

BLAVATNIK SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Summary

Job title	Senior Executive Assistant
Division	Social Sciences
Department	Blavatnik School of Government
Location	Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6GG
Grade and salary	Grade 6: £34,982 - £40,855 (with a discretionary range to £44,382), dependant on experience. Pro-rated for part-time appointments
Hours	Full time. Part-time applicants (minimum 0.8 FTE) will also be considered
Contract type	Permanent
Reporting to	Chief of Staff to the Dean and Head of the Executive Office
Vacancy reference	179190
Additional information	<p>The closing date for applications is 12 noon (UK time) on Tuesday 6 May 2025</p> <p><i>Interviews will take place during the week commencing 12 May with second round interviews during the week commencing 19 May</i></p>

The role

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We're excited to be looking for a Senior Executive Assistant to our Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the Vice-Dean. This is a critical role for the Blavatnik School, sitting at the heart of the School – in the Executive Office – with responsibility for all support to the COO and the Vice-Dean, and for the operations of the School's governance function.

This post comes at an exciting time for Blavatnik School: we are embarking on our second decade with a fantastic community of staff, alumni, and supporters.

We are seeking someone with excellent interpersonal and organisational skills. In your work with the COO and Vice Dean, you will be responsible for managing two busy diaries (and the COO's inbox) and taking forward a wide range of issues on their behaves. You will be someone with a zest for communicating with people from all walks of life, who will inject equal amounts of energy and diplomacy into each of their interactions – be they with students, administrative colleagues, or senior academics and practitioners from top institutions across the world. In your work on School governance, you will have operational responsibility for the smooth-running of the School's governance function – to include scheduling the annual governance meeting cycle, writing and collating agendas and discussion papers, and tracking actions and decisions.

The ideal candidate will have excellent all-round administrative skills and strong track-record of providing outstanding executive support. You will be a senior member of the Executive Office, line managing 2-3 members of staff (Executive Assistants) and working with the Head of the Dean's Office to promote a high-performing team culture in which the people you manage can flourish. You will work quickly yet meticulously, taking a flexible and pragmatic approach to shifting priorities; and you will have impeccable judgement – be it on a confidential project on which the COO is working, an urgent meeting request, a difficult staffing matter, or an innovative interpretation of a policy.

If you believe that you have the energy and experience to make a positive impact on our Executive Office – we would love to hear from you.

Interviews will take place during the **week commencing 12 May** with second round interviews during the **week commencing 19 May**.

ABOUT THE BLAVATNIK SCHOOL

We want to improve the lives of citizens around the world – by improving public leadership. We do this in three ways:

- **OUR TEACHING.** Each year, our highly competitive Master of Public Policy (MPP) and Doctorate in Public Policy, and MSc in Public Policy attract some of the most brilliant and innovative minds from over a hundred different countries. Our students learn the sharpest disciplinary tools and hone their practical skills to go out into the world and be truly outstanding public leaders. From the youngest ever minister in Yemen, to the youngest mayor in Germany, to the Minister of Youth Affairs in the United Arab Emirates, to an MP in Panama – our alumni make real-world impact. As well as our degree programmes, we run shorter programmes for senior leaders – from our Executive Public Leaders Programme (for heads of public organisations) to our Executive Course on Oil, Gas and Mining Governance.
- **OUR RESEARCH,** which is applied, practical and deeply rooted in how best to make real and immediate impact on governments and lives in all corners of the world – from improving education, to reducing corruption, to preventing armed

conflict. We really listen to governments – and supply them with rigorous evidence to help tackle the challenges with which they are most grappling.

- **OUR ENGAGEMENT.** We use our convening power to bring people together – across disciplines, sectors and countries – to share knowledge and ideas, and to help forge cooperative solutions that create real and lasting change. In a world in which people are preferring to shout than to listen, we create spaces for leaders to collaborate, cooperate, and seek common purpose – particularly with those whom they disagree with most fiercely.

BENEFITS OF WORKING AT THE BLAVATNIK SCHOOL

The Blavatnik School is a collaborative, friendly, and dynamic department based in an award-winning building in Jericho. In term time, we host regular events and talks with well-known guest speakers (usually 2-3 each week) – all of which that are open to staff. On the social side, we have regular coffee/cake mornings for staff, a Halloween event to which children of staff are invited, Christmas and summer parties for all staff, and a Social Committee who put on a range of other events – from quiz nights to puppy yoga! Our café (located on the ground floor of the building) provides a range of breakfast and lunch options – and there are also kitchens on Levels 2, 3 and 5 with free tea and coffee. For a full list of University of Oxford staff discounts and benefits, visit the [University of Oxford staff benefits page](#).

Responsibilities

Executive support

1. Manage the COO and Vice-Dean's diaries efficiently and effectively, using initiative to make considered judgements when juggling the demands on the COO and Vice-Dean's time.
2. Support the COO and Vice-Dean in any follow up to meetings.
3. Manage the COO's inbox, replying to a range of issues on his behalf, and drafting correspondence to very high standard, developing an understanding of the COO's communication style and tone and to reflect this style in all written materials produced on his behalf.
4. Identify priority items of business within the COO's inbox and allocate tasks accordingly, e.g. to members of the School's Senior Administrative Team.
5. Identify and anticipate opportunities, risks or challenges for the COO and Vice-Dean and proactively to manage/ mitigate these.
6. Research and prepare reports or briefing papers as requested by the COO or Vice-Dean.
7. Prepare papers for day folders, liaising with colleagues where necessary to ensure appropriate briefing or background material is available to the COO and Vice-Dean in sufficient time ahead of their engagements.
8. Present a professional and engaging manner to external and internal contacts (some of whom are very senior and/or influential), acting as an ambassador for the School and representative of the COO and Vice-Dean, whether by email, in person, or by phone.

9. Line manage Executive Assistants – including annual reviews, managing and approving absence, and dealing with any performance issues.
10. Convey confidential and sensitive information with careful thought and professionalism.
11. Make complex travel arrangements, including flights, visas, accommodation bookings, meeting schedules and travel insurance.
12. Provide full administrative support on financial matters: for example, the management of travel, subsistence and other expenses and allowances, invoices for subscriptions.

Governance:

1. Work with the Head of the Dean's Office in sharing responsibility for managing the governance of the School.
2. Create and independently manage the cycle of meetings and associated deadlines for all governance meetings within the School.
3. Independently coordinate the work of the School's Academic Advisory Board and Management Board, including preparing agendas and discussion papers, writing minutes, and ensuring business is dealt with in a timely manner.
4. Coordinate the work of the School's Strategy & Resources Group and Senior Management Team meetings: developing agendas; commissioning, collating and issuing papers in a timely fashion; and recording and tracking decisions and actions (and ensuring follow-up to agreed actions).
5. Devise, implement, and maintain, the School's filing-systems and record-keeping, taking responsibility for the action and decision tracking of all governance meetings within the School.

Other:

1. Deputise for the Head of the Executive Office, as required.
2. Undertake specific projects and tasks as requested by the COO/Head of the Dean's Office to support the development of the School, treating such activities as short-term projects with defined objectives, milestones and timelines.
3. Depending on the current business needs of the School – and on the capacity of this post – to take on other work commensurate with the nature of the post, either within the Executive Office or in the wider School.

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

- Experience of high-level diary and inbox management, and of managing the office of a senior member of staff/ directly supporting a senior staff member in their duties.
- Initiative and the ability to anticipate problems before they arise.
- Highly attuned judgement and the ability to demonstrate a personal and diplomatic approach employing tact, a high degree of discretion, in dealing with a diverse range of people from a variety of cultures, including students,

visitors (including some very senior visitors), academic staff and other members of the collegiate University.

- Excellent prioritisation and organisational skills, with the ability to work on a variety of tasks at the same time whilst maintaining high standards, including coping with unpredictable volumes of work, busy periods and tight deadlines.
- Excellent team working skills, within your own team and with other teams across the School, with a flexible can-do approach, self-motivation, resilience and a willingness to adapt to changing needs and priorities. A flexible approach to working hours will be required as the post-holder may be asked to work outside normal office hours on occasion in connection with events.
- High levels of accuracy and attention to detail when drafting, handling data and providing information.
- Excellent written communication skills, with the ability to draft high-level correspondence and reports.
- Good IT skills including experience in the use of Macs and the Microsoft Office Suite, particularly Word and Excel, and the ability to learn new systems.
- Good numeracy skills, including confidence in dealing with financial data.

Desirable selection criteria

- An understanding of the importance of good governance and effective decision-making in the operation of an organisation, and how this can be supported.
- An affinity to the mission of the Blavatnik School of Government.
- An understanding of aspects of Higher Education such as the different types of Higher Education qualifications and the format of an academic year.

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. 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.

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 120 MPP students and five doctoral students a year.

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).

If, for any reason, you have taken a career break or have had an atypical career and wish to disclose this in your application, the selection committee will take this into account. The selection committee will also be mindful of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic may have had on candidates' careers as a result of additional caring responsibilities or other factors.

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.

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).

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 recruiting department directly via recruit@bsg.ox.ac.uk.

To return to the online application at any stage, please go to: 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**, which with effect from 1 October 2023 will be 30 September before the 70th 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, travel discounts, and a variety of professional development opportunities. Our range of other employee benefits and discounts also includes free entry to the Botanic Gardens and University colleges, and discounts at University museums. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

University Club and sports facilities

Membership of the University Club is free for all University staff. The University Club 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 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 website 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 dependents. See <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visa-loan-scheme>

Family-friendly benefits

With one of the most generous family leave schemes in the Higher Education sector, and a range of flexible working options, Oxford aims to be a family-friendly employer. We also subscribe to the Work+Family Space, a service that provides practical advice and support for employees who have caring responsibilities. The service offers a free telephone advice line, and the ability to book emergency back-up care for children, adult dependents and elderly relatives. See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/my-family-care>

The University has excellent childcare services, including five University nurseries as well as University-supported places at many other private nurseries.

For full details, including how to apply and the costs, see <https://childcare.admin.ox.ac.uk/>

Disabled staff

We are committed to supporting members of staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions. For further details, including information about how to make contact, in confidence, with the University's Staff Disability Advisor, see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/disability-support>

Staff networks

The University has a number of staff networks including the Oxford Research Staff Society, BME staff network, LGBT+ staff network and a disabled staff network. You can find more information at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/networks>

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club

The University of Oxford Newcomers' Club is an organisation 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.