

TASO

Transforming Access
and Student Outcomes
in Higher Education

Candidate information pack

Chief Research Officer

Follow us



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**Until we get equality in
education, we won't have an
equal society.**

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Sonia Sotomayor

Welcome from our CEO

I'm delighted that you're interested in working for the TASO - the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education!

The Chief Research Officer is the lead role in the organisation for our research and evaluation programme. As part of the senior leadership team, reporting directly to me as the CEO, the role offers a wide range of opportunities for a leader who's committed to using evidence to tackle inequalities in higher education.

You'll be joining the organisation at an exciting time. We've been operating for six years, and are now fully embedded and recognised for our expertise in higher education. The Office for Students recommends our evaluation resources to the sector, while the Department for Education also highlighted our work in its White Paper on higher education last year. We are a member of the Government's 'What Works Movement' meaning we engage regularly with our fellow What Works Centres as well as the Cabinet Office, while we also have strong links with senior leaders at universities and colleges across England and the rest of the UK.

The senior leadership team and board are now reflecting on our achievements and challenges over the past 5-6 years and the CRO would play a central role in working with us to develop our strategy and priorities in the coming years.

As you will see from the job pack, TASO has a range of policies and procedures that are designed to help promote fairness and equity in the treatment of individuals, and offer a generous benefits package. We know, however, that a team culture goes beyond policies, and regularly reflect on the informal ways we work, and the role of leadership in delivering on equality and inclusion as part of our team culture. I particularly welcome applicants from those under-represented in research roles, particularly senior research roles, including those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, those from disabled backgrounds and from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

I look forward to working with you.

Dr Omar Khan

Chief Executive Officer of TASO

About TASO

The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) is an affiliate What Works Centre, and part of the UK Government's What Works Movement. Our vision is to eliminate equality gaps in higher education (HE). Our mission is to improve lives through evidence-informed practice.

TASO was set up in 2019 and became an independent charity in April 2021. Our work focuses on the generation, synthesis and dissemination of high-quality evidence about effective practice in widening participation and student outcomes. We primarily focus on developing and disseminating causal evidence.



Our values

Continue to challenge

We are honest and transparent in every element of our work.

Integrity is everything

We challenge the status quo, push boundaries and strive for better.
from ourselves, from the team and from our stakeholders.

Always learning

We remain open-minded and curious, ever-ready to learn, develop or find out something new.

Stronger together

We support each other and believe in the strength of teamwork, partnership and collaboration.

Committed to equity

We strive to achieve fairness in everything we do.

Act with empathy

Our approach is driven by kindness, understanding and respect.



The role

The Chief Research Officer will ensure the smooth and successful delivery of TASO's Research & Evaluation programme, with overall responsibility for TASO's Research and Evaluation budget. This will involve managing the staff involved in these functions to deliver TASO's research, evaluation, synthesis and evidence mobilisation activities to time and within budget.

Working closely with the Chief Executive, the postholder will help shape TASO's overall strategic direction and translate this into a clear programme of research and evaluation activity. They will lead and manage the teams responsible for research and evaluation to ensure that TASO's strategies are delivered effectively, on time and within budget.

The role includes overseeing the delivery of TASO's research programmes, ensuring compliance, managing research funding rounds, and maintaining strong oversight of subcontracted work. The Chief Research Officer will also oversee the development and implementation of TASO's evaluation strategy, including the commissioning and monitoring of evaluations and the effective functioning of governance mechanisms such as the Research Sub-committee and Evaluation Advisory Panel.

Working with the Chief Executive, Head of Evaluation, and Head of Communications, they will ensure a strategic approach to communications, dissemination and stakeholder engagement, strengthening awareness and uptake of TASO's work across the sector. The postholder will champion the quality, accuracy and transparency of TASO publications and act as a credible and respected voice for robust service research and evaluation.



Key objectives of the role

- Act as overall in-house lead on all TASO research and evaluation activities, upholding methodological standards to ensure the production of high-quality casual evidence.
- Plan and oversee TASO's research and evaluation programmes, including ensuring adherence to all relevant procurement, legal and ethical requirements, delivery of research funding rounds and effective management of research and evaluation partners.
- Take overall responsibility for the TASO research and evaluation budget, including budget allocation, forecasting, monitoring and reporting. Lead resourcing and budgetary planning and reporting for the research and evaluation team.
- Oversee the quality, accuracy and transparency of TASO research and evaluation publications.
- Oversee the running of the Research and Evaluation subcommittee of the TASO Board to ensure effective scrutiny of the Research and Evaluation programme and a clear line of support for the Board to understand our work.
- Act as ambassador and leader of TASO, speaking at external events about the TASO Research and Evaluation programme.
- Provide line management for team members, with overall leadership for a team of seven.
- Work with the Chief Executive to develop and monitor TASO's overall strategic direction, and to translate this strategic direction into the effective operations and activities of the organisation.
- Lead on work to mobilise Research and Evaluation outputs (e.g. through events, publications and stakeholder engagement) via effective liaison with the Communications team.



The attributes we are looking for in a Chief Research Officer

Education/qualification and training

Essential

- Undergraduate degree in relevant discipline
- PhD or Masters level qualification with evidence of applied research

Knowledge/skills

Essential

- Overseeing and managing research projects, including scoping, planning, delivering and reporting, and quality-assurance.
- Confident and clear written and verbal communication, and the ability to review and edit others' work in line with organisational style
- Considering and synthesising complex information into formats that are useful to a wide range of stakeholders, including senior managers, practitioners and the lay public.

Desirable

- Budget planning and monitoring.
- Coordinating and influencing diverse stakeholders to deliver strategic priorities, including building positive relationships and convening forums where stakeholders can be briefed and issues surfaced.
- Understanding of widening participation and/or student success agendas.



The attributes we are looking for in a Chief Research Officer

Experience

Essential

- Designing and implementing rigorous quantitative impact evaluations, including randomised controlled trials, difference in differences, regression discontinuity, and propensity score matching, particularly applied to policymaking.
- Applying academic research to real-world problems.
- Line and project management of staff with a range of development needs, including developmental coaching and performance management
- Managing multiple projects and competing demands.

Desirable

- Commissioning and overseeing external research providers.
- Developing and delivering capability-building presentations and workshops for professional audiences.

Personal characteristics/other requirements

Essential

- Committed to evidence-led decision-making.
- Determined, resilient and optimistic approach to work.
- Able to advocate for robust evaluation and build enthusiasm and capacity in non-expert collaborators.



Why work for TASO?

- **Annual holiday** - 27 days per year, plus public/bank holidays and a day off for your birthday.
- **Pension scheme** - TASO will contribute 8% to your pension.
- **Flexible working** - We are committed to flexible working where possible, with core hours of 10:00 - 16:00.
- **Hybrid working** - Currently, a two-day requirement to work from our London office.
- **Team days** - Regular team days in the office and team-building days.
- **Training and development** - Systematic performance reviews, personalised learning and development objectives and access to a training and development fund plus team training days.
- **Volunteering** - One day a year off to volunteer for an organisation of your choice.
- **Wellbeing** - Free employee assistance programme that offers webinars, courses, and counselling sessions. A yearly personal wellbeing budget.
- **Sick pay scheme** - 3 months full pay and 3 months half pay after probation has been passed.
- **Staff discounts** - Discounts are available via Perks At Work from a wide range of retailers for shopping, dining, experiences, car maintenance, study, etc.



Initial terms and conditions of appointment

- Remuneration: £65,000 to £70,000 per annum - depending on experience
- Location: Central London office, nearest station London Blackfriars. This post will be hybrid with the expectation that the post holder will be in the office two days a week in addition to attending office based project meetings.
- Term: Permanent, Full-time, 35 hours per week. We are open to part-time applications, minimum 0.8FTE
- Candidates must have the right to work in the UK.



How to apply

We are working with our recruitment partner Whiton Maynard on this role. To apply, please send your CV to tim@whitonmaynard.com together with a separate personal statement (maximum 2 sides of A4) outlining why you're interested in the role and how you meet the person specification.

If you would like to discuss the role details before applying, please contact Tim Hamilton-West via the email above.

Deadline for applications: Monday 13 April, 13:00

Interviews are expected to be held on Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 April.



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Equality! Where is it, if not in education? Equal rights! They cannot exist without equality of instruction.

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Frances Wright

