

# Position Description Guide

**Purpose:** This Position Description Guide is used as a tool/resource to assist in writing staff position descriptions.

## Tips

- Keep the position description concise.
- Use plain English. Keep the language simple, sentences short and paragraphs limited to single statements.
- Avoid using jargon, acronyms or terms only “insiders” can understand. Define acronyms at least once.
- Write in the third person and in an “active voice.” Statements about job duties should start with a present tense verb. For example: “Approves routine requests and refers special cases to the manager with recommendations for decision.”
- Use gender free language.
- Ensure internal consistency. For example, capabilities and capability levels should clearly relate to the accountabilities described for the position.
- Take care with spelling, grammar, font and layout. The final document should look professional and be easy to read.
- A good position description documents the key accountabilities and capabilities of the position. It does not attempt to capture every activity or task performed and skill used.
- Be specific about what the job does. Avoid vague and ambiguous terms, such as “assists,” “transport duties,” and “advises.”
- Don’t just list tasks. Aggregate work activities into responsibility statements that explain what the job does, how and why.
- Only designated HEERA (MPP) positions can “supervise/manage” work. Some staff positions may provide lead work direction. Please see “**Lead Work vs. Supervision**” chart on the Classification & Compensation website for more information.

## REVIEW THE POSITION DESCRIPTION

Review what you have written with a critical eye.

Ask someone who is not familiar with the job to give you feedback on the draft position description.

Give it to the job experts, which may include the position incumbent, for comment before making final amendments.

When you’re satisfied with the position description, contact your Human Resources Analyst in the Office of Human Resources Classification & Compensation to evaluate the position description.

### Consulting Staff Members

The aim of job design is to optimize the value of the position to the organization. This involves employee engagement and risk reduction.

The person who designs the job needs to be objective, weighing and balancing information from a range of sources. This should generally include the position occupant, who usually is a rich source of information, with detailed working knowledge of the position.

Position occupants should not write their own position description, but can provide input.

Staff affected by position updates/changes need to be notified seven (7) days prior to the effective date.

### Consulting Human Resources

Prior to recruitment requests, work with your assigned Human Resources Analyst to finalize the position description.

If your department is restructuring, consult with your assigned Human Resources Analyst in the Office of Human Resources Classification & Compensation.

### Reference Tools

Refer to the “Sample Position Description” as an example of completed position description.

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Position Description Section	Description Tips								
<p><b>Section 4: Minimum Qualifications</b></p> <p>List <b>ONLY</b> the Minimum Qualifications from the appropriate Classification Standards for this position.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum Qualifications from the appropriate Classification Standards used to determine if the candidate meets the “entry level” requirements for the classification.</li> <li>• For classifications with <i>skill levels</i>, entry qualifications must match those listed on the classification standards and the typical KSA for the skill level.</li> </ul>								
<p><b>Section 5: Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSA), and Experience</b></p> <p><b>Required:</b> Must be <u>comparable</u> to the Minimum Qualifications, appropriate to the skill level of the position, and would allow an incumbent to satisfactorily perform the Essential Functions of the position. (Must have on Day 1 of job)</p> <p><b>Preferred:</b> List any desirable qualifications beyond the Minimum Qualifications and those that are Required that would <u>enhance</u> an incumbent’s ability to perform the work of the position (e.g., additional years of experience, advanced education, certification and/or specialized training). (Can acquire within first 3-6 months on the job)</p> <p>Recommended to have no more than 8-10 bullets of KSA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required and preferred qualifications are used by the hiring manger to screen job applicants to determine the most qualified candidates.</li> <li>• Some qualifications are screened during the review of resumes (experience, demonstrated knowledge, demonstrated ability) while other qualifications must be evaluated during the interview (ability to, knowledge of). For example, you cannot determine if someone has “excellent communication skills” by reviewing a piece of paper, but you can evaluate this skill during a phone interview or in-person interview.</li> <li>• Are the capabilities required consistent with the essential functions of the position? To create an effective KSA, identify the following:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) <b>Outcome:</b> Identify the key and/or essential outcomes/functions of the position (the ones that matter most in the job).</li> <li>2.) <b>How:</b> Identify what capabilities (knowledge, skills, and abilities), experience and other specific requirements are needed to achieve each outcome. This will become your Required/Preferred KSA.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="578 1241 1523 1497"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="578 1241 1013 1283">OUTCOME/RESPONSIBILITIES</th> <th data-bbox="1013 1241 1523 1283">HOW (Required KSA)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="578 1283 1013 1497">Provide front office support</td> <td data-bbox="1013 1283 1523 1497"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures quality service delivery</li> <li>• Customer service oriented</li> <li>• Good communication and interpersonal skills</li> <li>• Ability to interpret policies and procedures</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Understanding Required &amp; Preferred Knowledge, Skills and Abilities</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="578 1577 1523 1885"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="578 1577 1127 1629">Required: Important for job performance</th> <th data-bbox="1127 1577 1523 1629">Preferred</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="578 1629 1127 1885"> <p><b>Essential/Important</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• job cannot be done without this</li> <li>• required frequently</li> <li>• significantly impacts on the ability to achieve a result</li> <li>• certification/legislative requirement</li> <li>• significantly impacts stakeholders</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="1127 1629 1523 1885"> <p><b>Good to have</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• desirable but not essential to perform job satisfactorily</li> <li>• can be acquired within a 6-month period of starting employment (e.g., specific campus software)</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	OUTCOME/RESPONSIBILITIES	HOW (Required KSA)	Provide front office support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures quality service delivery</li> <li>• Customer service oriented</li> <li>• Good communication and interpersonal skills</li> <li>• Ability to interpret policies and procedures</li> </ul>	Required: Important for job performance	Preferred	<p><b>Essential/Important</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• job cannot be done without this</li> <li>• required frequently</li> <li>• significantly impacts on the ability to achieve a result</li> <li>• certification/legislative requirement</li> <li>• significantly impacts stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p><b>Good to have</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• desirable but not essential to perform job satisfactorily</li> <li>• can be acquired within a 6-month period of starting employment (e.g., specific campus software)</li> </ul>
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<b>Section 5: Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSA), and Experience</b>	<b>Understanding qualifications (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Experience)</b>								
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<b>Section 6: Change in Duties</b>	<p>If duties have been added/removed since the last time this position was reviewed by Human Resources, list them including the percentages for each function/duty (as a % of total time spent performing all duties) and when the duties were added/removed.</p>								
<b>Section 7: Position Summary</b>	<p><b>Summarize the position</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly describe the reason(s) the position exists. Describe the major purpose of the position and the role it plays in the department and/or organization.</li> <li>• The summary should give a brief overview of the job.</li> <li>• The summary is not all-inclusive.</li> </ul> <p><b>Example Position Summary:</b>  The Administrative Support Coordinator acts as the main office support for the Department of Biology and reports to the Office Manager. Receives and greets visitors, types a variety of documents and maintains the director’s calendar. Works with other university departments such as human resources, purchasing, and payroll, as well as the controller’s office to ensure that a variety of business transactions are completed effectively and timely.</p>								
<b>Section 8: Essential Functions of the job</b>	<p><b>Step 1: Identify the tasks/categories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize duties into 4-5 major categories and list in order of priority. These like groups/categories will become job duties/essential functions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 2: Identify essential functions (duty statements)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duty statements should be written with sufficient level of detail as to describe the work performed but should <u>not</u> include the instructions or procedures for performing the job.</li> <li>• Duty statements should answer: <b>what</b> is done, <b>how</b> it is done, and if possible, <b>why</b> it is done.</li> <li>• List in the order of importance and time performed (by % and frequency).</li> </ul>								
<p><i>Essential Duties</i> are those that are critical, integral, necessary, crucial, primary, and/or fundamental. These essential functions are the basic job duties that an employee must be able to perform.</p>									

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The instructions on how a particular responsibility should be carried out should be in the department’s standard operating procedures, not the employee’s job description.</li> <li>• Describe the job using key responsibilities (e.g., Administrative Support, Budget Administration, Receptionist/Front Office).</li> <li>• For each responsibility estimate the percentage of time and frequency spent on each. The percentage of Essential and Marginal Functions should total 100%.</li> </ul> <p><b>Example of Duty Statements:</b></p> <p><b>Weak:</b> Assist in budget management by monitoring supply and expense accounts.</p> <p><b>Strong:</b> Monitor supply and expense accounts (<b>what is done</b>) by posting expenditures and reconciling balances (<b>how it is done</b>) on a weekly basis.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of a job. Thus, position descriptions must clearly and accurately indicate exactly which functions are essential.</p>
<p><b>Section 9: Marginal Functions of the job</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginal functions are those that are non-essential, minimal, or incidental that could be removed without fundamentally altering the purpose of the position.</li> <li>• Marginal functions should be no more than 5% of the total job.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Essential Functions and Marginal Functions should have a combined total of 100% of time.</p>
<p><b>Section 10a: Nature and Scope of Authority</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the type of supervision this position receives.</li> <li>• What decisions can this position make on its own?</li> <li>• When does the incumbent have to consult with a manager?</li> <li>• What guides the work (e.g., written procedures, precedents)?</li> <li>• Indicate if position acts as lead, and explain their role.</li> </ul> <p><b>Example Statement:</b></p> <p>Under direct supervision, the incumbent works independently on operational and/or procedural assignments that are routine in nature, within guidelines set by established policies and procedures, requiring limited judgment. Normally receives detailed instructions on all newly assigned work. Performs ongoing routine assignments with direct supervision.</p>

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	<p><b>Definitions of Supervisory Level Descriptions:</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Immediate/Direct</b></td> <td>Close and regular supervision. The incumbent is assigned work which is regularly reviewed. The methods of performing tasks are well established and outlined. Assistance and guidance is readily available.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>General Supervision</b></td> <td>Some delegation of responsibility, some independence of routine matters. Incumbents exercise some control over both the technical and administrative aspects of work. Objectives may be set for the position, but the incumbent often works independently.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>General Direction</b></td> <td>Operates independently under broad guidelines. Incumbents have broad responsibility for planning, organizing and prioritizing work. Active control by the supervisor is only exercised on longer-term goals and policy issues.</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Immediate/Direct</b>	Close and regular supervision. The incumbent is assigned work which is regularly reviewed. The methods of performing tasks are well established and outlined. Assistance and guidance is readily available.	<b>General Supervision</b>	Some delegation of responsibility, some independence of routine matters. Incumbents exercise some control over both the technical and administrative aspects of work. Objectives may be set for the position, but the incumbent often works independently.	<b>General Direction</b>	Operates independently under broad guidelines. Incumbents have broad responsibility for planning, organizing and prioritizing work. Active control by the supervisor is only exercised on longer-term goals and policy issues.
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<b>Section 10b: Problem Solving</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of problems will this position solve?</li> <li>• Does the position have program or development responsibilities?</li> <li>• Does the incumbent have to come up with new ideas and innovations?</li> <li>• Is customer/client relationship management challenging?</li> <li>• Are there technological challenges or limitations?</li> </ul> <p><b>Example Problem Solving Statement</b> The incumbent will encounter often unpredictable inquiries and questions from visitors, will be required to remain calm and professional when confronted with difficult situations, large volumes of visitors at one time, rapidly changing priorities and competing deadlines and demands. Work often involves using knowledge of the campus and researching background information, recommending solutions, and communicating outcomes to those involved.</p>						
<b>Section 10c: Contacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What internal and external contacts will the position have and for what purpose?</li> </ul> <p><b>Example Contacts Statement</b> The incumbent must have the ability to effectively interact in highly sensitive interpersonal and/or confidential situations with a variety of individuals including executives, administrators, directors, faculty, staff, students, parents, and other members of the community.</p>						
<b>Section 11. ADA Requirements</b>	This section must be completed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.						
<b>Section 12. Project Coordination/Lead Responsibilities/Technology Usage</b>	This section is for Information Technology Positions Only.						

For feedback, questions or assistance, please contact Classification & Compensation at [classandcomprequests@csus.edu](mailto:classandcomprequests@csus.edu).