

## Introduction

The main purpose of any job description is to outline the main duties and responsibilities that are involved in a particular job. Additional information is often requested in order that one document can fulfil the needs of several processes, such as: recruitment and selection; appraisal; job evaluation and training. Job descriptions should be based on a thorough job analysis and should in themselves be as brief and factual as possible.

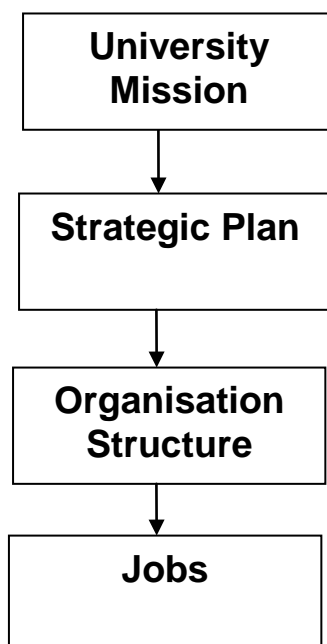
## Section A: Job Analysis

Before you try to describe a job (in the **Job Description**) and the sort of person you need to do the job (in the **Person Specification**) you will find it useful to first go through a process known as **Job Analysis**.

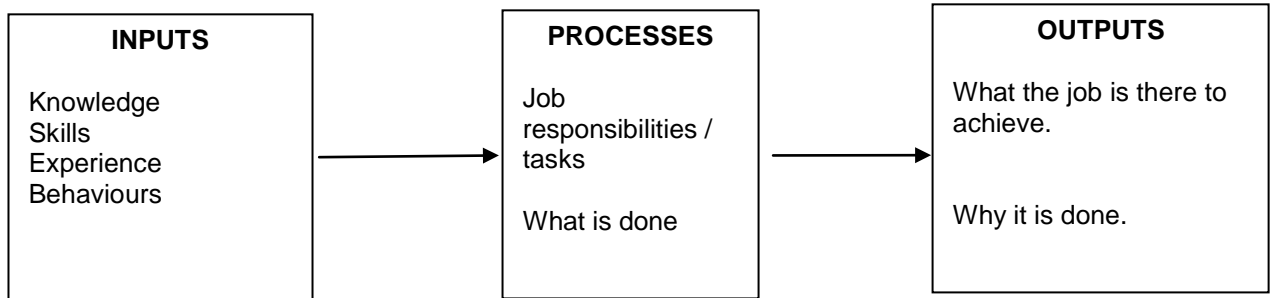
This is the process of gathering information about the content and context of a job, analysing and organising that information.

### 1. What is a 'job'?

You can think about a job as being a part of the organisation with a set of responsibilities to achieve a defined purpose, which supports the purposes of the unit to which it belongs. Jobs are the basic unit of organisation structure.



It might be helpful to think about a job in terms of a simple input-output model:



## 2. How to conduct job analysis

There are several ways of approaching this task. The following approaches might be helpful to you:

- § Review existing documents, including existing job descriptions, structure charts and business plans.
- § Discuss with the current or previous job holder(s).
- § Discuss with Human Resources  
Your local HR team can provide support in this area. They know the sort of information that is needed and, being a step removed from the situation, may be able to spot gaps or suggest improvements. They may also be able to provide you with examples that might save you some work.

Before capturing the information in the job description and person specification, you might find it particularly useful to consider the following.

## 3. Results Analysis

It is important to be clear about what the job exists to achieve – the ‘outputs’ of the role, often called ‘Key Results’. From these, you can work back to think about what has to be done to achieve those results (the ‘process’ in our simple job model) and what package of knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours this will demand (the ‘inputs’ in our model).

Once you have established the key outputs, you can also think about what you would look for to establish how well the output is being achieved, i.e. the performance indicators for the job. You don’t need to know the performance standard at this stage, but you should be able to identify the sorts of evidence you would look for to assess how well the job is being done.

Examples

Job	Key Result Areas	Performance Indicators
Secretary	Document Preparation	Accuracy of documents Speed of preparation Presentation of documents
Technician	Fault finding	Equipment down-time Speed of response
Kitchen Assistant	Serving meals	Customer feedback Portion control

Appendix 2 is appended for you to use to capture information on Results and Performance Indicators.

## 4. Situational Analysis

It will be useful to consider the different situations in which the job operates. This context will help you to determine the type of person you will need to do the job effectively.

First, think about the different duties involved in the post and whether they are done in situations which are:

### Individual Situations

Situations in which the jobholder takes independent action or performs on their own.

### Dialogues

Situations where the jobholder is dealing with one other person (either internal or external to their own team). Examples might include advising, negotiating, coaching, answering, supervising.

### Group Conversations

Situations in which the job holder must relate to several people. This may include all types of group situation such as taking part in meetings, presenting, training or teaching a group.

### Critical Incidents

It can also be useful to analyse situations which are critical to the success of the role. What are the 'high risk' situations during which a strong performer really shines or a less effective performer is left wanting. What are the situations when there is no room for error?

Appendix 3 is provided to help you capture this information.

## Section B: Guidance on Writing Effective Job Descriptions

The headings under which a job description should be written and notes for guidance on completing each section are set out below:

### 1. Job Details

#### 1.1. Job Title

The job title should be brief and accurately describe the job, whilst retaining consistency with University norms. It should not include the Organisation Unit name. For example state "School Administrator" and not "School Administrator in the Institute of XYZ". Any new job title must be checked with your local HR team.

#### 1.2. Effective Date

The date that the job description is effective from.

#### 1.3. Faculty/Central Service

The name of the Faculty e.g. Medical Sciences or Central Service

#### 1.4. School/Section

The name of the school e.g. School of Dental Sciences or the name of the Central Service section e.g. Estates

#### 1.5. Grade

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The grade of the job, as confirmed by HR (leave this blank if the job is to be evaluated)

## 1.6. Position Number

This number is unique to the job and is allocated by HR when the post is created.

## 2. Main Purpose of the Job

This should be an accurate and concise statement of the contribution the job makes to the University. It should not exceed a paragraph in length, and is normally capable of being contained within one sentence. The purpose does not include a detailed list of how the job is done, or a list of problems, tasks and activities. Nor is it a summary of the duties and responsibilities or a description of the Organisation Unit. You may find it easier to write the purpose statement by answering one of the following questions:

What is it that the job is intended to achieve?

What would not get done if the job did not exist?

What is the contribution that the job makes to the University?

Examples:

The purpose of a Director of Information Technology might read:

“Develop and implement an Information Technology Strategy for the organisation that reflects and supports the current and future needs of the Organisation.

The purpose of a Finance Assistant might read:

To maintain all operational aspects of the school's accounts to ensure school expenditure and income is accurately processed and reported upon.

When preparing the job description it may be better to defer writing down the purpose of the job until the main duties and responsibilities have been analysed and described.

## 3. Main Duties and Responsibilities

The steps required to define the main duties and responsibilities of the job are as follows. The information you gain from a 'Results Analysis' described in Section A will help you describe the main duties and responsibilities.

- 3.1. Firstly, identify and list the tasks that are carried out. No attempt should be made to describe how they are carried out but some indication should be given as to the purpose of each task.
- 3.2. Analyse the initial list of tasks and, so far as possible, simplify the list by grouping related tasks together so that no more than say, seven or eight main areas of responsibility remain.
- 3.3. Decide on the order in which the main responsibilities should be described. Perhaps the most effective order is to list the most important duties first. An alternative is to adopt a more chronological order; this can be useful when jobs are based around a core process or calendar of events.
- 3.4. A typical sentence describing a task should start with an action verb and use verbs which

express the actual responsibility, for example: to recommend; to ensure that; to collaborate; to prepare; to supervise. A list of action verbs is attached. Complete the sentence by stating why that action is carried out. This indicates the purpose of the task and can lead to setting targets or performance standards more easily. A useful format for constructing a job responsibility is:

"What is done"

"To what"

"To achieve what result"

### 3.5.

Examples are:

<b>What is done</b>	<b>To what</b>	<b>To achieve what result</b>
To supervise	the team	so that staff have the motivation and training to deliver the required levels of performance
To undertake	equipment maintenance	in order to ensure that equipment is kept in a safe working condition.
To design	degree courses for undergraduate students	to meet the school's teaching objectives
To design	training courses	in order to produce quality training events that meet the University's training strategy
To produce	the management accounts	in order to provide accurate and timely management information

- 3.6. Having written down the main duties and responsibilities, amplify each sentence appropriately using precise terminology and examples if necessary. An example of expanding the first of the above statements regarding supervision could include: recruits and selects team members, sets performance objectives, agrees training and development plans and handles any performance issues.

Managers should not feel it necessary to amplify every sentence. However for certain elements further detail will provide a fuller picture of the main duties.

- 3.7. Where acronyms are to be used please ensure the first instance is stated in full e.g. Performance Related Pay (PRP). For the more common acronyms e.g. BTEC, RSA this will not be required.

## 4. Dimensions

This section contains the factual, quantitative and qualitative information that will help to describe the context in which the job operates. Any information provided in this section should correspond to statements in the previous section. Typical job dimensions are given below:

### 4.1. Staff

Number and profile of staff supervised including whether full time, part time, voluntary or other. This can include for example, supervision of a team of external contractors

## 4.2. Financial

Budgets managed, including grant monies, discretionary funds and monies generated. Wherever possible please provide the annualised amount or time period for which the funds are allocated to.

## 4.3. Research

Number and amount of research grants managed or coordinated annually.

## 4.4. Teaching

Number and type of courses managed or delivered annually.

## 4.5. Customer

Number and type of external and internal customers who are **key** to the performance of the main duties and responsibilities.

## 4.6. Administrative

Management or attendance on committees which link to the main duties and responsibilities and are key to the delivery of objectives.

## 4.7. Other

## 5. Special Features

The purpose of this section is to provide the opportunity to identify aspects of the job that are important and have a significant impact on the job. There should be some comments on the following areas:

### 5.1 Planning and Organising

This should describe the requirement for planning and organising within the job. It may be a direct requirement to plan and organise the job holder's own workload, that of other people, or the allocation and use of resources. Some points useful to include are:

- how does work come to the job holder?
- does he/she plan to deal with it?
- to what extent can the job holder plan ahead?
- what timescales are planned over e.g. daily/monthly?

### 5.2 Decision Making

Describe the job's role in decision making. It would be particularly useful to include:

- examples of typical decisions made independently or are involved with
- the nature of the role in decisions e.g. formal sign off, recommending, advising

- contributions made by others to decisions
- what guidelines are in place to support decisions?

## 5.3 Internal and External Relationships

In this section identify and describe the most significant internal and external relationships that are involved in the job, ensuring that the content and nature of the relationship is clear. Do not describe every relationship, only those that play an important part in getting the job done, e.g.

- Negotiating contracts with purchasers
- Developing services with customers
- Managing staff

## 5.4. Use of Specialist Equipment

A brief description may be given here of the types of specialist equipment used and the frequency and nature of use e.g. basic operation, installation, maintenance etc.

The knowledge, skills and experience needed to use the equipment to the required standard should be described in the appropriate section of the Person Specification..

## 5.5 Other Special Features

There may be other special features such as:

- Operating in a highly technical or particularly complex field
- Operating in a highly complex external market place
- Involvement in political/public relations issues
- The physical effort and/or strain on the job holder in performing the job to the required standards
- Unfavourable environmental conditions to which the job holder is necessarily exposed in order to perform the job

## 6 Signatures

Job descriptions should always be reviewed and discussed with any current job holder/holders. To ensure that the job description is acceptable to all interested parties, the last page of the document is to be signed by the job holder, (or where there are multiple job holders, by one of the job holders), the Manager and Head of School/Service. It is then reviewed by the relevant Human Resources Officer to ensure it is of an appropriate standard.

## 7 Organisation Chart

An organisation chart should be attached showing the reporting relationships relevant to the job. Ideally the whole unit should be shown, where practicable, with clear identification of the appropriate team. Where this is not possible the chart should show the following:

- The title of the person to whom the job reports
- The titles of all other jobs reporting to that person
- The titles of all jobs reporting to the job holder
- Which job the job description refers to
- Dotted lines where there is a “functional” reporting structure

The organisation chart should **not** include names of employees, staff categories or grades.

Additional notes can be used, for example, to explain the nature of reporting lines and supervision.

## 8. Person Specification

This section must be completed to show the key knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours required to perform the role effectively. This information is not just used for recruitment purposes – it is also needed for other HR processes such as job evaluation and re-organisations.

Detailed guidance on how to compile a good quality person specification can be found on the HR website at

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/hr/recruit/guidance/process/person-specification.php>



## ACTION VERBS

Accumulate	Follow-up	Receive
Achieve	Forecast	Recruit
Advise	Formulate	Recommend
Analyse	Fulfil	Reject
Appraise	Furnish	Report
Approve		Represent
Ascertain	Gather	Review
Assess	Give	
Assign		Serve
Assist	Help	Service
Assure	Hire	Set
Authorise		Specify
	Identify	Standardise
Budget	Implement	Store
	Improve	Structure
Check	Inform	Study
Compile	Interview	Submit
Complete	Inspect	Supervise
		Supply
Conduct	Issue	Survey
Consult		
Contact	Keep	Take
Contribute		Train
Control	Limit	Undertake
Co-ordinate		Uphold
Counsel	Maintain	
	Meet	Verify
Design	Motivate	
Determine		Write
Develop	Participate	
Dictate	Perform	
Direct	Plan	
Distribute	Prepare	
	Present	
Ensure	Process	
Establish	Produce	
Evaluate	Propose	
Examine	Provide	

# Results Analysis

Job Title	
Academic/Service Unit	
<b>Key Result Areas</b> What outputs are expected to be achieved.	<b>Performance Indicators</b> What factors will be used to evaluate performance in the Key Result Areas?

## Situational Analysis

What types of activities involve working in **Individual Situations**?


What types of activities involve working in **Dialogue Situations**?


What types of activities involve working in **Group Situations**?


### Critical Incidents

Situations in which the job holder is vulnerable. For example, situations which demand extreme effort or which reflect especially good or poor performance. High risk events which are critical to job success.