Job Description – Widening Access and Student Success Manager

About the role

The Widening Access and Student Success Manager will lead and manage an outcomes focused team while providing leadership and influence across The Open University in Scotland (OUiS), the wider OU and externally. You will develop and implement a range of strategic initiatives to enhance OUiS’ work to improve student success and build on the OUiS’ reputation as Scotland’s national widening access university.

The OU in Scotland has ambitious plans to ensure its innovative access policy is matched by exceptional levels of student success and satisfaction. You will play a key leadership role in this area focusing on widening access and success as well as student satisfaction for OUiS students. You will ensure that teaching and learning in The Open University reflects the needs of the Scottish policy context and learners in Scotland. You will co-ordinate and be responsible for OUiS’ engagement with QAA Scotland as well as developing an enhancement based approach within your team and more broadly across OUiS. You will ensure an ever stronger role for the student voice.

You will scan the policy and political environment and be well connected within the wider university in order to highlight and take advantage of opportunities while identifying and mitigating risks. You and your team will work in partnership with academic colleagues including associate lecturers, colleagues delivering a range of professional services, and students. You will lead a close working relationship between your team and Student Recruitment and Support Scotland and planning and data colleagues.

You will also lead on our evaluation work in this area, ensuring our activities, outcomes and impacts are based on a strong evidence base to support our reporting to the Scottish Funding Council.

Key Responsibilities

a) Lead and manage the widening access and student success Scotland team in line with University policies.

b) Lead on operational planning, implementation and co-ordination of The OU in Scotland’s widening access and student success agenda and ensure work is effectively communicated with OUiS, OU and externally. The focus will be on access and success for all including those with widening access and protected characteristics.

c) Contribute to the achievement of targets and outcomes associated with the OUiS Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council, OU strategic plan and other internal and external commitments. You will lead co-ordination of outcomes relating to widening access, student success and satisfaction and deliver directly on some of these.

d) Take responsibility for a portfolio of specific partner relationships and projects, and ensure appropriate processes including record keeping, reporting and generic project management are undertaken.
e) Working closely with colleagues in the Planning and Data team, assume the lead role on evaluation activity, data collection and analysis, report writing and other dissemination activity relating to your portfolio.

f) Manage budgets in your work area, including forecasting, monitoring and ensuring best value.

g) Work alongside colleagues to identify significant opportunities, securing support and funding to enable their delivery.

h) Analyse relevant data and write and produce reports for internal and external audiences.

i) Contribute to internal and external groups and committees as appropriate, taking a leadership role in these groups as appropriate.

j) Identify opportunities to promote, publicise and share your successes, those of your team and of The OU in Scotland.

The role holder may be required to undertake any other duties reasonably required within the nature of the duties and responsibilities of the role, subject to the proviso that normally any changes of a permanent nature shall be incorporated into the job description in specific terms.

All staff are expected:

✦ To comply with the University’s Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities policies in the performance of your duties.
✦ To take reasonable care of the health and safety of yourself and that of any other person who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work.
✦ To co-operate with The Open University in ensuring as far as is necessary, that Statutory Requirements, Codes of Practice, University Policies and Departmental Health and Safety arrangements are complied with.
✦ To demonstrate a strong commitment to the principles and practice of equality and diversity.

Role Specific Requirements

✦ The Role Holder should be prepared to travel around Scotland and occasionally other OU locations

Skills and Experience

Requirements (E = Essential/ D = Desirable)

Education, qualifications and training

Essential

✦ A degree or equivalent qualification.

Desirable
• A higher degree in a relevant subject.

Knowledge, work and other relevant experience

Essential:
• Previous experience of leading and managing an outcomes focused team.
• Experience of developing and delivering operational plans.
• A track record of building relationships with a range of colleagues, partners and stakeholders to support delivery of outcomes.
• Experience of project management, implementation and evaluation, including the dissemination of learning to other interest groups.
• Experience of an evidence-based approach.
• Confident working with complex data.
• Knowledge and experience of supporting widening access and success in the context of higher education.
• An understanding of current policy drivers in Scotland in relation to widening access and student success and one or more of student satisfaction; learning and teaching; and enhancement.
• Knowledge of the Further and Higher Education sectors in Scotland.
• Experience of budgetary management.
• Previous experience of working in a complex organisational environment.

Desirable:
• An understanding of the needs of part-time adult learners and the challenges facing students in a distance learning context.
• Experience of working in Higher Education.

Personal abilities and qualities

Essential:
• The ability to work on your own initiative, to make considered decisions and to work in an open and collegiate way.
• A collaborative mindset, when engaging with a wide range of stakeholders & colleagues.
• Excellent organisational abilities, particularly in relation to a diverse and demanding work portfolio.
• Well-developed interpersonal, influencing and communication skills.
• Excellent presentation skills e.g. presenting your work to internal colleagues and at external events.
• Excellent IT skills.
• A growth mind-set where you are open to ideas and possibilities and can respond positively to challenges and setbacks.
• Resilient and adaptable to change.
• A commitment to the ideals of The Open University, including access for all, equal opportunities and diversity issues.
Additional Requirements:

The role holder should be prepared to travel around Scotland and occasionally to other OU locations.

How to obtain more information about the role or application process

If you would like to discuss the particulars of this role before making an application please contact Shona Littlejohn email: shona.littlejohn@open.ac.uk (NB on leave until 17th June).

If you have any questions regarding the application process please contact the Staffing Co-ordinator on 0131 226 3851 or email: Scotland-Staffing-Coordinator@open.ac.uk.

The application process and where to send completed applications

How to apply:

As well as a completed application form, you must provide a supporting statement/covering letter, which clearly identifies how you meet the criteria in the person specification. Please ensure that you provide relevant examples as evidence to support your statements. The selection panel will consider how well the information you provide demonstrates that you meet the criteria identified in the person specification.

Please ensure that your application reaches the University by: 5pm on Thursday 4th July 2019

E-mail your application (and covering letter) to: Scotland-Recruitment@open.ac.uk

Selection process and date of interview

The interview panel will be chaired by: Shona Littlejohn (Depute Director, Open University in Scotland)

The other members of the interview panel will be: Kate Signorini, Depute Director (Strategy, Planning and Resources)
Steven Mc Geever, Partnerships Manager

The interviews will take place on: 25th July 2019

The selection process for this post will include Formal interview Presentation
We will let you know as soon as possible after the closing date whether you have been shortlisted for interview. Further details on the selection process will also be sent to shortlisted candidates.

Applications received after the closing date will not be accepted.

Please note: If you have not heard from us within 10 days of the application closing date, please assume that on this occasion you have not been selected for interview, however we thank you for your interest in The Open University and encourage you to apply for future positions. Expenses incurred for travelling to the interview will not normally be reimbursed by the University.

About the Open University in Scotland and the unit/department

The Open University in Scotland is an integral part of the Scottish higher education community and actively involved in the development of HE policy alongside the other 18 higher education institutions in Scotland. Since 1 April 2000, the teaching of OU students resident in Scotland has been funded by the Scottish Funding Council.

With over 16,000 students, Open University students can be found in virtually every postcode district and community in Scotland. Social justice and equality of opportunity are at the heart of everything the OU does and widening access to higher education is the ambition on which it was founded. The Open University is committed to extending opportunities for educational success to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. The OU’s open access policy, flexible part-time delivery, its bridging programme with schools, college articulation agreements and geographical reach position us well as Scotland’s national widening access university. More than one third of our undergraduate students have qualifications below standard university entrance level when they joined the OU, over 18% have a declared disability and 17% are resident in the most deprived areas of Scotland (based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

With over 70% of our students in work while they study with us, The Open University in Scotland occupies a unique place in terms of developing the Scottish workforce. We work closely with employers, trades unions, public sector bodies, institutes, private, third sector and community organisations, universities, colleges and schools across the whole of Scotland.

140 academic, administrative and secretarial and clerical staff work from the OU’s office in Edinburgh managing the University’s business in Scotland. The OU in Scotland works in collaboration with colleagues across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and in particular with the Academic Services Unit in providing support to our students.

More information can be obtained from The OU in Scotland website at www.open.ac.uk/scotland