



JOB DESCRIPTION MANUAL

Guidelines for Writing Job Descriptions in the Aurora University Format

Overview:

A job description (commonly called a JD) is a written document that describes the purpose, duties, responsibilities, tasks, and relationships of a particular job. Without a JD, it is impossible to hold a person accountable for performing the duties of their position. The primary purpose of a job description is to identify the **essential functions** of the position. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), **essential functions** are those tasks or functions of a particular position that are **fundamental** to the position (as opposed to marginal). Knowing the **essential functions** of the job will aid you in

- Assuring compliance with legal requirements related to equal opportunity, equal pay, overtime eligibility, etc.
- Establishing a basis for recruitment, selection, and hiring
- Writing appropriate interview questions
- Determining whether a person is qualified to perform the essential functions
- Identifying reasonable accommodations to enable a disabled person to perform the essential functions
- Evaluating work distribution and departmental organization
- Analyzing jobs to determine appropriate pay ranges and classifications
- Training employees
- Assisting incumbents in understanding their job better
- Allowing clear and accurate performance reviews
- Counseling employees on career opportunities and their vocational interests

While every position changes somewhat over time based on the abilities of the incumbent, the description should be written in terms of the position itself, not the capabilities of any individual. It is a document that establishes the baseline which will be utilized for the many reasons listed above, for training new employees, and for various legal purposes.

All job descriptions are summaries. The baseline objective is to provide enough information in the right format and language to be accurate, clear and useful to the employer. Job descriptions:

- Should contain enough accurate information to be useful, and
- should not be so broad that they confuse or mislead managers, employees and/or job applicants.

Position Summary Section

The Position Summary section describes in very brief terms, the duties and responsibilities of a position. It explains the general reporting structure, what is done, how it is done and why it is done. It should be no more than two or three sentences long.

Job Content Section

There are two sections that make up the overall Job Content Section: **Principal Duties and Responsibilities** and **Other Duties and Responsibilities**. The Principal Duties and Responsibilities section covers the *Essential Functions* of the position. This section will list some items which will be standard to all University positions as well as the 6 to 12 most vital essential functions of the position. The Other Duties and Responsibilities section covers other important pieces of the overall position; however it does not include essential functions. It will include one item common to all University positions, as well as any additional duties (up to 6 or 8) that are important to the position but which do not reach the level of an essential function.

What are Essential Functions?

In identifying **essential functions**, be sure to consider **(1) whether employees in the position actually are required to perform the function**, and **(2) whether removing that function would fundamentally change the job**.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, from which the issue of **essential functions** has come into focus, lists several reasons why a function could be considered essential:

- **the position exists to perform the function** (e.g., if you hire someone to proofread documents, the ability to proofread accurately is an essential function, since this is the reason that the position exists);
- **there are a limited number of other employees available to perform the function, or among whom the function can be distributed** (e.g., it may be an essential function for a file clerk to answer the telephone if there are only three employees in a very busy office, and each employee has to perform many different tasks);
- **a function is highly specialized, and the person in the position is hired for special expertise or ability to perform it** (e.g., a company expanding its business with Japan is hiring a new salesperson, so requires someone not only with sales experience, but also with the ability to communicate fluently in the Japanese language).

To identify the **essential functions** of the job, first identify the **purpose** of the job, and the **importance of actual job functions** in achieving this purpose. In evaluating the "importance" of job functions, consider, among other things, the frequency with which a function is performed, the amount of time spent on the function, and the consequences if the function is not performed.

The EEOC considers various forms of evidence to determine whether or not a particular function is essential; these include, but are not limited to

- the employer's judgment;
- the amount of time spent on the job performing that function; and
- the availability of others in the department to fill in for the person who performs that function.

In defining the essential functions of a job, it is important to distinguish between **methods** and **results**. For example, is the essential function *moving* a fifty pound box from one part of the lab to another, or is it *carrying* the box? While essential functions need to be performed, **they often do not need to be performed in one particular manner** (unless doing otherwise would create an undue hardship).

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Section:

This section may break out into two or three subsections; it will depend on the needs of the job and your preferences. Every entry in this section **must** be supported by the **Principal Duties and Responsibilities** section. This section is **critical** in determining the areas of the position which may and may not be accommodated under the ADA. This section outlines:

- **Knowledge:** The level of education, experience and training an individual must have **at minimum** to be considered qualified for the position.
- **Skills:** Specific skills such as ability to create, manipulate and utilize spreadsheets, word processing programs, and so on (avoid using program names unless knowledge of that specific program is essential).
- **Abilities:** Be careful with this requirement. Some examples: Does the position require LIFTING 50 pounds, or does it require the ability to move a box of paper from one location to another which could be done with a dolly, or one ream at a time? Does it require the ability to WALK across campus or MOVE across campus? For some positions, such as Security, the ability to walk and run will be essential. For most other positions, moving about could be accomplished by other means. Include such abilities as visual acuity, ability to talk on the phone, and so on if appropriate. Remember, every entry in this section must be directly supported in the Principal Duties and Responsibilities section.

Writing the Job Description

Now that you've thought through the above, and have gathered data, it is time to write the job description. Have you carefully thought about what is REALLY needed? Is there tolerance for a new person's learning curve or do you need to hire someone with specific experience? As you consider your responses to these questions, remember that Human Resources is available to offer you guidance in writing your job description. There are certain elements common to all job descriptions at Aurora University; they are on the template. The sample template attached includes those common elements as well as some tips and guidelines in each appropriate section.

The template itself is available in the shared "HR Docs" folder, and via a link from the HR website. You may open the document and do a "Save as" to save it to your K: drive as a new WORD document, then add your information at that time.

Some tips in writing Job Descriptions:

A well written job description is written in a factual and impersonal style. It should be accurate, concise, and complete. Before writing a job description, you may want to consider these suggestions:

- List all the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job; divide them into requirements and preferences.
- Be precise. This is critical.
- The requirements listed on the job description must support the essential functions, and serve as the primary criteria for selecting/rejecting candidates.
- Keep sentence structure as simple as possible; omit unnecessary words that do not contribute pertinent information.
- Begin each duty/task with an action verb.
- Avoid the narrative form.
- 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. Disregard minor occasional tasks, which are not unique to a specific job.
- Use logical sequence in describing duties and responsibilities, and be consistent.
- Don't lock yourself into strict requirements that may prevent you from considering qualified candidates. Consider substitutions (example: "Bachelor's degree or a minimum of 6-8 years of relevant professional experience").
- When hiring, use the job description as one of your guides in your search to find the most qualified candidate. Keep in mind that, under the ADA, you cannot refuse to hire a qualified candidate who meets the requirements and whose disability can be reasonably accommodated.

Once you write your job description:

1. Forward it in electronic format to Human Resources for review. We will review the draft, make suggestions for changes, and return it to you.
2. Once Human Resources has reviewed and given format approval, print a hard copy for your signature and your Vice President's signature.
3. Forward a signed copy to Human Resources, AND forward a finalized electronic copy to hr@aurora.edu.
4. Give the employee 2 copies of the job description; one they will review with you and keep, the other will be signed and forwarded to Human Resources for their employee file.

Questions?

Contact Human Resources. We'll work with you to make this a fruitful process!

References:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *A Technical Assistance Manual on the Employment Provisions (Title I) of the Americans with Disabilities Act* (1992)

Robert L. Duston, Karen S. Russell, and Lynn E. Kerr, *A Guide to Writing Job Descriptions under the Americans with Disabilities Act* (Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1992)

Websites from the following Universities and Organizations:

Society for Human Resource Management	www.SHRM.org
Rice University	www.ruf.rice.edu/~humres/training/HowToHire.htm
St. Louis University	www.slu.edu/services/HR/compensation_position_analysis.htm
University of Pittsburgh	www.hr.pitt.edu/comp/JobD.htm

Sample Job Description Form

Please Note: This template can be found on the Shared Drives in the **HR Docs** folder and can be accessed from the HR Homepage. Do a “Save As” and save the document under a new name on your personal drive before inserting any text.



JOB DESCRIPTION

TITLE: *(Consult HR if you have questions regarding title)*

COLLEGE/SCHOOL/DEPT: *(your department name)*

DATE PREPARED: *(Date approved)*

REPORTS TO: *(Title of person position reports to)*

FLSA: *(Exempt/non-exempt status)*

POSITION SUMMARY:

This is a brief, 2-to-3 sentence section that summarizes position. This information is used in job postings, classified advertising, and so on. Include:

- *The kind of supervision/guidance the position generally receives (e.g., general direction, close supervision, and so on)*
- *The main responsibilities of the position*

PRINCIPAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

*(This is the section for the Essential Functions of the position. The first three are core competencies, the same for **all** AU positions)*

1. Represents Aurora University in the most positive manner with prospective, former and current students, clients, suppliers and the community we serve. Interacts effectively with a diverse group of faculty, staff, students and other customers of our services, learns and uses operating practices of the department and Aurora University.
2. Upholds the Mission Statement: Aurora University – an inclusive community dedicated to the transformative power of learning.
3. Handles confidential information with tact and discretion.

A sample of an entry from a job description for a Media Relations position might look like this:

- * *Organizes the distribution of media advisories and press releases; develops press releases and internal communications; assists with the development of distribution methods for press releases; distributes news releases using web-based distribution tool; constructs and maintains media database and distribution lists.*

OTHER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 1. Performs other functions as necessary or as assigned.

This section contains responsibilities and important duties performed occasionally or in addition to the essential functions of the position. The above statement is on all job descriptions in this section.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES REQUIRED:

*Every entry in this section **must** be supported by the **Principal Duties and Responsibilities** section. This section is critical in determining the areas of the position which may and may not be accommodated under the ADA. This section outlines:*

- A. **Knowledge:** *The level of education, experience and training an individual must have **at minimum** to be considered qualified for the position.*
- B. **Skills:** *Specific skills such as ability to create, manipulate and utilize spreadsheets, word processing programs, and so on (avoid using program names unless knowledge of that specific program is essential).*
- C. **Abilities:** *Be careful with this requirement. Some examples: Does the position require **LIFTING** 50 pounds, or does it require the ability to move a box of paper from one location to another? Does it require the ability to **WALK** across campus or **MOVE** across campus? For some positions, such as Security, the ability to walk and run will be essential. For most other positions, moving about could be accomplished by other means. Include such abilities as visual acuity, ability to talk on the phone, and so on if appropriate.*

APPROVALS:

Supervisor:	_____	Date:	_____
Vice President:	_____	Date:	_____
Human Resources:	_____	Date:	_____

Employee Review:

I have read the above, and understand that it is intended to describe the general content of and requirements for performing this job. It is not an exhaustive statement of duties, responsibilities or requirements. I understand that this description does not preclude my supervisor's authority to add or change duties or responsibilities, and understand that the performance of other duties will be required from time to time in order to meet the University's needs. I have been given a copy of this description.

Incumbent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

**EXAMPLES OF ACTION VERBS
TO USE IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

accommodate	conduct	extract	obtain	schedule
achieve	confer	facilitate	operate	screen
acquire	consolidate	file	originate	search
act (as)	construct	forecast	organize	secure
adapt	consult	formulate	participate	select
address	control	furnish	perform	serve
adjust	convert	gather	persuade	service
administer	cook	generate	plan	sign
adopt	coordinate	govern	predict	simplify
advise	correlate	guide	prepare	sell
allocate	correspond	handle	present	solicit
analyze	counsel	highlight	preside	solve
apply	create	hire	prevent	specify
appoint	customize	identify	process	stimulate
appraise	delegate	illustrate	produce	strategize
approve	deliver	implement	program	streamline
arrange	demonstrate	improve	promote	strengthen
assemble	design	improvise	propose	study
assess	determine	incorporate	provide	submit
assign	develop	increase	publicize	suggest
assist	devise	influence	publish	summarize
assume	devote	inform	push/pull	supervise
assure	direct	initiate	quantify	support
attain	discuss	inspect	recognize	survey
attract	disseminate	install	recommend	systematize
audit	distinguish	instruct	reconcile	teach
augment	distribute	interact	record	test
authorize	document	interface	recruit	trace
budget	draft	interpret	redesign	trade
calculate	drive	interview	reduce	train
circulate	edit	introduce	refer	transcribe
clarify	eliminate	investigate	refine	transfer
clean	encourage	issue	regulate	translate
clear	enforce	lift	reinforce	transmit
climb	ensure	maintain	repair	troubleshoot
collaborate	establish	manage	reorganize	type
collect	evaluate	market	report	update
combine	execute	modify	represent	upgrade
communicate	exhibit	monitor	research	validate
compile	expand	motivate	resolve	verify
complete	expedite	negotiate	restructure	walk
compose	explore	notify	review	weld