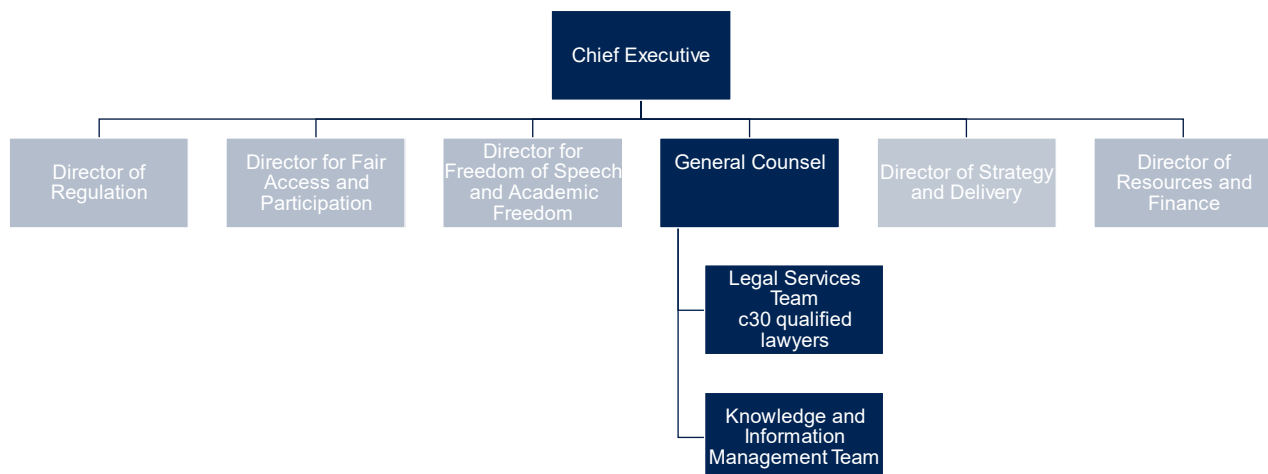


## General Counsel

### Job Description

Job title:	General Counsel
Pay band:	D1. c.£130,000 (and £3,566 London weighting where relevant)
Location:	OfS offices are in Bristol and London
Responsible to:	Chief Executive
Responsible for:	Leading the provision of expert, strategic and enabling legal advice to support effective regulation in the interests of students



### Context

The OfS is the statutory regulator for higher education in England. We are currently consulting on a new strategy to ensure that students from all backgrounds benefit from high quality higher education, delivered by a diverse, sustainable sector that continues to improve.

We regulate a complex and diverse sector that is operating in a challenging and dynamic environment. Our work is wide-ranging: we set regulatory standards for course quality, consumer rights, freedom of speech, equality of opportunity, good governance and financial sustainability. We are increasingly using our regulatory tools, including where providers are responding to significant financial pressures and facing insolvency. To continue to protect the interests of students in this difficult context our approach to regulation needs to be confident and agile.

The General Counsel is a new post and will be a pivotal member of the OfS's executive team, leading the legal function, and accountable directly to the Chief Executive. This is a rare opportunity for an experienced and mature legal professional to lead and shape the legal function of an important sector regulator. We are seeking an exceptional individual, with a well-judged appetite for risk, and the ability to translate technical legal advice across a range of domains for an ambitious strategic leadership team.

## **Key responsibilities**

As General Counsel, you will be the OfS's principal legal advisor, responsible for shaping our understanding of the legal framework within which we work and providing legal advice and strategic counsel on a wide range of matters to the Chief Executive, Executive Committee and OfS Board.

You will advise proactively on the full range of our regulatory interests, including in relation to litigation, in a way that supports effective delivery of the OfS's strategic goals. Your expertise will help us to navigate with confidence the complexities for a public body seeking to regulate a sector under stress. Your approach to legal risk will reflect our ambitions and will become a visible and integral part of the culture and practice of your team.

You will lead your team of around 30 highly capable legal professionals to deliver high quality, clear and enabling advice on complex legal matters. Working closely with the wider leadership team, you will play a pivotal role in driving cultural change to enable legal and policy teams to work effectively together, towards a common purpose, and to take legal risk in line with the Board's risk appetite. We will expect you to track and manage legal risk across our activities.

This is a broad leadership role in which you will be accountable for day-to-day legal operations, the work of our Knowledge and Information Management team, and also contribute to development and delivery of our long-term strategy for a dynamic and evolving sector.

Outside the OfS, you will develop effective working relationships with government lawyers, particularly those in our sponsor department, identifying and championing opportunities for legislative change. You will know how and when to access external legal counsel to draw on the best advice available.

## **Knowledge, skills, experience**

The postholder will be a qualified solicitor or barrister with significant post-qualification experience and is required to demonstrate:

- Significant senior-level experience of providing effective strategic legal advice to the executive team and/or board of a complex organisation.
- Sophisticated specialist legal knowledge in areas relevant to regulation, public law and the OfS's remit, and the ability to quickly develop this expertise where there are gaps.
- Proven expertise in strategic delivery and management of legal services, including through contract management for external legal advice.
- Proven experience of managing complex litigation to successful conclusion.
- Excellent personal judgement, including in relation to risk, and ability to work creatively and innovatively with policy teams.
- Exceptional leadership skills with experience in building and motivating high-performing and enabling legal teams, in a complex and ambiguous environment.

- Excellent communication skills, able to convey legal concepts and arguments to more generalist audiences without losing meaning, and with the ability to influence stakeholders at all levels
- Extensive experience of developing and maintaining strong and effective relationships with stakeholders, including in a regulated sector, and in government.
- Ability to reach and convey reliable judgements on the basis of complex and imperfect information, and in novel circumstances, and where the risks to students, providers and the OfS are significant.
- Intellectual credibility, analytical capability, with the ability to think strategically and take a broad view of issues, events and activities and understand their likely impact or wider implications for students, the higher education sector and the OfS.
- Extensive experience of leading across professional functions beyond the post holder's own expertise as part of an executive team.
- Highly credible and persuasive public speaking, in both internal and external settings.
- Strong, accurate, fluent and direct writing style, and experience of setting and enforcing high standards of written English in others.

March 2025