Aston University
BIRMINGHAM UK

Press and Communications Manager



Reference: 1778-26

Grade: Grade 8

Salary: £39560 to: 46970 per annum, depending on experience

Contract Type: full-time

Basis: Permanent

Job Purpose

The Press and Communications team is responsible for protecting and enhancing Aston University's reputation and for delivering communications that support institutional priorities. Its audiences include prospective and current students, staff, alumni, partners, employers, policymakers and the wider public.

The postholder is accountable for planning, prioritising and delivering an integrated portfolio of media relations, content and communications activity. Within agreed University strategy and policy, they will exercise independent professional judgement to identify opportunities, allocate effort, advise on reputational risk and evaluate outcomes.

The postholder reports directly to the Head of Communications and has lead responsibility for press and communications support to Aston Business School and the School of Law and Social Sciences. They will be the principal professional adviser to senior academic and professional services colleagues within this portfolio, help to shape communications strategy at School and University level, and determine appropriate communications approaches to promote the Schools' teaching, research, enterprise, engagement and impact.

The role operates with a high degree of autonomy and manages competing requirements across a complex stakeholder environment. The postholder will lead communications planning and campaigns; secure and manage media opportunities; coordinate responses to complex or sensitive issues; and commission or produce content across media, web, social and multimedia channels. They will also provide senior professional input to corporate communications and major University priorities.

The postholder requires substantial communications experience, advanced editorial and media relations expertise, and the ability to analyse complex information, influence senior stakeholders and make sound decisions in circumstances that may be fast-moving, sensitive or reputationally significant.

Main Duties/Responsibilities

School communications strategy and leadership

- Determine and lead annual and project-based communications plans for Aston Business School and the School of Law and Social Sciences, translating School and University priorities into defined objectives, audiences and activity.
- Contribute senior professional expertise to the development of School and University communications strategy, using stakeholder insight, external awareness and evaluation evidence to help shape priorities and approaches.
- Provide authoritative professional advice to School leaders, academics and professional services colleagues on communications strategy, messaging, channels, timing and reputational risk.
- Maintain a detailed understanding of the Schools' teaching, research, enterprise and engagement portfolios and determine which opportunities should be prioritised for communications support.
- Set editorial direction for press releases, features, briefings, opinion pieces, digital content and campaign materials for specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Interpret complex business, legal and social sciences research and present it accurately and accessibly, maintaining academic integrity and compliance with relevant requirements.

- Advise and prepare academic and senior spokespeople for media interviews and other high-profile communications opportunities.
- Represent the Press and Communications team at School leadership and planning meetings, negotiate priorities and timescales, and challenge proposals where they present delivery or reputational concerns.
- Design and deliver media training, briefings and communications workshops, adapting content to the needs and experience of participants.

Media relations

- As required, lead and coordinate responses to complex, sensitive or high-profile media enquiries, determining the response approach, obtaining specialist input and approvals, and escalating significant institutional risks.
- Develop and maintain effective professional relationships with journalists, editors, producers and relevant sector stakeholders across local, national, international and specialist media.
- Develop targeted media strategies and negotiate opportunities for news, expert commentary and thought leadership to secure coverage that supports agreed objectives.
- Monitor the external environment, assess the communications implications of emerging issues and advise senior colleagues on proportionate action, as needed.
- Lead assigned elements of crisis and issues communications, including preparing reactive statements, lines to take, media briefings and question-and-answer materials, within the University's escalation and approval arrangements.

Content creation and digital communications

- Lead the creation and commissioning of high-quality content for media, digital, print and multimedia channels, ensuring a consistent narrative and clear audience focus, as required.
- Exercise editorial oversight for content within the portfolio, ensuring accuracy, accessibility, legal and regulatory compliance, brand alignment and appropriate approval.
- Plan and deliver integrated campaigns across earned, owned and social channels, adapting content and calls to action to maximise reach and engagement.
- Lead or oversee the production of podcasts, photography, video and audio content where required.
- Use audience insight, channel performance and sector trends to improve content, test new approaches and advise colleagues on effective practice.
- Diagnose unfamiliar communications problems, develop appropriate solutions and evaluate new methods or channels.

Team working and events

- Lead communications workstreams and project teams, define requirements and deliverables, and coordinate the work of colleagues, contributors, external agencies and suppliers.
- Plan and lead communications for significant School and University events, launches and announcements, including stakeholder briefing, media management and contingency planning.
- Deputise for the Head of Communications within delegated authority, as needed.
- Contribute to team service improvements; identify resource requirements and manage delegated supplier performance.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Define objectives, intended outcomes, audiences and proportionate measures for communications plans and campaigns.
- Analyse quantitative and qualitative evidence, including media coverage, digital performance and stakeholder feedback, to assess effectiveness and reputational impact.
- Report findings and recommendations to senior stakeholders and use the evidence to inform priorities, resource decisions and future activity.

- Maintain appropriate records, identify lessons and implement agreed improvements to communications practice.

Additional responsibilities

- Engage in continuous professional development and undertake relevant training as appropriate.
- Participate in major University events such as graduation, clearing and open days.
- Display the behaviours outlined in the Aston University Behaviour Framework.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of work.
- Support the University's environmental sustainability agenda.
- Ensure and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors.
- Carry out duties in a manner that promotes fairness, integrity and trust.
- Undertake any other duties that may reasonably be required.
- Attend and participate in staff meetings and University committees as appropriate.
- Develop and maintain professional working relationships across the University.
- Maintain confidentiality of information acquired during the course of work.

Person specification

	Essential	Method of assessment
Education and qualifications	• Educated to degree level or able to demonstrate an equivalent level of knowledge and understanding.	Application form and interview

	Essential	Method of assessment
Experience	• Substantial professional experience in journalism, public relations, media or strategic communications, including responsibility for planning and delivering work with limited supervision. • Evidence of developing and delivering communications strategies or campaigns against defined objectives and measures. • Significant media relations experience, including proactive pitching and the management of complex or sensitive enquiries. • Experience of researching, writing, commissioning and editing content for senior, specialist and public audiences across multiple channels. • Experience of interpreting complex research, policy or technical information and communicating it accurately to non-specialist audiences. • Experience of managing reputational issues, crisis communications or other communications activity involving material organisational risk. • Experience of advising and influencing senior stakeholders and building effective relationships across organisational boundaries. • Experience of managing a varied portfolio, coordinating the contributions of others and delivering to competing deadlines. • Experience of managing external agencies or suppliers, leading project teams or mentoring colleagues, and overseeing project resources or delegated budgets, including	Application form, interview and test

	Essential	Method of assessment
	setting expectations and assuring the quality and timely delivery of agreed outputs. • Experience of commissioning or producing podcasts and other multimedia content.	
Aptitude and skills	• Advanced written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to exercise editorial judgement and produce accurate material for different audiences and purposes. • Ability to analyse communications requirements, provide evidence-based professional advice and influence decisions at senior level. • Ability to identify news value, develop clear narratives and translate organisational priorities into communications activity. • Political awareness, discretion and sound judgement in handling confidential, sensitive or reputationally significant matters. • Ability to make timely decisions within delegated authority, including where information is incomplete, and to recognise when escalation is required. • Ability to diagnose unfamiliar communications problems, develop appropriate solutions and evaluate new methods or channels. • Strategic planning, project management and organisational skills, including the ability to prioritise resources against objectives and risk. • Advanced understanding of digital communications and the coordinated use of media, web,	Application form, interview and test

	Essential	Method of assessment
	social and multimedia channels. • Professional knowledge of media law, copyright, data protection, accessibility and relevant communications standards. • Ability to interpret communications data, assess effectiveness and present clear conclusions and recommendations. • Ability to lead through professional influence, coordinate multidisciplinary contributors and provide constructive guidance to colleagues. • Commitment to professional standards, inclusive practice and effective stakeholder service.	

	Desirable	Method of assessment
Education and qualifications	• NCTJ or similar. • Member of CIPR.	Application form
Experience	• Experience of working within higher education, research, the public sector or another complex and highly scrutinised organisation. • Experience of business, legal, social sciences or policy communications.	Application form and interview
Aptitude and skills	• Strong knowledge of the UK higher education, research and public policy environment. • Knowledge of content management, social media	Application form and interview

	Desirable	Method of assessment
	management and media monitoring platforms. • Experience of formal line management or coaching.	

University values

All staff are expected to demonstrate and promote the University's values and expectations, which are an integral part of our strategy and underpin the culture of the University. In addition, our leaders are expected to be accountable, help to deliver the University's strategic vision, and set and communicate clear expectations that inspire those around them.



How to apply

You can apply for this role online via our website https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/jobs.

Applications should be submitted by 23.59 on the advertised closing date.
All applicants must submit a completed application form and CV.

Any CV sent direct to the Recruitment Team and Recruiting Manager will not be accepted.

If you require a manual application form, please contact the Recruitment Team via recruitment@aston.ac.uk.

Contact information

Enquiries about the vacancy:

Name: Nicola Jones
Job Title: Head of Communications
Email: n.jones6@aston.ac.uk

Enquiries about the application process, shortlisting or interviews:
Recruitment Team via recruitment@aston.ac.uk or 0121 204 4500.

Additional information

Visit our website https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr for full details of our salary scales and benefits Aston University staff enjoy.

Salary scales: https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/payroll-and-pensions/salary-scales/index

Benefits: Benefits and Rewards | Aston University

Working in Birmingham: https://www2.aston.ac.uk/birmingham

Employment of Ex-Offenders: Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, a person with a criminal record is not required to disclose any spent convictions unless the position they are applying for is listed as an exception under the Act.

Eligibility to work in the UK: Where an individual is subject to UK immigration control, they will require a visa to work in the UK.

The following individuals do not need a visa for the UK, but do still have to prove their right to work before employment can commence:

- **British Citizens or Irish Nationals**
- **EU/EEA/Swiss nationals with Settled or Pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme**
- **Non-EEA nationals with Indefinite Leave to Remain/Settlement in the UK**

The main routes available for those who need a visa to work in the UK are **Skilled Worker**, **Global Talent** and the **Graduate Route**.

Please see UKVI guidance for further information on eligibility, knowledge of English requirements and approved test centres https://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa You can also find further information on our candidate immigration web page.

If you will conduct research in your role, you may need to apply for and obtain ATAS clearance before Aston can issue a Certificate of Sponsorship for your visa application. Please see our candidate immigration web page for further details.

Before you start and Right to Work

Right to Work Check
All employees must complete a Right to Work check before they commence work at Aston. HR will contact you during the onboarding process to arrange your check.

Cost of Living - Estate and Letting Agents
There are numerous Estate and Letting Agents that can help you find suitable accommodation. Useful websites for support and guidance https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent/how-to-rent-the-checklist-for-renting-in-england and https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/
You can also use property search websites such as Rightmove or Zoopla.

Equal Opportunities
Aston University promotes equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. We aim to ensure, through our admissions policies for students, and our staff recruitment and selection processes that we encourage applications from all groups represented in the wider community at a local, national and international level.

The University will endeavour not to discriminate unfairly or illegally, directly or indirectly, against students or potential students, staff or potential staff. This commitment applies to all functions of the University and to any stage of an individual's career.

An Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form is included within the application form. Data you provide on the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form will be included in a general database, for statistical monitoring purposes, enabling the University to monitor the effectiveness of its Policy, Codes of Practice and Guidelines on Equal Opportunities in Employment. Individuals will not be identified by name.

Data Protection
Your personal data will be processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) ("GDPR"). The University's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices, including the Job Applicant Privacy Notice can be found at https://www2.aston.ac.uk/data-protection. Your application will only be used to inform the selection process, unless you are successful, in which case it will form the basis of your personal record with the University which will be stored in manual and/or electronic files. Information in statistical form on present and former employees is given to appropriate outside bodies.
Full details of our terms and conditions of service and associated policies and procedures are available online at https://www2.aston.ac.uk/staff-public/hr/policies

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