

WE STAND FOR AMBITION.

University of
Kent

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

Candidate brief – September 2024



Message from Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience, Professor Richard Reece



We are delighted that you have expressed an interest in the post of Director of Student Services, at the University of Kent.

This is an extremely important appointment that will play a key part in developing the University for the future. We have set out our vision and strategy that builds on strong foundations in education, student experience and research, embracing flexibility and growth to ensure a sustainable future for our community.

The Director of Student Services at the University of Kent is a pivotal role that carries significant responsibility for enhancing the student experience. As a key member of the university's leadership team, the Director will provide strategic and operational oversight to a diverse range of student services, including Student Support and Wellbeing, Student Conduct and Complaints, Student Life, and Careers and Employability. This role requires a visionary leader who can effectively manage these areas, ensuring that the services provided are aligned with the university's mission and strategic objectives to deliver an excellent student experience.

The successful candidate will be expected to drive the development and implementation of policies, procedures, and strategies that support the non-academic aspects of student life at Kent. This includes adapting to the evolving needs of the student body and the higher education sector at large. Collaboration is a key aspect of this role, with the Director working closely with Professional Services departments, academic schools, and the Registry to ensure a holistic approach to student support. Candidates should have a proven track record of leadership within student services in higher education and demonstrate the ability to inspire and guide their teams through periods of change. The University of Kent prides itself on being an inclusive employer, fostering a culture of cooperation and collaboration, which the Director of Student Services will be expected to uphold and promote.

This is a time of great opportunity for Kent. We very much look forward to receiving your application for what will be a stimulating, challenging and professionally fulfilling role.

Professor Richard Reece
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience



The University of Kent

The University of Kent is moving forward, working to deliver our ambitious Kent 2030 strategy. We are building on our world-class teaching and research reputation to become a leading civic university, supported by progressive courses that place us at the heart of public and intellectual life.

We are a university embedded in our community at a regional, national and global level. We build relationships, connections and partnerships, bringing the University's skills and expertise to make a difference in the world.

We strive to be a community that empowers students from a wide range of backgrounds to find and shape their place in the world, where academics are free to explore and deepen our understanding of it.

Canterbury, our historic base, has been a hub of learning for centuries, while our Medway campus is at the heart of its region's cultural aspirations. We are proudly international in outlook with our Kent International College supporting international recruitment and partnerships with more than 300 universities worldwide.

We are determined to build on this to meet local, national and international needs. The Kent and Medway Medical School will bring vital skills to the region, while a growing Institute for Cultural and Creative Industries will support the fastest growing sector of the UK economy.

Our students are diverse, passionate and independent. They are thought leaders, volunteers and co-creators. They decolonise curricula and help shape their communities.

Our highly rated, inspirational teachers, work with award-winning staff to ensure everyone reaches their potential. We actively seek new ways to open up education, from online learning to apprenticeships, to support personal and community development as well as business growth.

We are home to some of the world's most influential thinkers, with recent biology research named among the UK's best breakthroughs of the last century. We are establishing an internationally renowned knowledge base in key areas including cyber security and digital accessibility.

By 2030, the combined talents of our students and staff will ensure we are known for our transformative student experience, groundbreaking discoveries and the significant role we play in wider society.



The Abbot and
Martha Kanner
LIBRARY

EXAMS 2018
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The context

As we work towards delivering our Kent 2030 strategy, we continue to put our students at the heart of all we do: offering courses that inspire and meet employer needs; providing facilities that add another dimension to their studies and a window into future career options; creating an environment where students are supported and challenged by academics at the top of their field.

The Director of Student Services at the University of Kent plays a central role in shaping the non-academic aspects of student life, ensuring that all students receive the support and resources they need to thrive. This position oversees a broad portfolio of services, including Student Support and Wellbeing, Student Conduct and Complaints, Student Life, and Careers and Employability. The Director is responsible for delivering an exceptional student experience by fostering a supportive environment that addresses students' personal, professional, and developmental needs.

As a member of the wider university leadership team, the Director provides strategic and operational leadership across the Student Services directorate. They will develop and implement strategies, policies, and processes that align with the University's vision of enhancing student wellbeing and engagement. At a time of significant change both within the higher education sector and at the University of Kent, the Director will need to bring innovative ideas and proven leadership skills to the role.

In addition to their leadership responsibilities, the Director will work closely with heads of services within the directorate to ensure that resources and support structures evolve to meet the current and future needs of students. The direct reports include the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing, the Head of Student Conduct and Complaints, the Head of Student Life, and the Head of Careers and Employability. Together, this leadership team will shape the delivery of comprehensive services that enhance all aspects of student life.

Collaboration is key to this role. The Director will regularly engage with Professional Services departments, academic schools, and the Registry to ensure a coordinated approach to student services. By fostering strong partnerships across the university, the Director will ensure that student support services are fully integrated into the broader university experience, creating a seamless journey for students from enrolment through to graduation.

The ideal candidate will have extensive experience in student services, ideally within a higher education setting. They must demonstrate the ability to lead diverse teams, drive strategic initiatives, and manage complex projects. Strong communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills are essential, as is a commitment to delivering services that promote student wellbeing, success, and personal growth.

At the University of Kent, we pride ourselves on fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment. The Director of Student Services will play a key role in upholding these values, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or circumstances, are supported in their academic journey and have access to opportunities that allow them to succeed.





The role

An inspirational leader and role model, the Director of Student Services will contribute to the delivery and objectives of student and support services at the University, delivering on the University's vision and mission for an excellent student experience.

The post-holder will provide strategic and operational leadership and management for the Student Services directorate to ensure that support, resources and services are developed to meet the current and future needs of the University and all its students.

They will play a central role in developing and implementing strategy, policy, procedure and processes that enhance all aspects of the University of Kent non-academic "student life" experience, at a time of significant change both within the sector and at Kent. The successful candidate will have the proven leadership skills to make this happen.

Key accountabilities

- Lead on the development of strategic initiatives, working closely with Kent Students' Union and other senior managers across professional service and academic schools to improve all aspects of student life and experience throughout the University.
- Develop, manage and implement institutional strategies, policies, procedures and guidance to support all Kent students, developing clear and concise evidence based and analytic reports for Executive Group or central University committees to support decisions.
- Lead on the development, implementation and evaluation of institutional student initiatives to support and promote student safety and student life, enhance the University's reputation in the local community and strengthen good community relations, in partnership with inter alia local universities, the Council, Kent Police and residents.
- Lead on the strategic development, implementation, co-ordination and monitoring of student equality, diversity and inclusivity to ensure the promotion and sharing of good practice across the University, legal compliance and accountability annually to the University Council.
- Undertake horizon scanning and strategic planning for the directorate to support present and future needs across the University for all Kent students, including the University's relationship with external partners and services.
- Lead on the development, accountability, continuous improvement and monitoring of service provision and delivery to ensure it operates in-line with the University's Institutional Strategic Plan; including student employability, support, health and wellbeing, conduct and complaints, engagement and student life.
- Lead on institutional and national developments to ensure a safe and secure campus community for all staff and students of the University (including chairing relevant groups, boards, committees and ad hoc working groups).
- Lead and contribute to cross-university projects to help ensure that these are completed within agreed budgets and timescales and to the appropriate quality standards.
- Lead, motivate and develop relevant staff, providing clear objectives and managing performance against these, to ensure that staff are appropriately motivated and trained to carry out their responsibilities to the required standards.
- Oversee the planning and management of appropriate budgets, to ensure that the University achieves best value.
- Take responsibility for the University's Safeguarding policy and procedure and being the University's Senior Safeguarding Officer.
- Play a key role in responding to serious incidents affecting students, the Directorate or the University as a whole.
- Maintain a strong awareness of current and forthcoming regulatory and/ or statutory requirements that impact on students and the services they receive.
- Be available for out-of-hours work, as required, to deal with urgent student-related issues as they arise.

Salary

Attractive salary based on Senior Professional Services scale

Contract

Full-time and ongoing

Location

Canterbury campus; with work at other campuses including Medway

Responsible to

DVC Education and Student Experience

Responsible for

Head of Student Support & Wellbeing; Head of Careers & Employability; Head of Student Conduct & Complaints; Head of Student Engagement; Student EDI Officer; oversight of Medical Centre and Chaplaincy

Person specification

The Director of Student Services will be an engaging and consensus-building leader with a focus on delivery and a strong understanding of the actions needed to ensure that the University thrives.

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

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, CV and/ or cover letter, which back-up any assertions made in relation to each criterion.

Essential

- Degree in a relevant field or equivalent qualification or experience (A)
- Post-graduate or professional qualification in a relevant area, or equivalent experience in a relevant profession at managerial level (A)
- Proven expertise and experience in the delivery of student services such as student support and wellbeing, careers and employability, or student life and community (A,I)
- Experience of working within and substantial knowledge of the Higher Education (or related) sector and an understanding and/or key appreciation of the challenges facing it (A,I,T)
- Experience of managing large-scale projects and initiatives and their implementation in a large and complex environment (I)
- Experience of responding to, and as a consequence the management of, the high-level risks that are associated with student services (A,I)
- Substantial experience and proven track record in strategic planning and management relevant to student services (A,I)
- Significant experience managing large budgets and planning sustainably for the future (A,I,T)
- Highly numerate and able to read and interpret quantitative and qualitative data, financial information and work with metrics and KPIs (I,T)
- Excellent and effective negotiation, influencing and communication skills, giving the post-holder the ability to deal confidently and diplomatically with a range of people at all levels both internally and externally, and the ability to produce clear and concise written materials (I,T)
- Experience in dealing with highly confidential and/or sensitive matters, across a range of stakeholders (I)
- Experience of successfully managing staff, with well-developed leadership skills and a clear passion for developing motivated staff and strong teams (A,I,T)
- Ability to solve complex issues and problems within an environment of competing priorities and agendas (I,T)
- Ability to assess, analyse and manage risks and opportunities (I,T)
- Willingness to work out-of-hours as required to respond to urgent casework (I)
- The ability to enable those at Kent to reach their full potential (I)
- Firm commitment to achieving the University's vision and values, with a passion for a transformative student experience and the civic university mission (I)
- Commitment to deliver and promote equality, diversity and inclusivity in the day to day work of the role (I)

Desirable

- Ability to undertake international travel (I)

Assessment stage: A = Application/ CV/ Letter; I, T = Interview/ presentation/ test (after shortlisting stage)

Additional information

Annual leave: The annual leave entitlement for full-time staff on this grade is 30 working days and 8 public and other holidays. There are also 5 additional days, which are taken between Christmas and New Year when the University closes.

Pension: You will be automatically enrolled to become a member of USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme).

Location: The primary location is at the University's Canterbury campus with regular working at our Medway campus, although the post-holder may be required to work from time to time at other campuses and centres, both nationally and internationally.

Relocation: You will be required to live near enough to Canterbury to perform the duties of the post fully. The University offers assistance with relocation expenses for those who have to move to the vicinity.

UK Visa & Immigration: You will be required to meet the current UK Visa and Immigration requirements for this position. Further information on Certificate of Sponsorship requirements can be found at www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk

Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity: We are proud to be a Disability Confident employer, supporting and promoting disabled people in the workplace. We welcome applications from disabled people and we will:

- ensure our recruitment and selection process is inclusive and accessible

- communicate our vacancies through a range of different channels
- offer an interview to applicants with a disability who meet the minimum essential requirements of the role as detailed within the person specification (Guaranteed Interview Scheme)
- anticipate and provide reasonable adjustment as and when required
- provide support to any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition.

All University staff are expected to be aware of, comply with, and support the University's policies with regards to ensuring and promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity. Relevant training and development should be undertaken, as required. Further information about EDI is available from the University's website at: kent.ac.uk/hr-equalityanddiversity/

Childcare: The Oaks Nursery based at the Canterbury campus is an excellent benefit for staff and a great asset to the University.

Places are offered on a first come first served basis and baby places are particularly limited so staff may wish to make contact as soon as their pregnancy is confirmed.

Healthcare Plan: A corporate employee-funded healthcare plan partnered with Benenden Health is open to all staff.



The city of Canterbury

The University's main campus is in Canterbury; a vibrant, exciting and well-connected city with a world-famous cathedral. One of medieval Europe's great places of pilgrimage and knowledge, it has a distinctly cosmopolitan feel thanks to its international visitors and the students and staff from its three universities. Less than an hour from London, it takes little more than that to visit France.

People come to Canterbury from across the globe for its world-class heritage, for culture and festivals.

The city and its immediate area have an increasingly rich cultural offer. Turner Contemporary, the nationally-acclaimed art gallery, is within easy reach. The Marlowe Theatre is one of the country's leading regional theatres complemented by the rich offering of the Gulbenkian Arts Centre with its cinema, theatre and a powerful youth programme. The Curzon Canterbury showcases independent films from around the world and the Sidney Cooper Gallery is a contemporary arts space in the heart of the city. The nearby Beane House of Art and Knowledge is an art museum and library.

Canterbury Festival, the Whitstable Biennale and the Folkestone Triennial are just some of the regular events taking place in the region.

Kent is often described as the Garden of England and you will find local produce in cafés, pubs and restaurants: Romney Marsh lamb, cherries, ale from local hops and award-winning wine from Kentish vineyards.

Canterbury is surrounded by some of the country's most attractive landscapes. To the north of the city is one of England's largest ancient woodlands, the Blean, and a few miles away there is the seaside town of Whitstable. Dover Cliffs offer one of the most iconic views in the country.





APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications are to be submitted via the University's online recruitment system: <https://jobs.kent.ac.uk/OTR-206-24>

You will be required to complete and submit the application form and upload a CV detailing career and achievements and a cover letter of no more than two pages that addresses your motivation and suitability for the role.

Deadline

The closing date for applications is Monday 30 September 2024.

Interviews are expected to be held in October 2024, date to be confirmed.