Job Description – Senior Product Development Manager

Learning Experience and Technology (LXT), CIO portfolio

About the role
Product teams in Learning Experience and Technology work collaboratively to design, deliver and manage a sustainable and unified end-to-end learner experience of technology. We are responsible for the management and development of the Open University’s award-winning digital learning environments. Our goal is 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 Senior Product Development Manager will work across a variety of exciting and innovative teaching tools and platforms to:

1. Build capability of current learning systems and identify, plan, design and deliver new learning products and services to enhance the student learning experience.
2. Manage multiple digital products and services through the complete lifecycle, from inception to mainstream adoption, ongoing use, and eventual decommissioning of obsolete systems.
3. Deliver accountable performance management of line reports and other project team staff to ensure excellent performance and drive ongoing career and professional development, operating in line with University policies and procedures.
4. Promote and embody a positive transformation in attitudes and behaviours to champion the values and future direction of the organisation.

Key responsibilities
Planning, managing and delivering services

- Assess requirements for learning environments, work with stakeholders, define project plans, resource requirements, milestones and deadlines, taking into account student and staff needs, strategic constraints, accessibility and the user experience.
- Take responsibility for ongoing development, support and maintenance of products within our learning environments.
- Lead on accessibility and inclusive design for our products and services, all the way from a strategic level down to design details. Growing the skills of the team in this area.
- Promote adoption, quality standards and use of products and learning systems, provide timely, expert guidance and support to colleagues, academic teams and students.

Delivering effective communications and managing relationships

- Manage product releases, communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders and related communications, including acceptance into service and sign-off.
- Manage and maintain the production of guidance and support for our staff and students.
- Use and present data and analytics to provide evidence, give insight, assess impact/benefits and inform decision making.
- Work with internal and external developers to incorporate requirements into the development and enhancement of new software, tools and approaches.
People management

- Direct, motivate, engage and challenge the team to deliver high-quality, appropriate, creative and pedagogically effective learning products and services to agreed performance and quality standards.
- Manage individuals or teams as required.

Strategic development

- Contribute to the development of the VLE roadmap and related strategy and policy formation.
- Support the development of innovation and analytics in learning environments, in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

Broadening internal and external perspectives

- Promote learning environments, keep abreast of national and international developments in HE online digital delivery, products and services and facilitate the sharing of excellence across the University and beyond.

Essential Skills and experience

- Higher education qualification or equivalent professional experience.
- Demonstrates an active interest in accessibility and inclusive design and a passion for creating great user experiences.
- Proven ability to specify and deliver web-based products successfully, preferably in an educational setting.
- Knowledge of contemporary open and distance learning, educational technology, media production and learning systems environments.
- Proven ability to successfully communicate and collaborate with colleagues and across organisational boundaries to achieve common goals.
- Proven ability to persuade and influence appropriately and influences effectively.
- Proven ability to prioritise effectively, meet challenging deadlines through strong critical analysis skills and provide evidence-based recommendations.
- Positive attitude to change and respond flexibly.
- Proven delivery of results under pressure, taking responsibility for the outcomes.
- Commitment to equality and diversity, which is key to fulfilling the University’s mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.

Desirable

- Experience of working within a complex organisation.
- Familiarity with Virtual Learning Environments (e.g. Moodle).
- An understanding of the development and configuration of enterprise-level systems (preferably learning systems).
- Experience of Agile software development, managing innovation projects and usability and accessibility testing.
- Experience of interpreting large data sets and generating and communicating learning analytics to inform decision making.
- Experience of benchmarking and horizon-scanning.
- Experience of creating and leading a small team in an area of responsibility as required by the business, e.g. design, accessibility, testing or guidance and support.
- Demonstrates a curiosity and passion for new technology and how it may apply to teaching and learning.