

Fellowship

Supporting Statement Template

Your Name	Ruth Cook
Applicant Name	Sarah Hill
Your Institution/organisation/other	UWTSD – Student Services – Learning Support
Your current role	Learning Support Manager
Email address	r.cook@uwtsd.ac.uk
Your Fellowship Status (if appropriate)	N/A
Relationship to Applicant	Line Manager
How long have you worked with the Applicant (insert dates)	September 2021 - present
Declaration	In submitting your Supporting Statement, you are confirming that the applicant's submission relates to their higher education professional practice and that your statement is your own work and has been written specifically for this applicant. If the professional integrity of the Supporting Statement is in question it will not be accepted. I confirm that I have read and agree with the declaration above. Date: 18/04/25

Supporting Statement

Please provide your statement to verify and endorse the applicant's submission for Fellowship in the following section. You are required to comment on the applicant's recent higher education practice (usually within the last 3 years), providing examples to support your statement wherever possible.

In completing this Supporting Statement you are confirming that you have read the AdvanceHE Guidance for referees writing a Supporting Statement. In association with the Descriptor 2 criteria, as a guide, you should comment on the following in your supporting statement:

- your own personal experience of the applicant's recent and effective HE practice;
- if you have been involved in peer observation of the applicant's teaching and/or support of learning, please draw on relevant examples from this;
- any inclusive practice and/or contribution to developments by the applicant in teaching and/or supporting learning within their context as appropriate;
- your perspective on the practical examples provided within the application to illustrate the Fellowship requirements.

Two sides of A4 will normally be sufficient for this category of Fellowship.

Sarah works in the Learning Support Department (Student Services) as a Learning Support Specialist, supporting students with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) referred to her through the government-funded Disabled Students' Allowance, on a 1:1 basis.

Working closely with Sarah on a day-to-day basis, and as her Line Manager, I have direct experience of her as a practitioner at HE level, observing how she consistently demonstrates the core knowledge, professional values and inclusive practice that the role demands, and can confirm that her application is a fair and accurate record of her professional expertise and practice in supporting learning in HE.

The Learning Support Department aims to ensure equality of opportunity by empowering students with ALN to develop the confidence and skills they need to become independent, successful learners, to fulfil their potential and achieve their aims. I am aware that Sarah strives to meet these departmental aims in all that she does, evident through the meticulous records and detailed notes that Sarah keeps.

Students with ALN present with diverse challenges and/or barriers to their learning, often have complex profiles, and require individual, tailored and specialist interventions to overcome these, which I observe Sarah working extremely hard to provide. My discussions with Sarah, both formal and informal, reveal, e.g., how she thoroughly prepares before beginning to support a student, familiarising herself with the individual student's needs, and then adopting/developing strategies, and designing activities tailored to meet these needs. I further note how Sarah critically evaluates the success, or otherwise, of the strategies and activities she employs and the supporting resources she creates and adapts/redesigns them as necessary.

Learner feedback is important to Sarah, who listens, reflects and reacts to any feedback received from learners in a positive and constructive way, using this feedback to make changes, thereby informing and enhancing her practice moving forward.

Sarah is eager to learn and receive feedback and from her colleagues in Learning Support, evidenced by the regular collaboration which exists between members of the team as they participate in both ad-hoc and arranged discussions, to exchange ideas and share and review resources.

Sarah regularly reviews student progress, providing me, as the Learning Support Manager, with updates, requesting meetings to discuss in more detail the options and best way forward for those students whose progress or presentation she is concerned about.

As Sarah's Line Manager, I have recorded as part of the PDR process how she uses research and professional learning to ensure depth and breadth in her professional knowledge and takes a planned, mapped-out approach to her professional CPD. Sarah selects training which expands her subject knowledge and informs and enhances her practice, seizing opportunities to embrace the most recent research and thinking and seeking to fill any perceived gaps or areas for improvement in her wider skill set, e.g., digital skills.

I have been impressed by the holistic approach Sarah takes to her work as a Learning Support Specialist, observing how she crafts a safe and supportive environment, which enables students to make academic progress, but which also affords them the opportunity, should they need it, to disclose, without fear of judgement, any wider issues they are experiencing which may be impacting their learning. Sarah has ensured she possesses the information needed to be able to signpost students to the most appropriate support services within the University and in the community to help resolve their issues, meaning they are ultimately able to re-focus on their studies and learning support. I have personally received and seen emails sent to Sarah from students who were extremely grateful for the help and support she gave them during a difficult period and extolling the difference that this support made.

The 'whole person' approach which Sarah adopts in supporting students improves outcomes for individual students, of course, but I am also aware of its positive impact at a wider university level – students have openly shared that without Sarah's support they would have found it impossible to continue with their studies and would almost certainly have withdrawn from their course, thereby aiding retention. Graduate outcomes have also been positively impacted, as students build resilience, gain confidence, and develop the skills they need for future employment under Sarah's mentorship. Sarah has provided excellent examples of both in action, which I can corroborate. To ensure she maintains her professionalism in this wider context, Sarah has also undertaken additional relevant CPD, e.g., Mental health 1st Aid.

Sarah is an excellent colleague who, from my direct experience, is working at the level expected for Fellowship. She demonstrates outstanding subject knowledge and professional values in every aspect of her work. I am delighted to be able to support her application and look forward to her continuing contribution to the Learning Support Department.

