
Job Title:	Senior Manager, Media Relations and Issues Management
Department:	University Communications
Reports To:	Director, Media Relations and Issues Management
Jobs Reporting:	None
Salary Grade:	USG 12
Effective Date:	June 2023

Primary Purpose

The Senior Manager, Media Relations and Issues Management (SMMRIM) has two major roles. Firstly, the SMMRIM must help to enhance the public profile of the University of Waterloo by drawing on their extensive experience researching and pitching institutionally focused stories and their deep relationships with members of the media (including at tier one outlets in Canada and internationally) to strategically position the institution as a leader in academic and research excellence through proactive news and media strategies. Secondly, the SMMRIM assists the Director in managing Waterloo's reputation and reputational risk in times of issues, crisis and emergency using communication strategies and tactics that encompass all of Waterloo's primary channels and audiences. At the leading edge of managing the institution's external reputation, the position provides media relations and issues management leadership for members of the media relations team and university communications staff in faculties and departments. The SMMRIM will frequently act as the University's spokesperson and must contribute to efforts to maintain strong relationships with journalists locally, nationally and internationally.

Key Accountabilities

Working within the broader University Communications team, the Senior Manager, Media Relations and Issues Management contributes to the development, execution and evaluation of a strategic program of media activities and management of issues and crises, which includes:

- Strategically and systematically evaluate research discoveries and outcomes, university events and new developments, to identify those with the greatest potential for top-tier media coverage, with an emphasis on institutional priorities and institutionally focused media stories.
- Build and maintain relationships with top tier domestic and international journalist
- Act as spokesperson on behalf of the University if needed, in consultation with the Director, Media Relations and Issues Management and Associate Vice-President, Communications.
- Provide 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.
- Contribute to all aspects of day-to-day media relations activities including providing excellent and responsive service to the media with a full understanding of deadline pressures.
- Contribute to 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.

- Lead the planning, development and distribution of high-value institutional materials for media while investigating new and agile channels to meet University communications and media relations needs.
- Generate new ideas around sector-related topics to showcase University brand and thought leadership.
- Oversee the maintenance of an expert guide and other materials to support media and researchers.
- Contribute to the management of University Relations wide daily news monitoring program.

Implement Communications Plans

- Under the direction of the Director, Media Relations and Issues Management and working with others across campus, oversee, develop and support pan-University communications plans that reflect and support the central goals of the University.
- Represent Waterloo's voice and position in media materials and facilitate conversations with members of the media that enhance Waterloo's reputation with local, national and international journalists.
- Ensure accuracy, consistency and excellence in quality and content of messaging for Waterloo media releases, pitches and other communications targeted to the media.
- Support the Emergency Communication Team in delivering the Emergency Response Plan as required.
- Participate in the administration of specific department-wide responsibilities and other general and specific duties as may from time to time be determined.

Insights and Understanding

- Anticipate economic, social, political, environmental, and technological developments to keep media activity relevant and targeted to the news cycle.
- Interpret the news agenda and the factors that will affect the news agenda to strategically pitch stories about the university.
- Bring together views and perspectives of stakeholders to gain a wider picture of the landscape surrounding activities and policies at Waterloo and implement changes to messaging or communication approach based on insights gathered.
- Develop tools and vehicles to generate sources of data from across campus to inform future communication activities.
- Use data and metrics to improve the effectiveness of media output by leveraging and maximizing current platforms that measure Waterloo's media exposure.
- Keep abreast of the current and changing media/news landscape including the changing nature of the public consumption of news and identify new approaches and new technologies to deliver media content in new and innovative ways.
- Regularly review team processes and identify opportunities to maximize efficiencies and increase engagement.

Influence and Impact

- Identify opportunities to engage and strengthen relations with stakeholders across campus.
- Establish and maintain relationships with relevant campus stakeholders to actively encourage ideas from a range of sources.
- Recommend and implement cross-channel approaches to communication based on institutional priorities, emerging opportunities and insights gained from data analysis.
- Champion UR guidelines: writing style, inclusive language and brand.
- Contribute to the development and promotion of university key messages.
- Work collaboratively across all units of University Relations.

Job Description

- Support the development and delivery of professional development and training programs designed to raise proficiency in media relations and issues management for leaders across campus.

**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 or equivalent experience in English, journalism, communications, public relations or communications-related field.

Experience

- At least 7-10 years of experience in media relations, or communications and in successfully leading the response to complex and highly charged issues on behalf of a publicly visible organization.
- Extensive experience researching and pitching institutionally focused stories, should have demonstrably deep relationships with members of the media, including at tier one outlets in Canada and internationally.
- Recent experience in counseling C-Level leaders, political leaders, or boards on issues management and experience working with legal counsel in managing issues.
- Strong record of building close relations with media and of working in an organization with a high-profile reputation, often in the media spotlight.
- Experience of working with senior executives and leaders and demonstrating advanced influencing and negotiation skills.
- Demonstrable track record of leading, line managing and developing teams of professional staff and of balancing conflicting and pressing demands.
- Experience of developing organizational objectives into material for targeted communications and engagement activities across a range of different channels and media, including face-to-face engagement.
- Experience of working with people with no direct or negative experience of 'professional' communications and ensuring their expectations/input/requirements from communication are effectively aligned and managed.
- Evidence of a highly collaborative style and an ability to react quickly to changing circumstances.
- Evidence of being a persuasive and dynamic team member with highly developed communication and interpersonal skills, who is outgoing and comfortable with networking, influencing and persuading at the highest level.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Superior critical thinking and excellent analytical skills to enable immediate and appropriate assessment of complex issues of concern to stakeholders including among others, the media, the public, the campus community (including senior leaders) and funders.
- Deep understanding of the current and changing media/news landscape including the changing nature of the public consumption of news.
- Strong managerial and organizational skills and ability to handle multiple tasks and meet deadlines when under pressure.
- Exceptional communications judgement, a service mind-set and a collegial approach to working with colleagues and media partners.
- Proven ability in managing multiple-source projects requiring attention to accuracy, consistency and the ability to work with many different people with competing priorities.

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills; excellent editing skills.
- Highly developed people management and leadership skills with demonstrated ability to develop and support a professional, service and continuous improvement focused workplace culture.
- Excellent consultation, negotiation and mediation skills to communicate project deliverables, resolve conflicts, and develop and sustain effective working relationships.
- Ability to make decisions with good judgment and with acute sensitivity to the political environment and to the reputation of the University.
- Demonstrated ability to thrive in and contribute to an integrated and collaborative team environment and to apply a positive team approach to working with colleagues.
- Flexibility to adapt to unexpected and time sensitive demands.
- Ability to think and act strategically, creatively and dynamically.
- A tactical, self-starter that can work under minimal supervision and navigate multiple relationships and audiences.
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Discretion and tact in dealing with sensitive information.
- Ability to manage confidential and sensitive materials and situations with the utmost discretion.
- Ability to deal professionally with tension and conflicts.
- Technical skills to include media database management, MS Office and social media best practices.

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Interacts with colleagues at all levels across the University to develop trust, rapport and promote collaboration. Demonstrates leadership and integrity when dealing with all internal and external stakeholders, with the goal of advancing the overall University communications agenda.
- **Level of Responsibility:** Requires a deep understanding of the issues facing the post-secondary education sector and the ability to interpret these factors into insightful communications in support of senior leaders and the University. Engage in communications of highest quality, which reflect and directly impact the reputation of the University in local, national and international spheres. The incumbent must be a communications professional with experience in producing diverse publications and other communication deliverables (print, web, and digital) with simultaneous or overlapping deadlines, in a fast-paced environment. The incumbent must have considerable grasp of current communication best practices and is expected to identify new opportunities for effectively reaching Waterloo's many target audiences through new communication vehicles and channels.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** Responsible for meeting critical project milestones and deadlines. This position may independently make high-risk decisions that have significant consequences on the reputation of the University. This position may also independently lead a project or lead a team.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:**
Minimal demands typical of a position operating within an office environment. This position requires regular mental and visual concentration while working on the computer, writing and reviewing documents for details and accuracy. Visual strain may result from these activities. Listening concentration is often required to respond to requests for information.
This position requires outstanding customer service, sound judgment, a strong work ethic, calm demeanor, ability to work under very challenging time constraints, constant interruptions and competing priorities.
- **Working Environment:** Minimal exposure to disagreeable conditions typical of a position exposed to stress and pressure associated with project management level responsibilities. Responsiveness is critical to the role. Intermittent work outside the normal operating hours of the University can be expected.