

Position Description Development Guide

Position descriptions are important tools that can help manage employees' performance and set expectations. Use the following guide to help develop position descriptions. Managers will work with their HR Liaison to develop a position description. They will discuss the vision for the organization/department and will develop an organizational chart.

Which Method

There are several approaches to crafting position descriptions. You may choose any of the following methods:

- A manager can talk with an employee about their work, soliciting their input to incorporate into the manager's ideas about how to describe the position
- The employee can be asked to develop their own position description and then discuss the draft with the manager combining the manager's ideas with the employee's
- The manager can draft the description and then discuss it with the employee to ensure the expectations and standards for the position are understood

Think Structurally

It's important to think about the position structurally, rather than describing the unique qualities of the individual currently holding the position. The job description is not an all-inclusive list of duties performed, but rather a reflection of typical work accomplished in that position. Try the following tactics:

- Think broadly in terms of outcomes, responsibilities and accountabilities, rather than simply listing tasks and duties
- Cluster responsibilities into broad functions, such as project management, customer contact, supervisory responsibilities, etc.
- Typically a job will have 3 – 5 main responsibilities/functions
- List activities or tasks for each broad function or responsibility

How to Write It

Position descriptions will be used to monitor and evaluate, as well as to provide orientation and training, write them with action verbs. Focus on the job not the incumbent. You should do the following:

- Begin each task-oriented sentence with an action verb (i.e., analyzes, coordinates, plans). A list of sample action verbs is available at the conclusion of this guide.

- Be as specific as possible when describing tasks and responsibilities, using the following right and wrong examples for guidance:
 - Wrong: “Be professional”
 - Right: “Observes work rules and practices as has been described concerning punctuality and breaks.”
 - Wrong: “Provides good customer service”
 - Right: “Answers the phone in a courteous manner”
 - Wrong: “Handles projects”
 - Right: “Prioritizes project deadlines using available resources and manages the work of student workers as necessary”

Keep position descriptions current. Position descriptions are constantly evolving and subject to change. Review them at least once a year during performance evaluation time and if there have been significant changes, you may need to incorporate those changes into the position description. Submit any changed position descriptions to Human Resources for the file or possible review based on the extent of the changes.

Action Verbs

Accumulates		
Achieves	Determines	
Advises	Develops	Inspects
Analyzes	Dictates	Issues
Answers	Directs	
Appraises	Distributes	Keeps
Approves		
Ascertains	Ensures	Limits
Assesses	Establishes	
Assigns	Evaluates	Maintains
Assists	Examines	Manages
Assures		Meets
Authorizes	Follows up	Motivates
	Forecasts	
Budgets	Formulates	Oversees
	Fulfills	
Checks	Furnishes	Participates
Collaborates		Performs
Compiles	Gathers	Plans
Completes	Gives	Prepares
Conducts		Presents
Consults	Helps	Processes
Contacts	Hires	Produces
Contributes		Proposes
Controls	Identifies	Provides
Coordinates	Implements	
Counsels	Improves	Receives
	Informs	Recruits
Designs	Inputs	Recommends
	Interviews	Rejects

Reports
Represents
Requires
Responds
Reviews

Serves
Services
Sets
Specifies
Standardizes
Stores
Structures
Studies
Submits
Supervises
Supplies
Surveys

Takes
Trains

Undertakes
Upholds

Verifies

Works
Writes