University of Edinburgh
Job Description

1. Job Details

Job title: Academic Policy Officer
School/Support Department: Policy and Planning
Line manager: Head of Academic Affairs

2. Job Purpose
Liaison with colleagues across the University to identify, develop and implement fit-for-purpose academic policy and procedures. Support the Head of Academic Affairs in advising senior colleagues on academic policy. Facilitate and support the work of central academic committees.

3. Main Responsibilities

1. Provide support to Head of Academic Affairs in the maintenance, ongoing development and delivery of University academic policies, procedures and guidance.  

2. Provide high quality secretariat service to a number of central academic committees to facilitate their efficient and effective operation.  

3. Monitor Higher Education policy developments in given areas and gather information to brief/advise Head of Academic Affairs and senior colleagues on implications for the University.  

4. Supporting single-issue or ad hoc working groups considering specific academic administration or regulatory matters  

5. Providing administrative support for the effective functioning of the University’s academic processes, such as Teaching Programme Review or academic appeals  

6. Such other responsibilities as may be assigned from time to time.  

4. Planning and Organising

- Plan and prioritise own workload to deliver a range of outputs required quarterly/annually whilst ensuring the ability to respond to ad hoc demands generated primarily by senior management (e.g., Vice-Principal) and which are largely unforeseen and immediate.
- Organisation of committee papers, minutes, etc through provision of professional secretariat service to central academic committees, to meet with centrally defined committee meeting timetable.
- Support to Head of Academic Affairs and Academic Policy Managers in preparation and delivery of University-wide/significant reviews.
5. Problem Solving

- Ensure effective presentation and communication of updated/new policy and procedural issues/solutions
- Research current HE developments and best practice to inform improvements to University academic administration/policy
- Research, analyse and present complex information clearly, and in an understandable format for the target audience, to inform strategic policy discussions
- Proactive in suggesting improvements to current procedures/guidance
- With Head of Academic Affairs, developing and implementing University-wide procedures in specific policy areas, liaising with relevant College, School and senior staff to achieve an agreed outcome.

6. Decision Making

- Formulating and offering clear and practical advice on policy issues
- Exercising judgement in monitoring and briefing/reporting on sectoral developments
- Identifying when changes in policies and practices are needed or desirable.
- With Head of Academic Affairs, determining the content of policy recommendations.
- Deciding when resolution of issues falls within their capabilities and when these should be passed on to other more appropriate colleagues for resolution.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

- Liaising with and persuading relevant academic and administrative colleagues in College Offices and Schools, Registry, and staff in the Policy and Planning unit, in the delivery of advisory and policy-development goals.
- Liaising as appropriate with the convenor of the committee(s) for which the jobholder provides secretariat support; ensuring effective communications with committee members.
- Through/with the Head of Academic Affairs, briefing the Senior Vice-Principal, Vice- Principals, Academic Registrar and other senior managers on academic policy issues.
- Liaising with sabbatical office bearers and members of staff of EUSA as appropriate to maintain and enhance excellent relationships on an ongoing basis
- Developing links with equivalent postholders in other HEIs to exchange ideas on issues of best practice.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job

- At least two years administrative experience either gained within or relevant to the HE sector
- Good conceptual and analytical skills: ability to organise, analyse and present information, verbal and numerical, and to suggest options for action in light of that information
- Good intellectual calibre, evidenced by academic qualifications (a good honours degree) and or equivalent capability demonstrated through career achievement
- Excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to develop effective relationships with staff and external stakeholders, and a collegial and customer-focused approach to the delivery of services
- High levels of oral and written expression, IT literacy, some committee servicing experience
- Good time management skills and the ability to organise a variety of tasks across a broad portfolio and to meet priorities and deadlines agreed with senior staff
- Knowledge of HE regulatory environment
9. Dimensions

- Liaison with a wide range of academic and administrative staff across the University is a key aspect of this role, and there is significant contact through committee work with student representatives.
- Input into academic administration procedures and policies, and the related advisory role, impacts all academic staff and those directly supporting academic administration functions in Schools and colleges, and also directly impacts on the student experience.

10. Job Context and any other relevant information

- Devolution of responsibilities to Colleges and Schools mean that ongoing liaison is crucial to establish common agreed procedures applicable to all.
- The postholder should maintain some basic awareness of general major developments across the University and the sector more generally in relevant areas, so as to inform discussions with the Head of Academic Affairs as to possible positive or negative interactions in relation to the Section’s work.