UNIVERSITY CAREER ARCHITECTURE PROJECT

WRITING A POSITION DESCRIPTION

Introduction

Position descriptions are essential for:

- Organizing work within the unit or department
- Hiring
- Placement of the new position into the Career Architecture
- Defining job duties and required (minimum) and preferred (selection criteria) qualifications
- Creating interview questions
- Discussing work expectations with applicants
- Training and coaching
- Writing performance standards and evaluating performance
- Career Planning and Management
- Determining potential career paths
- Reviewing placement in the career architecture when job duties have changed
- Succession Planning
- Complying with laws (Fair Labor Standards Act, American with Disabilities Act, Pay Equity
- Determining whether eligible for exemption from overtime
- Defining essential functions of the job for American Disability Act purposes
- Comparing this position to other positions in the organization
- Compensation

Since work at the University tends to change over time, position descriptions should be reviewed periodically (for example, during annual performance reviews). A useful tool for developing a greater understanding of an employee's current job duties is the Position Description Template Form.

Position descriptions should reflect a consensus between the supervisor and the employee. If consensus is not possible, however, the supervisor's decision is final.

Following these steps will help ensure consistent and useful descriptions.

- Provide a position summary
- Identify the major job duties and responsibilities
- Describe the level of each work dimension appropriate for the position
- Determine the qualifications required to fill the position
- Determine physical and environmental requirements
- Add additional information about the job

Steps in Writing a Position Description

Once you have thought through the needs of your unit and how the position fits into the mission, you are ready to create a position description. The steps below will help:

1. **Position Summary**

   Describe the Unit and/or Program
   What is the work of the unit? Describe the unit and/or program, its purpose, and how it fits into the University's organization. Information about the unit and/or the program is helpful in connecting the overall objectives for the position with the mission of the unit.

   Provide a Work Summary
   How does this position support the work of the unit? Describe the overall objectives for the position, and then use a few sentences to describe its main responsibilities.

2. **Identify the major job functions**

   List the tasks that will be assigned to the position. Group those that are related.
   Determine a heading that starts with an action verb for each grouping. The headings are the major work functions of the position. Most positions will have four to six major function areas.

   Order the major duties and responsibilities by importance
   This will help determine which major function areas are essential to the job.

   Determine the percent of time spent on each major duty or responsibility (essential function)
   Determine the percentage of time typically spent on each major function area and list it in the description.

   Essential and non-essential functions should be differentiated in the position description. Factors to consider in determining whether a function is essential:

   - Does the job exist to perform this function?
   - How much time is spent performing this function?
   - Can other co-workers do this function if necessary?
   - Would taking the function from the job significantly change the job?
   - Would there be significant consequences if the function were not performed?

3. **Determine the level of work performed in the following work dimensions**

   - **Leadership and Influence:** Scope of management responsibilities and impact with respect to strategy, operations, and people.
   - **Complexity of Work:** Degree and difficulty level of problem solving and innovation required in the job.
   - **Communication:** Scope and nature of internal and external interpersonal contact.
   - **Operational Latitude and Impact**: Extent of oversight for and implications of decision making required of the job.

- **Depth and breadth of knowledge:** Level of expertise required as defined by minimum levels of education and/or work experience.

4. Determine the Qualifications

Required (Minimum) Qualifications:
These describe the minimum level of qualifications needed for an individual to perform the essential functions of the position. They include education, licensure or certification, and any measurable and job-related experience. Required qualifications are used to screen applications for vacant positions.

The Career Architecture provides required qualifications for each University job code. Additional qualifications can be included as long as they are directly related to the job functions. Your unit's employment consultant can assist you in determining, what, if any, additional required qualifications are needed.

List qualifications needed to perform the work. Guidelines to consider include:

- Identify the required and preferred level of education necessary to effectively handle the position's duties and responsibilities.
- Determine if equivalent experience cannot be substituted for the education. This typically applies to positions where licensure or credentialing is required to perform the work. Otherwise, utilize the equivalency grid to determine equivalent years of experience.
- Determine how many years of work-related experience is needed to effectively perform the positions duties and responsibilities beyond education requirements.

Guidelines to consider:
- If the desired position qualifications exceed or are less than the required qualifications listed in the work dimensions for the identified job code please consult with human resources.
- All required qualifications must be measurable and job related; do not include language such as "ability to" or words such as "excellent" or "advanced level" because these cannot be measured; use phrases such as "demonstrated/documented experience" instead.
- University specific experience may be included in the required qualifications if relevant to the essential job functions, but doing so impacts the applicant pool. Consultation is a must with these requirements.

5. Determine Physical and Environmental Requirements

Complete the physical/environmental requirements section. When considering physical requirements, remember that long periods at a computer terminal or standing at a service counter may be physically demanding. It is also important to list any unusual environmental conditions, such as loud noises, cold temperatures, confined spaces, dust, or fumes.

6. Additional Information

Unique aspects of this job description

Disclaimer: "The Employer retains the right to change or assign other duties to this position."