



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

## CANDIDATE BRIEF

Head of Public Affairs, Communications



**Salary: Grade 8 (£41,526 - £49,553 p.a.)**

**Reference: CSCOM1045**

## Head of Public Affairs Communications

**Are you an exceptional and engaging public affairs professional, with a proven track record of forging meaningful relationships with stakeholders? Can you develop and direct a programme of public affairs activity which exploits political and policy opportunities and mitigates risks? Are you able to communicate information to key political and policy audiences with accuracy, focus and flair?**

We are seeking an experienced, self-motivated public affairs strategist and practitioner to help us raise our profile with key local, national and international political and policy stakeholders.

Leading the University's public affairs agenda within the Communications team, you will offer insight and expertise to ensure political and policy engagement activity is effective and aligned with our academic and corporate ambitions.

You will communicate with, develop and maintain strong relationships with key political and policy stakeholders, provide credible advice to senior staff, and work with colleagues from across the University to inform our communications/engagement activity and planning.

This appointment comes at a particularly exciting time for the University, as it devises a strategy for the coming decade that takes account of the current volatile political and policy environment.

### What does the role entail?

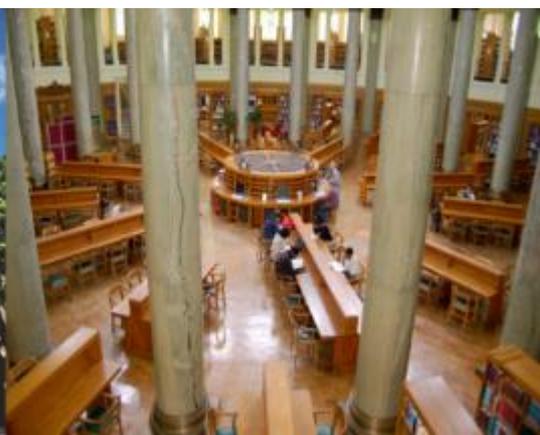
As Head of Public Affairs your main duties will include:

- Working closely with the Director of Communications to develop and implement a strategic engagement and communications plan which is aligned with the University's strategic plan and ensures the University identifies and engages key political and policy stakeholders in support of institutional academic and corporate objectives;
- Offering expert public affairs advice to senior leaders and academics to enable them both to develop and maintain effective relationships with key influential



stakeholders, and strategically and effectively communicate academic and corporate priorities to priority audiences;

- Identifying the most effective channel mix for engagement, in part delivered through direct engagement with key stakeholders;
- Creating communications material for political, policy and other stakeholder audiences to ensure they understand the University's broad academic strengths, its institutional priorities and its overall 'offer';
- Advising and preparing briefings for the University Executive Group and other senior leaders and academics on handling of political and policy opportunities relevant to our academic disciplinary portfolio; devising and delivering effective plans to influence, exploit opportunities and mitigate potential risks;
- Gathering intelligence from internal and external sources to inform engagement and communications activity; co-ordinating and aligning political and policy engagement by working with colleagues from across the University, including Research & Innovation, Policy Leeds, Alumni, Marketing and Communications, and Conferencing and Events teams. This will involve working as part of virtual interdisciplinary "project" teams to deliver communications and engagement activity;
- Where required, the role will involve close liaison with the Head of Policy, Funding and Regulation, who is responsible for ensuring the University is well positioned to influence and respond to developments across the Higher Education policy, funding and regulatory landscape, including leading on horizon scanning and advising the University Executive Group on HE policy developments;
- Working with key internal and external stakeholders on political handling of potentially sensitive issues, aligning activity with that of the wider Communications function;
- Developing and maintaining an effective GDPR-compliant mapping system of the University's key political and policy stakeholders and relationships;
- Defining metrics to measure and evaluate progress in the public affairs area;
- Recommending future development of the function (budget contingent), and how public affairs expertise in the University can most effectively interact with existing teams and structures;
- The role will involve some travel, including overnight stays, and some out-of-hours working.



These duties provide a framework for the role and should not be regarded as a definitive list. Other reasonable duties may be required consistent with the grade of the post.

## What will you bring to the role?

As Head of Public Affairs, you will have:

- Significant experience of working in a public/external affairs role, with a proven track record of working with politicians, civil servants and decision-makers at local and national levels, with genuine insight into how they operate and can most effectively be engaged with;
- Very strong networking and interpersonal skills (including, crucially, negotiating and influencing) and proven ability to build collaborative, productive working relationships and networks;
- Experience of advising and influencing at all levels of seniority, with the ability to work with tact and a high degree of diplomacy to handle potentially sensitive issues. First-rate political judgement will be essential;
- A track record of gathering intelligence and horizon-scanning to offer valuable insights into political and policy developments in order to inform political handling and planning to strategically influence, exploit opportunities and mitigate potential risks;
- Experience of delivering and evaluating effective stakeholder engagement activity and communication campaigns, with outstanding writing skills and the ability to present engaging information to a range of audiences;
- Energy, resilience and self-motivation, with evidence of being able to take initiative, work independently, as well as support and work collaboratively within a wider team to develop effective public affairs engagement activities;
- Excellent organisational skills, with the ability to manage competing deadlines and ensure effective prioritisation and use of resources;
- Experience of working in a large organisation, working across reporting lines in a matrix environment, gaining buy-in from different parties while retaining a clear focus on achieving desired outcomes.

You may also have:

- An understanding of the higher education policy environment and/or experience of working with organisations in the sector;
- Experience of soliciting the views of stakeholders, including in support of



consultation exercises and reputation audits.

## How to apply

You can apply for this role online; more guidance can be found on our [How to Apply](#) information page. Applications should be submitted by **23.59** (UK time) on the advertised closing date.

## Contact information

To explore the post further or for any queries you may have, please contact:

### Mark Devane, Director of Communications

Tel: +44 (0)113 343 3207

Email: [m.n.devane@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:m.n.devane@leeds.ac.uk)

## Additional information

### Working at Leeds

Find out more about the benefits of working at the University and what it is like to live and work in the Leeds area on our [Working at Leeds](#) information page.

### Candidates with disabilities

Information for candidates with disabilities, impairments or health conditions, including requesting alternative formats, can be found on our [Accessibility](#) information page or by getting in touch with us at [disclosure@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:disclosure@leeds.ac.uk).

## Criminal record information

### Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

A criminal record check is not required for this position. However, all applicants will be required to declare if they have any 'unspent' criminal offences, including those pending.

Any offer of appointment will be in accordance with our Criminal Records policy. You can find out more about required checks and declarations in our [Criminal Records](#) information page.

