1. Job Details

Job title: PA to Principal of the University
School/Support Department: Principal's Office
Line manager: Principal

2. Job Purpose

To provide a comprehensive and professional PA/administrative service to the Principal thereby contributing to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the office. To ensure that all duties are carried out with the appropriate degree of tact and confidentiality.

3. Main Responsibilities

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1. To provide a comprehensive administrative/PA service to the Principal in conjunction with other colleagues. To act as “gatekeeper” for the Principal's Office. Prepare correspondence including shorthand and manuscript typing. Also compose letters for the Principal's signature. Management of the Principal's diary, including meetings within and outwith the University and internationally, including booking venues where appropriate and liaising with numerous staff, individuals and dignitaries, both within and outwith the University, who may be required to attend. Supervise one Senior Secretary to ensure an effective and timely service and continuity is provided for the University's Principal.

2. Oversight of the Principal's mail including strictly private and confidential mail and ensuring that all previous relevant correspondence is brought forward and attached. Assessing the relevance of all correspondence for the Principal's Office and distributing, where appropriate, mail to other University colleagues.

3. Organising all of the Principal's travel arrangements within the UK and overseas. This also entails booking accommodation, where necessary and internal city transfers. Liaising with external travel agencies to arrange full personal travel arrangements both nationally and internationally. To ensure the Principal is fully briefed regarding schedules/itineraries etc. Liaise with University chauffeur regarding the Principal's travel requirements. Management of the University chauffeur's diary/travel commitments. Member of Travel Users Group currently negotiating contracts to three outside tenders.

4. Arranging catering for University and private functions hosted by the Principal. Issuing invitations. Liaising with in-house Caterers and external caterers and booking venue and entertainment when appropriate. Ensuring the Principal has a full and comprehensive list of guests for relevant functions and ensuring he has necessary biographical details of guests when necessary.

5. Responsible for office cost centre to ensure budget figures are maintained and reconciling monthly transaction listing.

6. Preparing confidential information and correspondence on instruction from the Principal to activate the annual Professorial Salary Review.

4. Planning and Organising

- Organise paperwork in advance of meetings ensuring that all documents are brought forward at least a week in advance and put into prepared daily folders so that the Principal can access them himself where necessary and instruct the post holder if further information is required.
- Organise internal and external catering for the department, lunches, dinners, buffet suppers and garden parties.
- Organise guests lists, issue invitations and book entertainment where required.
- Organise functions for Vice-Principals and other senior members of staff when the Principal has agreed to act as host. These events can be hosted for anything in excess of 200 guests.
- Plan Principal's travel both within and outwith UK.
- Organise meetings for the Principal when he is visiting overseas so as to allow him not only to attend overseas meetings, but to allow him to meet with alumni and colleagues working in other educational institutions and living broad.
Plan regular meetings with senior colleagues.
Prioritise daily workload of office, which is allocated by the Principal.

5. Problem Solving

- Difficult and sometimes aggressive telephone calls which have to be dealt with courteously and patiently. Complaints about students or staff: take careful note and relay to the Principal or, in his absence, the Senior Vice-Principal or University Secretary, who would decide next course of action. Ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout.
- Scrutinising financial transaction listing errors which require checking carefully, tracking and correcting.
- Providing advance warning to Principal of important and unexpected issues. Identifying misunderstandings which may generate difficult personnel issues.
- Re-arranging appointments in diary at short notice as the Principal can be summoned away at short notice – this requires tact, diplomacy and negotiating skills as the cancelled meetings are often with senior and very busy individuals.
- Miscellaneous calls from members of public and staff on subjects outwith the Principal’s jurisdiction: either pass caller immediately to appropriate member of staff or take details and ask relevant person to return the call.

6. Decision Making

- Fielding telephone calls, dealing with standard enquiries and using judgement and experience to field “unwelcome” calls.
- Agreeing diary dates on behalf of the Principal: negotiating and agreeing appointments with a range of individuals at all levels.
- Sorting and prioritising the Principal’s incoming mail: replying on his behalf to straightforward requests, bringing urgent matters to his immediate attention.
- Authorising the ordering of office equipment and stationery by senior secretary.
- Authorising payments from Office Budget.

7. Key contacts/Relationships

Internal: For the purpose of dealing efficiently and timeously with enquiries, arranging meetings, obtaining and giving information and advice and progressing business and making telephone calls: University staff at all levels from Heads of Colleges/Schools, University Secretary downwards; members of University Court, EUSA staff. Liaising with the Head of Policy and the Principal’s Policy and Executive Officer.

External: For the purposes of dealing with enquiries, arranging meetings and travel, obtaining and giving information and advice and progressing business and making telephone calls: members of the Funding Council, Vice-Chancellors from other UK and foreign Universities, The Chancellor of the University’s Office, The Scottish Executive, The Scottish Parliament, The British Council, Royal Societies, Scottish Enterprise, large companies (i.e. IBM, SUN) Embassies and Consulates, Hotels/Clubs, Caterers, General Public

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job

The post holder should have a high level of administrative, secretarial and interpersonal skills. High level of initiative and personal accountability (much of work carries a high level of confidentiality). A well developed knowledge of the University of Edinburgh structures and systems, ability to take decisions within appropriate context. Knowledge of full range of Microsoft office systems. Sound educational and secretarial background (educated to HND/Degree level) with appropriate skills i.e shorthand 120 wpm (preferred) minimum typing speed of 60 wpm. A minimum of 5 years experience of this type of work is required.

9. Dimensions

- Direct line management/supervisory role to one senior member of secretarial staff.
- Direct supervisory role to the University chauffeur.
- The Principal’s diary is very complex and can be changed very many times in a week requiring negotiation with very many diaries both internally and externally.
- The Principal’s travel within the UK and overseas for Board meetings, conferences and alumni related at least monthly but typically more frequently.
- Incoming emails, correspondence and telephone enquiries are typically well in excess of 100 per day.
- Monitor Office budget - £51K
10. Job Context and any other relevant information

High level of accuracy, confidentiality and integrity in all aspects of the work is necessary. Failure to provide the highest and best possible quality of service can reflect personally on the Principal of the University.

As the Principal of the University is required to be out of office for much of the time, it is vital that the post holder can work efficiently, effectively and with very little supervision.