

Student Support Framework



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Purpose of Framework

To set out the University's approach to and expectations of the provision of student support.

Overview

The framework specifically covers support for students provided within Colleges, Schools and Deaneries, and the Student Wellbeing Service. It also provides principles for all specialist services providing support to students.

Staff working in Colleges, Schools and Deaneries should work with specialist services providing support to students, such as the Information Services Helpdesk, Residence Life, EdHelp, Student Counselling Service and the Institute for Academic Development (not an exclusive list). However, it is not a framework intended to cover all aspects of the student experience.

Scope:

Mandatory - The framework applies to all taught students in its entirety. For research students, it applies in relation to the provision of support by the Student Wellbeing Service.

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Document control

Dates	Approved:	Starts: 01-08-2023	Equality impact assessment: 23.08.23	Amendments:	Next Review: 2023/4
Approving authority	Senate Education Committee (SEC)				
Consultation undertaken	Academic Services; Deputy Secretary (Students); Academic Registrar; Deans of Students; Deans of Learning and Teaching; Student Support project Management Group; EUSA VP (Education); EUSA VP (Welfare); Union reps; Student Support Project Board; Senior Policy & Projects Adviser - Students				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Student Experience Service; Deputy Secretary, Students				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">See Appendix A				
UK Quality Code					
Policies superseded by this policy	Academic and Pastoral Support Policy 2022 Interim Guidance 2020				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email or telephone				
Keywords	Student Support; Student Adviser; Student Wellbeing Service; Cohort Lead; Peer Support Student Coordinator; Support; Wellbeing				

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This framework is a formal document covering the expectations of the provision of student support. It provides, or links to, guidance, where appropriate.

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Student Support at the University

1. Overview of Student Support

The University is committed to providing its students with effective academic guidance and wellbeing support. The aim is to ensure that students have access to a support ecosystem of high quality and consistent support that meets their needs.

Joined-up teams of academics, professional services staff and fellow students work together to give students clear, actionable guidance and advice with practical matters, their wellbeing or their studies. A wide range of student support, in academic, pastoral, administrative and domestic areas, is made available to students through student support services, which complement provision in Schools, Deaneries and Colleges. The effectiveness of these services, and the cohesion between them and the wider academic University community, are fundamental to a high-quality student experience.

All staff will have a baseline understanding of the student support structures available to students in the University and be able to signpost students to them as appropriate.

The University's approach to student support ensures that students can access consistent information, academic guidance, and wellbeing support when and where they need it.

2. Expectations and Standards

All support to students will be provided within the expectations and standards set out by current University policies, guidance and regulations, including those that are academic, Human Resources, and information systems-related

Students

Our ambition is for student support to enable and empower all students to prosper as independent adults. The University recognises each student is an individual and their support needs will range from support embedded within normal University activities to more specialist interventions. All students have an expectation that the University will provide reasonable support for them to thrive, flourish and succeed in their studies. Students can also expect that the University knows who they are, and staff will provide opportunities to review their progress in their academic studies.

Each student will reflect on their academic progress, including how their learning contributes to their longer-term aspirations. They will take responsibility for their own progress, informing their Student Adviser or Doctoral Supervisor promptly, in the first instance, of any relevant matters affecting their studies, to enable effective support to be offered, and then acting on the advice, referral or information given.

Academic Guidance and Support – Taught students will have appropriate academic and skills support from the University. This means each taught student will have:

- Support in building a good understanding of their core programme, with access to specialised subject related guidance, advice on their degree programme and help with course selection
- Support in their learning, including regular contact with the academics who teach them
- Support through induction and key transitions during their university lifetime

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- Opportunities to meet and collaborate with other students, helping to shape a sense of belonging to their degree programme, and the wider University
- Time and opportunities for reflecting on their learning and academic progress
- Access to academic support from their peers through student-led schemes, with coordinating support from the University

Support for postgraduate research students is governed by the [Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students](#).

Personal and Wellbeing Support – All students will have appropriate personal and wellbeing support. This means each student will have;

- Support from a named individual (Student Adviser or Supervisor) who knows who they are. They will be the first point of contact and will proactively reach out to them at key times in their studies. If that person is unavailable, the student will still have access to a wider student support team
- Access to individual and group personal development opportunities to allow them to make the most of their studies and face any challenges that occur during their time at the University of Edinburgh
- Support with their overall wellbeing, and if they need more specialist support, they will be helped in navigating specialist services and relevant support networks, as well as receive advice on how to contact specialist support beyond what the University is able to offer.

Student Services Providing Specialist Support – All students will have appropriate support from a [wide range of specialist services](#) across the University, for example (including but limited to) Student Counselling Service, Careers Service, Student Immigration Service, etc. This means that:

- Providers of specialist support to students will make clear, through a range of appropriate channels:
 - the services and levels of support they offer
 - who can access these services
 - how to access these services
- Specialist teams providing support to students will:
 - Respond to requests and enquiries accurately, promptly and efficiently
 - Maintain and develop effective links with other areas of the University, Edinburgh University Students' Association and external organisations in order to facilitate effective referral and coherent delivery of student support
 - Ensure that all staff delivering the service are appropriately qualified, trained, supported and developed in their roles
 - Seek and respond to regular feedback from users, and make clear who students must contact with a complaint, compliment or suggestion
 - Monitor, review and seek to enhance their performance regularly, taking on board and acting upon feedback from students and by participating in appropriate quality assurance and enhancement processes within the University and/or within their professional arena

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Teaching Teams - Teaching teams (including but not limited to Lecturers, Course Organisers, Teaching Assistants, Lab Tutors, Studio Tutors, and professional practitioners) play a role in supporting students to transition into and through their studies both within and alongside the taught curriculum. This means all such staff will:

- have a basic understanding of the student support structures available to students in the University, and
- be able to signpost students to those.

3. Overview of Key Roles in Student Support

Where possible, direct links have been provided to job descriptions (current at the time of publishing). Otherwise, staff can access a full role/job description in the student support Briefing Resources site, with copies also available via the studentsupport.project@ed.ac.uk mailbox

Student Advisers

Each School/Deanery has a team of trained professional Student Advisers who take on the day-to-day work of supporting and advising students, both proactively and reactively. Student Advisers provide a first contact point for students within their School/Deanery, providing guidance and support, including additional assistance where needed, to those navigating the University support systems.

Working closely with academic and specialist services teams, the role is an advocate for students, their School/Deanery, and programme, ensuring parity of experience for all students.

The Student Adviser will coordinate support, consider students' wellbeing and make proactive contact or referrals to the Student Wellbeing Service where appropriate.

Job Description of the Student Adviser role is in **Appendix B**.

Wellbeing Advisers

Wellbeing Advisers support students with their wellbeing and mental health challenges, both proactively and reactively. Student Wellbeing Services collocate with staff based in each School/Deanery, and are available to support all taught and research students during their time in the University.

A student can request wellbeing support either through their Student Adviser or Supervisor or directly with the Student Wellbeing Service.

For taught students, it is strongly recommended that referrals to the Student Wellbeing Service are primarily made via a Student Adviser to enable coordinated support for the more complex situations students may be experiencing.

Academic Cohort Leads

Academic staff in the role of Cohort Leads are responsible for creating a sense of cohort belonging, encouraging students to reflect on their development, leading on induction and transition activities throughout the programme, and taking the lead on the following areas:

- Welcome, induction and transition
- Community building

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- Academic guidance and support

Cohort Leads provide a visible academic presence for students as they navigate their University career. These roles will typically be performed by a member of academic staff teaching on that programme, and activities would normally be undertaken with groups of students.

Peer Support Coordinator

Peer support recognises the benefits of students supporting each other. This includes building a sense of belonging for students, environments to consolidate their learning and safe spaces to ask questions that students may be reluctant to ask staff directly.

The Peer Support Student Coordinator role will play a key role within student support and will assist students in developing, facilitating and delivering high quality inclusive and supportive peer support activity. The peer support framework developed provides a job description for recruitment of these professional services roles.

4. Limits of Support Responsibilities

While Student Advisers, and other staff, have a responsibility for coordinating support for students, they are not expected to provide specialist wellbeing care and should not attempt to do so.

Consequently, in cases where a student appears to be experiencing severe distress (e.g. serious physical or mental health problems), they should be encouraged to seek help from appropriate services e.g. Wellbeing Advisers. In some circumstances the University may be obliged to call in support from the Emergency Services. Staff should refer to the [Helping Distressed Students Guide](#)

It may occasionally be necessary for School/Deanery staff to establish explicit boundaries, especially if the student is reluctant to seek professional support or if their behaviour is having a disruptive effect on others. For further guidance, staff should refer to the [Support for Study Guide \(and Policy\)](#) and follow its processes

5. Confidentiality

Where any member of staff is concerned about the wellbeing of a student they may need to share personal information about the student with relevant staff whose role is to provide specialist support in such circumstances. Similarly, staff may wish to share personal information about a student with a third party, such as a registered GP or through the Trusted Contact Process, because of significant concerns regarding the person's wellbeing. Any such actions should be made in accordance with the University's [Data Protection](#) policies.

Support Leadership Responsibilities

This section covers the leadership of student support provided within Schools/Deaneries, and identifies key leadership responsibilities.

Heads of Schools/Deaneries have overall responsibility for Student Support within their area, and this should be reflected in their senior management team. They may delegate tasks and responsibilities for Student Support to a team of relevant senior academic and professional

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services colleagues. They should ensure that sufficient cover is in place for planned and unplanned absences, and may choose to appoint a specific named deputy to achieve that.

Heads of Schools/Deaneries will ensure all taught students have access to quality academic guidance and wellbeing support within the School/Deanery comprising four interrelated elements: Academic Cohort Leadership, Professional Services Student Experience Teams, Teaching Teams, and Peer Support:

Element	Key related responsibilities of leadership for student support
Academic Cohort Leadership	Dotted line reporting of academics acting as Cohort Leads, with clear boundaries working with relevant line management; Ensuring quality of Cohort Leadership recruitment, capacity, and skills; Overview of cohort activities within their area
Professional Services	Oversight of quality of provision of student support within School/Deanery by Student Advisers (or Student Experience Teams), working with relevant line managers as appropriate; Ensuring structures are in place to support those staff
Teaching Teams	Ensuring clear and effective communication to teaching teams (all staff providing teaching to students, whether directly or indirectly in the classroom) in School/Deanery to raise awareness of the support needs of their students, an understanding of how their role can affect those, and are fully conversant with the local processes by which they should escalate students of concern to the Student Adviser teams in Schools/Deaneries
Peer Support	Ensure School/Deanery (further) develops peer support activity, with appropriate staff resourcing; Oversight of staff resource to provide effective and sustainable peer support, putting in place evaluation and monitoring as required

In line with the phased introduction of new ways to support our students and recognising that this is a transitional phase, with the implementation of considerable change to the delivery of Student Support in AY23-24, **Schools/Deaneries are not expected to amend their existing leadership and governance in advance of September 2023**, provided there is identified representation for these student support elements in the School/Deanery senior management team. There is an expectation however that Student Support Leadership is embedded in School/Deanery planning for AY24-25.

6. Director of Students and Deputy Director(s) of Students (Optional Role Descriptions)
For AY2023/24, this element of the student support leadership is optional. The roles described may be adopted by Schools/Deaneries but are not mandatory. They will be reviewed during AY2023/24, with intention of recommended leadership roles being agreed with Colleges by January 2024.

A Director of Students would be responsible for the holistic oversight of Student Support within their School/Deanery. This would include establishing and sustaining consistent access for all taught students to quality academic guidance and wellbeing support, and by

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working in partnership with Professional Service teams to provide each student with effective support.

A Director of Students role would be responsible for reporting to the Head of School/Deanery and contributing as required to the Quality Assurance (QA) report, as requested by the Director of Quality, on the four interrelated elements of Student Support: Academic Cohort Leadership, Professional Services Student Experience Teams, Teaching Teams, and Peer Support.

The Director of Students role would have a clearly defined value within the senior academic management team, provide opportunities for career progression and can be included as substantive experience when making applications for academic promotion

The Director of Students requires a deputy to provide cover for responsibilities, delegated by the Head of School/Deanery, taking into consideration the size and shape of the student population.

As above, Deputy Director of Students staff resource considerations include:

- Size of student population
- On campus, online, full-time, part-time, part-time intermittent
- UG or PGT variants
- Accredited degree programmes
- Number of subject areas
- Complexity of teaching delivery including to hubs e.g., Edinburgh Futures Institute
- Practice learning: e.g. work placements, dissertation research placements, fieldwork

The deputy structure can be resourced through the recruitment of a new Deputy Director of Students role or via the agreement of delegated deputy roles within the existing staff structure, e.g. Senior Tutors, Directors of Teaching, Head of Student Services, etc.

The Deputy Director of Students are particularly important in ensuring succession planning, building relevant academic leadership, skills and experience to aid the recruitment of incoming Director of Students. The Deputy Director of Students role would provide opportunities for career progression and can be included as substantive experience when making applications for academic promotion.

The Director and Deputy Director of Students roles would commit to completing training essential to the roles as a minimum. This is important to meet the University's commitment to [Equality and Diversity](#).

7. Deans of Students

The Dean of Students is normally a member of the College Senior Management team, who reports to the Head of College. They will have responsibility for oversight of student support in their College, working with Schools/Deaneries to ensure effective and appropriate student support. They will provide strategic direction to Directors of Students in interpreting staff and student feedback to guide enhancement of student support

Main Responsibilities are to:

- report directly to the Head of College;
- liaise with other Deans in the College, with the Deans of Students in the other Colleges and with relevant Vice-Principals and Assistant Principals;

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- ensure that adequate and appropriate training and professional development is undertaken by (Deputy) Directors of Students and Cohort Leads;
- collaborate with support services and Schools/Deaneries regarding the design and delivery of student support training and professional development;
- coordinate, meet and advise and others in key support roles;
- foster regular interchanges between academic leaders in student support, and student representatives.

Student Support Governance

This section covers the overall ownership/governance of student support in the University and specifies how it will be implemented, evaluated and monitored.

8. The Deputy Secretary, Students

Student Wellbeing Service

The Deputy Secretary, Students will:

- Ensure the provision of a Student Wellbeing Service (SWS) available to all students, including all taught and postgraduate research students, and provide them access to suitably trained and experienced advisers, within the boundaries of University wellbeing provision
- Ensure the SWS is sufficiently resourced with Wellbeing Advisers to provide wellbeing support for students who may benefit from:
 - Proactive and preventative support to prevent their situations developing
 - An assessment of their needs and behaviours
 - A professional wellbeing intervention
 - An action plan to support their on-going wellbeing support
 - Provide advice on how to contact specialist support beyond what the University is able to offer.

Application of Student Support Framework

The Deputy Secretary, Students will:

- Ensure this framework is applied consistently across all Colleges
- Ensure that robust evaluation and monitoring of the quality of student support across all Schools/Deaneries is in place
- Report to the appropriate Senate sub-committee on recommendations from the evaluation and monitoring of student support
- Ensure that a Student Support Statement has been provided from each School/Deanery, and that it has been published and accessible to students

9. Heads of Schools/Deaneries

Overall Support for Students

Heads of School/Deanery will ensure that in their School/Deanery:

- All students are:
 - Welcomed into their respective academic communities to feel they matter and are a valued part of the University
 - Informed which teams, individuals and service(s) will provide them with support
- Taught students (including MScR students where appropriate) are informed how Student Adviser and Cohort Lead engagement will be delivered

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- Provision of a readily accessible, student-facing office as the primary point of contact for students seeking advice and information. This office must ensure that where necessary, students are directed to the appropriate member of staff or source of information. This office will also proactively reach out to all taught students at key points in the academic cycle of their programme
- Student Adviser roles are recruited and appropriately trained
- Every undergraduate and taught postgraduate student is assigned a Student Adviser prior to the start of their programme or academic year. For students on a joint degree, the School/Deanery responsible for the student's programme also has responsibility for provision of a Student Adviser
- Regular student review (enhanced support) meetings are held to consider and support individual taught students experiencing personal or academic challenges
- Appropriate structures of support for provision of academic guidance, and building a students' sense of belonging is in place
- Cohort leadership support is provided by academics, either as a specific responsibility or within their current role, e.g., as a Programme Director

Peer Support

Heads of School/Deanery will ensure that in their School/Deanery:

- A Peer Support Student Coordinator and/or relevant academic or professional services staff member is in place, responsible for proactively developing, facilitating and delivering peer support for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) student cohorts
- The named member(s) of staff complete essential training, including Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training. Where the member of staff is also a UoE student, they must complete the EUSA-developed Student Leader course

Staff Interacting with Students

Heads of School/Deanery will ensure that in their School/Deanery:

- Staff providing support to students can access support for their own wellbeing working with Human Resources
- A process is in place to inform all staff, including those in technical roles, who are involved in the delivery of teaching and learning to students, of the student support structures in their School/Deanery and College
- All members of teaching teams are trained, as a minimum, to sign-post individual students in need of support to the appropriate student support, e.g. to their Student Adviser

Support Leadership

Heads of School/Deanery will ensure that in their School/Deanery:

- Responsibility for Student Support within their area is reflected in their senior management team. They may delegate tasks and responsibilities for Student Support to a team of relevant senior academic and professional services colleagues
- Sufficient cover is in place for planned and unplanned absences
- Staff in support leadership roles complete all relevant training

Implementation

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Heads of School/Deanery will ensure that in their School/Deanery:

- A “Student Support Statement” (also known as a “School on a page” summary) is prepared and published by no later than end-July ahead of the Academic Year 2023/24, with its location communicated to their staff and students. The scope of the statement must cover Student Advisers, Cohort Leadership, Student Support Leadership, local governance structures, and peer support provision within the School/Deanery
- This statement is provided to the Deputy Secretary, Students
- Staff in support leadership roles contribute to School/Deanery quality assurance processes

10. Heads of Colleges

Heads of College will ensure, through their Deans of Students and Deans of Learning and Teaching (or equivalent):

- That each School/Deanery in their College has published their “Student Support Statement” ahead of the start of the academic year, and will confirm that to the Deputy Secretary, Students
- Role descriptions and committee remits are in place to oversee the quality of provision of academic guidance and pastoral support across Schools/Deaneries in their College

11. Monitoring and Evaluation of Student Support

Schools/Deaneries will reflect on their student support arrangements as part of [annual monitoring, review and reporting processes](#), using their Student Support Statement as reference point and working with central student services. The Project Board will continue to work with Senate Education Committee (SEC) and Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) to ensure effective oversight and evaluation of student support arrangements, and make recommendations to develop this approach. The Student Analytics, Insight and Modelling Team will provide support for the evaluation of student support arrangements, providing analysis of data and reporting and develop an approach for a continual learning model.

The Deputy Secretary, Students, will annually evaluate the workings of the central support teams through the [Student Support Services Annual Review](#) procedures.

Appendix A – Related Policies and Guidance

- [Helping Distressed Students Guide and Policy](#)
- [Support for Student Policy \(and Guide\)](#)
- Fitness to Practice (request from relevant College Office)
- [Student Support Services and Support](#)
- [Student Mental Health Strategy](#)
- [International student attendance and engagement policy](#)
- [Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students](#)

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Appendix B – Student Adviser Job Description

Job Title:	Student Adviser
Department / School:	Various Schools
Reports To:	Head of Student Support or equivalent

Job Purpose

Student Advisers provide a first contact point for students within their School/Deanery, providing guidance and support, including additional assistance where needed, to those navigating the University support systems. Working closely with academic and professional services teams, the role will enable students to achieve their potential, as well as ensure parity of experience for all students.

Main responsibilities

Support Individual Students (60%)

Responsible for providing assigned students with a personal, professional relationship tailored to the student's needs and requirements. The postholder will use their skills, knowledge and empathy in order to ensure every student assigned to them is supported in their journey throughout the entirety of their programme - from induction through key study transitions to graduation. They will support students at challenging and/or difficult points in their study journey, or changes to personal circumstances. The needs/demands of students can vary if they are Undergraduate or Postgraduate so the Student Adviser will need to adapt to fit the cohort of students to which they have been assigned.

The post is part of the wider ecosystem of student support within the University and as the first point of contact for students is responsible for encouraging them to benefit from the support opportunities available across the institution. The postholder will recurrently engage with relevant committees and management groups to provide information or advice to the committee on individual student or student group situations.

Support Cohorts (20%)

Responsible for supporting the wider student community within the School/Deanery, including where appropriate an assigned cohort, in order to help students to engage with the University, to feel part of a community, benefit from development opportunities and to understand their study options and the requirements of their programme. This will include supporting and contributing to communications, written/online materials, events and other activities.

Personal and Professional Development (10%)

Responsible for maintaining own professional development, building professional relationships, skills and knowledge base; and for supporting colleagues to develop their skills and knowledge; in order to ensure students receive the best possible service. This will include proposing and implementing agreed improvements to ways of working.

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Line Management (5%)

Depending on your role, you may be responsible, as a line manager, for allocating and prioritising the day-to-day work of their team to ensure that a high level of support is provided for students and staff. Manage, lead, mentor and support the team including conducting staff inductions, annual review and identifying training and development needs, ensuring consistency of practice across the whole team.

Other Administrative Responsibilities (5%)

Responsible for undertaking any other reasonable duties in order to support the School/Deanery's aims as assigned by their line manager.

Key Contacts / Relationships

- Wellbeing Adviser
- Academic Delivery/Teaching Team
- Student Experience Team/Manager
- Senior Tutor
- Taught Student/Programme Administrators
- Teaching Organising Manager/Team Leaders
- Director of Professional Services
- PG and UG Teaching Teams
- Academic Cohort Leads
- Dean of Students
- College Office teams
- Student Administration
- Study and Work Away
- University Health and Wellbeing Services: Student Counselling Service, Student Disability Service, Res Life, Chaplaincy, EUSA, Centre for Sport & Exercise

Planning & Organising

- The post requires the ability to work autonomously and take independent action. The line manager and Student Support Management Group will provide direction and guidance when necessary.
- Managing workloads to allow for both proactive and reactive tasks with students and staff.
- Maintaining awareness of relevant university policy and procedures.
- Work with colleagues to prepare and deliver welcome week activities to support incoming students.
- Participate in developing new processes and tasks in response to both local and central initiatives.

Problem Solving

- Provide expert advice and direction on complex student support cases.
- Provide and maintain communications to students to assist with expectation and scene setting around support for students.

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- Proactively assess support required, utilising available data, to identify potential students of concern and reach out to those students, escalating to the Wellbeing Adviser or Wellbeing Team as required.
- Responsible for planning and organising their own work or that of a team of colleagues who may be involved in different types of work and will encounter changing and/or conflicting priorities

Decision Making

- Most day-to-day decisions are made independently on the basis of extensive knowledge of University regulations
- Review notifications or alerts from other student services to proactively add the case to own (or team) case load.
- Prepare adequately to meet with students using available information, selecting appropriate resources to share.
- Record using suitable systems and make appropriate decisions on escalation and information sharing of student cases.

Knowledge Skills and Experience

Attribute	Essential	Desirable
Education, Qualifications & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNC/HND or equivalent level qualifications plus typically a minimum of 3 years' relevant work experience, or broad experience (typically a minimum of 5 years), acquired through a combination of job related training and considerable on-the-job experience, demonstrating development through involvement in progressively more demanding relevant work/roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of higher education • Experience in using appropriate record keeping systems • Scottish Mental Health First Aid (or equivalent) • BSL qualification of Level 2 / SCQF 5 or above
Knowledge & Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of and sensitivity to the complex areas of student wellbeing and support • Experience of working independently and ability to prioritise workloads in the face of conflicting demands • Excellent written communication skills • Competent IT skills (e.g. Outlook, Word) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of student record systems • Knowledge of higher education • Ability to supervise and develop staff. • Knowledge of equality legislation and good practice including GDPR • Good understanding of EDI issues, e.g. LGBTQ+ and racial literacy
Personal Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent interpersonal skills - remaining calm under pressure, being able to provide a safe and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very fluent in BSL

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	<p>welcoming space for students in distress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent active listening skills• Excellent communication skills• Sound analytical and pragmatic problem-solving skills• Constructive team player, demonstrating ability to work collaboratively• Strong commitment to equality and inclusion• Ability to understand the need for boundary setting when working with students	
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Dimensions

This role will be line managed within the School/Deanery Student Support Team, at 1.0 FTE (35hrs per week, exact working pattern can be discussed upon appointment).

The role will be aligned with one School/Deanery.

The role will operate at UoE Grade 6.