Director of Student Learning Adjustment Strategy (SLAS)

About the Role

The Student Learning Adjustment Strategy (SLAS) was conceived as a cross-departmental initiative to lead all effort and associated Governance for the Open University effort to fix the established problems with the production and distribution of printed materials to students.

The SLAS approach was agreed by VCE in December 2019 and progress ratified on 6th February 2020, specifically breaking down into six main areas of analysis and change:

1. Process mapping
2. Management information
3. Supporting evidence
4. Student advice and expectation management
5. Curriculum design principles
6. Production issues

The SLAS Director must organise and lead work in this area to delivery material change to OU student experience for all module presentations from 20J (autumn 2020) through to 22J (autumn 2022) as a fixed term assignment.

Key Responsibilities

Act as University champion for SLAS and principle ambassador for reasonable adjustments to course materials required by disabled students and those in secure environments.

Provide effective and collaborative leadership across a matrix structure for all teams involved in the delivery of SLAS.

- Adapt and firmly establish effective Governance of SLAS initiatives using a matrix managed team of Senior OU Managers and Directors.
- Take full responsibility (with the matrix team) for the delivery of SLAS services to students at each presentation for the duration of the assignment, then prepare and handover to a business as usual structure that the SLAS Director will help define during the course of the assignment.

Engender and develop a cross departmental culture and teamwork approach to SLAS, actively seeking and implementing initiatives and strategies to break down established departmental focus.

- Create a small team to ensure the delivery of all SLAS initiatives through existing teams managed within the established structure of the University, with no additional or parallel administrative or business processes.
Ensure all teams have a clear and common SLAS purpose.

- Effectively manage into key leadership forums and established OU Governance, including VCE
- Participate as a senior member of University to promote SLAS and the resolution of SLAS issues

Engage with established OU processes for performance management for all team members in close cooperation with corresponding OU Directors within the matrix management organisation for SLAS.

Organise and deliver effective change in the provision of SLAS to established methodologies and in a way that takes colleagues across the University on the change journey.

Lead the development and execution of the Student Learning Adjustments Strategy through multiple curriculum presentations, re-establishing control that delivers excellent service to all students.

Ensure the sufficient and most appropriate deployment of resources across all team to meet this objective.

Develop and promote an agile working environment that is adaptive and supportive of team working to change and deliver SLAS.

Prepare and (when required) deliver papers for VCE, Senate and other committees to established OU standards.

Drive progress on SLAS initiatives that promote real and quantifiably better services to students who require additional support.

Ensure the provision of accurate and reliable Management Information is at the heart of SLAS delivery, eliminating spreadsheet manipulation wherever possible.

Ensure MI work is documented and that a path of migration is clear in relation to CSR initiatives and system replacement.

Take a structured and realistic approach to risk assessment and risk management.

Ensure a risk register for SLAS is created and maintained specific to each presentation.

Ensure teams working in the delivery of SLAS are trained and supported to succeed in their role, with particular emphasis to colleagues on the front line of student assessment and support.

Identify and effectively manage relationships with key stakeholders, to include:

- Student representatives including OUSA
- VCE
- Heads of Student Support
- Senior management in Academic Services, LDS and Faculties

Adopt and promote an open and honest style to SLAS internal communication, while being mindful of wider implications to the OU reputation with an external audience.
Engage directly in the communication and promotion of SLAS using established OU media including newsletters, webinars and forums to spread the word on challenges, initiatives, progress and results.

- Work closely with the MarComms team to manage SLAS messaging internally to the University while maintaining a watching brief on any external communications concerns, particularly in relation to the wider reputation of the OU.

Actively seek feedback to track your and the wider team's progress on the SLAS initiatives. Effectively review, manage and discuss budgets in association with Director colleagues who have the formal budget ownership and with relevant Finance business partners.

Foster a culture of continuous improvement related to all SLAS initiatives across all teams utilizing learning from the continuous improvement work in Academic Services (SRSC).

Re-engineer processes across the SLAS landscape in close cooperation with the BPI team and using their work from Q1 2020 as a base.

Drive the development and sharing of best practice within and between teams involved in SLAS.

Encourage and promote the creation of quality control over SLAS processes including the proper monitoring and measurement of service to students.

Ensure that established policies and procedures are adhered to across all SLAS teams.

Drive high and improving levels of student satisfaction by ensuring SLAS always delivers to students' specific needs.

- Ensure any SLAS solutions passed into business as usual are sustainable including the provision of training and education to OU teams

- Establish continuous improvement within the SLAS space with active implementation within business as usual

Please note this post is based in Milton Keynes, with (very) occasional travel to regional offices in Cardiff, Belfast, Edinburgh, Manchester and Nottingham.

Flexible hours of working are required to offer maximum support to your team.

**Skills and Experience**

A recognised degree or similar proven experience.

A solid knowledge of service operations and related EDI legislative requirements.

Experience of managing an effective and cohesive leadership team, preferably cross departmental/cross specialisms and in formal matrix structures.

Experience of managing, leading and driving performance in a successful team.

Experience of identifying barriers, whilst leading a team to create and introduce new ways of working.
A high level of commercial focus.

Solid budget management for large scale, complex initiatives and projects.

Experience of embedding high performance collaborative culture across teams.

Experience of translating customer insight into meaningful service propositions.

Proven ability to initiate, manage, drive and deliver change.

A background or experience of analysing and interpreting data.

Ability to formulate, articulate and deliver on a vision (with operational basis)

Strong communications and influencing skills with proven flexibility of style and approach to interact and communicate with different audiences.

Capable of conducting difficult conversations topics and situations ensuring honesty between team members, peers and stakeholders.

A confident, outgoing and resilient personality with energy, enthusiasm and passion for excellence.

The business experience and conviction to challenge assumptions and drive radical change and innovation to improve processes and ways of working.

Strong strategic, analytical and problem solving skills.

Excellent prioritisation skills, comfortable working under pressure and within resource/budget constraints.

Proven strategic capability with the ability to contribute to organisational design and leadership.

Firm commitment to the educational mission and values of the Open University including, but not limited to, EDI principles.

Recognised and respected by peers and colleagues as someone who provides support to others, inspiring confidence through personal ownership.

Clear focus on the multiple critical milestones for SLAS per annum and the limited time allocated to achieve SLAS success – by end 2022 this must be established business as usual, accepting Core Systems Replacement may deliver further change opportunity beyond this date.

Desirable

Working knowledge and qualifications in project, programme and change management.

Understanding of business needs and OU strategy.

Consulting or contracting background proven over multiple clients and several years of direct experience.