

WEST  DEAN



# **Vice-Principal of West Dean College**

Candidate Pack  
Spring 2025

# About West Dean

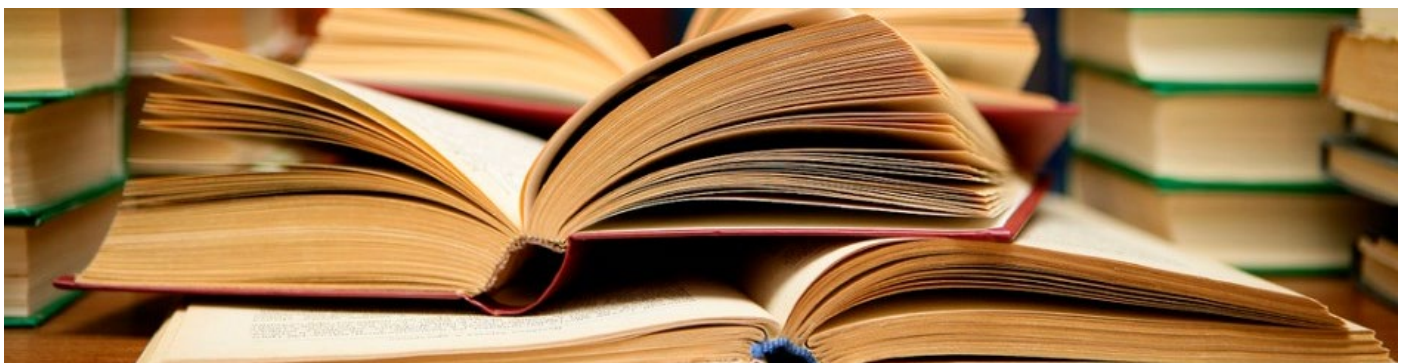


**West Dean College is a leading specialist institution dedicated to practice-based education in arts, crafts, conservation, and design.** It forms part of West Dean, which, alongside West Dean Estate, is supported by the Edward James Foundation. Nestled in the stunning landscape of the South Downs National Park, and with a new site in Bloomsbury, London, the College provides an immersive and inspiring environment for students.

West Dean offers a distinctive and highly respected model of education. It delivers a wide range of programmes, from undergraduate and postgraduate degrees to residential short courses and continuing professional development (CPD). Students engage in hands-on, workshop-based learning across fine art, craft practices—including bookbinding, ceramics, clock-making, furniture, metalwork, and musical instrument making—interior and garden design, conservation, and creative writing. The College’s small class sizes, expert tuition, and state-of-the-art studios ensure that students graduate with specialist skills, real-world experience, and strong industry connections.

The College is ambitious for growth and innovation. In recent years, student numbers have expanded, with over 215 higher education students currently enrolled in full- and part-time validated courses, alongside more than 6,000 students annually participating in its dynamic portfolio of short courses.

Research, knowledge exchange, and arts and creative industry collaboration are integral to the College’s mission. It fosters active research groups in areas such as conservation and tapestry while stewarding significant historic collections that document the legacy of its founder, Edward James. These collections—featuring works by Salvador Dalí, Leonora Carrington, René Magritte, and others—are central to the College’s identity and ongoing contribution to cultural scholarship.



# About The Role

## Vice-Principal of West Dean College of Arts, Design, Crafts and Conservation

**Reports to:** Chief Executive Officer and Principal

**Location:** This role is split between our London and West Sussex campuses.

In May 2025, West Dean will introduce a new senior leadership structure, with the recently appointed CEO, Professor Anna Gough-Yates, assuming the title of CEO and Principal of West Dean. The Vice-Principal of West Dean College will report directly to them, shaping the College's academic and strategic direction in this newly established role. This comes at a pivotal moment, as West Dean embarks on an ambitious refresh of its Vision 2030—one that will be shaped through extensive engagement with staff, students, and partners. With a bold and imaginative outlook, the updated vision will continue to push creative boundaries, drawing on West Dean's legacy of innovation, practice, and artistic experimentation.

This is a rare opportunity for a visionary leader to continue to position West Dean College at the forefront of specialist education. The Vice-Principal will drive innovation in teaching, curriculum development and research, while ensuring the College remains a pioneer in both higher education, short courses and CPD. The role demands a balance of academic leadership, strategic vision, and the ability to evolve the institution in response to both opportunity and challenge.

Your leadership will foster a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and adaptability. By enhancing the College's academic offering and student experience, you will ensure that West Dean continues to thrive—combining academic ambition with long-term sustainability. Strengthening partnerships, developing new revenue streams, and exploring opportunities for growth—both in existing disciplines and emerging areas of study—across West Sussex and London will be key priorities. Ensuring the long-term success of the College requires a leader who can navigate complexity, engage stakeholders, and make strategic decisions that align resources with future aspirations.

This is a pivotal moment in West Dean's evolution. The ideal candidate will bring a track record of transformative leadership in higher education, a deep appreciation for the specialist education that West Dean offers, and the ability to inspire staff, students, and partners alike.

A Professorial title may be awarded to suitably qualified candidates.





# About The Role



## Key Responsibilities

### Strategic Leadership and Growth

- Serve as a core member of the Senior Leadership Team, contributing to institutional strategy and high-level decision-making.
- Working with the CEO and Principal, shape and drive the College's strategic direction, ensuring academic excellence, student success, and long-term sustainability.
- Lead the development of a refreshed academic vision and curriculum, aligning with West Dean's distinctive heritage while fostering innovation and contemporary relevance.
- Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders—including industry, cultural institutions, and peer organisations—to expand opportunities for collaboration and growth.
- Identify and develop new academic and commercial opportunities, including innovative course offerings, emerging disciplines, and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Champion a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that West Dean remains an influential leader in specialist education.
- Work in close alignment with the College's Vision 2030 strategy, defining success metrics and ensuring academic priorities contribute to West Dean's wider institutional ambitions.

### Academic Leadership and Innovation

- Oversee the academic portfolio, ensuring that programmes across higher education, short courses, and CPD reflect sector trends and industry needs.
- Lead curriculum development and pedagogical innovation, supporting the integration of research, sustainability, and professional practice into teaching.
- Ensure the highest standards of academic quality, regulatory compliance, and student outcomes, including preparation for external reviews and accreditations.
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration and explore new ways to integrate West Dean's unique locations, collections, and research into the student experience.
- Represent West Dean at national and international forums, enhancing its profile as a leader in arts, design, crafts, and conservation education.

### West Sussex and London Campuses – Growth and Development

- Develop strategies that maximise the distinct strengths of West Dean's two-campus model.
- Strengthen and expand the London campus, enhancing access to cultural and industry networks, short courses, and professional partnerships.

# About The Role

- Ensure the West Sussex campus remains a hub for immersive, estate-based learning, integrating its historic workshops, conservation labs, and collections into the curriculum.
- Identify opportunities for cross-campus collaboration, ensuring students and staff benefit from the unique attributes of both locations.

## Student Experience and Engagement

- Oversee strategies to enhance student recruitment, retention, and progression, ensuring a vibrant and engaged learning community.
- Lead initiatives to ensure continued student satisfaction and wellbeing, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment.
- Ensure high-quality student support services, including academic guidance, pastoral care, and career development.

## Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Income Development

- Strengthen West Dean's research profile.
- Expand knowledge exchange initiatives, fostering collaborations with industry, museums, and cultural institutions.
- Develop strategies to generate external research funding and income streams through partnerships, grants, and commercial projects.
- Integrate research and scholarship into student learning, leveraging West Dean's archives and collections.

## Resource Management and Financial Sustainability

- Ensure the effective management of academic resources, optimising operational efficiency while maintaining excellence.
- Lead the development and implementation of strategies for financial sustainability, including diversifying income streams and identifying new funding opportunities.

- Oversee academic budgets and resource allocation to support long-term institutional success.

## Leadership and People Development

- Build and develop a high-performing academic team, fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and professional growth.
- Mentor and support academic and professional staff, ensuring alignment with the College's vision and values.
- Ensure effective workforce planning, including recruitment, retention, and staff development initiatives.

## External Engagement and Strategic Partnerships

- Cultivate relationships with industry partners, cultural organisations, funding bodies, and other institutions to enhance opportunities for students and staff.
- Develop research and knowledge exchange initiatives that position West Dean as an influential voice in arts, design, crafts, and conservation education.
- Lead the College's role in collaborative projects, fostering connections that enhance reputation, funding, and impact.

## Edward James Foundation Archive and Collections

- Working with the Collections Manager and team, provide strategic oversight for the Edward James Foundation archive and collection, ensuring its educational and research potential is fully realised.
- Develop policies and strategies to enhance the archive's visibility, integration into academic programmes, and contribution to knowledge exchange.
- Oversee conservation and cost-management strategies to ensure the long-term preservation and sustainability of the collection.

# About The Person



## Essential Qualifications and Experience

- A doctorate in a relevant field (including arts, design, conservation, humanities) or equivalent professional standing.
- Significant senior leadership experience in higher education, with a proven track record of shaping and delivering academic strategy.
- Experience in leading academic programme development, including interdisciplinary and practice-based approaches.
- Strong financial acumen, with experience in managing budgets, developing sustainable business models, and identifying new revenue streams.
- Proven ability to lead institutional change and manage complex organisational structures.
- In-depth knowledge of quality assurance and regulatory compliance in higher education.

## Skills and Attributes

- Visionary leadership with the ability to drive transformation while respecting institutional heritage.
- Outstanding interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to build relationships across the organisation and externally.
- A strategic thinker with a deep understanding of the evolving higher education landscape and specialist education sectors.

- Ability to inspire and develop high-performing teams, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.
- Strong financial and commercial mindset, with the ability to balance academic ambition with long-term sustainability.
- Commitment to diversity, inclusion, and widening participation in education.
- Highly analytical and solution-focused, with the ability to navigate complex challenges with confidence and clarity.
- Passion for the arts, design, crafts, and conservation, with a deep appreciation for West Dean's unique role in these fields.

## Desirable

- Experience in leading international collaborations and partnerships.
- Understanding of how to integrate traditional practices with contemporary education and research.
- Knowledge of philanthropic funding and external revenue generation in an educational context.





# About The Person

The ideal candidate will bring a combination of strategic vision, academic leadership, and exceptional interpersonal skills to drive West Dean's mission of delivering world-class education in arts, design, crafts, and conservation. While expertise in these fields is valuable, we welcome applications from leaders with a proven track record in managing diverse academic portfolios and a deep appreciation for West Dean's distinctive educational approach.

## Additional Notes

The Vice-Principal will have the opportunity to shape their role and build a team to support the College's strategic objectives. The specific line management responsibilities will be determined upon appointment, taking into account the successful candidate's strengths and the College's evolving needs.

The Vice-Principal will be expected to represent the College at various events and may be required to work outside normal office hours as necessary. They will play a key role in shaping the future of West Dean College and contributing to its continued success and growth in the field of arts, design, crafts, and conservation education.



# How to Apply



To find out more about this exceptional opportunity, please contact Alan Walter on 07876 766972, email [alan@dixonwalter.co.uk](mailto:alan@dixonwalter.co.uk).

Further information and details about how to apply can be found here: [VP - West Dean - How To Apply](#)

Applications should be made via email to [alan@dixonwalter.co.uk](mailto:alan@dixonwalter.co.uk) and must include on separate documents:

- letter of application setting out your interest in the role and details of how you match the person specification
- a comprehensive curriculum vitae (CV)
- details of three referees and notice period (referees will not be contacted without your permission)
- a completed Personal Details Form (available above)

Closing date for applications is Midnight on **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

Preliminary interviews will take place with Dixon Walter via MS teams from **w/c 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

Final interviews will take place at West Dean College on **Tuesday 10 June 2025**

*Please note that the dates above are indicative and may be subject to change.*