Guidance on HERA and Completing a Job Overview Form

Other relevant documents:

Job Overview Form
Verifiers Guidance

Please note: it is helpful but not necessary to read this before completing a Job Overview Form (JOF); this is intended to be supplementary information that can be read alongside the JOF.
WHAT IS HERA?
HERA is a job evaluation tool used to analyse roles found in Higher Education. It is used to assess the relative value of roles by scoring them against 14 key criteria in a consistent and equitable manner. The total score produced from this determines the grade of the role.

The purpose of this document is to outline the HERA process for Managers and individuals and to provide guidance on completing the Job Overview Form (JOF). The JOF should be used for all grading requests which include new and vacant posts plus instances where an existing role has substantially changed. It is also used to evaluate grades of roles when departments are restructuring.

HOW DOES HERA WORK?
HERA is made up of 14 elements (or Factors). Each element is assessed based on evidence given in the form and ‘scored’ by trained Role Analysts. Information given should cover those activities performed in typical circumstances and situations, not rare or extreme cases or those undertaken through personal interest. The evidence given by the role-holder (RH) or Manager need not cover every single activity or task undertaken but should provide typical and significant examples that represent the role.

Where the form is completed by a RH (usually for regrading requests) or a Manager (usually for new posts), it must be verified by someone who knows the role well and is authorised to verify it. The verifier should confirm that the evidence given is representative and accurate. Verifiers are guided to ensure the content and evidence is accurate and genuinely reflective of the required job content. Verifiers should challenge examples not representative of the role and any evidence that reflects performance of the role rather than duties of the role.

Once the JOF is verified and submitted, together with an organisational structure indicating where the role sits (job titles and grades of existing posts should be included), trained Role Analysts will assess the role in accordance with the HERA methodology. The scores generated are used to determine the grade of the post.

NEW & VACANT ROLES
Managers should complete the JOF and submit to HR for evaluation. For new and replacement posts, this should be done prior to inputting the vacancy into iRecruit.

JOFs are normally evaluated within a 10 working day time period although a further period may be required if a consistency check is required. Managers will be advised of any delay and the likely timescale for completion.

When replacing a ‘like for like’ post, if the role has not been evaluated in the last 3 years, it is good practice to submit a new JOF for evaluation to ensure consistency with other similar roles or new posts across the University.

REGRADING REQUESTS
Individual role holders should complete the JOF in the first instance, discussing the matter with their Manager who will verify the information in the JOF. The outcome of the evaluation will be confirmed back to the Line Manager by HR. If the role has been evaluated as a higher grade, a RG1 form should be completed and submitted to VMG for final approval.
Where a regrading request is approved, the effective date will normally be the date on which the formal regrading request was received by HR. Roles that have been evaluated may not be considered for further evaluation for a minimum of 12 months (unless there have been significant changes as part of a restructure for instance).

It is important to note that any regrading requests must be affordable in the departmental budget. In some cases it may require deferral to the next financial year when a case can be made during the planning round to increase staff budgets.

Individuals should also note that sometimes a role develops as a result of their exceptional performance in the role, resulting in more responsibility/additional duties being given to them. In cases where an increase in grade is not possible (due to budgetary or other factors), it may be the case that these additional duties have to be reviewed to bring it in line with the substantive grade, or that the RH continues with the duties as career development while they seek promoted opportunities elsewhere in the University. A case for accelerated increment or contribution point may be considered appropriate.

**APPEALS**

For regrading requests, the role-holder has the right of appeal against the grading outcome, and this must be done in writing using form RA1 within 14 days of receiving the decision to the Head of Reward and Employee Engagement.

**COMPLETING THE JOB OVERVIEW FORM**

The following sections give more detailed guidance to supplement the questions asked in the Job Overview Form. It can also be helpful to refer to the Level Descriptors for examples of levels of responsibility available on the Reward and Employee Engagement SharePoint site.

The JOF is broken down into 14 elements (or factors) and the questions asked in the form are designed to draw out evidence of what is required of the role holder (RH).

Remember that the main requirements of the role will be analysed, not activities or responsibilities that individuals may have acquired for personal interest or development. Try to think of activities and responsibilities that are typical of the role, not just the most recent, rare or extreme ones. Try to use different examples for each element if possible.

For each element, Role analysts require evidence of the skills used/required, the activities engaged in, the responsibilities held by the role and, if appropriate, the frequency of an activity.
MAIN PURPOSE & KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES
Give a brief summary of the main reason for the roles existence. Describe this as concisely as possible in no more than 2 or 3 sentences. The description should enable the role to be differentiated from other roles.
The key accountabilities or duties should be a series of brief numbered phrases in order of importance.
Both the main purpose and key accountabilities can be used as part of the job description for recruitment purposes.

STRUCTURE CHART
It is essential to include a simple diagram showing the position of the role in the immediate structure. The manager should complete this to include job titles and grades of other roles prior to submission for evaluation.

THE 14 ELEMENTS
1. COMMUNICATION
The questions in the form are designed to ascertain the level and frequency of communication being carried out both orally and in writing.
Communication includes oral, written, electronic or visual communication in both formal and informal situations. Communication includes the need to convey basic factual information clearly and accurately, conveying information in the most appropriate format and explaining complex or detailed specialist information.
You should provide details of who the RH communicates with, how often, eg daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally, and how essential it is to the role and how complex the information being communicated is.
Heriot-Watt University is an international university and it is implicit that colleagues will regularly and frequently communicate with students/staff/visitors for whom English is not the dominant language. Additional credit is only given where a key part of the role is translating significant amounts of text/information into or from another language.
Examples of oral communication might include giving directions to students to help them find their way around the Campus, answering telephone enquiries, explaining procedures/regulations, giving presentations, delivering lectures, attending or chairing meetings or engaging in negotiations.
Examples of the types of written communication might include responding to requests for information, completing forms, drafting letters writing brochures or advertising material, writing instructions/training manual, preparing technical specifications for contracts, writing minutes of meetings (which can have varying degrees of responsibility/complexity) or writing policies or complex reports of a sensitive nature.

It is important to note differences between drafting original content (drawing from other sources or completely original), and using templates that do/don’t require modification, re-presenting information provided by others, or copying information.
2. TEAMWORK & MOTIVATION

This is about team work and team leadership when working in both internal (i.e. within the immediate department or as part of a cross-University team) and external teams (although in many situations external teams or cross University teams may be a ‘Network’ as defined by HERA and therefore come under the next element).

It can include the need to contribute as an active member of the team, motivating others in the team (if it is a core part of the role) and providing leadership and direction for the team or several teams.

You should identify the main team(s) in which the RH is required to work and the role played within that team. For example the RH may be a team leader of a small section within a department, or the Head of a larger department with responsibility for several teams. The team described should be easily identified by the structure chart.

It can be useful to consider the following questions to think about the teams the RH is involved in:

- In which team(s) is the role holder mainly involved?
- What is the function of this team(s) and what are they working to achieve?
- Who is in the team and what is the role holder’s main role in it?
- Who is responsible for setting the direction of the work of the team?
- How are team members encouraged and motivated?

3. LIAISON & NETWORKING

This covers when the RH is required to liaise with others both within and outwith the University and participate in or create networks. This may include passing on information promptly to colleagues, ensuring mutual exchange of information, influencing developments, or building an external reputation.

Information should be given about the type of liaison or network and its purpose. It is important that only those networks that are essential for the role are included, rather than networks which may be helpful but not essential.

It can be useful to consider the following when considering networks and liaison that the RH is involved in:

What information is the RH typically passing or receiving?

- What networks does the RH (if any) belong to? (minute taking is not usually considered being part of a network unless it is a more involved clerking role)
- What is the purpose of the network and what is the role holder’s part in it?

Networks are defined by HERA as an interconnecting group of people, possibly from different work teams or organisations, who exchange information, contacts and experience on a recurrent basis. Virtual or online ‘networks’ do not usually fall under the scope of this
element but are likely to fall under Knowledge & Experience if they are used for CPD purposes or keeping up to date with professional/technical developments. External networks might include professional bodies, national or international groups with shared research interests, regional university groups etc. The RH should be acting as a representative of the University.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY

This element covers the help, assistance and services role-holders are required to provide students, visitors, members of staff and other users of the University. This may include reacting to requests for information or advice, contacting potential customers to let them know about new services, actively offering or promoting the services of the University to others, or setting the overall standards of service offered.

Consider:

- Does the RH actively offer the service or does the customer go to them?
- Is there a standard service which is the same for all customers?
- How does the RH find out what the customer wants?
- Can the RH tailor the service to the customer without authority or approval from a manager or other person?

5. DECISION MAKING PROCESSES & OUTCOMES

This element covers the impact of decisions within the University and externally. It can include decisions that may impact on the RH’s work or team, decisions which impact across the University and decisions that may have significant impact longer term within or outside the University.

It is important to include information relating to the impact any decision made will have on the RH’s School/Department/Team and the University as a whole.

Examples can include:

- deciding when to hold a meeting
- buying non-routine items/stock
- deciding the structure of a course
- annual planning round submissions

Decisions relating to planning and prioritising work are scored under the Planning & Organising element.
6. PLANNING & ORGANISING RESOURCES

Resources can be human, physical or financial. This element can include planning and organising your own work, planning the work of others on day to day tasks, or projects, operational or strategic planning. The skill required for planning and organising effective use of resources is more important than the size or value of them.

Examples can include: working to a set pattern each day, deciding how and when to respond to request for assistance or information, managing and being accountable for a sub-section of a department, planning the budget, or contributing to strategic plans for significant parts of the University.

Consider:

- What does the RH plan and organise?
- How much scope does the RH have to decide how (in what order) and when to organise and carry out their tasks?
- What resources are involved (eg people, equipment, money etc)?
- Who else is involved in creating or working on the plan?
- What is the timescale?
- How does the RH prioritise?
- What may impact on the plan and what else does the RH have to take into account?
- How is progress monitored?

7. INITIATIVE & PROBLEM SOLVING

This element is about identifying and/or developing options and selecting solutions to problems that typically occur in the role. It is useful to consider what options the RH considers and how they select the best course of action. It may be that there is guidance to follow or it is the knowledge and experience that allows problem solving. Sometimes an immediate solution is not always readily identifiable and roles can also require individuals to anticipate problems that could have an impact on the dept/School/University.

It is helpful to indicate if problems recur or if the role is required to deal with unique or rare problems; and whether or not the resolution is obvious or has to be approached in an innovative way. Problems faced in dealing with upset students will normally require a similar approach although the detail of the specific problem can be very different; so generally this type of example would be seen as a common recurring problem – the role holder may have to resolve the problem or refer it to others to resolve.
8. ANALYSIS & RESEARCH

This is when the RH is required to investigate issues, analyse information and carry out research. Often individuals feel this element does not apply to them if they are not engaged in academic research. However most roles will have an element of Analysis & Research and can include researching travel options, analysing spreadsheets, leading investigations into significant matters such as a Grievance or Complaint, or stock taking.

Roles may involve gathering information; manipulating information/data analysing information or a combination of any or all of these. Sometimes this is carried out using reports that are already set up as templates and it is an easier process and sometimes there will not be pre-existing methods and it is more complex to gather, analyse and present the data, drafting the report from scratch.

It is helpful to consider:

- Who sets the task?
- Who else is involved in the analysis and research?
- What data does the RH have available or need to obtain – and how?
- How does the RH choose which method or approach to use?

9. SENSORY & PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Many roles in the University are desk/office based with little sensory or physical demands. However there are roles where different levels of difficulty or level of demand are required.

The demands of the role should form a key part of the job description and normally require formal training/certification in order to carry out the work and to score in this element.

Consider:

- Is any assistance given by others or in the form of special equipment (e.g. PPE)?
- Does the RH work in cramped, confined or difficult spaces or awkward positions? (and if so, indicate frequency/how much time spent in those situations)
- How long did it take to learn or develop the skills and how were they acquired?
- What training/certification/regular CPD is required for the role?

Some example roles that may score here:
- Sports Scientists and fitness instructors;
- Technicians

10. WORK ENVIRONMENT

This explores the impact the working environment has on the RH and their ability to respond to and control that environment safely. Again, many roles in the University are office or lecture theatre based, so have little to consider in the way of work environment and have no responsibility for the health and safety of others beyond due care and diligence. However some roles will have an impact and may include working in excessive temperature, noise or fumes, or working in an outdoor environment which will impact on the score in this element.

Consider:

- Does the RH have to take any special measures to reduce the risk or control the environment before or while working there?
• Who is responsible for controlling the environment and making sure that others working there are not at risk?
• Who is responsible for the health and safety of people working there and decides that it is safe to work? How are such assessments made?

11. PASTORAL CARE & WELFARE

This element is about the RH’s responsibilities for the welfare and wellbeing of students and staff within the University, in both formal and informal situations. RHs may need to be aware of specialist areas/people they can refer individuals to, or advise/guide/counsel themselves.

Sometimes students or staff may approach a particular member of staff due to their interpersonal skills and general approachability. These instances would only be scored if they were an essential requirement of the role.

Consider:

• Is the RH approached by others for help? (bear in mind guidance above in regard to role requirements)
• What are the typical issues or problems?
• What does the RH do and how do they decide to do it?
• Is the RH able to refer the individual to someone else?
• Did the RH have any training in this aspect of the role?
• Is there any guidance material to help?

12. TEAM DEVELOPMENT

This element covers the development of the skills and knowledge of others in the RH’s work team (as defined in Element 2 – Teamwork & Motivation). It may include the induction of new colleagues; coaching and appraising any individuals who are supervised, mentored or managed by the RH, conducting PDRs, and giving guidance or advice to peers or others on specific aspects of the work.

Consider:

• What does the RH instruct, coach or guide others to do?
• How does the RH do this?
• Are there any materials to help?
• Has the RH been trained in this aspect of the role?
• Who identifies the learning needs of the team members and decides whether any one individual should receive training or development?
13. TEACHING & LEARNING SUPPORT

This covers what the RH is required to do to teach or provide learning support to students and others who are not part of the work team. It can include providing instruction to those who are using a particular service or working in a particular area for the first time, conducting short training sessions/workshops, delivering a series of training sessions/workshops, or coaching individuals.

Consider:

- Who does the RH teach, develop or provide support to?
- Who decides the activity’s content?
- Who designs and develops the content?
- Who else is involved in the activity?
- Who decides on the content and how it is delivered?
- How is the effectiveness of the activity assessed?

14. KNOWLEDGE & EXPERIENCE

This last element covers the relevant knowledge and experience needed to carry out the role. It should establish the minimum level of knowledge and experience required of a new person in the role. It is likely to be the same or similar to the essential criteria used in the Person Specification in the further particulars for a new/vacant role. Desirable criteria would not be scored.

Knowledge, qualifications or skills acquired by the RH that are not relevant or are only a desirable requirement of the role should not be included.

Examples can include: supervisory or management skills, holding a special type of driving license (e.g., for driving a tractor), holding a specific level of qualification or relevant experience, having professional knowledge to provide advice to others, being regarded as an authority in the field who is able to challenge/lead thinking or research in their area.

Consider:

- How does the RH apply the knowledge and experience?
- How long did it take to obtain and how did the RH obtain the required knowledge and experience?
- How often does the RH need to update that knowledge?
• Who routinely goes to the RH for advice or guidance?
• What level of knowledge and experience would be required of the replacement if the RH were to leave their role?

**ADDITIONAL TIPS**

It is particularly important when completing the JOF to give actual examples to back up statements. Role Analysts are trained to interpret the examples and will not give a score for a simple statement of fact. For instance if under Communication, the form states that ‘the RH is involved in complex communication requiring high levels of interpersonal skills’, unless there is an example to support that statement, credit cannot be given.

HERA has specific definitions for terms such as ‘complex’, ‘networks’ etc that may not be the common definition used for other purposes so that actual evidence is crucial for analysts.