# Head of Service Design (Head of Practice and Group Design Lead)

# Digital Services, The Open University (OU)

**Location: Milton Keynes**

Flexible and remote working is an option, but you must be able to attend Milton Keynes on a weekly/fortnightly basis.

**Reporting to: Director of Design and Experience (Head of the Design Profession), Digital Services**

As part of your role, you may be required to deputise for the Head of the Design Profession, Digital Services.

**About us:**

The Open University (OU) is the largest university in the United Kingdom and reaches across all four nations. It is a global leader in higher education and research, using a model of open supported learning to deliver world-renowned teaching and learning content to over 200,000 students every year.

If you are a Senior Design leader looking for a new opportunity, we would like you to join our existing Design community that is quickly developing in its maturity. We would love you to help us shape and create successful products and services using an agile and user-centred approach, caring deeply about our users’ needs and the future of education.

The OU is developing its digital capabilities as part of its ongoing digital transformation journey. We are moving towards organising ourselves differently, and we are starting to do this by forming ‘Product groups’ that have clear user outcomes and building on our Professions. This role will be both a Practice Lead as the Head of Service Design in the Design Profession, and a Group Design Lead in one of our new Product groups. You will be responsible for defining the strategy and direction for Service Design, the Service Design standards and processes used across teams and for leading a team of Service Designers as part of the wider Design Profession. You will also be responsible for working as a Group Design Lead as part of a Product Group. You will work closely with a Group Product Lead and a Group Engineering Lead, to ensure we deliver products and services that align with user needs, business goals, and are buildable and scalable.

Come and be part of an organisation that transforms lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone.

The OU is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion, fostering an environment where different perspectives, ideas, knowledge, and cultures are valued and celebrated. We actively encourage applications from all underrepresented groups and strive to create a supportive workplace for all through our policies, services, and staff networks.

**We are looking for someone who will:**

* Be an integral part of developing our overall Design communities and openly demonstrate a proven ability of where you have had significant impact, and successfully led at senior levels.
* Work collaboratively alongside other Heads of Practice in Design, line managing and supporting the professional development of designers within Service Design, as well as establishing strategy, standards, best practice, capability and buy in for Service Design and its wider application across the OU.
* Actively and collaboratively influence stakeholders across the OU, elevating and championing Service Design and expertise to influence over wider business strategies and show how this can influence at strategic levels and benefit the OU.
* Contributing to and executing the OU Design mission, vision, and strategies, openly sharing work, and thinking internally and externally.
* Be a Group Design Lead, responsible for helping teams to frame research questions to inform design and product decisions and for ensuring that the product and service teams have the design support, direction, and capabilities to set and deliver outcomes.
* Be responsible for overseeing the design of the products and services in that Group and ensure quality and alignment of the design of services and products across the different Digital Services Product Groups and across the OU.
* Work across multidisciplinary teams, supporting the work for designers in that Group, managing budget and timelines, closely collaborating with the Group Leads for both Product and Engineering and the relevant Group Digital Service Leader. Together agreeing on what problems to solve and how best to structure and balance delivery teams, working with other Heads of Practice in Design to allocate (and hire or train) Design practitioners to teams depending on the needs of that product or service. Collaboratively helping to set the vision and direction for a group’s products and services, ensuring that the products and services they develop are desirable, feasible and viable.
* Be an active member of the Digital Services Senior Management Team, attending and contributing to meet ups, learning together, and developing strong professional relationships across Digital Services.
* Develop, contribute to, and help lead our Design communities of practice. Focus will be on Service Design, moving the community to be able to run itself.
* Be bold and lead by example, giving and receiving challenge respectfully, embracing diverse viewpoints, experience, and evidence, spreading optimism, positivity, and kindness.

**As a Senior Design leader, you will:**

* Demonstrate a passion, enthusiasm, and a deep understanding of the Service Design practice, can act as an expert and advocate for Service Design approaches and therefore be a key influencer on how it can be applied across the OU.
* Be a thought leader, informal coach, career advisor and champion for professionals in the Service Design community. Establishing, leading and continuously developing a team and community in support of professional Service Design.
* Contribute to the development an overall Design strategy for the OU and helping to create an actionable roadmap to develop the maturity of the existing Design profession.
* Champion, advocate, and influence at a strategic level for Design across the OU, providing confidence to senior stakeholders, demonstrating how Design is core to being able to deliver ‘Being Service Led’ as an organisational approach.
* Establish and embed leadership and agile ways of working as a Group Design Lead within a multidisciplinary delivery team. Demonstrating how a Senior Design role can work as part of the wider Design community and within a multidisciplinary team.
* Establish and develop our Design communities of practice and embed this as an effective way of working at the OU, actively encouraging community leadership to be shared and community led.
* Further develop and clarify our Design practices at the OU, developing a discipline that has clear supported career pathways, succession planning, internal development opportunities, is diverse, inclusive, equitable and capable. Creating shared standards, processes, best practice, approaches, and methods for use by the Design community. As part of this, you’ll ensure standards are developed, maintained, and appropriately shared.
* Be a visible internal and external thought leader, sharing work openly and establishing close links with relevant professional bodies and networks.

**We would love to hear from you if you have:**

* Education: A degree in Design or in a Design related field or the equivalent in extensive and relevant professional experience
* Professional experience: Significant experience in the Design industry, including time spent as a Lead Designer or manager in Service Design. An expert understanding of Service Design methods, standards, and principles. Have extensive knowledge and experience in scoping and designing simple end to end services.
* Leadership skills: Strong and demonstrable leadership skills, being able to balance being part of leading a profession, being a leader in agile multidisciplinary teams, being a leader in the wider Design community, as well as the ability to collaborate with senior stakeholders and other teams across the OU.
* Effective decision-making skills, can think critically, analyse complex data and user research to understand user needs and be able to make pragmatic design decisions supported by evidence and clear reasoning.
* Strategic thinking: Excellent strategic thinking, we want you to have a strong strategic mindset with the ability to develop and execute Design strategies that align with business objectives and can balance both strategic and operational needs.
* User focus: Champion the user needs across the development of products and services, applying strategic thinking to provide the best service for the end user.
* Agile experience: Experience of being a design leader in agile teams and the ability to manage budgets where necessary and timelines.
* Learning together: A love for learning new stuff, have an interest in and up-to-date industry knowledge with Design trends, use of Generative AI, emerging technologies, new Design methods, attending and participating in conferences and participating in Design forums.

**Why apply?**

You will help us to mature our Design community and ways of working as the OU continues to transform the way it delivers its education and support services. We have a strong commitment to providing training and development in and beyond your current role. This includes thorough induction into the organisation and regular reviews of your training and development needs.

The interview process will be in two main stages, the first will be an interview with the Director of Design (Chair), Director of Product, the Director of Engineering and Architecture and the Director of Student Services Portfolio. If successful you will be invited to a second stage process where you will be invited to present at the Open University Campus in Milton Keynes with a Q&A session. You will have the opportunity to learn more about the Open University and meet several people from the OU that you will be working closely with.

We may contact you for more information before interview. If invited to interview we will provide you with the questions for the interview beforehand, so you are able to prepare in advance. We may not use all the questions in the interview, but they are there as a guide for you.

We may choose to close the application date early if we reach a high number of applications. However, if you would still like to apply before the deadline originally advertised do not hesitate to contact us and we can discuss this with the Chair of the panel.