University of Edinburgh

Job Description

1 Job details
Job title: College Research Officer
School/Support Department: College of Humanities and Social Science
Line manager: College Registrar

2 Job purpose
To develop and enhance the College’s research culture, profile and funding, by providing administrative and advisory support to the Dean of Research and Directors of Research in the College’s Schools.

3 Main responsibilities
1 To maximise the College’s success in the Research Assessment Exercise in 2008 (RAE2008) by developing and implementing a research strategy for the College and leading preparations for the RAE - **Approx 25%**

2 Liaison with staff in schools – Research Directors and their administrative staff, UoA co-ordinators etc – to develop their understanding of the RAE requirements and to ensure a co-ordinated approach to RAE2008 - **Approx 20%**

3 With the Dean, develop the College’s research culture for 2015 and beyond, by providing expertise and analysis as required, either through formal meetings and preparation of papers, or less formally through liaison with individual staff - **Approx 15%**

4 Lead meetings of relevant school and other staff (e.g. ISG) to share information on issues of concern in build-up to RAE2008, and to develop solutions to those issues - **Approx 15%**

5 Deputise for Dean on occasion at meetings within and beyond the University of Edinburgh, e.g. at Centre for Integrated Healthcare Research, a new research centre covering three universities - **Approx 2%**

6 Manage two research funds and advise staff on applications. The Development Trust Research Fund and Seminar Competition provide seedcorn funding to academic staff to stimulate development of major external grant proposals - **Approx 5%**

7 Liaise with colleagues in ERI and the Knowledge Transfer Office on a regular basis to share information and ensure a co-ordinated approach to development of research support – **Approx 5%**

8 Service relevant committees, primarily College Research Committee and Research Ethics Sub-committee, to ensure development of the College’s research profile and a shared understanding of the issues involved - **Approx 10%**

4 Planning and Organising
This post was created in January 2005 with the specific brief to support the Dean of Research in improving the College’s research profile and culture over the following decade. Shorter term, planning for our submission in RAE2008 is a major focus of activity, with a need to respond promptly and appropriately to the client group, whilst retaining and developing the longer term vision of an increasingly research-active College. Planning is therefore taking
place over an extended time-frame, with a number of crucial interim deadlines which have been externally imposed.

CHSS is the largest and most complex of the University’s three colleges and will be submitting to over 30 Units of Assessment (UoAs) in RAE2008. This compares with 12 UoAs in MVM and 13 in SCE. The breadth of subject areas in HSS and the number of UoAs involved mean that the post-holder needs high level management, analytical and negotiation skills, and the ability to form effective working relationships with a wide range of staff.

Spotting gaps in provision of information, anticipating issues which are likely to worry members of the client group, and proactively working to fill those gaps requires foresight and a self-starting approach, for example by formation and leadership of a network for administrative staff involved in the RAE preparations.

5 Problem solving
The post-holder needs to answer questions from senior academics and others with authority and tact, drawing on an expert knowledge of the relevant guidance and the University’s approach to interpretation of that guidance. Staff may have heard conflicting versions of the information ‘on the grapevine’; the post-holder needs to know or research the correct position, and then communicate that information clearly and with authority.

Data recorded in centrally-held databases may not match that held at school level. The post-holder needs to provide reassurance to staff in schools, and then to liaise with central providers to ensure that disparities between data sources are resolved.

Several schools are cross- or multi-disciplinary, creating the potential for ‘custody disputes’ over individual researchers in RAE submissions. The post-holder needs to be sensitive to these issues, liaising with senior staff in relevant schools and initiating or facilitating meetings to resolve the issues.

6 Decision making
The post-holder works with minimal or no supervision, making all routine decisions. Decisions with major policy implications are discussed with the Dean and/or the College Registrar, and/or taken to the relevant committee for debate.

7 Key contacts/Relationships
The Dean of Research, senior staff in schools – Heads of School, Research Directors, Directors of Research Centres, other academic staff, for purposes mentioned above. Administrative staff in schools, for purposes given above. Staff of other institutions, where collaborative research institutes exist or are being considered. Staff in ERI and the Knowledge Transfer Office, to ensure effective liaison over research support. Colleagues in Planning Section, ISG and other College Offices, to ensure effective liaison over RAE preparation. Staff in Finance Office, to ensure effective management of funds.

8 Knowledge, Skills and Experience needed for the job
Degree plus several years’ relevant experience in university administration. Extensive knowledge of the HE sector and research funding and policy, particularly the RAE. Thorough understanding of the formal and informal structures within University of Edinburgh. Ability to assimilate complex rules and procedures quickly and accurately, and to summarise and disseminate those as need be. Excellent written and oral communication skills. Confidence, authority and tact.

9 Dimensions
Provide a research support function to the College and its 10 schools, and the Dean of Research.
10  **Job context and any other relevant information**
The post-holder is also active in the relevant professional association, developing and delivering staff development for the professional association through one-day events and annual conference sessions, and through publications.