

Job Description

Job Title:	Director, Media Relations & Issues Management
Department:	University Communications
Reports To:	Associate Vice-President, Communications
Jobs Reporting:	Manager, Media Relations
Salary Grade:	USG 13
Effective Date:	July 2016

Primary Purpose

Reporting to the Associate Vice-President, Communications, the Director of Media Relations and Issues Management has two major roles. Firstly, to enhance the public profile of the University of Waterloo by strategically positioning the institution as a leader in academic and research excellence through proactive news and media strategies. Secondly, to manage Waterloo's reputation and reputational risk in often fast-paced, highly-charged situations using communication strategies and tactics that encompass all of Waterloo's primary channels and audiences.

As a leader on campus, the Director provides mentorship and guidance to senior leadership, communicators, faculty members and other staff in guiding their interactions with the media and shaping institutional strategy. The Director frequently acts as the University's spokesperson and must ensure that the University maintains strong relationships with journalists locally, nationally and internationally.

Key Accountabilities

Working within the broader University Communications team, the Director, Media Relations and Issues Management oversees the development, execution and evaluation of a strategic program of media activities targeting key global audiences, which includes:

- managing all aspects of day-to-day media relations activities including providing excellence and responsive service to the media with a full understanding of deadline pressures;
- strategically and systematically evaluating research discoveries and outcomes, university events and new developments, to identify those with the greatest potential for media coverage, with an emphasis on institutional priorities;
- gathering information, conducting research, interviewing sources, and writing a variety of high-impact materials for the media on a wide variety of subjects (e.g., news releases, social media and multi-media content);
- acting as spokesperson on behalf of the University as needed, in consultation with the Associate Vice-President, Communications;
- recommends institutional spokesperson for high profile and emerging media opportunities;
- builds and maintains relationships with both domestic and international/business media including reporters and bloggers;
- monitoring and measuring the media visibility of University of Waterloo and its competitors across traditional media channels both in Canada and internationally, and contributing to daily news monitoring distribution;

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- overseeing news elements of the University's homepage and website;
- maintaining an expert guide and other materials to support media;
- providing a program of coaching and mentoring to enhance the capacity of faculty, researchers and staff in engaging with the media;
- drafting correspondence and media messages to meet outreach needs at the request of senior administration in consultation with the government relations team;
- ensuring consistency, accuracy and excellence in quality and content of messaging in all media materials;
- providing leadership in the organization and coordination of media interviews with members of the university community, including but not limited to senior administration and faculty, and provide expert strategic advice and individual counsel on media interviews;
- managing the use of Waterloo's double-ender studio;
- managing vendors and contracts and assessing services for the potential value to Waterloo's programs; and
- coordinating media relations activities with a broad range of internal communicators and stakeholders.

Emergency Communications Planning

- The Director, Media Relations and Issues Management is accountable, working in support of Associate Vice-President, Communications and Vice-President, University Relations, for Waterloo's emergency communications planning in order to minimize and manage risk to the University. This includes the assessment of risk and the astute evaluation of the expected media approach to inform the development and execution of tactics and messaging when dealing with crisis.

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**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess and correct health and safety hazards, as required.*

Required Qualifications

Education

Bachelor's degree in English, journalism, communications, public relations or communications-related field.

Experience

- At least 7-10 years of media relations experience with extensive experience in successfully managing complex and highly charged issues on behalf of a publicly visible organization.
- Recent experience in counseling C-Level leaders, political leaders, or boards on issues management and experience working with legal counsel in managing issues.

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- Strong record of building close relations with media, including successful promotion/pitching of stories on behalf of an organization to selected journalists.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Strong managerial and organizational skills and ability to handle multiple tasks and meet deadlines.
- Exceptional communications judgement, a service mind-set and a collegial approach to working with colleagues and media partners.
- Advanced social media, intermediate web/online competence, public speaking, familiarity with photo and video editing software

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:**

Internally, communicates regularly and professionally advises and consults with all senior leaders including the President, and with all employees in all groups and departments to inform, influence, educate and collaborate and to promote and build the University's profile. Externally, this position must maintain strong relationships with journalists locally, nationally and internationally and with stakeholders at all levels in partner organizations.

- **Level of Responsibility:**

The Director, Media Relations and Issues Management directly supervises the Manager, Media Relations and is responsible for leading a wide variety of communications staff across the University in dealing with the media. This position is responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that fosters and encourages creativity, excellence, innovation and personal accountability.

The position is responsible and accountable for the overall results of the media relations program against specified goals. The position will be in a leadership role in emergency, crisis and issues management situations.

- **Decision-Making Authority:**

Responsible and accountable for establishing the priorities for media relations and addressing the changes to strategic business plans in consultation with the Associate Vice-President, Communications.

- **Physical and Sensory Demands:**

Minimal demands typical of a position operating within an office environment.

- **Working Environment:**

Moderate exposure to disagreeable conditions typical of a position exposed to stress and pressure associated with management-level responsibilities with significant public and campus scrutiny and potential for impact on the university's reputation. Media inquiries and issues affecting the university occur at any time. As a result, work outside the stated operating hours of the University is normal in this role.