Senior Manager, Skills

Role Details

Vacancy ref: 21229  
Salary: £45,585 - £54,395 (Grade 8)

Working Pattern: Full time (37 hrs per week)  
Duration: Fixed term contract until 31 July 2026

Location: Hybrid working – Working from our OU in Wales, Cardiff office 2 days per week.

Additional Information: Some expectation of travel in Wales and to other OU locations when required.

Closing date: 12 noon, 12 January 2024

Welsh Language: For this role, the ability to speak Welsh is desirable.

About the Role

The Senior Manager will lead the strategic development and implementation of a range of initiatives to enhance The Open University (OU) in Wales’ skills, employability, enterprise, and innovation activity.

You will be responsible for managing a small team of staff, working with Welsh Government, Regional Skills Partnerships, employers and others to strengthen our local and regional engagement and develop a coherent approach to our skills and innovation developments along with our Partnerships Progression and Impact, and Business Development teams. You will ensure our employability and entrepreneurship strategy is student focused and that activities and support contribute to student success.

You will scan the policy and political environment in relation to skills, employability, enterprise and innovation and identify emerging development opportunities. As a creative and innovative team player with a growth mindset, you will utilise and grow the OU’s extensive curriculum and unique methods to service the needs of learners, employers, government and other partners. You will also lead on our evaluation work in this area, ensuring the outcomes and impacts of our work are well understood and contribute to a strong evidence base both to inform future developments and support our reporting to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)/ Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) and to Welsh Government.

Key Responsibilities

• To lead on skills, employability, enterprise and innovation activities from the OU in Wales, coordinating the development, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of activities and ensuring progress in line with agreed strategy.
• To develop excellent knowledge of the national and regional skills agenda and sector priorities and work closely with Welsh Government, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Regional Skills Partnerships, employers and others, influencing developments and supporting colleagues in Wales and more broadly in the University, to understand and realise the opportunities presented for the OU.
• To work with the Careers and Employability Service to ensure Welsh students are appropriately supported under the University’s Student Employability Strategy and further develop a programme of placements, internships and employability schemes to enable students to achieve their personal and career development goals.
• To identify new opportunities for student number growth, income diversification and skills, employability, enterprise and innovation, and support funding applications through OU and external approval processes, including costing projects and ensuring compliance with university policies and funder terms and conditions.
• To establish strong working relationships with key stakeholders and networks across the OU, informing colleagues of opportunities for academic and Unit involvement in activities in Wales and supporting their engagement.
• To assume the lead role on evaluation activity, data collection and analysis, report writing and other dissemination activity in these areas, including the generation, collection and curation of evidence for OU in Wales’ skills activities relating to relevant external quality and monitoring activity with funders and regulators e.g. Targeted Employability Support for Students (TESS) programme and such other reporting as may be required.
• To represent the OU in Wales’ interests at internal and external meetings relating to skills, employability, enterprise and innovation, taking a leadership role in these groups as appropriate.
• To manage budgets in your work area, including forecasting, monitoring and ensuring best value.
• To identify opportunities to promote, publicise and share your successes, those of your team and of the OU in Wales, working closely with the Marketing and Communications team.
• You may be required to undertake any other duties reasonably required within the nature of the duties and responsibilities of the role, subject to the proviso that normally any changes of a permanent nature shall be incorporated into the job description in specific terms.

All staff are expected:
• To comply with the University’s Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities policies in the performance of your duties.
• To take reasonable care of the Health and Safety of yourself and that of any other person who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work.
• To co-operate with The Open University in ensuring as far as is necessary, that Statutory Requirements, Codes of Practice, University Policies and Departmental Health and Safety arrangements are complied with.
• To demonstrate a strong commitment to the principles and practice of equality and diversity.
Skills and Experience

**Essential**

1. **Educational qualifications**: a degree or equivalent skills and experience.
2. **Knowledge of work-based learning and skills**: Considerable knowledge of work-based learning, skills development and/or innovation in Wales, including an understanding of higher education policy drivers and related delivery mechanisms (e.g. Regional Skills Partnerships and vocational education such as degree apprenticeships).
3. **Partnership and bid management**: Proven track record of leading successful partnership proposals and bids.
4. **Project management**: Strong experience in project management, including implementation, evaluation, budget management, and knowledge dissemination.
5. **Interpersonal and relationship management skills**: Exceptional interpersonal skills with the ability to effectively develop and maintain relationships, establish credibility, influence, and negotiate with various stakeholders.
6. **Communication proficiency**: Clear and effective communication skills tailored for diverse audiences, including report writing and presentation delivery.
7. **Team management**: Ability to effectively lead and manage teams that provide customer or student services, fostering teamwork, collaboration, innovation, and motivation among colleagues.
8. **Independent initiative and decision-making**: Ability to work autonomously, make considered decisions, and resolve problems with expediency, intelligence, and sensitivity.
9. **Organisational expertise**: Well-developed organisational skills with excellent attention to detail, capable of handling a diverse portfolio of work with unforeseen work demands.
10. **Digital literacy**: Proficient in everyday office tasks, including basic computer operations, Microsoft Office 365, email communication tools, internet research, basic data management, cybersecurity principles, and adaptability to new software.
11. **Commitment to University values**: A strong commitment to and understanding of the Open University's Vision and Values.
12. **Welsh language**: Understanding of the requirements and opportunities that arise from working within a bilingual context.

**Desirable**

13. **Knowledge of part-time adult education**: An understanding of the needs of part-time adult learners and the challenges facing students in a distance learning context.
14. **Knowledge of the Higher Education sector**: Excellent knowledge and/or experience of the UK higher education sector with a comprehensive understanding of higher education in Wales.
15. **Data management**: Experience and confidence in working with complex data sets.
16. **Welsh language**: Ability to communicate in Welsh, or a willingness to learn.

**Important additional information**

You may be required to undertake any other duties reasonably required within the nature of the duties and responsibilities of the role, subject to the proviso that normally any changes of a permanent nature shall be incorporated into the job description in specific terms.

Homeworking with regular visits to Cardiff is possible. This role requires engagement with partners across Wales, with travel to engage with project partners/stakeholders as necessary, along with some travel to Milton Keynes and occasionally to other OU locations. A full driving licence and access to a vehicle will be essential.
About the Open University in Wales

The Open University in Wales is responsible for delivery of academic and support services to students and enquirers right across the country. It is funded through student fee income and by support from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and serves over 15,000 students.

Our Cardiff office is the base for more than 180 members of staff working for The Open University in different functions, including:

- The Director for Wales and deputies with overall responsibility for the leadership and oversight of the work of the Open University in Wales, including that delivered by faculty staff based in Wales;
- Academic staff, managers and coordinators from our faculties and schools, developing curriculum, supporting and co-ordinating teaching and ensuring that there is a Welsh perspective in the academic developments of the University;
- Our Student Recruitment and Support (Wales) team working to ensure the successful delivery of services and support to students across all activities;
- Staff engaged in external affairs, marketing, widening access and employer engagement, seeking to grow our collaboration agenda in Wales and tell our story to a wider public;
- The UK-wide Venue Management Team, which is responsible for venue procurement and management activities for all OU tutorials, examinations and ad hoc meetings in the UK and Continental Europe;
- Our team of Operations and Support staff, who make sure we run smoothly and effectively on a day-to-day basis.

The Open University is committed to sustaining a powerful and visible presence in Wales, working closely with other educational providers and organisations to offer high quality part-time higher education opportunities via distance learning. The University is focused on working with the Welsh Government and the Funding Council in meeting the economic, social and cultural needs of the Wales.

This is an exciting time to join the University, as it transforms its UK-wide operations, and refreshes its academic approach. Wales-based staff are involved in planning and organising large-scale operations, using technology to produce materials and information, and effectively managing resources to produce and deliver services to schedule. All staff are concerned with the maintenance and improvement of our high standards of support to individual students and have a strong customer service ethos.

The Open University in Wales is located at 18 Custom House Street, Cardiff. This is a five-minute walk from Cardiff Central train and bus stations. Given its city centre location there is no parking available but there are numerous car parks nearby. For further information on The Open University in Wales, and on the University, please see the Open University in Wales' website at www.open.ac.uk/wales.

How to Apply

Please send an application form, cv and supporting statement to wales-recruitment@open.ac.uk.

Applications received after the closing date will not be accepted.

If you have not heard from us within a week of the application closing date, please assume that on this occasion you have not been selected to interview for this position, however we thank you for your interest and encourage you to apply for future positions.
If you have any questions about this role please contact Tom Poultney on 029 20 26 27 16 who will arrange a convenient time for the hiring manager to contact you for a chat.