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Discover excellence like you've never known it before. At ARU, you'll be part of a community that celebrates who you are, champions new ideas, and inspires greatness. Combining individuality with collaboration, you'll be given the tools and support to achieve your aspirations, all whilst making a collective impact on the world around you.

HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES

Job Description

Job Title:	Assistant Director (Policy, Strategy and Strategic Employee Relations)
Grade:	8
Job Family:	Administrative
Work Base:	Chelmsford, Cambridge, or Peterborough, with travel across campuses and/or overseas as required
Hours of Work:	Full time (37 hours per week)
Managed by:	Chief People Officer
Line Manages:	Senior Reward & Recognition Specialist
Relationships and Contacts:	HR Leadership Team, University Executive, Vice Chancellors Group, ARU Senior Leaders, Board of Governors, Trade Unions, External Stakeholders, Networks and Organisations
Job Purpose:	Provide strategic leadership for employment policy, strategic employee relations, governance and workforce frameworks, ensuring legal compliance, effective industrial relations, governance, and operating models that support organisational effectiveness, transformation and the delivery of strategic objectives.

What You'll Be Doing

Lead the development, implementation and continuous review of the University's employment policy framework, ensuring policies, procedures and practices remain legally compliant, strategically aligned and reflective of organisation needs and sector best practice.

Act as an employment law specialist, and provide authoritative advice and guidance on complex employee relations, organisational change, contractual, statutory and regulatory matters across all areas of the University and its subsidiaries.

Maintain expert and current knowledge of employment legislation, case law, higher education and further education sector developments, including pay frameworks, collective bargaining arrangements and workforce trends, translating these into practical organisational approaches and guidance.

Provide strategic oversight of employee relations frameworks, collective agreements and workforce governance arrangements, including recognition agreements, facilities time arrangements, collective consultation processes and relevant negotiating mechanisms including JCNG arrangements.

Alongside the AD (People Partnering, Management Advice & Support), work closely with external legal advisers, commissioning advice where required, managing legal risks and ensuring professional and cost-effective utilisation of external expertise.

Lead the strategic development and oversight of employment contracts, terms and conditions, promotion and progression arrangements, discretionary payment frameworks and associated employment documentation.

Provide strategic leadership for pensions policy and governance, ensuring compliance with relevant regulatory requirements and alignment with organisational workforce objectives, whilst working

collaboratively with specialist pension administrators and providers.

Oversee the University's job evaluation arrangements and governance processes, ensuring consistency, transparency, equality and compliance in role evaluation and grading frameworks.

Lead the preparation, coordination and quality assurance of employment-related papers, reports and recommendations for senior committees e.g. PCEG, UET and FEPG etc, and governing bodies, ensuring compliance with governance requirements, the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Senior Staff Remuneration Code, relevant Further Education governance expectations and other applicable regulatory frameworks.

Provide expert advice and support to senior leaders, the University Executive Team, HR Business Partners and managers on complex, sensitive and high-risk employee relations matters, organisational change programmes and workforce challenges.

Work collaboratively with other Assistant/Deputy Directors and senior stakeholders to design and deliver significant organisational change initiatives, providing project management support, governance coordination, workforce planning advice and frameworks and comprehensive documentation to support successful implementation.

Develop and implement modern, responsive and scalable employment frameworks and operating models that support the University's entrepreneurial ambitions and diverse organisational structures, including Higher Education, Further Education for WUC, ARU London, ARU Peterborough, ARU Direct and other subsidiary entities.

Ensure employment frameworks appropriately reflect differing workforce requirements including multiple terms and conditions, pension arrangements, collective agreements, professional groups, research staff populations and subsidiary-specific operating requirements.

Lead strategic consultation and engagement activity with recognised trade unions and staff representative groups, fostering constructive relationships and supporting effective industrial relations.

Provide expert education, coaching and professional development to HR colleagues and leaders on employment law, employee

relations, organisational change, workforce governance and wider people management practices.

Commission, interpret and present workforce intelligence, legal developments, employee relations data and sector benchmarking information to inform strategic decision-making and organisational planning.

Contribute to institutional strategic planning by identifying employment risks, opportunities and emerging workforce challenges and recommending appropriate interventions.

Promote a culture of continuous improvement, accountability and excellent employee experience through effective governance, policy development and employee relations practice.

Comply with Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR requirements in all working practices maintaining confidentiality, integrity, availability, accuracy, currency and security of information as appropriate. Take personal responsibility for all personal data within own working environment.

Comply with Equity Diversity and Inclusion, Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Sustainability responsibilities as detailed in our policies and procedures.

Such other duties temporarily or on a continuing basis, as may reasonably be required, commensurate with your grade.

This is a description of the job as it is presently constituted. It is normal practice to review periodically job descriptions to ensure that they are relevant to the job currently being performed, and to incorporate any changes which have occurred or are being proposed. The review process is carried out jointly by manager and employee and you are therefore expected to participate fully in such discussions. In all cases, it is our aim to reach agreement to reasonable changes, but where it is not possible to reach agreement, we reserve the right to make reasonable changes to your job description which are commensurate with your grade after consultation with you.

October 2026

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HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES

Assistant Director (Policy, Strategy and Strategic Employee Relations)

Person Specifications

	Essential	Desirable
Academic/ Professional Qualifications	Higher degree plus demonstrable professional experience for the role OR Relevant professional/degree level qualification (Chartered where appropriate) and significant demonstrable professional experience for the role	Postgraduate qualification in Human Resources, Employment Law, Business Administration or related discipline
Experience	Significant experience leading employment policy and employee relations strategy within a complex organisation Experience of advising executive leaders on employment law and workforce governance matters Experience of managing complex, high-risk employee relations cases and organisational change programmes Experience of working with recognised trade unions and collective bargaining structures Experience of drafting high-quality board, committee and governance papers Experience of developing organisational employment frameworks, policies and contractual arrangements Experience of overseeing job evaluation and grading processes	Experience relating to pensions governance and strategy Experience within Higher Education or a similarly regulated, knowledge-based environment

	Essential	Desirable
	Experience of leading cross-functional projects involving multiple stakeholders	
Knowledge/ Skills	Expert knowledge of current and emerging employment law, best practice, employee relations strategy and workforce governance Comprehensive knowledge of employment contracts, collective agreements and workforce governance arrangements Detailed understanding of CUC guidance, senior remuneration governance and wider governance requirements Knowledge of Higher Education and Further Education workforce frameworks and sector developments Strong analytical and strategic thinking capability Excellent report-writing and presentation skills Ability to influence and challenge senior stakeholders constructively Strong project management, planning and organisational skills Ability to manage competing priorities within a complex environment Excellent negotiation, consultation and stakeholder management skills, ability to navigate conflicts towards successful outcomes Ability to interpret legislation, regulation and sector developments into practical organisational solutions Ability to analyse data to inform decision-making and drive strategic initiatives	Understanding of the UK Higher Education sector, its strategic opportunities and challenges, policy landscape, regulatory environment and governance frameworks Knowledge of pension governance frameworks Knowledge of research workforce employment issues and funding-related employment considerations Understanding of subsidiary governance and multi-employer operating models

	Essential	Desirable
	Ability to drive positive change Ability to motivate a team and foster a collaborative and empowering team environment Ability to communicate clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing Ability to navigate complex situations effectively and determine the best course of action	
Personal Attributes	Strategic, commercially aware and solutions focused High levels of professional credibility and judgement. Confident operating in complex and ambiguous environments Resilient and effective under pressure Collaborative and relationship focused Committed to continuous improvement and innovation Highly developed integrity, discretion and professionalism Ability to inspire confidence and provide trusted expert advice Highly motivated and committed to achieving own and shared goals Committed to championing high performance and excellence Adaptability and flexible approach to changing needs	
Other	Flexible and willing to travel to different university sites on a regular basis Commitment to own continuous personal and professional development Committed to our University's values	

	Essential	Desirable
	Compliance to our equity diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, health and safety, and sustainability policies and procedures Compliance to Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR principles/ requirements	