Job Description – Senior Policy Manager

About the role
The Senior Policy Manager works to identify, shape and articulate policy positions for The Open University (OU) on a broad range of government policies in England that are of relevance to the University and its students. Developing and strengthening relationships with key internal experts across the OU whose activities, research or capabilities the Government and External Affairs team (GEA) may usefully draw on to strengthen our external engagement, messaging, submissions and partnerships will be absolutely key. Added to this the postholder will provide insightful analysis of developments in higher education, skills and lifelong learning and the opportunities these may present for the OU. In particular, the post-holder will lead on generating GEA policy lines and messaging. They will also develop policy responses to government consultations and parliamentary inquiries in England and the UK.

The post-holder will work closely with the other Senior Policy Manager in GEA to ensure a collaborative approach to policy communications, as well as with the Government & External Affairs team and wider Strategy Office. This is a varied and stimulating position in a small but highly effective team. It will demand a strong understanding of the higher education sector in England, coupled with an awareness of the associated further education, adult learning and skills landscapes.

Key responsibilities

To note – while these main responsibilities relate specifically to higher education/adult skills policy in England, close collaboration with OU colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on policy issues will be required at all times.

To monitor and analyse the UK political landscape and funding environment (including legislative bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and provide insight in order to develop an effective understanding of new or developing policies that may be relevant/provide opportunities to the OU in England.

To work with Head of Government and External Affairs and other Senior Policy Manager to communicate relevant external policy developments internally, within the OU, via effective channels, providing strategic advice as requested.

To maintain awareness of and strengthen relationships with key internal experts across the OU whose activities, research or capabilities GEA may usefully draw on to strengthen our external engagement, messaging, submissions and partnerships.

To commission and critique the value of OU information, case studies and analysis for potential use in OU submissions to Government and Parliament. This will involve direct engagement with experts in the Nation offices, Marketing, Finance, the wider Strategy Office, Business Development Unit, PVC Students, Research & Academic Strategy, Student Services, Academic Policy & Governance, and central academic units.
To draft policy position papers, articles and blogs for internal and external audiences.

To draft the OU’s responses to UK Government, Parliament and wider stakeholder inquiries and consultations.

To work with external stakeholders including UK Government Officials, to inform and shape policies that affect the University’s students, staff and markets, including representing the OU at external meetings and events where appropriate.

To ensure consistency of the University’s internal and external policy positions across the four nations of the UK, by close working with OU colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Skills and experience**

First degree or equivalent

Very strong HE policy background and experience with a clear understanding of external policy making in Whitehall and Westminster.

Experience of proactively identifying ways to capitalise on changes to public policy.

Excellent written and oral communication skills are essential with the ability to communicate complex policy messages to a range of audiences through a variety of channels.

A good team player with the ability to work collaboratively with colleagues from other parts of the University and key external partners to obtain information and achieve results.

Excellent analytical skills, confidently and authoritatively interpreting public policy and translating ramifications for the OU.

Adept at collecting internal data and responses, and packaging for external audiences (i.e. consultations and articles etc), as well as developing messages, lines and policy positions for the OU to adopt with an excellent understanding of the use of evidence in formulating and assessing policy options.

Ability to think, plan and organise strategically and systematically and monitor progress using effective controls and success criteria.