Job Description – Product Development Manager

About the role

The Learning Systems Team are responsible for the management and development of the Open University’s award-winning digital learning environments.

Our goal is to work collaboratively to create great user experiences, applying professional digital product management standards to enable our academic colleagues to realise their teaching vision and allow students to achieve their learning objectives.

The Product Development Manager will work across a variety of exciting and innovative teaching and learning tools and platforms, supporting the team to:

- Drive consistent and adoption and effective use of the University’s learning systems
- Work with stakeholders to gather business requirements
- Create and deliver guidance, support and training materials
- Communicate product enhancements in regular release briefings, presentations and one-to-one training sessions
- Maintain, test and administer the learning systems

Key responsibilities

Planning, managing and delivering services

Assist Senior Product Development Managers to:

- Work with stakeholders from across the University to understand, interpret and evaluate their learning system requirements, preparing user stories and specifications as required.
- Work with internal and external developers to incorporate these requirements into the development and enhancement of new software, tools and approaches.
- Coordinate testing, such as user acceptance testing, accessibility testing, and usability testing, of new products and services.
- Work with external service providers, monitoring against service-level agreements.

Working in an Agile product environment

- Provide ongoing operational support for OU digital learning systems, carrying out administration, configuration, issue investigation and user support.
- Support and contribute to the roll out and adoption of new learning tools, products and services to stakeholders, and provide appropriate guidance and training to staff.
- Work as part of the team as well as on own initiative, prioritising and managing tasks accordingly, to achieve goals.
• Plan and organise effectively, adjusting priorities, identifying and managing risk, and escalating issues as appropriate to meet deadlines.
• Apply specialist expertise appropriately, offering a range of solutions to problems.

Developing and delivering effective communications

• Create, manage and maintain internal and student-facing guidance and exemplar websites, ensuring that content is clear, readable, engaging and effective.
• Communicate effectively and persuasively, both in person and remotely, utilising a range of media, with internal and external stakeholders.
• Translate technical notes into coherent, concise and effective guidance for students and staff.
• Contribute to or deliver clear and professional business documentation, such as project plans and business cases.
• Develop productive working relationships with business partners across the Open University and externally.
• Use and present data and analytics to help provide insight and inform decision making.

Other responsibilities

• Demonstrate a genuine passion for technology and creating great user experiences.
• Maintain an understanding of contemporary online and distance learning, educational technology and pedagogy.
• Identify opportunities for continuous professional self-development.
• Identify, research and analyse emerging trends and technologies, and evaluate how they may apply to teaching and learning.
• Be willing and able to embrace new ideas, learn new skills and adapt to changing situations or requirements.
• Assists the Learning Systems team and Online Student Experience team with project tasks and operational support objectives as and when required.

Person Specification

Essential

• Demonstrate a genuine passion for technology and creating great user experiences.
• Manage time effectively, working to agreed deadlines and budgets, managing risk and adjusting priorities as required, escalating issues as appropriate.
• Ability to build and develop productive working relationships with internal business partners and externally.
• Good communication and presentation skills: communicates with confidence and credibility in face-to-face situations, remotely and in writing.
• Apply specialist expertise appropriately, offering a range of solutions to problems.
• The ability to cope with pressure and unforeseen problems and to offer timely pragmatic solutions.
• Ability to work as part of the team as well as on own initiative – to be self-motivated and proactive to achieve goals.

• Must be willing and able to embrace new ideas, learn new skills and adapt to changing situations or requirements.

• Experience of creating or editing clear, readable, engaging and effective documentation/guidance.

• Experience of delivering results that conform to agreed project specifications, budgets, schedules and standards.

Desirable

• Awareness of contemporary online and distance learning, educational technology and pedagogy.

• Appreciation of the use of pedagogic tools and services in a learning and teaching context and their application.

• Experience of identifying, researching and analysing emerging trends and technologies, and the ability to present these findings clearly, concisely and persuasively.

• Experience of contributing to multi-stakeholder workshop sessions to gather and prioritise requirements.

• Knowledge and experience of various learning environments, ideally Moodle and similar LMS platforms.

• Develops knowledge and expertise through continuing professional development and shares expertise and knowledge with others.