

## **National PATH (Programme for Access to Higher Education) Coordinator**

A vacancy has arisen in the Irish Universities Association for an experienced National Coordinator for the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH).

### **Background**

The Irish Universities Association (IUA) is the representative body of the university sector. The national DARE and HEAR schemes are led by IUA as part of its Access Programme, along with a number of other access and widening participation initiatives.

The Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) was established by the Department of Education and Skills in 2016 to support the implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access (NAP). PATH is a funding mechanism supporting the NAP to enable innovative responses to support NAP target groups' participation and retention in higher education. PATH supports priority areas within the National Access Plan as determined by the Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and enables collaborative partnerships with clusters of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This fund is allocated on a competitive basis to the six regional clusters of higher education institutions, which include all publicly funded HEIs.

The second of the PATH strands (PATH 2, also known as the 1916 Bursary Fund) enables the award of bursaries of €5,000 per academic year to 1,200 of the most socio-economically disadvantaged students (a minimum of 200 new bursaries per year) from the NAP target groups accessing higher education for the first time.

### **Role Overview**

The role is funded by the DFHERIS as part of a grant to IUA for the reform of PATH 2 over the period 2021-2024. The role will support all HEIs participating in PATH 2.

The National Path Coordinator will, over the 3 year project timeframe, develop an efficient and effective national application and assessment system for PATH 2 bursaries. Building on existing good practice and in collaboration with key stakeholders including HEIs, SUSI, CAO, IUA, THEA, DFHERIS and the HEA, the coordinator will support the development of pilot initiatives with stakeholders and the full rollout of the system over the subsequent years. The coordinator will also provide support for the ongoing development of the overall PATH programme.

### **Job Specification and Key Responsibilities & Deliverables**

Reporting to the IUA Access Programme Manager and the Access Steering Group for HEIs, and working with the National PATH 2 Implementation Group, the coordinator will deliver and implement a national approach for the application, assessment and awarding of the PATH 2 Bursaries.

The National PATH Coordinator will be responsible for:

- Scoping and developing a project implementation plan for the reform of PATH 2.

- Building on current good practice of Clusters and HEIs, develop a new PATH 2 bursaries central application system for use by applicants in 2023, including all associated online platforms, documentation, processes and facilities. Going forward this should also cater for annual renewal of PATH bursaries.
- Managing the assessment process, screeners, data from third parties, student communication & appeals process, and provide ranked shortlists of eligible qualifying candidates for participating HEIs.
- Managing a communications strategy with PATH 2 applicants and sectoral stakeholders.
- Build and manage the ongoing collaborative relationships with key stakeholders, including HEIs, SUSI, CAO, THEA, IUA, DFHERIS and the HEA.
- Identify options for moving to a national platform, including the investigation of integration within existing application systems.
- Develop an integrated application verification process with robust data-sharing agreements in place with the relevant agencies including SUSI, the CAO and Geo Code.
- Migrating all Clusters into the integrated PATH Bursaries central application system.
- Facilitate the development of more structured engagement and connections between clusters with relevant PATH partners – including DEIS schools, FE Colleges, Local Community Development Communities (LCDCs), community and voluntary groups, existing local initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage and other relevant stakeholders to embed the promotion and applicant support for the PATH Bursaries.
- Undertake any other relevant duties as required.
- Report on progress at agreed intervals to the IUA Access Steering group, and on invitation to the National Access Plan Steering Group.

The role of the National PATH Coordinator will be subject to annual review.

### **Candidate Skills and Attributes**

This is a role which requires strategic leadership, management skills and a hands-on approach to the achievement of results based on the skillset below.

#### Essential:

- A primary degree and at minimum three years' experience of collaborative inter-institutional education projects.
- Demonstrated project and people management skills and experience of working collaboratively.
- Strong IT, organisational, planning and writing skills.
- Possess relevant research, critical thinking and evaluation skills.
- Highly developed communication, negotiation and liaison skills, evidenced by the ability to build productive professional relationships and consensus.
- In-depth knowledge and experience of access and widening participation in higher education.
- Demonstrated ability to operate with tact and diplomacy and to manage competing interests.

#### Desirable:

- Experience of similar complex projects in this or a related field would be an advantage.
- A post-graduate qualification in a relevant area.

### **Contract details**

The position of National PATH Coordinator will ordinarily be based at the IUA (in line with public health guidelines in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic), with some capacity for remote working. It is offered on a 3 year full time contract, and subject to a period of probation and meeting on-going performance requirements. The role will require domestic travel within Ireland on a regular basis. Salary in the region of **€60,000-€65,000** commensurate with experience will be offered. A secondment arrangement for existing public-sector employees may be possible, subject to concluding an appropriate agreement between the IUA and the candidate's current employer.

### **Application Details**

Please forward a detailed but concise CV and cover letter (max 500 words), demonstrating the competencies and experience listed above, by email by **Friday 13 August 2021** to:

[marguerita.lardner@iua.ie](mailto:marguerita.lardner@iua.ie)

Tel. 01 6764948

Subject to panel availability, interviews will be scheduled for the week commencing **30 August 2021**.

Applications submitted by or through third parties, including recruitment agencies, will be rejected.

The IUA is an equal opportunities employer.