

Vacancy Description for Interim Head of Policy (Higher Education)

12 Month Fixed-Term Contract – Maternity Leave Cover

1. Background

- 1.1 The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector. You can find out more about us on our website: <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk>.
- 1.2 We aim to ensure that higher education and research policy development is underpinned by a robust evidence base and a commitment to improving life chances, raising aspirations, contributing to economic prosperity and innovation, and to civic responsibility.
- 1.3 Our work on higher education policy encompasses a wide range of important public policy areas including the funding of higher education, the Skills agenda, lifelong learning and technical education, the quality and regulation of higher education and efforts to make our world-class education more accessible to students of all backgrounds.
- 1.4 It is a challenging time for higher education policy and this post presents an opportunity to make a real contribution to the evolving policy landscape. The Russell Group is a leading voice in the sector and provides strategy, policy development, intelligence, communications and advocacy for our member institutions.

2. Our Values

- **Collaboration:** we are a team, where everyone has an integral role to play. We work together and we support one another. We strive to be inclusive and respectful. We collaborate constructively with our members as well as with external stakeholders.
- **Excellence with impact:** we operate with integrity, honesty and rigour and we are committed to ensuring our work is evidence-based, high quality and with close attention to detail.
- **Autonomy, trust and ownership:** we want to get the very best out of people, supporting them to reach their full potential by fostering expertise across the team, with individuals given appropriate responsibility and opportunities to drive their work and their development.
- **Proactive, forward-thinking and influential:** we seek to make a change through the work we do, by being proactive, forward-thinking and providing credible and creative solutions that have real influence.

3. The role

- 3.1 We are looking to recruit a Head of Policy (Higher Education) on a 12-month fixed-term contract/secondment basis to provide robust and clear evidence to support the delivery of the Russell Group's objectives which are to:
- Strengthen the status of Russell Group universities as world-class institutions; and
 - Strengthen the ability of Russell Group institutions to compete in a global market.
- 3.2 The role would report to the Director of Policy and CEO and would be focused on achieving a policy environment which supports our universities' priorities.
- 3.3 The Head of Policy has the following key responsibilities:
- Oversee and lead analysis and policy development in relation to Higher Education policy programmes including:
 - Higher education funding including student finance
 - University finances, pensions and sector sustainability
 - Skills agenda, including lifelong learning and technical education
 - Covid regulation and impacts of the pandemic on higher education
 - Quality, standards and student experience
 - Regulation and university autonomy, including free speech issues
 - Admissions (undergraduate and postgraduate)
 - Access and Participation
 - Act as an efficient and effective line manager to staff providing coaching and support in their personal and professional development so they reach their full potential
 - Draft and contribute to high quality, persuasive and evidence-based reports, briefing papers, consultation inputs and board papers on relevant issues for a variety of audiences including government, policy-makers and Russell Group members
 - Build and maintain good working relationships with key individuals in priority stakeholder organisations, including DfE, HMT, Number 10, OfS, UCAS, QAA, OIA and the wider HE stakeholder community to inform policy development and future strategy
 - Oversee and contribute to relevant Russell Group working groups including the PVC learning and teaching network, Registrars, HR Directors, Finance Directors, Admissions Directors and Quality Network.
 - Represent Russell Group views and interests at relevant meetings, events and conferences; acting as an ambassador on behalf of the organisation and its members.

4. Person specification

- 4.1 We are looking for an experienced, motivated, and flexible individual to manage part of our policy team responsible for policy analysis and development in the areas of higher education funding, university finances, quality and standards, regulation, admissions and widening access. Prior experience of leading policy development within the higher education sector and specific experience of regulatory and/or funding policy is desirable.

4.2 Candidates should:

- Be able to manage, motivate and develop a team
- Have an excellent track record in policy analysis and development, and strong project management skills
- Have direct experience of networking and influencing diverse and senior groups of stakeholders as they will directly engage with Vice-Chancellors and senior academics, parliamentarians, business leaders, and policymakers
- Be able to communicate diplomatically in person as well as in writing.

4.3 Previous line management experience is desirable.

4.4 The following are the key competencies we are looking for in a Head of Policy (Higher Education):

Initiative and judgement

- Have responsibility to take decisions at the strategic level, drawing on high levels of political awareness to inform decisions
- Identify barriers to decision-making and initiate action
- Lead a programme of work for the team based on new ideas, help shape policy options for consideration and make policy recommendations and decisions based on analysis of different options
- Provide advice/ solutions directly to the Director(s) of Policy and Chief Executive on difficult issues for the long-term benefit of the organisation
- Balance own team's needs with wider organisational needs
- Understand and manage members' needs and priorities, including where there may be conflicting interests

Management

- Manage own workload and ensure team's workload is appropriate to maximise results and deliver on time to expected standard
- Delegate and oversee policy projects ensuring they are delivered on time
- Apply understanding of political and policy environment to manage senior stakeholder relationships, identify opportunities and address challenges
- Feed into and shape development of the budget for the organisation
- Line manage, motivate and develop own team to achieve high performance and meet organisational objectives; provide clear direction, constructive feedback and appropriate levels of autonomy to staff

- Form part of the senior management team, working with other heads of group, the Director(s) of Policy and the Chief Executive to manage priorities, workload, staff and outputs across the whole organisation

Communicating and influencing

- Ensure own and team's work is high quality, persuasive, credible, evidence-based and adapted appropriately to the audience to meet the expectations of the Chief Executive, board and external stakeholders
- Work closely with Head of Comms to ensure comms work reflects policy priorities and to maximise impact; be a well-known advocate for RG positions
- Represent the RG at the highest levels, supporting and standing in for the Director(s) of Policy and Chief Executive when necessary; undertake regular public speaking engagements and engagement with the media

Expert knowledge

- Maintain an overview of key priorities and latest developments across all policy areas, with more detailed expertise on the issues covered within the Head(s)' team, and ensure expert knowledge is maintained within the team
- Draw on expert knowledge within the team, research outputs/ data and understanding of broader political and policy environment to ensure our positions are effective, credible and influential

Team working and positive attitude to work

- Make difficult decisions about prioritisation and focus of policy work and set the direction for the team with input from the Director(s) of Policy and/or Chief Executive where appropriate
- Work closely with other members of the senior management team, member institutions and senior stakeholders to support organisational objectives
- Drive and exemplify a culture of continuous improvement, support team's well-being and support them to cope with pressure and change
- Demonstrate positive leadership within the organisation, including by establishing a strong direction and future vision

5. Terms and conditions

- 5.1 This appointment is full time on a **fixed-term 12 months contract** (maternity leave cover) starting in January 2021 and will be primarily based in our central London office but with some home working. Secondments from other organisations will be considered.
- 5.2 We offer a salary in the range of £64,000 - £70,000 based on skills and experience, although a higher amount may be available for an exceptional candidate. Other benefits including a career average (defined benefit) pension, generous holiday entitlement, and subsidised canteen facilities.

6. Application Procedure

- 6.1 Please submit the following to rg.1@russellgroup.ac.uk by the closing date (**5pm, Wednesday 6th October 2021**):
1. An up-to-date CV (max. 2 sides of A4) including:
 - a. details of your current and past employment
 - b. your degree qualification(s)
 - c. contact details for two references: your current or most recent employer; and a former line manager who could be contacted during the process
 2. A supporting statement (max. 2 sides of A4) addressing the following:
 - a. how your knowledge, skills and experience meet our requirements
 - b. specifically, your experience of managing and motivating a team
 - c. why you are interested in working for the Russell Group.
 3. We ask all applicants to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring form which you can download from our Vacancies webpage - <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/vacancies/>
- 6.2 We anticipate that first and second rounds of interviews will be carried out in the last two weeks of October 2021.
- 6.3 For a confidential discussion, please contact Paul Purcell on 0203 816 1314.