

JOB DESCRIPTION

- POST TITLE:** Senior Policy Officer
- RESPONSIBLE TO:** Head of learning, teaching and widening access
- RESPONSIBLE FOR:** The post holder will have formal line management responsibility for the work of the team's Policy Officer.

Job Summary

Universities Scotland is the representative organisation for Scotland's 19 higher education institutions (HEIs). We are highly influential in ensuring that politicians, government and its agencies make decisions that promote higher education and its contribution to our economy, culture and society.

Working with the leaders of Scotland's HEIs, we are a team of 15 staff. We aim to be a confident, creative organisation, with an emphasis on learning and integrity. In developing evidence-based policy proposals and the promotion of our messages, we aim to achieve a positive and significant impact for our members.

We have a vacancy in our team for a Senior Policy Officer. As the successful applicant, you will work in an exciting role at the heart of higher education policy and across multiple areas of expertise, with a particular focus on widening access, learning and teaching.

The role is a rare opportunity to work at the heart of Scottish higher education, working closely with Principals and senior colleagues in universities, government and other representative bodies.

Job description

The successful candidate will become part of a three-person team, including a part-time team leader and a part-time policy officer (both 0.6 FTE), who are the key advisers to university leaders on learning, teaching and widening access issues.

The team advises on and develops policy in relation to various topics that can attract a high level of political and media interest. These range from widening access to higher education for disadvantaged groups, to influencing the Scottish Government's understanding of the value of a university education, to more technical work to inform the development of Scotland's quality assurance regime for higher education.

Main responsibilities and deliverables

As directed by the line manager:

The creative development and advocacy of evidence-based policy:

- to deliver the sector's commitments to widening access, as set out in *Working to Widen Access*;
- to advance key learning and teaching priorities for the sector.

Ensuring that lead members, committees and senior US officers are provided with analysis and advice that anticipates their priorities and enables them to make decisions that best promote the sector's interests.

Influencing key stakeholders, including government, agencies, QAA and students, in order to promote Universities Scotland's objectives.

Undertaking personal leadership of specific projects within the team's portfolio and contributing to cross-office projects as directed by the Director and the Manager.

Working with our public affairs and communications team to turn evidence into persuasive stories.

Undertaking line management of the team's Policy Officer.

Detailed responsibilities

The principal focus will be on:

Working to Widen Access (this work is likely to be limited to 2019)

- Participating in various Universities Scotland's working groups arising from our Working to Widen Access actions, to ensure that our commitments are delivered in a way that best meets learners' and the sector's interests;
- Participating in ad hoc working groups and meetings relating to widening access.
- Providing briefings to inform Principals' participation in the Scottish Government's Access Delivery Group, and other ad hoc briefings on widening access.

Learning and Teaching

- Devising and helping to deliver the Learning and Teaching Committee's annual priorities;
- Helping senior colleagues to devise and advocate policy on skills that best meets learners' and the sector's needs;
- Helping to ensure the integrity of the Scottish quality assurance regime, including by responding to changes in the UK or England that may impact on the Scottish sector.

Other policy issues

To lead/ participate in the delivery of policy work that requires a cross-organisational response, working constructively with colleagues across teams.

Supporting the use of data in evidence-based policy and advocacy

To work with colleagues to identify, use and maintain key data sources within the portfolio, so that Universities Scotland can deliver better policy and advocacy.

Management

To set the key objectives for, develop and evaluate the performance of the team's part-time Policy Officer.

General

To help to respond promptly to enquiries from universities or other stakeholders on portfolio topics.

To liaise with UUK and Universities Wales to ensure that cross-border interests are taken into account as US and UUK develop policy and advocacy proposals.

To deputise for the Head of learning, teaching and widening access in their absence.

To lead in the arrangement of Universities Scotland events and externally focused activities as appropriate.

To undertake any other such duties or general tasks and hours of work as may reasonably be required. The post holder will be expected to be flexible, working within US's portfolio of responsibilities.

A job description is not a rigid or inflexible document but acts to provide guidelines to the duties expected while in post. It will be reviewed and amended in the light of changing professional demands.

Person Specification

Essential / Desirable	QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING	ASSESSED
<i>Essential</i>	An honours degree or equivalent (SCQF level 10 or above) or equivalent work experience.	Application form
A. WORK BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE		
<i>Essential</i>	Demonstrable experience in a policy environment, preferably within higher education	Application Form
<i>Desirable</i>	Sensitivity to the political and policy context and working in a membership organisation	Application form/ Interview
B. SKILLS AND APTITUDES REQUIRED		
<i>Essential</i>	Ability to use analytical skills to develop evidence-based policy propositions, drawing on a range of information and data sources	Application Form / Interview/ Assessment
<i>Essential</i>	Experience of assimilating and summarising large amounts of evidence, in a way that reflects members' priorities and influences key audiences	Application Form / Interview/ Assessment
<i>Essential</i>	Excellent oral and written communication skills, with the ability to advocate policies and provide advice in a clear, authoritative and persuasive manner	Application form / Interview/ Assessment
<i>Essential</i>	Good interpersonal skills, including the ability to develop and maintain productive working relationships with a wide range of people and organisations within HE and beyond, including senior staff in universities and government	Application form / Interview
<i>Essential</i>	Ability to work cooperatively in teams, and with different kinds of people, contributing to team decisions and maintaining strong team relationships by supporting others	Application form / Interview
<i>Essential</i>	Ability to quickly develop an understanding of new policy areas; build connections between diverse policies; and add value to the organisation's work in these areas	Application form / Interview

<i>Essential</i>	Computer literacy - Universities Scotland currently uses Microsoft Windows and Office	Application form
<i>Essential</i>	Ability to plan and manage one's own time and several projects at once, and to deliver these on schedule	Application form / Interview
<i>Desirable</i>	Experience of line management, including the ability to develop team members	Application form / Interview
C. SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED		
<i>Desirable</i>	Good knowledge of HE policy in Scotland and UK higher education	Application form / Interview
D. PERSONAL QUALITIES		
<i>Essential</i>	Willing to be flexible and positive about change	Interview
<i>Essential</i>	Committed to high standards	Application form / Interview
E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS		
<i>Essential</i>	Willingness to travel within Scotland and occasionally to other parts of the UK	Interview

Point of contact for recruitment

For any questions about the recruitment process or to arrange an informal discussion or request additional information about this position, please contact us by emailing

HR@UniversitiesUK.ac.uk.