Job Description – Senior Advisor (Ref: 16618)

About the Role

The role holder will work as part of a wider team based within the office of The Open University in Scotland and will empower students and prospective students make choices about their studies that meet their needs and support retention, progression and student satisfaction. The key duties are:

1. To deliver proactive support across all areas of the curriculum, through provision of complex advice to students and prospective students on a wide range of queries to maximize student success. To also act as a point of contact for reactive queries and requests for advice and support received via a variety of channels.

2. Where necessary to refer on to other staff with specialist expertise, as part of the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) model; making interactions with The Open University as effortless and seamless as possible.

3. To concentrate on the delivery of a specific area of work/areas of work, such as work with students in secure environments, disability support, proactive study campaigns, retention and progression activities (the list is not exhaustive), whilst also making a significant contribution to the core service.

Key responsibilities

1. To provide complex and/or curriculum related advice to support students and prospective students in registration and study with The Open University to enable them to choose the right course for them and progress successfully through their studies. You will make both proactive and reactive contact via a number of channels including inbound and outbound phone calls, emails, letters, online webchat, online forums and social media, and face to face:
   - Act as the first point of referral, including via hot transfers and pre-booked appointments, for students and prospective students requiring complex advice and information, using judgement and expertise to assess queries and ensure that advice needs are identified and addressed, referring on where appropriate.
   - Act as the first point of referral for students who may present with challenging issues and/or behaviour, e.g. where a student is distressed because they have missed a deadline critical to their studies.
   - Advice provision across all areas of the curriculum using judgement and expertise as well as reference to standard operating procedures and policies, informed by use of a knowledge management system as well as briefings, training events, use of databases and printed material to access accurate and up to date information and advice.
   - This will cover a range of matters across the student lifecycle from choice of qualification, career-based enquiries, change of study intention to TMA (tutor marked assignment) extensions and tutor referrals.
2. To undertake associated administrative and operational processes to action student requests:

- Accurately record and maintain student and prospective student details on university systems and databases.
- Ensure all work is carried out to required standards.
- Ensure that complex guidance needs, and issues are identified through referring/transferring calls appropriately and effectively to other specialist staff as part of an IAG model.
- Where appropriate or necessary, book follow up appointments for those specialists.

3. To work as part of a flexible operation to provide support and answer queries from students, prospective students and Associate Lecturers within agreed timescales.
   To work to a rota to ensure that all activity is dealt with promptly and effectively and within agreed Service Levels:

- Participate actively in the achievement of agreed service standards
- Contribute to the regular monitoring and review of these standards
- Exercise judgement in dealing with complex issues, interpreting and applying guidelines with initiative whilst operating within defined boundaries.

4. To engage and assist proactively with the development and continuous improvement of good internal and inter team working and service provision:

- Attending and actively participating in team meetings and developmental activities.
- Contributing to business improvement ideas and initiatives, making recommendations to Managers as appropriate.
- Showing initiative in helping the team to run smoothly and working with and supporting other teams as required.
- Engage actively in the support and development of new team members.
- Contribute to the development of effective team delivery relating to IAG.
- Undertaking other activities as directed by the Manager, Student Support (Operations).

5. To continually develop skills and knowledge to maintain and improve personal performance in the spirit of continuous improvement and to adopt correct and evolving business practices and procedures:

- Undertaking all duties in accordance with internal policy and external legislation.
- Working with the Manager, Student Support (Operations) to understand personal performance and areas for development.
- Providing feedback to contribute to colleagues’ skills and knowledge development.
- Accepting feedback from colleagues to improve personal skills and knowledge development.
- Ability to work under pressure and maintain service standards through peak periods.
6. Delivery and/or coordination of a specific area of work/areas of work, such as work with students in secure environments, disability work, proactive study campaigns, retention and progression activities (the list is not exhaustive).

- Liaison with central colleagues/staff in other areas of the University and/or external organisations.
- Act as local knowledge expert facilitating briefings/training and/or coaching and mentoring colleagues.
- Ensuring any issues are reported appropriately.
- Gathering and reporting feedback on procedures, briefing materials etc.

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.

Skills and Experience

**Essential**

- Good communication skills: both oral and written, with effective telephone techniques and the ability to explain policies and processes in plain English as well as to write clearly, succinctly and correctly in plain English.
- Good interpersonal skills: including active listening skills and the ability to respond to identified needs through the use of varied questioning techniques.
- Flexibility: including adaptability to changing circumstances, duties, work practices and systems and a commitment to ongoing development with the ability to demonstrate a rapid understanding of newly presented information.
- Good planning and organisational skills: including the ability to cope with heavy workloads and to meet deadlines, working productively and accurately in a high pressure environment.
- Good negotiating skills.
- An ability to deal with and follow complex information and procedures: using initiative and judgement in problem-solving, whilst recognising boundaries.
- Strong IT skills: including use of standard Microsoft Office packages, and the ability to learn to use a range of in-house and commercial systems.
- An understanding of team working and the ability to work effectively as part of a team.
- An understanding of Equal Opportunities (EO) issues and a commitment to equal opportunities and diversity.
- Commitment to excellent customer service and continuous improvement.
- Commitment to and role model for the University’s values.

**Desirable**

- Ability to adapt interpersonal styles to suit different people or situations.
- Evidence of understanding the roles that individuals play as part of a team.
- Evidence of applying EO policy in a previous role.
- Ability to use management information systems.
- Ability to use customer relationship management systems.
Knowledge, work and other relevant experience

**Essential**

- Experience of answering and actioning complex and diverse queries, using a wide range of information sources.
- Experience of providing information and advice and the ability to transfer this experience to a higher education context.
- Ability to maintain own knowledge bank in a coherent and systematic way and carry out research as necessary.
- Ability to identify deficiencies in information sources and take proactive measures to improve and enhance clarity and accuracy for the service as a whole.

**Desirable**

- Experience of inbound and outbound calling in a complex customer services environment.
- Experience of working to personal, team and organisational targets.
- An understanding of the needs of part-time students in the Higher Education sector.

Education, qualifications and training

**Essential**

- Standard Grade Maths and English at Grade C or above, or equivalent.

**Desirable**

- Relevant VQ to Level 2 or above (e.g. Customer Services or Information, Advice and Guidance, Customer Care).
- Some familiarity with administration.

Role specific requirements e.g. shift working

- Role holder may be required to attend meetings/events at various venues across the UK for business, training and evaluation purposes.
- Appropriate office equipment will be provided to facilitate effective working on the telephone and for Skype/Lync conferencing.
About the Open University in Scotland

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 approximately 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.

130 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

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 David Johnstone on 0131 226 3851.

If you have any questions regarding the application process please email: Scotland-Staffing-Coordinator@open.ac.uk

The application process and where to send completed applications

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 your application reaches the University by 5pm on Thursday 7th November 2019.

Email your application form to Scotland-Recruitment@open.ac.uk
**Selection process and date of interview.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The interview panel will be chaired by:</th>
<th>David Johnstone, Manager, Student Support Operations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The other member of the interview panel will be:</td>
<td>Ali McDonald, Senior Manager, Student Operation &amp; Fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>The interviews will take place on:</td>
<td>25th and 26th November 2019.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The selection process for this post will include:</td>
<td>Formal interview and desk exercise.</td>
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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.

Expenses incurred for travelling to the interview will not normally be reimbursed by the University.