

Role Specification

Title: Manager - Risk and Data Protection (Data Protection Officer)
Grade: 6
Unit: Research, Future Skills Needs, Statistics and Risk
Reporting to: Director of Research, Future Skills Needs, Statistics and Risk (Chief Risk Officer)
Location: SOLAS Block 1, Castleforbes House, Castleforbes Road, Dublin 1
Ref: 632

Closing Date for applications is Tuesday, 21 July 2026 at 12.00pm (Noon)

Role Summary

SOLAS is the statutory authority for Further Education and Training in Ireland, established under the Further Education and Training Act 2013. It is an agency of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. SOLAS oversees a funding allocation to Further Education and Training organisations, mainly the 16 Education and Training Boards of approximately €1 billion annually. The FET system supports over 200,000 unique learners each year. SOLAS also has a statutory role in Apprenticeship.

The Risk and Data Protection Manager (Data Protection Officer) is identified as a key role within SOLAS. This Manager role encompasses the requirements in SOLAS to identify and manage risk, alongside a comprehensive brief to ensure compliance with Data Protection requirements, as the Data Protection Officer, working to the Director with responsibility for these areas. The successful candidate will be responsible for ensuring that SOLAS has a robust risk management framework in place and that risk is embedded across the organisation. In addition, this role will include a key responsibility for Data Protection provisions, including GDPR. The successful candidate will also act as the key point of contact for Subject Access Requests (SARs) to SOLAS.

Responsibilities

In the role of Risk and Data Protection Manager (Data Protection Officer) the successful candidate will have the following role requirements:

- Ensuring compliance and a co-ordinated approach in terms of risk and data protection with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.
- Working with all business units to embed risk aware decision making across the organisation.
- Developing, implementing, and continuously improving SOLAS' risk management framework, policy and procedures and risk appetite.
- Identifying, assessing and maintaining a comprehensive register of risks including a central corporate risk register, divisional and project/programme risk registers.
- Ensuring adequate risk mitigation strategies and internal controls are in place and on-going monitoring of same.
- Preparing and providing regular risk reporting and updates for the SOLAS Board, the Audit and Risk Committee and the senior leadership team.

- Independent oversight and challenge of the assessment of risks within the established and required policy, processes and systems for SOLAS, with a clear understanding of the remit and role of SOLAS and the legislative conditions in which the organisation is designated.
- Performing robust review and challenge of each Divisional risk register in SOLAS, as well as supporting good practice and facilitation, to ensure timely and proactive actions and decisions.
- Supporting the Director, the ELT, Chief Executive Officer and the SOLAS Board in the completion and ongoing review and assessment of the SOLAS Corporate Risk Register.
- Ensuring active and continued engagement with the eRisk system in SOLAS, building on the established processes and systems in place and ensuring compliance with audits completed in areas of responsibility.
- Continuing to raise awareness and empower active implementation of the Risk Management Policy at all levels in the organisation through awareness and promotion of a risk aware culture, working closely to support the SOLAS Risk Strategy Group. Ensuring that training for all staff members is completed as required, including in risk, data protection, privacy and GDPR legislative compliance.
- Assist staff to meet GDPR requirements, including in areas such as Data Sharing Agreements, Data Processing Security Agreements, Data Protection Impact Assessments, Non-Disclosure Agreements, etc., data breaches. Engage with Government as required on Data Sharing and Governance requirements.
- Lead out on GDPR Requests e.g., Rectification, Deletion and follow procedures as required. Ensure compliance with any SAR request to SOLAS, including where appropriate, confirmation of identity as well as completion of responses within legislative timeframes, working closely with all senior leaders in SOLAS as necessary.
- Lead on internal reporting of relevant risk and data protection/privacy data and analysis, both qualitative and quantitative, to ensure dissemination of good practice as well as highlight at senior level issues and/or trends that require action. This includes, reporting of any data breaches, within legislative requirements as set out in the relevant SOLAS policies and procedures as well as management and monitoring of the risk incident and near miss reporting processes, performing trend analysis of all incidents reported.
- Reporting and working to the Director in the areas of Data Protection and Privacy, deal effectively with any data breaches identified as required as the designate SOLAS Data Protection Officer (DPO).
- Leadership of SOLAS Records Management policies and procedures and Records Storage Facilities both internally and with external records storage providers. This includes undertaking RoPA requirements.
- Excellent ICT and communications skills to ensure delivery of the complexity and depth of this brief which encompasses a key senior role within SOLAS which also requires high level senior engagement with external agencies and Government.
- Experience of management and leadership of staff, ensuring successful design and implementation of relevant business and project plans and dealing with staff performance and objectives setting.
- Representing the organisation where required at external events and engagements, such as networks and communities of Data Protection Officers. Liaison and engagement internally as required with relevant units and teams in SOLAS, such as IT, business continuity, legal and audit.
- Carry out any other duties deemed appropriate for the position by the Director.

Skills & Experience

Essential Criteria

- Third level or equivalent relevant qualification in related subject (legal, risk, data protection, IT) and/or equivalent relevant work experience.
- A minimum of 5 years senior management experience with regulatory and compliance expertise including knowledge of the Risk, Data Protection, IT and governance systems and functions within a complex organisation.
- Demonstrated achievement in the development, delivery and execution of implementing and managing Risk and Data Protection / Privacy systems.
- Excellent leadership, negotiation and influencing skills with the ability to motivate, challenge and engage individuals and teams.
- Proven record of continuous development, improvement and innovation in the areas of Risk Management, and/or Data Protection and Privacy.
- Excellent written and spoken communications skills, as well as experience and high levels of knowledge of Risk and Data Protection legislation, with an understanding of other relevant laws including within Digital and AI.

Desirable Criteria

- Post-graduate qualification in a related subject.
- Familiarity with the states eRisk System and other programmes and systems widely available in risk, data protection/privacy.
- Experience dealing with complex high profile risk and data protection matters in both the public and private sectors.