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Candidate brief for the position of

**DIRECTOR OF POLICY
UNIVERSITIES UK**

JANUARY 2025



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Introduction from the Chief Executive

Thank you for your interest in joining the leadership team at Universities UK.

My colleagues and I believe that what we do at Universities UK really matters, not only to our universities but to the whole of the country. We're looking for a strategic policy leader who can make a profound impact on our work as the collective voice of universities across the United Kingdom, championing their interests and effectively collaborating with Government to impact and advance the UK's ability to harness the transformative power of education and research.

Our universities are at a pivotal juncture and our strategic report, A Blueprint for Change has proactively demonstrated our capacity to inform and develop impactful policy. As the President of Universities UK, Professor Dame Sally Mapstone states in her foreword, "We stand at a fork in the road of the UK's Universities. There is now a clear choice. We can allow our distinguished, globally competitive higher education and research system to slide into decline. Or, we can act together, as institutions and with government." It is more vital than ever that our positions are effective, collaborative, and powerful to realise the great potential of our sector through our policy work. By joining us, you will have the chance to impact a sector which educates 2.8 million students, which generates new discoveries every day, which makes a £130 billion contribution to the UK economy, and which supports 440,000 jobs.

We are seeking a visionary and strategic policy leader with a passion for impact and a proven ability to develop and react to policy that relates to our dynamic sector. We need a smart political strategist, with the ability to advance Universities UK's strategic policy objectives, and in doing so, support the success of our members. We need someone who is calm under pressure, understands the nuances of government policy making and is strategic enough to see what policies can be developed and which we believe will help both our members and the UK to achieve their respective goals.

I am deeply proud of the team at UUK, and the quality of our work.

If you care about higher education and research, its ability to transform people's lives then, in my opinion, there is no better place to do it than here.

Many thanks for your interest and we look forward to hearing from you.



Vivienne Stern,
Chief Executive
Universities UK
January 2025

About Universities UK

We are the collective voice of the UK's universities and have 141 member universities. For over 100 years we have brought universities together in all four nations of the UK to foster collaboration exchange insight and influence policy.

Our shared vision:

Thriving universities, serving society

Our Mission

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

Our Purpose

We do this by:

- influencing policy and opinion.
- bringing our universities together to take collective action.
- providing insight into our universities, helping others to understand them better and helping them to plan.

Our universities

Thriving universities, serving society

2.7m

Educate over **2.7 million** students every year.

100k

Produce over **100,000** public service workers every year.

230

Educate over half a million students in more than **230 countries** worldwide

4th

Produce world leading research: the UK is the **4th largest producer of research** worldwide

£130.5bn

Contribute **£115.7bn** a year to the economy. International students generate an additional **£14.8bn**

21k

Responsible for helping to create **21,000** active spinout companies, start ups and social enterprises.

The Role

Reports to:	Chief Executive Officer
Direct Reports:	Deputy Director (Policy) Deputy Director (Policy)
Location:	Woburn House, London / hybrid working
Salary:	£93,000 - £103,000

Role Summary

Universities UK (UUK) is the collective voice of 141 universities across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. UUK aims to create the best possible environment for universities to thrive, ensuring they can make a positive impact on society. The organisation advocates for higher education, influences policy, and provides support to its member institutions. The Director of Policy at UUK will be responsible for leading the development and implementation of policy strategies that align with the organisation's and member's goals. We have published our objectives in our *Blueprint for Change* [which you can read in full here](#).

As part of the UUK Leadership Team, the Director of Policy will play a crucial role in developing and influencing policies on a range of issues, including student experience and skills, innovation, research, regulation, funding and analysis policy, and universities' responses to societal challenges such as climate change and student mental health. Our strategic aims are described in [Universities UK Strategic Plan](#) and using this as the foundations of your work, you will lead a team of policy professionals, providing guidance and support to ensure the effective delivery of UUK's policy objectives. Additionally, the Director will represent UUK in high-level discussions with government agencies and other key partners, advocating for the interests of the higher education sector and ensuring that universities' voices are heard in policy-making processes.

To succeed in this role, the Director of Policy will need a strong background in public policy, with experience in higher education, innovation and / or research policy being particularly advantageous. Key skills for this position include excellent leadership and management abilities, as well as the capacity to engage with our remarkable membership.

Main Responsibilities / accountabilities

- Identify strategic policy priorities for UUK and lead the development and delivery of UUK's policy work in support of UUK's Strategic Plan.
- Build and maintain strong, trusted and influential stakeholder relationships and networks at senior levels, both within the higher education sector and with policy makers and influencers.
- Negotiate and collaborate with stakeholders in order to shape the higher education and research policy landscape and ensure UUK's work has maximum influence and impact.
- Represent UUK through external speaking, senior stakeholder meetings and engagement and in the media.
- Ensure effective engagement, consultation and involvement of members in UUK's policy work and building consensus, including providing input and advice to the UK Board and other committees and members meetings as appropriate.
- Liaise and collaborate with Directors of Universities Scotland, Universities Wales, ensuring wherever possible a coordinated approach on policy across the nations of the UK.
- Undertake such other duties as may be required from time to time by the Chief Executive.

Management

- Lead a high performing policy team of c25 FTE, with a strong focus on supporting professional development and embedding leadership.
- Be an active member of UUK's Management and Senior Leadership Teams, supporting decision making on overall direction of UUK.
- Take overall responsibility for resource management in the Policy Group. This includes ensuring active monitoring and management of team resources to ensure staff time is prioritised and focused in the right areas; and managing budgets including coordinating responsibility for programme budgets and external funding.
- Generate external income when appropriate and in line with UUK objectives and priorities. Prepare annual Policy Group budgets, and meet all corporate, human resource and financial control standards.

Main Responsibilities / accountabilities (cont...)

Compliance and governance

- 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.
- Ensure compliance with UUK's internal procedures and all external legal requirements

Personal Effectiveness

- 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

- Respect 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.
- Work collegially, and to support all the teams which the post has contact with, in achieving the organisation's objectives.
- Attend and deliver 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

Person Specification

Qualifications and Knowledge

- A good under graduate degree or equivalent
- Broad knowledge of UK higher education, Innovation and / or research policy would be advantageous

Work background and experience

Essential:

- Substantial experience at a senior level in policy development, analysis and influence.
- Experience at a senior level in leading multiple programme teams across a wide matrix of policy domains and with a range of stakeholders, including at senior levels.
- Experience of working in or with higher education, in a policy leadership or analytical capacity.
- Substantial experience of leading strategy development and implementation, and delivery of defined outputs and outcomes in a complex external environment.

Desirable:

- Experience of generating income from external sources.
- Experience of working in a membership organisation, including building consensus and direction on difficult or contentious issues.

Skills and Aptitudes

Essential:

- Excellent written and oral communications skills to an advanced level including presenting complex issues in clear and accessible ways.
- Strong analytical skills and intellectual rigour.
- Ability to use judgement and make decisions on complex issues and provide clear direction, often within uncertain circumstances.

Leadership and Management

Essential:

- Substantial experience of leading teams and managing staff, demonstrating the ability to develop and motivate high performing teams to achieve shared organisational goals.

(Continued...)

Person Specification (cont...)

Leadership and Management

- Experience at a senior level of enabling cross-organisational working, particularly involving the communication of policy outcomes for external audiences.
- Finance and budgetary skills with demonstrable experience of planning resources to meet operational priorities and requirements, and seeking cost effective methods of working

Specialist Knowledge

Desirable:

- Understanding and experience of working in a highly political environment, with good knowledge of the UK parliamentary system.
- An awareness of the public relations and campaigning aspects of policy development.

Personal Qualities

Essential:

- Ability to initiate, implement and optimise change programmes both within teams and across an organisation, including bringing people along and motivating them, and identifying and implementing entrepreneurial, creative and innovative approaches.
- The ability to work under pressure.
- Ability to engage with UUK members and represent the organisation in a professional manner, using judgement, tact and diplomacy as necessary

How to Apply

The preferred method of application is online at www.berwickpartners.co.uk/92873

If you are unable to apply online please email your application to response.manager@berwickpartners.co.uk

All applications will receive an automated response.

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process.

For detailed information on how we process your personal data, please review our privacy policy on our website <https://www.berwickpartners.co.uk/privacy-policy/>

In line with GDPR, we ask that you do NOT send us any information that can identify children or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and/or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data in your CV/application documentation will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

If you have any queries or would like more information regarding this document, please contact:

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