

JOB DESCRIPTION

PRINCIPAL LEGAL ADVISER

Directorate:	Resources and Finance
Post responsible to:	Head of Legal Services and Deputy Head of Legal Services
Purpose of the job:	<p>The Office for Students (OfS) was established by the Higher Education and Research Act in 2017 and became fully operational in April 2018. OfS's primary aim is to ensure that English higher education is delivering positive outcomes for students – past, present, and future. Our objectives are to ensure that students, from all backgrounds (particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education 2) Receive high quality academic experience and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure 3) Are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value over time 4) Receive value for money <p>The Resources & Finance Directorate provides critical services to the OfS to enable the organisation to deliver its strategy. The Directorate ensures that the OfS complies with statutory and other public sector requirements, identifies and manages risks and opportunities and co-ordinates efforts across the organisation to be efficient and effective</p> <p>The aim of the role 'Principal Legal Adviser' is to lead on provision of legal advice and support for a broad range of legal matters. They could lead and advise across any legal issue relevant to the OfS, including advisory, investigatory and litigation workstreams. Key responsibilities include; supporting the Head of Legal Services, Deputy Head of Legal Services and other senior managerial members of the legal team in tasks relating to the on-going operation of the legal function within the OfS and leadership of specific initiatives. This role will also require significant engagement with internal stakeholders to ensure that all employees are appropriately trained, and external stakeholders to ensure the team is supported.</p>

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	The key person attributes required to fulfil this role include: significant legal experience dealing with many legal practice areas and delivering at pace, including in contentious legal proceedings; significant experience managing other lawyers, including potentially leading large teams, acting as an advisor to boards and senior executives; ability to analyse and advise on complex legal issues; sensitivity to politics, understanding the needs of, and willing to work collaboratively with external stakeholders; adopting a creative and innovative approach to legal issues; excellent verbal, written communication and presentation skills; and an ability to influence and negotiate.
Location:	London or Bristol
Pay band:	11

Responsibilities (up to 10)

Responsibility	Outcome
Act as a senior lawyer within the OfS on a wide range of legal matters running in parallel	<p>Leads on providing advice and support on the following legal areas and topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation applying to the higher education sector including the Higher Education and Research Act 2017; • Managing the conduct of litigation activities, such as judicial review proceedings and statutory appeals; • Legal topics relevant to decision making and supporting processes, such as public law principles, statutory duties and considerations, the delegation of functions and equalities legislation; • The use of the OfS's enforcement and information gathering powers; • The regulatory framework and registration conditions that apply to higher education providers; • Legal issues relating to knowledge and information management, including data protection and freedom of information law; • Consumer protection law; • Human rights law.
Supporting the Head of Legal Services, Deputy Head of Legal Services and other senior managerial members of the legal team in operating the legal function within the OfS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts are negotiated and relationships with providers of legal research tools are managed, such as Lexis/Nexis; • Leads on commissioning external legal support (including Counsel) and managed in their delivery of tasks; • Leads on the procurement of panels of external legal providers • Fees are negotiated with external legal and other support service providers and Barristers' clerks in order to ensure value for money

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads on the production of internal guidance documents on key legal and regulatory issues to a high standard • Training for the legal team is organised in line with professional CPD requirements • Leads with the delivery of training to colleagues within the OfS to establish and maintain a culture of working closely and effectively with the legal team, as well as developing their knowledge on key legal/regulatory issues • Leads on the management of case management systems to track the timeliness of legal support and identify trends in the topics raised with the legal team
External and internal stakeholder management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working closely with the Head of Legal Services and Deputy Head of Legal Services, maintains oversight of the relationship, budget, and performance of a legal panel of external legal providers • An understanding of senior leadership team objectives, concerns and aspirations is developed • Leads on engagement with internal and external stakeholders
Knowledge development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expert knowledge and understanding of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 is developed • A thorough knowledge and understanding of the work and operations of the OfS is established
Delivering and working in a team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the areas for which the post holder is responsible, the outcomes and objectives in the OfS's business plan are delivered efficiently and effectively • The following are delivered: the OfS's behaviours and values; flexible, agile and collaborative working, including with staff and teams in other directorates

Other Requirements		
Key Skills	Essential/Desirable	Level: I / II / III / IV I Basic Knowledge II Competent User III Advanced User IV Expert / Adviser
Significant legal experience dealing with many legal practice areas and leading large legal teams, acting as an advisor to boards and senior executives, including as to:	Essential	IV

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigation and enforcement in a regulatory context Litigation cases involving judicial review and/or regulatory appeals Public law matters UK consumer protection law The interpretation of regulatory rules such as licence conditions or equivalent the interpretation and application of sector specific legislation which relates to a regulatory body 		
Sensitive to politics, understanding the needs of, and willingness to work collaboratively with external stakeholders	Essential	IV
Ability to adopt a creative and innovative approach to legal issues	Essential	IV
Excellent verbal, written communication and presentation skills	Essential	IV
Ability to influence and negotiate	Essential	IV
Enablers		
Knowledge and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads the team to ensure learning, reflection, understanding and addressing root causes of problems as well as surface issues Values others' contributions and builds their confidence Takes responsibility to obtain develop, organise and share knowledge and information that may be of use to others, ensuring that it is accurate and up to date. 		

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- Contributes time, knowledge and expertise to corporate activities responsibly, willingly and actively.

Planning

- Plans, organises and marshals activities and resources effectively and collaboratively
- Identifies and mitigates risk to plans and delivery
- Manages own workload, resolving competing demands, and coping with changing priorities in a flexible and proactive way
- Demonstrates a readiness to make decisions, take the initiative and originate action, including in circumstances without complete or perfect information
- Contributes pro-actively and positively to thinking and discussions concerning longer term issues affecting one's area of work and OfS

Communications

- Speech is clear, concise, of appropriate complexity and tailored to the audience. Content of speech is accurate
- Writing is clear, concise, of appropriate complexity and tailored to the audience(s). It follows house style and uses correct grammar. The content of writing is accurate.
- Is approachable to others.
- Provides actionable technical and professional feedback to individuals on legal matters
- Communicates authoritatively, clearly, fluently and in a compelling manner to individuals and large audiences, using appropriate style and language. Chairs meetings, events, leads and facilitates discussions effectively and with outstanding presentation skills
- Influences, convinces or impresses others in a way that results in acceptance, agreement or behaviour change, using evidenced arguments and clear rationale

Relationships

- Demonstrates a confident, assertive and co-operative style and deals effectively with people at all levels to build positive working relationships
- Maintains credibility with members of the OfS Board, Directors and senior government officials
- Maintains effective work behaviour in the face of setbacks or pressure and remains calm and professional in such circumstances
- Actively contributes to the leadership of the directorate
- Pro-actively seeks to build relationships, enabling others to work well
- Leads and contributes to relationships in ways which create a positive impression of the OfS.
- Uses a partnership approach where appropriate.

Professional/external qualifications required:	Essential/Desirable	Level Required
Qualified Solicitor or Barrister	Essential	Significant post qualification experience



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