Job Description – Assistant Director (Communications, Public Affairs and Policy - Ref: 16779)

About the Role

The Assistant Director (Communications, Public Affairs and Policy) has responsibility for the strategic planning and operational delivery of the University’s communications, public affairs and policy work in Scotland.

Leading a small team of communications professionals, you will be responsible for the management of the University’s reputation and profile in Scotland, building on relationships with media across broadcast, print and online. You will support these relationships with the identification and development of engaging and timely stories which convey the University’s key messages in Scotland and which promote the work of the University and the successes of its students. You will promote a more impactful online presence, seeking measurable improvements in engagement through our website and social channels.

You will manage the University’s political and policy relationships in Scotland and will be proactive in seeking opportunities to influence policy development that furthers the interests of the University and its students in Scotland. This will include your representation of the University at the Scottish Parliament and at a senior level in relevant working groups, discussion forums and networks, both external and internal, that improve understanding of, and advocacy for, the University in Scotland. You will work directly with the Director and Depute Directors, planning and leading activity that ensures political stakeholders and decision-makers are not just familiar with The OU in Scotland but recognise our ability to contribute to public policy solutions and plan accordingly.

You will work with the Knowledge Exchange Manager and other colleagues to develop, promote and leverage a rolling programme of corporate and knowledge exchange events, aligned with the University’s strategic objectives and Outcome Agreement in Scotland, and designed to raise the profile of our students, our academic excellence, and the University generally.

In recognition of our belief that all staff have a role in communicating on behalf of the University, you will support colleagues through the provision of advice, briefing, messaging, and – where necessary – training, to enable them to represent the University to the best of their abilities. You will also work to ensure that all colleagues feel confident enough and know how to identify potential story leads, such as case studies, to ensure a continuous flow of content opportunities.
Key responsibilities

- As a member of The Open University in Scotland’s senior management team, work with colleagues to set the overall short and long-term objectives and plans for the organisation including The OU in Scotland’s business plan and its Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council. Contribute to the overall management and strategic direction of The OU in Scotland, providing expert advice to colleagues on communication issues and the political and external environment.

- Through the development of an annual communications strategy, set strategic objectives for The OU in Scotland’s communications, public affairs and policy work – and ensure these are delivered.

- Lead and manage the communications team and ensure the effective delivery of communications, public affairs and policy objectives. Set overall vision and objectives for team and manage staff effectively in order to enable everyone to contribute towards common goals.

- Working alongside the Director, be the OU’s expert voice on political and policy matters in Scotland. Provide briefings and advice, including the Vice-Chancellor and other senior colleagues, on political developments in Scotland, including on matters of a specialist and technical nature.

- Meet with and brief Scottish Government Ministers, including the Minister for Higher Education, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies, civil servants and other political stakeholders including parliamentary researchers, in order to further the interests of The OU in Scotland and its students through positive impacts on the decisions and policy of the Scottish Government and its agencies.

- Act as a senior spokesperson for The OU in Scotland, to include media interviews, and support other spokespeople for the University in their work with Scottish media and other stakeholders.

- Ensure a steady and increasing flow of positive stories about The OU in Scotland and its students is available to and reported in Scottish broadcast, print and online media.

- Plan for and manage reactive and/or controversial communications situations on behalf of the OU in Scotland.

- Interpret and analyse complex information – including publications of the Scottish Government and its agencies – and assist colleagues to understand and engage with the implications for The OU in Scotland.

- Develop institutional policy positions in consultation with internal and external contacts; prepare responses to consultations by Scottish Government and its agencies, and influence the Scottish Government and others in respect of The OU in Scotland’s policy asks.

- In conjunction with colleagues across the other UK nations, influence the wider public affairs, policy and communications work of the University at UK level, providing expert advice on the implications for Scotland and sharing expertise and good practice with colleagues to ensure a ‘four nations by design’ approach.
Monitor, research, consult on and contribute to matters of public policy, particularly as they relate to higher education, economic and skills development and lifelong learning.

Develop and lead internal and external networks of contacts relating to The OU in Scotland’s communications, public affairs and policy activities.

Develop and manage the University’s communications with the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, other policy makers, media and key stakeholders in Scotland, raising awareness of The Open University’s unique role, its contribution to Scottish higher education, and issues for and needs of part-time and older students.

Develop an integrated and asset-rich approach to social and digital media, premised on the re-use and adaptation of content and stories across multiple channels as appropriate.

Empower and enable communications staff in The OU in Scotland to develop their skills to increase the capabilities of the communications team and for career development purposes.

Lead, plan and manage delivery of a series of profile-raising public events.

Lead, plan and manage specific projects and areas of activity relating to The OU in Scotland’s communications work.

Provide leadership to the Engagement Support Team and ensure both their understanding of their role in the University and their ability to contribute to the delivery of the University’s obligations in the Outcome Agreement through logistical, operational and administrative support for externally-facing teams across The OU in Scotland.

Manage and report on budgets for relevant projects and areas of responsibility.

All staff are expected:

To comply with the University’s Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities policies in the performance of your duties.

To take reasonable care of the Health and Safety of yourself and that of any other person who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work.

To co-operate with The Open University in ensuring as far as is necessary, that Statutory Requirements, Codes of Practice, University Policies and Departmental Health and Safety arrangements are complied with.
## Person specification

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<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Essential/Desirable</th>
<th>Measured by</th>
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<td><strong>Education and qualifications</strong></td>
<td>A degree or equivalent qualification.</td>
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<td>A relevant professional qualification and/or evidence of updating.</td>
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<td>Membership of appropriate professional body such as CIPR.</td>
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<td><strong>Knowledge, work and other relevant experience</strong></td>
<td>Significant (at least 5 years) and senior relevant work experience, in 2 out of the 3 areas of strategic communications, public affairs and public policy.</td>
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<td>Experience of managing people and budgets.</td>
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<td>Commitment to and experience of evaluating campaigns and strategies.</td>
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<td>Experience of leading and contributing to integrated MarComms activity and strategies.</td>
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<td>Recent or current relevant experience either within adult, further or higher education or a related field.</td>
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<td>Understanding the needs of distance learners particularly within the context of part-time supported open learning.</td>
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<td>Proven experience in media relations, promotions and publicity across all channels, including digital.</td>
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<td>A commitment to widening access to higher education, and equality and diversity.</td>
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<td>Skills &amp; competencies</td>
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<td>Relevance</td>
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<td>A thorough awareness of the external environment and government policies in Scotland and the wider UK, with special reference to higher education and lifelong learning.</td>
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<td>Proven experience in influencing public policy, including working with MSPs, civil servants and other organisations.</td>
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<td>Good understanding of the Scottish post-16 education sectors and of Scottish agencies and institutions.</td>
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<td>Excellent written and verbal communication skills (including speech writing, presentations, social media campaigns).</td>
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<td>Excellent organisational and motivational skills.</td>
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<td>Willingness to work some evenings and weekends.</td>
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<td>Understanding of, as well as commitment to, Equal Opportunities practice.</td>
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<td>Computer literacy, sufficient to use IT systems effectively.</td>
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<td>Willingness to undertake some travel around Scotland and on occasions outside of Scotland.</td>
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About The Open University in Scotland

The Open University in Scotland is an integral part of the Scottish higher education community and actively involved in the development of HE policy alongside the other 18 higher education institutions in Scotland. Since April 2000, the teaching of OU students resident in Scotland has been funded by the Scottish Funding Council. With over 17,000 students, Open University students can be found in virtually every postcode district and community in Scotland. Social justice and equality of opportunity are at the heart of everything the OU does and widening access to higher education is the ambition on which it was founded. The Open University is committed to extending opportunities for educational success to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. The OU’s open access policy, flexible part-time delivery, its bridging programme with schools, college articulation agreements and geographical reach position us well as Scotland’s national widening access university. More than 20% of our undergraduate students have qualifications below standard university entrance level when they joined the OU, over 18% have a declared disability and almost 19% are resident in the most deprived areas of Scotland (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

With over 70% of our students in work while they study with us, The Open University in Scotland occupies a unique place in terms of developing the Scottish workforce. We work closely with employers, trades unions, public sector bodies, institutes, private, third sector and community organisations, universities, colleges and schools across the whole of Scotland.

130 academic, administrative and secretarial and clerical staff work from the OU’s office in Edinburgh managing the University’s business in Scotland. The OU in Scotland works in collaboration with colleagues across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and, in particular, with the Academic Services Unit in providing support to our students.

More information can be obtained from The OU in Scotland website at www.open.ac.uk/scotland

How to obtain more information about the role or application process

If you would like to discuss the particulars of this role before making an application please contact Kenny Stewart on 0131 226 3851.

If you have any questions regarding the application process please email: Scotland-Staffing-Coordinator@open.ac.uk

The application process and where to send completed applications

As well as a completed application form, you must provide a supporting statement/covering letter, which clearly identifies how you meet the criteria in the person specification. Please ensure that you provide relevant examples as evidence to support your statements. The selection panel will consider how well the information you provide demonstrates that you meet the criteria identified in the person specification.

Please ensure your application reaches the University by 5pm on Thursday 19th December 2019.

Email your application form to Scotland-Recruitment@open.ac.uk
Selection process and date of interview.

The interview panel will be chaired by: Susan Stewart, Director, Scotland

The other members of the interview panel will be:
Stephen Webb, Interim Director Communications, The Open University;
John d'Arcy, Director, The Open University in Ireland;
Marie Hendry, Depute Director (External Engagement and Partnerships), The Open University in Scotland;
Susannah Lane, Head of Public Affairs, Universities Scotland

The interviews will take place on: 21 January 2020

The selection process for this post will include: Formal interview including presentation and informal discussions with OU in Scotland staff,

We will let you know as soon as possible after the closing date whether you have been shortlisted for interview. Further details on the selection process will also be sent to shortlisted candidates.

Applications received after the closing date will not be accepted.

Expenses incurred for travelling to the interview will not normally be reimbursed by the University.