



## Senior Policy Officer

<b>Location:</b>	Edinburgh
<b>Post Type:</b>	Full Time, permanent
<b>Grade:</b>	Technical
<b>Salary</b>	33,916 to 38,815
<b>Hours:</b>	Monday to Friday, 09:00-17:00, flexible working arrangements will be considered
<b>Application Closing Date:</b>	23:59 Monday 23 August 2021
<b>Assessment:</b>	All applicants: application  Shortlisted candidates: assessment exercise and interview
<b>Interview Date:</b>	Thursday 2 September 2021

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 initial focus on widening access, learning and teaching. You will work with colleagues across our team of 15 on a range of policy issues. You will also have the adaptability to support other areas of Universities Scotland's policy portfolio as required.

You will work closely with Principals and senior colleagues in universities, government, other representative bodies and in industry. The successful applicant will have the flexibility to understand diverse issues quickly; build connections between diverse policies; and work with our specialist public affairs team to turn evidence into persuasive stories.

You will be skilled at assimilating and summarising large amounts of evidence, understanding members' and stakeholders' priorities, and developing policy proposals that can influence our key audiences. You will have the capacity to be authoritative and persuasive in your presentation to senior audiences within and outside Universities Scotland. You will work on a range of policy areas, with a varying degree of depth.

## **Job Description**

Post: Senior Policy Officer

Responsible to: Head of Learning, Teaching and Widening Access Policy

Management responsibility: The postholder will have formal line management responsibility for the work of the team's Policy Officer.

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 skills policy, to more technical work to inform the development of Scotland's quality arrangements for higher education.

## **Current main responsibilities and deliverables**

As directed by the line manager:

The creative development and advocacy of evidence-based policy. There will be some flexibility on which policy areas you work on within the areas the team are responsible for, which are:

- Widening access;
- Skills;
- Quality;
- Admissions; and
- Other key learning and teaching priorities for the sector.

To conduct research and analysis to support policy development.

To gather and interpret intelligence and manage relationships, including:

- building an effective network of contacts;
- anticipating and interpreting the actions of other stakeholders; and
- anticipating and interpreting members' priorities.

Negotiation and influencing, including key organisations such as government and agencies; and to do so in a way which promotes US's objectives.

Ensure the sector is represented on key stakeholder groups in the relevant policy areas.

Ensure that lead members, committees and senior US officers are provided with analysis and advice which enables them to make decisions about how best to promote the sector's interests.

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 issues the post-holder is expected to deal with will vary over time, and may include any part of US's policy portfolio. US is currently developing a new strategic plan, which may lead to changes in priorities.

The principal initial focus of the role will be on:

#### Access and Admissions

- Devising and helping to deliver the Admissions Policy Group's plan of work (this is likely to include work relating to future changes in the UCAS admission system).

#### Learning and Teaching

- Devising and helping to deliver the Learning and Teaching Committee's annual priorities (this will involve work relating to the SFC's recent review, work on skills, and joint work on articulation issues with Colleges Scotland);
- Helping senior colleagues to devise and advocate policy on skills that best meets learners' and the sector's needs; and
- Helping to ensure the integrity of the Scottish quality arrangements, 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 (a recent example of this is climate change policy).

### 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.

### Supporting policy development

- Liaising with external organisations seeking their input to inform Universities Scotland's work.
- Participating in ad hoc working groups and meetings.
- Providing secretariat for relevant groups when required.
- Providing briefings to inform Principals' participation in Scottish Government and other meetings relating to the team's policy areas.
- Working with our Public Affairs team to ensure they are equipped to brief the media and to develop publications and campaigns to further our policy aims as appropriate.

### 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.

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

To represent Universities Scotland at external events, meetings and conferences where appropriate.

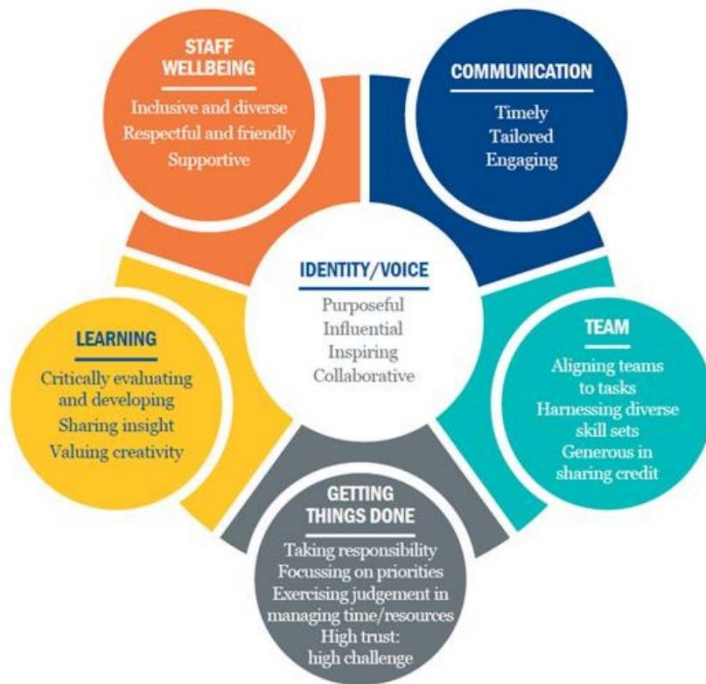
To deputise for the Head of Learning & Teaching & Widening Access Policy in their absence.

To undertake any other such duties or general tasks and hours of work as may reasonably be required.

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

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.

## Values and behaviours



## 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
<b>A. WORK BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE</b>		
<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>B. SKILLS AND APTITUDES REQUIRED</b>		
<i>Essential</i>	Demonstrable strength in the sourcing and use of data in constructing persuasive evidence-based policy and advocacy and in the deployment of such data across teams.	Application Form / Interview/ Assessment
<i>Essential</i>	Numerate with excellent written and oral communications skills with the ability to interpret and explain policies and provide advice and assistance	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 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
<b>C. SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED</b>		
<i>Desirable</i>	Good knowledge of the UK higher education and, in particular, HE policy in Scotland	Application form / Interview
<b>D. PERSONAL QUALITIES</b>		
<i>Essential</i>	Willing to be flexible and positive about change	Interview
<i>Essential</i>	Committed to high standards	Application form / Interview
<b>E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS</b>		
<i>Essential</i>	Willingness to travel within Scotland and occasionally to other parts of the UK	Interview

Whilst Universities Scotland is currently operating through remote working, we anticipate that we will shortly move to a hybrid model involving a mixture of office-based and home-based working. We have an open plan office which we share with other HE organisations, so the successful candidate will be someone who has a professional approach, is competent, easy to work with, adaptable and comfortable working in a small team. They will have a variety of tasks to deal with so they will need to be excellent time managers and have a calm, professional communication style to deal pleasantly and confidently with stakeholders at different professional levels. The successful candidate will be highly competent in managing competing priorities and comfortable distinguishing 'important from urgent' tasks and responding pro-actively. The ability to create or identify persuasive evidence and its use to influence universities' funding and operational environment are key elements of the role.

### **Reporting Line**

The postholder will report to the Head of Learning & Teaching & Widening Access Policy.

### **Point of contact for recruitment**

For any questions about the recruitment process or to arrange an informal discussion / ask queries about the role please contact HR, Universities UK

[hr@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:hr@universitiesuk.ac.uk)