

Public Affairs Officer

Recruitment pack

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A message from our CEO, Vivienne Stern

Universities UK (UUK) is the collective voice of universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We bring them together to pursue a common cause: thriving universities, serving society.

My journey at UUK started as a Parliamentary Officer and I have progressed through the organisation from there, with the opportunity to work across a range of different teams, up to becoming CEO. This is testament to the fact that at UUK we support our people to succeed, helping us achieve our ambitious goals as an organisation as a result.

At UUK we believe that supporting our people to succeed involves prioritising wellbeing at work and being an inclusive employer. We employ a total of just under 160 staff across the UUK Group. In our 2023 staff survey, I am proud that we scored higher than similar organisations for caring about our employees and treating them with fairness and respect, and that 86 per cent felt proud to work for UUK.

I am continually inspired by the passion and talent of the team at UUK. If you care about higher education, its ability to transform people's lives and its impact on wider society, then, in my opinion, there is no better place to do it than here.

Who are we?

At Universities UK, we harness the power of the UK's universities and create the conditions for them to thrive. We are the collective voice of 142 universities, bringing them together to pursue a common cause: thriving universities, serving society.

This mission forms the core of our [strategic plan](#) which runs to 2030 and sets out our ambitions for the sector. Our influence, convening power, and insight will enable our universities to:

- transform the lives of more people from the UK and around the world through high-quality education.
- drive greater growth and prosperity through the knowledge and skills they generate, creating places that allow communities to flourish.
- be globally competitive centres of research, at the forefront of making ground-breaking discoveries with the power to change our world.

To help them achieve this we will:

- secure sustainable funding that enables our universities to serve society better.
- build trust and confidence that our universities are a national asset to be proud of and are acting in the best interests of society.



Role description

Post title: Public Affairs Officer

Responsible to: Deputy Director, Public Affairs

Salary: £34,646 – £38,496 (dependant on experience)

Location: London

The team: There are four roles in the public affairs team, including this one, and the team sits within our Communications Group. This team takes responsibility for UUK's political, parliamentary and stakeholder relationships and supports the sector to navigate and influence our political environment.

Job summary: The post-holder plays a significant role in building relationships with politicians, government, civil servants, think tanks and other key stakeholders to ensure that UUK's strategic priorities and activities inform influential audiences in the most effective way. The Public Affairs Officer also plays a key role in UUK's planning and influencing ahead of elections such as those in May 2026, to ensure that higher education is visible across the political spectrum.

Activities include briefing our Chief Executive, President and Board members ahead of political meetings, often attending these meetings alongside senior representatives; organising and attending UUK events related to our political priorities; drafting parliamentary questions and briefings for MPs and Peers on ahead of debates in Parliament; influencing legislation by drafting amendments and finding galvanising parliamentarians; drafting communications plans for key UUK campaigns.

The working pattern for this role is Monday – Friday, 9.30-17:30. This is a full-time role, but other suggestions of how these hours could be conducted are welcome, and the team will be flexible with you where possible. You will also be expected to work outside those hours occasionally to attend events, for example, and to travel overnight for party political conferences. The post holder will be able to choose to work a mixture of in the UUK office in central London and at home, however they must be available to attend the office when required for core business reasons.

Main responsibilities:

- Maintaining detailed awareness of relevant political and parliamentary developments, and informing and advising UUK senior staff on these.
- Acting as the political lead for some UUK policy programmes, including coordinating work across press, social media and policy colleagues and writing strategic communications plans.
- Stakeholder mapping of political targets for UUK influencing on specific topics, and building impactful relationships
- Leading on briefings for parliamentarians ahead of parliamentary debates and oral questions.
- Preparing briefings on key political and policy issues for senior UUK staff and vice-chancellors ahead of political meetings, events and select committee appearances.
- Administration of and attendance at political affairs events, including party conferences and UUK-led parliamentary events throughout the year.
- Play an active role in the Future Universities programme, volunteering creative ideas and carrying out programme tasks within the broad scope of the programme.
- Managing relationships with various stakeholders, including MPs and their staffers, including through meetings and events.
- Careful monitoring of upcoming and current legislation to identify risk and opportunities for universities, and to draft amendments.

- Acting with creativity and agility to proactively spot ways to raise the voice of universities in parliament and political discourse.
- Supporting UUK's strategy ahead of future elections such as engaging with candidates, influencing manifestos and supporting UUK's member activity.
- The post-holder will be part of the Communications Group, line-managed by the Deputy Director. They will be expected to work as part of a cross-functional team on high-priority projects and may be asked to carry out other duties in support of communications/campaigning priorities

Compliance and governance

- to take responsibility for own health and safety in line with UUK H&S policy and current legislation and undertake such responsibilities as they relate to any employees, volunteers or contractors for which the post is responsible.
- to ensure compliance with UUK's internal procedures and all external legal requirements.

Personal effectiveness

- to take responsibility as far as is practical for own personal development to ensure that personal knowledge and skills are updated to ensure effectiveness in meeting work objectives.

General

- to show respect to colleagues, external partners and stakeholders, and to understand and adhere to UUK's Equal Opportunity policy, UUK Staff Standards of Conduct, and UUK's organisational capabilities.
- to work collegially, and to support all the teams which the post has contact with, in achieving the organisation's objectives.
- any other duties commensurate with the grade and level of responsibility of this post, for which the post holder has the necessary experience and/or training.
- This job description will be reviewed and amended in the light of changing professional demands. A job description is not a rigid or inflexible document but acts to provide guidelines to the duties expected while in post.

Last reviewed: *05 June 2026*

Person specification

Essential skills:

Essential skills	Assessment
Experience of working in a political, campaigning or communications environment in Whitehall or Westminster.	Supporting Statement Interview
Fluent knowledge and experience of how Parliament works, its processes, working in a political environment, and engagement with parliamentarians and influencing government.	Supporting Statement Interview
Strong knowledge of the legislative process, including how to use opportunities to change the course of a Bill.	Supporting statement Interview
High standard of written English and confidence in drafting good quality letters, newsletters, and briefings for a range of audiences.	Test
Excellent oral communication. Ability to present confidently in internal and external meetings and to respond to enquiries.	Interview
Confident in administering events, from crafting guestlists to arranging invites to catering, and speaker briefings.	Interview
Highly organised with proven experience of strategic coordination of people, information, diary management and relationships.	Interview

Ability to secure results, willingly tackle demanding tasks, and work at pace.	Interview
Ability to work under pressure in a calm, professional and efficient manner.	Interview
Understanding of, and commitment to, equality, diversity and inclusion as set out in UUK's Equal Opportunity policy.	Application form Interview

Desirable skills:

Desirable skills	Assessed by
Wider experience of communications: media, campaigns, social media	Interview
Knowledge and experience of the higher education sector and policy development.	Supporting Statement Interview
Confidence to come up with new ideas, try new contacts, and work with agility.	Interview
Ability to build and maintain a network of peers amongst public affairs teams, and in allied organisations.	Interview
Experience or understanding of working for a membership body.	Supporting statement or Interview

Working at UUK: Benefits

If you care about higher education, its ability to transform people's lives and impact wider society, joining our team is a great opportunity.

Universities play a huge part in our everyday lives, and we want to help them make even more of a difference. We bring together leaders of UK universities to discuss higher education issues and represent and campaign on their behalf to the government, business, the media and beyond.

People drive our success, and we value everyone's work.

Universities UK operates a hybrid working framework involving the opportunity to work from home and in the office. There will be a small number of roles where employees will be required to work from an office, but typically the majority of employees will be able to work remotely on average 60% of their working week. All employees are welcome to use their contractual office for their whole working week if that is their preference.

"I joined Universities UK three months after leaving university, and I immediately felt so welcomed and supported. I've been given opportunities to develop new skills, get involved in such a variety of interesting projects and work with colleagues across the organisation. It's a really friendly place to work and I feel trusted and valued to put my own views and ideas into practice."

Sofia Henderson, Senior Content Producer

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT STAFF BENEFITS AND WELLBEING, VISIT OUR [WORKING AT UUK PAGE](#)

Staff benefits

Leave



- 27 days annual leave rising to 30 days after 3 years' service and 32 days after 5 years' service plus bank holidays.
- 4 closure days between Christmas and New year.
- 2 days paid leave each year for volunteering activities

Well being



- Access to 24 hour 7 day a week Employee Assistant Programme which extends access to close family.
- Virtual Medical Care – 24 hour access to GP consultations.
- Mental Health First Aiders.
- Staff network groups.

Financial wellbeing



- Interest free season ticket loans after 6 months.
- Staff benefit fund loan scheme
- 'learn for you' – claim **£100 each** year tax free towards hobbies and activities outside of work.
- Funding support for continuing development, up to 2/3 of course costs paid with the remaining funded through an interest free loan recovered through monthly pay.
- Generous pension scheme (USS or SAUL depending on role).
- Salary sacrifice Cyclescheme.
- Salary progression plans.
- a £45 contribution every two years towards eye tests and the purchase of glasses where required.

Home working



- Hybrid Working policy – 40% of time averaged over a month to be spent in the office or meeting face to face with stakeholders; allowing 60% of time to be worked from home.
- Support for homeworking set up.

External schemes



- Charity worker discounts.
- Apple hardware discount scheme.
- Access to Able Futures for mental wellbeing support.

Our office facilities



- Tea/coffee/milk provided for refreshments.
- Kitchens available in all offices with access to fridges and microwaves.
- Shower facilities available (London and Cardiff).
- Cycle storage facilities.



Equality, diversity and inclusion

We want every member of staff to feel that they belong, can be themselves and that their opinion counts.

We can only reach our ambitious goals with multi-skilled, multi-experienced teams. Different perspectives make our work better.

What unites us is a passion for higher education and the enthusiasm to spread the message about the positive impacts UK universities have on our society.

We are committed to the equal treatment of all current and prospective employees and do not condone discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender identity, or marriage and civil partnership. We aspire to have a diverse and inclusive workplace and strongly encourage suitably qualified applicants from a wide range of backgrounds to apply and join UUK.

An equal, inclusive and diverse place to work

Equality, diversity and inclusion help create new ideas and approaches to teaching, learning and research. With that in mind, we're building a culture where difference is valued. We're constantly evolving the programmes and tools that help all employees grow and manage rewarding careers.

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT UNIVERSITIES UK, READ OUR [INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN](#)

Staff engagement and wellbeing at work

Staff engagement

In our 2023 staff survey, we scored higher than similar organisations for caring about our employees and treating them with fairness and respect, and that 86 per cent felt proud to work for UUK.

Wellbeing at work

We care about the mental health and wellbeing of all our staff. Having open and honest conversations about mental health is important to us. Our commitment to staff wellbeing includes:

- Training some members of staff to become mental health first aiders so they are there for colleagues who need support and advice.
- Raising awareness by recognising Mental Health Awareness Week with external speakers, opportunities to come together and talk and take part in activities
- Training for managers and all staff on mental health awareness
- Employee Assistance support helpline.



Universities UK is the collective voice of 142 universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Our mission is to create the conditions for

UK universities to be the best in the world; maximising their positive impact locally, nationally and globally.

Universities UK acts on behalf of universities, represented by their heads of institution



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