



Position Description Questionnaire
(PDQ)
Instruction Guide

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Position Summary

Human Resources has developed this instruction guide to assist managers in writing a Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) for a new or existing position. The PDQ is an important part of establishing the foundation for setting job expectations and performance, pay, and determining whether the position meets Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements. Although this guide pertains to writing a PDQ for Administrative Faculty positions, this document can also be used as a guide to write the Position Description, or NPD-19, for classified positions.

Where to start?

Position Summary

Summarize the main points, 1-3 paragraphs, of the position description which may include key functions/responsibilities, and duties; and any other pertinent information. This exercise will help to structurally define the overall responsibilities. Additionally, this section can be used to develop the vacancy announcement for recruitment. Here is an example:

Reporting to the Dean of xxx, this position serves as the Business Manager of the College of xxx. The Business Manager is responsible for the organization, direction, and management of all administrative and business services including budget and planning, college liaison, human resources, grant administration and event planning, within the most research-rich and complex college at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. The Business Manager is responsible for significant contributions to institutional planning and operational strategy development.

The Business Manager also has general oversight and accountability for 100+ administrative staff in various college units and academic departments who contribute to the performance of financial and administrative functions. The Business Manager supports the Dean in ensuring effective use of the COE budget of approximately \$150 million with research expenditures exceeding \$70M annually.

| Job Categories and Functions

Develop Job Categories of Primary/Essential and Marginal Functions

A position will typically have 4- 5 Primary/Essential Functions and 1-3 Marginal functions. Primary/Essential functions make up approximately 90% of job duties, while marginal functions should make up to 10% of job duties. Functions can be grouped into categories, here are some examples of developing categories for a Business Manager position:

- Primary Job Category #1 - Financial Management & Fiduciary Responsibilities
- Primary Job Category #2 - College Liaison
- Primary Job Category #3 - Office Management and Supervision
- Marginal Job Category #4 - Meeting/Event Planning

Once functions have been defined and categorized, job duties can be written under the appropriate category along with assigning the percentage of time expected to perform each function which should add up to 100%, here are some examples:

- Primary Job Category #1 - Financial Management & Fiduciary Responsibilities (40%)
 - Manage research, gift, and state accounts, UNLV Foundation and Scholarship as well as Part-time instructional budgets and summer returns.
 - Participate in the development and implementation of overall strategic goals, objectives, priorities, plans and initiatives.
 - Analyze, prepare and present long-term financial and operational projections and plans
 - Ensure compliance with applicable government rules and regulations pertaining to accounting procedures and related business operations.

Primary Job Category #2 - College Liaison (25%)

- Liaise with appropriate University offices to ensure college's financial and business- related policies and practices are compliant with University goals and regulations.
- Attend managers meetings to learn about best practices to improve business operations
- Represent the department by serving on various committees and having authority to make recommendations on the college's behalf.

Primary Job Category #3 - Office Management and Supervision (30%)

- Recruit, hire, schedule, train, coach and discipline classified staff.
- Meet routinely to provide operational updates, expectations and customer service standards which will foster and promote a strong culture of collegiality and respect.
- Collaborate with Central Human Resources to ensure adherence to relevant policies and procedures related to faculty and staff.

Marginal Job Category #4 - Event Coordination (5%)

- Create and execute logistical plans for events, including budgets and contract management.
- Collaborate with campus partners for venue, catering, parking, etc...
- Coordinate travel arrangements for guest lecturers/speakers.

When job duties are well written and organized, they can accurately convey the complexity, scope, and level of responsibility of a job.

To summarize, here are some things to remember when completing the job duties section of the position description:

- The Job Duties section should contain 4 - 5 Primary/Essential Functions and no more than 1-3 Marginal Functions
- Title each Job Category to summarize the function / role.
- Include 3 - 4 concise job duties for each job category. The job duties should expand upon that particular area of responsibility as well as describe the complexity of the position.
- Begin job duty with an **action verb** (see page 8 for a list).
- Limit the listing of categories and job duties to what is required to perform the job.
- Do not include duties that are no longer performed or those that may be required in the future.
- Write the duties in terms of what the position requires, **not** based upon the capabilities of any individual.
- Determine an accurate percentage of time the incumbent should spend on each function over the course of a year.

Education & Experience

Best Practices for Setting Minimum Education & Experience Requirements

Minimum requirements is the lowest level of acceptable education and/or experience needed to successfully perform the job duties. When establishing requirements, consider the following:

Career Level

Entry level positions may not necessarily require experience, a bachelor's degree may suffice, or an equivalent combination of education and experience if acceptable by your appointing authority (Executive Vice President and Provost's Office or Vice President). Utilize the university's "Career Level" grid as a guide. Ultimately, the Compensation

& Classification unit will determine the appropriate level/ grade and classification by performing a comparative job analysis.

Range	Career Level
E	Senior executive: Senior leadership role with long-term strategic impact on the course of the university.
D,E	Executive: Manages significant administrative functions with major impact on the university. Involves direction of one or several senior or middle managers.
C,D	Senior manager: Manages complex department or function with responsibility for coordinating multiple administrative activities.
C	Middle manager/senior professional: Manages a department or program. May also apply to professionals and consultants who are recognized as university authorities in their fields of expertise.
B,C	Entry-level manager/senior professional: Typically requires a bachelor’s degree or equivalent and four or more years of experience.
A,B	Supervisor/maturing professional: Typically requires a bachelor’s degree or equivalent and two to four years of experience.
A	Entry-level professional: Typically requires a bachelor’s degree or equivalent.

Education Requirements

If a degree is required, University guidelines require that degrees for academic and administrative faculty positions must be obtained from a regionally accredited college or university by the [Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#).

Applicants who obtained their degree outside the United States must have their degree evaluated by a third party vendor. Review the [policy](#) and contact your recruiter if you have any questions.

Use Preferred Qualifications

Establishing Preferred Qualifications will allow you to develop shortlists for both minimally qualified and highly qualified candidates.

For example, setting minimum requirements at 5-7 years of experience and a Master’s Degree in Business Administration for the Business Manager position used in this writing guide would be appropriate given the scope and complexity of job responsibilities. However, it could be difficult to attract a number of applicants who meet these requirements.

Setting requirements too high can result in a small applicant pool during recruitment. Instead, designate these requirements as “preferred” and set the minimum requirements at say, 3-5 years of experience and a bachelor’s degree in business management or related field. This approach should widen the applicant pool.

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSA’s)

Best Practices in Defining Required/Preferred Competencies

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities are attributes required to perform a job and are generally demonstrated through qualifying service, education, or training. Here are some best practices on developing competencies,

Define competencies simply and clearly.

Anyone reading the competency should be able to easily identify what the competency is.

Example - Conflict Management

Incorrect: Manages the conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements of all types in a variety of situations regarding personnel at various levels as well as external customers and resolves these conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements in a constructive manner consistent with organizational guidelines in order to minimize any potential negative personal impact on employees, customers, or the organization.

Correct: Manages and resolves conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements in a constructive manner to minimize negative personal impact.

Singularly Identifiable

Make sure competencies embody a single, readily identifiable characteristic. For example, oral communication is different from written communication; therefore, both characteristics should not be included in one competency.

Example - Written Communication

Incorrect: Writes and speaks in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.

Correct: Writes in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.

Make the competency definition behavioral-based.

This ensures the competency can be verified (such as on the applicant's resume) and assessed through measurable behaviors. One way to do this is to incorporate action verbs (e.g., "Recognizes", "Identifies", "Organizes") into the competency definitions.

Remove unnecessary qualifiers (e.g., "Thorough Knowledge," "Considerable Skill," or "Basic Understanding").

Example - Reasoning

Incorrect: Ability to draw accurate conclusions based on available information.

Correct: Identifies rules, principles, or relationships that explain facts, data, or other information; analyzes information and makes correct inferences or draws accurate conclusions.

Example - Leadership

Incorrect: Successfully influences, motivates, and thoroughly challenges others; adapts leadership styles to a variety of difficult situations.

Correct: Influences, motivates, and challenges others; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situation

Source: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/competencies/writing-competencies.pdf>

Writing Do's & Don'ts

Before writing a job description, here are some helpful hints to consider:

DO:

- ◆ Base the job description on the department's needs
- ◆ Keep sentence structure as simple as possible, omitting unnecessary words that do not contribute pertinent information.
- ◆ Begin each duty/task with an **action verb** (see page 8 for a list).
- ◆ Be consistent when using terms like "may" and "occasionally." These should be used to describe tasks that are performed once in a while, or tasks that only some employees perform
- ◆ Refer to job titles rather than incumbents, i.e., "Reports to Manager" instead of "Reports to Mary Smith."
- ◆ Focus on critical activities
- ◆ Before recruitment, review the existing PDQ to determine necessary revisions
- ◆ Use a logical sequence in describing duties and responsibilities (Defining Job Categories first, followed by

the corresponding job duties)

- ◆ Call your Compensation Analyst for guidance
- ◆ include any travel the incumbent will be required to complete
- ◆ Ensure responsibilities are not being replicated/duplicated with other positions

DON'T:

- ◆ Base the content of the job description on the capabilities, skills, and interests of the incumbent
- ◆ Write the job description based upon the desired job classification
- ◆ Write the job description as step by step guide on how to do the job
- ◆ Include minor or occasional tasks, which are not unique to a specific job
- ◆ Inflate the business title
- ◆ Use discriminatory language

Action Verbs

Finding the right words can be challenging. Below is a list of useful action verbs to help in developing job duties.

accommodate	communicate	draft	interface	recruit
achieve	compile	edit	interpret	reduce
acquire	complete	eliminate	interview	regulate
address	compose	enforce	investigate	report
adjust	compute	establish	issue	research
administer	conduct	evaluate	lift	resolve
advise	confer	execute	maintain	review
allocate	consolidate	expand	manage	schedule
analyze	construct	explore	monitor	search
apply	consult	facilitate	motivate	select
appoint	control	formulate	negotiate	solve
approve	coordinate	furnish	observe	specify
arrange	correspond	generate	operate	strategize
assess	counsel	guide	organize	streamline
assign	create	handle	participate	strengthen
assist	customize	hire	perform	summarize
audit	delegate	identify	plan	support
augment	deliver	illustrate	predict	teach
authorize	demonstrate	implement	prepare	train
budget	design	improve	present	translate
calculate	develop	improvise	process	troubleshoot
circulate	devise	incorporate	program	update
clarify	direct	increase	provide	validate
clear	disseminate	inform	quantify	verify
collaborate	distinguish	initiate	recognize	
collect	distribute	instruct	recommend	
combine	document	interact	record	

Resources

Your [designated Compensation Analyst](#) would be your best resource in writing a PDQ. It's possible there is sample job description of similar positions on campus or another NSHE institution. Below is a list of HR contacts for both Compensation and Recruitment for each college/department.

Additional resources are listed below under References used to help develop this guide. Talk to subject matter experts in your department or other colleagues on campus.

[Occupational Information Network \(O*NET\)](#)

The O*NET program is the nation's primary source of occupational information. Central to the project is the O*NET database, containing information on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors.

[Online Occupational Information Network](#)

A free database created by the Department of Labor that provides information on employee characteristics and requirements; occupation specific information and requirements; and workforce characteristics.

References

Adapted from *Skills vs Abilities*: <https://simplicable.com/new/skills-vs-abilities> posted by John Spacey, March 10, 2017, updated on December 28, 2018

Writing Competencies - Office of Personnel Management <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/competencies/writing-competencies.pdf>

Competencies Database - Office of Personnel Management - Competencies <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/competencies/mosaic-studies-competencies.pdf>