

## BLAVATNIK SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

### Summary

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| <b>Job title</b>              | Director of Finance and Administration  |
| <b>Division</b>               | Social Sciences   |
| <b>Department</b>             | Blavatnik School of Government  |
| <b>Location</b>               | Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Walton Street, Oxford, OX2 6GG   |
| <b>Grade and salary</b>       | Grade 10: £64,228 - £74,191 (with a discretionary range to £80,913)<br>A market supplement may be available for suitably qualified candidates |
| <b>Hours</b>                  | Full time   |
| <b>Contract type</b>          | Permanent   |
| <b>Reporting to</b>           | Chief Operating Officer   |
| <b>Vacancy ID</b>             | 176808  |
| <b>Additional information</b> | The closing date for applications is 12 noon (UK time) on Monday 16 December 2024.  |

### The role

The Director of Finance and Administration is a senior professional leader who combines a superb attention to operational detail and ability to hold and manage risk; with a strategic mindset, creative, problem-solving approach; and a strong motivation to work with others to continuously improve the ways things are done. They will be a collaborative leader who brings people together across organisational boundaries to maximise effective, joined up delivery and a confident and empowering line manager who knows how to get the best out of their team.

The successful candidate will have significant experience of leading and implementing organisational strategy, including aligning finances with priorities and resources, as well experience of managing key commercial relationships and contract negotiations. The post holder will lead the development and delivery of the School's overall financial and operational strategy as it looks to build on its successful growth to date. They will provide assurance to the Dean, the Chief Operating Officer, the School's Management Board, and the Division that the School's financial projections are robust and well-grounded.



They will be responsible for overseeing the finance team in the continued development of effective and resilient financial processes, operation of financial controls, reporting and monitoring, ensuring timely, accurate management information is provided to management and others. The post holder will also provide strategic leadership of financial planning activities, particularly in overseeing the preparation of the School's annual budget, by contributing to the School's longer term strategic planning, and through costing and scenario modelling for new initiatives.

The Director of Finance and Administration will also lead on the School's commercial negotiations for all major research programmes and the commercial aspects of all new initiatives. They will oversee the School's research services team, working with Academic Research Coordinator to ensuring a customer-focused, robust and creative approach to supporting the research of our world-class faculty and programmes. The postholder will be responsible for the School's approach to risk, maintaining our strategic risk register and ensuring buy-in to risk mitigation and management from across the professional services team. They will work with the Head of IT/AV and Operations on business continuity planning, ensuring there are robust and tested plans and processes in place to respond to disruption. And they will oversee the development and implementation of a new performance and business improvement function, deploying data, good practice and established frameworks and methods to maximise the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of the School. This will include identifying and executing continuous improvement projects.

The post-holder will work closely with the Executive Director of Comms and Events, the Head of People and Organisational Design, and the Head of IT/AV and Operations, as the three other team leaders critical to the operations of the School. It is this group of senior professionals who make up the School's Strategic Operations Group.

The Director will work closely with these colleagues on continuous improvements including finding ways of working that maximise use of technology and emphasises early intervention and support; major IT improvement projects including the new Client Relationship Management system, and the upcoming Events Management System – ensuring they deliver a step change in efficiency and effectiveness when implemented; and with identifying and promoting opportunities across the School to adopt new technology to improve how we do things.

The Director will lead and manage the finance and research services team of c10 people and develop a small performance function (c1-2 people). In total, they will have broad oversight of around 25 people. They will be a committed and experienced line manager, able to create happy, high-performing teams and supporting individuals to achieve their best. The Director will also have a significant leadership role across the professional services cadre, joining up with their peers to ensure a collaborative, customer service and improvement-focused mindset. They will be responsible for bringing together teams and individuals with responsibility for School operations to ensure smooth delivery and a joined-up approach in line with the high standards the Blavatnik School sets for itself. This will include chairing the Strategic Operations Committee and the weekly operational meetings.

The Director will play a key role in the School's wider leadership team including attending our Strategy and Resources Group (comprising the Dean and other senior academics) as well as being a member of the School's Senior Management Team, Senior Professional Services Team, and the School's Staffing and Operations Committees. They will also be responsible for building and maintaining strong relationships with key stakeholders externally and within the University. This is an exciting and challenging position which requires substantial management and leadership experience and capability.

The post will suit a highly motivated individual with proven flexibility, creative problem-solving approach and initiative. The post holder should have substantial experience of working in a finance and administrative leadership role, ideally in a fast-moving environment. Experience of the use of financial and performance data to drive strategic decision-making in a proactive way will be particularly helpful. Candidates should be able to demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate complex financial and operational issues to a lay audience. They should be excellent line managers and collaborative organisational leaders, highly motivated to spot opportunities for improvement and bring people together across team boundaries to deliver outcomes. An ability to create a team culture of meeting priorities and deadlines while maintaining high levels of customer service with the highest standards of accuracy and clarity is vital.

## Responsibilities

### **Financial Strategy and Planning**

- Responsible for the School's financial strategy and planning. Integrated with the School's key priorities the plan should support appropriate growth and financial sustainability.
- Oversee the annual budget process in agreement with the Dean and Chief Operating Officer and in consultation with budget holders.
- Provide strategic financial analysis, advice, and guidance to the School's key governance fora and senior leadership.
- Develop and oversee medium term financial targets for all School activities including development, executive education, events, teaching and research and ensure these are aligned with priorities and expectations and understood and shared appropriately with management.
- Be responsible for the stewardship of resources from the School's trust funds, including advising the School's leadership and governance fora on the strategic and operational use of existing funds and on the setting up of new funds where necessary.
- Act as the lead School contact for high level, strategic finance-related matters, including with the Divisional Registrar and Financial Controller, senior academic colleagues and external parties as appropriate
- Champion the importance of robust budget management and achieving value for money, including work to better understand our costs and align budgets and priorities as part of strategic planning.

### **Financial controls, reporting and management information**

- Oversee the finance team to implement robust financial processes and practices that prioritise supporting the School's faculty and professional teams to achieve their goals with the minimum required bureaucracy and in compliance with University and legislative requirements. This includes:
- Maintain, develop, monitor and communicate effective and resilient financial processes and controls, ensuring ongoing compliance with University requirements and other external terms and conditions,
- Oversee key financial systems e.g. Oracle for contract management, journal processing, purchasing and expense approval. Key authorisation/escalation point for high value transactions and journals.
- Responsible for the School's assurance to include internal audit/review and compliance with funder terms and conditions

- Develop and oversee the month-end, quarter-end and year-end reporting processes, ensuring the School's financial position against budget is effectively monitored and any actions identified and implemented
- Ensure that accounting structures and systems facilitate the generation of robust financial reporting and management information quickly, efficiently and clearly
- Prepare quarterly forecasts and analyses of variances in support of Divisional and University-wide reporting requirements.
- Prepare financial reports for donors/sponsors and other parties, as required.
- Assist the Dean, Chief Operating Officer and others in interpreting or analysing financial data, as required.

### **Research services**

- Lead on the School's overall research strategy, working with faculty
- Work collaboratively with the Academic Research Coordinator (currently Dr Thomas Elston) to ensure that s/he receives the support from the Research Services team and other teams across the School required to fulfil their role and achieve their priorities.
- Oversee the team's work to manage the budgets of research programmes, monitoring their finances, and ensuring compliance with financial regulations with support from the Senior Research Finance Officer.
- Oversee the team's work on the administration of research grant income from first application through to closure of the award, liaising with principal investigators and funding bodies to ensure proper monitoring and reporting, and to ensure that the School maximises grant income and overhead recovery with the support of the Senior Research Facilitator and the research support team.
- Develop a whole-lifecycle approach to research services, working with the Academic Research Coordinator, faculty and other teams to embed strong financial and project management, dissemination and impact from the beginning and throughout the programme.
- Work with the research service teams and professional services teams across the School to develop a joined-up approach to supporting faculty to develop themselves as researchers, as desired, and to support larger research programmes effectively.
- Further develop new models of working across the core School and research programmes to embed project officers within the School, ensure efficient recruitment of professional staff for research programmes and build capability.

### **Commercial**

- With colleagues, establish and set pricing methodology for executive programmes, research programmes and other new initiatives. Ensure that all School initiatives are financially and commercially robust.
- Lead on commercial negotiations for major research programmes, working with the Dean and COO where necessary.
- Lead on financial strategy and commercial negotiations for new initiatives, working with relevant faculty.
- Oversee the catering contract and support the Head of IT/AV and Operations to manage the facilities management contract and other IT supplier contracts
- Take the initiative to identify specific opportunities for the School with partners (based on a clear understanding of the School's strategy, strengths and resources) and assiduously pursue these.

## **People**

- Close working relationship with the Head of People, empowering them to lead the function effectively and supporting their professional development
- Act as a confidential sounding board on complex HR cases
- Act as a critical friend for the Head of People in the development and delivery of a People Strategy, including a programme of learning and development for line managers; a plan to achieve Athena Swan Silver in four years' time; and a revamp of People-related governance across the School.
- Support the Head of People in a transition to a new HR structure and ways of working, including earlier intervention, empowering of line managers and greater use of new technology.

## **IT/AV and Operations**

- Close working relationship with the Head of IT/AV and Operations, empowering them to lead their function effectively and supporting their professional development
- Provide additional senior and business support to ensure effective implementation of current School-wide IT transformation projects and to spot and implement additional opportunities to use emerging technology to improve how the School operates.
- Lead across teams in the School to further integrate our operational approach to allow for better strategic planning; management of demand and capacity; maintenance of high standards; and opportunities to do things better or more efficiently. This includes chairing the monthly Strategic Operations Committee [and the weekly Operations meeting].

## **Performance & Business Improvement**

- Develop a new data and best practice driven approach to performance and business improvement across the School
- Develop and oversee the production of high-quality performance and corporate information to drive leadership and management decisions and inform key stakeholders, including the creation of new, joined up corporate data-systems
- Develop an internal School performance scorecard and a set of external performance metrics.
- Own the School's approach to risk, including coordination of the School's strategic risk register and embedding ownership with relevant teams. Work with the Head of IT/AV and operations to ensure a robust approach to business continuity, appropriate to risks involved.
- Develop a business improvement function, with a trained cadre of continuous improvement experts who champion business improvements and are deployed to strategic, crosscutting and specific projects to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of School operations.

## **Organisational and team leadership**

- Provide excellent leadership and management for the Finance and Research Services team, the Head of People and the Head of IT/AV and Operations, maintaining and developing a happy and high performing culture in which everyone is supported to achieve their best.
- Embody a collaborative leadership approach across the Senior Professional Services team, working across team boundaries to ensure a joined-up approach to corporate operations and professional services more widely.

- Make a substantial contribution to the School's Strategy and Resources Group and Senior Management Team to the setting and implementing of the School's strategic direction: for example, chairing internal working parties collaboratively to develop new policy and projects.
- Be an excellent team member within the School, working closely with faculty and professional colleagues to help the School achieve its mission efficiently and effectively based on effective cross-team working and flexible resourcing.
- Deputise for the Chief Operating Officer internally and externally, as required.
- Representing the Blavatnik School on Divisional and University bodies, as required.
- Other comparable duties, as required.

## Selection criteria

### Essential selection criteria

1. **Proven track record of successfully leading and developing financial and organisational strategy in a complex and fast-changing environment.**  
Demonstrable ability to apply strong financial planning and analysis and to oversee effective financial controls, policies, monitoring and reporting.
2. **Commercial acumen and experience of making risk-based judgements,** including investment decisions and negotiation of contracts, to deliver complex activities to budget. Experience of risk management.
3. **Experience of proactively driving improvement** through using data and evidence to spot and seize opportunities to do things more efficiently and effectively and of building cross-organisational coalitions to implement changes that deliver impact. Ability to use data and experience to contribute to overall strategic development and prioritisation.
4. **Strong interpersonal communication skills,** both written and oral, sound judgement, sensitivity and discretion, and the ability to influence and persuade internal and external stakeholders. Have experience of building strong and trusted relationships with a wide number of senior stakeholders. Be able to explain complex information clearly to a range of audiences.
5. **Experience of leading and overseeing high performing and happy teams.** In particular developing new functions, setting strategic direction, and creating a culture of high performance, collaboration, customer service and personal fulfilment
6. **Analytical and creative problem-solving skills** using data and analysis, various stakeholder perspectives and the overall strategic picture to evaluate financial and business risk; actively seeks pragmatic solutions and develops and implements plans successfully.
7. **Collaborative organisational leader** who can comfortably operate as a member of multiple virtual teams, helping to create a shared culture and spirit. Able to bring together people across organisational boundaries to work together to identify opportunities, solve problems and make improvements.

8. **An understanding**, from experience, or an openness to learning about, the unique culture of the higher education sector; with an ability to navigate the various stakeholders within a large academic setting

In addition, the successful candidate will have a good first degree from a research-intensive university and substantial experience of overseeing a finance function and administrative teams. Plus, crucially, they will have a strong and demonstrable affinity with the goals and mission of the Blavatnik School of Government.

## Pre-employment screening

### Standard checks

If you are offered the post, the offer will be subject to standard pre-employment checks. You will be asked to provide: proof of your right-to-work in the UK; proof of your identity; and (if we haven't done so already) we will contact the referees you have nominated. If you have previously worked for the University we will also verify key information such as your dates of employment and reason for leaving your previous role with the department/unit where you worked. You will also be asked to complete a health declaration so that you can tell us about any health conditions or disabilities for which you may need us to make appropriate adjustments.

Please read the candidate notes on the University's pre-employment screening procedures at: <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/pre-employment-checks>

## About the University of Oxford

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities and we rank first in the UK for university spin-outs, and in recent years we have spun out 15-20 new companies every year. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford.

For more information, please visit [www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation).

## The Blavatnik School of Government

Our vision is of a world better led, a world better served and a world better governed. We are a global school committed to improving the quality of government and public policymaking worldwide, through three routes: teaching current and future leaders; applied research; and engagement with government and practitioners.

The School was founded in 2010, and our founding dean is [Professor Ngaire Woods](#). We admitted the first 38 Master of Public Policy (MPP) students in 2012, and we currently accept around 140 MPP students and around eight doctoral students a year. We also accept a small group of students for our MSc in Public Policy Research.

The Blavatnik School of Government holds a bronze Athena Swan award to recognise advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all. You can find more information on the [Blavatnik School of Government's website](#).



## How to apply

Applications are made through our online recruitment portal. Information about how to apply is available on our Jobs website <https://www.jobs.ox.ac.uk/how-to-apply>.

Your application will be judged solely on the basis of how you demonstrate that you meet the selection criteria stated in the job description.

As part of your application, you will be asked to provide details of two referees and indicate whether we can contact them now.

You will be asked to upload a CV and a supporting statement. The supporting statement must explain how you meet each of the selection criteria for the post using examples of your skills and experience. This may include experience gained in employment, education, or during career breaks (such as time out to care for dependants)

Please upload all documents **as PDF files** with your name and the document type in the filename.

All applications must be received by **midday** UK time on the closing date stated in the online advertisement.

If you currently work for the University, please note that:

- as part of the referencing process, we will contact your current department to confirm basic employment details including reason for leaving
- although employees may hold multiple part-time posts, they may not hold more than the equivalent of a full-time post. If you are offered this post, and accepting it would take you over the equivalent of full-time hours, you will be expected to resign from, or reduce hours in, your other posts(s) before starting work in the new post.

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## Information for priority candidates

A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment because they have been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing department(s).

If you are a priority candidate, please ensure that you attach your redeployment letter to your application (or email it to the contact address on the advert if the application form used for the vacancy does not allow attachments).

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## If you need help

Application FAQs, including technical troubleshooting advice is available at: <https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-support-faqs>

Non-technical questions about this job should be addressed to the HR team directly on [recruit@bsg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:recruit@bsg.ox.ac.uk)

To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: [www.recruit.ox.ac.uk](http://www.recruit.ox.ac.uk).

Please note that you will receive an automated email from our online recruitment portal to confirm receipt of your application. **Please check your spam/junk mail** if you do not receive this email.

## Important information for candidates

### Data Privacy

Please note that any personal data submitted to the University as part of the job application process will be processed in accordance with the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. For further information, please see the University's Privacy Notice for Job Applicants at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/job-applicant-privacy-policy>.

The University's Policy on Data Protection is available at: <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy>.

### The University's policy on retirement

The University operates an Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) for very senior research posts at **grade RSIV/D35 and clinical equivalents E62 and E82** of 30 September before the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. The justification for this is explained at: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

For **existing** employees on these grades, any employment beyond the retirement age is subject to approval through the procedures: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>.

There is no normal or fixed age at which staff in posts at other grades have to retire. Staff at these grades may elect to retire in accordance with the rules of the applicable pension scheme, as may be amended from time to time.

### Equality of opportunity

Entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and the application of criteria which are related to the duties of each particular post and the relevant salary structure. In all cases, ability to perform the job will be the primary consideration. No applicant or member of staff shall be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

## Benefits of working at the University

### Employee benefits

University employees enjoy 38 days' paid holiday, generous pension schemes, flexible working options, travel discounts including salary sacrifice schemes for bicycles and electric cars and other discounts. Staff can access a huge range of personal and professional development opportunities. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

### Employee Assistance Programme

As part of our wellbeing offering staff get free access to Health Assured, a confidential employee assistance programme, available 24/7 for 365 days a year. Find out more <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/health-assured-eap>

### University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for University staff. It offers social, sporting, and hospitality facilities. Staff can also use the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road at discounted rates, including a fitness centre, powerlifting room, and swimming pool. See [www.club.ox.ac.uk](http://www.club.ox.ac.uk) and <https://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/>.

### Information for staff new to Oxford

If you are relocating to Oxfordshire from overseas or elsewhere in the UK, the University's Welcome Service includes practical information about settling in the area, including advice on relocation, accommodation, and local schools. See <https://welcome.ox.ac.uk/>

There is also a visa loan scheme to cover the costs of UK visa applications for staff and their dependants. See <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visa-loan-scheme>

### Family-friendly benefits

We are a family-friendly employer with one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector (see <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/family-leave>). Our Childcare Services team provides guidance and support on childcare provision, and offers a range of high-quality childcare options at affordable prices for staff. In addition to 5 University nurseries, we partner with a number of local providers to offer in excess of 450 full time nursery places to our staff. Eligible parents are able to pay for childcare through salary sacrifice, further reducing costs. See <https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/>.

### Supporting disability and health-related issues (inc menopause)

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions, including those experiencing negative effects of menopause. Information about the University's Staff Disability Advisor, is at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support>. For information about how we support those going through menopause see <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/menopause-guidance>

### Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including for research staff, BME staff, LGBT+ staff, disabled staff network and those going through menopause. Find out more at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks>

## The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is run by volunteers that aims to assist the partners of new staff settle into Oxford, and provides them with an opportunity to meet people and make connections in the local area. See [www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk](http://www.newcomers.ox.ac.uk).

## Research staff

The Researcher Hub supports all researchers on fixed-term contracts. They aim to help you settle in comfortably, make connections, grow as a person, extend your research expertise and approach your next career step with confidence. Find out more <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub>

Oxford's Research Staff Society is a collective voice for our researchers. They also organise social and professional networking activities for researchers. Find out more <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/connecting-other-researchers/oxford-research-staff-society>