



Head of Public Affairs

Salary: starting range £49,593 to £52,570

Working pattern: Full-time, Permanent (35 hours per week)

Pension: USS

Annual leave: 25 days plus 8 bank holidays, 3 well-being days, and a Christmas office closure

Location: Hybrid, flexible working model with an office located in central London.

Occasional UK-wide travel for GHE and relevant events.

Reports to: Director of Operations and Membership

Line management: Communications Manager, Membership and Events Officer

Purpose

The Head of Public Affairs will lead the development and execution of a cohesive external engagement strategy. You will be responsible for managing the organisation's reputation, building high-level stakeholder relationships, and ensuring the collective voice of our member institutions is heard by policymakers and the media. This is an exciting new role for GuildHE and will demand the postholder to work across both the operations and policy functions of the organisation, collaborating with policy, communications and events colleagues.

Key Responsibilities

1. **Strategy and Planning:** Audit and overhaul our existing GHE communications strategy and annual communications plan, bringing fresh thinking to ensure we're not just participating in conversations, but leading them. This work will be supported by the Communications Manager and require close working with the Director of Policy and Strategy and the Parliamentary Engagement Policy Manager. It should include monitoring and reporting (using metrics) to assess the overall effectiveness of our communications strategy and engagements.
2. **Strategic Advocacy:** Develop and lead multi-channel public campaigns to influence higher education policy at local, national, and international levels. Identify opportunities for collaboration, and lobbying to support strategy objectives.
3. **Stakeholder Mapping & Engagement:** Build and maintain a map of key influencers, including press contacts and media personalities, government officials, funding bodies, industry partners, and think tanks. Establishing new relationships and expanding our network is expected.
4. **Media & Reputation Management:** Serve as the primary point of contact for media inquiries. Oversee press releases, media briefings, and crisis communication protocols.

5. Member Relations: Work closely with member institutions to ensure external messaging aligns with their diverse needs and reflects our values, mission and strategic priorities.
6. Digital Presence & Branding: Oversee the organisation's digital footprint, ensuring that social media, web content, and annual reports reflect a modern, authoritative brand.
7. Event Leadership: Working closely with the Director of Operations and Membership, and the Membership and Partnerships Manager, provide oversight of our conferences and events as platforms for HE advocacy and key avenues for raising awareness about our work and priorities.

The postholder will also be expected to:

1. Keep abreast of developments in higher education policy, including national policies relevant to higher education.
2. Manage colleagues working to support GuildHE communications activities; currently, the Communications Manager and the Membership and Events Officer.
3. Actively support the delivery of the GuildHE strategy.
4. Contribute positively to a small, professional team focused on delivering excellence in their members' interests.
5. Contribute to GuildHE's thought leadership efforts by identifying case studies across our membership and sharing best practice internally and externally to drive national conversations about new ways of working and operating in the sector.
6. Maintain strict confidentiality while providing high-quality advice and guidance to members on sensitive policy matters.
7. Demonstrate a proactive approach to embedding EDI principles within all policy development and advocacy efforts.
8. Deputise for the GuildHE CEO or other senior colleagues in a range of meetings, bodies and agencies when required.
9. Assist in the preparation of papers on relevant matters for the GuildHE Board.
10. Undertake any other reasonable duties as may be required.

Person specification

The attributes listed below reflect our expectations of the successful candidate:

1. Proven experience managing communications, marketing or external relations at a senior level (preferably within higher education or another public sector, though not essential).
2. Outstanding verbal and written communication skills for writing strategic papers, public speaking and social media outputs.
3. Substantial management experience (including staff) and the ability to plan, implement and monitor long-term strategies for impact.

4. Ability to synthesise large, complex amounts of information into approachable, easy-to-understand general terms for easy digestion across a range of audiences.
5. Strong ability to influence and negotiate with stakeholders across different levels.
6. Is a creative problem-solver, oriented towards collaborative solutions and a high level of transparency to support strong team work.
7. Experience advising boards or executive teams to shape company direction (desirable but not essential).
8. Knowledge of current issues in higher education policy and understanding of GDPR compliance.
9. Takes personal responsibility for leading by example.
10. Holds a relevant degree or equivalent qualification and/or experience.