Job Description

Job title: Director of External Relations
Salary range and conditions: Senior Salary 2
Department/Division: External Relations
Term of office: Indefinite
Directly responsible to: Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer
Supervisory responsibility for: Associate Director (Admissions, Marketing & Recruitment), Assistant Director of Communications, Assistant Director of Marketing, Heads of Departments covering: Philanthropy, Student Recruitment and Admissions

About the External Relations division

Leadership context
The External Relations Division plays a central role in advancing Lancaster University's strategic ambitions, strengthening its reputation and profile, and developing meaningful relationships with its diverse audiences and stakeholders in the UK and internationally. Working in close partnership with the Vice-Chancellor, University leadership, academic colleagues and professional services, the Division supports the University's positioning as a leading international institution for education, research and innovation. It brings together the expertise and activities needed to communicate Lancaster's distinctiveness, build influence, attract students and partners, engage alumni and supporters, and strengthen the University's contribution to society.

Operational context
The Division brings together a broad portfolio of professional services encompassing Communications, Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions, (including ceremonies and events) and Philanthropy and Alumni. Through these functions, it leads and supports the development and delivery of the University's brand and marketing strategy; internal and external communications, media relations and public affairs; UK and international student recruitment and admissions; and philanthropic fundraising and alumni relations. Working collaboratively across the University and with external partners, the Division provides strategic advice, specialist expertise and integrated services that enhance Lancaster's reputation, support student recruitment and success, develop strategic relationships, and advance the University's wider institutional objectives.

Job purpose
The Director of External Relations will provide strategic leadership for the University's external relations, marketing, corporate communications and student recruitment, philanthropy and alumni engagement, shaping their contribution to the University's overarching strategic ambitions. The role will strengthen and protect Lancaster's reputation as a leading UK and global institution, enhance its brand profile and influence, and advance its ability to attract talented students and staff, build partnerships and secure philanthropic support.

The Director will lead a multidisciplinary team of subject matter experts and professional leaders, establishing a shared vision, setting strategic priorities and fostering an integrated approach to engagement, communications, marketing, recruitment, fund raising and alumni relations - nationally and internationally. They will ensure that the Division's expertise, resources and activities are aligned with institutional priorities and deliver measurable impact.

Working closely with the University's strategic leadership team, the Director will provide authoritative advice on institutional positioning, reputation rankings and external engagement, anticipating opportunities and risks and ensuring that the University's voice, profile and interests are effectively represented. They will also lead the development of relationships with key external stakeholders including alumni, donors and supporters.

The role will also provide strategic leadership for UK and international student recruitment and admissions, developing sustainable recruitment pipelines through schools, colleges and education partners, overseeing key recruitment and conversion activities, and ensuring a coordinated and data informed approach to attracting applicants and supporting their journey from initial interest through to enrolment.

The Director will also lead the University's approach to philanthropy and alumni engagement, building a strong and connected global community of alumni and supporters, developing meaningful and lasting relationships, and growing philanthropic support for the University's strategic priorities. They will ensure that fundraising and alumni engagement are embedded within the University's wider external relations activity, strengthening advocacy, participation and support for Lancaster's education, research and wider societal impact.

Key responsibilities and challenges

You will join the University at a key period of transformation and change, establishing a new team structure and shaping an integrated strategic approach to External Relations that supports Lancaster's future development and ambitions. Providing strategic leadership and advice to senior colleagues, you will strengthen the University's reputation, media profile, communications and brand, deepen external relations and public engagement, and lead UK and international student recruitment and admissions, alongside philanthropy and alumni engagement A key priority will be to bring together specialist expertise around a shared vision, building on existing strengths, aligning resources and establishing clear priorities and accountability for delivery.

Specific duties

Strategic leadership and institutional positioning

- Provide strategic leadership for the External Relations Division, ensuring its activities and resources are aligned with the University's strategic ambitions and deliver measurable impact.
- Advise the strategic leadership team on institutional positioning, reputation, rankings, external engagement and emerging opportunities and risks.
- Develop and deliver an integrated External Relations strategy that strengthens Lancaster's profile, influence and standing nationally and internationally.

Reputation, marketing and communications

- Lead the development of the University's brand, marketing, corporate communications and media relations, ensuring a coherent and distinctive institutional identity.
- Oversee integrated campaigns and communications that enhance reputation, showcase Lancaster's strengths in education and research, and support recruitment and engagement.
- Provide leadership on reputational risk, crisis communications and the effective representation of the University's interests and achievements.

Student recruitment and admissions

- Provide strategic leadership for UK and international student recruitment and admissions, developing sustainable approaches that support the University's recruitment ambitions and enhance the prospective student journey from initial engagement through to enrolment.
- Strengthen recruitment pipelines and partnerships with schools, colleges, agents and other education partners, working collaboratively with academic faculties and professional services to deliver effective recruitment events, open days and offer-holder engagement activities.
- Oversee the use of market intelligence, applicant insight and performance data to inform recruitment strategies, monitor outcomes and optimise resources.

Philanthropy and alumni engagement

- Lead the University's philanthropy, fundraising and alumni engagement strategies, growing sustainable philanthropic support for Lancaster's strategic priorities.
- Develop meaningful, long-term relationships with alumni, donors and supporters, strengthening engagement, advocacy and participation across the University's global community.

- Work with the Vice-Chancellor, senior leaders and academic colleagues to identify philanthropic opportunities, build supporter relationships and demonstrate the impact of giving.
- Oversee the University's approach to alumni engagement activities and events, including graduation ceremonies, ensuring they strengthen lifelong connection, advocacy and participation within the Lancaster community.

Leadership, people and performance

- Lead and develop a multidisciplinary Division, establishing a shared vision, clear priorities and an integrated approach across its functions.
- Shape an effective organisational structure and culture, building on existing strengths, empowering professional leaders and fostering collaboration, inclusion and continuous improvement.
- Oversee the Division's financial and human resources, performance, governance and risk and health and safety management, ensuring clear accountability, effective use of resources and delivery against agreed objectives.

General duties

Represent the University at events on behalf of the Strategic Leadership Team, support graduation ceremonies and other significant University occasions, and deputise for senior colleagues as required and appropriate to the scope of the role.

Job hazards, safety-critical duties and pre-employment checks

On occasion, the post-holder may be required to work alone, or travel independently nationally or globally. Full risk assessment will be conducted to ensure personal safety and appropriate emergency procedures in the event of accident, fire or other unforeseen incidents.

Physical demands

On occasion, the post-holder may be required to travel to events overseas and attend events which involve working evenings or weekends alone or as part of a team. Where required, full risk assessments and training will be provided.

Additional information

The duties outlined above are not intended to be exhaustive and may change as organisational needs evolve. As duties and responsibilities change, the job description will be subject to periodic review and amendment in consultation with the post-holder.

The University recognises and celebrates good employment practice that addresses inequality in higher education and promotes the wellbeing of all colleagues.

The University is committed to fair, lawful and inclusive employment practices in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and relevant professional standards. All staff are expected to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully at work and to contribute to an environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This expectation relates to behaviour and professional practice and does not require staff to hold or express particular beliefs or viewpoints. Selection decisions will be based on merit, professional competence and the ability to meet the requirements of the role.

Person Specification – Director of External Relations

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS: Below are the skills, knowledge, and competencies we need for this role, categorised as either essential or desirable. The final column shows where the hiring team will look for your examples to demonstrate that you're a suitable fit for this position. Further advice and guidance can be found here: https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/jobs/how-to-apply/

Criteria	Essential / Desirable	Where the panel will look for this evidence
Professional knowledge: Demonstrable understanding of the higher education sector and demonstrated experience working in a strategic role of communications, marketing, student recruitment and admissions, philanthropy and alumni engagement in supporting organisational reputation, recruitment and financial sustainability.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
Strategic leadership: Proven experience of anticipating external opportunities and challenges, setting strategic direction, and leading integrated programmes of activity that deliver measurable organisational outcomes.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
Inclusive people leadership and team development: Demonstrated experience of leading and developing high-performing multidisciplinary teams by setting clear expectations, managing performance effectively, and supporting the development of others through delegation, coaching and feedback.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
Leading change and digital transformation: Experience of leading organisational change and leveraging emerging technologies and innovative approaches to improve organisational effectiveness, enhance stakeholder engagement and maintain organisational competitiveness.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter / Interview
Stakeholder engagement and influence: Proven experience of providing credible advice, constructive challenge and negotiation to influence decisions and secure collaboration across organisational boundaries.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
External engagement and representation: Demonstrated experience of building influential external relationships and representing an organisation effectively with senior stakeholders to advance strategic objectives and organisational reputation.	Desirable	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
Brand, communications and marketing: Demonstrable experience of shaping brand, corporate communications and marketing strategies to strengthen organisational reputation, communicate institutional values, and enhance market positioning.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
Student recruitment and admissions: Strong understanding of UK and international student recruitment and admissions, including the factors that influence applicant choice and a positive applicant journey.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
Philanthropy and alumni engagement: Demonstrable understanding of fundraising and alumni engagement strategies that build lasting relationships and support institutional reputation, advocacy and investment.	Desirable	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview

Criteria	Essential / Desirable	Where the panel will look for this evidence
Strategic resource and service leadership: Proven experience of leading substantial budgets, multidisciplinary services and resource planning across competing priorities, making informed decisions in complex environments to ensure financial stewardship, organisational resilience and effective delivery of strategic objectives.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview
Data insight, agility and continuous improvement: Demonstrated experience of using evidence and intelligence to inform strategic decisions, adapt to changing circumstances, anticipate and manage reputational and organisational risks, and deliver measurable improvements.	Essential	Application form and uploaded CV and covering letter/Interview

 # Essential - if you do not effectively demonstrate you have this skill, knowledge, or competency we will not be able to shortlist you. Please give detailed answers to provide us with examples.

Applications should be submitted in the following format:

- **a short professional curriculum vitae**
- **a 'covering letter' - in the form of a supporting statement providing clear, evidence-based examples demonstrating how you meet the specific elements outlined in the person specification.**