

WRITING A JOB DESCRIPTION – GUIDANCE NOTES

1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

- 1.1. These guidance notes set out how Professional Services job descriptions should be written at the University.
- 1.2. The majority of Professional Services roles can be mapped to a generic role profile in one of the Job Families. Full details are available on the HR Webpages.
<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/business-services/recruitmentandselection/genericjobdescriptions>
- 1.3. There will, however, be occasions where a role cannot be successfully mapped to a generic role profile meaning that a job specific Job Description is required.
- 1.4. This guidance sets out the purposes of a job description and how they should be prepared.
- 1.5. Jobs are a product of an organisations structure, which in turn are a product of the strategies and plans in place to deliver services, which in turn are a product of an organisations mission/purpose. This hierarchy should be borne in mind when writing a JD. A job should only ever be created and should only exist where there is a need for something to be delivered. If this cannot be determined the role should not exist and should, in line with regulations, be deleted. A role should only ever be designed around the needs of the University and not around a specific person or persons.
- 1.6. A MS Word template is available on the HR Webpages
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/documents/job-profile---template-v11.dotx>

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. **Job Description** – this is a document that clarifies key activities carried out in a role and how it contributes to the overall aims, objectives and purpose of the University. It should outline the general character of the role, and not list specific tasks or activities.

3. THE PURPOSE OF A JOB DESCRIPTION

- 3.1. Job Descriptions serve a number of purposes:
 - 3.1.1. Deliverables – a job description should describe the duties that are to be delivered, which are in turn determined by the hierarchy referred to in 1.5.
 - 3.1.2. **Job Evaluation** - well-defined job information enables the job evaluation panel to correctly evaluate the role for pay and grading purposes.

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- 3.1.3. **Recruitment** - an accurate job description plays a key part in attracting and selecting suitable candidates.
- 3.1.4. **Objective Setting and Personal Development Planning** - a job description provides a starting point for defining and setting objectives related to the role and analysing personal development needs.
- 3.1.5. Contractual – depending on circumstances a Job description may form part of the contract of employment.
- 3.2. The key to a successful job profile is clarity -acronyms and jargon should be avoided.
- 3.3. Job descriptions should describe the role as it stands at the time of writing it.
- 3.4. Job Descriptions should describe the work that is required to be delivered, and not the skills of a specific role holder.

4. WHAT MAKES UP A JOB DESCRIPTION

- 4.1. **Job Title** - this should accurately reflect the role. The Job Title should also appropriate when considered against similar roles in the Job Families scheme and should not cause confusion over the level of the role and its general purpose.
<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=job-families-v12.pdf&site=302>
- 4.2. **Grade** – this will be added once the job evaluation process has identified the correct grade of the role.
- 4.3. **School/Division** – this is the school or division the role is in.
- 4.4. **Location** – this is the location of the role.
- 4.5. **Responsible to** - the post's immediate line manager (enter the job title, not the role holder's name).
- 4.6. **Direct Reports** – this is a list of posts that report to the role holder and are line managed by the role holder
- 4.7. **Key Contacts** – this is a list of the key contacts (positions/role titles, not the role holder’s name) that the role holder works with.
- 4.8. **Role description** - Provide one or two sentences to explain why the job exists.
 - 4.8.1. Each sentence in the role descriptions should identify:
 - What the role does
 - The area of work
 - The result
 - 4.8.2. For example, the Job Purpose of an HR Advisor is:

What the role does	To provide a ...
The area of work	... comprehensive range of HR services ...

	... through (a) support and advice to one or more of University's schools and/or divisions; and (b) delivery of or contribution to a range of corporate HR functions...
The result	... to assist the University in meeting its objectives.

4.9. **Principal Accountabilities** - identify what the job has to do and why. The focus should be on the key outputs for which the job is responsible.

4.9.1. They should not include any specific targets or objectives, but should refer to the ongoing responsibilities of the job.

4.9.2. They should follow the same format as contained in 4.8.1.

4.9.3. Principal Accountabilities should:

- Describe major responsibilities rather than detailed tasks - detailed tasks can usually be placed within a smaller number of major responsibilities.
- State what the Jobholder does, e.g. plan, monitor, support, etc., to achieve these responsibilities (see the Appendix B for a key word grid for suggestions).
- Be clear about why work is undertaken - this helps the reader to understand the impact of the job on the University.
- Be specific, precise and realistic.
- Number no more than 8-10.

4.10. **Key Responsibilities** – if required, this will set out in a little more detail the key responsibilities associated with each of the Principal Accountabilities.

4.10.1. They should follow the same format as contained in 4.9.

4.10.2. After detailing the key responsibilities, all Job Descriptions should contain the statements:

- To carry out any other duties that are within the employee's skills and abilities whenever reasonably instructed.
- This Job Description sets out current duties of the post that may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or level of responsibility entailed.

4.11. **Indicative Performance Criteria** - These give a feel for the scale of the resources which the job holder manages or has an impact/influence on. This is not a descriptive section. Dimensions should be brief, factual and quantitative.

4.11.1. This may include, but is not limited to:

- The number of staff the role holder line manages,
- The scale and level of any budget responsibility,
- An outline of any premises, equipment or other resources the role holder is responsible for, and

- Details of any Key Performance Indicators the role holder is responsible for.

4.11.2. The grade appropriate statements contained in Appendix B.

4.12. **Person Specification** - This should include the essential knowledge, skills experience, and personal attributes someone needs to perform the job to an acceptable standard and should be as specific as possible. The specification should state what is actually needed to do the job effectively and should not be discriminatory. If certain factors and/or traits are desirable rather than essential this should be clearly stated. Examples include:

- Detailed day to day operational experience of working with Budgets
- Practical post graduate experience of working in Economic Development through at least one annual business cycle
- Experience of working with Senior Directors
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Packages
- Significant experience of managing staff
- Typing speed of 50 wpm

4.12.1. Where a particular level of skill is required, try to be as objective as possible. Adjectives such as "good", "excellent", etc., are open to interpretation. Greater clarity can be achieved by relating the skill to achievement or stating what the skill is required to achieve. For example:

- "Good project management skills" could become " Detailed day to day operational experience of successfully managing projects [of a similar size/type/complexity]"
- "Excellent oral and written communication skills" could become "Effective oral and written communication skills to develop persuasive proposals and deliver clear and often complex messages to a wide range of audiences"

4.12.2. When specify the level of experience required, those preparing the Person Specification should be alert to the possibility that using criteria such as x year's experience may constitute indirect discrimination, particularly where factors in excess of five years are specified.

4.12.3. Where those writing a person specification are finding it difficult to express the required level of experience except though an annual cycle, (i.e. 10 years' experience ...) consideration should be given to the activities that the role holder will need experience of that will normally only occur on, for example, a 10 year cycle. There is a significant difference between 10 years' experience and 1 year's experience repeated 10 times!

4.12.4. The Person Specification should distinguish between the criteria that are essential that any person appointed to the role must possess or be competent in and those which are desirable and may be acquired with experience or training.

4.12.5. They should be specific if there are any statutory/regulatory/legislative requirements of the role, e.g. to be accredited with the Law Society.

5. CONTACT

5.1. Initially, questions relating to these guidance notes should be addressed to your Human Resources Business Partner.

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/business-services/hrcontactsbyareaoftheuniversity>

Appendix A

Key Word Grid for Job Accountabilities

Approve	Authorise	Analyse	Appraise	Achieve	Administer
Advise	Assist	Attract	Control	Coordinate	Collate
Check	Consult	Create	Determine	Distribute	Define
Develop	Diagnose	Direct	Disseminate	Enable	Engage
Ensure	Evaluate	Equip	Establish	Execute	Forecast
Facilitate	Gain	Gather	Identify	Improve	Implement
Increase	Install	Issue	Interpret	Integrate	Instruct
Inspire	Judge	Justify	Lead	Limit	Liaise
Make	Maintain	Monitor	Motivate	Manage	Negotiate
Obtain	Organise	Operate	Perform	Present	Process
Provide	Persuade	Produce	Progress	Propose	Prepare
Plan	Review	Reconcile	Recommend	Record	Request
Standardise	Supervise	Support	Submit	Train	Work

Appendix B

Indicative Performance Criteria

University Job Descriptions should include the grade appropriate statements from those below:

Grades 1-4

- Support achievement of the Division's/Unit's/School's compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory compliance obligations, including (but not limited to): UKVI, Health & Safety, the Prevent Duty, data protection, Competition and Markets Authority requirements and equal opportunities, as appropriate to the grade and role. Additionally, to promote good practice in relation to University policy, procedure and guidance in relation to those compliance matters in respect of students, staff and other relevant parties.

Grade 5

- The post holder reports to the [manager job title], they are given clearly agreed responsibilities in specific areas. Their line manager would agree daily/weekly/monthly tasks and duties in order to achieve their agreed objectives and support the delivery of the University's goals. The post holder may be expected to work collaboratively across the University and with key stakeholders to deliver single team working that efficiently and effectively supports the achievement of those goals and objectives.
- Support achievement of the Division's/Unit's/School's compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory compliance obligations, including (but not limited to): UKVI, Health & Safety, the Prevent Duty, data protection, Competition and Markets Authority requirements and equal opportunities, as appropriate to the grade and role. Additionally, to promote good practice in relation to University policy, procedure and guidance in relation to those compliance matters in respect of students, staff and other relevant parties.

Grade 6

- The post holder reports to the [manager job title], working under comprehensive direction within a clear framework the post holder will manage their own work and achieve their agreed objectives. In doing this they ultimately support the achievement of the strategic and operational goals of the University, Professional Services & their Division. The post holder may be expected to work collaboratively across the University and with key stakeholders to deliver single team working that efficiently and effectively supports the achievement of those goals and objectives.
- Support achievement of the Division's/Unit's/School's compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory compliance obligations, including (but not limited to): UKVI, Health & Safety, the Prevent Duty, data protection, Competition and Markets Authority requirements and equal opportunities, as appropriate to the grade and role. Additionally, to promote good practice in relation to University policy, procedure and guidance in relation to those compliance matters in respect of students, staff and other relevant parties.
- Balance effectiveness and cost-efficiency in the management of the budgets you are accountable for, demonstrating compliance with Value for Money and Return on Investment principles to support the University's strategic aim to achieve a world-class standard of teaching and research by managing our resources effectively and efficiently.

Grade 7

- The post holder reports to the [manager job title], working under general direction within a clear framework the post holder will manage their own work (and possibly their direct reports) to achieve their agreed objectives. The role holder will play a key role in supporting the Divisional leadership team to achieve the strategic and operational goals of the University, Professional

Services & their Division. The post holder is expected to work collaboratively across the University and with key stakeholders to deliver single team working that efficiently and effectively supports the achievement of those goals and objectives.

- Support achievement of the Division's/Unit's/School's compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory compliance obligations, including (but not limited to): UKVI, Health & Safety, the Prevent Duty, data protection, Competition and Markets Authority requirements and equal opportunities, as appropriate to the grade and role. Additionally, to promote good practice in relation to University policy, procedure and guidance in relation to those compliance matters in respect of students, staff and other relevant parties.
- Balance effectiveness and cost-efficiency in the management of the budgets you are accountable for, demonstrating compliance with Value for Money and Return on Investment principles to support the University's strategic aim to achieve a world-class standard of teaching and research by managing our resources effectively and efficiently.

Grade 8

- The post holder reports to the [manager job title], working under broad direction to enable the post holder to manage their own work and that of their team members, to achieve their agreed objectives. The role holder will play a key role as part of the Divisional leadership team in supporting the achievement of the strategic and operational goals of the University, Professional Services & their Division. The post holder is expected to work collaboratively across the University and with key stakeholders to deliver single team working that efficiently and effectively supports the achievement of those goals and objectives.
- Support achievement of the Division's/Unit's/School's compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory compliance obligations, including (but not limited to): UKVI, Health & Safety, the Prevent Duty, data protection, Competition and Markets Authority requirements and equal opportunities, as appropriate to the grade and role. Additionally, to promote good practice in relation to University policy, procedure and guidance in relation to those compliance matters in respect of students, staff and other relevant parties.
- Balance effectiveness and cost-efficiency in the management of the budgets you are accountable for, demonstrating compliance with Value for Money and Return on Investment principles to support the University's strategic aim to achieve a world-class standard of teaching and research by managing our resources effectively and efficiently.

Grade 9

- The post holder reports to the [manager job title], but enjoys a defined level of autonomy and responsibility to enable the post holder to manage their own work and that of their reporting managers to achieve their agreed objectives. The role holder also supports the senior leadership team of their Division to achieve the strategic and operational goals of the University, Professional Services & their Division. The post holder is expected to work collaboratively across the University and with key stakeholders to deliver single team working that efficiently and effectively supports the achievement of those goals and objectives.
- Support achievement of the Division's/Unit's/School's compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory compliance obligations, including (but not limited to): UKVI, Health & Safety, the Prevent Duty, data protection, Competition and Markets Authority requirements and equal opportunities, as appropriate to the grade and role. Additionally, to promote good practice in relation to University policy, procedure and guidance in relation to those compliance matters in respect of students, staff and other relevant parties.

- Balance effectiveness and cost-efficiency in the management of the budgets you are accountable for, demonstrating compliance with Value for Money and Return on Investment principles to support the University's strategic aim to achieve a world-class standard of teaching and research by managing our resources effectively and efficiently.