



EST. 1597

**GRESHAM**  
COLLEGE

**Gresham College**

**Professorship of Astronomy**

**July 2022**

Gresham College  
Barnard's Inn Hall  
Holborn  
London EC1N 2HH  
[www.gresham.ac.uk](http://www.gresham.ac.uk)

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the role of Professor of Astronomy at Gresham College. A new appointment will be made to this position with effect from 1 August 2023.

The mission of Gresham College is to make new learning of contemporary relevance and academic integrity available to a wide and diverse audience. It provides an intellectually rigorous and stimulating programme of free public lectures of the highest standard, dealing in depth with a range of intellectual, cultural, and social issues. All its professors are superb communicators able to get across complex ideas to an educated but non-specialist audience.

As the term of office of Professor Katherine Blundell comes to an end, the College is seeking a Professor of Astronomy who will continue to educate and inspire audiences, building on the 400-year-old traditions of Gresham College, at the same time as developing innovative ideas for the transmission of knowledge. The scope of the disciplines originally identified by Sir Thomas Gresham has changed slightly over time, and appointments now reflect the ways in which knowledge has expanded. In recent years, the professorship has expanded to consider other physical sciences, and a range of topics from particle physics to astrophysics has been covered.

Previous postholders have included Sir Christopher Wren, Sir Martin Ryle, Lord Rees, and Heather Couper. The successful candidate will have a record of high-level scholarship, and a demonstrable ability to communicate the complexity of the subject to an intelligent and interested public.

Gresham Professors are contracted to provide six one-hour lectures annually (which are live streamed and recorded), as well as participating in additional promotional filming, and engaging in Academic Board meetings and social events. It is common to hold a Gresham Professorship (with its specified commitments) alongside a permanent position at a University, professional institution or other body, but the home institution's agreement must be secured in advance. The term of office is three years, with the possibility of renewal for a fourth and final year at the College's discretion (and subject to the approval of the relevant sponsor).

Applications will be judged against the job description and person specification that follow, and applicants should clearly state how their skills and experience combine to meet these criteria. The selection and interview process will be conducted by an interview panel comprising Gresham College Council members and other persons who will make an appointment recommendation to Council. Candidates invited to interview will be asked to give a 10-minute presentation on their topic (such as an overview of their proposed series, or an excerpt from a lecture), presented as if to a Gresham public audience. The final appointment will be made subject to satisfactory references, formal Sponsor and Council approval, and any other necessary document checks (eg right to work in the UK).

Please contact Ms Mariam Ismail ([professorships@gresham.ac.uk](mailto:professorships@gresham.ac.uk)) if you have any queries or require any additional information that is not covered below.

Yours sincerely,

*Professor Simon Thurley CBE  
Provost  
Gresham College  
Barnard's Inn Hall  
Holborn, London, EC1N 2HH*

## Introduction

Gresham College (est. 1597) has provided free public lectures in the City of London for over 400 years. The College was founded out of the will of Sir Thomas Gresham, who, in pursuit of a vision of promoting the “new learning” to all, left funds for the maintenance of the College’s educational activities in perpetuity to be administered by the City of London Corporation and the Mercers’ Company. Recently, outreach has been extended to a wider and more diverse audience, working to satisfy a real appetite for deep thinking, authoritatively delivered knowledge, and cultural experience. The College is a company limited by guarantee and has charitable status with its own Council acting as its Board of Governors.

Gresham College has taken various forms since its foundation, but the major continuing activity has been the appointment of distinguished Professors in Astronomy, Divinity, Geometry, Law, Music, Physic and Rhetoric. To these, in 1985, was added the Mercers’ School Memorial Chair of Commerce (renamed ‘Business’ in 2017). The Frank Jackson Professorship of the Environment was added in 2014, and the IT Livery Company Chair of IT was added in 2015.

Since 1991, the College has been based at Barnard’s Inn Hall, where the premises provide for lectures and other events, but a range of other venues are also used. Gresham College has no registered students, runs no courses and does not confer degrees or diplomas. All Gresham lectures (about 120 pa) are open to the public, without charge, with attendances in person numbering up to 20,000 each year, and achieving c. 5 million online views annually. All lectures are live-streamed and recordings made available more widely; there are now over 2,000 Gresham lectures accessible through the College website.

## Vision, Mission and Values of Gresham College

### Vision

Gresham College values and fosters serious intellectual enquiry and new learning, making it freely accessible to all.

The College’s vision has its roots in the Will of Sir Thomas Gresham dated 1575:

*To entrust the City Corporation and the Mercers’ Company to ensure that a succession of academics should be nominated and appointed as Professors ‘to read Lectures in Divinity, Astronomy, Musick and Geometry, ... and also Law, Physick and Rhetorick, for the benefit of the Mayor and Commonalty and Citizens of London, henceforth and so long as they or their successors shall by any means or title have, and hold and enjoy the said Royal Exchange, Shops, Pawns, Vaults, Houses and all other the Premises with the Appurtenances for ever.’*

### Mission

Gresham College aims to make new learning of contemporary relevance and academic integrity available to a wide and diverse audience. It provides an intellectually rigorous and stimulating programme of free public lectures of the highest standard, dealing in depth with a range of cultural, intellectual, and social issues. It will contribute to society through this provision and associated activities.

### Values

We are committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of expression.

We value in-depth and considered analysis, and will ensure the intellectual rigour and quality of our educational and cultural offerings.

We are dedicated to providing, free of charge to the public, the best academic and professional knowledge.

## Governance

The governance of the College is based in the Articles of Association (rev. 2007). The Articles specify powers of Council and procedures for its general meetings, the appointment of Professors, Fellows and the Provost, and other procedural matters. The College is registered with the Charity Commission and Companies House. Its main source of funding is the rental income from the Royal Exchange, administered jointly by the Mercers' Company and the City of London Corporation through the Joint Grand Gresham Committee.

The Gresham College Council (equivalent to a Board of Directors) is composed of a maximum of 15 persons, of whom 4 each are appointed by the City of London Corporation and the Mercers' Company, with others being co-opted by Council itself. The Council may delegate certain powers to Finance and Remuneration Committee and the Nominations Committee. Academic Board consists of Gresham Professors (Visiting Professors are also invited), and Gresham Fellows (a small number of former Professors), its main function being oversight of the academic programme of the College, including quality assurance and monitoring.

President  
Chair of Gresham College Council

The Lord Mayor of London  
Dr Loyd Grossman CBE

## Staff

For Academic Year 2022-23:

CEO  
Provost  
Academic Registrar  
Head of Finance and Resources  
Head of Income Generation  
Accounts and Facilities Manager  
Head of Communications Technology  
Head of PR and Media  
Digital Marketing Manager  
Communications Officer  
Website and Comms Manager  
Academic Programme Officer  
Administrative and Events Assistant

Dr Wendy Piatt  
Professor Simon Thurley CBE  
*TBD*  
Ms Lucy Petrie  
Ms Jess Goulson  
Ms Angela Barclay  
Mr James Bull  
Ms Lucia Graves  
Ms Linda Appiah-Spick  
Mr Richard Taverner  
Ms Sara Green  
Ms Mariam Ismail  
Ms Saffron Cooper

## **Job Description: Professor of Astronomy**

Professors are appointed periodically, normally initially for a three-year term, with the possibility of extension for a fourth year at the College's discretion (and subject to the approval of the relevant sponsor).

The appointment of the Professor of Astronomy is subject to the official approval of the City of London Corporation Side of the Joint Grand Gresham Committee. An honorarium of £8,000 is paid (plus reasonable travel expenses etc). Honoraria are subject to tax and NI contributions, and professors are responsible for ensuring that a self-assessment is made for the appropriate amounts.

Professors' responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

### **Lectures**

- To contribute to the College's annual academic programme, by preparing and personally delivering six public lectures a year (lasting one hour including time for questions), and making such other public presentation(s) as may be agreed with the College.
- To provide written transcripts of lectures (and any other supporting resources such as PowerPoints) at least one week in advance of each lecture. These materials, together with live-streaming and video recordings, are made public through the Internet and other means.
- To contribute to the College's overarching aim to provide free education and outreach to a wide range of audiences, both locally in person and world-wide through the Internet.

### **Academic Board**

- To participate in the activities of the College, including attendance at an initial professorial induction session, and at meetings of the Academic Board, which normally meets four times per year (October, February, April and July).
- To advise as necessary and appropriate on College academic policy, programmes and proposals.
- To participate in additional activities from time to time, both academic and social, attending other meetings and events (including social events) as appropriate, and where possible.

### **Promotion of the College**

- To engage with the College's production team on promotional filming for lectures and for the College more widely
- To promote the College in external partnerships and at external events, acting where possible as an ambassador for the organisation, its members and followers.
- To use the Gresham title wherever possible/appropriate when engaging in other activities, so that public attention is drawn to their connection with the College.
- To promote the College's reputation as a prominent, global education institution, committed to making accessible a wide range of innovative education and research.

# Person Specification: Professor of Astronomy

## Essential

- A superb communicator with extensive experience of public speaking and lecturing, with a commitment to widening participation and access able to deliver complex information to intelligent and educated but largely non-specialist audiences.
- A distinguished record in the chosen field (please note that the field of Astronomy at Gresham is now understood to include the wider physical sciences), with strong credibility including an academic research profile (where appropriate) and the ability to command respect from sponsors, staff, participants and others.
- Proposals for a programme of lectures of originality and topicality for the tenure of the professorship and specifically providing engaging titles and 200/250-word abstracts for the first 6 lectures in year one, and outlines for the further two years) for approval by the Academic Board. Note: successful candidates must also provide 80/90- word summaries of all their first-year lectures for the printed programme booklet immediately upon appointment.
- Enthusiasm for the College's ethos and range of provision, with the ability to work with colleagues to promote an academic programme of the highest standard that will have excitement, topicality, credibility and impact - making a contribution to local/national/international learning and debate
- A willingness to work with Gresham colleagues on promotion and marketing of lectures, and in the creation of introductory videos, interviews, publicity etc
- An ability to build on the College's current success and strengths to lead it to an ever-higher level of achievement and growth (particularly globally)
- Good interpersonal and communication skills, in order to relate to the sponsors, other academics, staff and members of the public. Outreach to students and schools is also included in College activities.
- Good time-management (lectures are strictly limited to one hour including questions)

## Desirable

- A national/international reputation, with substantial publications of recognised international quality (or similar), which will contribute to and enhance the profile of Gresham College
- An excellent track record in teaching, evinced by previous university-level lectures

## Additional Notes

1. **University positions.** It is not essential for applicants to be formally attached to a University or Higher Education Institution as long as the above can be demonstrated
2. **Country of residence.** It is not essential for Professors to be UK-based, but the requirement to attend at least 10 times per year for lectures, Board meetings and other occasions would present challenges to anyone outside the UK (non-UK expenses are subject to limits).

## Equal Opportunities

Gresham College has an increasingly diverse world-wide audience and programme. To reflect this, the College wants to increase the diversity of its professoriate, and welcomes applications from everyone regardless of age, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. It would like to see applicants from the full pool of talent – especially those who have

been and continue to be underestimated, underrepresented, and under-served. All appointments will be made on merit, following a fair and transparent process. Panel members are aware of the principles of equality of opportunity and fair selection. Gresham College's equal opportunities in employment policy (in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics defined therein) states: *The only consideration in recruitment, training, appraisal and promotion of employees will be how the genuine requirements of the post are met or likely to be met by the individual under consideration.*

## Application Process

All applications will be managed in accordance with the process outlined below. No additional recruitment agency or executive search is being used, and no agencies may submit on another's behalf. Formal applications must consist of:

1. A statement in the form of a letter explaining your suitability for the role as against the information and criteria specified in the Job Description and Person Specification, as well as details of the proposed lecture series.
2. A Curriculum Vitae of not more than five pages. Anything above this limit will not be submitted to the panel. CVs submitted without an accompanying statement as outlined in point 1 above will not be considered.
3. A list of proposed titles and abstracts for the first year's 6 lectures (as for a submission of abstract for conference proceedings, c 200-250 words), plus an outline for the following two years (6 further lectures per year) to show the coherence of your programme.
4. A weblink to a lecture presented by you on the internet, to demonstrate your outstanding communication skills appealing to both specialist and non-specialist alike. Lack of such an online lecture does not preclude you from applying, but is strongly encouraged.
5. Indication of any social media presence you currently have eg Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, or that you are willing to use (not essential).
6. Names and addresses of two referees. Referees will be contacted only upon offer of the appointment.
7. Submission of a Recruitment Monitoring form. This can be completed here: <https://forms.gle/Yub9dCSGgvYHclhC7>

Applications should be sent to [professorships@gresham.ac.uk](mailto:professorships@gresham.ac.uk). Please combine into a single (eg pdf) file if possible, and include your surname in the file title. If you send separate attachments, please put your surname at the beginning of each file name and your name in the header of each document. Applications may also be sent by post to:

Gresham College  
Barnard's Inn Hall  
Holborn  
London EC1N 2HH.

**The closing date for the Gresham College Professorship of Astronomy is 9.30 am on 9 January 2023. Interviews will be held in London on 28 February 2023.** Shortlisted candidates will be asked to specify potential lecture timings for the 2023-24 academic year at the point of shortlisting.