University of Edinburgh

1. Job Details

Job title: University Records Manager  
School/Support Department: Policy and Planning  
Line manager: Academic Registrar and Deputy Secretary

2. Job Purpose

Proactively develop and support a culture of high quality records management practice across the University to deliver concomitant organisational benefits. Develop, implement and support systems and practices which facilitate compliance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations and the Data Protection Act (collectively called “information legislation”).

3. Main Responsibilities

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1. Contribute strategically to the initiation, ongoing development and delivery of University information legislation policy to ensure legislative compliance and in support of University Strategic Plan objectives.

2. Oversee the development of the University infrastructure (guidance on legislation and records management practices, training provision, web site and databases) to support University's response to information legislation and to deliver best practice business benefits.

3. Manage/lead the Records Management Section (RMS) staff to ensure that a high quality customer-focused and continually improving service is delivered to the University.

4. Manage the University's response to information legislation requests to ensure that these are dealt with efficiently and effectively in line with the legislation and best practice guidelines.

5. Contribute to the records management profession (within and beyond the HE sector) to ensure that University approaches and practices remain up to date, to influence professional developments, and to enhance the University's reputation.

6. Contribute to the Department-wide work and strategic direction of the senior management team in Policy and Planning, and more broadly to the management of the Student and Academic Services Support Group.

4. Planning and Organising

- All aspects of the Records Management Section’s work:
  - on a 2-3 year cycle, planning the University’s strategic and operational responses to impending legislative change and proactively shaping the strategic direction of the Section
  - on an annual cycle, planning, replanning and project managing the overall portfolio of RMS activity
on a three monthly cycle, reviewing RMS projects, including opportunities for generating income through the provision of external consultancy services

- planning the University's response to developments in information legislation (three years for FOI, typically 12 months for regulations changes)
- Flexibly managing the Section’s response to the most complex individual FOI/DPA requests to tight timescales in a context where legal or reputational penalties could follow from compliance failures.
- allocation/reallocation of staff resources in the Records Management Section, both for strategic organisational developments and in response to ad hoc issues.
- Contributing to strategic and annual planning for the Department as a whole.

5. Problem Solving

- Interpreting highly complex legal/regulatory information legislation issues in a context where the jobholder is the most senior University official with relevant knowledge and experience in information legislation compliance and records management
- ensuring consistency of University approach in a context where detailed responses to information legislation and information requests is generally devolved
- persuading University community to comply with legislation which some staff see as additional bureaucracy competing for scarce resources
- providing support for Section staff on complex issues arising from their duties.
- Developing cost-effective best practice solutions in context where resources provided a very much less than standard for similar-size organisations.

6. Decision Making

- Identifying when changes in University policies and practices are needed or desirable, and initiating action
- determining the content of policy recommendations on issues of strategic importance to the University, and often as the only person understanding underlying legal issues.
- advising on highly complex legal and regulatory issues, including often difficult judgments on contested areas/issues
- balancing Section resources against ad hoc demands, and determining priorities
- appointing support staff in the Section, and acting as a panel member for professional staff in the Section and elsewhere in the Department.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

- Negotiates with, persuades, advises and influences the University Secretary, Academic Registrar, College Registrars and other senior managers on information legislation policy issues, both proactively for future developments and responsively on specific/current issues.
- Negotiates with, persuades, advises and influences FOI Promoters on developments in policy/practice, with a view to introducing/spreading best records management practice within the University.
- Liaison with senior staff of the Scottish Information Commissioner to gather intelligence and to influence policy formulation, decisions etc
- Liaison with information professionals in the HE sector and more generally on issues of best practice, exchange of ideas, and collaborative work to ensure that the University's approach remains 'leading edge'.
- Liaison/negotiation with senior managers and information professionals in the HE sector and more generally to cultivate opportunities for income generation through the provision of consultancy and training services.
• Responding to particularly complex requests, to ensure that inquirers’ needs are met, and that the University’s reputation is not damaged through compliance failure.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job

• At least 10 years professional experience at progressively senior/broader levels
• Ability to think strategically and innovatively, including a demonstrable capacity proactively to identify and respond to relevant issues of both long-term and immediate importance to the University.
• Capacity to formulate and offer clear and practical advice on complex legal and policy issues.
• Broad/deep knowledge and understanding of all aspects of UK information legislation, and of contemporary issues in information legislation policy.
• Ability quickly to acquire knowledge and understanding of academic structures, processes and issues, and their implications for University records management.
• High intellectual calibre, evidenced by academic qualifications (good honours degree and a professional qualification in records management or archive administration) and career achievements.
• Excellent interpersonal skills, including ability to develop effective relationships with staff/external stakeholders, and a customer focused approach to service delivery.
• Very high levels of oral and written expression, and IT literacy, and the ability to work under considerable pressure and to tight deadlines.

9. Dimensions

• The post holder is the most senior University official with relevant knowledge and experience in information legislation compliance and records management.
• Any significant error in the interpretation of legislative obligations could result in legal action, investigation by regulatory bodies or reputational damage for the University.
• This role impacts on all University staff; it involves overseeing policy and procedures, publicising and advising on issues that could affect anyone in the University.
• The University’s Records Management Section is a recognised leader in its field within the HE sector, and has a national reputation within the records management profession, such that other institutions employ the Section’s staff on a consultancy basis, thereby generating income for the department.
• Anyone can make an information request to the University. The University received approximately 130 information requests in 2005, 28 from journalists. It is in the top 3 UK HE institutions ranked by volume of information requests received.

10. Job Context and any other relevant information

• There is a national shortage of professionally qualified records managers.
• The requirements of information legislation are highly complex and affect all aspects of the University’s operations. Information legislation has not been in force for very long, so the interpretation, case law and best practice is still evolving, requiring the job holder to work continuously to keep up-to-date with the current situation and assess its implications for the University.