

Job Description

Job Title	Deputy Principal (Academic) (36.5 hours per week, 1.0 FTE)
Department	Directorate
Reporting to	Principal (OCA) - with accountability to Head of School for Creative Industries (OU) & OCA Board of Trustees
Responsible for	Line management of senior academic staff and senior operational staff
Grade	Grade 8
Date Approved	July 2026

Role Purpose

The Deputy Principal provides senior academic and operational leadership for the College, working in close partnership with the Principal (OCA) and the Head of School for Creative Industries (Open University). The role holds delegated responsibility for strategic leadership, curriculum direction, academic quality, teaching delivery and enhancement, student success, retention, partnership arrangements, and regulatory compliance across a complex organization.

This is a senior academic leadership role combining strategic leadership and accountability for the College programmes, with teaching, scholarship, curriculum innovation, and external academic engagement. The postholder ensures coherence, quality, and continuous improvement across programme delivery, in alignment with the College quality and regulatory requirements, Open University academic governance requirements, and external regulators including the Office for Students and The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

The Deputy Principal will bring a background and credibility of managing change within a complex educational setting, enabling them to contribute to the strategic development of academic and support staff within the College and play an active role in national and sector discussions on education, policy, and workforce development.

The role is supported by the Open University, equivalent to approximately one day per week, to serve as the main liaison between the Open College of the Arts and the Open University School of Creative Industries. It is responsible for operational academic touchpoints and shared activities. The Deputy Principal is therefore accountable for shared academic delivery, reporting to the Principal (OCA) and the Head of School of Creative Industries (OU).

The College is a subsidiary of the Open University and is responsible for delivering strategic objectives for the School of Creative Industries in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and thus contributing to the wider strategic goals of the Open University is support of growth and Reach. The Deputy Principal will therefore lead projects to achieve partnership goals and to deliver on strategic plans for recovery and growth.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- Act as the primary liaison between the Open College of the Arts and Open University School of Creative Industries, responsible for operational academic touchpoints and shared activities.

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- Provides academic leadership, curriculum oversight, partnership engagement, regulatory compliance support, and tuition.
- Defines curriculum strategy and curriculum development including commissioning research and developing policy to future proof OCAs curriculum direction of travel.
- Defines areas of the curriculum to withdraw and managing the process of withdrawal and 'teach out'
- Lead the strategy and approach for validation, revalidation and professional accreditation.
- Ensures the quality and academic integrity of OCA's services and student environments, overseeing processes for quality assurance and enhancement, student feedback, assessment and student success.
- Lead the development of Student Support services so that these enable student success.
- Alongside the Principal and Academic Board, provides the vision and direction for learning and teaching through accountability for the OCA academic strategy and associated Academic Regulatory Framework
- Lead and support tuition, including workload allocation, performance management, and professional development
- Lead operational delivery across the curriculum, ensuring high-quality, consistent implementation across all programmes.
- Develop and apply innovative, evidence-informed approaches to teaching, learning and assessment within a distance learning model.
- Lead OCA strategic objectives and associated projects for student success, improving curriculum sustainability and retention and progression.
- Develop fit-for-purpose tutor feedback systems
- Manage academic staffing models, setting KPIs and action plans for senior academic staff in managing academic teams to be consistent with OCA targets and objectives, establishing a strong and cohesive team.
- Manage academic complaints and appeals
- Ensure robust compliance with regulatory frameworks (ensure compliance with CMA, QAA, Skills England, Office of Students and other relevant bodies)
- Provide an academic vision and strategy aligned to the OU School of Creative Industries vision and wider Open University Strategy (Opening up the future - together - 2027-32)
- Lead potential new partnership arrangements and funding opportunities appropriate to OCA activities and bring these forward for discussion and follow up.
- Provide effective operational planning across competing priorities in a complex, dispersed environment.
- Recommend enhancement to better enable future student success.
- Be committed to the College mission of widening opportunity and inclusion
- Substitute for the Principal as required.

Note that this list of main tasks and activities is intended as a guide rather than an exhaustive list of tasks to be performed.

Liaison and Networking

- Extensive liaison with staff at all levels within OCA, across the Open University, partner organisations and regulatory bodies for Higher Education

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- Strong communication and influencing skills, with the ability to disseminate complex academic, pedagogical, and regulatory ideas to diverse audiences.

Initiative, Problem Solving and Decision Making

- Regularly interpret complex data for the purposes of senior decision making.
- Responsible for a portfolio of activity and delivery of academic objectives
- Regularly solves complex organisational problems, consulting as appropriate
- Ability to carry out the role in a way that is consistent with equality legislation, College and wider University policies.

Planning and managing resources

- Responsible for setting the academic direction and commissioning market research
- Responsible for managing academic and operational teams and delivery of a broad portfolio of activity to enable OCA to teach sustainably and support students.
- Responsible for establishing, monitoring and managing academic delivery budgets, models and expenditure for OCA.
- Takes a compassionate and consultative approach to managing change

Teaching and Learning Support

- Credible leadership, integrity and experience in a complex HE (or equivalent) environment
- Responsible for the framework for support, quality assurance and enhancement of OCA Teaching and Learning.
- Responsible for directing operational resources in support of curriculum development and delivery.
- Establishes resources and materials for academic and academic-related staff of OCA.

Analysis and Research

- Regularly works with complex data sets
- Interprets market research trends and external analysis.
- Commission and contribute to curriculum evaluation and review, requiring specific data gathering and analysis.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Consideration

- Regular use of VDU/screen

General

You will be required to undertake such other duties appropriate to the grade and character of the work as may reasonably be required of you. Therefore, the list of duties in this job description should not be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive.

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Your duties will be set out in this job description but please note that we reserve the right to update your job description, from time to time, to reflect changes in, or to, your job. Significant permanent changes in duties and responsibilities will require agreed revisions to be made to this job description. You will be consulted about any proposed changes.

Person Specification			
	Essential	Desirable	Method of assessment
Education	Honours degree and postgraduate qualification in discipline relevant to the role and/or equivalent substantial professional experience	Postgraduate degree or equivalent, preferably in a discipline relevant to the role, and/ or substantial professional experience. (MBA, PhD, etc.) A relevant professional qualification.	
Knowledge	Extensive knowledge of the UK Higher Education environment and current issues therein. Good negotiation and liaison skills, demonstrably able to lead and manage change. Demonstrable knowledge of teaching, curriculum, quality and assessment practices in higher education.	Knowledge of relevant regulations or legislative requirements. Demonstrable commercial exposure. Extensive business acumen and leadership experience.	
Skills	Ability to think strategically about your area of responsibility in the context of OCA strategy and the changing external environment. A positive, inclusive and collegial leadership style, with the ability to inspire and motivate others to achieve results Proven ability to design, deliver, and review curriculum or modules in higher education or professional education contexts. Strong communication and influencing skills, with the ability to disseminate complex academic, pedagogical, and		

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	regulatory ideas to diverse audiences. Able to use initiative to resolve complex problems by applying creativity to identify practical options and devise varied solutions. Excellent organisational skills in relation to budgetary and resource management. Ability to lead and motivate skilled professional and support staff in providing excellent and efficient administrative support and services.		
Experience	Experience in development and delivery of learning and teaching at a higher education institution. Experience of managing and leading change in a complex organization. Successful record of resource planning and management including managing changes to working practices. Experience of effective people management including the management of diverse groups of staff. Experience of effectively developing and implementing strategies in relation to education. Demonstrable success in building close relationships and partnerships with key internal and external parties.	Evidence of engagement in educational research, practitioner enquiry, or scholarly activity relevant to the role Experience of working as a member of a senior team in a large and complex organisation. Experience of distance learning, hybrid and/or blended delivery. Successful record of budget and financial management.	
Attributes	Ability to research, assess and interpret complex data sets to deliver meaningful insights.	A relevant professional qualification.	

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	Soft skills - public speaking, relationship building, time management, communication.		
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