**Job Related Information**

This document includes information about the role for which you are applying and the information you will need to provide with your application.

1. **Role Details**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vacancy reference</th>
<th>14763</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job title:</strong></td>
<td>Head of External Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reports to:</strong></td>
<td>Director of Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salary:</strong></td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terms and conditions:</strong></td>
<td>Academic Related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade</strong></td>
<td>SS2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of post:</strong></td>
<td>Permanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working hours:</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong></td>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closing date:</strong></td>
<td>26 July 12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of application form accepted:</strong></td>
<td>Short version, CV and covering letter or statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of referees required:</strong></td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit recruitment contact:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Comms-recruitment@open.ac.uk">Comms-recruitment@open.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Summary of duties

**Purpose Statement:**
The Head of External Engagement works closely with Director of Communications to proactively create strategies that develop opportunities to build the University’s reputation and manage reputation risk. Developing relationships with key journalists and media contacts in England, across the UK and international media to build and maintain awareness of and support for the University and its initiatives, and through these relationships, communicating the OU’s key messages, strategic objectives and expertise. The Head of External Communications also supports the Director of Communications as an OU Ambassador in engaging on, and communicating, the OU Story.

**Main Responsibilities:**
- Monitor the media landscape within England, the wider UK and internationally and develop an effective understanding of current and possible future environments.
- Create a proactive media relations strategy and plans that, integrated with Social Media Engagement, Government and External Communications, aim to build and protect reputation and influence politicians, students, employers and those that influence them.
- Identify stakeholders and build coalitions that help to achieve strategic goals, for example key journalists in target media, positioning the OU at the centre of the debate on lifelong learning, skills and flexible pathways to higher education.
- Develop a proactive strategy for managing risks to the University’s reputation and the handling of high level crisis situations effectively and quickly.
- Translate the strategy into practical communication and action plans; lead and organise media and social media campaigns as required.
- Conduct meetings with target journalists and key influencers who may join forces with us on coverage, such as Business and HE leaders and academics.
- Assume editorial control of the OU News website, including overseeing production of content, and working with project management support to ensure consistency and coordination of output across all channels.
- Work flexibly with the Director of Communications to ensure that External Communications strategies and plans are appropriately integrated with Corporate Communications and Government & External Affairs strategies and plans and are mutually reinforcing.
- Manage or delegate responsibility for contracts with external consultants, including external PR agencies, and monitor and evaluate their performance against contract.
- Work with other managers in the Communications Senior Leadership Team to ensure the delivery of an effective and integrated professional service that meets the needs of the University.
- Lead, manage and develop the Media Relations, Social Media Engagement and Digital Services teams; encouraging joined-up working and team cohesion and facilitating reliable team communications, ensuring the quality of performance of staff, instilling both a culture for creativity and effective project management. Delegating effectively and providing clear decisions as necessary. Ensuring the team captures the opportunities of new technologies and keeps abreast of both industry best practice and our own best practice (by learning from the successes and challenges).
- Media Relations: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: Work with the Nation Directors in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure that media activity is effectively co-ordinated and that the University presents a consistent approach.

3. Person specification
## Requirements  (E = Essential/ D = Desirable)

### Education, qualifications and training

| Essential: | A first degree or equivalent qualification or experience  
|           | Appropriate professional qualifications. |
| Desirable: | Evidence of professional development  
|           | Project management qualification |

### Knowledge, work and other relevant experience

| Essential: | Extensive experience in a press office or journalistic environment at managerial level  
|           | Proven ability to deliver effective multi-channel communications with demonstrable impact  
|           | Understanding and appreciation of the broader political landscape in which the OU operates  
|           | Experience of leading, managing and developing a team of news professionals in a large, complex organisation  
|           | Experience of working with, advising |
| Desirable: | Experience of working to influence government or public sector bodies |

### Personal abilities and qualities

| Essential: | Demonstrated ability to maintain a strategic approach to news delivery against organisational objectives.  
|           | Proven ability of keeping abreast of developments outside of the direct work environment and identify opportunities for achieving cost-effective competitive advantage  
|           | The ability to work quickly and accurately to tight deadlines, to take a brief, agree to and ensure its fulfilment.  
|           | A high level of interpersonal and communications skills both spoken and written.  
|           | The ability to motivate, manage team workload and delegate tasks to others.  
|           | Must have a creative approach to generating media publicity and drive social media campaigns.  
|           | Ability to interpret policy and procedures, and to disseminate information.  
|           | The ability to influence others in a constructive manner and work effectively with a range of people across the OU  
|           | High level of discretion over sensitive and confidential issues.  
|           | Professionally resilient with the ability to prioritise own workload, have a methodical and flexible approach, and remain effective under pressure.  
|           | Pragmatic and creative approach to problem solving, including ability to analyse and then resolve problems where there may be either complex, partial or conflicting information. |
**Desirable:**

Strong demonstrable project management skills and familiarity with working with project management support.

Clear commitment to OU values and mission, particularly embracing the implementation and integration of equality & diversity and other inclusive policies.

---

4. **Role specific requirements e.g. Shift working**

This vacancy is being offered as a full-time opportunity. You will be required to work 37 hours per week.

Required to work occasional weekends or out of hours.

---

5. **About the unit/department**

**Directorate**

- Provides counsel to the OU’s senior leadership, and advises OU staff at every level, including best practice, on communications.

- Ensures communications activities are delivered in line with the University’s strategic plan, and that these effectively contribute towards promoting the OU’s position as a world leader in flexible lifetime learning.

- Provides professional leadership for the OU on communications.

**External Communications**

**Media Relations**

- Drives the OU’s news output and shapes the way the University is portrayed in the media.

  Manages the University’s reputation through:

  - planning and shaping the editorial agenda;
  - identifying, sourcing and developing positive stories to promote the OU as a top university;
  - evaluating and advising on opportunities and risks; and taking timely and appropriate action on behalf of the University; and
  - nurturing relationships with key journalists and opinion-formers.

**Social Media Engagement**

- Provides Social Media Engagement that delivers proactive and responsive reputational management and adoption of ‘social everywhere’ – particularly in supporting ‘Communicating Academic Excellence’ and Corporate Reputation. Dedicated to using creative solutions to support our students, engage our advocates in relevant/topical conversations and be the ‘go to place’ for HE news and current debate in order to protect and enhance our reputation.

**Digital Communications**

- Provides Digital Services that provides a framework to manage and enhance the University’s digital estate for the public web (excluding recruitment of students) and next generation intranet - enabling the delivery of the best possible experience for all audiences to visitors to (for example) News, Research, Faculties, Nations etc., and quality staff engagement through the intranet.
technologies we provide.

Corporate & Change Communications

Corporate Communications
- Guides, advises and enables pan-University communications, including:
- Effectively engaging staff with university strategy, institutional change and other initiatives;
- Supporting managers and their teams in delivering meaningful and effective communications;
- Staging of impactful and well-managed events;
- Managing the Business Planning process for the Communications Unit;
- Establishing and managing the framework for effective editorial planning; and
- Coordinating with the OU’s academic community to deliver effective campaigns on Communicating Academic Excellence (CAE).

Change Communications
- Leads on delivering fast, accurate responses to complex and sensitive pan-University issues. Coordinates closely with other teams to deliver effective communications and campaigns, through:
  - developing accurate and compelling messaging;
  - targeting and briefing key external stakeholders (not covered by GEA); and
  - providing guidance, briefing and negotiating agreements with external stakeholders on local and national partnerships, including event sponsorship opportunities.

Government & External Affairs (GEA)
- Engages governments and other key organisations and individuals to secure policy and funding objectives to support the OU’s mission through:
  - gathering intelligence, assessing and coordinating policy proposals across the OU;
  - building relationships with decision-makers to increase influence and advocacy; and
  - ensuring the four-nation status of the OU is promoted through close working with Nation Directors and their teams.

Business Services Team
- Staffing, Recruitment, Induction, Training and Development support and guidance
- Finance and budget management support and guidance
- Manage and support of general office functions (H&S, booking travel and accommodation, management of stationery and IT equipment)

• 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 or you have any questions regarding the application process please contact The Recruitment Co-ordinator by email at comms-recruitment@open.ac.uk
7. The application process and where to send completed applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please ensure that your application reaches the University by:</th>
<th>12 Noon on Monday 19 July 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email your application to:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Comms-recruitment@open.ac.uk">Comms-recruitment@open.ac.uk</a> marking the reference number and the Job title in the subject field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or post to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name/Job title:</td>
<td>The Recruitment Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department/Unit:</td>
<td>Communications, The Open University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>Walton Hall, Milton Keynes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Code:</td>
<td>MK6 7AA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Selection process and date of interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The interview panel will be chaired by:</th>
<th>Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The other members of the interview panel will be:</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interviews will take place on:</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The selection process for this post will include</td>
<td>Formal interview and presentation by candidate (details of presentation subject will be sent to shortlisted candidates).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.