

Student Retention Officer

Job Specification

Date created: October 2024

JOB DESCRIPTION

Employment status: Permanent, full time

Hours: Full time hours at UCEM are 35 per week, Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and this role follows this pattern

Location flexibility: The place of work for this role is **Horizons based**, with the majority of your working week spent at our office in Reading and the rest at your home; the exact split of days/hours is negotiable but must include a minimum of **three** working days per week spent at Horizons (you may work more in the office should you wish)

Please note the following:

- When you work at Horizons you must attend on core office days only
- Core office days are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday
- The building is closed to staff on Fridays
- You can only attend the office on Mondays if you have worked a minimum of three other core days
- Working at home is only possible if your environment meets certain conditions – see the **Attachment** to this Job Specification document – and if not, you need to work at Horizons

Department: Student and Registry Services

Line manager: Martyn Knox, Academic Registry Manager

Role summary

As a Student Retention Officer, you will be a key advocate for student success, dedicated to enhancing the student experience through proactive support, engagement, and retention initiatives. You will lead first-line intervention activities, focusing on the early identification and resolution of student needs. Working closely with specialist teams such as the Academic Support and Enhancement Team (ASET) and Apprenticeship Outcomes Officers (AOOs), you will refer cases when more specialised, in-depth support is required. This ensures a streamlined approach to student support, with Student & Registry Services managing the initial contact and triage of students to the appropriate specialist teams. Your role will be central in coordinating these efforts and ensuring that students receive timely and effective support at every stage.

Alongside intervention activities, you will support key student lifecycle processes, ensuring the effective management and maintenance of student records and academic progress. This position offers a dynamic blend of administrative and student support responsibilities, creating a varied and fulfilling role where you can make a real impact.

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Role accountabilities and responsibilities

- Implement and coordinate student intervention plans across all student support teams, ensuring timely and effective support for students at risk of disengagement or failure.
- Coordinate monthly student progress review meetings.
- Use reports and data to monitor student progress and identify students where additional intervention activity or escalation to specialist teams is required.
- Utilise Microsoft Planner to set up tasks, assign owners, and establish deadlines for intervention activities, ensuring efficient coordination across teams.
- Provide guidance and support to staff on the execution and documentation of intervention activities, promoting consistency, transparency, and best practice.
- Develop and disseminate guidance materials for both staff and students to enhance understanding and awareness of intervention activities and expected outcomes.
- Undertake student intervention and engagement activities, including making outbound calls, sending emails, and SMS messages to engage and support students.
- Maintain a thorough understanding of university academic regulations, policies, and procedures to advise students and staff effectively on intervention options and best practices.
- Support with the review and enhancement of retention activities, ensuring they remain effective, relevant, and aligned with delivering a positive student experience.
- Be jointly accountable for the achievement of student retention and success targets and intervention KPI's.
- Undertake re-registration processes for students each semester, including updating student records and module choices based on board of examiner decisions.
- Communicate with students regarding registration, tuition fee payments, and important deadlines.
- Undertake conversion activities aimed at encouraging students to register, pay fees, and continue their studies.
- Process student withdrawals and interruptions to study, ensuring accurate updates to student records.
- Run and monitor processes to keep the student record system current, ensuring all enrolled students have accurate module and enrolment records.
- Generate and manage student fees, ensuring the accuracy of fee records and addressing discrepancies as needed.
- Serve as a key contact and adviser for the team, providing guidance and support on complex issues and fostering a collaborative environment where team members (and those outside of the team) feel comfortable seeking advice.
- Demonstrate the ability to work autonomously and collaboratively, contributing to a culture of continuous improvement and effective team collaboration.
- Actively engage with expertise across the sector to inform your own development and the development of the team's processes and procedures.
- Lead by example, promoting professional behaviours and values across the team.
- Deputise for line managers where required, ensuring continuity of leadership and decision-making in their absence.

Line management responsibility:	NO
Budget responsibility:	NO
<u>In this role you will liaise with:</u> Academic Quality Unit: Apprenticeship Operations Team; Business Development Team; Academic Team; Finance; Learning Technology Team; Student Services; Information Technology	

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Assessment Criteria: A = Application I = Interview T = Test

X denotes both essential and desirable requirements plus how these will be assessed

Qualifications and training	Essential	Desirable	A	I	T
GCSE Maths and English Language Grade C or 4 or above	X		X		
Further education level qualifications		X	X		
Degree level qualification		X	X		
<i>Please be aware that as part of onboarding processes, we will seek original documentary evidence of the relevant academic and/or professional qualifications which you include within your job application</i>					
Previous experience	Essential	Desirable	A	I	T
Administrative experience	X		X	X	
Experience in outbound support or outreach with high-quality customer service; the ability to engage and support a diverse student population (e.g. call centre, customer service, customer advice, student support)	X		X	X	
Coordinating projects or activities, including setting tasks, assigning responsibilities, and tracking progress	X		X	X	
Using databases to process information, maintain records, and run reports.	X		X	X	
Experience in a higher education environment, particularly in student support, retention, or engagement roles, focusing on improving student outcomes and engagement.		X	X	X	
Skills, knowledge, and aptitudes	Essential	Desirable	A	I	T
Written and verbal communication skills, capable of creating clear and informative guidance materials and engaging effectively with students, staff, and stakeholders	X		X	X	X
Organisational and time-management skills to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, ensuring efficiency and accuracy in complex processes	X		X	X	X
Ability to build relationships, offer guidance, and collaborate effectively with various teams and departments	X		X	X	
Problem-solving and analytical skills	X		X	X	
Ability to prioritise and achieve performance targets, demonstrating a proactive and results-driven approach to planning and executing tasks effectively	X			X	X

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Ability to work independently, take initiative, and make decisions confidently while also being capable of seeking guidance when necessary	X		X	X	
Digital skills (proficiency with Microsoft Office applications, particularly Outlook, Teams, Word, Excel and demonstratable ability to learn new applications and systems quickly)	X		X	X	
Ability to maintain composure, accuracy, and attention to detail during high-pressure situations or when approaching tight deadlines	X			X	X
A positive and enthusiastic team player and able to adapt readily to changing circumstances	X		X	X	
Comfortable working in a dynamic environment and able to adapt processes or approaches to meet evolving student needs and institutional priorities	X		X	X	
Committed to enhancing the student experience, showing empathy, and understanding the needs of diverse student groups	X		X	X	
Understanding of University policies, academic regulations, and procedures		X	X	X	
Other requirements or special requirements	Essential	Desirable	A	I	T
Alignment to the UCEM core values of Passion, Integrity, Excellence and Support; all employees are expected to demonstrate our values at work: https://www.ucem.ac.uk/core-values/	X			X	
Commitment to delivering positive outcomes for our students; we want our students to be successful	X			X	
You must be prepared to undertake compulsory online training should you be appointed; this includes Data Protection, Health & Safety, Safeguarding, Prevent, EDI, and Anti-bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct	X			X	

PAY & BENEFITS

- Salary £30,000 per annum
- 26 days paid holiday (rising to 28 with service) plus paid bank/public holidays plus up to 5 paid closure days (typically between Christmas and New Year); all per holiday year Full Time Equivalent. Our holiday year runs from 1 August to 31 July. We also have a holiday buy and sell scheme in place. Sometimes UCEM does not need to close for 5 days per year and any balance, for example 1 day, can be used as a paid Wellbeing Day to take time out for your own physical or mental health.
- Pensions auto-enrolment to the People's Pension salary exchange scheme (the term we use for salary sacrifice). You may opt out of salary exchange but remain in the scheme, or you may choose to opt out altogether.
- Policies in place for all types of family-friendly statutory leave with enhanced pay available from day one of employment (in addition to statutory pay, where applicable).
- Wellbeing support and full access to the Employee Assistance Programme as well as the Thrive Mental Wellbeing app. Several UCEM employees are trained Mental Health First Aiders and can support staff.

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- For Horizons based roles, we may in the future be able to offer parking on site however you must not assume this will be possible. Every now and then we may have a spare parking space become available and you can ask to join the waiting list. UCEM is keen wherever possible, to encourage staff to commute as sustainably as possible.
- Cycle to Work salary sacrifice scheme and access to Tax-Free Childcare (Government scheme).
- Life assurance cover.
- Employer-funded Health Cash Plan (Simplyhealth) and voluntary dental insurance (Unum).
- Charity giving options available including one voluntary paid day, per annum.
- As a UCEM employee you will have access to Microsoft Office 365 applications for personal use. You will also have access to range of lifestyle discounts (savings on everyday purchases) and access to two learning platforms.

On the *Join the team* page of our website, you will find the full list of employee benefits at UCEM

APPLICATION PROCESS

IMPORTANT! All job applications must be sent to recruitment@ucem.ac.uk and if you apply via a jobs board, please make sure you have sent all required documents otherwise we will be unable to consider your application. In addition, if you apply for this job on the recommendation of an existing UCEM employee, please make sure to mention their name within your application.

Please send the following to recruitment@ucem.ac.uk (you will receive an auto-response):

1. Your up-to-date CV;
2. A covering letter or email message outlining your suitability* for the role; AND
3. A completed Recruitment Check Form which is available from the *Current vacancies* page of our website.

The above items constitute a complete job application.

*We hope you take time to consider the UCEM values when you prepare your job application. You may also wish to consult our vision and strategy document: <https://www.ucem.ac.uk/our-vision/>

We are committed to driving forward our sustainability agenda to secure a sustainable future and our long-term ambition is to be the world's most sustainable university. We recommend you visit our website to find out more about our **Sustainability Strategy**: <https://www.ucem.ac.uk/sustainability/>

If you are an existing UCEM employee, we request you inform your current line manager of your intention to apply for this role.

NO AGENCIES: We are not using agencies for this vacancy and we cannot accept any CV submissions. Please do not contact us as we can only repeat this message.

Informal discussion

If you are unsure whether to apply, perhaps because you do not meet all essential criteria, we encourage you to call the hiring manager to discuss this further (details below). If you are excited by this vacancy do not rule yourself out; it still might be worth applying.

For an informal discussion about the role please contact Martyn Knox on 0118 921 4695 or email m.knox@ucem.ac.uk

For any other enquiries please contact HR on 0118 467 2454/2433 or email recruitment@ucem.ac.uk

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Closing date and next steps

Monday 18 November 2024 at noon.

HR will screen all applications in person and all applicants will receive a response confirming the status of their application. We value the time taken to make a job application and the interest shown in UCEM.

Interview details

Dates for interview will be advised to you later in the process.

Please indicate on your Recruitment Check Form any dates that you cannot make, up to 4 weeks from the closing date. This helps us to plan interviews should you be shortlisted, prior to contacting you.

Applications may be reviewed prior to the closing date and occasionally, you may be invited to interview ahead of the closing date.

Interviews are normally carried out over Zoom or Microsoft Teams, however we may invite you to visit our Reading office, especially when this is your place of work.

Please be prepared for a two-stage interview process, held on different dates. As part of the interview process, you will meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Sometimes we may conduct a telephone interview at first or second stage.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Here at UCEM we champion equality, diversity and inclusion in our workforce. We celebrate diversity and the strengths it brings to our staff body, our student community and our Board of Trustees, recognising that people are key to our success. Our aim is to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce, therefore we welcome and encourage applications from all backgrounds.

Pre-employment checks

UCEM undertakes thorough pre-employment screening as part of its recruitment process. Given we have contracts with Government offices, we make sure our checks comply with the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS). Checks will include identity, right to work, basic disclosure criminal record check, and three years of employment history.

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Attachment – homeworking environment

UCEM is a **flexible employer** and flexibility is built into different places of work location. As such, it is reasonable to ask employees to adhere to some **general principles and ways of working**, in order to make sure flexibility offers value to everyone, including UCEM.

In addition, if all or part of your working week involves working at home, your home environment must meet certain conditions. Otherwise you will be required to work in the office at Horizons.

General principles

- All employees regardless of place of work will be required to take an online Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment and repeat this at such intervals as may be instructed by the Facilities Management Team. The purpose of this is to look after your health and safety at work.
- All employees must adhere to UCEM IT Security and Data Protection policies in their place of work.
- All employees will be expected to be accessible to colleagues during their normal working hours and ensure their Outlook Calendars reflect the accurate place of work.
- All line managers will be expected to be accessible to their team and will be responsible for ensuring the performance of their team.

Remote (Home) requirements and conditions

- Where your place of work involves working at home, you must have suitable conditions in which to work.
- As a minimum, your UK home location must be able to accommodate the UCEM technology and equipment. What this means in practice is that you must have sufficient space in which to house the technology and equipment safely and securely.
- In all cases, UCEM technology and equipment can only be handled and used by you, the employee. It must not be accessible to any other household member, at any time.
- When you are working remotely as part of the DSE assessment, you will be required to provide evidence that your working environment meets DSE requirements, such as providing a photo of your workstation setup.
- You must also provide a secure and reliable internet connection which allows you to work as effectively as if you were in Horizons, **including undertaking video and audio calls and connecting permanently to the VPN.**
- In the case of known broadband outage you should plan to work at Horizons or elsewhere – noting that elsewhere must still meet the place of work requirements. Should you be unable to do either of these options, you will be required to take holiday. In the event of unexpected outage, you should discuss with your line manager whether you need to find an alternative place of work or take holiday.
- For the avoidance of doubt, the provision of the required broadband, will be self-funded.
- It is expected that you will house technology and equipment at a suitable work desk, which gives you the space needed to work safely and confidentially. This space in your home must be away from other household users, such as space in a room which is not frequented by other household members.
- Your work environment must remain professional at all times. This means you must be able to work remotely without interruption from household members and noise, and your surroundings should mirror what an office environment would look like (clean/tidy, free of clutter and distractions).
- It is not appropriate to work from a sofa or other location which is not in keeping with presenting a professional work environment. Opting to use the blurring function on Teams/Zoom is not an acceptable workaround.
- If you do not have space to accommodate these requirements or your circumstances change, you are not permitted to work at any location other than Horizons.