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| Last updated: | February 2024 |

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

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| Post title: | **Executive Director of Communications** | | |
| Standard Occupation Code: (UKVI SOC CODE) | 1134 | | |
| School/Department: | Communications | | |
| Faculty: | Professional Services | | |
| Career Pathway: | Management, Specialist and Administrative (MSA) | Level: | 7 |
| Posts responsible to: | Vice-President (Operations) | | |
| Posts responsible for: | Associate Director, Corporate Communications (currently) | | |
| Post base: | Office-based (Southampton and Winchester), noting that the University currently operates using a hybrid working model, and with some overseas travel. | | |

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| Job purpose |
| Provide strategic leadership to the management of the University’s reputation and the delivery of comprehensive communication strategies and media engagement that enhance the University’s reputation externally and creates engagement with a large and diverse staff community internally.  Reporting directly to the Vice-President (Operations) and working closely with the Vice-Chancellor, and University Executive Board to provide confident and robust communications advice and guidance.  This position has specific ownership of the University’s reputation in response to a range of high-profile and sensitive issues, including how the University prepares for threats to its business continuity, including security and cyber security, and how crises are dealt with effectively. |

| Key accountabilities/primary responsibilities | | % Time |
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| 1. **Strategic Communication Planning**  * Lead the development, implementation and delivery of a robust communications strategic plan that supports the delivery of the University’s Strategy, its overall goals and objectives, maintaining and enhancing its reputation. * Collaborate with the senior leadership team to ensure that our communication plans support business priorities and contribute to the achievement of organisational milestones. |  | 10% |
| 1. **External Communications**  * Support external communications with a coherent and up-to-date narrative of the University’s strengths and achievements, including highlighting the endeavours of students and staff, emphasising the depth and richness of the University’s research activity, civic engagement, and other innovative work with practical illustrations. * Lead the development of new and creative approaches to share the University’s stories and news. Establish and lead the approach to story development, ensuring the creation of effective, multi-use, sharable content which can be accessed and amplified by other teams within the University. * Ensure that all corporate communications are accurate, coherent, consistent and produced to the highest standards. * Write engaging communications for external publication. |  | 20% |
| 1. **Media Relations**  * Exploit and co-ordinate all appropriate media and social media channels, in order to communicate effectively and consistently with all stakeholders and members of the public, with a digital first approach. * Build and maintain strong relationships with media outlets, journalists, and influencers. * Act as the primary spokesperson for the University, managing media inquiries and interviews effectively. * Support colleagues to be equipped to deal with media interviews. |  | 15% |
| 1. **Internal Communications**  * Develop and implement internal communication strategies to engage and inform employees at all levels. * Facilitate communication channels that foster a positive organisational culture and employee engagement, working closely with senior leaders across the University. * Collaborate with student communications teams to ensure a consistent approach and style across the university. * Proactively engage, and collaborate with Faculties, Schools, Professional Service Divisions, and the Students’ Union to deliver the University’s objectives and foster excellent working relationships and a strong sense of membership of the University. |  | 25% |
| 1. **Reactive and Crisis Communication**  * Lead on the creation and implementation of effective crisis communication plans, ensuring the University’s reputation is safeguarded in challenging situations. Develop reputation management protocols to support this activity. * Provide calm but confident, robust advice and guidance to the Vice-Chancellor, Council, and the University Executive Team where appropriate and act as our spokesperson when required. * Advise on complex matters and create communications that respond to the different and challenging situations that face universities. * Prepare responses to correspondence on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the University Executive Board. * Play a key role in crises responses and in business continuity planning. |  | 20% or as needed |
| 1. **Stakeholder Engagement**  * Ensure effective support for the University’s civic engagement in Southampton, Winchester, and the wider South Hampshire region, working closely with the Vice-President (Engagement and International) and the Director of Civic and Arts. |  | 5 % |
| 1. **Budget Management**  * Develop and manage the communications budget, ensuring efficient allocation of resources to achieve strategic objectives. |  | 5 % |
| 1. Any other duties as allocated by the line manager following consultation with the post holder. |  | As required |

| Internal and external relationships |
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| All colleagues in the University, Members of the University Executive Board, Professional Services Executive Group, and other senior managers in the University.  Council, and their committees.  Equivalent post holders in other relevant organisations, nationally and internationally.  SUSU (Southampton University Student Union) and Alumni.  External customers, agencies, and bodies, including government and commercial organisations,  media outlets and journalists |

| Special Requirements |
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**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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| Criteria | Essential | Desirable | How to be assessed |
| Qualifications, knowledge and experience | Skill level equivalent to achievement of a professional qualification or postgraduate degree in a relevant field (such as a postgraduate diploma in media, marketing or public relations), supported by demonstrable professional experience at a strategic level.  Proven experience in a senior communications role, within a complex multi-faceted operation, with a track record of success in strategic communication planning and execution, including the exploitation of digital communication tools and platforms  Demonstrable success as a first-rate media relations operator, with excellent news sense, spot-on judgement, acute political savvy and highly developed writing skills.  Proven experience of leading communication responses to unplanned events and in crisis communication and issues management.  Proven leadership experience in a range of demanding and influential roles.  Proven experience of managing significant organisational change. | Understanding of and/or empathy for higher education and its current and emerging global trends. | CV and selection process |
| Expected Behaviours | Apply and actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion principles to the responsibilities of the role.  As a Line Manager and senior leader, role model the Southampton Behaviours and work with the management team to embed them as a way of working within the directorate. |  | CV and selection process |
| Management and teamwork | Substantial leadership and management experience at a senior level.  Ability to lead and develop diverse teams, empowering and supporting people, creating effective organisational structures and managing through influence as well as through executive authority.  Able to demonstrate leadership and to raise performance standards throughout own work areas.  Able to recognise and deal with obstacles and difficulties so that teams can deliver. |  | CV and selection process |
| Planning and organising | A strategic thinker with the ability to plan and evaluate in the short, medium and long term, alongside the day-to-day demands of a fast-paced news agenda.  Able to champion and oversee the Department’s contribution to the university’s strategy and to lead on the Department’s strategies and plans.  Able to implement successful change management initiatives and formulate strategic plans that reflect and support the priority needs of the university. |  | CV and selection process |
| Problem solving and initiative | Proven ability to identify reputational risks and develop strategies to manage and mitigate them.  Proven ability to make judgements on significant new problems where precedent may not apply. |  | CV and selection process |
| Communicating and influencing | Evidence of highly developed interpersonal and influencing skills with a demonstrable ability to achieve personal impact in working relationships, ideally with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, including individual journalists, media outlets and senior stakeholders within the HE sector, Government and beyond.  Proven ability to influence, persuade and change the motivations, attitudes and behaviours of multiple audiences, both internal and external to the organisation.  Ability to establish credibility quickly to work effectively and collaboratively with cross-functional teams.  Outstanding written and oral communication skills. |  | CV and selection process |
| Other skills and behaviours | Able to demonstrate alignment with the University’s core values in all areas of work, and champion those behaviours in the Department.  Intellectual capacity, stamina and agility to deal with a broad span of duties and to gain the respect of a wide range of people, balancing internal and external demands.  Personal presence and able to project and inspire confidence at all levels.  High level of emotional intelligence with excellent judgement |  | CV and selection process |
| Special requirements |  |  |  |

Appendix 1. Embedding Collegiality

Collegiality represents one of the four core principles of the University; Collegiality, Quality, Internationalisation and Sustainability. Our Southampton Behaviours set out our expectations of all staff across the University to support the achievement of our strategy.

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| **All staff** | **Behaviour** |
| **Personal Leadership** | I take personal responsibility for my own actions and an active approach towards my development |
| I reflect on my own behaviour, actively seek feedback and adapt my behaviour accordingly |
| I show pride, passion and enthusiasm for our University community |
| I demonstrate respect and build trust with an open and honest approach |
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| **Working Together** | I work collaboratively and build productive relationships across our University and beyond |
| I actively listen to others and communicate clearly and appropriately with everyone |
| I take an inclusive approach, value the differences that people bring and encourage others to contribute and flourish |
| I proactively work through challenge and conflict, considering others’ views to achieve positive and productive outcomes |
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| **Developing Others** | I help to create an environment that engages and motivates others |
| I take time to support and enable people to be the best they can |
| I recognise and value others’ achievements, give praise and celebrate their success |
| I deliver balanced feedback to enable others to improve their contribution |
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| **Delivering Quality** | I identify opportunities and take action to be simply better |
| I plan and prioritise efficiently and effectively, taking account of people, processes and resources |
| I am accountable, for tackling issues, making difficult decisions and seeing them through to conclusion |
| I encourage creativity and innovation to deliver workable solutions |
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| **Driving Sustainability** | I consider the impact on people before taking decisions or actions that may affect them |
| I embrace, enable and embed change effectively |
| I regularly take account of external and internal factors, assessing the need to change and gaining support to move forward |
| I take time to understand our University vision and direction and communicate this to others |

**JOB HAZARD ANALYSIS**

**Is this an office-based post?**

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| Yes | If this post is an office-based job with routine office hazards (e.g: use of VDU), no further information needs to be supplied. Do not complete the section below. |
| No | If this post is not office-based or has some hazards other than routine office (e.g: more than use of VDU) please complete the analysis below.  Hiring managers are asked to complete this section as accurately as possible to ensure the safety of the post-holder. |

## - HR will send a full PEHQ to all applicants for this position. Please note, if full health clearance is required for a role, this will apply to all individuals, including existing members of staff.

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| **ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES** | **Occasionally**  (<30% of time) | **Frequently**  (30-60% of time) | **Constantly**  (> 60% of time) |
| Outside work | x |  |  |
| Extremes of temperature (e.g: fridge/ furnace) |  |  |  |
| ## Potential for exposure to body fluids |  |  |  |
| ## Noise (greater than 80 dba - 8 hrs twa) |  |  |  |
| ## Exposure to hazardous substances (e.g: solvents, liquids, dust, fumes, biohazards). Specify below: |  |  |  |
| Frequent hand washing |  |  |  |
| Ionising radiation |  |  |  |
| **EQUIPMENT/TOOLS/MACHINES USED** | | | |
| ## Food handling |  |  |  |
| ## Driving university vehicles(e.g: car/van/LGV/PCV) |  |  |  |
| ## Use of latex gloves (prohibited unless specific clinical necessity) |  |  |  |
| ## Vibrating tools (e.g: strimmers, hammer drill, lawnmowers) |  |  |  |
| **PHYSICAL ABILITIES** | | | |
| Load manual handling |  |  |  |
| Repetitive crouching/kneeling/stooping |  |  |  |
| Repetitive pulling/pushing |  |  |  |
| Repetitive lifting |  |  |  |
| Standing for prolonged periods |  |  |  |
| Repetitive climbing (i.e.: steps, stools, ladders, stairs) |  |  |  |
| Fine motor grips (e.g: pipetting) |  |  |  |
| Gross motor grips |  |  |  |
| Repetitive reaching below shoulder height |  |  |  |
| Repetitive reaching at shoulder height |  |  |  |
| Repetitive reaching above shoulder height |  |  |  |
| **PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES** | | | |
| Face to face contact with public | x |  |  |
| Lone working | x |  |  |
| ## Shift work/night work/on call duties |  | x |  |