

Job Description

Summary

Job title	Public Affairs Manager (Innovation & Engagement)
Division	University Administration and Services
Department	Research Services
Location	Robert Hooke Building, Parks Road
Grade and salary	Grade 8 (£48,235 - £57,255, including Oxford University Weighting)
Hours	1.0 FTE (full time = 37.5hrs per week)
Contract type	Fixed-term until 31 July 2026, with renewal dependent on future funding.
Reporting to	Head of Business Engagement & Special Projects, Innovation & Engagement team
Vacancy reference	179902
Additional information	Owing to the nature of the role, there will occasionally be a requirement to work outside usual office hours. The postholder will also be expected to attend the office for at least 40 per cent (0.4 FTE) of the working week.

The Role

The University of Oxford is seeking a strategic and politically astute Public Affairs Manager to join the Innovation & Engagement team in Research Services. This role offers a rare opportunity to lead the development and delivery of a public affairs strategy that supports the University's ambition to shape and influence innovation policy, build high-value partnerships, and enhance the impact of Oxford's knowledge exchange activity.

You will play a pivotal role in advocating for the University's innovation priorities at regional and national levels, ensuring that Oxford is recognised as a leading voice in shaping the UK's research and innovation landscape. Your work will involve engaging with policymakers, government officials, and other strategic stakeholders to promote the University's interests, articulate its contributions to the economy and society, and inform future policy development. You will monitor political and regulatory developments, provide strategic advice to senior colleagues, and lead the preparation of briefings, consultation responses, and evidence submissions.

A central focus of this role will be to lead the stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy work surrounding the **Oxfordshire Strategic Innovation Taskforce (OSIT)** – a major University-led initiative, convened by the Vice-Chancellor, that aims to remove barriers to innovation and accelerate inclusive economic growth across the region. You will be responsible for coordinating external engagement activity linked to OSIT, building strategic relationships with local authorities, government departments, NHS leaders, business representatives and community organisations, and working with partners to amplify the University's role as a convener and thought leader.



This is a highly outward-facing role that requires excellent judgement, a deep understanding of policy and political processes, and a confident approach to stakeholder relationship management. You will work closely with colleagues across the University, including in communications, policy and academic departments, as well as with external agencies and networks, to ensure a joined-up and impactful approach. You will also contribute to shaping public narratives about innovation, providing the insight and coordination needed to support effective engagement with the wider public and civic leaders.

This position offers an opportunity to shape the University's role in national and regional policy conversations, strengthen its influence across the innovation ecosystem, and contribute to the delivery of Oxford's Innovation, Engagement and Impact Strategy. In short, you will enable the University to speak with authority and purpose on the issues that matter – demonstrating how our research and innovation activities make a difference to society, the economy and the region we call home.

Responsibilities

- Lead the development and implementation of a public affairs strategy for innovation & knowledge exchange, aligned to University priorities, its organisational strategies and institutional policy frameworks.
- Coordinate and manage all public affairs and stakeholder engagement activities linked to the Oxfordshire Strategic Innovation Taskforce (OSIT), ensuring integration with wider University activity.
- Build and maintain productive relationships with local and national policymakers, civil servants, local authorities, NHS leaders, industry bodies and other civic partners.
- Monitor external political, economic, and regulatory developments relevant to innovation and knowledge exchange and provide high-quality briefings and strategic advice to senior colleagues.
- Develop clear and compelling messaging to promote Oxford's research impact and innovation leadership, including the drafting of position papers, policy submissions, and consultation responses.
- Represent the University in external forums, networks and events, acting as a confident and credible spokesperson on matters related to innovation and regional economic growth.
- Work closely with UAS and divisional communication colleagues and external agencies to ensure aligned and effective external engagement.
- Provide expert advice to senior University staff on strategic engagement opportunities, risks, and influence pathways, particularly as they relate to OSIT.
- Line-manage staff and/or contractors involved in delivering OSIT-related public affairs work and support cross-functional project teams as required.
- Contribute to business planning, reporting, and internal coordination across Research Services and University leadership on matters of innovation, engagement and advocacy.
- Manage the budget for public affairs activity across the team, with oversight from our team's Head of Operations.
- Undertake other duties from time-to-time and as may be reasonably required, to support the Director of Innovation and Engagement and members of the leadership team.

Selection criteria

Essential selection criteria

- Educated to degree level or equivalent relevant work experience.
- Substantial experience in public affairs, policy engagement, government relations, or a related field, ideally in a complex organisation such as a university, public body, or large charity.
- Excellent understanding of the UK political landscape, government structures, and policymaking processes, especially in relation to research, innovation, and regional development or higher education.
- Demonstrated ability to devise and implement public affairs strategies that influence policy outcomes and build productive long-term relationships with external stakeholders.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to write clearly and persuasively for a range of audiences, and to represent an institution externally with credibility.
- Proven ability to analyse complex policy and political developments and translate them into strategic institutional responses or opportunities.

- Experience working across organisational boundaries and with multiple stakeholder groups, demonstrating sound political and organisational judgement.
- Project management skills with the ability to manage competing priorities, deliver to tight deadlines and oversee others' work effectively.
- A high level of professional integrity, discretion, and emotional intelligence, with experience of advising senior leaders and handling sensitive information.
- Strong knowledge of the role of universities in the innovation ecosystem and their interactions with regional and national productivity agendas.

Desirable selection criteria

Experience of one or more of the following would be beneficial, but not essential:

- Knowledge of key policy areas such as the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, UK government's emerging Industrial Strategy or regional innovation ecosystems.
- Experience working in or with a research-intensive university.
- Familiarity with communications and media relations in a public affairs context.
- Experience of line management and/or managing external contractors or agencies.
- Evidence of managing budgets.

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.

Oxford is world-famous for research excellence and home to some of the most talented people from across the globe. For the past five years we have ranked number 1 in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, both overall and specifically for research.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. The University of Oxford is a world leader in research, engagement and innovation. Our research portfolio covers an exceptionally broad range of disciplines and has a strong interdisciplinary character. Our work helps the lives of millions, solving real-world problems through a huge network of partnerships and collaborations. We are currently the most successful UK university in securing funding for research (£779m in 2023/24). We are a leading institution for the commercialisation of our research, having spun out more than 300 companies, more than any UK institution.

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.

Research Services

Research Services is part of the University Administration and Services Division and works in partnership with the academic divisions and their departments and faculties to support Oxford's researchers. Our role is to facilitate excellence in research, engagement and innovation at Oxford. Our vision is to be a trusted provider of expertise, strategic insight, internal and external influence and excellent professional support to Oxford's research, engagement and innovation community.

Research Services is a large team of over 170 research support professionals, with a wide-ranging remit including:

- Supporting the acquisition of external research funding, funder engagement and strategic research initiatives
- comprehensive funding, contracts and research development support
- Negotiating research-related contracts
- Supporting institutional research strategy, policy and planning
- Facilitating knowledge exchange, innovation and engagement and coordinating the development and delivery of knowledge exchange strategy and policy
- Promoting the responsible conduct of research and compliance with regulatory and research governance requirements
- Leading the continuous improvement of research administration at Oxford

Our values and commitments govern the way we work with others within Research Services, the University and externally, including our commitment to professionalism, consultation, teamwork and continuous improvement. You can read more about our values and commitments [here](#).

For more information please visit: researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk

Innovation and Engagement Team

The post is based in the Innovation and Engagement team, which is part of the University's central Research Services. The team provides support for a wide range of Innovation and Engagement activities across the University, including IP management and commercialisation, enterprise and entrepreneurship, public engagement with research, engagement with businesses, society, community and regional economic development organisations, knowledge exchange strategy and support services and the development of Oxford's innovation ecosystem.

University Administration and Services

University Administration and Services (UAS) is the collective term for the central administrative departments of the University. UAS comprises structures to:

- support the University's core academic purposes of teaching, learning and research;
- ensure the University can meet the requirements of government, funding bodies and other external agencies; and
- facilitate the attainment of the objectives set out in the University's Strategic Plan.
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The offices of the UAS sections are spread across the city centre, with the main University Offices located in Wellington Square.

For more information please visit: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/>

How to apply

Applications are made through our e-recruitment system and you will find all the information you need about how to apply 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.

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

Help and support is available from: <https://hrsistemas.admin.ox.ac.uk/recruitment-support>

If you require any further assistance please email recruitment.support@admin.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 e-recruitment system 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 all academic posts and some academic-related posts. The University has adopted an EJRA of 30 September before the 69th birthday for all academic and academic-related staff in posts at **grade 8 and above**. The justification for this is explained at: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/the-ejra>

For **existing** employees, 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 **grades 1–7** 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>

Childcare

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.