

Senior Legal Counsel (Research)

HEP Level 10

POSITION NUMBER	954367
ORGANISATIONAL UNIT	Office of the General Counsel
POSITION REPORTS TO	General Counsel
OVERALL PURPOSE	<p>The overall purpose of the Senior Legal Counsel (Research) is to provide strategic and specialist legal advice to the University's Research and Impact portfolio including reviewing, drafting, and negotiating research agreements; advising on intellectual property, regulatory, risk and compliance and commercialisation matters. The role plays a key role in supporting the University in achieving its research objectives whilst managing legal risks.</p> <p>Working within the Office of the General Counsel, the University's in-house legal team, the Senior Legal Counsel (Research) will lead complex legal matters, support key strategic initiatives, and drive legal projects that enhance the delivery of effective in-house legal services.</p> <p>The Senior Legal Counsel (Research) also mentors colleagues within the Office of the General Counsel, building capability and supporting the professional growth of junior lawyers in research-related matters.</p>
ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND RELATIONSHIPS	<p>Within the University the position:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> works closely with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact), Executive Director, Research Services, senior research leaders and researchers, and other team members in the Office of the General Counsel works with all operational areas of the University, including senior leaders and managers supervises the junior lawyers of the OGC where required. <p>Outside the University the position liaises with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> external parties to contracts, external law firms and counsel, patent attorneys, educational organisations, government and judicial bodies where required external research stakeholders, including those in the research industry, government agencies, philanthropic organisations, joint venture corporate partners as well as other universities and research institutes.
LOCATION/CAMPUS	The position is currently located at the Footscray Park Campus of the University. The position and incumbent may be relocated to any other existing or future University work locations where it conducts its operations.

KEY CAPABILITIES

Victoria University is committed to building core capability across VU through investment in our staff, our systems and our processes. We will develop the capabilities of our staff to:

Deliver – Excellence Results-driven, accountability, problem solving focus.

Engage – Customer service mind-set internally, externally and particularly for students.

Collaborate and Partner – Build successful relationships, communicate effectively, influence and negotiate.

Innovate – Entrepreneurship, growth, continuous improvement, digital transformation.

Lead – Inspire direction, lead change, manage and develop people.

OUR ORGANISATION

Victoria University (**VU** or **University**) is a dual sector (higher education and TAFE) tertiary institution based in Melbourne, Australia. VU has academic colleges, each covering a broad discipline of study, and several research institutes and research centres. The University has campuses in Melbourne's CBD and western region, and a campus in Sydney and Brisbane. It also offers courses at partner institutions throughout Asia. Over 40,000 students, including around 14,000 international students, study VU courses worldwide. In 2016, VU celebrated its 25th anniversary as a university, which also marked its 100 years as an educational institution.

Commitment to Protecting Country

Victoria University honours its deep diversity as a foundation for collaboration and social progress. We will demonstrate sensitivity in respecting First Nation perspectives. We will ensure that we respect our Indigenous voices and commit to sustainable Protecting Country. We will take leadership responsibility, in all that we do, to improve the health and wellbeing of our local and global communities, and the planet that we share.

Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion at VU

Victoria University believes that diversity of the workforce adds value to the University and creates a stronger, richer working environment for everyone. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to ensure that our employees have positive, barrier-free work environments that accommodate their access needs. Employees who require adjustments are encouraged to discuss their needs with their line manager.

ORGANISATIONAL UNIT

The Office of the General Counsel (**OGC**) is the University's central legal team within the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. It provides comprehensive, timely and high-quality legal advice and services to internal stakeholders, including senior leaders, on legal issues and matters arising out of the University's key functions and activities. The OGC partners with internal businesses and colleagues to ensure the University's legal needs are met, and existing and emerging legal risks are identified and managed.

The work of the OGC is diverse, interesting and challenging, with lawyers having an opportunity to work across all areas of the University and on various types of legal matters. The OGC has a collegiate and supportive culture that encourages and values diversity, flexibility, and wellbeing. It also supports and encourages systems improvement and the adoption of modern legal services to support internal stakeholders.

Some of the key services and work of the OGC include:

- reviewing, drafting and negotiating contracts, terms & conditions and research-related agreements, including those involving government and industry funded research, multi-party collaborative research agreements, sub-contracting arrangements, multi-institutional agreements, and IP licensing;
- managing litigation, including briefing external legal advisers and counsel, attending conferences and hearings where necessary, and advising on dispute resolution options;
- providing legal advice on issues arising out of the University's key functions, including in relation to intellectual property, licensing, regulatory risks, compliance issues, discrimination, employment, freedom of information, privacy, property, and student matters;
- monitoring regulatory and legal changes or reforms to the tertiary sector;
- working closely with key stakeholders to identify and manage key legal risks; and
- identifying opportunities for system improvements.

MAJOR TASKS AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

- ◆ Act as the primary legal advisor for the Research & Impact portfolio, applying a comprehensive understanding of the University's research strategic objectives, business needs and commercialisation processes and activities.
- ◆ Lead and manage both routine and complex legal matters for the Research & Impact portfolio, including advising on and drafting research-related agreements to ensure the timely review, negotiation, finalisation and execution of agreements, and allocating and settling legal work where necessary.
- ◆ Provide specialist legal advice on a wide range of research specific matter including intellectual property, confidentiality, legal structures, conflicts of interest, delegations, foreign arrangements and interference, and commercialisation.
- ◆ Support the General Counsel and other senior lawyers in allocating and prioritising research-specific legal matters, workload distribution, team meetings and aligning activities with organisational goals.
- ◆ Collaborate with senior leaders and internal stakeholder including the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact), Executive Director, Research Services to identify and mitigate legal risks legal risks and safeguarding the University's research interests and freedom to operate for University researchers.
- ◆ Build and sustain strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders such as industry, government agencies, commercial, research institutes, external law firms and patent attorneys.
- ◆ Provide leadership within the OGC, mentoring lawyers and staff, settling the work of junior lawyers, and identifying opportunities for professional development and training in research-specific matters.
- ◆ Monitor regulatory and legislative changes related to research, advise on their implications for University operations, and recommend updates to policies and procedures to ensure alignment with business needs and compliance requirements.
- ◆ Drive and support OGC initiatives and projects, including developing precedents, delivering training, and integrating technology to enhance legal service delivery.
- ◆ Collaborate as an internal member of the OGC fostering a positive work culture that supports wellbeing and contributes to a high-performing, adaptable team that meets the University's diverse legal needs.
- ◆ Identify, assess, prioritise and control risks to the health and safety of staff, students, visitors and contractors to the environment arising from the operation of the area under their responsibility, and ensure that a safe system of work is developed and followed through appropriate training, supervision and monitoring in line with the annual occupational health and safety plan.

TYPICAL/MAJOR CHALLENGES

- ◆ Ensuring legal advice and decision-making consistently align with the University's strategic research and commercialisation priorities, while managing legal, reputational, and regulatory risks in a complex and dynamic research environment.
- ◆ Exercising a high level of judgment and independent decision-making to assess and respond to emerging legal risks, including those arising from economic shifts, regulatory changes, or global challenges.
- ◆ Clearly communicating complex legal and financial risks to senior management and relevant internal departments to ensure alignment and informed decision-making in research.
- ◆ Balancing the demands of an in-house legal team, including servicing day-to-day legal matters and key strategic legal matters for the Research & Impact portfolio.
- ◆ Collaborating with a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, including academic leaders, executive management, research services, government, and industry partners, each with varying priorities, timelines, and levels of legal understanding.
- ◆ Monitoring research-related laws and regulations and ensuring timely integration of changes into legal advice and University policies to safeguard compliance, research integrity, and institutional reputation in a highly regulated and politically sensitive environment.

LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

Operates under the broad direction from the General Counsel and may be required to manage other administrative, technical or professional staff.

PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

- ◆ Extensive knowledge of and experience in contract drafting, review and negotiation, intellectual property, and research-related legal matters.
- ◆ Understanding of government legislation and policies related to research and, more broadly, the tertiary education sector.
- ◆ High standards of professionalism, integrity, and ethical behaviour.
- ◆ Expertise in identifying, managing, and mitigating legal risks and liabilities in a complex environment.
- ◆ Knowledge of or experience in leadership principles, including mentoring, training, and fostering a collaborative environment within a legal team.
- ◆ In-depth understanding of the importance of an organisation's strategy, vision, and operational structures and the role of an in-house legal team in supporting the organisation.

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Essential

1. Knowledge or training equivalent to proven expertise in the management of significant human and material resources.
2. A tertiary qualification in law and an Australian legal practitioner with a current Victorian legal practising certificate (unrestricted) with at least eight years' post-admission experience in an in-house setting or in private practice.
3. Extensive experience in corporate and commercial transactions, intellectual property, and research-related legal matters.

4. Excellent ability to work autonomously and independently, as well as collaborate with team members, escalate matters where necessary, and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement.
5. Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to interact effectively with a broad range of stakeholders, both internal and external, and interact with and influence senior leaders.
6. Outstanding time management and organisational skills, with demonstrated ability to prioritise and manage multiple legal matters at the same time, complete work in a timely manner, and maintain up-to-date files.
7. Demonstrated leadership and delegation skills, including the ability to mentor staff, and identifying opportunities for professional development and training.
8. Ability to provide sound, timely, cost-effective and commercially pragmatic legal advice and support.
9. Demonstrated willingness and ability to contribute to a high-performing team that values wellbeing, fosters collaboration, and supports personal and professional development and growth.
10. Demonstrated capacity to understand and comply with employer policy and practices in all aspects of work and conduct, including occupational health and safety and anti-discrimination responsibilities and complete and attend relevant training.
11. Willingness to commit to the University's values and behaviours:
 - Values – Access, Excellence, Respect
 - Behaviours – Engagement, Collegiality, Courage.
12. Demonstrated capacity to understand and comply with employer policy and practices in all aspects of work and conduct, including OH&S and Anti-Discrimination responsibilities and complete/attend relevant training.

Desirable

1. An understanding and knowledge of the higher education and TAFE sectors, including the regulatory framework.
2. Knowledge of university legislation, industrial instruments, policies and procedures.