

Job Description

Associate Director of Student Life

Directorate of Student Life & Library Services

Grade: PSS4

Role profile: Senior

Full time

Permanent

	Duties of the role
Overall purpose of the role	The Associate Director of Student Life is a senior leadership role within the university and will be responsible for establishing a forward-thinking Student Life agenda to ensure that our students receive a sector leading experience. You will lead and manage strategic initiatives which enhance the student experience and student outcomes within and outside of the classroom. The postholder will work closely with the Associate Director of Library and Learning Services and senior colleagues across the University to shape a modern, integrated student support service to ensure that the University meets its key performance indicators. Along with the Associate Director of Library and Learning Services this postholder will deputise for the Director of Student Life and Library Services when required. The postholder will have a clear vision for enhancing the student experience and the ability to put forward proposals that bring about significant strategic change. This role is pivotal in shaping and guiding the strategic vision for student engagement, wellbeing, and future graduate readiness across the University. Building on our Empowering University Strategy, this position is dedicated to cultivating a holistic student experience by empowering students to participate in a wide array of co-curricular, extra-curricular, and wellbeing initiatives that enhance their academic success, personal growth, and future preparedness. The postholder will contribute to university planning, quality assurance, and regulatory requirements (e.g. OfS, TEF) and use data, insight, and student feedback to continuously improve services and ensure that student services play a key role in student retention and attainment. Through strong strategic leadership, the postholder will foster an inclusive, supportive, and vibrant campus environment that champions academic excellence, personal development, and active student engagement in work-based learning and community involvement. By overseeing and integrating student-focused services, the postholder will ensure students thrive both academically and personally, enjoying a rich and rewarding university journey. The role will involve active collaboration with colleagues across professional services, faculties, academic schools, the Students' Union and external stakeholders.

	Duties of the role
	The work conditions will involve a hybrid work model. As a senior leader, it is important that you have a visible presence on campus, and it is expected that you will work on campus for a minimum of 3 days per week.
Main duties and responsibilities	• To take a senior leadership role in improving the experience of students at the University, working closely with the Associate Director of Library and Learning Services, the DVC for Education, Student Experience and Equalities, and the Associate PVC Education. To deputise for the Director of Student Life and Library Services when required. • To provide senior strategic leadership across the University's student life agenda, including designing and executing initiatives that enhance student wellbeing, belonging, engagement, careers and employability, to ensure that they are fully connected with University services and maximise the opportunities provided by data and artificial intelligence to drive forward enhancements and efficiencies in the team. • To collaborate on cross-University projects and participate in committees, working groups, and project teams aimed at enriching the overall student experience, as well as preparing reports to meet regulatory requirements. • To establish and support University-wide events that strengthen student engagement and campus community spirit through an evidence-based approach. • To take a senior strategic leadership role in fostering student voice and promote student involvement in decision-making processes that positively impact their university experience. • To provide senior strategic leadership across the University's approach to maximising the student experience as measured by student surveys such as the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Student Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, Graduate Outcomes Survey, and wider student data (for example retention and gap-based data across protected characteristics). • To lead the student life team, ensuring that resources (staff and budgets) are deployed effectively to maximise the benefit to students, and that staff are supported and developed in their role. • To lead a programme of continuous improvement across the student life team and to play a critical role in coordinating and organising University events that build community and foster student wellbeing and belonging from induction to graduation. • To work with Faculty, Professional Service colleagues and students to ensure an integrated approach to student support, with specific reference to the design and delivery of timely interventions that enhance student wellbeing, belonging and engagement. • To lead initiatives that prepare students for life after graduation by putting in place strategies which enhance personal development, career development, employability support, placements, and part-time work. • To adopt a holistic perspective which ensures that appropriate strategies are put in place to maximise opportunities for students to be connected and networked to activities across the University and beyond, such as enterprise, volunteering, and community engagement.

	Duties of the role
	• To build strong alumni relationships that enhance networking, mentoring, and career support for current students. • To encourage student participation by amplifying their voice in decisions that affect their university life. • To drive forward engagement initiatives that promote student progression and retention throughout their academic journey and to ensure that the work of the student life team meet the needs of diverse and underrepresented user groups, including students, staff, and researchers. • To lead student wellbeing programmes including mental health, counselling, chaplaincy, and financial advice to provide holistic support across the DMU student community. • To oversee accessible services for students with disabilities and specific learning needs like dyslexia. • To assist in tracking progress and evaluating targets set out in the University Access and Participation Plan. • To support safeguarding responsibilities alongside the Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board. • To represent the University externally when needed and serve as a proud ambassador and advocate for De Montfort University.
General Responsibilities	• Perform any other duties commensurate with the job grade as reasonably required from time to time at the direction of the line manager. • Role model and act in accordance with the University's Leadership and Management Standards and Behaviours framework aligned to DMU values: ○ Collaborative - encourage my team to collaborate and share best practices, set clear and aspirational goals, create outcome-focused work plans, and recognise strengths and support development. ○ Compassionate - provide honest and constructive feedback, foster a safe and open work environment, deliver difficult decisions with credibility, and act with integrity and transparency. ○ Creative - create an environment that encourages questioning and idea sharing, minimises bureaucracy, facilitates open discussions about mistakes, and involves teams in continuous service improvement. ○ Community minded - encourage diverse perspectives, promptly address conflicts and inappropriate behaviours, and foster a culture of mutual respect. • Treat all DMU staff, students, contractors and visitors with dignity and respect. Provide a service that complies with the Equality Act 2010, eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations with particular attention to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (or none), sex and sexual orientation. • All members of staff are responsible for their contribution to improved environmental performance and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions at DMU. It is therefore required that all members of staff are aware of how the Environmental Policy relates to their own role at the university. Staff conduct must reflect the values inherent in the Environmental Policy and where required staff must cooperate with environmental compliance and conformance requirements to help minimise our emissions to air, water and land.

	Duties of the role
	• Provide a service that complies with the Equality Act 2010, eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations with particular attention to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (or none), sex and sexual orientation. This role requires an enhanced DBS check.

Person Specification

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Area of responsibility	Requirements	Essential or desirable		*Method of assessment			
				A	I	T	D
Qualifications	Educated to degree level or equivalent and substantial professional experience related to the role which has involved critical thinking, analysis and problem solving.	Essential		X			X
	Evidence of continuing professional development	Essential		X	X		X
	Membership of relevant professional body (e.g. AMOSSHE)	Essential		X			X
	Postgraduate qualification in education, leadership, psychology, mental health, social work, wellbeing, or a related field.		Desirable	X			X
Experience	Demonstrable senior experience of successfully leading and managing student services within the higher education sector: managing resources, leading teams, managing change and delivering organisational goals.	Essential		X	X		X
	Proven senior experience in designing and implementing strategies that enhance the student experience, with reference to wellbeing programmes and engagement and belonging activities.	Essential		X	X		X
	Extensive and in-depth knowledge and understanding of current legislation and best practices in student wellbeing, belonging, safeguarding and support services.	Essential		X	X		X
	Proven understanding of current and future student needs and the ability to	Essential		X	X		X

Area of responsibility	Requirements	Essential or desirable	*Method of assessment			
			A	I	T	D
	take data informed decisions in meeting these needs.					
	Proven experience of driving forward institutional change programmes that deliver positive impacts on student outcomes as measured by metrics.	Essential	X	X		X
	In-depth knowledge and understanding of the student lifecycle and the challenges faced by students, including those from diverse and underrepresented groups.	Essential	X	X		X
	Strong knowledge of current legislation, policies, and best practices related to student wellbeing, safeguarding, mental health support, and inclusion within the UK higher education context.	Essential	X	X		X
	Proven experience in managing complex student welfare issues, including crisis intervention, developing robust emergency protocols, and safeguarding procedures.	Essential	X	X		X
	A proven record of accomplishment in developing and executing strategies that enhance the overall student experience, including support services, engagement initiatives, wellbeing and belonging activity programmes.	Essential	X	X		X
	Demonstrated experience in leading multidisciplinary teams and overseeing large, complex budgets.	Essential	X	X		X
	A strong record of accomplishment of driving institutional change and successfully delivering projects that improve student support and outcomes.	Essential	X	X		X
	Strong knowledge and understanding of information technology systems and the implementation of user focused student support services.	Essential	X	X		X
	Experience of procurement, space redesign, or major service redevelopment projects.		Desirable	X	X	X

Area of responsibility	Requirements	Essential or desirable		*Method of assessment			
				A	I	T	D
	Familiarity with institutional frameworks and national guidance on Prevent, GDPR, Equality and Diversity, and Duty of Care responsibilities.		Desirable	X	X		X
	Experience in crisis management and developing emergency protocols for student welfare.		Desirable	X	X		X
Skills and abilities	Excellent communication and presentation skills, with the ability to motivate and develop high-performing teams and to engage confidently and effectively with students, staff, senior leadership, and external stakeholders.	Essential		X	X		X
	Skilled at cultivating inclusive, respectful, and collaborative environments that drive meaningful results.	Essential		X	X		X
	The ability to prioritise work, ensure objectives meet deadline, and have both a resilient and creative approach in finding creative solutions where challenges arise.	Essential		X	X		X
	Strategic thinker with a clear vision for enriching the student experience, paired with the practical skills to deliver sustainable change.	Essential		X	X		X
	Experience of working collaboratively across departments to deliver integrated student support services and the ability to remain composed and decisive under pressure, particularly in challenging or crisis situations.	Essential		X	X		X
	Ability to manage sensitive situations with discretion, empathy, and professionalism, maintaining student confidentiality and dignity at all times.	Essential		X	X		X
	A sound understanding of the University’s strategy and values and a demonstrated commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity and the ability to support work that actively addresses gaps and potential bias. Commitment to ensuring adherence to the University’s Equality and Diversity policy.	Essential		X	X		X

Area of responsibility	Requirements	Essential or desirable		*Method of assessment			
				A	I	T	D
Additional requirements	The ability to commit to on-campus work on 3 days per week as part of hybrid working.	Essential		X	X		X
	Willingness to work occasional out of office hours (e.g. evenings and weekends).	Essential		X	X		X

***A = Application Form; I = Interview; T = Test; D = Documentary Evidence**