**Department of Human Resources**

**OPSEU Job Description**

**Job Title:** Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist

**Job Number:** A-289

**NOC:** 4033

**Band:** 9

**Department:** Student Accessibility Services

**Supervisor Title:** Director, Student Wellness Centre

**Last Reviewed:** May 26, 2015

**Job Purpose**

The Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist is responsible for implementation, coordination and delivery of academic accommodations and supports, as mandated by the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Human Rights Code for students with disabilities, ensuring equal access to Trent’s academic programs and facilities.

Provides comprehensive evaluation, case management, advising, academic coaching and learning strategy support to students with disabilities, promoting student development and potential for academic success. Working as part of a team, responsible in part for program development, coordination and evaluation of SAS programs and supports, as well opportunities to supervise student staff and interns.

**Key Activities**

1. Conducts intake interviews and reviews documentation from accredited diagnostician. Assessment of co-morbidities, cognitive, physical, psychological, developmental, and environmental factors, and how functional limitations may be exacerbated by the complex interaction of these factors. Identifies and refers students in crisis, which may result in unsafe conditions and serious bodily harm to self or others.

Develops accommodation plans with students and faculty as required, which are based on functional limitations and areas of strength while maintaining academic integrity of the program of study. (25%)

1. Provides one-on-one advising to students regarding accommodation and funding issues, working in multi- and inter-disciplinary teams of professionals and student services to coordinate services for registered clients. Provides case management support through liaising with departments and faculty at Trent, initiating referrals to on-campus or community-based supports, while ensuring privacy and confidentiality are maintained as required by FIPPA (40%).

1. Provides learning strategy and/or academic coaching supports to students, using a solution-focused and strengths-based approach, taking into consideration the complexity of factors that can exacerbate functional limitations.

May involve coordination of peer support programs at SAS. Works with students to identify and develop academic and coping strategies, considering the functional impact of the disability, nature of program demands, and contributing personal, environmental and socio-economic factors. (20%)

1. Develops, implements and evaluates SAS programs, including the Summer Transition Program, workshop series during the academic year. Coordinates psycho-educational assessment referrals to the Regional Assessment Resource Centre (15%).

**Analytical Reasoning**

*Indicate degree of complexity or difficulty of thinking and reasoning required by the job. Provide a relevant work example that is typical of roles and responsibilities of the job (i.e. not an occasional duty).*

* Must be aware of current evidence-based practices, theoretical approaches and models, and apply/adapt to work with individual clients (e.g. developing accommodation plans based on advanced clinical reasoning and knowledge of best practices from related fields of psychology, education and disability-related literature).
* Demonstrates understanding of the impact of disability on access to post-secondary education and accommodation that maintains academic integrity and rigour of the program of study.
* Requires understanding of co-morbidities and functional limitations caused by multiple personal and environmental factors in order to identify and implement solutions using professional judgment and clinical reasoning within the biopsychosocial framework adopted by the Student Wellness Centre and human rights legislation requirements.
* Example 1: A student presents with multiple diagnoses (e.g. acquired brain injury, whiplash injury, with post-traumatic stress disorder) and requires advising with respect to risks and benefits of remaining at university. Advisor must consider best practices concerning management of acquired brain injury, assess the functional impact of multiple conditions to make appropriate recommendations regarding course load and potential accommodations/supports.
* Example 2: A student presents with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and co-morbid mental health issues e.g. bipolar disorder. Advisor must have the understanding of how these diagnoses may exacerbate each other, potential risks to the student in an academic environment, and identify strategies that will maximize student strengths.
* Example 3: The advisor meets with eight (8) students in one work day and receives ongoing e-mail and phone requests with varying degrees of urgency and/or time-sensitivity. A student presents in mental health crisis, reporting suicidal ideation. The advisor must intervene to support the student in crisis, prioritizing the level of need from her caseload while continuing to provide a high standard of service to each individual request. (SAS has evening drop-in hours during the regular term and advisors offer e-mail, phone, and Skype meetings to provide access. These multiple formats require specific understanding and awareness of the various styles of students with communication difficulties as a result of their disabilities.)

**Decision Making**

*Indicate the degree of freedom to exercise initiative or act independently in making day- to-day decisions. Provide a relevant work example that is typical of roles and responsibilities of the job (i.e. not an occasional duty).*

* Authorized to recommend and implement individual academic accommodations including e.g. equivalent to full time status and reduced course load which can affect eligibility for scholarships and external funding. These decisions are based on the complex interaction of factors including supporting documentation, assessment of student functional limitations, funding availability, and developmental readiness of the student.
* Advocate on behalf of a student for academic consideration with faculty members.
* Initiate referrals to internal and external supports and share confidential information in accordance with privacy legislation and confidentiality policies based on student level of need.
* Guidance received:

In order to carry out daily activities and responsibilities, the Accessibility Advisor is responsible for developing systems and procedures in collaboration with colleagues to ensure consistent and evidence-based practices are maintained in working with students, parents and faculty. Work is assigned and there is considerable scope to decide on priorities and procedures to be used; work is generally checked for achievement of objectives (e.g. Summer Transition Program).

* Creativity used in Decision Making:

New ideas are developed that result in new procedures, policies, and services for clients served by Student Accessibility Services and the Student Wellness Centre. e.g. development of cross-departmental forms and methods of communicating confidential client information, development of Summer Transition Program which provides a new means of access for incoming students and parents to the Student Wellness Centre and other student services.

**Impact**

*Indicate the impact or consequence to the department or University of typical actions or decisions taken by the job incumbent. Provide a relevant work example that is typical of roles and responsibilities of the job (i.e. not an occasional duty).*

* If the Accessibility Advisor does not develop evidence-based accommodation plans, students may not be able to access academic programs and facilities, thereby contravening the mandate of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Human Rights Code. If a student is not provided equal access to academic programs and facilities at Trent University, the University is at risk for potential human rights complaints and lawsuits, and damage to overall reputation. The SAS office has also been selected by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities as an exemplar for the Summer Transition Program.
* Without appropriate accommodation and support, students' academic progress may be in jeopardy (failed courses), which can have an impact on overall program retention and graduation. A study conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council showed that students who do not have access to advising and transition support are at increased risk of accruing greater debt, and prolonged programs of study can result in lost time in the workforce. Our office has been selected as one exemplar by the provincial government for our Summer Transition Program.

**Education**

* Master’s degree in Psychology, Education, Applied Educational Psychology, Social Work, Occupational Therapy or other related area.
* Professional membership and/or accreditation is an asset.

**Experience Required**

1. Minimum 2 years of directly-related experience working with persons with disabilities.
2. Excellent assessment and communication skills.
3. Accredited coach training and experience preferred, or membership to relevant professional association.
4. Knowledge of ethics and standards of professional practice.
5. Experience working in a multidisciplinary team and case management.
6. Understanding of post-secondary demands, social, economic implications for students with disabilities.
7. An understanding of the meta-cognitive deficits of adults and the effective methods for assisting them.
8. Demonstrated creative approach to problem-solving, especially in an instructional environment.
9. Excellent teaching and communication skills both in 1:1 and small group environments.

Experience with/lived experience of oppression, racism, homophobia, transphobia and/or ableism and/or personal connection to queer or trans communities of color, including newcomer and disability communities will be an asset

**Responsibility for the Work of Others**

Direct Responsibility

The Accessibility Advisor/Learning Strategist coordinates and supervises student staff members, interns and volunteers. Also provides training, guidance and instruction to student staff, volunteers, including student peer-coach mentors, during university events (e.g. Open Houses) and Summer Transition Program.

**Communication**

Internal

* Ability to clearly articulate and advise students regarding accommodations, student responsibilities and learning strategies that are strength-based. Requires professional judgment, active listening, empathetic responses and ability to normalize situations for students who experience stigma as a barrier to accessing support.
* Adapt communication styles based on student needs and strengths. E.g. Students with sensory loss may require alternate formats and means of communication, students with learning disabilities may also require information presented in an alternate and accessible way.
* Provide clinical rationale for accommodation, funding, and academic consideration for students.
* Ongoing communication and exchange of information in accordance with PHIPA, using professional judgment and tact with faculty members regarding student need for accommodation, AODA requirements and how to support individual students.
* Liaising and consultation with colleagues within the Student Wellness Centre and other departments.

External

* Communication with students’ parents and families as required, in accordance with SAS privacy policy and PHIPA.
* Representative of SAS and Trent University with external organizations (e.g. Inter-University Disability Issues Association, Regional Assessment Resource Centre, Canadian Association of College and University Student Services), other universities and colleges, and general public
* Liaise with community supports

**Motor/ Sensory Skills**

* Fine motor skill required for typing and documenting notes and student information in ClockWork and Colleague
* Attend to visual and/or auditory cues from students, parents, and faculty

**Effort**

* Sustained attention/concentration during student and faculty meetings, for hours at a time. Must attend to verbal and non-verbal cues during communication, provide appropriate, clear and positive feedback, and assess level of risk.
* Physical effort includes sitting during student meetings, on average 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. Occasional moving of boxes and supplies during exam invigilation and student orientation events.

**Working Conditions**

* Must prioritize and manage multiple demands and often high volume of student or parent inquiries/requests.
* Some students and parents are facing psychological stresses or crises. May present as frustrated or angry. Accessibility Advisor must manage stress associated with crisis or high-stress student situations, and prioritizing high volume of student needs that can arise suddenly and unexpectedly.