

Job Description

Job Title: Director of Communications

Directorate: Generic

Reports To: Chief Executive

1. Job Purpose

Strategic leadership of SQA communications and engagement.

Head of profession ensuring best practice across core communications team and overall organisation. Responsible for delivering strong return on investment in internal and external communications.

As a member of the Executive Management Team, contributing to the strategic development and direction of SQA while providing senior counsel to CEO, EMT and board on reputation and risk.

2. Key Responsibilities

- As a trusted adviser, support the Board, Chief Executive and other Directors in setting strategic direction, policies and operating priorities for SQA. Ensuring communications and engagement activity contributes to the achievement of the support and understanding necessary for the effective operation and growth of SQA.
- Develop and lead implementation of a long-term communications and marketing strategy for SQA which is fully aligned to corporate outcomes. Establish rigorous monitoring and evaluation, backed up by regular reporting to EMT and Board in a form that stimulates their engagement, ownership and shared direction.
- As head of profession, be accountable for quality and standards across all communications and engagement with full regard to organisational policies and relevant external regulation.
- Ensure communications professionals within SQA and retained external agencies are organised to optimise delivery of the communications strategy.
- Establish incisive, lean project and campaign management, including an approach to service level agreements mandated from EMT. Able to identify priorities and respond flexibly to sudden changes in circumstances.
- Ensure assigned budget is managed effectively and delivers value-for-money. Accountable officer for the budget.
- Identify critical investment needed to optimise audience engagement and reach. Prepare business case in order to secure appropriate resources.

- Ensure constant monitoring of professional skills base to identify and rectify skills gaps and to anticipate new skills. Responsible for instigating a culture of continuous improvement within communications, backed up by appropriate CPD and performance management.
- Provide effective leadership to the directorate team and ensure that people resources and expertise are developed appropriately to support SQA's strategic goals.
- Ensure the directorate contributes productively to shared corporate objectives such as user experience, customer engagement, research, meeting the needs of hard-to-reach groups and common standards on design and editorial.
- Contribute to the organisation's aims of change and innovation in the way products and services are delivered, in response to changing business and stakeholder needs.
- Lead SQA stakeholder communications, ensuring effective co-ordination and a appropriate targeting of activity. Develop visibility as a spokesperson/representative for SQA.
- Lead issues management and act as senior adviser to the CEO, EMT and board on reputational risk and mitigation.

3. Knowledge, Skills and Experience

- Be qualified to degree level, SVQ level 4 / SCQF level 9 or equivalent. Ideally, hold relevant professional qualifications in at least one communications discipline.
- Proven expertise and track record in leading a large, full service, integrated communications function within a complex organisation. Experience at senior level of an organisation subject to regulatory controls or public sector accountability would be useful but not obligatory.
- Able to champion communications and engagement across a large organisation, building productive collaboration and raising corporate capabilities.
- Proven track record in promoting innovation, staff development and managing performance. Skilled at recognising absent voices and drawing these into project planning. Comfortable with constructive challenge and acknowledging differences.
- Proven expertise in senior counsel and working as a trusted advisor within a senior management team. Resilient, quick witted and self aware; able to be a critical friend as well as negotiate.
- Ability to represent an organisation externally with confidence and authority and establish trusted advocacy role.
- Able to develop and maintain network of key external contacts, e.g. with the Scottish Government, political parties, professional bodies, senior commentators, academics and editors.

- Strong understanding of the social and political context. Proven ability to anticipate and mitigate reputational threats.
- Ability to identify and develop strategic partnerships.
- Track record of handling high-profile reputational issues.
- Able to make sense of complexity and cut through to the big picture.
- Adept at drawing out insight from research, evaluation and feedback.
- Proven track record of managing and coordinating teams as well as managing projects, and have a commitment to the development of empowered, committed and multi-skilled staff, and in a positive and inclusive workplace culture
- Actively demonstrate values led leadership behaviours.
- Be decisive, a problem solver, adaptable and able to manage strains. Calm under pressure.
- Ability to maintain a strategic focus whilst managing business as usual operations.
- Ability to articulate the bigger picture in a way that is meaningful and engaging for all.

4. Dimensions

The job holder reports directly to the Chief Executive.

Contributes fully to the Executive Management Team strategy development and implementation.

Responsible for the strategic leadership of the directorate, and as a corporate leader, provides direction and operational leadership across all forms of SQA communications and engagement.

Be a trusted adviser to the CEO, EMT and Board on reputational issues.

As a corporate director have responsibility for delivery against corporate plans and budgets, and deliver best value for public funds affecting approximately 900 staff and a net organisational budget of approximately £48 million.

Full management responsibility for directorate budget (currently approximately £4 million)

Full management responsibility for 3 direct reports and approximately 45 indirect reports, but this is likely to expand, as the new Director shapes and builds this area further within SQA.

5. Planning and Organising

A key responsibility of the job holder is to lead teams as they deliver their own business area plans, but also to ensure communications and engagement is fully considered from an early stage in strategy across the SQA including development of the long-term SQA qualifications, assessment and quality assurance strategies. The focus on strategy requires the job holder to focus on future developments and ensure that their teams undertake this too.

The job holder leads on championing best practice in communications, marketing and engagement across SQA.

They are responsible for ensuring the effective planning and co-ordination of communications activities and for appropriate consultation with the CEO, EMT and board.

The job holder leads the operational planning for each business area in the directorate. This includes agreeing the activities, campaigns, resources, procurement of external agencies, budgets and milestones in line with corporate objectives. The job holder will take account of external influences such as legislation, Scottish Government targets/objectives, audience research and stakeholder feedback.

They are responsible for the performance management of their directorate plan.

The job holder will also need to be able to respond to rapidly changing priorities and lead on discussions and the re-allocation of resources where applicable. These changes must balance the needs of internal and external stakeholders.

The position also requires the job holder to have the foresight to anticipate likely problems and risks and put in place measures which will counter or minimise the effects of these.

6. Problem Solving and Decision Making

The job holder will ensure that an effective work plan is prioritised and delivered.

The job holder will provide high level advice and guidance to resolve complex problems and issues that may pose a risk to SQA's credibility and success. Problems escalated to the job holder may be novel, hold a short deadline, and involve conflicting high-profile priorities.

The job holder will work very closely with internal customers and external stakeholders to ensure that the work of the directorate is informed by customer needs and expectations and also an understanding of current challenges, external context and future developments.

The job holder will enhance how SQA makes decisions: they will challenge both internal and external thinking. This will be difficult when seeking to change or influence established thinking and ways of working, but challenge will be done based on sound professional judgement, research, analytics, and evidence undertaken by the directorate.

The job holder will ensure that SQA's investment in marketing, communications and engagement adds value and that this area is increasingly influential in decision making across the organisation. The directorate must also play a pivotal role in identifying and setting the strategic direction and ensuring that SQA is developing products and services that are aligned with best practice.

The job holder will need to provide statistical and management information (along with its analysis) to the Executive Management Team, Board of Management and Scottish Government that will inform and influence decision making.

7. Communication and Relationships

The job holder will provide, receive, adapt and disseminate highly complex and sensitive information effectively and persuasively to the Board, Executive Management Team, Scottish Government and other organisations.

The job holder will demonstrate excellent communication skills both internally and externally to represent and promote SQA. They will successfully manage and develop the relationship with Scottish Government and with Board members.

The job holder will work closely with their executive level colleagues on leading successful organisational change within SQA and in their capacity as a Director will challenge assumptions and decision-making as appropriate providing analysis, insight and professional advice on all activities, plans and targets. As a champion of creativity, they will provide leadership on trialling new techniques and developing 'safe space' for experimentation.

The job holder will be responsible for influencing the whole organisation to follow best practice in communications and engagement, ranging from involving the communications directorate from the early stage of project development to the continuous improvement of

user experience, responding to audience requirements, increasing proactive communications and developing a more confident and productive engagement with external stakeholders.

The job holder will work closely and influence all directorates in SQA to understand, analyse and challenge established ways of working and to identify and support adoption of best practice, including the strengthening of communications and engagement capability at middle and senior management levels.

The job holder will lead a well organised, skilled and motivated team and Directorate.

This job description is intended to be indicative of the duties and responsibilities associated with the post and are not exhaustive.

This job description is open to review from time to time in light of changing environments and circumstances.