

# University of Reading Charity of the Year

## Application Guidelines

This document is designed to support applications for the 2026/27 Charity of the Year scheme.

### Aims of the scheme

This scheme, which launched in 2024, is aimed at increasing the ways that the University of Reading can partner with charities that operate and deliver impact within the Thames Valley area.

Importantly, the scheme aims to deliver mutual benefits to both the chosen charity and the University, whilst also benefitting the wider local community.

The scheme will support the University of Reading's charitable objectives, which are to advance education, learning and research for public benefit, and is designed to complement existing schemes and ways of working together with charities.

### Why does the University of Reading have a Charity of the Year scheme?

The University of Reading is a leading force in British and international higher education that enjoys a worldclass reputation for teaching, research and enterprise.

Being an engaged University and making a positive impact beyond our own campuses is one of our key strategic principles. Our [strategy](#) galvanises us around a set of shared ideals and guides our decision making.

The University is proud to be a major contributor to Reading and the Thames Valley. Working with local partners is a key way in which we can play a positive role in the social, cultural and economic life of our community.

Working with charities enriches and strengthens our work and our impact.

### Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, organisations must meet **all** the following criteria:

1. Be registered with the charity commission.

2. Work either as a local charity or a branch of a national charity, operating and delivering impact within the Thames Valley region, which is defined as the local authority areas of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.
3. Operate in ways that align closely with the University of Reading's own charitable objectives of advancing education, learning and research for public benefit. This should extend beyond training your own staff and could include:
  - Helping people of all ages along their education and learning journey (whether formal or informal) – supporting their ability to engage, raising aspirations, etc.
  - Assisting with/improving staff and students' physical and/or mental wellbeing.
  - Contributing to research where there are mutual interests.
4. Have a dedicated member of staff who can act as the main point of contact with the University.

### **Are there any exclusions?**

This scheme is unable to support:

- Organisations or activities that seek to further the interests of profit-making businesses.
- Organisations or activities that seek to promote religious or political beliefs.
- Activities that do not align with the University's Royal Charter or [policies](#), including but not limited to non-discrimination and freedom of speech.
- Activities that may damage the University's reputation.

### **How can a charity apply?**

Applications must be submitted using the [online form](#). A document containing the application form questions is available so you can prepare your submission offline.

Applications will be welcomed from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2026 and the **closing date is Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026 (23.00)**.

The chosen charity will be notified by the end of July 2026.

### **What benefits will the chosen charity receive?**

The scheme presents opportunities to:

- raise awareness about their charity and its beneficiaries among the large University staff community
- work with University staff to raise funds
- promote volunteering opportunities to staff

- explore the potential to collaborate on, and contribute to, research studies
- network with a wide range of people and organisations
- enable work placements.

### **Will the chosen charity receive any financial grant awards from the University?**

No, this scheme does not provide grant funding. However, the chosen charity will be able to work with University staff to raise funds together.

Note that University employees can apply for small grant funding for specific projects involving local charities and community organisations via a separate scheme known as the [Community Fund](#).

### **When will activity with the chosen charity begin?**

The Charity of the Year scheme will align with the University academic year, which runs from August – July.

It is anticipated that there will be an initial planning phase in August and activities will be delivered from September onwards.

### **How will you select the chosen charity?**

After the application timeframe has closed, the Charity of the Year team will undertake an assessment process to identify the shortlist of charities that will progress to a staff vote.

Assessment criteria are shared below:

- Alignment to the University’s charitable objectives. Applications that demonstrate clear/direct alignment will be scored higher. This is a key priority and is weighted in the assessment.
- Benefits to the charity and charity beneficiaries in the Thames Valley region from the engagement.
- Benefits to the local community from the engagement.
- Benefits to the University community of staff and students. Applications that demonstrate clear/direct benefits will be scored higher.
- Why the University has been chosen as a potential engagement partner.
- Overall quality of application. Applications that provide clear/detailed responses will be scored higher. Responses need to be within the required word limits.

University staff will vote for their preferred charity from the final shortlist. Text to inform the staff vote will be taken from the submitted application.

### **What will the chosen charity be asked to agree to?**

- Attend regular meetings with the Charity of the Year team, to plan and deliver the activities that will take place throughout the year.
- Provide materials to support communications about their organisation and its activities.
- Allow the University of Reading to use their charity name, logo and trademark in promotional and marketing activities. Use of the University of Reading logo will be subject to the selected charity entering into a letter of permission with the University.

### **What other ways can local charities engage with the University?**

Applying or being selected for the Charity of the Year scheme does not preclude an organisation from engaging in other ways of working with staff and students at the University of Reading.

Further details about other initiatives can be found on our [local community](#) web pages.

### **Who is co-ordinating the scheme?**

This initiative came about through suggestions from employees at the University of Reading.

The Charity of the Year administrative team are a small group of staff volunteers, drawn from a diverse range of functions within the University, with full support from the Vice Chancellor and senior leadership team.

### **Is the University of Reading a charity?**

Yes, the University of Reading has [charitable status](#), established by Royal Charter in 1926. Our [charter](#) defines our charitable purpose of advancing education, learning and research for public benefit.

### **Who can I ask if I have any questions?**

Please email [charityoftheyear@reading.ac.uk](mailto:charityoftheyear@reading.ac.uk)

**Please also note:**

The staff vote to select the Charity of the Year is final. There is no right to appeal.

The University provides no warranties or assurances to the selected Charity of the Year that any activities or outcomes will be achieved.

Although termination is not expected, please note that either party may terminate its participation in the Charity of the Year scheme at any time without notice or providing any reason.

Information submitted via the application form will be used for the purposes of assessing suitability for the Charity of the Year scheme and data will be processed and stored in accordance with the [University of Reading privacy policy](#).

April 2026