

Policy and Public Affairs Manager – The Open University in Ireland

About the Role

The postholder has responsibility for the strategic planning and delivery of the University's policy and government affairs work in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

- Raising awareness of The Open University's work, policies and impact in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, working with external facing teams in Belfast and Dublin
- Preparing responses to consultations by government and other bodies
- Monitoring curriculum, student and other policies within the OU across the U.K. which might have impact in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- Preparing policy proposals for discussion with Departments in Northern Ireland based on appropriate OU policies in England, Scotland and Wales. With the Assistant Director, Planning and Resources, assess whether these need to be subject to equality impact assessment and/or consultation with Section 75 Consultees in Northern Ireland
- Monitoring, researching, consulting and contributing to matters of public policy, particularly as they relate to higher education, economic and skills development and lifelong learning
- Managing government relations with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish government, media and other key stakeholders,
- Raising awareness of part-time student issues
- Contributing to and supporting the development and implementation of the OU in Ireland Implementation Plan for the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression on policy related matters, supporting teams in the areas of student support, student finance, employer engagement, widening access, and other projects identified by the Director
- Planning and management of profile-raising government relations events, requiring occasional evening and weekend work

The Open University is committed to making higher education open to all and providing a seamless journey for students and supporting their learning success, regardless of their background or previous educational qualifications and you will ensure that our activities are focused on this core mission. We will support and develop the successful candidate to effectively carry out the following responsibilities:

Main Responsibilities

- i. As a member of the OU in Ireland's senior management team, work with colleagues to contribute to the overall short and long-term objectives and plans for the organisation including the OU in Ireland's business plan. Contribute to the overall management and strategic direction of the OU in Ireland providing expert advice to colleagues on the external political and policy environments and internal OU policies in a range of student, fees and other matters.
- ii. Set strategic objectives for the OU in Ireland's government affairs and policy work and ensure these are delivered. Develop and monitor strategic and operational objectives, in order to meet government affairs and policy objectives. Contribute to and support the development of key plans of the OU in Ireland, including the overarching strategic plan, strategies for widening access, employer engagement, partnerships and collaboration.
- iii. Collaborate with colleagues on communications strategies and objectives to raise the profile of The Open University in Northern Ireland in the devolved political and funding environment.
- iv. Lead and manage a team to ensure the effective delivery of government affairs and policy objectives. Set overall vision and objectives for the team; manage and motivate staff to achieve the team's goals.
- v. Monitor, research, consult on and contribute to matters of public policy in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, particularly as they relate to higher education, economic and skills development and lifelong learning.
- vi. Develop institutional policy positions in consultation with internal and external contacts, prepare responses to consultations by government and other bodies and influence government and others in respect of the OU in Ireland's policy asks.
- vii. Develop and manage the University's government affairs with the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, government departments in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, the Westminster Parliament, the Oireachtas, other policy makers, media and key stakeholders in Ireland, raising awareness of the Open University's unique role in both jurisdictions, its contribution to higher education, and issues for part-time students.
- viii. Working alongside the Director for Ireland, be the OU's expert voice on political and policy matters in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Provide proactive briefings and advice to colleagues, to include the Vice-Chancellor and other senior colleagues, on political developments in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland including on matters of a specialist and technical nature.

- ix. Meet with and brief Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Government Ministers, other senior politicians, policymakers and parliamentary researchers as appropriate, in order to further the interests of the OU in Ireland and positively impact on Government decision making.
- x. Develop and lead internal and external networks of contacts relating to the OU in Ireland's government affairs and policy activities.
- xi. Lead, plan and manage delivery of a series of profile-raising government relations events and lead, plan and manage specific projects and areas of activity relating to the OU in Ireland's communications work.
- xii. Influence the wider government affairs and policy work of the University at UK level, providing expert advice on the implications for Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland and sharing expertise and good practice with colleagues to ensure a Four Nations by Design approach.
- xiii. Act as a senior spokesperson for the OU in Ireland's Directorate to include media interviews.
- xiv. Interpret and analyse policy information and proactively assist colleagues to understand and engage with the implications for the OU in Ireland.

Additional Responsibilities

- i. Manage and report on budgets across relevant projects and areas of responsibility
- ii. Contribute to policy development through membership of relevant committees and/or working groups
- iii. Support and participate at the Degree Ceremony in Belfast and Dublin, held annually
- iv. Recruit, select, appoint, induct, manage, develop, appraise/monitor staff in accordance with equal opportunities policies, fair selection procedures, institutional guidelines and employment regulations
- v. Work in accordance with the University's Equal Opportunities policies
- vi. Any other duties as may be determined by the Director, Ireland or Assistant Directors.

Person Specification

(E = Essential/ D = Desirable)

Education, qualifications and training

E: A degree or equivalent qualification

D: A relevant professional qualification and/or evidence of continual professional development

Knowledge, work and other relevant experience

E: Significant relevant work experience, including liaison within political and policy environments

E: Understanding the needs of adult (distance) learners particularly within the context of part-time supported open learning

E: Proven experience in developing written communications

E: Experience of managing a team with a proven ability to build a positive and inclusive working environment, role modelling behaviours that are consistent with organisation values

D: Experience of budget management

Personal abilities and qualities

E: A thorough awareness of the external environment and government policies in Ireland and the wider UK, with special reference to higher education and lifelong learning

E: Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the drafting of policy reports and responses, speech writing, presentations and public speaking, and the ability to meet tight deadlines.

E: Excellent organisational and motivational skills

D: Good understanding of the post-16 education sectors, agencies and institutions in Ireland

Additional Requirements

E: Willingness to work some evenings and weekends

E: Understanding of, as well as commitment to, the principles and practice of Equal Opportunities

E: Willingness to undertake some travel around Ireland and on occasions outside of Ireland.

Role specific requirements e.g. Shift working

The Role holder may be required to attend meetings/events at various venues across the UK or Republic of Ireland for business, training and evaluation purposes.

The hours of work will be those necessary for the performance of the role holder's duties having regard, as appropriate, to office hours set by the Council of the university, shift working and related roster where applicable and other operational demands.