

JOB DESCRIPTION / STUDENT SUPPORT OFFICER

Academic Divisions/ Divisional Operations: Education & Student Experience

The University of Kent is a leading UK institution with an excellent reputation for outstanding teaching, strong research and international links. There are many new initiatives underway to build on existing strengths, such as Signature Research Themes, the Institute for Cultural and Creative Industries and the Kent and Medway Medical School.

The University is continuing to look to the future whilst responding to sector-wide challenges. Kent has set out a vision and strategy that builds upon strong foundations in education, student experience and research, embracing flexibility and growth to ensure a sustainable future for our community, and to enable the University to further its position and navigate these challenges successfully.

As part of this, we're reshaping our operating model to ensure our directorates and academic divisions are effective, efficient and focused sharply on delivering the University's ambition to be a leading civic university; delivering an outstanding student experience, outcomes, and world-leading research.

Reference:

HSS-161-23

Salary:

Grade 6

Contract:

Fixed Term until 31/08/2023

Part time

Location:

Canterbury campus

Responsible to:

Student Support Manager

Responsible for:

Student Support Assistant(s) (Supervisory responsibility only)

Activities: Pastoral support activities

Job family:

Administration, Professional & Managerial

Job purpose

The Student Support Officer provides a professional and wide-ranging pastoral support service to students whose personal problems or issues risk their academic progress or continued studies.

The role holder works as part of a professional services team with supervisory responsibility for staff within the same work area, and in conjunction with senior colleagues, delivers a service which makes a positive and measurable contribution to the student experience and academic attainment. The team provide a student-facing pastoral service and also signpost the central professional service provision for students where this is a more appropriate course of action.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) guidance states pastoral responsibilities and academic diligence discipline should be separated. This will be achieved by ensuring that the former is led by professional services staff, whereas the latter is led by academic staff - with support from the relevant professional services staff within the Division. It is key that this separation is understood and maintained, and the student support team will be key to this process.

Key accountabilities

The following are the main accountabilities for the job. Other duties, commensurate with the grading of the job, may also be assigned from time to time.

1. Provide support and guidance to both undergraduate and postgraduate (including HDA) students requiring non-academic advice, including drop-ins, regular support meetings and follow-up as required.
2. Make referrals to, and communicate with, other University departments that offer support services to students so that students with difficulties receive a seamless support experience.
3. Collate and make an initial assessment of concessionary evidence to ensure that the relevant committees and boards are able to make informed and evidence-based decisions in relation to mitigating actions.
4. Maintain and updating the record of interactions, ensuring sensitive data is handled in accordance with University guidelines and GDPR.
5. Process ad hoc requests for mitigation relating to late coursework submissions, extensions, intermissions and exam delays throughout the year.
6. Identify and monitor ILPs and recommend amendments in liaison with SSW, where applicable, through student support meetings
7. Co-ordinate and deliver induction events during welcome week and other student support events and activities, including preparation and delivery of material to students, giving presentations and liaising with other divisional and central professional service teams as appropriate.
8. Supervise relevant staff, providing clear objectives in consultation with the Student Support Manager and ensuring that staff are appropriately motivated and trained to carry out their responsibilities to the required standards in terms of service expectations.
9. Contribute to the development of a collaborative working environment and improved processes in order to maintain and enhance the quality of the support provided to students.

Key challenges and decisions

The following provide an overview of the most challenging or complex parts of the role and the degree of autonomy that exists.

1. This is a student-focused role and the role holder will need to work closely and collaboratively with colleagues across the University and within the Division to ensure the best possible support for students.
2. Some exchanges with students can be upsetting, either because of the nature of the problem the student faces, or because issues can feel sensitive and/or confrontational. Knowing when or if signposting or referral to a more specialist service is needed.
3. The role holder will need to have a good knowledge and understanding of appropriate services, regulations and codes of practices needed to efficiently carry out the role. They will be expected to liaise with central professional services departments where students may be referred to support.
4. Prioritisation of own workload and that of those they supervise. Decisions will be within broadly defined policies and procedures. Students may drop in with no notice and judgements will need to be made about the state of their mental wellbeing and which service to signpost them to, or whether to deal with them in-house
5. Ensure strict confidentiality with student data, adhering to University guidelines and Data Protection legislation

Facts & figures

The role holder will provide student support services to all staff within the division. As such caseloads may be high and demand for services may increase at certain times of the academic year.

The role holder will supervise junior team members as directed by the Student Support Manager.

Internal & external relationships

Internal: All students, academic and professional support staff within the Division; professional support staff across the wider University at all levels; Kent Union; CES, SS&W, the Medical Centre.

External: Public; parents; relatives and guardians of students; external examiners; other institutions; emergency services

The role holder is expected to demonstrate a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion; promoting collaboration and positive partnerships, working harmoniously with colleagues, students and other stakeholders of all cultures and backgrounds.

Health, safety & wellbeing considerations

This job involves undertaking duties which include the following health, safety and wellbeing considerations:

- Regular use of Screen Display Equipment
- Conflict resolution
- There may be a requirement to work evenings and weekends
- Ability to travel in a timely and efficient manner regularly between campuses

Person specification

The person specification details the necessary skills, qualifications, experience or other attributes needed to carry out the job. Applications will be measured against the criteria published below.

Selection panels will be looking for clear evidence and examples in an application, or cover letter (where applicable), which back-up any assertions made in relation to each criterion.

You will use your knowledge and skills to provide an effective and customer-focused frontline support service to students within the Division. You will be well organised, with excellent attention to detail and an enthusiasm to deliver an exceptional student experience.

You'll be able to demonstrate the following skills, experience, abilities and personal interests:

Essential	Assessed via
• GCSE Maths & English (grade C/4 or above) or equivalent	A
• Educated to A level standard or equivalent	A
• Substantial experience of working in a student facing role in HE	A,I
• Line management/supervisory experience and the ability to motivate and supervise staff effectively	A,I
• Excellent IT skills particularly MS Office packages and the ability to learn systems quickly	A,I,T
• Excellent communication skills (written and verbal) and the ability to deal confidently and diplomatically with a range of people at all levels, modifying your approach when necessary	A,I,T
• Strong judgement and initiative with the ability to effectively interpret and apply policies and procedures, understand and solve problems and make suggestions for improvements	A,I,T
• Ability to advise on a wide range of student pastoral issues and the ability to judge when to refer to specialists	I,T
• High level of accuracy and attention to detail	A,I
• Ability to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, and insights into the range of issues they may face, especially if living abroad for the first time	A,I
• Excellent interpersonal skills and an ability to show empathy with students who face difficulties, whatever their background or circumstances	A,I
• Highly organised - able to prioritise work (self and others) to ensure key deliverables are achieved on time and to required standards	A,I
• Ability to work independently and effectively as part of a team by collaborating and developing close working relationships with colleagues at all levels	I
• Good numeracy skills and ability to gather and analyse data/information and then make recommendations for action	I,T
• Ability to handle issues of great sensitivity with discretion and with complete confidentiality	I
• Firm commitment to achieving the University's vision and values, with a passion for a transformative student experience	I
• Commitment to deliver and promote equality, diversity and inclusivity in the day to day work of the role	I
Desirable	Assessed via
• Working towards relevant degree/professional qualification (eg counselling) or equivalent	A, I
• Experience of providing student support and guidance	A, I

- Understanding HE and how to liaise with relevant sections to provide coherent student support

A, I

* A - Application; I - Interview; T - Test/presentation at interview stage