

Advertisement

Post Title: Lead Practitioner - Student Support Unit (Disability Support)

School/department: Student Experience

Hours: Full time hours considered up to a maximum of 1 FTE. Requests for flexible working options will be considered (subject to business needs - due to business needs, full-time hours are required).

Contract: Permanent

Reference: 6412

Salary: Starting at £42,149 to £50,296 per annum

Placed on: 18 October 2021

Closing date: 08 November 2021. Applications must be received by midnight of the closing date.

Expected interview date: TBC

Expected start date: As soon as possible

The Student Experience Division are looking to recruit a Lead Practitioner for the Student Support unit, a team dedicated to supporting students with a range of disabilities throughout their University journey.

We seek to appoint a highly skilled disability practitioner who is not only experienced in assessing the needs of existing and prospective students with a range of physical disabilities; long term health conditions; learning differences and mental health conditions but has experience of a managing a case load and a team of very experienced and well established advisors and expert administrators in this field.

You will have substantial experience of determining the suitability of reasonable adjustments and how to proactively support students within an education setting. Experienced at building professional relationships with colleagues and an excellent communicator you will lead on the development of policies and procedures as well as inputting with others on existing processes and reviews.

A strong manager, we are looking for a positive, pro-active individual who can be flexible, listen to the team and be responsive whilst also willing to share their experience and advice both with immediate colleagues and more widely with the academic community to support them in working with students with disabilities.

Key Working relationships: Students from across the University, Connectors in co-creation roles, Director for the Student Experience all academics and professional services within schools, Division of the Student Experience, local needs assessment Centres, primary and secondary care providers, social care teams

Please contact Wendy Tozer at w.j.tozer@sussex.ac.uk and she can arrange an informal conversation with the Associate Director.

For full details and how to apply see our [vacancies page](#)

The University of Sussex values the diversity of its staff and students and we actively encourage and welcome applicants from all backgrounds.

2. The School / Division

Please find further information regarding the school/division at <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/about/strategy-and-funding>
<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentsupport/>
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/schoolsandservices/professionalservices/student-experience>

Job Description

Job Description for the post of: Lead Practitioner (SSU)

Department: Student Experience

Section/Unit/School: Student Support Unit

Location: Bramber House

Grade: 8

Responsible to: Associate Director Student Engagement and Achievement

Responsible for: Disability Advisors, Operations Officer, NMH Support Coordinator, Student Connectors

Job Purpose and Overview:

- Provide direction and management of disability support to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of customer-focused services to students, staff and other users of the service. To provide advice and guidance to immediate Disability Advisor colleagues, University colleagues, including Faculty/Schools-based managers, on key issues concerning disability support and services, which will impact on the University's overall aims and objectives
- To contribute to a professional and specialist advice and guidance service to students [with disabilities, long-term health conditions, learning differences, and mental health and autistic spectrum conditions] to enable students to access their studies successfully and encourage academic progress and student retention.
- To contribute to the work of the Division in the formulation, promotion, delivery, monitoring and review of University policies and procedures regarding students [with disabilities, long term health conditions and mental health and autistic spectrum conditions] to ensure legal and contractual obligations under equality legislation.
- **Main accountabilities and responsibility areas**
- To manage and motivate a team of staff in providing services to disabled students and staff that are efficient, effective, innovative and forward-looking.
- To develop and ensure appropriate working partnerships are in place with colleagues, students, and external stakeholders, which are conducive to the effective realisation of the University's strategic aspirations in relation to student support and the student experience.
- To provide a professional and specialist advice and information service to disabled students and those with mental health and autistic spectrum conditions and SpLD's. This service is provided for current students and potential students applying to the

University of Sussex.

- To accurately interpret, and keep up to date with, all relevant legislation relating to disabled students to ensure that accurate and appropriate advice is offered at all times.
- To lead on the allocation of case work and maintain your own caseload providing continuing support for individual applicants and students as appropriate. This may involve regular reviews and updates of provision, case conferences with academic staff and other professional services directorates to ensure that students are able to access their studies effectively throughout their time at University.
- To organise and prioritise your caseload; to routinely monitor and review casework, taking into account any urgent action required and mandatory deadlines for submission of applications and to take responsibility for deciding when to invoke peer or management supervision.
- Lead case reviews as appropriate with Disability Advisors to ensure shared good practice and be the point of contact for students that need to be discussed in the weekly case review meetings.
- To liaise with the University's academic and support services regarding the learning needs of students with including the provision of special examination arrangements and reasonable adjustments in respect of teaching, learning and assessment.
- To provide advice and support for advisors in the identifying of circumstances where it is necessary to breach the Services Code of Confidentiality and clients who are at risk of harming themselves or others and to invoke emergency procedures or referrals where necessary ensuring that duty of care responsibilities are discharged at all times.
- To offer advice on individual support plans students and referrals to an approved National Access Centre, to enable students to apply for Disabled Students Allowance or other relevant funding to cover their support needs.
- To keep thorough, accurate and up to date client case notes ensuring compliance with the Student Support Service's Code of Confidentiality, professional standards and the Data Protection Act.
- To actively use systems to record statistical information and be able to report on volumes, complexity and potential challenges to the work of the service.
- **Major deliverables, projects, processes, responsibility areas etc.**
- To lead, organise and support the work of the Disability Advisors so that the objectives are met and support and advice for students with disabilities are operating efficiently and effectively.
- To ensure that colleagues provide effective support, advice and direction to the University and its Faculties, Schools and administrative Directorates in responding to and complying with legal requirements and published good practice, and to ensure that relevant policies, procedures, practices, and arrangements are in place.
- To promote a culture of excellent customer service throughout the team

- To contribute significantly to the development, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the, policies and procedures for disability support and other relevant strategies as required.
- To ensure that diagnostic assessments, NMH or non-medical support personnel, e.g. sighted guides, note- takers, communication support workers, mentors for disabled students services are managed and organised appropriately throughout the year, supporting colleagues to navigate challenges to a busy service as appropriate.
- To liaise with local authority social services, community mental health teams, and other relevant agencies in the support of students with diagnosed/suspected long term health conditions, physical disabilities and mental health / autistic spectrum conditions.
- To be a recognised advisory point of contact for university staff/stakeholders when dealing with critical incidents / student crises and to work proactively with colleagues in teams across the division to manage risk.
- To act as the escalation point if there are barriers to implementation of reasonable adjustments; liaise with appropriate academic and any other relevant staff to ensure that any anticipatory and reasonable adjustments required by students are implemented, in accordance with equality legislation. [This could include liaison with other professional service directorates and faculty staff, offering advice and recommendations on physical accessibility, appropriate format of teaching materials and any other practical considerations in order to ensure that individual applicants and students can access their studies].
- To liaise with appropriate academic and other relevant staff to support widening participation and access, academic progress and student retention.
- To be leading on the support and organisation of training for colleagues in the Division, and schools around reasonable adjustments and the adaptation of materials as appropriate to ensure access to up to date and detailed information about support and provision.
- To undertake any other reasonable duties and responsibilities as may be reasonably expected as part of this role and in line with the grade.

- **4. Person Specification**

- **Essential Criteria**

- ***Skills and Competencies***

- Degree or equivalent
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- Excellent management skills, team building and decision making skills combined with the ability to motivate staff within an ethos of individual and collective responsibility for actions and exemplary service delivery.
- Evidence of working collaboratively across organisational boundaries and with external agencies.
- The capacity to innovate and support change management

- Experience of providing advice to students on disability related matters
- Able to maintain clear professional boundaries
- Ability to manage a caseload and prioritise work
- Well-developed interview, case working and practitioner skills
- Competence in accurate record keeping and report writing.

- ***Knowledge Areas***
 - A thorough and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of all matters relating to support for disabled students, the relevant legislation, published codes of practice and the national agenda affecting this area of work, with a particular focus on higher education.
 - Substantial knowledge of issues affecting students with physical disabilities and long term health conditions, mental health conditions and / or learning differences undertaking higher education

- ***Previous experience***
 - Significant experience of being a Lead Practitioner within higher education or a similar organisation, including management of staff and resources.
 - Proven record in effectively managing a team.
 - Extensive experience of supporting people with physical disabilities, long term health conditions, mental health conditions and SpLD's in a professional context
 - Proven ability to articulate complex legislative or regulatory issues to a range of audiences
 - Ability to apply knowledge of current approaches to supporting disabled students
 - Ability to remain calm and professional within a busy environment when dealing with clients with various challenges and in difficult situations

- ***Professional qualities***
 - An ability to think in strategic terms and a willingness to exercise leadership
 - Organisational abilities, including an ability to manage priorities and workloads
 - Highly developed inter personal, communication and negotiation skills
 - Literate in IT and reporting tools
 - Understanding and commitment to the importance of equality of opportunity within a student support service environment.
 - An enthusiastic, can-do approach to supporting students and promoting the services and the Directorate.

- ***Desirable criteria***
 - Professional / vocational qualification in a disability related field
 - Ability to develop and deliver training to staff
 - A good knowledge of the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) scheme and the DSA Quality Assurance Framework

