University of Edinburgh

1. Job Details

Job title: Allocations Assistant

School/Support Department: Accommodation Services

Unit (if applicable): Business Development & Occupancy: Allocations Team

Line manager: Allocations Administrator

2. Job Purpose

To support the provision of a professional, efficient and effective accommodation service for all students.

3. Main Responsibilities

1. Supporting the distribution, receipt, allocation and processing of accommodation applications from approximately 12000 students per annum, including Freshers, Postgraduates, Visiting Undergraduates and continuing students in order to facilitate the effective and efficient allocation of all University accommodation to relevant and appropriate applicants.  

2. Contributing to the provision of a comprehensive accommodation information and advice service for prospective students and their families, continuing students, couples and students with families, as well as staff of the University of Edinburgh and other institutions in the UK and abroad, with a strong emphasis on a personalised and customer-oriented approach, to ensure accurate, relevant, appropriate and positive information is provided.

3. Supporting the receipt of approximately £1,400 000 in accommodation deposits and transfer fees.

4. Supporting the effective marketing of the University of Edinburgh to prospective and existing students both within the UK and abroad, by participating in Visit Day and Open Day activities relating to University accommodation.

5. Producing accurate occupancy and vacancy information for all student accommodation, in order to ensure voids are minimised and rental income maximised.

6. Processing information from UCAS and University Registry regarding the admission of all students, ensuring that all applications for accommodation are processed effectively and efficiently.

7. Assist with the training and supervision of 2 seasonally-employed Clerical Assistants each year, in order to ensure that the business of the department is conducted efficiently, effectively and appropriately.

8. Ensuring adherence to timetables of offers of accommodation and accuracy
of data and information held.

4. Planning and Organising
The work of the Allocations Section operates on an annual cycle, and consequently planning tends to require the co-ordination of a range of issues – staffing requirements, accommodation requirements, processing of applications, review of publicity materials, stationery requirements and dissemination of information to appropriate departments – over lengthy periods of time, usually between three to six-months in advance.

The Allocations Assistant liaises with a number of internal and external departments in order to ensure that resources/services are delivered on time and that all requisite materials and information are prepared, acquired and delivered timeously, efficiently and accurately. In the course of these activities the Allocations Assistant obtains information directly from the Accounts Department, the IT Department, Accommodation Managers and the College and School Offices. Furthermore, the Allocations Assistant provides information back to these bodies in a timely, effective and appropriate manner. In addition the Allocations Assistant supports the Allocations Administrator and Allocations Manager in organising the work of the seasonally-employed Clerical Assistants.

5. Problem Solving
Typical problems which the Allocations Assistant will be expected to deal with include:
- Responding appropriately to difficult or dissatisfied customers (students, staff or visitors to the University), ensuring a satisfactory solution to complex and sometimes heated situations by dealing sensitively and effectively with customers, while still ensuring that the University’s accommodation policy is upheld.
- At critical times of the year the Allocations Assistant will be required to work under severe pressure and will be expected to respond to multiple demands from both internal and external customers, while still maintaining effective work practices within the section. This requires acute time management skills.

6. Decision Making
Although the student allocation procedures operate on regular annual cycles, decisions are required each year regarding the most efficient & effective means of processing applications and allocations. As part of this process the Allocations Assistant is expected to take decisions at an operational level, e.g. deciding where individual students will be allocated, prioritisation of own work load.

In addition, the Allocations Assistant will be expected to contribute to, and participate in, the policy decision-making process with regard to all business concerning student accommodation application, allocation and marketing of the service.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

Internal Contacts/Relationships
Providing accurate information relating to Allocations issues to Accommodation Services Management Team, and contributing to the regular review of the department’s policies.

Exchanging accurate, timely and comprehensive accommodation records with Accommodation Services’ Reception, Wardenial and Property Management Teams.
Providing accurate information relating to students’ finances to Accommodation Services’ Accounts Department including the receipting, recording and forwarding of deposits and transfer fees.

Liaising with colleagues within Edinburgh First regarding the booking of rooms and facilities for accommodation presentations, tours and student open days.

Providing regular feedback to Accommodation Services’ IT Department and external system providers on the implementation of new technology.

**External Contacts/Relationships**
Providing a comprehensive accommodation advisory service to all customers.

Maintaining the interface between Accommodation Services and Registry, which facilities the exchange of critical information.

Responding to accommodation queries from SRA, the International Office staff and colleagues within the College and School Offices.

**8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job**
The post of Allocations Assistant requires a broad range of core skills, knowledge and experience:

- Extensive interpersonal and communication skills, which are utilised both intra- and inter-departmentally.
- Time management and the ability to work under pressure.
- A capacity to work on own initiative and respond effectively to difficult or unexpected situations.
- An ability to work as part of a small, cohesive team.
- A sympathetic understanding of customer needs.
- Experience of a range of computer packages including Microsoft Office.
- An awareness of the student admissions process, the accommodation application and allocation process and familiarity with the broad range of accommodation options that are available to students.
- An ability to maintain accurate records, including critical financial information.

**9. Dimensions**
- Supporting the allocation of 5600 places in University accommodation each year.
- Responding appropriately and effectively to over 12000 applications for accommodation per annum and additional individual requests for accommodation advice.
- Supporting the receipt and throughput of over £1m in accommodation deposits, rent payments and transfer fees.

**10. Job Context and any other relevant information**
- Responding to unpredictable circumstances relating to student admission to University, such as unanticipated fluctuations in numbers of applicants/actual admissions and its concomitant impact on the allocation of University accommodation.
- Maintaining and effective and value-for-money accommodation service in an increasingly competitive market.