Peer Supporters

Overview of role…

Our online Peer Support Service offers a listening ear for students to talk to when they need help, guidance, or simply want to talk through a problem. The service is anonymous to protect the students and supporters.

The Peer Support Online service operates through a dedicated mailbox and an online forum. Volunteer Peer Supporters are always needed to continue this vital service for students.

As a Peer Supporter you'll be tasked with responding to students’ queries and providing one-to-one encouragement. You'll also need to provide answers to questions, or put students in touch with others who might be able to help.

This role is suitable for a student who has studied with the OU long enough to feel that they can offer a wealth of experience to others who might be new to the OU or experiencing challenges with their study.

Essential for role:

- Good communication skills
- A patient and empathetic nature
- Non-judgemental behaviour towards views, beliefs, values and perspectives which are different to your own
- A willingness to engage with students
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Knowledge of the OU’s Forums

Supported by:

You will be supported in your role by our elected VP Student Support and an office administrator.

Main responsibilities:

- Monitor the Peer Supporters inbox and forum
- Respond to Student messages within 24 hours of receipt
- Offer one on one support as the need arises
- Signpost students to the appropriate OU services depending on their issue
What the OU Students Association expect from you in this role:

- That you will attend online training sessions (dates specified on the application form) and complete online modules around safeguarding, data protection and unconscious bias.
- That you perform your role only within the boundaries laid out to you by Peer Support Admin.
- That you undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check.
- To act professionally whilst in your role.
- To ensure that you act in a way which reflects our commitment to Equality and Diversity (our expectations of volunteers can be found in your handbook).
- To ensure you fulfil your volunteer role in line with our Volunteer Agreement and our Anti-Bullying and Harassment policy.
- To follow and adhere to the training you receive.
- To keep all information gathered from your role as confidential and to not discuss your conversations with students outside of the Peer Support forum.
- To remain anonymous and not reveal to other students that you are a Peer Supporter.
- Respect the nature and limitations of the relationship with the students.
- Attendance at online meetings with other Supporters, where aspects of the Peer Support Services and planned changes are discussed.
- Attend any ongoing training as required.
- That you will spend approximately 5 to 10 hours a week as a Supporter.

What you can expect from the OU Students Association:

- Support from the Vice President Student Support and the Association staff team in Milton Keynes throughout your time as a Peer Supporter.
- Access to a monthly volunteer newsletter to inform you of what’s going on in the Students Association.
- A volunteer handbook outlining all polices and support you can access. Within this will be a guide to the Association and the services they offer, to help you in your role.
- An induction and full training appropriate to your role including a Peer Support Guidebook and useful ‘How To’ postcards.
- We will reimburse all reasonable expenses.
- To develop transferable skills and confidence.
- When you start in this role you will receive a guide to the Association and its services and will have the opportunity to take part in an online introductory training session.
- You will have the opportunity to network and receive support from other Peer Supporters through a dedicated online forum.