University of Edinburgh

Job title: Director  School/Support Department: Disability Office  
Line Manager: Academic Registrar and Deputy Secretary, Planning and Policy

2. Job Purpose
To provide strategic direction and operational management to ensure that the Disability Office delivers a high quality customer focussed service to disabled students in line with the University’s strategic plan, with current legislation and quality of service provided by similar Services in other HEIs. To provide expertise/guidance on disability equality matters through staff development and contribution to policy in order to promote an inclusive environment.

3. Main Responsibilities

1. Lead and manage a specialist department comprising 6 diverse professionals, 3 secretarial staff and a pool of up to 50 Personal Assistants, tutors, note takers etc. to provide a quality service to approximately 1450 disabled students (6% of student population). Includes planning and controlling budgets, generating income to ensure maximum value is delivered, and motivating staff to develop their professional effectiveness. 30

2. Develop new initiatives and procedures within the Disability Office in order to monitor, streamline and improve the service – such as annual student satisfaction survey, recruitment and employment of a pool of personal assistants for students, in-house dyslexia screening, technical support to enhance role of Coordinators of Adjustments in all the Schools, development of departmental intranet and procedural guidelines 10

3. Coordinate and provide staff development at all levels and in all disciplines/sectors on disability awareness/equality, legislation, and access to the curriculum in order to meet DDA compliance, and encourage mainstreaming and good practice. Engage external experts as appropriate. 20

4. Advise Senior Management and other members of staff within the University on the impact of disability legislation (existing and new) so that the University is providing equality of opportunity for disabled students and is compliant with legislation. 10

5. Provide relevant up to date information on disability issues to the wider University community through involvement on key committees, via the web, through specific Disability Office publications, and briefing sessions. Collect and submit accurate data for HESA and Funding Council. 10

6. Contribute to and influence University policy on issues such as developing inclusive curricula, timetabling of exams, procedures for ensuring academic adjustments are put in place, provision of alternative assessments, Knowledge Management Strategy. Support the Disability Committee, and its four sub groups to influence policy decisions. 9

7. Initiate and manage collaborative projects that foster innovation and good practice and have University wide impact with colleagues across the University 7

8. Represent the University to relevant external organisations through attendance and presentations at conferences and workshops, and contribute to the profession more generally so that the University’s provision for disabled students remains at the forefront of developing standards and hence the University’s reputation is maintained and enhanced 4

9. Such other duties as may be assigned from time to time

4. Planning and Organising
- Plan and prioritise own and staff workload, and budget spending to deliver a range of outputs which are required quarterly/annually whilst ensuring the ability to respond to adhoc, immediate and unforeseen demands generated primarily by individual students, members of academic staff and senior management. Effective management of times of the year when student and staff demand is particularly high such as first semester, before examinations, and around key committee dates is essential.
On a 1 - 5 year cycle plan strategic and operational developments for the Disability Service, taking into account the University’s strategic plan, academic structures and priorities, current trends and legislative changes. Some examples of evolving developments include changing the nature of the Learning Profiles as academic units become more anticipatory in making adjustments, working with Euclid to incorporate ‘reasonable adjustments’ on the new student record system which will support and enhance the delivery of accessible curricula, working with MIS to plan systems for secure distribution of Learning Profiles.

Anticipate the effect of legislative changes on the University community, and advise relevant sections on action required. On a 2 -3 year cycle, plan the University’s strategic and operational responses to impending legislative change.

On a 3 yearly cycle develop and monitor the University’s Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan making sure it fits with overall Equality and Diversity Plan, and the University’s Strategic Plan

Work collaboratively with others to develop and produce a University wide Disability Equality Scheme involving impact assessments, setting targets, wide consultation, 3 yearly reviews and updating

On a yearly cycle (and in response to adhoc requests) plan and deliver a staff development programme that fits in with staff availability and commitments throughout the University.

On a yearly and continuing basis assess what impact wider University changes, such as restructuring, or changes to the academic year will have on the provision of Disability Services, and adapt delivery as appropriate

On a yearly cycle oversee mainstreaming projects delivered by others, for example the development of a 2 year University web accessibility project in CPA, School of Geosciences project to video tape all 1st year field trips, thus making them accessible to disabled students and others who cannot attend.

Recruit and retain qualified professional staff, and anticipate need for additional staff at peak times and as the service develops. Provide effective staff support, supervision and appraisal

5. Problem Solving

Effect sensitively a cultural change to promote mainstreaming of disability support within a climate of competing demands, where resources may be limited, where some staff view this as additional bureaucracy

Anticipate and assess trends and changing needs of students and staff in order to respond appropriately and to identify opportunities for change

Provide quick and efficient advice and solutions to general problems raised by University staff, individual students and the public. Proactively anticipate types of enquiries/problems and solutions.

Negotiate solutions with University staff in cases where individual students’ needs are either very complex or not easily dealt with by standard arrangements, such that there is ambiguity about how best to support them and how best to meet the University’s legal requirements in the context of budget constraints.

Support front line Disability Office staff to respond professionally and innovatively in complex situations.

Manage grievance and disciplinary matters and team dynamics/conflict

Handle complaints from students, parents, academic staff

Develop cost effective best practice solutions and innovate ways to supplement budgets in order to keep developing

6. Decision Making

Plan and implement the direction of the Service from strategic objectives to day to day operational work of the department

Manage the spend of budgets, and initiate specific projects

Trouble shoot and make immediate decisions if unexpected demands are made on the Service, students are at risk, or the University is potentially acting unlawfully

Implement University wide procedures that impact on staff time and quality of student support – e.g. the distribution of Learning Profiles for all disabled students (the key document responsible for disseminating information about students’ needs for adjustments)

Determine the content of policy recommendations on issues of strategic importance to the University

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

Negotiates with, persuades, advise sand influences the University Secretary, Academic Registrar, Senior Vice Principal and Vice Principals, Heads of Colleges/ Schools/ Planning Units and other senior managers on disability legislation, good practice, policy issues, both proactively for future developments and responsibly on specific/current issues. Influences all departments and Student Services, Course Organisers, Supervisors, Directors of Studies, and other academic staff, the Rector, General Council, Registry.
• The Director is often called upon by Senior Managers to comment on and coordinate a corporate response to wider disability policy initiatives that may affect any aspect of the University’s provision, to interpret the impact of new legislation and to advise on specific actions which should be taken by the University.
• Maintains professional contact with a range of external individuals and organisations, HEIs locally, nationally and internationally to contribute to the profession generally, and to disseminate good practice and innovative solutions used at the University. Contact with prospective and current students to evaluate the Service.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job
• Degree plus relevant management qualification
• Understanding of and commitment to disability equality issues and experience of supporting disabled people in higher education or another context
• 5 – 10 year track record at progressively senior levels of significant management and leadership skills
• Proven ability to manage diverse budgets and maximise income
• Ability to quickly acquire knowledge and understanding of academic structures, processes and issues, and their implications for the operation of the Disability Service
• Understanding the relevant legislation and current developments in relation to the inclusion of disabled students in higher education
• Track record of successful development work and the ability to effect change sensitively
• High interpersonal skills, ability to communicate effectively, and work within complex policy concepts, IT literacy, and the ability to work under considerable pressure and to tight deadlines
• Ability to problem solve using creative solutions
• Proven effective negotiation, presentation and representational skills
• Ability to move effectively between strategic and operational issues
• Previous experience of initiating, developing and managing new projects

9. Dimensions
• 4.5 FTE reporting directly (5 people), 3.21 FTE reporting indirectly (4 people). Diverse team with specialists in different areas – specific learning difficulties, technology, disability advisors
• 50 Personal Assistants and tutors reporting indirectly
• Staff/tutors on 3 sites and most Personal Assistants working remotely
• Budget responsibilities – non staffing operational budget of £73,560, staff budget £269,500, needs assessment income of approximately £30,000, equipment loan scheme worth £70,000, processing DSA funding of approximately £100,000
• Departmental activity (successful application for Disabled Students’ Allowances) attracts yearly Disability Premium Funding of over £200,000 for the University
• Service affects up to 1450 disabled students directly, and potentially impacts directly or indirectly on all staff
• Support to HR and Occupational Health by giving specialist advice to members of staff who are disabled
• Any significant error in the interpretation of legislative obligations could result in legal action and damage to the University’s reputation

10. Job Context and any other relevant information
The job exists within a changing environment where the University is expected to demonstrate its compliance with the QAA Code of Practice on Students with Disabilities, the Disability Discrimination Act, Part IV and other emerging legislation such as DDA 2005. Other key factors that impact on the job are the widening access agenda, growing numbers of international students, students with more complex support needs, higher expectations from students, their parents and University staff, emerging technological innovations and research on enabling teaching and learning environments. The activities of the department have institution-wide, legal, political and reputational implications for the University.