Job Description – Practice Based Learning Assistant, Scotland

About the Role

The Practice Based Learning Assistant is a member of the School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care (HWSC) in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS) at the Open University in Scotland (OUiS). They are part of a larger regional team of academic, academic-related staff, administrative and student services colleagues involved in delivering health and social care qualifications and professional programmes.

We are seeking a highly organised and enthusiastic individual to manage, develop and coordinate placement activity to facilitate the delivery of the Faculty’s Social Work professional programme. You will support the Social Work programme and Social Work staff tutors in managing the development and maintenance of student practice placements in line with the requirements of their professional body. You will ensure that efficient systems, processes and procedures are in place to develop and support practice learning experiences for student social workers in Scotland. Working with colleagues from across the University, you will be responsible for administrative processes related to the practice learning experience of student social workers. You will be a point of contact for prospective students, current students and their employers or sponsors amongst others relating to practice learning experience.

You will have strongly developed administrative and organisational skills, with a relevant degree or equivalent qualification and demonstrable experience relevant to the role. You will be highly motivated, able to demonstrate flexibility, excellent communication, team working and a commitment to collaborative working across organisational boundaries. You will need to be flexible, adaptable and have the ability to work independently and as part of a team.

This post will be located in Edinburgh with the successful candidate being expected to live within reasonable commuting distance. Whilst most work will be undertaken during office hours, some evening/weekend work may be required. Whilst most travel required will be within Scotland, occasional travel to Milton Keynes and other OU offices in the UK may also be required.

Key responsibilities

The postholder will be expected to:

- Ensure that Scotland specific requirements for the development of placement provision for the Open University Social Work Programme (Postgraduate and Undergraduate) are met, in collaboration with Scottish and central staff at Milton Keynes, relevant professional bodies and employers/sponsors in Scotland;
- Contribute to the effective management of the Social Work programmes though the provision of support, advice and guidance to students, sponsoring agencies and employers regarding practice learning experiences
• Liaise with relevant social work/social care Practice Providers and commissioners to develop new practice-based learning opportunities for social work students maintaining an accurate database of these opportunities.
• Support social work students regarding placement requests and negotiate the appropriate placement in line with course and regulatory requirements for the programme of study.
• Manage the necessary communication to link students to appropriate practice placements ensuring that all parties are aware of timescales, requirements, etc.
• In liaison with the Staff Tutors for Social Work develop materials to help prepare students for their practice learning experiences.
• In liaison with the Staff Tutors for social work develop materials to help prepare employers/sponsors and practice placement providers for having social work students on practice placement.
• Develop and manage administrative systems and processes in collaboration with Staff Tutors to ensure the practice placement system works effectively.
• Develop systems to ensure that quality assurance of the practice-based learning provision is carried out in line with OU and regulatory policies visiting employer sites if required.
• Monitor the progress of formal complaints from students regarding practice placement experience, working with appropriate Staff Tutor colleagues to ensure their proper resolution.
• Respond to requests for feedback by relevant parties regarding placement provision for social work students in Scotland.
• Manage administrative systems and processes in collaboration with Staff Tutors to ensure the practice placement system works effectively.
• Contribute to the development, planning and delivery of practice educator briefings either face-to-face or online in liaison with the Social Work Staff Tutors.
• Deal with non-academic queries from students and enquirers, advising accordingly and with awareness of the particular requirements of the professional social work programme.
• Work with Staff Tutors and ALSPD to plan and co-ordinate Practice Tutor staff development activities and practice educator briefings, participating in them as required.
• Develop and maintain effective working relationships with regional academic staff, team assistants and establish links with members of the social work programme teams in the School and the Faculty at Walton Hall;
• Maintain a good knowledge of relevant OU policy and procedures and use a variety of IT programmes and software packages to support the management of educational programmes and compliance with internal and external policies;
• Any other Practice-based learning related duties as required.

Skills and Experience

Essential

• First degree or equivalent qualification and/or
• Demonstrable experience relevant to carrying out the role.
• Knowledge of the Scottish policy and legal processes as they relate to the relevant profession – Social Work
• Demonstrable experience of successful administrative work and developing administration systems;
• Excellent organisation and communication skills with the ability to express ideas clearly both orally and in writing, to analyse and interpret numerical data and disseminate information effectively;
• Excellent information and communication technology skills, including the ability to use Microsoft applications including Word, Excel & Outlook, and experience of using databases, spreadsheets and templates;
• Experience of planning, organising, prioritising and scheduling tasks to cope with conflicting demands and deadlines, paying attention to detail and managing records effectively;
• Good interpersonal skills, with the communication skills needed to support effective liaison with academic, administrative colleagues, students, and partner provider organisations;
• Excellent interpersonal skills with experience of building good relationships, using tact, discretion and own initiative and managing, organising or co-ordinating others;
• Good planning skills with the ability to work proactively with minimum supervision and ensuring delivery to quality standards, budget and schedule;
• Experience of building good relationships and considering the needs of customers including students, employers and other health and social care agencies;
• Experience of working with confidential information and awareness of the principles of data protection issues;
• Knowledge of and commitment to the OU mission, including equality and diversity issues;
• Ability to prioritise work, anticipate risks, make timely decisions and remain effective under pressure.
• Proven ability to work proactively with minimum supervision, using your own initiative;
• A willingness to use more IT advanced software after appropriate training;
• Ability to work flexibly, independently, pro-actively and co-operatively in a variety of team settings;
• A person who can engage with a wide range of colleagues and who is resilient and adaptable to change.
• Ability to work flexibly and in an adaptable way, sometimes under considerable pressure.
• Ability to travel around Scotland, to Milton Keynes and other OU offices in the UK;

Desirable

• An understanding of issues around student access, support needs, retention and success in the context of higher education;
• Knowledge of the local Scottish context of the post.
• Demonstrable experience of working within a practice setting as a practice educator or equivalent
• Current experience of working within a professional health or social care setting
• Experience of administrative work in an educational context;
• Familiarity with distance learning and the teaching methodology of the OU.
About the unit/department

The Open University in Scotland

The Open University (OU) is Scotland’s leading provider of part-time higher education. The cornerstone of the OU’s mission to be open to all and our open entry system allows us to offer the opportunity for study to people from all backgrounds and sections of the community. For example, more than one third of our undergraduate students had qualifications below standard university entrance level when they joined the OU.

We are also Scotland’s main provider for students with disabilities, teaching 10% of all disabled students in higher education. Our reach is nationwide, and Open University students can be found in virtually every postcode district and community in Scotland.

The OU is an integral part of the Scottish higher education community and actively involved in the development of HE policy alongside all other higher education institutions in Scotland. Since 1 April 2000, the teaching of OU students living in Scotland has been funded by the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education.

The 130 academic, administrative and secretarial and clerical staff at the OU’s office in Edinburgh offer an extensive range of support and specialist advice services to students in Scotland. The core function of the office is to manage the University’s business in Scotland. This includes managing relationships with government and other external bodies, the research and development of learning and the recruitment and retention of students in Scotland. More information can be obtained from the OU web site at www.open.ac.uk/scotland

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies

The Open University has embarked on a period of transformational change and in August 2016, restructured into four new Faculties, each comprising a number of Schools. The new Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies is based in Milton Keynes and in a number of regional and national offices, with our Student Support Team located in Nottingham. The majority of our 35,500 students are in the UK but the Faculty also has students in the Republic of Ireland, continental Western Europe and elsewhere in the world. The Faculty’s curriculum comprises programmes at undergraduate, Masters and doctoral levels.

School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

The School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care is one of three Schools within the Faculty. It is characterised by a vigorous intellectual life fostered through shared research/scholarship interests, collaborative teaching, and a strong external focus. The School has three distinct but inter-related areas of curriculum: Health and Social Care, Nursing, and Social Work. The School is committed to making a difference to health and social care practice and to working in partnership with key stakeholders. The School’s mission is to transform lives through health and social care education and research. Our teaching materials are underpinned by the excellence of our research as well as high quality scholarship in the area of teaching and learning that focuses on the delivery of an excellent student experience. Students of the School have won prestigious awards including, for example, the Scottish Association of Social Workers student of the year award and the Royal College of Nursing Student Nurse of the Year Award in Northern Ireland.

Teaching

The University has been developing and delivering supported open learning in the field of health and social care for over 40 years. Our materials are highly respected and we have
become one of the largest providers of educational opportunities and learning solutions in this sector. Our practice-focused curriculum and emphasis on meeting the need of the health, social work and social care workforce, makes us very different from other, more traditional academic units. The School:

- Supports a large student population of approximately 11,000
- Offers a diverse range of open modules and qualifications in the field of health and social care that are relevant to practice and the workplace
- Is the UK’s largest provider of part-time social work training
- Has a unique pre-registration nursing programme which offers a work-based qualifying route for healthcare support workers across the UK
- Works in partnership with employers to provide learning programmes that meet their changing needs. Over 50% of its students are currently sponsored by employers, mainly in the NHS, social services and the voluntary sector
- Has a research community committed to promoting the synergy between research/scholarship and learning and teaching
- Is strongly committed to the principles and practice of equality, diversity, widening participation and to the pursuit of social justice.

The School develops open and distance learning materials for multi-disciplinary and multi-professional use, qualifying and post-qualifying routes, and vocational training. Modules and study materials cover a wide range of subject areas including social work; nursing; community care; working with children, young people and families; youth justice and law; public health; care management; mental health; dementia care and end-of-life care; communication in health; and mentorship and leadership.

Whilst most of the School’s curriculum is open to all, we currently offer two professional qualifications – a degree in Social Work and a degree in Nursing (adult or mental health) that are available to students who are sponsored and supported by their employers.

Research and scholarship

The School has a strong track record in applied health and social care research. We are funded by the Research Councils (ESRC and AHRC), the National Institute for Health Research and a wide range of trusts, charities and commercial organisations. In REF2014, 69% of our research submitted to UoA22 (Social Work and Social Policy) was judged to be world leading (4*) or internationally excellent (3*). 73% of our research was assessed as 4* or 3* for impact and 75% for research environment.

We continue to develop and invest in research and have a particular interest in:

- the role of innovative methodologies for health and social care research
- the study of normative/non-normative life-course trajectories, and the impact of these on experiences of health, care and wellbeing.

Our research is currently organised into five broad research themes: Ageing and later life; Children, young people, parenting and families; Death, dying and bereavement; Living with disability and long-term conditions; and Reproduction, sexualities and sexual health. Most of our staff work within, or across, these themes. Staff in the School are listed on the editorial boards or hold editorial responsibilities across more than 25 academic journals.

The School is committed to making a difference to health and social care practice and works in partnership with research users in all of our activities. We have a lively postgraduate community on campus and a busy international research events calendar.
The School is continuing to grow its enterprise and knowledge exchange activities through the development of long-term, strategic external partnerships and maximising the impact of our research through effective communication, supported by our busy events schedule.

Collaborations with the BBC

Over the past few years the School has been involved with a number of high quality popular broadcasts, developed in collaboration with the BBC. These have included Great Ormond Street, a three part series looking at the running of the hospital and the decisions made in the treatment of children; Back to School with the Hairy Bikers following an intergenerational project in a community in Oxford; and The Big C and Me a three part series following a number of people who were diagnosed with Cancer and undergoing treatment. School staff were also involved in the award winning film How to die; Simons Choice which tells the dramatic and poignant story following one man’s decision to end his life at a suicide clinic.