University of Edinburgh

1. Job Details

Job title: Principal's Policy and Executive Officer
School/Support Department: Policy and Planning
Line manager: Head of Public Policy and Deputy Director of Planning

2. Job Purpose

To provide executive support primarily to the Principal and also to the Senior Vice-Principal; exercises day-to-day oversight of the operations of the Principal's private office and supports the Head of Public Policy & Deputy Director of Planning in monitoring and analysing public policy relevant to the higher education sector.

3. Main Responsibilities

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<td>1.</td>
<td>In consultation with the Head of Public Policy, formulate policy advice and analysis for the Principal, including undertaking background research, in order to ensure the University is informed of the current policy context in which it operates.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Monitor incoming correspondence and e-mail, draft papers and responses on behalf of the Principal and take an oversight of the day-to-day operation of the Principal's private office in order to ensure that all correspondence and enquiries receive a timely and appropriate response.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Organise and support internal events &amp; hospitality relating to the activities of the Principal's Office and support the Principal’s attendance at external events, including the preparation of background information, invitation lists, speeches, presentations and other papers, in order that such events run smoothly, convey key messages and reflect well on the University.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Act as Secretary to University committees (e.g. the University Research Ethics Committee) in order to ensure the effective operation of such bodies.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Provide equivalent support to the Senior Vice-Principal in regard to items 1 and 2 above to enable this post holder to operate effectively.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Undertake project work for the Principal as requested including acting as secretary to ad-hoc working groups and perform other specific tasks in support of the Principal and the Head of Public Policy as appropriate to the seniority of the post and in order to achieve the University’s aims &amp; objectives.</td>
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4. Planning and Organising

- Overall longer-term priorities will be established through weekly meetings with the Principal and the Head of Public Policy
- In consultation with the Head of Public Policy prioritise urgent matters including press enquiries, emerging priorities of the senior management team and individuals contacting the office either in person or by telephone
- Self generation of work in relation to the identification of opportunities to influence public policy in the interests of the University in consultation with the Head of Public Policy
- Prioritise, allocate and co-ordinate the business of the Principal’s Office to tight deadlines
- Plan and prioritise own workload, in consultation with the Head of Public Policy, to deliver range of outputs whilst ensuring the ability to respond to ad hoc demands which are
generated primarily by Senior Management/external stakeholders and are largely unforeseen and immediate.

5. Problem Solving

- Think independently on a daily basis and undertake research to ensure the Principal is adequately briefed
- On occasion, offer advice in the Principal’s stead based on an evaluation of what would best serve the University’s interest (e.g. in relation to press matters)
- Exhibit flexibility and formulate advice on novel or unfamiliar topics relating to any aspect of the University’s operation or the context in which it operates, often at short notice
- Support the Principal and the Head of Public Policy in articulating the University’s public policy interactions in order to achieve a positive context in which the University can operate
- Ensure the smooth-running of events relating to the Principal’s Office, including aspects such as venues, invitees, programme and speakers

6. Decision Making

- Determine the most appropriate response and respondent to mail/e-mail addressed to the Principal
- Decide who to consult on urgent issues in the absence of the Principal and the Head of Public Policy
- Determine the appropriate content for briefing material for the Principal in relation to individual events and engagements
- Identify content and draft text of an appropriate nature and tone when preparing presentations/speeches for the Principal
- Decide on the nature of advice to offer the Principal in relation to a wide range of topics
- Decide when a matter is serious enough to interrupt the Principal and bring it to his attention

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

- The Principal and Senior Vice-Principal to ensure these individuals are effectively supported in carrying out their roles
- Staff across the University, in particular senior staff including Heads of Schools, Colleges and Support Groups and thematic Vice-Principals in order to ensure the effective conduct of the business of the Principal’s Office
- A range of external contacts within the Scottish Executive, Scottish Parliament and other key stakeholder bodies in order support the Principal and the Head of Public Policy in developing a positive context in which the University can operate

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job

The job-holder will require a minimum of two year’s relevant administrative experience (with such experience in a higher education environment being an advantage); excellent analytical skills and very high standards of written and oral expression; strong IT skills including familiarity with e-mail, the internet and word processing packages; the ability to form effective working relationships with staff at all levels and from all backgrounds and to work effectively as part of a team and independently; self confidence, energy and initiative combined with a consultative and collegial style; and a good honours degree (a relevant postgraduate qualification would be advantageous. A demonstrable experience of interest in higher education public policy issues would be considered advantageous.

9. Dimensions
• Day to day oversight of the Principal’s busy private office, including 2 senior clerical staff
• Aspects of the role have the potential to impact on every member of the University’s community of staff and students
• Whilst direct financial authority is small, the job holder is occasionally required to advise in relation to large sums

10. Job Context and any other relevant information

• The job holder is required to understand the full scope and operation of the University and the competing priorities of its various units
• The job holder is required to have a good understanding higher educational and research policy within Scotland and the UK as well as the international context in which the University operates.