



Executive Director - BUILA (British Universities' International Liaison Association)

About BUILA

The British Universities' International Liaison Association (BUILA) is a UK-wide membership organisation representing professionals working in international student recruitment and international relations within higher education.

BUILA provides a collaborative forum for members, offering sector insight, professional development, networking opportunities, and a collective voice to influence policy and practice. The Association works closely with key partners across government and the education sector to support sustainable, ethical, and effective international recruitment.

The Opportunity

This is a pivotal leadership role at a time of transformation and opportunity for BUILA.

We are seeking an exceptional individual to support the next phase of the organisation's development as it transitions into a company by limited guarantee. We are looking for a candidate to help shape a clear and compelling vision for "BUILA 2.0". Strengthening our impact and ensuring we remain a trusted and influential voice within the international higher education sector.

The Executive Director will work in close partnership with the elected Directors and Council, as well as the Operational Team, to drive strategic priorities, enhance member value, and position BUILA at the forefront of sector collaboration and policy engagement.

Why Join BUILA?

This is a unique opportunity to play a central role in shaping the future of a respected sector organisation and contributing to international higher education in the UK and beyond.

You will work alongside a committed elected Council and sector leaders, helping to influence policy, support members, and drive innovation in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Role Purpose

The Executive Lead will provide strategic leadership, operational oversight, and sector-wide representation for BUILA, working in partnership with the elected Directors and members of the Council.

The role is responsible for:



- Supporting the articulation and delivery of the organisation’s vision and strategy
 - Demonstrating impact and value to members
 - Strengthening governance, partnerships, and organisational capability
 - Ensuring BUILA remains a collaborative, forward-looking, and influential sector body
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Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Vision

- Support the development and delivery of BUILA’s strategic direction, including shaping the vision for “BUILA 2.0”.
- Articulate the organisation’s purpose, impact, and value to members and stakeholders.
- Ensure effective communication of outcomes and impact (“closing the loop”) to the membership.
- Provide thought leadership and maintain oversight of sector developments.
- Proven operational leadership experience at an equivalent level to strategic responsibility. This role demands an equal command of both, and candidates should be comfortable owning the operational running of the organisation in full.

Stakeholder Engagement and External Relations

- Develop and manage strategic relationships with key partners, including government departments and sector organisations.
- Represent BUILA at meetings, events, and forums as appropriate.
- Prepare briefings, presentations, and papers to support engagement.
- Support the delivery of lobbying and public affairs activity in collaboration with the elected Council Directors, members and external partners.

Governance and Council Collaboration

- Work in partnership with the elected Council Directors and members to support effective governance and decision-making.
- Support clarity of roles, responsibilities, and expectations across the elected Council membership.
- Coordinate the planning and administration of the Council and any associated governance.
- Ensure strong induction processes for new Council Directors and members, building confidence and understanding of their roles.
- Contribute to succession planning by supporting the identification and development of future Council Directors.

Organisational Development and Culture

- Foster a collaborative, transparent, and accountable culture across BUILA.
- Encourage knowledge sharing, open discussion, and collective ownership.
- Support the professionalisation of working practices, including implementing effective systems and project management approaches.
- Contribute to the development of sustainable organisational and staffing models.

Operations and Financial Oversight

- Oversee financial records and ensure accounts, tax returns and statutory filings are completed on time and in line with UK company law.
- Oversee day-to-day financial processes, including expenses and payments, ensuring appropriate controls are in place.
- Support the preparation of the Annual Report and audited accounts for approval by the Council.
- Contribute to the development of systems for data collection and analysis.
- Explore business development opportunities to build new avenues of income.

Membership Offer and Services

- Support the enhancement of BUILA's training and development offer in line with sector needs.
- Improve member engagement and communications across all channels. To lead on a refresh of Regional Interest Groups and Directors Forum.
- Ensure services remain relevant, high-quality, and aligned to member priorities.

Events and Sector Engagement

- Oversee a 21st century conference experience which is designed to be immersive, collaborative and highly engaging for the future development and delivery of the BUILA Annual Conference and other events.
- Ensure training and events evolve to meet changing sector expectations and member needs.

Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns

- Support the delivery of public affairs and PR campaigns in collaboration with external agencies.
- Contribute to lobbying strategy and policy engagement activity, working closely with the Council.
- Support initiatives promoting sustainable and ethical recruitment practices.

Project Delivery

- Work with the Operational Team and Council Directors and members to deliver key strategic projects.
- Ensure effective planning, coordination, and delivery of organisational priorities.

Additional Responsibilities

- Undertake any other duties as required by the elected Directors of the Council.

Person Specification

Essential Experience



- Proven experience in strategic planning and organisational delivery.
- Experience of working with Non-Executive Boards, elected Councils or governance structures.
- Strong track record in stakeholder engagement and partnership development.
- Experience in policy, public affairs, or influencing activity.
- Experience of financial oversight and organisational management.
- Experience delivering complex, multi-stakeholder projects.

Essential Knowledge

- Strong understanding of the UK and global international higher education landscape.
- Knowledge of policy and regulatory issues affecting international student recruitment.
- Understanding of governance best practice within membership organisations.

Skills and Abilities

- Excellent strategic thinking and planning capability.
- Strong communication and influencing skills.
- Ability to build effective relationships across a wide range of stakeholders, including Directors.
- Strong organisational and project management skills.
- Analytical and data-informed decision-making ability.

Leadership and Personal Attributes

- Collaborative and inclusive approach, with the ability to work effectively in partnership with an elected Council.
- High levels of integrity and professionalism.
- Confidence to represent BUILA and contribute to sector leadership.
- Resilient, adaptable, and forward-thinking.
- Committed to transparency, accountability, and shared success.

Desirable

- Experience within a membership organisation or professional association.
- Experience delivering sector events or conferences.
- Experience working with public affairs or PR agencies.
- Experience developing training or professional development programmes.
- Understanding of ethical recruitment practices.

Governance, Reporting Structure, and Operational Leadership Responsibilities

The Executive Lead reports to the elected Director of the Council (Chair) or in their absence, the Vice Chairs.

The role is responsible for three additional posts which are currently on a part time contractual basis that provide operational support to events and membership, key projects driven by external policy drivers, marketing and delivery of the Regional Interest Specialist Groups.

This role will hold a Directorship of the Company in an ex-officio capacity.