



The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities

ACU membership 2026-27: making the most of your membership



Welcome: 2026-27

We are delighted to welcome you to your new ACU membership year for August 2026 – July 2027.

Your institution continues to play a critical role as one of our 400 members across 40 countries, uniquely positioning you to connect with other universities across the Commonwealth, foster collaboration to address complex global challenges, influence policy, and strengthen your institution's global engagement and impact.

We ensure that your voice directly informs the Commonwealth's higher education agenda. We place our members at the heart of our work with governments and partners to advance global priorities such as access, skills, research and sustainable development.

This year, we are introducing an even more supportive and practical approach to working with our members, designed to help you engage more strategically and receive greater value.

ACU membership extends across your entire institution, with benefits available to all staff and students. This new 2026-27 welcome pack provides an overview of your full membership package, including key enhancements for the year ahead.

We will also share our ACU membership experience survey later in the year. Please make sure you complete the survey, as we genuinely want to hear your feedback to be able to continually enhance your experience.



All the best,
Kathryn Jack CMgr MCMl
Head of Membership and Events

Meet our new Chair of ACU Council

Professor Nana Aba Appiah Amfo, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, was elected as Chair in January 2026. Professor Amfo is a respected leader in global higher education, with more than 24 years of experience in academia and university governance. [Read more about Professor Amfo.](#)



Your member benefits

Global connections, new university partnerships, and collaboration

- Develop meaningful connections and partnerships across the Commonwealth through ACU Connect – your exclusive members-only online community. ACU Connect hosts our ACU Communities of Practice and our member-only events. Start making new connections today.
- Express your interest today in joining our next ACU Congress, due to be held in early 2028 (in Colombo, Sri Lanka). ACU Congress is our flagship member conference and an opportunity to network with your peers across the Commonwealth's higher education community.
- Support high-quality partnerships by using the ACU's Equitable Research Partnerships Toolkit: embed the tools into all stages of your research project, from planning through to implementation.
- Join 'ACU Live', a year-round programme of online events aligned to key Commonwealth higher education priorities. You may have joined the Higher Education Taskforce's working group webinars this year; our webinars are back due to popular demand and will be more frequent, with a mixture of interactive and broadcast formats.



Your member benefits

Member-only access to funding opportunities

What's new this year?

- Global Grants: the new ACU Global Grants provide undergraduate students at ACU member universities with funding to attend short-term academic programmes ('summer' or 'winter' schools), hosted by an ACU member in a different Commonwealth country.
 - ACU members running summer and winter schools: the grants could fund students to attend your programme.
- ACU Fellowships: we have listened to member feedback and increased funding by 100%, offering awards of up to 5,000 GBP.
- Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships (QECS):
 - For students: we have increased the number of places for students to apply for the chance to study for a two-year, fully-funded master's degree programme.
 - For members: apply to become future QECS hosts before 10 September.
- Expert Group Research Fund: this new award (formerly titled as a fellowship) will give direct funding of 13,000 GBP to researchers at ACU member universities to develop policy relevant research, commissioned in partnership with Commonwealth governments

Collaboration grants

- Exciting new opportunity: the ACU will be launching new collaboration funding for ACU member universities to work together in 2027, with the chance to showcase outcomes and findings in Colombo, Sri Lanka, at ACU Congress 2028. Further updates will be emailed to all members soon.

Plan ahead: all 2026-27 funding opportunities for staff and students



Our 2026-27 funding calendar is now live, including opening dates and deadlines for grants, fellowships, and scholarships, to help you plan ahead.

Your member benefits

New partnerships, programmes and exclusive discounts

Times Higher Education



Attend THE events at a discounted rate with ACU membership.

[Read more about the collaboration initiatives](#) that will benefit you and look out for your monthly Synthesis newsletter in which we will share discount codes, speaker calls and other related benefits for members.

The Institute of Leadership:

We have partnered with the Institute of Leadership, the professional membership organisation for leaders and managers, to strengthen leadership capability across Commonwealth higher education.



The multi-year programme will include leadership development initiatives, peer-learning networks, research, and thought leadership. ACU members will also be able to access IoL membership, gaining access to professional recognition, community, training and a range of resources.

- Vice-chancellors are invited to apply for fellowship, recognising their leadership experience and contribution to the sector.
- Students at ACU member universities will also be able to access discounted IoL student membership.

Further information on how to join and the exclusive student offer will be shared with ACU member universities in the coming weeks.



Your member benefits

Engage with the ACU's policy work

Our Expert Groups bring together ACU member academics with policymakers and practitioners to co-create practical, policy-relevant solutions to shared sustainable development challenges, providing your university with opportunities to contribute to high-profile international policy engagement and strengthen institutional visibility.

From August, the Oceans and Health Expert Groups will launch Commonwealth-wide surveys on mangrove conservation and cancer workforce education and training, enabling you to share good practice, showcase your staff expertise and demonstrate how higher education contributes to evidence-based policy action.

Help shape the future of higher education across the Commonwealth

Following the successful conclusion of the inaugural Higher Education Taskforce, the ACU will launch a new programme of senior member engagement to inform Commonwealth policy and advocacy.

Bringing together selected university leaders from across the Commonwealth, the next phase will provide opportunities to contribute to high-level working groups, influence policy priorities, and help shape the ACU's engagement with governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat on issues including trade, entrepreneurship and economic resilience, AI, research and innovation. Expressions of interest will open later this year.



Enhance your member experience

Nominate an ACU Ambassador

The key to being able to make the most of your member benefits is to have an engaged and actively involved ACU Ambassador. ACU Ambassadors must be nominated by your vice-chancellor's office in writing. Please email membership@acu.ac.uk

Ambassadors play a key role in coordinating engagement with ACU membership across your institution, connecting colleagues to relevant opportunities, supporting participation and helping to ensure you realise the full value of your membership. Having a nominated point of contact also enables us to provide more tailored support, including regular check-ins, targeted signposting and strategic guidance aligned to your global priorities.

Your ACU Ambassador can access ACU Connect, our online community to engage with peers; join our ACU Communities of Practice; and showcase your institution's work across our Commonwealth network. While we know that our member universities engage with the ACU in different ways, we also know that those with an active Ambassador typically experience a more connected and coordinated membership and are best placed to take full advantage of the opportunities available.

If you already have an active ACU Ambassador, please note:

- you can have up to two nominated staff members as your ACU Ambassadors to help spread the network management workload.
- Ambassadors should all now be active on ACU Connect. If not, please let us know and we can arrange for their online induction.



The ACU's Star Ambassador for 2025: Professor Lynette Jacobs (right) from the University of the Free State, South Africa

Enhance your member experience

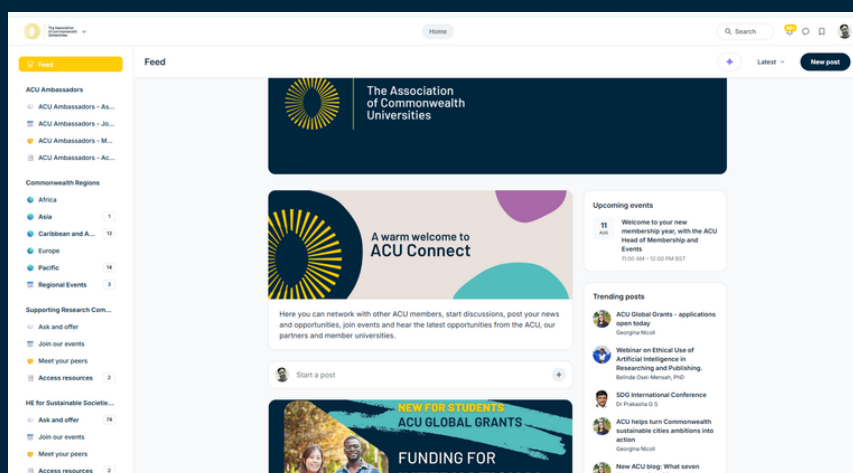
Join ACU Connect

Develop meaningful connections and partnerships across the Commonwealth through ACU Connect – your exclusive members-only online community.

ACU Communities of Practice on ACU Connect

Our Communities of Practice are open to all staff at ACU member universities and are hosted online on ACU Connect. They enable members to network and form new partnerships across the Commonwealth, attend events, share knowledge and discover opportunities.

The communities include the Higher Education for Sustainable Societies Community, the Supporting Research Community, and the HR in HE Community.



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ACU Connect has provided a valuable and effective avenue to strengthen our international outreach and connect with the wider Commonwealth higher education community. We have been able to identify opportunities, access expertise, and build meaningful connections with academics, professionals, and institutions across the network, particularly those focused on sustainability, research, and regional collaboration. The continued support from the ACU team has enabled us to make effective use of the platform.

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Irandi Munasinghe, Senior Executive – International Relations and Grants, Sri Lanka Technology Campus

Enhance your member experience

Connect with your regional membership engagement lead

To help you maximise the full range of ACU membership benefits and engagement opportunities, each institution has now been assigned a regional Membership Engagement Lead. Working closely with your ACU Ambassador, they will serve as your dedicated account manager, providing tailored guidance, regular check-ins, and strategic support aligned with your institution's priorities and global ambitions.



Aditya Malkani

Membership Engagement Lead
- India and Southeast Asia



Fariba Soetan

Head of Policy and Research;
Membership Engagement
Lead - Europe



Ife Akintunde

Membership Engagement Lead
- Africa



Ikita Pokharna

Membership Engagement Lead
- South Asia



Yara Vasina

Membership Engagement Lead
- Pacific



Kevin Goheen

Membership Engagement Lead
- Americas and Caribbean



Kathryn Jack

Head of Membership and Events;
Membership Engagement Lead -
Pakistan

Schedule an engagement call

Our regional membership engagement leads are available to provide engagement insights and tailored support to help you maximise the value of your ACU membership. To request a meeting or an ACU membership presentation for your staff, please email membership@acu.ac.uk. Keep an eye on ACU Connect too for engagement lead 'office hour' events - active participation is key to realising the full impact of your membership.

Stay connected with us



Receive our monthly e-newsletter, Synthesis (sent to 17k recipients), with opportunities and updates from across the network. If you are not receiving Synthesis, please [register for a MyACU account](#), or contact us.



If your job or contact details change, or your university appoints a new vice-chancellor or executive head - remember to please keep us updated.



Join [community](#) discussions on ACU Connect



Attend ACU Live [events](#)



Register for our [Roster of Experts](#)



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Useful links



ACU membership [terms and conditions](#)



ACU membership annual [subscription fees](#)

Any questions?

Please email us at membership@acu.ac.uk – we are here to serve you as one of our valued members.

We are excited to see what we can do together this year, and beyond!



membership@acu.ac.uk



www.acu.ac.uk



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Our Patron is His Majesty King Charles III

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