

Job Description

Job Title:	New Student Transition Specialist, Special Projects
Department:	Student Success Office
Reports To:	Manager, New Student Transition
Jobs Reporting:	None
Salary Grade:	USG 9
Effective Date:	January 2023

Primary Purpose

The New Student Transition Specialist, Special Projects is accountable to the Manager, New Student Transition and is part of an interdependent and collaborative team committed to the successful design, development, implementation, and administration of programming that enhances the new student experience. Until the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the New Student Transition (NST) team executed programming that had only minor changes and updates over the past decade. Though the needs of the incoming cohorts of UWaterloo students have evolved over the last ten years, many of the NST team's initiatives have not.

This Specialist has three primary areas of focus: 1) act as the project manager for the undergraduate Orientation model and program review; 2) conduct and summarize a comprehensive review of best practices/literature, environmental scan of the U15, and any other relevant data (including student feedback) related to first-year Orientation programs and the new student transition experience; 3) conduct a curriculum review and develop a content map including a visual of all content that students receive throughout their transition, inclusive of initiatives offered by other teams within and external to the SSO. This role will also explore the new student transition experience for student groups including but not limited to Black, indigenous, racialized and traditionally under-represented students and international, undergraduate students, and graduate students.

Key Accountabilities

Specific Accountabilities and role outcomes

- Acts as the project lead in the review of the undergraduate Orientation model and program.
- Review current new student transition (including Orientation) best practices (including research and literature) and produce recommendations that align with relevant student development theory, best practices and student trends that can guide the undergraduate Orientation review process and the work of the New Student Transition team over the next five years.
- Conduct a full review of new student transition programs/initiatives (undergraduate and graduate) and produce recommendations with supported rationale for program updates, enhancements, and changes.
- Produce a curriculum and/or content map including a visual of all content and information students receive throughout their transition beyond new student transition offerings; outline recommendations for how this work should be operationalized among new student transition team and other teams within the SSO.
- Create an outline with a visual of the transition experience for various student groups with particular focus on equity-deserving students (undergraduate and graduate) and

recommendations for how new student transition programming can action these recommendations.

- Working closely with the SSO's Data and Evaluation team, create a plan to gather student feedback related to their experiences with Orientation and transition at UWaterloo.
- Produce a full report on all recommendations that can be applied to the new student transition team's work and how this connects to the overall student experience at UWaterloo that can be shared internally (SSO) and with external partners as appropriate.
- The Specialist demonstrates a commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism through their leadership and operational practices.
- The Specialist will also contribute to and lead additional special projects as needed.

Project management

- Implements and maintains project management processes for the undergraduate Orientation model and program review.
- Develops a project plan, that includes but is not limited to a project charter, project scope and deliverables, clear outline of roles and responsibilities for all involved stakeholders (internal and external to the SSO), deadlines and the process for moving the work forward to ensure all project deliverables are in place and completed on time.
- Develops and leads a communications strategy among all project stakeholders, ensuring that key information is shared well in advance of deadlines and that all stakeholders are clear of their roles and expectations in relation to the overall review.
- Leads continuous assessment and review of process and strategy throughout the Orientation model and program review.

Evaluation, Assessment, and Theory

- Establishes evaluation and assessment methods to collect and analyze student feedback that can inform recommendations for undergraduate Orientation and the overall new student transition portfolio in the SSO.
- Reads current literature, research student trends and relevant student development theory in relation to the new student transition (including Orientation) experience. Summarizes and simplifies this knowledge for the NST team, SSO and external partners as appropriate.
- Uses evaluation and assessment methodologies and best practices from literature, research, and student development theory to inform all recommendations related to undergraduate Orientation model and program and the new student transition portfolio in the SSO.
- Conducts analysis, creates reports, and identify trends to better understand the new student experience at UWaterloo and how it links with the overall student experience at UWaterloo.

Relationship Building

- Facilitates a strong working relationship with campus and faculty partners and collaborates/consults when appropriate in the development of new student transition principles and initiatives. Key working relationships include but are not limited to Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, Marketing and Undergraduate Recruitment, Campus Housing, Campus Wellness, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, Graduate Student Association and all Faculties and Affiliated University Colleges. The Specialist will work closely with the Manager to ensure campus and faculty partners are aware of the work within the Specialist's portfolio as appropriate.
- Works closely with other teams in the SSO, including but not limited to the Faculty Relations Managers, Academic Success & Retention, International Student Experience and

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Data & Evaluation Specialists to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to connecting with campus and faculty partners around new student transition.

- Represents the SSO at relevant campus and faculty partner meetings as appropriate.
- Establish and maintain relationships with external partners (e.g., CACUSS, other post-secondary institutions) in collaboration with NST team.
- Participates in and contributes to regular team and department wide meetings as appropriate.

**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 degree or equivalent experience in a related field (e.g., Leadership, Higher Education, Student Services) considered an asset.

Experience

- Experience in an academic setting working students, staff and Faculty/instructors is preferred.
- Demonstrated experience working collaboratively, building consensus, and managing sensitivities, perspectives and interests of diverse teams and stakeholder groups to execute a strategy,
- Demonstrated experience leading strategic and large-scale projects/initiatives with multiple stakeholders.
- Program/project management experience an asset.
- Experience applying a curriculum design approach to content/program development considered an asset.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- A record of and commitment to participating in ongoing learning and engagement in the areas of equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and accessibility. Demonstrated experience applying this learning to their leadership and development.
- Knowledgeable and up to date on the student experience of post-secondary students (particularly in a university environment). Knowledge of the new student experience considered an asset.
- Ability to co-ordinate multiple projects at once with demonstrated ability to research, summarize, and report information; excellent administrative, organizational, and time management skills.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and as part of a team with exceptional interpersonal and communication skills.
- Proven ability to take initiative and be both creative and flexible, working in a team and independently.
- Highly collaborative, adaptable and a strong active listener.
- Outstanding interpersonal communication skills, including written, oral, one on one, and group. Able to effectively communicate with diverse teams and stakeholder groups in a respectful and professional manner.
- Proven ability to manage multiple demands, stay organized and prioritize effectively.

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- Sound knowledge of new student transition principles and best practices is preferred.
- Proven facilitation skills and an ability to communicate to diverse audiences both in person and online.
- Demonstrated ability to use and interpret data to make decisions and communicate results effectively to various stakeholders.
- Knowledge of curriculum development and design 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.
- Intermediate skills in the following programs: MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Key internal contacts include but are not limited to Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, Marketing and Undergraduate Recruitment, Campus Wellness, Campus Housing, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, Graduate Student Association and all Faculties and Affiliated University Colleges. Key external contacts include but are not limited to partner institutions across Canada and professional networks (e.g., CACUSS).
- **Level of Responsibility:** The Specialist is responsible for their portfolio. The Manager will support the direction of the Specialist's work but the development, execution and implementation of the portfolio's goals will be the responsibility of the Specialist. This job has specialized work with little direct supervision. When applicable, the Specialist will be responsible for building collaboration and consensus among internal and external partners.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** The Specialist will make decisions in collaboration with the Manager regarding the strategic direction of the special projects portfolio but will be required to modify and make decisions, where appropriate, in the absence of a direct manager.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Minimal demands typical of a position operating within an office environment, periods of extensive sitting, concentrated use of visual sense and physical effort that may result in moderate fatigue, strain, or injury because of repetitive keyboard/mouse movement.
- **Working Environment:** Office based, intermittent work outside the normal operating hours of the institution is required. Located in a comfortable indoor area, although location can change. Some weekend and evening work will be required throughout the year to support and best understand the programs and initiatives executed by the NST team especially during July, August, and September as well as during Labour Day weekend.