

# JOB DESCRIPTION WRITING GUIDE

This guide provides the basics of writing a job description and covers the following sections of the job description:

- ◆ **Position Details**
- ◆ **Job Duties (“What you do”)**
- ◆ **Performance Standards (“How you do it”)**
- ◆ **Job Factors**

For more comprehensive instruction, the Compensation Department offers Job Description workshops to provide administrators, managers, supervisors, and staff employees with the necessary tools to write effective job descriptions. Please see the Compensation Main page or FSDP page on the Organization Development website for dates and times of the next Job Description Workshop available to you.

## POSITION DETAILS

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This Position Details section contains general information about the job – the current or requested classification, working title, pay range, exemption status, department name and number, position number, percentage of effort, the job description summary, comparable positions, etc.

**Working Title** – The working title for a job should be based upon the main function or role of the job. It is important to stray away from vague and very specific job titles, instead create a working title that appropriately describes both the level of responsibility and role of the job. Here are some examples of good working titles and those that need some improvement:

### Good Working Titles

Program Director  
Administrative Assistant  
Help Desk Support Analyst  
Business Manager

### Working Titles that need improvement

Director of the XYZ Program at the School of AB  
Assistant to the Director of ABC Dept  
Systems Programmer II  
Administrator III

**Job Description Summary** – The job description summary:

- ★ Contains 1 - 3 paragraphs
- ★ Summarizes the main points of the job description which may include key responsibilities, functions, and duties; education and experience requirements; and any other pertinent information (i.e. scheduling requirements, travel, etc)
- ★ Is used in job postings

**Comparable Positions** – Use this section to list any positions in the department that have a similar role or level of responsibility. It is useful to the Compensation Analyst during the classification process and helps to ensure positions are classified consistently.

On the following page, you will find an example of the Position Details section.

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## Position Title

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Job Classification</b> | Administrator I         |
| <b>Hiring Range</b>       | \$20,064.00-\$30,480.00 |
| <b>FLSA Status</b>        | Non-Exempt              |
| <b>Provisional Period</b> | 6 Months                |
| <b>Pay grade level</b>    | 5                       |
| <b>EEO-6 Category</b>     | PR                      |
| <b>Salary Minimum</b>     | \$20,064.00             |
| <b>Salary Midpoint</b>    | \$30,480.00             |
| <b>Salary Maximum</b>     | \$40,896.00             |

## Position Information

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Department</b>  | 99999 – Department Name   |
| <b>Working Title</b>   | Admissions Coordinator  |
| <b>Assignment Category</b>   | Regular, Full-Time  |
| <b>Position number:</b>  | 5557777   |
| <b>Campus</b>  | Oakland   |
| <b>If other campus, please specify</b>   |   |
| <b>Job Type</b>  | Staff   |
| <b>Bargaining Unit</b>   |   |
| <b>Staff Work Months</b>   | 12  |
| <b>Percent of Effort</b> (Use numbers only)  | 100   |
| <b>Job Description Summary</b><br><br>(Note: This summary is the language that will be used in the posting to advertise the position on the OHR Employment Web site)                     | <p>The Admissions Coordinator is responsible for administering the admissions and registration processes and providing administrative support to the Program Director. Administration of the admissions process includes serving as the primary point of contact for potential students, preparing recruitment event materials, processing applications, coordinating the transcript evaluation process, and preparing admissions correspondence. Coordinate the initial registration process for students, review and coordinate the transfer credit evaluation process, post transfer credits, and provide general information to students. Administrative support to the Program Director includes preparing general correspondence, answering phone calls, assisting with meeting preparation, making travel arrangements, etc.</p> <p>A qualified candidate should have one to two years of experience in an academic support or secretarial position, preferably in a University setting. An associate's degree is preferred.</p> |
| <b>Comparable Positions</b><br><br>(If there are any comparable positions within the department, identify these positions by position number and note the similarities and differences.) | #1234567  |

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## JOB DUTIES

The Job Duties section is the foundation of the Job Description. It conveys the complexity, scope, and level of responsibility of a job. Due to the significance of this section, it is important to accurately, concisely, and completely describe the duties and responsibilities of a job.

This section of the Job Description is comprised of three main elements:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Key Accountabilities</b> | The main areas of responsibility within a job, or “buckets of work.” A job description usually contains three to five Key Accountabilities. |
| <b>Duty Statements</b>      | Sentences that provide additional information about the tasks associated with the Key Accountability.                                       |
| <b>Percentage of Time</b>   | Estimates the portion of the job that is spent on a particular Key Accountability.  |

### Job Duties Writing Methods

When the Job Duties are well written and organized, they can accurately convey the complexity, scope, and level of responsibility of a job. To assist in the organization and writing of the Job Duties, two writing methods have been developed:

#### **Method # 1:**

1. Think of the job in terms of its Key Accountabilities, or main responsibilities/functions. Typically, a job will have 3 - 5 major Key Accountabilities. Here are some examples:
  - Budget Management
  - Executive Support
  - Event Coordination
2. After establishing the Key Accountabilities, generate specific job duties associated with each. These are the individual tasks or duties that correspond to the Key Accountability. For example, specific Budget Management duties might include:
  - Prepare budgetary reports
  - Analyze expenditures
  - Monitor levels
3. Condense the specific job duties into two to three concise “Duty Statements,” beginning each statement with an **action verb** (see page 8 for a list).

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## Method # 2:

1. Brainstorm a list of all the duties required to perform the job. These are the individual tasks completed on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis. Below is an example of a task list:
  - Arrange for catering
  - Compose and types correspondence
  - Coordinate logistical support for meetings, seminars, and departmental events
  - Determine and secures the event location
  - Make travel arrangements
  - Monitor levels
  - Prepare budgetary reports
2. Review the list and group the duties based upon the specific functions and responsibilities of the position, also known as Key Accountabilities.
3. Establish the Key Accountabilities. For this group, the Key Accountabilities may include: Event Coordination, Administrative Support, and Budget Administration.
4. Condense the specific job duties into two to three concise “Duty Statements,” beginning each statement with an **action verb** (see page 8 for a list).

Here is an example of a well written and organized Key Accountability Section in a Job Description:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Key Accountability</b> | <b><i>Event Coordination</i></b>   |
| <b>Duty Statements</b>    | Coordinate all Dean’s Office events. This includes securing the event location, scheduling presenters, coordinating the production of event marketing materials and programs, maintaining the RSVP list, and making all catering arrangements. At the event, supervise the event staff and greet the guests. |
| <b>Percentage of Time</b> | <b>15%</b>   |

To summarize, here are some things to remember when completing the Job Duties section of the job description:

- ★ The Job Duties section should contain 3 - 5 Key Accountabilities.
- ★ Title each Key Accountability section to summarize the function / role.
- ★ Include 2 - 3 concise Duty Statements for each Key Accountability. The Duty Statements expand upon that particular area of responsibility as well as the role and complexity of the position.
- ★ Begin Duty Statement with an **action verb** (see page 8 for a list).
- ★ Limit the listing of Duty Statements and Key Accountabilities to what is required to perform the job.
- ★ Do not include duties that are no longer performed or those that may be required in the future.
- ★ Write the duties in terms of what the position requires, **not** based upon the capabilities of any individual.
- ★ Determine an accurate percentage of time the incumbent should spend on that particular Key Accountability over the course of a year

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## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

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The Performance Standards section:

- ★ Conveys the expectations of the job
- ★ Depicts the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be successful in the job
- ★ Provides a basis for measuring performance

This section is typically completed by either the supervisor, hiring manager, or designated administrator in the department. There is a Performance Standards section associated with each Key Accountability which provides information about the performance expectations of that particular area of responsibility. Here is an example of a Performance Standard for the “Event Coordination” example in the Job Content Section:

| <b>Key Accountability</b>    | <b><i>Event Coordination</i></b>   |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Duty Statements</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Coordinate departmental and programmatic events</li><li>▪ Secure the location</li><li>▪ Schedule presenters</li><li>▪ Make travel arrangements</li><li>▪ Coordinate the production of program / event marketing materials</li><li>▪ Maintain RSVP list</li><li>▪ Make arrangements for catering and any necessary equipment</li><li>▪ Staff the event</li></ul>  |
| <b>Performance Standards</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Event Coordination activities are expected to be carried out with minor supervision.</li><li>▪ Must be capable of setting priorities and working under pressure</li><li>▪ Must be able to multi-task, planning several events simultaneously</li><li>▪ Ability to work well with internal and external participants is essential</li><li>▪ Knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite is imperative</li></ul> |

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## JOB FACTORS

The **Job Factors** section of the job description outlines the knowledge and skills required to successfully function in the job. The Job Factors cover a variety of areas pertaining to the job, for example, the level of education/experience required, supervision received, and analytical skills and ability required for the job.

The assignment of Job Factors should be completed by the supervisor, hiring manager, or departmental administrator, and, should be reflective of the general responsibility level of that position. For example, an employee in an Administrator I classification would not be expected to be responsible for interviewing, selecting and hiring someone into an Administrator IV position, but may be responsible for interviewing, selecting and hiring a student worker. It is important to remember to include only information that pertains to the position and **not** specific to the skills, experience, and education of the incumbent. The following are all the Job Factors listed in a job description and examples of responses:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Minimum Education Level Required</b>  | Baccalaureate   |
| <b>The minimum experience level required</b><br>(All qualifications listed <b>must</b> be job related.)  | Three years of relevant administrative, marketing and/or event planning experience is preferred.  |
| <b>The amount of supervision received by the employee</b><br>(What is the job classification and working title of the supervisor? How, and to what extent, is the employee's work checked? Note the distinction between initial or special training and ongoing supervision.)  | The incumbent reports to the Assistant Director. After initial orientation, the incumbent will be given general direction from the Assistant Director, but is expected to perform duties and responsibilities independently.  |
| <b>The analytical skill required</b><br>(What is the complexity or standardization of the tasks which are performed?)  | The job requires excellent analytical and communication skills as statistical and financial reporting is an essential element to this position.   |
| <b>BOTH the level and budget volume (Dollar Amount) of financial responsibility/accountability</b><br>(What is the extent of the employee's responsibility for calculating and verifying figures; gathering data; typing requisitions or budget documents; monitoring or analyzing expenditures; preparing reports; approving purchases; planning and authorizing department or grant budgets, etc?) | The incumbent is responsible for managing event budgets. This includes collaborating on budget development, monitoring and approving budgetary expenditures, and analyzing statistical and financial reports. The budget for a single event can range from \$5,000 - \$50,000.  |
| <b>The impact of actions carried by this position</b><br>(What are the probable results of inadvertent error or mistake in judgment, interpretation, or exercise of responsibility?)   | Poorly executed events could result in a negative image for the School and the University or potentially lose funding opportunities.  |
| <b>BOTH the diversity and complexity of the supervision exercised</b><br>(List the job classification and working titles of those directly trained and/or supervised by this person).  | This position is not responsible for supervising any staff positions.   |
| <b>The scope of the human resources impact of this position</b><br>(Explain supervisory role in hiring, firing, promoting, evaluating, increasing salaries, etc. of other employees. Does the position carry "lead" responsibility? Explain how, and to what extent, the work of others is checked by the employee.)   | Occasionally responsible for interviewing prospective candidates and providing input into the hiring process.   |
| <b>BOTH the level and nature of the INTERNAL contacts</b><br>(What, if any, University departments does the incumbent contact. Why are these contacts made and how frequently are they made?)  | The incumbent has regular contact with senior level University staff and faculty, such as Deans, Directors, Senior Administrators, etc. In addition, the incumbent maintains contact with several areas across the University including University Marketing Communications, Institutional Advancement, the Special Events Office, etc. |
| <b>BOTH the level and nature of the EXTERNAL contacts</b>  | External contacts include staff members at other colleges and universities, government and industry representatives.  |

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## JOB DESCRIPTION DOS AND DON'TS

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Before writing a job description, here are some helpful hints to consider:

### **DO:**

- Refer to the Job Description Writing Guide
- Attend a Job Description Workshop
- Use a factual and impersonal style when writing the job description
- Base the job description on the department's needs
- Write an accurate, concise, and complete job description
- Use complete sentences
- Keep sentence structure as simple as possible, omitting unnecessary words that do not contribute pertinent information.
- Begin each duty/task with an **action verb** (see page 8 for a list).
- Be consistent when using terms like “may” and “occasionally.” (These should be used to describe tasks that are performed once in a while, or tasks that only some employees perform.)
- Refer to job titles rather than incumbents, i.e., “Reports to \_\_\_\_\_ Manager” instead of “Reports to Mary Smith.”
- Be precise. This is critical for accurate job evaluation and analysis.
- Focus on critical activities.
- Use a logical sequence in describing duties and responsibilities (Key Responsibility first, followed by the corresponding duties)
- Call your Compensation Analyst for guidance

### **DON'T:**

- Use the narrative form when writing a job description
- Base the content of the job description on the capabilities, skills, and interests of the incumbent
- Write the job description based upon the desired job classification
- Write the job description as step by step guide on how to do the job
- Include minor or occasional tasks, which are not unique to a specific job.

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## ACTION VERBS

|             |             |             |             |              |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| accommodate | communicate | draft       | interface   | recruit      |
| achieve     | compile     | edit        | interpret   | reduce       |
| acquire     | complete    | eliminate   | interview   | regulate     |
| address     | compose     | enforce     | investigate | report       |
| adjust      | compute     | establish   | issue       | research     |
| administer  | conduct     | evaluate    | lift        | resolve      |
| advise      | confer      | execute     | maintain    | review       |
| allocate    | consolidate | expand      | manage      | schedule     |
| analyze     | construct   | explore     | monitor     | search       |
| apply       | consult     | facilitate  | motivate    | select       |
| appoint     | control     | formulate   | negotiate   | solve        |
| approve     | coordinate  | furnish     | observe     | specify      |
| arrange     | correspond  | generate    | operate     | strategize   |
| assess      | counsel     | guide       | organize    | streamline   |
| assign      | create      | handle      | participate | strengthen   |
| assist      | customize   | hire        | perform     | summarize    |
| audit       | delegate    | identify    | plan        | support      |
| augment     | deliver     | illustrate  | predict     | teach        |
| authorize   | demonstrate | implement   | prepare     | train        |
| budget      | design      | improve     | present     | translate    |
| calculate   | develop     | improvise   | process     | troubleshoot |
| circulate   | devise      | incorporate | program     | update       |
| clarify     | direct      | increase    | provide     | validate     |
| clear       | disseminate | inform      | quantify    | verify       |
| collaborate | distinguish | initiate    | recognize   |              |
| collect     | distribute  | instruct    | recommend   |              |
| combine     | document    | interact    | record      |              |