Job Description – Senior Student Recruitment and Support Advisor (Senior Advisor)

About the role
The role holder will work within the Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSCs), and will help students and prospective students make study choices that will lead to successful progression, qualification completion and customer satisfaction. The key duties are:

1. To provide proactive support, working primarily within a particular Student Support Team (SST), through provision of complex advice to students and potential students on a wide range of queries to maximise 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 expert advice with a focus on a particular SST curriculum area and the associated Faculty, whilst also providing some advice across all curriculum areas when appropriate.

Key responsibilities
1. To provide complex and/or curriculum related advice to support students and potential students in registration and study with The Open University, through 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 potential students requiring complex advice and information, using judgement and expertise to assess queries and ensure that guidance needs are identified and addressed, referring on where appropriate.
   - Act as the first point of referral for students and potential students who may present with challenging issues and/or behaviour, eg: where a student is distressed because they have missed a deadline critical to their studies.
   - Advice provision will normally be within, a specific curriculum (SST) area and associated Faculty area of study.
   - Generic advice provision will also be required, 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 assignments) extensions and tutor referrals.

2. To undertake associated administrative and operational processes to action student and potential student requests:
   
   • Accurately record and maintain student and potential 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 and met, 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 at times convenient to students and potential students.

3. To work as part of a flexible operation to provide support and answer queries from students, potential students and Associate Lecturers within agreed timescales. To work to a rota as part of a Work Force Management System 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 assist proactively in 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 performance development
- Accepting feedback from colleagues to improve personal skills and knowledge

Skills and experience

Essential:

- A good standard of general education including GCSE Maths and English at Grade C or above, or equivalent.
- 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.
- 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:

- Relevant NVQ to Level 2 or above (e.g. Customer Services, or Information, Advice and Guidance, or Customer Care) or equivalent.
- Experience of inbound and outbound calling in a complex customer services environment.
- Experience of working to personal, team and organisational targets.
- 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.

Additional requirements:

- Takes action when appropriate, to seek and deliver solutions to problems as they arise
- Recognises personal impact on others and maintains a professional manner at all times.