

JOB DESCRIPTION GUIDELINES

Header Information

Job title:	Does the title reflect the nature of work and responsibility level of the job? Is it consistent with comparable positions?
Department:	Is the department name accurate and up-to-date?
Reports to:	Does this reflect a formal (not functional) reporting relationship?
Jobs Reporting:	Are position titles (not incumbent names) being used?
Effective Date:	Include the month and year the job description was written

1. Primary Purpose

This section provides a brief overview of why the position was created.

Ask yourself:

- What is the main reason this job exists?
- How does this job contribute to the bigger picture? Think about your department and the University as a whole.

Remember:

- Describing the position accurately will attract the right candidates. There is no need for a fancy introduction.
- Write 2-3 sentences in paragraph format.
- Focus on the position, not the department.
- Do not include specific job duties – this will be done in the section below.

2. Key Accountabilities

This is the most important part of the job description, where you will describe the responsibilities of the job. Accountability-based job descriptions focus on the overall goals and objectives of the position.

Ask yourself:

- What outputs, deliverables, and end-results is the job ultimately responsible for?

HEADINGS

Tips and tricks:

- Think of headings as subtitles or buckets of key accountabilities.
- Headings should group main functions of the job into categories using one or two words, such as Administration, Customer Service, Staff Management, etc.
- Group duties together in order of importance, starting with the group of duties that is most closely linked to the overall goals and objectives of the position.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

Tips and tricks:

- Each duty should begin with a verb in present tense such as assists, coordinates, leads, etc.
- Use clear, concise, and gender-neutral language to ensure that readers can easily understand the responsibilities.
- Describe the position based on current or imminent needs, not long-term, future or past needs. Consider what the job will look like in the next 6 to 12 months; if changes to the job are imminent, or the incumbent is actively being trained to take on new accountabilities, these should be captured in the job description.
- If a duty can potentially fit under multiple headings, choose where it fits best. If you notice some repeated overlap, consider modifying your headings in a way that combines these duties under the same heading.
- Be sure to include all duties that require a specific skill-set or have a significant impact, even if they are not performed often.

- Other duties that are not performed often and are not an essential function of the role can be left out and covered with a generic statement at the end of the job description such as *Performs other duties and assists with special projects as assigned.*

Things to avoid:

- Descriptions of specific steps taken, tasks performed, or software, tools, and equipment being used as these things may change more frequently.
- Subjective or descriptive words that are open to interpretation and may be linked to performance. For example, *Responds to client inquiries effectively in a cheerful and positive manner* should be captured as *Responds to client inquiries*. The words effectively, cheerful, and positive have been removed to focus on the duty being described.
- Industry jargon, buzzwords, overly technical terms, and acronyms or abbreviations as these may not be common knowledge. If you must use acronyms or abbreviations, use the full term the first time followed by the acronym or abbreviation in brackets before using it throughout the rest of the document. For example, Student Life Centre (SLC).
- Overstating or understating job duties – focus on describing the position accurately to get the most out of your job description.

3. Required Qualifications

This section summarizes the education, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the duties of the job.

Ask yourself:

- What would be reasonably required in order for an incumbent to perform the essential functions of the job? Make sure you consider a natural learning curve.
- Which qualifications are must-haves, and which ones are nice-to-haves?

Must-haves versus nice-to-haves – what’s the difference?

- Qualifications should focus on the minimum requirements that an incumbent must have in order to be able to perform the essential functions of the job (these are your must-haves).
- Use additional preferred qualifications to identify any assets or nice-to-haves that an ideal candidate may bring to the role. Ensure that minimum requirements have been stated first and that any preferred qualifications are clearly identified using words such as ‘preferred’ or ‘an asset’.
- If you are having trouble deciding whether a qualification is required or preferred, ask yourself ‘*Would I hire a candidate who does not meet this requirement?*’

Job requirements and the Ontario Human Rights Code

- All job requirements must be neutral and non-discriminatory, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code. This means that job qualifications cannot exclude candidates because of any of the protected grounds laid out in the code such as citizenship, sex, age, and disability etc.
- Some requirements may seem neutral and non-discriminatory on their face, but exclude, restrict, or prefer some candidates based on one or more of the protected grounds. Examples of potentially discriminatory requirements include inflated requirements, recent graduates or students, Canadian experience, frequent travel, driver’s license, specifying personality traits, and non-essential physical demands etc.
- Discriminatory requirements can be included if they are necessary to perform the essential functions of the job, these are known as bona-fide occupational requirements. For example, Truck Drivers on campus are required to have a valid Driver’s Licence. If you are unsure about a requirement or have any questions about protected grounds and job requirements, contact your Human Resources Partner.

EDUCATION

- Include formal education, as well as any certifications, designations, additional programs/courses, and/or licenses.
- Adding a statement such as *Equivalent combination of education and experience will be considered* will account for candidates with extensive work experience who may not possess the required credentials, and should be used when applicable.

EXPERIENCE

- Specify the type of work experience needed.
- Quantified minimum years of experience should be included as a guideline.

KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS/ABILITIES

This section summarizes all the other knowledge, skills, and abilities in the role that are not captured through the education and experience requirements.

- **Knowledge:** Acquired information, concepts, or theories through education or work experience, such as working knowledge of Human Resources legislation, general knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methods, etc.
- **Skill:** Competencies and functional skills required for the position such as verbal and written communication skills, time management skills, conflict resolution skills, etc.
- **Ability:** An acquired or natural talent to perform an action, complete a task, or exhibit a specific behavior in certain situations, such as demonstrated ability to manage a high volume of work with conflicting priorities and deadlines, demonstrated ability to exercise judgment and discretion when handling confidential information, etc.

WRITING QUALIFICATIONS

Tips and tricks:

- List in order of importance and always start with the minimum qualifications.
- Make sure that all qualifications required to perform the essential functions of the job have been captured.

Things to avoid:

- Leaving out key requirements and defining qualifications too broadly.
- Including qualifications that are not supported by the accountabilities of the role, this can result in inflated job requirements.
- Defining education and experience requirements based on credentials and experiences held by current or past incumbents.
- Describing personal traits. For example, “cheerful with a can-do attitude” is not a position qualification.

4. Nature and Scope

Contacts: List the internal and external contacts that the position would interact with. Include information about the nature and frequency of interaction to help articulate the level of human relations skill required in the job. The nature of interaction may include exchanging information, collaborating on work initiatives and projects, providing advice and guidance, and/or influencing or motivating others.

Level of Responsibility: Include information about the context and organizational structure that the position operates in to help articulate the overall level of accountability. Some potential questions to answer are: *What type of guidance and direction does this position receive?, How readily available is assistance?, What type of influence and control does the job have?.* Any informal reporting relationships such as co-op students, casual staff, and project leadership should also be included here.

Decision-Making Authority: Describe the kinds of decisions the position is empowered to make in the performance of their job duties. Some potential questions to answer are: *What kinds of problems is the position required to solve?, What types of recommendations does this position make?, What types of decisions does this position have the final authority on?, What kinds of decisions are deferred or made in consultation with others?.*

Physical and Sensory Demands: Include any physical and sensory demands, and the intensity, duration, and frequency of these demands. Some examples of physical demands

are sitting, standing, walking, and lifting. Examples of sensory demands are observing, listening, and smelling.

Working Environment: Describe the environment that the position works in. Some examples are open office environment, closed office environment, outdoors, a store, a restaurant, etc. Include any physical, environmental, or mental stress factors that the position may be exposed to. Examples of stress factors include interruptions, deadlines, frequent travel, irregular hours, unpleasant contacts, and lack of control over work pace.

JOB DESCRIPTION CHEAT SHEET

1. PRIMARY PURPOSE

- Why does this position exist?
- Write 2-3 sentences in paragraph format
- Focus on the position, not the department

2. KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

- What are the overall goals and objectives of the position?
- Headings should group main functions into categories such as Administration, Customer Service, Staff Management
- Begin each duty with a verb in present tense such as assists, coordinates, leads
- Use clear, concise, and gender-neutral language

Avoid descriptions of specific steps taken, tasks performed, or software, tools, and equipment being used as these things may change more frequently.

3. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- What education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities are required to perform the essential functions of the job?
- Focus on the minimum requirements, these are your must-haves
- Use additional preferred qualifications to identify any assets or nice-to-haves that an ideal candidate may bring to the role
- Ask yourself: *Would I hire a candidate who does not meet this requirement?* to determine if a qualification is required or preferred

Education

- Include formal education, as well as any certifications, designations, additional programs/courses, and/or licenses
- *Equivalent combination of education and experience will be considered* can be used for candidates with extensive work experience who may not possess the required credentials

Experience

Quantified minimum years of experience should be included as a guideline.

Avoid defining education and experience requirements based on credentials and experiences held by current or past incumbents.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

Summarize all the other required knowledge, skills, and abilities that are not captured in the education/experience sections.

4. NATURE AND SCOPE

Contacts: List the internal and external contacts that the position would interact with and include the nature of interactions.

Level of Responsibility: Include information about the context and organizational structure that the position operates in to help articulate the overall level of accountability.

Decision-Making Authority: Describe the kinds of decisions the position is empowered to make in the performance of their job duties.

Physical and Sensory Demands: Include any physical and sensory demands, and the intensity, duration and frequency of these demands. Examples include: sitting, standing, observing, etc.

Working Environment: Describe the environment that the position works in. Examples include: open office environment, closed office environment, outdoors, a store, a restaurant, etc.

