Job Description – Director of Community and External Engagement, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies

About the role

This is a senior role within the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS) which will play the leading role in shaping the development of and implementing a significant component of the Faculty’s strategy, namely its external engagement and relationships with third-party organisations (e.g., institutions, societies, professional bodies, corporations, Higher and Further Education providers). The role sits at the heart of the Faculty, enabling the role holder to work strategically with senior Faculty colleagues and with colleagues in other Units, as well as with the external organisations with whom relationships are developed to develop faculty policy on employer and commercial partnerships.

In conjunction with members of the WELS Executive, the role holder will identify and take responsibility to pursue opportunities to develop third-party relationships, enabling the curriculum, pedagogy, and research activities of the Faculty’s Schools to be opened to wider student audiences, and to ensure the Faculty maximises the opportunities with the four nation (UK) political context. Such relationships will support growth of student numbers, diversification of Faculty income, and development of topics/areas which are of significant reputational or strategic advantage to the Faculty.

The role holder will also have responsibility for leading the pan-Faculty agenda on Community Engagement. Working closely with the OU Students Association, PVC Students, Associate Deans, Head of School’s and their management teams, the role holder will seek to maximise community engagement opportunities to build the Faculty profile, whilst always remaining sensitive to the School’s respective disciplinary differences.

Reporting directly to the WELS Executive Dean, the role holder will also be a member of the WELS Faculty Executive, and therefore will be involved in decision-taking affecting the whole of the Faculty. The role holder will be responsible for line management of colleagues in the Employer Engagement Team (currently 5 FTEs).

Key responsibilities

Working closely with academic and professional staff in the Faculty, the role holder will be responsible for:

- Leading the Faculty’s external engagement and business development activities through maintaining existing and developing new relationships with a range of external parties. The role holder will regularly be ‘the face’ of the Faculty with its partner organisations and where appropriate The University, its principal point of contact, with other units within the University and with external third-parties.
- Working closely with Government Relations and the Nation Directors and their respective senior teams, leading the Faculty, and where appropriate The University, in lobbying senior external stakeholders on policy decisions that are relevant to the Faculty business.

- Form and lead a working group regionally and across Nations to maintain and drive external and community engagement of faculty business in a sustainable way, maximizing opportunities to link into devolved government agenda's and policies.

- Lead and main point of contact for assessing philanthropic opportunities for faculty, working closely with Development Office.

- Leading their teams to establish a robust framework and operational processes for relationships between the Faculty and external parties, ensuring the quality and consistency of interactions.

- Maintaining an oversight of the external environment – including market and consumer trends, and policy developments – to identify new engagement opportunities with existing and/or new parties.

- Working closely with the three Head of School’s, take a leading role in the development of the Faculty's third-parties’ strategy and plans. Negotiating the resources across the Faculty and University to drive the effective delivery of these plans.

- Ensuring that activities identify and pursue opportunities across 4 nations which are relevant for their influence and impact upon curriculum, research, and enterprise. This will involve liaising and building strong relationships with Faculty colleagues to agree and negotiating the prioritization of the opportunities and resources needed to focus upon and to secure appropriate business-as-usual support.

- Developing a monitoring and reporting process, with appropriate tools, to provide management information about external relationships. Including defining appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs), and ensuring that issues relating to open access, employability, and careers/skills development are considered within success criteria.

- Being a member of the WELS Faculty Executive, including deputising for the Executive Dean at University- and Faculty-level meetings, and attending relevant conferences, working groups, discussion forums, etc.

- Establishing and building strong working relationships with colleagues from throughout the University, including in other Faculties, the Business Development Unit, Marketing, Communications, Strategy & Information Office, Legal Services, and Nations.

And other responsibilities deemed appropriate to the role when required between Line Manager and roleholder.
Skills and experience (Essential (E) / Desirable (D))

Education/Qualifications

- Degree level (or equivalent) or relevant professional experience (E)
- A personal interest in the subjects that are within the Faculty’s curriculum (E)
- Higher qualification in a relevant subject or recognised management/professional accreditation (D)

Knowledge/Experience

- Working at a senior level within a Higher or Further Education Institution (E)
- Working in a business development or account management type of environment, where the development and delivery of business opportunities has been a significant responsibility (E)
- Strong negotiating and influencing skills with senior- and peer-level colleagues, which focus on shaping direction and delivering results (E)
- Experience of organising and leading cross-functional teams, planning and coordinating activities to achieve results, and building collaborative virtual teams of multiple stakeholders (E)
- Strong understanding of the University’s values, including those relating to adult/open/distance learning, and ability to align these and incorporate them into the relationships that are developed with third parties (E)
- Strong awareness of the environment external to the University and the Faculty, and evidence of such awareness being kept up-to-date, thereby informing what opportunities and challenges this environment provides (E)
- Ability to source, analyse and use data from multiple sources in order to progress projects and relationships (D)
- Experience of writing, submitting and managing relationship proposals (D)
- Evidence of financial acumen and how this is applicable to this role (D)

Personal abilities and qualities

- Excellent clear, concise and compelling written and oral communications’ skills for internal and external audiences, involving liaison with different mixes of stakeholders (E)
- Self-starter who establishes and prioritises her/his working agenda, and makes considered decisions (E)
- A strong commitment to excellence in working with a diverse student population (E)
• A growth mind-set, open to ideas and possibilities, with a wide outlook  (E)

• Strong planning and organising skills, of self and of others, including good co-ordination of project-like workstreams towards delivery of agreed objectives  (E)

• Ability to create effective teams to deliver results, including ‘virtual’ ones  (E)

• Confident in engaging others within and outside the Faculty and University at both peer and senior levels  (E)

• Resilient and adaptable to change, and can respond positively to challenges and setbacks  (E)

• Self-sufficient IT skills (E)

• Actively pursuing on-going personal development (D)

• Commercial/industrial experience and judgment, or evidence of having had working contacts beyond a purely Higher Education environment (D)

The Open University is an Institution that strives to create an academic climate in which diversity is embraced by maintaining and respecting the dignity, respect and civility of individuals from all backgrounds, identities, cultures and experiences. The programmes in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, and Language Studies play an integral role in achieving the University’s widening participation and social justice mission. We strive to recruit, retain and develop the careers of a diverse pool of students and staff, and particularly encourage applications from all underrepresented groups.