University of Edinburgh

Job Description – HR/CORP/007

1. Job Details
Job title: HR Policy Advisor
School/Support Department: Human Resources
Unit (if applicable): Corporate HR
Line manager: Head of Policy and Staff Relations

2. Job Purpose
To contribute to the development of the University’s reward strategy, core HR policies, and ‘partnership approach’ to staff relations and collective bargaining, in consultation with heads of HR operational functions, to ensure that HR policy, strategy and practice meet the needs of Colleges and Support Groups and are in line with the University’s strategic plan; and to manage projects and processes with a broad HR Corporate context

3. Main Responsibilities

1. Contribute to the development of the University’s reward strategy and supporting systems to meet College and Support Group needs in the future, including managing and carrying out job evaluation and grading processes.  
   Approx. % of time 15

2. Develop modern core, HR policies in response to, and addressing, business needs in Colleges and Support Groups, the University’s strategic objectives and legal compliance requirements; monitoring development in employment legislation, and providing general advice and information on changes (accessing specialist advice from the University’s employment lawyers to assist as needed). 
   Approx. % of time 25

3. Develop and manage the ‘partnership approach’ to staff relations, maintaining, developing and extending links with trade unions (including extending relationships with Colleges and Support Groups); Secretary to Staff Committee and up to four Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committees, which includes planning and agreeing work agenda with Conveners, driving forward work between meetings and managing sensitive communications.
   Approx. % of time 20

4. Manage the processes and provide professional advice to conveners and members on the central stages of academic promotion processes (Secretary to Personal Chairs and Readerships Committees, and Academic Staff Review Board).
   Approx. % of time 10

5. Lead, contribute to, or support, key HR projects to deliver specific objectives and changes to meet the needs of Colleges and Support Groups (for example, leading the current sickness absence and fixed term contracts projects)
   Approx. % of time 25

6. Provide advice and case management support in areas of grievance and discipline (usually at the appeal stage to supplement and support operational HR departments).
   Approx. % of time 5

4. Planning and Organising
Project management on small, medium and significant scale as needed. Planning and organising work in all other areas to meet objectives set in University or HR plans, and/or as agreed with Colleges and Support Groups, analysing risks, co-ordinating staff effort and driving to meet deadlines set by those plans or by Committees – mainly up to a year but sometimes up to 2 years; responding to issues raised in projects and day to day processes over days and weeks.

5. Problem Solving
Complex problems relating to changes in policy or practice need to be solved in careful consultation with key stakeholders (especially senior HR staff in Colleges and Support Groups) and relate to both internal and external changes and to the need to create more flexible and
modern solutions in most areas of HR. Also advises HR colleagues and senior management on complex grading cases and, occasionally, on complex personal cases (eg grievances if involved at appeal stage).

6. Decision Making
The jobholder is expected to take forward areas of work allocated, on his/her own initiative and to identify issues which need to be referred upwards. Much of the work will involve joint policy development or problem solving with senior members of the HR community.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships
Heads of College and Support Group HR functions, Principal and Heads of Colleges (vis a vis academic promotion processes), Committees (including Staff Committee and JCNCs, trade union representatives and officials, UCEA (occasional), colleagues and contacts in other HEIs (occasional). Relationships with support staff whose priorities he/she will need to direct on projects or processes.

7. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job
Professionally qualified in HR, degree level capability, substantial track record in HR which must have included at least 3 years in operational HR middle management level as well as some experience (at least 2 years) in areas of employee relations and policy/solution development. Strong influencing and interpersonal skills, since much of success of the role is derived through the personal and professional authority of the jobholder rather than through hierarchy. Completely up to date with employment law.

8. Dimensions
Supports reward and policy for major organisation with three Colleges and three Support Groups (with varying needs), 7000 staff and three recognised trade unions; staff relations budget of £4500; occasional special budgets for projects (small to medium); up to 8 major university committees (four JCNCs, Staff Committee and academic promotions committees);

10. Job Context and any other relevant information
The University has a devolved HR function in a traditional management context, which means that the jobholder has to operate and influence within a complex matrix of relationships, where the needs and drivers of the Colleges and Support Groups have primacy and solutions have to found which meet the needs of up to six varying business areas in any case. Employee relations are critical and the building of partnership working is a long term investment; in can also be affected by external drivers such as national employment disputes which nevertheless impact locally. There is a large and constantly evolving legal context