

# Writing

# Position Descriptions

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*Office of* **HUMAN  
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## **Workshop Objectives**

*By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:*

- ✓ Explain the function of position descriptions.
- ✓ Develop all segments of a position description, including: function statement, essential duties, and minimum qualifications.
- ✓ Create appropriate working titles.
- ✓ Develop and use target hiring ranges.

## **Workshop Agenda**

- Overview of position descriptions
- Steps in writing a position description
  - ◆ Function statements
  - ◆ Summary of duties
  - ◆ Essential job duties
  - ◆ Minimum qualifications for employment
- Working titles
- Activity
- Target hiring ranges
- Wrap up and evaluation

## **Position Descriptions**

Position descriptions are an important part of many Human Resources functions. They serve multiple purposes for an organization, including:

- ✓ ***Recruitment and placement*** - A properly written position description will attract the most suitable candidates for the position. It provides a guide to supervisors during recruitment and selection.
- ✓ ***Market data*** - Information needed to match OSU jobs to jobs outside of OSU comes from position descriptions. This market data is needed to determine the market value of a position that feeds into decisions about target hiring salary ranges.
- ✓ ***Orientation of new employees*** - New employees use position descriptions to understand their new duties and responsibilities.
- ✓ ***Self assessment and development*** - Employees use position descriptions to analyze talents and capabilities and compare them against duties and responsibilities.
- ✓ ***Performance management*** - Supervisors use position descriptions to establish appropriate expectations. In addition, supervisors can compare an employee's capabilities against a position description to determine the appropriateness of job fit and possible career advancement.
- ✓ ***Dispute resolution*** - Effective position descriptions describe expected duties and responsibilities. This documentation is vital to successful resolution of disputes.
- ✓ ***External Legal disputes*** – Accurate position descriptions are vital to resolving Ohio Civil Rights Commission charges, State Personnel Board of Review appeals and ADA disputes.

## **Writing/Updating Position Descriptions**

Position descriptions are written for new jobs, prior to the beginning of the recruitment process. At this point in time, the position description is used to:

- ✓ Classify the job
- ✓ Develop a job posting
- ✓ Establish selection criteria
- ✓ Inform candidates of duties and responsibilities

Position descriptions should also be reviewed and updated annually, or more regularly if:

- ✓ The job is vacant and will be filled
- ✓ The job duties, including essential functions, have changed significantly

## **Steps in Writing a Position Description**

It is recommended that you create the position description in Microsoft *Word*, and then copy and paste into HRIS

Each of the overview steps listed below is explained in greater detail on the following pages. The steps are:

1. Develop the function statement
2. List the essential job duties
3. Organize the essential job duties
  - Create four-five major categories
  - Rank the major categories into relative order of importance
  - Assign percentages of time spent in each major category
4. Determine the minimum qualifications and physical requirements of the job
5. Enter all of the above information into the position description format in HRIS\*

\*For help with entering data into HRIS, please refer to the Human Resources A.S.S.I.S.T. pages at <https://ereports.osu.edu/assistr/WebHelp/assistr.htm>.

## **Function Statements**

The function statement tells why and where the position exists. Core elements include:

- ✓ Objective of the job - the purpose of the job.
- ✓ Scope/relative impact – two concepts are related to “scope.”
  - Level of independent judgement – how often is the individual allowed to make decisions without checking with their supervisor or another individual.
  - Consequences or implications of the actions they take or mistakes they make. The more complex and far-reaching the consequences, the higher the scope or impact of the position.
- ✓ Contextual information - important facts about the job context that describe to the candidate what the job is like. Examples: the position functions as part of a team or independently; there is a budget of \$2 or \$2 million to administer; the position supports one person or 100 people.
- ✓ Exercises supervision of projects and/or people or none at all.
- ✓ HR/fiscal role/responsibility - level of responsibility, accountability and dollars managed.

### **Examples of Function Statements:**

*Office Associate:* Provides administrative secretarial support to Chief, Division of Transplantation.

*Program Coordinator:* Provides leadership to a University College staff in identifying and addressing needs of the students who are not making academic progress in a degree program, have been rejected from a selective admissions program or need assistance with selecting academic and career alternatives; oversees career exploration services; develops Alternative Advising course.

*Systems Developer/Engineer:* Provides for and supports design, selection, specification development, and maintenance of computer and technology based systems; creates original design work for classroom renovation and construction projects; creates original design work for in-house design and builds electronic systems projects.

## **Summary of Duties**

This section is an overview or snapshot of the job duties and responsibilities. It should:

- ✓ Be brief;
- ✓ Include key duties and responsibilities; and
- ✓ Not be repetitive of the function statement.

## **Examples of Summary of Duties:**

*Office Associate:* Performs administrative secretarial duties; answers phones, screens and routes calls; schedule appointments and maintains calendar; coordinates travel; plans meetings and conferences; arranges catering, equipment and rooms; purchases supplies and equipment; assists Program Manager with daily operation of division; assists with special programs and projects as assigned.

*Program Coordinator:* Coordinates Alternatives Advising Program in University College; creates and maintains materials for alternative advising activities; monitors academic progress of students and advises on matters affecting progress; oversees full time staff, graduate students and practicum students working within the program; provides academic counseling for students needing alternative advising; initiates and conducts workshops with special groups of students; develops career planning materials; serves as liaison to advisors in other areas of the college and with degree granting units across the University as appropriate.

*Systems Developer/Engineer:* Designs work to include high technology audio-visual systems, lighting and systems remote control, computer based media retrieval systems, baseband, broadband, and high resolution video and audio distribution systems, and data network infrastructure; assists in the selection and utilization of acoustical treatments in assigned spaces and other University offices with preparation of original design work and review comments; serves as technical consultant to various campus areas; assists manager in day to day operational activities as required; operates and maintains CAD documentation areas; attends planning meetings.

## **Essential Job Duties**

The purpose of this section is to describe the range of tasks incumbents must complete and how they will be completed in order to satisfy the function statement. The duties are organized into four-five major categories and listed in order of importance. A percent of time is then assigned to each category of duties.

### **Examples of Job Duties:**

#### *Office Associate:*

- 35%      Answers phones, screens and routes calls; schedules appointments and maintains calendar; serves as liaison; manages mail, documentation and correspondence; organizes and maintains filing system.
- 30%      Composes letters; prepares typed correspondence, business documents, statistical reports, reviews, miscellaneous reports, and other medical/administrative documentation.
- 20%      Schedules meetings and conferences; coordinates catering, equipment and rooms; creates slides and assists in presentation preparation.
- 15%      Assists with special programs and projects as assigned; purchases supplies and equipment; attends meetings as needed; provides coverage for other support staff when needed.

#### *Systems Developer/Engineer:*

- 60%      Responsible for the original design, installation coordination and overall system integrity of high-technology video, data, remote control and sound reinforcement systems as designed.
- 30%      Serves as technical consultant to the University Architects Office, Associate Architect and Engineering Firms during classroom/facility planning and design phase of assigned projects.
- 10%      Assists Manager with generation of area reports as required. Performs other related duties as requested.

## **Examples of Job Duties Continued**

*Program Coordinator:*

- 50% Provides leadership to college staff in identifying students in need of Alternative Advising; coordinates Alternative Advising program; creates and maintains materials for Alternative advising activities; monitors student progress; hires, trains and evaluates professional and support staff in the program.
  
- 20% Acts as liaison to college advising units in selection of students to the program; coordinates activities in Career Resource Area; organizes and conducts orientation to the computerized career exploration courses and compiles reports on use; develops other career planning materials.
  
- 10% Develops and oversees Alternatives Advising course; initiates and conducts workshops with special groups of students, administers and interprets self-assessment instruments; participates in orientation program as assigned; teaches career advising course on occasion.
  
- 10% Conducts research and evaluation studies; writes administrative reports; assists with new advisor training; serves on college committees as assigned.
  
- 10% Represents college and prepares special projects as requested by the Dean; performs miscellaneous duties as assigned.

## **Minimum Qualifications for Employment**

The purpose of this section is to describe the qualifications necessary to consider a candidate for this position. The qualifications describe the knowledge, skills and abilities the incumbent must have at the time of hire in order to be able to do the job at a satisfactory level. Guidelines to follow when listing qualifications include:

- ✓ Do ask for skills and experiences that ***cannot*** be learned on the job.
- ✓ Do not ***require*** something that ***can*** be learned on the job. For example: ask for spreadsheet experience rather than experience with Microsoft *Excel*.
- ✓ List additional requirements in the "Experience (Required/Desired)" free form box.
- ✓ Use the following wording to indicate the number of years of experience:
  - ***Experience***, rather than 1-3 years experience
  - ***Considerable experience***, rather than 3-5 years experience
  - ***Extensive experience***, rather than 5 or more years experience
- ✓ Include unusual working conditions such as work hours, exposure to elements (e.g., heat, dust and heights), etc.
- ✓ Include ongoing training and development needed to remain in classification after employment. This information includes any certifications, licenses, or additional training an employee must have in order to perform the responsibilities of the job.
- ✓ Include physical requirements such as moves 30lb boxes from warehouse shelves or ability to transfer patient to and from bed or wheelchair.
- ✓ Spell out abbreviated words and acronyms the first time they are used.

## **Minimum Qualifications for Employment Continued**

**NOTE -- AFTER THE POSITION HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND CLASSIFIED:**

List the same minimum experience and educational requirements for positions within the same classification. Desired requirements may vary.

For all Classified Civil Service positions, "Per Classified Civil Service Specs" is always used. Leave "or equivalent edu/exp" box un-checked.

### **Examples of Minimum Qualifications**

#### *Office Associate:*

Experience: Administrative secretarial experience desired; working knowledge of word processing, spreadsheet and presentation programs desired.

Technologies/Skills: Typing experience.

#### *Program Coordinator:*

Experience: experience in program planning and administration; experience in academic advising at the college level desired; college teaching experience desired.

Technologies/Skills: Computer literacy, administration experience.

#### *Systems Developer/Engineer:*

Experience: Previous customer service experience desired; previous electronic/electro-mechanical design and trouble shooting experience desired.

Technologies/Skills: Programming experience, customer service experience, computer aided design experience.

## **Working Titles**

The employing unit determines working titles. Titles define a person's role and responsibilities, appear on business cards, resumes and job applications. They can send a powerful message, impact interactions with others and provide an identity. Before developing working titles, consider what message you want to send. Do you want the titles to create or eliminate levels; be general or more descriptive; create or minimize individual status?

When establishing Working Titles, remember the following:

- ✓ Keep titles short (usually one to three words). HRIS can contain no more than 30 characters per title. Abbreviations may be necessary. Characters include spaces. Semicolons should not be use. The system will read the words between the semicolons as two different fields.
- ✓ Avoid use of numbered rankings (e.g. 1, 2, and 3).
- ✓ Avoid titles so specific that they must be changed each time job duties change.
- ✓ Avoid working titles that are identical to existing classification titles.
- ✓ The titles should be meaningful to the workgroup and the individual.

### **Examples of Working Titles:**

Office Associate ~ Medical Secretary  
Systems Developer/Engineer ~ Design Engineer  
Program Coordinator ~ Transportation Planner

## **Target Hiring Ranges**

A target hiring range is the range of pay that the employing unit is willing to pay for a particular job. Decisions regarding the target hiring range are part of the pre-employment planning process. The purposes of a target hiring range are:

- ✓ Narrows the applicant pool to those persons most likely to accept the offered salary.
- ✓ Eases salary negotiations since the candidate entered the selection process knowing what the department would pay.
- ✓ Assists staff and departments in determining whether the job is an upward, lateral or downward move for the candidates that apply.

When establishing a target hiring range, consider:

- ✓ Level of experience desired in candidates;
- ✓ Past practices, and successes and challenges of past recruitment efforts;
- ✓ Balancing funding and budget restrictions with recruiting needs;
- ✓ Issues of internal equity/compression relating to current staff; and
- ✓ Tracking results to assist with future decisions.

The spread for a target hiring range should be \$3,000 to \$5000, and no more than \$8,000.

The decision-making process you use to decide what the target hiring range will be should include gathering and evaluating comparative data and determining local value.

### **Gather and Evaluate Comparative Data**

The most relevant comparative data are internal salary data for employees in comparable positions within the university and the unit and external salary data for comparable positions. Based upon the information collected a potential salary range should be identified. No matter how similar, it is rare that any two jobs, internal or external, are exactly the same.

### **Determine Local Value**

After gathering and evaluating comparative data, determine local value. All factors listed below could lower or raise the level of recommended salary range for a position as determined when collecting comparative data. A narrowed range of potential salary should result. This process will help filter the data. It will also provide information regarding the competitiveness needed to hire or retain staff.

Availability of unit funding for pay action - If funds are limited, data may be needed to increase funding, based on the following factors:

1. Degree of competition in the labor market - If the supply is scarce or the market is competitive, then paying at or above the market may be needed to attract a qualified candidate.
  
2. Degree of impact on the unit mission and goal - The importance of the position in attaining goals of the unit, the importance of providing services and products of the unit and impact of decisions and independent actions are all considered in the degree of impact. Low impact would warrant a lesser amount of pay. Significant impact would warrant a larger amount of pay.

# Resources

The information presented in the Writing Position Descriptions workshop emerges from a variety of materials produced by the Office of Human Resources and other sources. Listed below are some additional sources of information to consider when writing position descriptions and entering them into the Human Resource system.



## OHR sources of information:

- University Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual (Policies 3.10 & 4.10)
- University Rules for the Classified Civil Service
- HR Assist Pages (<http://www.oit.ohio-state.edu/hrfin/assist.html>)
- Compensation Handbook (OHR)
- Internal Management Information and Analysis Reporting (MIAR) Salary Data (<http://hr.osu.edu/miar/sim/simmenu.htm>)
- OHR Consulting Services

## College/Vice Presidential Unit/Department sources of information:

- Human Resource Professional
- Documented unit and/or departmental mission/vision statement
- College/unit/department human resources policies and procedures