

University Alliance Job Description

Role Title	Senior Public Affairs and Policy Manager
Department	Policy
Responsible to	Director of Policy
Responsible for	N/A
Hours	Full-time, working 37.5 hours per week
Location	Hybrid. A contractual minimum of two days per month in UA's central London office, with an expectation of one day per week in practice. Travel to member universities and to events is also required, including some evening and overnight commitments.
Contract	Permanent
Salary	c.£43k

Main purpose of the job

University Alliance (UA) is the voice of professional and technical universities. Our member universities specialise in working with employers to empower students with career-ready skills and develop the knowledge industries need to innovate and grow. UA provides expertise to policy makers and supports our members and their communities through collaboration. We are a small team with a wide remit.

The Senior Public Affairs and Policy Manager is the third post in UA's policy team, working to the Director of Policy and alongside the Deputy Director of Policy, as well as other UA staff and members, specifically the Director of Communications and their team as well as directly with the CEO. The role is split broadly evenly between parliamentary and government affairs and policy.

On the public affairs side, the postholder will develop UA's parliamentary function, and be responsible for drafting evidence and briefings for parliamentarians and oral and written parliamentary questions. This is an area UA is deliberately strengthening, and the postholder will have real scope to shape how it works. This position will also deliver UA's party conference and political events programme, engaging with the CEO and with support from the Communications team. The postholder will bring political judgement to the team's work, advising colleagues and in turn members on when and how UA should intervene and identifying the opportunities where a small organisation can have an impact. The purpose is to raise the reputation, reach and credibility of UA's policy work and of the wider brand.

On the policy side, the postholder will lead UA's work on international higher education and on admissions, developing UA's positions in these areas and acting as key facilitator for the associated member networks. In addition, they will support the Director and Deputy Director on funding and regulation policy, and provide the research, data and evidence that underpins the policy team's output across a range of areas.

The postholder will work closely with the Chief Executive and the Director of Communications and their team as well as with senior staff in member universities from the outset and will have regular contact with key parliamentarians and their offices, senior

officials and sector leaders in the course of the role. UA's most senior political relationships are held collectively by the Chair, Chief Executive, Director of Policy, Deputy Director of Policy and Director of Communications, and the postholder's work will shape and drive that engagement whilst building their own network across Whitehall, Parliament and the Higher Education sector.

Responsibilities and duties

Government and Parliamentary affairs

- Build and run UA's parliamentary monitoring: identifying relevant legislation, debates, select committee inquiries; alerting colleagues to risks and opportunities at an early stage; contributing to daily external opportunity spotting and maintaining UA's forward look.
- Take responsibility for UA's use of oral and written parliamentary questions, identifying opportunities, drafting questions, briefing sympathetic parliamentarians, and following up on answers.
- Draft briefings for parliamentarians ahead of relevant debates, and for the Chair, Chief Executive, Director and Deputy Director of Policy ahead of key meetings and events and when necessary, prepare the CEO and or Chair of UA for any appearances before select committees.
- Advise the Chief Executive, Director and Deputy Director of Policy and Director of Communications on political strategy and tactics: when UA should intervene, through which route, and with what message. Identify the opportunities where UA can have the most influence.
- Maintain UA's stakeholder mapping and engagement records and coordinate UA's political engagement activity, ensuring effort is aligned, contacts are not duplicated, and follow-up happens.
- Monitor developments in the devolved administrations and mayoral combined authorities relevant to Alliance universities, working through member universities as UA's source of local intelligence.
- Build and maintain UA's working-level relationships with officials, parliamentary, research and committee staff, think tanks and counterparts in other mission groups.
- Work with the Policy and Communications teams to lead the development of a political affairs network of staff in member universities.

Political events and profile

- Lead UA's autumn party conference activity: identifying objectives, securing and shaping UA's presence, preparing briefings and materials, and ensuring effective follow-up.
- Lead delivery of UA's parliamentary events and policy roundtables, from concept through to follow-up, liaising closely with the Communications team.
- Work with the Communications team to raise the reach and credibility of UA's policy output, identifying the audiences that matter, the moments to publish, and the routes to reach decision-makers.
- Work with the Communications team to deliver visits by key opinion leaders and policy makers to member universities.

Policy leadership: international education and admissions

- Lead UA's policy work on international higher education, including international students and recruitment, immigration policy and compliance, transnational education (TNE), and international partnership and mobility programmes (e.g. Erasmus+).
- Lead UA's policy work on higher education admissions, including widening access and participation.
- Develop evidence-based UA positions in these areas, drafting consultation responses, submissions, briefings and reports for review by the Director and Deputy Director of Policy.
- Act as key facilitator for UA's international, immigration compliance and admissions networks (currently), each chaired or co-chaired by a senior member university representative. Work with the network Chair(s) to shape high-quality agendas, secure strong external speakers, ensure meetings happen to schedule, and follow through so that agreed actions are delivered.
- Use the networks as UA's primary source of policy content in these areas, capturing member expertise and experience, testing emerging positions, and turning discussion into UA policy output.
- Deal directly and promptly with incoming policy queries in these areas from members, officials and stakeholders.
- Act as UA's day-to-day point of contact for members on international and admissions matters.

Policy support: funding, regulation and the wider agenda

- Support the Director and Deputy Director of Policy with work they lead on higher education funding and regulation, including pensions, contributing research, analysis, evidence and drafting.
- Collate and analyse sector data releases and reports, providing an overview of member performance and of relevant external policy developments.
- Provide desk-based research support across UA's policy projects, including literature reviews, briefing papers, and internal and external reports.
- Maintain UA's summaries and datasets of key member statistics, so that UA colleagues can draw on accurate, current evidence.
- Provide evidence and case studies for UA policy submissions and reports.
- Contribute to a range of networks for member universities, which is a shared responsibility across the whole policy team, and support the Director and Deputy Director of Policy in developing UA's relationships with members' policy and public affairs staff.
- Track and report on the reach and impact of UA's policy influencing and political engagement.

General

- Contribute to the wider work of University Alliance, with the flexibility expected of a member of a small team.

- Undertake a range of other appropriate tasks as directed by the Director of Policy in line with the role of a Senior Public Affairs and Policy Manager.

Responsibility for budgets

The postholder may manage event or project budgets by agreement.

Relationships/contacts

Internal: Staff across the organisation at all levels, including the Chief Executive and their Office; the Director and Deputy Director of Policy; Director of Communications and their team; the Director of Member Engagement; Director of Business Services and the Postgraduate Research team.

External: Chairs and members of relevant UA member networks; other key staff at all levels within our member universities; parliamentarians and their staff; civil servants and officials; think tanks and counterparts in other mission groups.

Note that Policy portfolios across the team are reviewed periodically and may change to reflect UA's priorities, the balance of work across the team, and the postholder's own development. The postholder will always hold a defined portfolio of their own.

This document outlines the main duties required, for the time being, of the post-entitled Senior Public Affairs and Policy Manager to indicate the level of responsibility. It is not intended to be a comprehensive or exhaustive list, and we may vary duties, from time to time, which do not change the general character of the job, or the level of responsibility entailed.

Person Specification

Post title: Senior Public Affairs & Policy Manager

Specification	Essential	Desirable
Education/Training	Educated to degree level or equivalent professional working experience.	Postgraduate qualification in a relevant discipline, or a relevant professional qualification.
Experience	- Parliamentary monitoring and engaging directly with the parliamentary process. - Policy or parliamentary work in higher education or a related public policy field, including researching a complex issue and developing a position on it. - Producing written outputs for expert or political audiences: consultation responses, briefings, submissions or reports. - Using data and evidence to build and support an argument. - Convening, facilitating or servicing groups of senior professionals.	- Working for a membership organisation. - Working in Parliament, government or a political environment. - Policy work on international higher education, immigration, admissions or widening participation. - Organising parliamentary, political or sector events, including party conference activity.
Skills/aptitude	- Understanding of Parliament, government and the legislative and policymaking processes, and of how representative bodies can effectively influence these. - Sound political judgement — able to read a political situation, advise colleagues on whether, when and how to intervene, and identify where a small organisation can have impact. - Knowledge of the higher education policy landscape, or of a comparable public policy field, with the ability to acquire HE-specific knowledge quickly. - Excellent written communication, with the ability to distil complex material into concise, persuasive	- Knowledge of international higher education policy and/or higher education admissions policy. - Detailed working knowledge of parliamentary procedure. - Understanding of devolution and of the role of mayoral combined authorities and devolved administrations. - Working knowledge of higher education datasets (HESA, OfS, UCAS, DfE, UKRI). - Stronger quantitative or statistical skills, or familiarity with data visualisation tools.

Specification	Essential	Desirable
	prose for political and expert audiences. • Confident using and interpreting sector data — able to read a statistical release, identify what matters, and explain it clearly — and to maintain accurate summaries and datasets. • Excellent organisational skills, with the ability to run several workstreams at once, manage own workload and deliver to deadline. • Confident oral communication, able to hold their own with senior university staff, officials and parliamentary contacts. • A self-starter, able to work with a light touch of supervision and to shape how a piece of work is done, while collaborating closely within a small team. • Discretion and sensitivity to political context, and rigour about the quality of evidence behind UA's positions. • Strong IT skills, proficient in Microsoft applications including Excel.	
Other	• Able to be in London a minimum of two days per month, and in most weeks approximately one day per week, with more frequent attendance when business needs require. • Willingness to travel and to work occasional evenings and overnight for meetings, events and party conferences. • Willingness to undertake further training and development.	