

## Higher Executive Officer (HEO) – Grade Descriptor

### Overview of Roles at this Pay-band Level

- This pay-band includes a wide variety of job types and functions and is the first at which role-holders are required to exercise independent judgement in a truly qualitative or discretionary sense. Role-holders will not be tightly managed and will be required to solve problems and make decisions by assessing information which may be incomplete or inconsistent and may require detailed analysis, evaluation and testing in order to assess its validity. In dealing with problems and issues more discriminating judgements in identifying the best approach or solution will typically be required.
- Roles at this level will often contribute to higher level decision making. This will often involve putting forward recommendations on specific issues through the provision of advice, briefings, presentations or written reports.
- Management responsibilities at this level will vary but may involve large groups, although smaller groups in professional areas will also be common. This is also the first level at which role holders may manage staff who are themselves managers. Project management specialists managing single, defined projects will also feature at this level.
- This level may also include roles responsible for providing professional or specialist operational support and advice across government.

### Key Functions at this Pay-band Level

- **Management & Administration:** managing and co-ordinating discrete areas of operational activity or specialised functions such as finance, HR services, procurement;
- **Professional & Specialist:** approval and regulatory work; design, evaluation and quality control; diagnosis, research, development and testing in technical or specialist areas.

### Key Differences from Roles in the Pay-band Level below

- There is a significant difference between roles at this level and those in the level below. At this level, problems and issues will typically require more in-depth fact finding and analysis to identify the underlying issues and more discriminating judgements in identifying the best approach or solution from a range of options. There is also more emphasis on supporting decision making through the provision of briefings, presentations and the compilation of written reports with appropriate recommendations and a greater requirement to plan ahead and take independent action without recourse to more senior management.

### **Knowledge & Skills**

- Roles at this level will require a full understanding of the detail of the work area as well as a good understanding of its links to other work areas. Most roles will also require a theoretical and applied knowledge of the principles underpinning a particular function acquired through professional and academic qualification and broad practical experience. In this latter respect, that knowledge and experience will need to be applied to a wide range of situations and enable the role-holder to provide advice and training to others.
- Professional roles at this level will require in-depth professional, specialist or technical expertise together with authoritative knowledge of specialist work practices and professional or regulatory guidelines relevant to the work area.

Additionally, analytical skills together with good interpersonal and representational skills are key requirements for these roles. For some roles management skills will also be a requirement.

### **Contacts & Communications**

- Contacts at this level typically require the use of a variety of media and methods to suit a range of internal or external recipients or audiences who may not be familiar with the subject matter or where ideas or concepts need to be conveyed in easily understood language. Communication will often involve putting forward recommendations on specific issues and providing oral advice, briefings, presentations or written reports. In providing that advice and guidance there is often an additional requirement to explain, justify and defend particular courses of action or proposals put forward for consideration.
- Roles at this level will also provide specialist, technical advice and support to staff at all levels and to external stakeholders based on a full

understanding of policies and procedures relating to their area of work activity.

### **Problem Solving**

- At this level problem solving will involve the careful scrutiny or investigation of specific issues including issues where the course of action is not immediately apparent. Available evidence, information or intelligence will rarely be complete or consistent and considering issues will involve the analysis, evaluation and testing of data in order to assess its validity.
- In dealing with problems role-holders will be expected to collect and analyse information from a number of different sources and put forward recommendations on specific issues through the provision of advice, briefings, presentations or written reports. In essence, role-holders will need to exercise a degree of initiative and judgement to determine how best to tackle particular issues and problems. Some problems may involve novel issues which may in turn require more in depth fact-finding and analysis.
- In a management context problem solving may relate to determining relative priorities, dealing with resource constraints, maintaining standards of service delivery, or meeting conflicting work demands. Similarly, individuals will also be called upon to resolve matters referred by more junior staff or others seeking advice and guidance.

### **Decision Making**

- At this level decision making will involve interpreting requirements, proposing solutions and providing advice in relation to a variety of issues. For example, the degree of fact-finding required; how information should be collated and presented and more importantly, what conclusions can be drawn. At this level available evidence, information or intelligence will rarely be complete or consistent and issues, some of which may be occurring for the first time, will often require the use of a range of interpretation, analysis techniques or methods and more discriminating judgements in identifying the best approach or solution typically from a range of options.
- For those roles with management responsibilities individuals will decide on work allocations and monitor outputs. In this latter respect, role-holders will be expected to review and act accordingly to improve service delivery in consultation with senior managers.
- Advisory responsibility is a significant feature of roles at this level. Role-holders will provide specialist, technical advice and recommendations to support informed decision making. In providing that advice and guidance there is often an additional requirement to

explain, justify and defend particular courses of action or proposals put forward for consideration.

- Role-holders at this level will also contribute to short-term projects within the work area or contribute to projects as a member of a wider departmental or government wide project teams.

### **Autonomy**

- Roles at this level will typically be expected to work on their own initiative using their judgement and discretion to interpret requirements within specific policies or guidelines. They will also be expected to resolve work problems independently although more senior staff will usually be available to provide help and support should it be required.
- Role-holders will consult more senior staff or specialist colleagues for advice and guidance on matters that fall outside of those policies or guidelines or agreed plans and objectives.

### **Management of Resources**

- Many roles at this level will carry formal staff management responsibilities for a group of staff. Those management responsibilities will typically focus on diagnosing problems or issues; interpreting operational and service requirements; and identifying and reviewing those requirements to improve service delivery. It will also include resolving matters referred by more junior staff or others seeking advice and guidance.
- Although formal budgetary responsibility is not a feature of roles at this level some roles will have responsibility for approving contracts or procurement orders up to delegated limits.

### **Impact**

- Work at this level will impact on relationships and the delivery of services (internal and external). The efficiency and effectiveness of individual role-holders will impact on the work of the section, team or department particularly in terms of maintaining workflows and ensuring target deadlines are met. Issues and situations are likely to involve a number of variables, cross more than one area and have the potential to impact on other areas of the department as well as externally.

