Exempt Job Description

Job Title: **Communications Officer**Job Number: **X-137**  
NOC: **1221**  
Band: **5**  
Department: **Marketing & Communications**Supervisor Title:  **Manager, Communications**   
Last Reviewed: **December 5, 2017**

## Job Purpose

Reporting to the Manager of Communications, the Communications Officer is a key member of the Marketing and Communications and Recruitment and Admissions team, which is responsible for University recruitment and enrolment as well as managing Trent’s reputation. Emphasizing innovation in marketing, this position supports the manager of communication in overseeing the planning, development and implementation of communications supporting the Trent brand, public profile and overall strategic enrolment management goals of the University. Working with representatives from all University programs and departments, this position coordinates, writes and produces communications materials for external and internal audiences. The Communications Officer also provides support and back-up for the Manager of Communications and Media Relations and Strategic Communications Officer on media relations, confidential administrative messaging and crisis/emergency communications.

## Key Activities

### Strategic Communications & Recruitment Marketing

* Oversee planning and implementation of communications strategy for a brand journalism approach to current and prospective students and applicants including print and electronic contact pieces at key stages of the recruitment cycle;
* Lead development of a social media strategy with focus on recruitment communications (e.g. Instagram) keeping Trent relevant and innovative in growing areas; develop tracking and measurement to evaluate success and adapt plans as needed;
* Plan, write, oversee writers / designers and edit high-quality and accurate materials for all mediums directed at both internal and external audiences, consistent with the University's mission, vision and strategic directions, enrolment (recruitment and retention) and objectives set by the Marketing & Communications and Recruitment & Admissions Office, and with an eye to increasing the public profile of the University. Materials include, but are not limited to: web material, online marketing, social media, brochures and publications, briefing and background documents, articles, interactive presentations, video and press/media materials.;
* Act as University agent for broadcasting the Trent story to future students through innovative new media approaches
* Explore and implement creative ways to integrate written content with digital content, including video;
* Develop innovative products and materials (print and electronic) that provide an opportunity for the University to promote its researchers, faculty, students and staff;
* Coordinate suppliers on multiple projects, overseeing publications and projects from concept to completion;
* Drive innovation by researching best practices, marketing trends, new digital strategies in using both new and traditional forms of communication to effectively engage with the University’s key target audiences, including prospective and current students;
* Assist with strategic development of University’s various social media channels and content related to recruiting new students;
* Produce quality of content and effective delivery of Trent stories through a robust contribution to the publications plan and e-delivery strategy leveraging University events and success stories.
* Meet targets for marketing metrics and assist in measuring recruitment marketing initiatives for key performance indicators and planning;

### Marketing & Communications

* Meet with internal University clients, recording marketing and communications objectives and drafting appropriate marketing and communications plans for approval;
* Draft advertising and marketing material concepts and copy for review by internal clients and approval of Manager, Communications;
* Assist with digital and other photography/video/podcasts to support marketing, communications, recruitment and admissions materials and initiatives
* Coordinate and liaise with designers, producers, photographers/videographers, and other marketing, communications and creative suppliers to facilitate timely delivery of marketing material for various campaigns, announcements, initiatives and events;
* Participate in team meetings and brainstorming sessions identifying marketing opportunities and new approaches to positively position Trent University in building reputation, awareness and enrollment;
* Provide a high level of general writing and project management support to Manager, Communications
* Provide support and back-up as required to other communications and marketing functions related to project management, writing and editing both for print and online, social media, internal communications and other administrative duties
* Assistance with digital and other photography/video to support marketing, communications, recruitment and admissions materials and initiatives
* Liaise with designers, producers, photographers/videographers, and other marketing, communications and creative suppliers and contractors to facilitate timely delivery of marketing material for various campaigns, announcements, initiatives and events;
* Participate in team meetings and brainstorming sessions identifying marketing opportunities and new approaches to positively position Trent University in building reputation, awareness and enrolment;
* Provide a high level of general writing and project management support to Manager, Communications including speeches, speaking notes, preparation for interviews, etc

### Media Relations

* Act as back-up and support to Media Relations & Communications Officer
* Respond to media calls and inquiries and prepare detailed reports on media issues with the potential for impact on University reputation for the Manager, Communications
* Prepare and update key messaging for issues arising, news releases, backgrounders, fact sheets, bios; create and support related internal communication strategies; craft backgrounders, presentations, briefing notes, and proposals.
* Meet with senior administration, academic and administrative department heads to effectively and strategically identify expertise, faculty, student and alumni successes, opportunities for commentary on topical issues, features and profiles – and activate use in media relations and marketing/communications materials
* Work with the Marketing & Communications digital team to contribute to a University-wide Social Media Plan with clear strategies for making connections with media
* Provide back-up and support on media monitoring and tracking

### Emergency Operations & Issues Management

* Act as back up to the Manager, Communications, Communications & Media Relations Officer, and/or AVP, Marketing & Recruitment on emergency communications and Emergency Operations Committee
* Act on strategies for crisis/emergency communications as required, including emergency response, campus closures, issues management, including collective bargaining and potential labour disputes
* Access and synthesize confidential and sensitive information, related to board governance, budgets, human resources, for backgrounders, speaking points, communications plans, etc.
* Maintain discretion and confidentiality with regard to files and sensitive issues, attend meetings, interviewing senior administrators to support the Manager of Communications on communication plans and materials;
* Develop briefing materials, backgrounders, speaking points for senior administration on media requests and confidential issues as required

### General communications support and special projects

* Assist in planning, development and implementation of public relations, marketing and communications, and recruitment and admissions special events, including Open House
* Build effective relationships and collaborate with all administrative and academic departments on key messaging;
* Act as key member and contributor to University-wide Integrated Communications Group, contributing to pan University communications strategy and planning
* Oversee and provide direction on work of Marketing & Communications student employees
* Liaise with suppliers (e.g. freelancers, printers, sign companies, designers) to ensure deadlines are met;
* Post material to daily news and myTrent portals and other communications tools as they evolve;
* Support distribution logistics for print and e-newsletters e
* Estimate budgets for communications materials and projects and ensure timely, on-budget delivery;
* Contribute to management of materials library, assist with photo database, electronic and hard copy department files;
* Schedule, take minutes and follow up on action items of department meetings, standing or ad hoc committees;
* Other duties as assigned.

## Education

Bachelor’s degree (Honours) in Marketing, Communications, Journalism, Media Studies or related field with post-graduate diploma or specialization in any one of these areas) is required.

## Experience Required

A minimum of five years’ experience in professional writing and communications activities (using new and traditional forms of media), preferably in a large public sector or corporate setting, is required.

Skills/Attributes/Qualifications:

* Excellent marketing writing and verbal communication skills;
* Demonstrated knowledge and experience in marketing and understanding of target audiences;
* Superior interpersonal strengths, conceptual skills, the ability to collaborate creatively and consult with others;
* Interest and appetite for the latest developments in marketing and social media as well as experience in integrating social media strategies.
* Outstanding strategic, creative, and conceptual writing and editing skills for various media
* Recognizable and consistent social media presence as well as interest and expertise in new media technologies.
* Exemplary interpersonal, communications, conflict resolution skills with abilities to build bridges between complex stakeholder groups and individuals.
* Well-honed issues management skills and ability to manage confidential information and display sensitivity during difficult situations.
* Ability to manage diverse projects and shifting priorities within tight timelines;
* Conversant with new media technologies, social media, photography and videography;
* Excellent sense of judgement, initiative, tact, diplomacy and discretion;
* Dedication to customer service and a student-centred environment.
* Ability to work with constructive feedback and take direction;
* Knowledge of the Ontario secondary and post-secondary system environments, trends and needs;
* An understanding of complex stakeholder groups and diverse audiences;
* Experience in proof-reading, editing and in managing publication projects;
* Excellent computing skills (Microsoft Office, Word, Excel, Project Management, email, internet, web content management, PowerPoint, etc.)
* Superior interpersonal strengths, conceptual skills, the ability to collaborate creatively and consult with others

## Analytical Reasoning

Must display an issues management mindset and be able to project how evolving issues will impact the reputation of the department/University. The complexity of this role is tied to the multitude of projects and priorities that must be managed simultaneously, with tight deadlines. The output of work is very public in nature and special attention must be adhered to ensuring the accuracy of work that is published in the public domain. Intense conceptual thinking is required to define the correct path for successful project management (e.g. recruitment marketing strategy, planning and coordination on confidential issues management topics).

*Example:*

The Communications Officer is responsible for overseeing and coordinating multiple projects at the same time. Some projects can be organized in advance (i.e. scheduled publications like the Viewbook, which is produced and distributed once per year) but well thought out and established timelines for such projects can be affected by competing priorities (i.e. recruitment projects like ads or brochures required in a short, tight timeframe). In addition, depending on the strategic priorities of the University, last minute additions/revisions to established editorial line-ups and publication outlines can occur, sometimes during the last stages of a project/publication. In this position, such competing priorities are the norm and the candidate must learn to adapt and reprioritize projects accordingly.

## Decision Making

Interacts regularly with senior administration, including President, VPs, AVPs, Deans, as well as external stakeholders including parents, prospects, applicants. In doing so, the Communications Officer provides support and messaging that has wide-reaching impact across the University, in the community and beyond. Sound judgement is required to maintain and cultivate relations with a variety of stakeholders in media, administration and internal/external communities. In broader consultation with Manager, Communications, this position is required to use sound judgement; decisions usually involve determining the best process to carry out the job tasks.

*Example:*

Publications planning – the Communications Officer is responsible for overseeing all aspects of certain publications (i.e. Viewbook), including developing timelines for production, managing relationships with suppliers – designers, photographers, and printers (including completing RFPs, if required), writing content (based on strategic messaging and University priorities), sourcing photos/organizing relevant photo shoots, etc.

## Impact

Decisions taken by the Communications Officer have the potential of impacting the reputation and public image of the University. Work completed is frequently broadcast and shared in the public domain.

Impact on the organization is likely to extend to other work groups and may also have some effect on clients and service partners: errors are normally detected before they become serious, but may cause interruption and loss of time to colleagues in the same section or other work groups to correct. Errors that go undetected may affect recommendations, decisions or actions, leading to a minor negative impact to the whole organization. Areas of potential impact could be in the organization’s reputation and public image.

*Example:*

This position is responsible for producing a variety of critical communications materials to diverse audiences through the web, print and social media. Poorly written or conceived messaging and materials can lead to dissatisfaction of these audiences (including prospective students and applicants) and potentially damage the University’s reputation and ability to attract students. Ideas and proposals are discussed with and approved by the Manager.

## Responsibility for the Work of Others

Supervisory responsibility is not a job requirement. The job may provide guidance by helping new people to adapt to the work environment or orienting others to work processes and methods on an ad hoc basis.

**Direct Responsibility for the Work of Others:**

* Contracted suppliers, including freelance writers, designers, photographers, and printers – often act as first point of contact in the department for contracted suppliers – manage work of freelance writers (assign stories, review and edit materials, provide feedback and act as mentor/provide direction for future pieces); designers – seek quotes on publications and projects, manage relationships with multiple designers.; photographers – provide creative direction of photo shoots and video projects; printers – seek quotes on publications and projects, manage relationships with multiple print houses, ensure work is distributed equally, etc.
* Student employees – provide direction to student employees on projects/tasks to be undertaken; review/edit written materials and photography; assist with training on various office procedures, etc.

**Indirect Responsibility for the Work of Others:**

* Liaises with other internal departments (e.g. President’s Office, Advancement, Risk Management, Facilities Management, Conference Services) on messaging and materials

## Communication

The Communications Officer is a direct point of contact for both the internal and external communities. Communication involves the ability to clarify ideas and messages, to summarize or synthesize the information according to the audience’s need, to use judgment in discussing problems, presenting information, making recommendations. Communication requires consulting on issues. Lack of judgment and discretion in communicating messages could result in damage to the organization’s image. Job responsibilities require communication with very diverse contacts, both inside and outside of the organization, including senior officials in the University, government representatives, prospective students and applicants, the community, and the general public.

**Internal Contacts:**

* University administration – President’s Office, Vice Presidents, Board of Governors, Deans, etc. (institutional messaging, speech and letter writing, briefing and background documents, internal memos/updates, press materials, etc.)
* Academic department heads, faculty and administrative assistants – all departments/programs, including undergraduate, graduate and professional programs (institutional messaging, press materials, profiles, brochures, marketing materials, online marketing/websites, photography, etc.)
* Administrative department directors and staff – all offices (i.e. Advancement, Alumni, Trent International, Registrar, Liaison, Career Centre, Library, etc.) (institutional messaging, profiles, brochures, marketing materials, online marketing/websites, photography, etc.)
* Students – undergraduate and graduate – regular contact with current students and alumni for profiles, press materials, online marketing/web content, events promotion, etc.
* Ancillary operations (Athletics, Conferences, etc.) (institutional messaging, profiles, brochures, marketing materials, online marketing/websites, photography, etc.)

**External Contacts:**

* Suppliers, vendors (freelance writers, designers, printers, etc.) – arrange “contracts” with vendors (RFPs, quotes, etc.), act as liaison between University clients (including departments, offices and M&C) and suppliers on various projects, etc.
* General public – indirect contact through development of stories and messages for press releases, website stories and text, etc.; occasionally respond to direct inquiries from the public
* Prospective students and applicants – through printed materials and social media interaction communicate with prospective students and their families and influencers, including guidance counsellors, etc.
* Associations – COU, Universities Canada, etc.
* VIPs – honorary degree recipients, Chancellor
* Government representatives – work with government reps through Manager

Communications, press conferences and University events, news releases, etc.

* Counterparts or contacts at other universities or academic institutions – consult on best practices; work with them on various events and/or announcements (especially local institutions/Fleming College), etc.
* Representatives from various external organizations – includes community organizations (around events, press releases, etc.)
* Media – direct contact with members of the media, back-up to Media Relations & Communications Officer for media calls/inquires, etc.

## Motor/ Sensory Skills

There is a requirement for some level of precision in motor or sensory skills, with some tolerance allowed. Job duties include keyboarding throughout the day and require dexterity involving speed and accuracy. Attention to visual detail is also required (reviewing/providing direction on designed materials, etc.). Sight is also an important factor in regards to photography.

**Motor Skills:**

**Skill Type** **Job Requiring**

Working at work station throughout the day, responding to telephone calls, large volumes of e-mails

Keyboarding – require dexterity involing speed and accuracy

Handwriting – required to capture notes from interviews (in person or on the phone) quickly and accurately

Verbal – excellent verbal communication skills; engaged in extensive verbal communication in media and public relations role; pick-up on verbal cues in interviews (in person, on phone or through e-mail); communicate effectively with all audiences

Visual – attention to fine detail and overall presentation of professional-looking materials; fit with Trent brand and identity; photography and videography best angles/lighting/set-up for various purposes  
  
Effort

**Physical Effort: Description** **Job Tasks Required**

Sustained concentration ability to maintain concentration on projects to ensure their completion in an accurate and timely manner in the face of constant interruptions, requests and emerging issues

Multitasking/competing demands ability to manage multiple and diverse projects with competing timelines; ability to adapt schedule for new priorities

Listening understanding of complex stakeholder groups and diverse audiences; listen and work with constructive feedback; take direction; good customer service approach

Diplomacy appropriate judgement, tact and discretion in dealing with confidential and sensitive information as well as various audiences and constituents

**Description** **Job Tasks Required**

Keyboarding extended periods of time spent keyboarding; speed and accuracy required

Visual demand working on computers, writing, reviewing visual materials, etc.; photography skills

Duration working on computer and in office for sustained periods of time

Lifting/Carrying limited lifting and carrying – publication mailings, etc.

Walking/Standing event coverage and photography; travel/walking to various places on campus and throughout community to cover events and activities, conduct interviews, etc.; standing for longer periods of time for photography, etc.

Extended Hours /Mobility Work sometimes involves covering evening and

weekend events and activities

## Working Conditions

**Psychological Conditions:**

**Condition** **Condition Description**

Competing demands/Conflicting multiple and diverse projects with competing timelines

work priorities

Changing deadlines/time pressures ability to adapt to shifting timelines; ability to work under time pressures and produce accurate materials/information in short time frame

Stress position is part of a department that manages a consistent high volume of work and concurrent projects

**Physical Conditions:**

**Condition** **Condition Description**

Duration extended hours often required – covering events/activities, meeting deadlines, etc.

Interior/Exterior activities take place both internally and externally and

may require limited, local travel