1. **Job Details**

Job Title: Head of Systems Operations  
School/Support Department: Student and Academic Services Group  
Unit (if applicable): Registry  
Line Manager: Head of Systems  

2. **Job Purpose**

To manage the efficient operation of all Admissions, Curricula and Student Systems; to manage the integrity and continuity of business and IT processes; to contribute to and support new IT developments during business analysis and process redesign, development and implementation; to initiate ongoing business process change.

3. **Main Responsibilities**

1. Managing the Systems Operations Group’s efficient operation of admissions, curricula and student systems, including the management of 6 permanent and ad-hoc temporary staff. This involves delivering continual development, innovative change and evolution of service and co-ordinating large scale activity undertaken across the University and the Registry. Importantly, it includes minimising the risk of process and system failure and ensuring that data quality and integrity is maintained through system validation and exception checking.  

2. As the ‘senior business user’ supporting the development of systems and business processes, policy and procedures and proactively identifying the need for new or changed business processes and for initiating ongoing business process change. This involves understanding and documenting current business processes and, in conjunction with system users and management, translating user requirements into business specifications.  

3. Meeting important regulatory and related requirements in preparing, reconciling and submitting the student-related returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on behalf of the University. This includes supporting operational and management information needs.  

4. Prioritising and managing the process for ‘bug fixes’, minor changes and upgrades to existing systems, liaising with Management Information Services, overseeing tests on new or amended software, and ensuring effective implementation.  

4. **Planning and Organising**

- Planning expected student IT projects which, given the complex nature of the systems and Management Information Services’ planning deadlines, have a lead-in period of 12-24 months.
- Planning and leading IT development and business process re-engineering projects, steering them to successful implementation. These can involve lead-in times of up to 3 years (e.g. HESA) and, within each project, can require continual planning and replanning to ensure successful delivery.
- Planning the future direction of the Registry website and its development to integrate with University strategic objectives. This involves liaison with CPA and MIS colleagues to understand likely requirements, and website structure redesign and adoption of new technologies and tools to meet these (e.g., integration with MyEd).
- Organising the evaluation of existing systems looking for new business process solutions to improve the efficiency of, and to increase the levels of functionality to, the user group; these projects tend to have shorter lead times and delivery is usually driven by the academic calendar. These are driven from within the Registry, within the University or externally.
- Due to external timelines, testing and implementation of new developments have to be completed in restricted timeframes, requiring flexibility and organisation to re-prioritise to ensure delivery in appropriate time-frames.
- Proactively meeting the complex requirements of the statutory HESA returns. The complicated data derivation within this return is used by Funding Councils and others to judge the University’s performance and can have a material impact on income streams.
- Planning the work of the group including a programme of planned developments and enhancements reviewing the workloads of the Group on a quarterly, monthly and weekly basis to ensure that the agreed milestones are being achieved and that the daily on-going service demands are being met.
- Anticipating training needs and planning the delivery of training to user groups; these are scheduled a year in advance, take place throughout the year with monthly reviews in order to absorb non-planned developments.
- Organising and prioritising a substantial personal workload with many conflicting high priority demands, absorbing many unplanned tasks.
5. Problem Solving
- Devising and recommending new business process solutions to improve the efficiency of, and levels of service to, the customers.
- Proactively reviewing performance of Systems activities and identifying where enhancements are possible through new business practices or process re-engineering.
- Analysing new academic, administrative and external policies to identify the impact on admissions, curricula and student systems and to develop appropriate solutions e.g. ongoing substantial changes to the HESA returns themselves, or revised interpretations from the Funding Councils or the University.
- Solving complex operational problems of the user community, delivering integrated solutions e.g. delivering strategic management information sought of Planning by senior management.
- Identifying and analysing key operational issues which must be addressed to enable projects to be successful and finding solutions to ensure that these are resolved quickly. This involves using specialist knowledge to identify risks and assigning responsibility for necessary action.
- Writing operational policy papers recommending an approach to enable line management to decide on appropriate courses of action.

6. Decision Making
- Setting benchmarks and performance indicators.
- Managing and organising the activities of the Systems Operations Group, and deployment of staff resource to achieve the group’s performance targets.
- Deciding on the monthly, weekly and daily priorities for the Systems Operations Group.
- Exercising responsibility for the accuracy of HESA return, and recommending its readiness for submission.
- Contributing to and influencing the operational decisions of Registry as a member of the Operational Management Team.
- Providing advice, guidance and direction on the functionality of admissions, curricula and student systems as a member of the PG Forum, RAE Administrative Liaison Group, Matriculation Working Party and other groups.
- Deciding, prioritising and allocating work to the Systems team. This includes pro-actively directing resources and actions where necessary to maintain the overall schedule, identifying individuals for specific tasks, directing their activities and monitoring progress and quality of output.

7. Relationships
- Negotiates with, persuades, advises and influences the users of the admissions, curricula and student system within the institution, including managing their expectations as to what can be achieved from the systems. Accountable to a wide range of system owners, stakeholders and service providers such as Admissions Officers for UCAS/GTTR Admissions Database; College PG administrators for the Postgraduate Database; Associate Deans and Deputy College Registrars for WISARD; Policy and Planning for Teaching Load, Management Information and HESA; CPA in support of the DRPS; which requires breadth and depth of understanding across all these systems and business areas.
- Engages with and influences the Head of Registry Operations and the Heads of Registry Groups in the context of new IT developments and new business processes to ensure that the delivery of Registry services meet the needs of the University’s Strategic Plan.
- Partnering relationships are needed with external and internal colleagues, in order to promote and facilitate effective use by the University community of admissions, curricula and student systems, leveraging the investment and adding value. Examples of external organisations and suppliers of services to the University include SITS (provider of packaged software), UCAS, Student Loans Company, HESA, SFC, SAAS; examples of internal providers are MIS, CPA, Finance, Accommodation Services etc.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job
- Educated to degree level with at least five years relevant work experience, preferably within HE.
- Substantial administrative experience, including directly managing staff and other resources.
- Proven track record of implementing organisational change, delivering as well as designing business processes to support IT solutions.
- Experience of business analysis and process re-design and of testing IT solutions.
- Ability to devise and deliver training to users with a range of IT competencies and knowledge and to produce relevant and easily interpreted documentation.
- Experience of managing and having responsibility for a large number of activities.
- Knowledge and experience of project management methodology highly desirable.
- Good organisational skills and the ability to prioritise and work under pressure.
- Ability to manage complex relationships and establish and maintain trust and support and to communicate effectively using a range of media.
• Ability to present effective case for change and to respond flexibly to opposing viewpoints.

9. Dimensions
• Provides leadership and support for a team of 6 staff within the Systems Operations Group.
• Admissions, Curricula and Student Systems have a staff user base of 1700 across a range of systems including: NESI, WISARD, USAD Admissions Database, PGDB, FEPS, SCS, STUDMI, STUDPROG, CAPAR, UCAS/GTTR Data Mart etc. Additionally, all students (over 22,000) access student record channels delivered via MyEd.
• USAD receives c35,000 applications per annum. The student record database contains over 100,000 students, 1,200,000 course enrolments, raises invoices for c£55M per annum, manages student exit/completion/graduation for over 6500 students per annum etc. PGDB – the postgraduate database – contains over 65,000 student records. STUDMI contains approximately 95,000 student programme records (nearly 85,000 unique students), resulting in a total of 1,400,000 rows of data and 51,000,000 data items.
• The HESA Student returns are major institutional returns (c28,000 students per annum, over 230 items of data about each) upon which the University’s funding and student performance (including nationally published statistics such as Performance Indicators, newspaper league tables, Teaching Quality Information etc) are based.
• The Management Information datasets are used to inform and assess progress against the University’s strategic policies (intake, income, balanced scorecard, strategic plans etc) and to deliver funding (SFC Early Statistics, Teaching Load funding streams to Colleges/Schools etc).

10. Context and any other relevant information
• The last 2 years have seen substantial investment in, and development of, admissions curricula and student systems including: USAD; Course Creation, Approval and Maintenance processes via WISARD; changes to support the Curriculum Project; the matriculation project; STUDMI, STUDPROG and UCAS data marts; revised interfaces with eFinancials and associated process change; integration of visiting student admissions processing into NESI; revised HESA and SHEFC requirements. These are all major developments that underpin critical Registry and University business and require substantial support from the Group.
• The postholder has a significant role in ensuring the quality and integrity of key corporate systems, and in leveraging the investment made by the University in these systems.