

# University of Richmond

## Instructions for Writing Position Descriptions

The following format should be used to develop a position description. This format, revised in March 2008, replaces all previous position description formats. You can find a copy of this format on the HR Web Site.

The position description should accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities of the position. A well written position description produces a mental picture of a job and eliminates the question, "but what does the person in this position actually do?" Position descriptions reflect a position's assigned duties as they exist today and not as they may be in six months. The position description provides the information necessary to classify the position.

Position descriptions should be "incumbent neutral" and not based on any quality of an incumbent (knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, dedication, loyalty, years of service, degree, etc.)

### **Position Description Header:**

- Position Title:** Identify a title that appropriately describes the major function of the position (30 characters or less preferred). If the title includes a commonly used term such as Manager, Director, Supervisor, Vice-President, etc., place that word at the beginning of the title. (Example: Vice President, Human Resource Services.)
- Department:** This is the major division/department in which the position resides or is budgeted and may include an additional identified area within the division/department for more precise identification. (Example: University Facilities/Landscaping)
- Reports To: (Title)** Provide the title of the position that the position reports to. Do not list the name of the individual. (Example: Chair, English Department, Controller, etc.)
- Position Number:** If this is an existing position, provide the position number. Leave blank for new positions.
- Pay Grade:** Current grade of the position if previously classified. Leave blank if this is a new position.
- Date Revised:** Provide the date the position description was written or updated. Use the 06-13-07 date format.
- FLSA Status:** Leave blank. HR will make the determination as to the exempt/non-exempt status.

### **Hints for Writing Position Descriptions**

The fundamental purpose of the position description is to describe the work assigned to a position. It should clearly state the Job Duties/Responsibilities that go together to make up a job.

Here are some hints that will make writing positions descriptions a bit easier:

- Write in a concise, direct style.
- Always use the simpler word rather than the complicated one. It will cut verbiage, shorten your description, and enhance understanding. Anyone at the University should be able to pick up a job description and come away with concise knowledge of what the job entails.
- Use action verbs in the present tense (e.g., writes, operates, etc.)

- Avoid abbreviations and acronyms. Other people reading the position description may not be familiar with them. If abbreviations and acronyms are necessary, define them the first time you use them.
- Don't use ambiguous terms. If you use terms such as "assists, processes, handles, and performs," describe "how" the position assists, handles or performs. Using the word "by" and then detailing the processes, tasks or operations done will usually clarify the ambiguity.
  - Example: **Processes** invoices for payment **by** checking invoice forms for completeness, preparing check requests and forwarding approved requests to accounts payable **to** provide payments to suppliers.
- Avoid gender-specific language, e.g. "He manages .....", "She is responsible for ....." as the position description should describe the job regardless of the current incumbent.

**POSITION SUMMARY:**

In this section state the primary purpose of the position. The position summary should be no more than three or four sentences in length. State the functions and responsibilities of the position without giving detailed information. The summary is intended to give the reader a basic understanding of the position.

- (Example: Position – Electrical Assembly Technician  
Performs a wide variety of duties to build, assemble and test electrical/electronic controls and pharmaceutical assemblies and to perform electrical, machinery and building maintenance.  
Assists with sub and final assembly as a need arises and time permits.)

**JOB DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES:**

This section contains a description of the duties, functions, and responsibilities assigned to the position. Provide in a bulleted or numbered format with generally no more than 6-12 items.

Duties should be listed according to their importance and/or frequency with which they are performed. Please include the percentage of time the employee typically spends, over the course of a year, performing each duty. Duties that require less than 5% of time should be combined with other duties or left off the job description. Use terms that help to define complexity and decisions made by the position.

- Example: Compares salaries of selected university positions against similar positions in the marketplace using either commercial salary surveys or by contacting employers by phone/email; determines level of comparison, and makes recommendations for salary structure adjustments, if appropriate. 15%

The following chart will assist you in estimating time percentages:

Percentage	Week	Year
5%	2 hours	2 ½ weeks
10%	4 hours	5 weeks
15%	6 hours	1 month
20%	8 hours	1 ½ months
25%	10 hours	3 months

**CONTACTS:**

In this section please list those individuals or groups, outside of the position's regular work group, that the position contacts and the purpose or nature of the contact.

- Example: Corporate HR departments - to solicit participation in an on-campus job fair.
- Example: UR Catering - to arrange for food for an event.
- Example: UR alumni – to solicit donations.

## **SUPERVISION EXERCISED:**

Identify the type of supervisory responsibility that is expected from this position; select the most appropriate example. Identify the number of staff and students supervised.

### Examples:

- Does not provide direction to other individuals.
- Assists in providing training, work direction and problem solving assistance for student workers.
- Supervises, hires, trains, provides work direction and problem solving assistance for student workers plus reviews or oversees the work of other staff.
- Supervises staff including hiring, scheduling and assigning work, reviewing performance, recommending salary increases, promotions, or terminations.
- Manages others through subordinate supervisors.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS/PHYSICAL EFFORT:**

Identify the working conditions and physical demands which relate to the job duties/responsibilities of the position.

Use terms that best describe:

- *Environment:* (office, outdoors, etc.)
- *Exposures* encountered: (hazardous materials, loud noise, extreme heat/cold, Etc.)
- *Essential physical requirements:* (climbing, standing, stooping, typing, etc.)
- *Physical effort/lifting:* (Sedentary – up to 10 pounds; light – up to 20 pounds; medium – up to 50 pounds; heavy – over 50 pounds.)
  - Example: Requires the employee to work both inside and outside in heat/cold, wet/humid, and dry/arid conditions. Frequently required to use personal protective equipment to prevent exposure to hazardous materials.
- Indicate if the position will be required to work weekends, nights or be on-call as a regular part of the job.

## **QUALIFICATIONS:**

This section shows the ***minimum*** level of job knowledge (skills, expertise, know-how and ability) required to do the job. This knowledge is typically gained through a combination of formal education and related experience. It focuses on the minimum level of skills, knowledge and expertise necessary to prepare an individual for the job. Use the following terms to indicate the depth of knowledge necessary at time of hire: Working, general, thorough or comprehensive .

### **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ABILITIES:**

In stating required knowledge, include the level or depth of knowledge required **for entry** into the position: The following definitions should be helpful:

- 1 **Working Knowledge:** Sufficient familiarity with the subject to know the basic principles and terminology and to understand and solve simple problems.
  - 2 **General Knowledge:** Sufficient knowledge of a field to perform most work in normal situations. The work calls for comprehension of standard situations and includes knowledge of most of the significant aspects of the subject.
  - 3 **Thorough Knowledge:** Advanced knowledge of the subject matter. The work calls for sufficient comprehension of the subject area to solve unusual as well as common work problems, to be able to advise on technical matters and to serve as a resource on the subject for others in the organization.
  - 4 **Comprehensive Knowledge:** Requires complete mastery and understanding of the subject. *This term should be used sparingly and only for unusually exacting or responsible positions required to originate hypotheses, concepts, or approaches.*
- Example: Working knowledge of the processes and procedures used in accounts payable
  - Example: Thorough knowledge of OSHA and other laboratory safety regulations

Identify occupational certifications and/or licenses that may be required:

- Examples: CPR Certification, plumber's license, etc.

List specific skills and/or competencies required:

- Examples: skill in the operation of hand held power tools; skill in the use of specific computer hardware or software.

List specific job related abilities required:

- Examples: ability to read, interpret and apply policies and procedures; ability to operate a fork lift; etc.

#### EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

- **Education:** Identify the *minimum* educational qualifications that an employee must possess on the first day of the job to satisfactorily perform the duties and responsibilities of the position. State the educational qualifications in terms of areas of study and/or type of education that would provide the knowledge required for entry into the position. You may indicate an equivalent combination of education and experience.
  - Example: Bachelors degree in accounting or business administration.
  - Example: Bachelor's degree in accounting or combination of graduation from high school and 5 years experience in accounting in a medium size organization.
- **Experience:** Identify the *minimum* number of years and type of work experience that an employee needs to be qualified for the job.
  - Example: 3-5 years of administrative support experience.
  - Example: 2-3 years of experience in performing payroll functions; prefer experience in an integrated Human Resources/Payroll system.