

Professional Services Re-grading Policy

Introduction

The School is committed to rewarding all employees in a fair, equitable and consistent manner for the work that they are required to undertake by the School. HERA (the Higher Education Role Analysis methodology) provides an objective job evaluation framework within which equitable decisions can be made regarding the grading of roles; HERA therefore helps to support the School in its commitment to equal pay for work of equal value, as encapsulated in the Equality Act 2010.

HERA is the principal job evaluation framework specifically designed for the UK higher education sector, covering professional services, research and teaching roles.

Policy Aims

This policy covers circumstances where a job role has changed or is required to change significantly and the line manager and post's incumbent, both believe that this may have affected the appropriate grading of the role.

Where re-grade requests are made, it is important that these are dealt with in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. This policy sets out the key principles that will guide all re-grade requests, from the considerations required before submitting a case, to the way in which requests will be approached.

Policy Principles

Job not jobholder

Job evaluation is used to assess the requirements of a role and not the individual contribution of an employee. It is recognised that, over time, an individual's particular skills set and contribution can organically change the shape and nature of a role and may legitimately lead to a reconsideration of the grade of the role. However, managers should think carefully about whether there is an ongoing need for a revised role in the team structure, that contributes towards the strategic objectives of the division or department, or whether it is actually a case where an individual's contribution should be recognised via another means (e.g. contribution pay, an additional responsibility allowance etc.). HERA re-grades are not normally an appropriate mechanism through which to respond to an urgent retention issue.

Furthermore, sometimes employees, with their active consent, are given additional duties or responsibilities purely as a development opportunity. It can subsequently be difficult to recognise the tipping point of when a development opportunity becomes an ongoing feature of a job, but this is something managers should be mindful of. Managers and employees are also encouraged to monitor the continuous nature of any explicit developmental opportunities through the Career Development Review process and may want to give this particular attention once a development opportunity has continued beyond a year. HR Partners are available for support to help tease out and resolve these difficult issues.

Substantial and permanent change

Not all changes to a role will lead to re-grade. To warrant consideration for a re-grade, changes should be substantial, permanent and operationally necessary. This would be a change of responsibility level, the addition of further skills or expertise, or an entirely new aspect to the role that involves a different set of skills (e.g. line management being added to a role that previously had none) and not previously

counted in the HERA assessment. HERA does not measure changes in volume or demand, so 'more of the same' will not impact upon a HERA score.

Staff and managers should be aware that, even where a HERA score changes, this does not necessarily mean that the score will cross a points boundary into the next grade. Each salary band covers a range of scores and a job can simply move from being low to high scoring within a single band. Conversely, a role that is already close to a band boundary may be re-graded with relative little change. It is therefore entirely possible that a similar type of change can affect two different roles to a different degree. No one particular task guarantees a particular grade.

Similarly, jobs that may look the same on the surface may be quite different in ways that are not always immediately obvious. Sometimes it may be one quite specific task or responsibility that distinguishes between two roles in different grades that are otherwise reasonably similar. Staff are therefore encouraged to exercise caution when comparing roles across departments and should not assume that they are identical.

Clear, well-evidenced cases

It is acknowledged that it can take time to put together documents for a HERA evaluation, but time spent thinking about what is really required for a role – and how to plainly express it in writing – will pay dividends in terms of both a smooth HERA process and the final usability of a job description that frames the work of one or more employees.

Job descriptions should not be written with the express intent of 'satisfying' HERA. They should be a clear statement of intent about what a job will actually entail. For example, stating that a role involves "communicating complex information to a range of audiences" is far less helpful to an employee than saying "providing regular verbal and written legal updates to both DMT and staff within the division". Managers are strongly encouraged to seek early support from HR Partners and/or Advisers when drafting new or significantly changed job descriptions.

Line managers are also required to submit a Role Review Form that outlines how a role has changed and how the developed role fits into the wider team structure. This information is requested to demonstrate that the new requirements have a considered place within the overall operation of the team, department or division. Furthermore, in the School's commitment to the principle of equal pay, it is important that managers take a step back and consider the impact any individual grading decision may have on the wider team and/or School context, e.g. where a number of roles were previously the same grade, or the same role is held by a number of people, the manager should be confident that raising the grade of one post or individual only can be legitimately justified and that it is the role and not the individual that is being re-graded.

More guidance on the HERA competencies can be found here ([link](#)). Staff and managers are encouraged to focus on the competency areas that are relevant to the role and to demonstrate the way in which the demands of the role have developed. Examples given as illustrations should be representative of the normal demands of the role (which can include infrequent but recurrent events), rather than rare or exceptional circumstances that are not expected to be repeated.

Decisions by panel

Panels will be comprised of members of the HR Division and managers across the School, all of whom will be externally trained in the use of HERA. This recognises

that responsibility for maintaining integrity in the School's grading structure is a School-wide duty, not one that rests solely with HR. Re-grade applications will be submitted to the HERA panel without the name of the individual in order to anonymise the application. However, it is not practical to ensure that all panel members are ignorant of the name of a particular job holder, although it will be incumbent upon panel members to identify any potential conflicts of interest.

The role of the panel is not to scrutinise the job description and/or business case, but to consider all cases in good faith and to make job evaluation decisions based on the evidence in front of them. Where the panel feels that there is a significant issue with the paperwork that makes it difficult to come to a final decision (e.g. two roles are put forward with seemingly overlapping areas of responsibility), the panel may put the evaluation on hold and refer questions back to manager.

Where a role is reviewed and the grade remains unchanged, constructive written feedback will be provided by the panel and the employee and manager will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit the job description and role review form a second time. A newly formed HERA panel will undertake the second review, and the decision of this second panel will be final, with no further submission possible for another 12 months.

Ongoing review

Should roles that have been re-graded subsequently become vacant, managers should review the job description before re-recruiting to the role in order to identify whether the drivers for the higher grade are still in place. Particularly where a role has grown gradually over time, it may well be that the actual future requirements of the role are lesser than before. Managers should not fall into the trap of assuming that a higher grade is always best, as it is important that new employees are recruited to roles where their expectations of the role and the actual demands when in post are a clear match, as well as being appropriate to their skill level.

Annual monitoring

The Human Resources Division will report trend data annually to the Joint Negotiation, Information and Consultation Committee (JNICC), including relevant Equality and Diversity monitoring measures.

Further useful documents:

- Professional services re-grading procedure
- HERA competency guidance
- Job Description template and guidance
- Role Review Form

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