# **University of Sunderland**

Role profile

### **Job title:**

Head of Legal Services

### **Grade:**

### Senior Manager (Head of Support Function).

### **Department:**

Academic Registry

### **Location:**

Sunderland Campuses

### **Reports to:**

Deputy Academic Registrar

### **Working hours:**

37

**The role:** As Head of Legal Services, you'll play a pivotal role in leading the direction and shape of the Legal Services Team, as a critical University service. You will also provide specialist and general legal advice to help safeguard and advance the University across a range of business activities and initiatives, including those stemming from the University’s Strategic Plan 2030 and its delivery plans. As well as providing clear and understandable legal advice to University Executive and Senior Leadership Board (SLB) members on complex and sensitive legal casework, the role-holder will act as the Legal Services representative for a range of major strategic initiatives.

The Head of Legal Services will champion and spearhead innovations in risk-based, prioritised approaches to legal advice provision to clients across the University, fostering efficient models of working and liaison. In the role, you will chair or be a key member of, University groups linked to statutory compliance or regulatory and compliance matters. You will also be invited to participate in, or lead on, other Academic Registry and Governance projects under the direction of the Academic Registrar, Deputy Academic Registrar, and Chief Operating Officer’s portfolios. As a member of the Academic Registry and Governance Senior Leadership Team, you will play a collective role in contributing to Academic Registry’s annual Service Plan and suite of transformation projects. You’ll collaborate closely with the and Deputy Academic Registrar and other key internal and external stakeholders, to drive initiatives and champion the role of Legal Services, working with senior leaders and peers to find proportionate and legally sound solutions to thorny and challenging issues.

### **The responsibilities**:

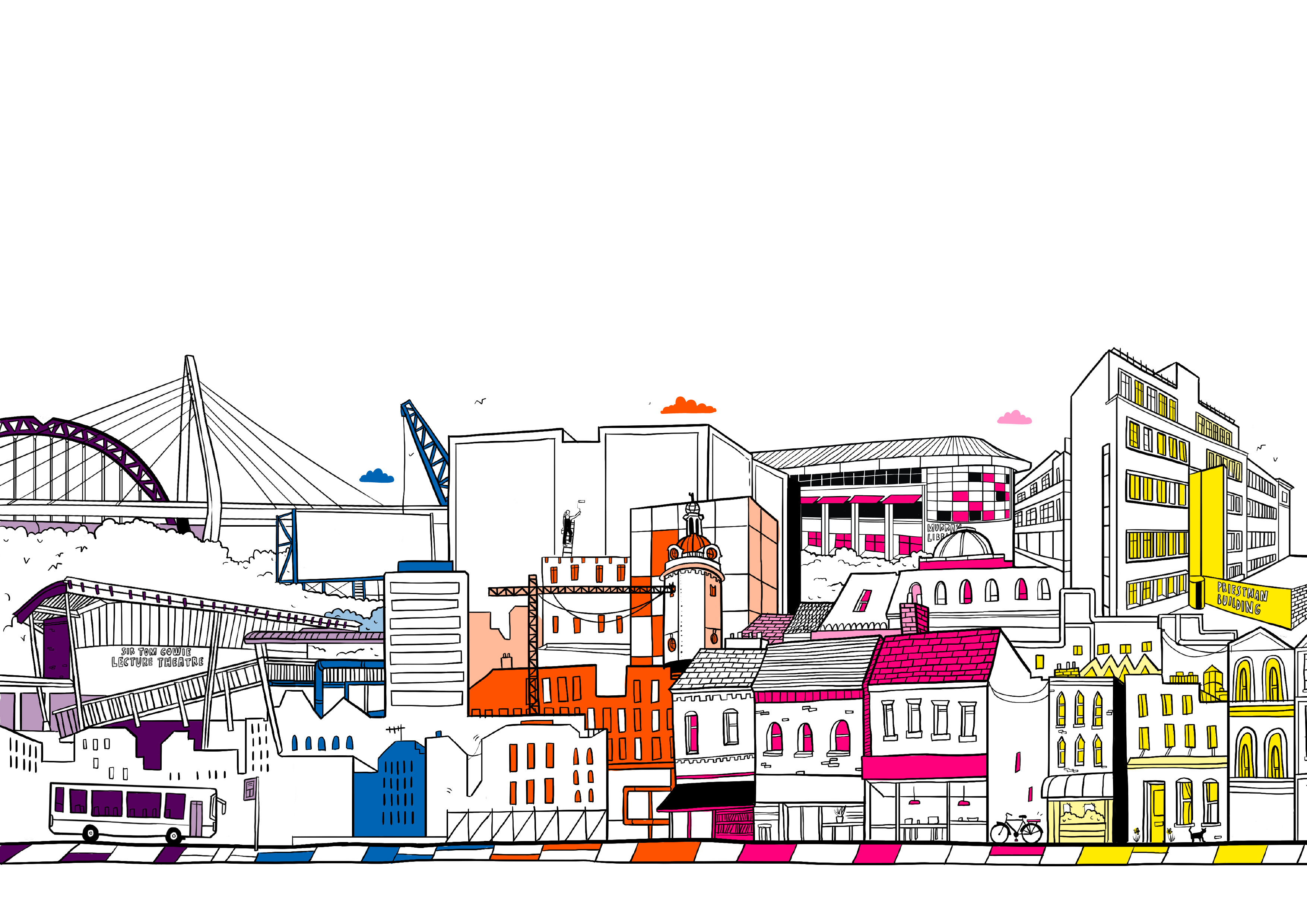
* To apply personal specialist knowledge and experience in complex commercial and contract law to University developments, projects and agreements
* To be a lead contact on complex matters of legal interpretation and application, offering comprehensive and comprehensible legal advice to develop robust and compliant agreements and terms
* To line manage a small team of Senior Solicitors (x2), a Solicitor (x1) and a Legal and Governance Coordinator (x1) within a wider Legal and Governance Services team
* To direct the Team in providing legal advice on behalf of the University, including in the areas of contract, commercial, corporate, employment, property, litigation (including representation in Court), constitutional, charity, consumer, intellectual property and technology law and overseas operations and activities
* To advise the University Executive and other senior staff on the legal dimensions and implications of contracts and agreements between the University and other parties
* Working with colleagues in the Research, Innovation and Skills Team and academic research leads and investigators, to secure the protection of University intellectual property as appropriate (i.e. patents, copyright, trademarks and non-disclosure agreements for research)
* To commission external legal advice on behalf of the University, and be the key contact during the engagement of these services
* To represent, or act as a signatory for, the University, where appropriate for statutory purposes
* To develop and lead the operation of a model for the prioritised allocation of all legal casework within the Legal Services Team
* To develop and design a framework within which non-legally qualified staff across the University can self-manage and administer lower-risk, precedent-based and routine and repeat processing of agreements, transactions and compliance activity
* To champion and commission the development of technology and other innovations in approaches to work to support legal casework transactions
* Working with the Governance Officer, to act as Company Secretary and/or offer corporate legal advice to the directors of the University’s subsidiary companies on any matters of corporate law
* Working with Professional Service Leads with specialist knowledge of emerging statutory requirements in their service areas, to lead on horizon-scanning of major legislative changes affecting the higher education sector and University specifically, producing briefings and impact assessments for a range of audiences, including the University Executive and Board of Governors
* To lead on, or be part of, wider University projects as directed and delegated by the Chief Operating Officer, Academic Registrar and Deputy Academic Registrar.

**Special circumstances:**

The role may require occasional UK and international travel.

### **The benefits:**

At the University of Sunderland, we are committed to creating a work environment where you can truly thrive. We recognise that our success is built on the dedication and talent of our people, which is why we have developed a benefits package designed to support you in every aspect of your life.

From generous annual leave and enhanced pay for important life events like maternity, paternity, or adoption, to flexible work options that help you balance life’s demands, we’ve got you covered. Our benefits also include access to our award-winning staff support networks, confidential employee assistance, discounts on major retail brands, leisure activities, travel to work, and more.

At Sunderland, we’re not just offering a job, we’re offering a place where you can grow, connect, and feel truly valued.

# **Who we’re looking for**

### Your qualifications include:

* A recognised law degree or equivalent
* A qualified solicitor or barrister, with current practising certificate, qualified to practice in England and Wales
* A postgraduate qualification (desirable).

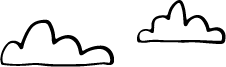
### Your experience includes:

* Experience of a broad range of disciplines relevant to the University’s context, particularly commercial/contract law, with the ability to acquire new areas of specialism in accordance with evolving business needs (Essential)
* Experience of other areas of law affecting the University including: property, construction, company, employment, dispute resolution/complex or litigated student complaints, data protection and activities and operations overseas (Desirable)
* Extensive experience leading and line management of teams, driving strategic initiatives in a legal, regulatory or corporate governance context in the public, private or third sectors (Essential)
* The effective management, prioritisation and allocation of complex legal caseloads (Essential)
* Proven success in overseeing complex, multi-faceted projects from inception to completion (Essential)
* Experience managing budgets, forecasting, and ensuring financial sustainability at a senior level] (Essential)
* Expertise in leading organisational change and navigating complex transformations (Essential)
* Experience of developing, interpreting and communicate legal policy into accessible and understandable practice for busy internal and/or external clients with high expectations and limited legal knowledge (Desirable)
* Knowledge of the specific statutory and regulatory framework for HE, including as overseen by the OfS, UKRI, OfSTED, OIAHE and wider compliance body requirements, such as UKVI and CMA (Desirable)

**What we’re looking for**

Your expertise includes:

* Demonstrating honesty, loyalty, integrity, creativity and flexibility
* Taking ownership and displaying resolve to be accountable for delivering against objectives
* Strong communication and interpersonal skills
* Ability to engage effectively and positively across a range of stakeholders both internal and external to the University
* Self-confidence, demonstrating a 'can do' approach
* Cultural awareness and a high level of commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity.



**Culture Framework:**

Our Culture Framework presents the way we do things at the University of Sunderland. It is a living document of our culture. It supports how we apply ourselves at work and it helps with our approach to making decisions and working with each other.

It is woven into all our people policies and procedures, supporting how colleagues are managed, recognised, and developed. Our values are our shared principles as an institution. We undertake actions to make them come to life. If you decide that a career with us is perfect for you, then these principles will lead and motivate your work every single day.

A purple planet in the dark

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**INCLUSIVE**

We celebrate our diverse culture where everyone's contribution is welcomed and valued.

What leaders do:

RESPECTFUL - Create team environments where it feels safe to ask questions, share views, & challenge non-inclusive situations.

AUTHENTIC - Are consistent & transparent with how colleagues are led & motivated.

DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS - Ensure a diverse range of people are involved with making decisions or generating ideas.

A group of hands with stars and a stick

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**INSPIRING**

We will provide an inspiring, enterprising, and empowering experience for our students and staff.

What leaders do:

ENTHUSIASTIC - Bring clarity on the vision/purpose of the University & translate that message so teams understand their contribution.

ENCOURAGING - Trust & empower others to grow, giving praise and constructive feedback.

LIFE-LONG LEARNERS - Support others to develop, working with them to seek opportunities to learn.

A drawing of a light bulb and a ball

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**INNOVATIVE**

We value people for their creativity and update our knowledge and practice to enhance the student experience and improve our institutional performance.

What leaders do:

CREATIVE - Challenge the status quo & encourage others to do the same.

CURIOUS - Create a safe environment where teams can share new ideas.

SOLUTIONS FINDERS - Enable others to make improvements.

A pink cup and a pink cup on a black background

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**COLLABORATIVE**

We work together as a community with our partners and build lasting relationships to achieve our shared ambition.

What leaders do:

ACCOUNTABLE - Explain the why behind decisions & own the outcome.

COMMITTED - Make regular contact with their team to share information & listen & include others in decision-making & tasks.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDERS - Make space for real collaboration to happen, within or outside the University, bringing the right people together

A yellow medal on a stack of blocks

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**EXCELLENT**

We strive for EXCELLENCE in all that we do in teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange, as well as in the services we provide to students and to each other.

To enable us to be excellent, we seek to act in ways that are INCLUSIVE, INSPIRING, INNOVATIVE & COLLABORATIVE.