

Job Description

Job Title:	Specialist, New Student Transition
Department:	Student Success Office
Reports To:	Manager, Student Experience
Jobs Reporting:	Coordinator, Orientation Coordinator, New Student Transition
Salary Grade:	USG 9
Effective Date:	March 2020

Primary Purpose

The New Student Transition Specialist is responsible for designing, implementing and maintaining integrated programs intended to enhance student success and support a successful transition into the university. This requires the Specialist to be knowledgeable and up to date on the unique needs of our diverse student populations and their families with special attention and focus on priority populations including first-year, graduate, transfer, international and exchange. With input and extensive consultation with the Faculty Relations Managers, Manager, Student Experience, Senior Academic Support Specialist and the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association he/she is responsible for overseeing the implementation of transition programs including day to day operations, decision making and program leadership.

The Specialist will work closely with the Manager, Student Experience and Coordinators to ensure programs are well integrated, responsive to the needs of the faculties and campus partners and are achieving desired outcomes.

Key Accountabilities

Specific Accountabilities

- Knowledgeable and up to date on the needs of a diverse population of students and their families including but not limited to priority populations such as first-year, transfer, exchange, graduate and international students. He/she will work closely with the leadership team to ensure orientation programs and initiatives serving all students are well integrated and coordinated and that resources are shared and used effectively.
- Provide excellent leadership and management of Coordinators including setting clear and reasonable expectations, providing on-going feedback and establishing a strong foundation for performance through comprehensive training.
- Oversee the day-to-day operations of the Coordinators. He/she will be expected to provide additional program support, leadership and assist in decision making during peak times (e.g.: Orientation Week, Faculty Days, etc.) and as programs evolve and grow.
- Works closely with the SSO leadership team to ensure transition programs are evolving to meet the needs of faculty and campus partners. He/she must therefore be knowledgeable of Faculty success plans, student needs, strategies and outcomes.

Relationship Management

- Establish and maintain a network of relationships with campus partners and external organizations (CACUSS, etc.) to remain up to date on new research, strategies and initiatives in orientation programs and new student transition literature.

- Participates in and contributes to various internal and external committees including Chairing the Orientation Advisor Committee. It is essential that the Specialist practice diplomatic facilitation and sound judgement while working with the Orientation Advisor Committee. The Specialist should exercise political acumen to maintain an accurate pulse on the Committee's needs and direction.
- Collaboration with campus partners is essential to ensure students are provided with necessary support, resources and information pertinent to their University of Waterloo experience. Key campus partners include but are not limited to: Marketing and Undergraduate Recruitment, Centre for Teaching Excellence, Registrar's Office, Housing and Residences, Campus Wellness, AccessAbility Services, Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, Graduate Student Association and all Faculties and affiliated University Colleges. He/she will work closely with the Manager, Student Experience in ensuring campus partners are aware of and connected to new student transition programs as appropriate.
- Participates in and contributes to regular staff, department and Faculty specific meetings as appropriate.

Leadership

- Provides leadership and direction to Coordinators, including co-op and contract staff responsible for implementing New Student Transition programs. This includes setting clear and reasonable expectations, providing ongoing feedback and establishing a strong foundation for performance.
- Oversees the recruitment, hiring, selection, onboarding, training, performance management, appreciation of and recognition of all staff who report to him/her - including casual, temporary and permanent staff.
- Provides leadership in all aspects of New Student Transition including both incoming/current students and their parents and family members. Direction is based on a solid understanding of literature and best practices in new student transition including its connection to retention, student engagement and student development. This includes being knowledgeable about priority populations of students and faculty priorities.
- Informs and understands the campus climate through consistent consultation with faculties, campus partners and students. He/she uses this knowledge to assist the SSO in continuing to align programs, services and providing direction and guidance in the ongoing review and development of programs and initiatives.
- Acquires a solid understanding of the office, faculties and institutional goals and priorities as it relates to enhancing the transition of all students.
- Ensures appropriate information related to the student transition process is available to various campus partners and stakeholders.

Program Development

- Develops, coordinates and maintains targeted programs and initiatives designed to ensure the successful transition of all new Waterloo students.
- Leverages resources, knowledge and expertise in the SSO to assist in the design of New Student Transition programs when appropriate in partnership with the SSO leadership team and campus partners.
- Acquires a solid understanding of individual Faculty and institutional goals and priorities as it relates to transition programs. He/she will therefore work closely with the Coordinators to ensure programs are meeting the needs of Faculty and campus partners.

Staff Development

- Provides strong leadership to Coordinators, including setting clear and reasonable expectations, providing ongoing feedback and establishing a strong foundation for performance.

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- Responsible for making key decisions in times of crisis when the Manager, Student Experience is not present. He/she must therefore have experience managing difficult situations, crisis and making decisions independently and with little direction.
- Works closely with Data & Evaluation Specialist and Manager, Student Experience to establish performance indicators and assessment methods to measure achievement in all areas of responsibility including learning outcomes, program goals and objectives and individual program success for each orientation program.

Research

- Knowledgeable and up to date on current Waterloo surveys including the orientation survey, Faculty specific surveys and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
- Strong understanding of the student experience at the University of Waterloo. Particularly priority populations such as first year students, graduate, exchange and transfer students.
- Uses current research to design intentional, proactive and responsive orientation programs that are in line with the needs of our students and Faculty partners.

**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess and correct health and safety hazards, as required.*

Required Qualifications

Education

- University degree required; Master's or equivalent in a related field (e.g., Leadership, Higher Education, Student Services) an asset.

Experience

- Experience managing/leading a team in a student service.
- Program/project management experience is an asset.
- Proven ability to take initiative and be both creative and flexible.
- Strong oral and written communication skills, solid organizational skills, and sound judgment
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively, build consensus and be sensitive to the needs and interests of various stakeholders
- Ability to function as part of a diverse team both within the department and across the institution.
- Political acumen is an asset
- Demonstrated ability to contribute to and thrive in a collaborative environment and to apply a positive team approach to working with colleagues.
- Demonstrated ability to use and interpret data to make decisions, and communicate results effectively to various stakeholders
- Demonstrated ability in managing multiple projects with competing priorities

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Able to cultivate strong and influential relationships across the university campus. The Specialist will be required to lead their co-workers in delivering outstanding transition programs that meet the needs of our students.
- Collaboration, problem solving, strong communication and consensus building are crucial to the success of the role.

Nature and Scope

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- **Contacts:** Internally, the Specialist communicates with direct reports, and the SSO management team to ensure all employees are informed and knowledgeable about initiatives. Externally, the Specialist is responsible for ensuring strong working relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders. Key partners include the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, central campus services and each of the faculties. He/she must lead by example in communicating effectively, building collaboration and ensuring a student focused program and environment.
 - **Level of Responsibility:** He/she is responsible for managing the day to day operations of the New Student Transition team, setting priorities and managing internal and external expectations of this area. He/she is responsible for ongoing performance management and yearly performance appraisals.
 - **Decision-Making Authority:** The Specialist will make decisions in collaboration with others about the priorities relating to New Student Transition initiatives. He/she would be responsible for making quick decisions in times of crisis that may occur on evenings and weekends during orientation programming.
 - **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Minimal demands typical of a position operating within a fast-paced service oriented office environment; extensive periods of sitting and concentrated use of visual senses. Requires close attention to detail, thoroughness, and accuracy.
 - **Working Environment:** Located in a comfortable indoor area. Minimal exposure to disagreeable conditions typical of an open concept work space and supervisory position, one where it is occasionally necessary to convey negative or unwelcome information to students or staff. Evening and weekend work is required. Some weekend and evening work will be required throughout the year, especially during July, August and September as well as during Labour Day weekend for event execution purposes.