role leading this project. There is an excellent and long-standing team supporting the Bursar.

## The Role

The role of Bursar is broad and complex. The role encompasses significant, operational, financial and people leadership responsibilities.

The Bursar must advance the College's core educational mission and support the student community through their education by ensuring the College's long-term financial sustainability and success.

A critical element of the Bursar's role is to maintain a transparent, productive and collegiate working relationship with the Governing Body. The Bursar is both an adviser to the Governing Body, helping it to understand the College's finances and the implications of its decisions, and is also accountable to the College Council and the Governing Body.



The postholder must be able to balance these two dimensions of the role, and be an active, visible and engaged Fellow of the College. The Bursar is expected to supply the Governing Body and its committees with financial, legal and charity knowledge and information necessary to inform strategy.

The Bursar is the senior administrative officer of the College and has responsibility for developing and delivering the College's financial strategy, astute management of the endowments fund and investments, and the estates. The Bursar receives the revenues, makes payments and renders accounts as required by the Statutes and the resolutions of the Governing Body and the Council, and performs all duties incident to the management of the financial and legal affairs of the College.

## The Role (cont.)

The Bursar's time is divided between the three core elements of the role:

- Finance, accounts and investments.
- Operations and compliance, including oversight of capital projects, human resource management, communications and IT services. (The Bursar is the College Safeguarding Lead and College Data Protection Lead.)
- College administration and governance, which is also the major element of the work of the Bursar's Assistant.

### Finance

The Bursar is responsible for developing the medium-term financial plan, preparing budgets and accounts, and maintenance of accounting systems and controls. This role includes writing reports and commentaries on the financial statements and ensuring that they are properly explained to the Fellows in writing and in discussion.



Operational accounting and the preparation of the statutory and management accounts and budgets are the responsibility of the Head of Finance and their team. The Head of Finance is also responsible for most of the liaison with the auditors, the maintenance of records of the Trust Funds, most tax matters, and the day-to-day administration of the investments and properties, pensions, insurance, banking and cash flow administration.

The Bursar is responsible for:

- Advising on the Investment Strategy, including responsible investment policy.
- Reporting on investment performance to the Investments Committee and the Council.
- The management of the College's commercial and agricultural properties, with advisers.
- Liaising with the various investment managers appointed to manage the portfolio.

### Operations

The Bursar leads experienced professional teams across finance, estates and operations, HR, communications and IT. The role has direct line management responsibility for the Director of College Services (known as the Domestic Bursar in some Colleges), Head of Finance, Head of HR, Head of Communications, IT team staff and the Bursar's Assistant.



## The Role (cont.)



### Administration and Governance

The Bursar leads the non-academic administration of the College and supports academic colleagues in the ongoing evolution of the College's governance structures. Governance of the College is divided between its Governing Body (all Fellows, excluding Emeritus Fellows, and seven student representatives), and its Council (the trustee body, comprising the Master, the Bursar, the Senior Tutor, ten elected members from the Governing Body, and the JCR and MCR Presidents). The Bursar acts as Secretary of the Governing Body and the Council. The latter meets seven times a year and is responsible for educational and financial affairs. The Governing Body meets six times a year. In consultation with the Master, and with support from the Bursar's Assistant, the Bursar is responsible for preparing agendas for these meetings and ensuring that minutes are kept recording the decisions taken.

The Bursar acts as Secretary to the following committees:

- Financial Control Audit and Risk Assurance Committee: College financial strategy, budget and accounts, and risk management arrangements.
- Investments Committee: oversight of the College's investments.
- Research Fund Managers: administration of the Research Fund, which makes grants to support the research work of Fellows.
- Statutes Committee: reviewing the College's Statutes and Ordinances.
- Remuneration Committee: the College's external advisory group focused on the remuneration of academic staff members and senior staff members.

The Bursar is also a member of several committees, most importantly:

- Alumni and Development Committee: concerned with the fundraising and relations with Alumni. The Bursar also helps represent the College at events for alumni and donors.
- Estate Strategy and Environmental Policy Committee: concerned, inter alia, with the capital programme, maintenance and sustainability of the estate and carbon footprint of the College's operations.
- Care+ Committee: the College's advisory group focused on improving equality, diversity and inclusion within the College.
- JCR and MCR Liaison Committees: fostering collaboration with the undergraduate and postgraduate student bodies.

The Bursar will need to establish strong working relationships with other College Officers including the Development Director who is responsible for alumni relations and fundraising, and the Senior Tutor and Director of Admissions who advise the Governing Body and the College Council on all matters of general educational policy.

The Bursar is expected to participate in University life, and to cultivate good links with other College Bursars.

## The Person

We are seeking an individual with exceptional management skills, capable of building and sustaining high levels of commitment in the teams for which they hold responsibility, and of delivering agile and efficient services for the College.

Applicants should have had experience at senior level in managing people and money. The successful candidate is likely to have had significant experience in managing a complex organisation, and experience in financial management and accounting. The person must have the ability to work cooperatively and constructively with the Fellows of the College in a self-governing academic environment, and with external advisers; the ability to learn fast and absorb the complexities of College administration, the legal and regulatory context in which the College operates, College accounting procedures, and investment and property management; the ability to think, write and speak clearly and to identify and explain the important issues; and an interest in the broader academic, cultural and social life of the College. The successful candidate should also have experience of developing and implementing strategies, and experience of managing change.



## Experience and Skills

A professional qualification in finance is required. Experience in higher education is welcomed but not essential - transferable leadership experience and intellectual curiosity are highly valued.

An ideal candidate will be expected to demonstrate:

- Experience of leading and empowering multi-disciplinary teams.
- Ability to build and maintain relationships at all levels, with excellent diplomatic and consensus building skills.
- Strong financial acumen and a clear understanding of implications of financial decisions, as well as fluency in handling accounts, budgets and forecasts.
- Clear and sustained experience of strategic financial and operational leadership in a complex setting.
- Working knowledge of relevant legislation, including employment law, data protection legislation, pension legislation and charity law.
- Proactivity, an ability to identify opportunities and pre-empt problems.
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills; able to draft papers, write succinctly and persuasively and make presentations, including on complex financial matters, within College, the University and beyond.





## The Person (cont.)

### Personal Qualities

The successful candidate will possess:

- Effective team-working skills, capable of working in a consensus-driven environment.
- A clear sense of personal integrity and empathy for others, with patience and resilience.
- Creativity and a commitment to innovation.
- Adaptability and an ability to manage conflicting requirements whilst focusing on main priorities.
- The ability to inspire trust and confidence and to command the respect of Governing Body and the College staff.
- A collaborative style coupled with a proven ability to get things done.
- A genuine commitment to equality, diversity, and treating others with dignity and respect.

## Our Values and Mission

Our mission is to encourage adventurous thinking and scholarship in and across all disciplines thereby furthering the University's mission of contributing to society through the pursuit of education and research at the highest levels.

We take great pride in the community we have created here. We are committed to supporting students of all educational and social backgrounds. Christ's typically admits around 75% of its UK entrants from the maintained sector, and between 20%-25% from areas in the lowest three deciles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, higher than the University average and a testament to the significant efforts that we have made in outreach and offer-holder support in recent years.



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## Introduction to Christ's College

Christ's is a constituent College of the University of Cambridge.

Re-founded by Lady Margaret Beaufort in 1505, its most famous former students are John Milton, Charles Darwin and J Robert Oppenheimer. These days the College has over 9,000 alumni worldwide, including three Nobel laureates (Sir Martin Evans, Duncan Haldane and John Clarke), Sir Simon Schama, Sir Martin Sorrell, John Healey (ex-Defence Secretary), Sam Carling (the Baby of the House), Nina Gold, Natalie Haines, John Oliver, and Sacha Baron Cohen.

The College is responsible for admitting its students, for providing small group teaching for them and for the welfare of both its undergraduates and postgraduates. Christ's is small enough to be friendly and personal, yet large enough to welcome staff and students from over 60 countries. The College is a registered charity subject to regulation by the Charity Commission for England and Wales. The College's affairs are regulated by Statutes, approved by the King in Council, and is governed by the Master and the Fellows of the College who constitute the College's Governing Body. The administration of the College is devolved to the College Officers, College Council (whose members are the Charity Trustees) and several sub-committees.

The College admits about 120 undergraduates and 100 postgraduates a year which means that students know many people by name and most by sight. The fact that all undergraduates and much of the postgraduate community live on site, or close by, further strengthens the sense that Christ's is a community that is neither claustrophobically small nor intimidatingly large. With extensive academic, pastoral and administrative support from the College and strong welfare support from fellow students, students feel at home here quickly.

To its Fellows, Christ's offers an intellectual and social environment which provides fertile ground for interdisciplinary approaches and partnerships. Most Fellows are recruited from those appointed to teaching and research positions within the University but, each year, Christ's appoints several early-career post-doctoral researchers who are given the opportunity to establish their academic careers as Research Fellows for a fixed period. Christ's also directly employs a few College Teaching Officers in subjects with high teaching need and is home to the developing Darwin-Hamied Centre, a dedicated facility promoting research at the intersection of biodiversity, conservation, and economics.

Christ's location and buildings are an integral part of our sense of community. Right in the middle of Cambridge but nestled behind high walls, you hardly know that you are in the city centre when on the main site. Christ's stretches back from its Tudor First Court back through its majestic Second Court, with the Fellows' Building (the most important seventeenth century building in Cambridge not designed by Christopher Wren) and Garden (with outdoor swimming pool), into the late Victorian Third Court and finally to the modernity of New Court and Yusuf Hamied Court. Christ's accommodates most of its students on the main site. The College also owns various hostels and flats.

Christ's is undertaking an ambitious programme of estate development, decarbonisation and refurbishment in support of our long-term sustainability targets. The College is a living heritage site, home to listed buildings of national importance alongside modern accommodation and facilities that support the needs of today's students, staff and visitors.

## Application Details

Applications should consist of a full curriculum vitae detailing qualifications and experience, accompanied by a tailored covering letter describing briefly how candidates meet the candidate specification outlined in this document, why the appointment is of interest, and what they believe they can bring to the role.

Formal applications should be sent, along with the names of three persons from whom references may be sought, to [jobs@christs.cam.ac.uk](mailto:jobs@christs.cam.ac.uk) by noon on **4 September 2026**.

Candidates should indicate which, if any, of their referees may be contacted prior to an offer of employment being made.

For an informal conversation about the role please contact Thorunn Byrne, Head of HR – [tab72@christs.cam.ac.uk](mailto:tab72@christs.cam.ac.uk)

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an interview on **30 September or 1 October 2026**.

Christ's College is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes diversity amongst its students, staff, Fellows and visitors, recognising the particular contributions to the achievement of the College's mission that can be made by individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

[Equal Opportunities Policy Statement | Christs College Cambridge](#)



## Terms and Conditions

The stipend of the Bursar will be **£108,153 per annum** (this figure equates to spine point 77 on the University's single salary spine point chart). The University's single salary spine point chart is reviewed on 1 August annually.

The Bursar will be eligible for participation in the University Superannuation Scheme. Other privileges include up to 41 days holiday per annum and generous meal allowances at the High Table.

This role is being advertised as a full-time post (40 hours per week).

This post is offered as a permanent contract. Notice period is three months on either side upon satisfactory completion of the six-month probationary period.

The Bursar will be elected to a Fellowship and thereby become a key figure in the communal life of the College.





# CHRIST'S COLLEGE

## UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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