

Information for Applicants

WHAT IS AURORA?

Aurora is a leadership development initiative for women and those who identify as a woman. It was developed by Advance HE (formerly known as The Leadership Foundation) for Higher Education in the UK in response to research which indicated a need for better representation of women in influential and senior positions in higher education.

The Aurora programme is targeted at women in lecturer, associate professor, research, technical and professional services equivalent roles across all academic disciplines and throughout HE administration. It is designed to introduce key leadership topics and skills through four full-day workshops complemented by networking, role models and guest speakers at each event. In addition, on-going support is ensured through two action learning days, online resources and institutional level support including attendance at launch, mid-way and closing events, guidance from the UCD Aurora Champion and partaking in a mentoring relationship.

The Aurora programme has been very successful and is seen as an important initiative contributing to the development of women in leadership and supporting UCD's strategic plan and commitment to gender equality. To date, UCD has supported 229 participants to avail of this programme and the programme will offer a further 21 places across the university for 2025-2026. More information on Aurora is available here: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/programmes-events/aurora>

DISTRIBUTION OF PLACES

To facilitate widespread participation and to encourage both faculty and staff applications, a representative spread of places has been allocated across the University. There are several areas where there are smaller numbers of employees and these have been combined for an allocation of one place. These areas include President's Office; University Relations; Astra Academy; Global Engagement, Strategy and External Engagement and Sustainability. The allocation of places is as follows:

Distribution of places across Colleges/VPs

College/Unit	AURORA Places
College of Arts & Humanities	2
College of Business	2
College of Law & Social Sciences	2
College of Health & Agricultural Sciences	4
College of Engineering & Architecture	2
College of Science	2
Office of the Registrar & VP of Academic Affairs	3
President's office, University Relations, Astra Academy, Global Engagement, Strategy and External Engagement, Sustainability.	1
Research, Innovation and Impact	1
HR, SIRC, Legal Affairs and Agile	1
Finance	1
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Aurora Leadership Development Programme 2025-2026

WHO CAN APPLY?

The following are the eligibility criteria which govern application to the programme:

- Must identify as female
- For faculty applicants, Aurora is open up to and including associate professor level
- For professional staff applicants, Aurora is open to those from Grade SEA (Senior Executive Assistant) to SA04 (Senior Administrative Officer Level 4)
- For technical staff applicants, it is open to technical officer and senior technical officer level
- At the time of application, applicants must have completed at least 2 years' service in UCD, (with the exception of Post-Doctoral Researchers)
- For Post-doctoral researchers, applicants must have completed 12 months of their Post-Doctoral Research Fellow contract (Level 1 or Level 2) at the time of application and there must be a minimum of 18 months remaining at the closing date for receipt of applications.
- For those on contracts, there must be a minimum of 2 years remaining on their contract of employment at the closing date for receipt of applications (with the exception of Post-Doctoral Researchers as above).
- Must be endorsed with a letter of recommendation from their Head of School/Head of Unit
- Must be nominated by the relevant Head of School/ Head of Unit
- Must be willing to commit to mentoring and nominate a mentor
- Must be available for all training days both internal and external
- Must complete a personal statement addressing set questions, which does not exceed 800 words

REQUIREMENTS OF UCD AURORA PARTICIPANTS

Participants will be:

- Committed to the full Aurora process attending four externally-run online development days, two action learning set days and three internal UCD events. They must also be prepared to undertake some self-directed study.
- Ready to embrace the mentoring relationship, and actively work with their mentors to address their personal development and build their self-reliance
- Committed to a career in higher education and prepared to devote some time to consider and plan their career
- Prepared to embrace the extensive networking opportunities and participate fully in Aurora
- Willing to undertake projects or assignments for their institution to continue developing their leadership skills
- Prepared to participate in a longitudinal study to gauge the effectiveness of Aurora
- Willing to act as mentors or role models to future participants

APPLICATION AND NOMINATION PROCESS

In order to apply for a place on this leadership development programme, applicants are required to complete the Aurora 2025-2026 application form which includes the following elements:

- Complete a personal statement of no more than 800 words, indicating the following:
 - Why do you believe that you demonstrate the leadership potential to participate in Aurora?
 - What development needs have you identified through your P4G conversation that this programme may support you to achieve?
 - What outcomes do you expect to achieve from your participation in this programme at this stage of your career?
- Consider potential mentor/s who would support you through the programme. It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the 'Guidelines on choosing a mentor' document which will assist in discussing your considerations with your Head of School/Unit as part of the nomination process. You may wish to wait until after the Mentee Training to make your final decision, which is fine.
- Applicants must confirm their availability for all online workshop dates (internal and external) and hold these dates pending successful application
- As there is a significant institutional commitment to supporting participation on the Aurora programme, applicants must be supported by a nominator. To satisfy this, applicants should provide their application form for review to their Head of School/Head of Unit and subsequently seek nomination through the completion of a meeting with their Head of School/Head of Unit.
- Evidence of this meeting in the application must be supported by a signed letter of endorsement from their Head of School/Head of Unit. This must include reasons why the Head of School/Head of Unit is supporting this application. Please note: It is at the discretion of the relevant Head of School/Head of Unit to decide as to whether or not to support the application.
- If the application is approved by the Head of School/Head of Unit, it must then be submitted for evaluation.

EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

- All applications must be completed using the Aurora Application Form
- Please submit only the application form including a scan of the page with the relevant signatures as well as scan of the letter of support from your Head of School/Head of Unit.
- All applications are to be submitted electronically by **5:30pm on 2nd September 2025**.
- Please see the table on the application form to identify where your application should be emailed to. It is your responsibility to ensure that your application has been received by the correct person.

- All applications will be assessed at a local level by a panel which will comprise of the respective College Principal/Vice Principal (CP/VP) of Unit, HR Partner and one other senior member of faculty/staff as designated by the CP/VP. The criteria which the panel will use to evaluate the applications include:
 - o Leadership potential and readiness to engage with the programme
 - o Fit with P4G Development Plan
 - o Quality and relevance of expected outcomes

Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria above will not be considered.

COMMUNICATION OF OUTCOMES

It is recommended that initial feedback be provided to all applicants by the CP/VP of Unit in conjunction with the HRP on **11 September 2025**. For applicants who are unsuccessful, it is recommended that this is discussed with their respective Head of School/ Unit and forms part of their P4G discussions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information please contact your local HRP. If you have a general query on Aurora, please contact Anna O’Flanagan, UCD People & Organisation Development (anna.oflanagan@ucd.ie).