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## GUIDELINES FOR WRITING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

These guidelines have been produced to assist managers and Supervisors in writing a Position Description (PD) that accurately reflects the requirements of the position at the University.

A PD should provide a clear outline of the functions and responsibilities of the job, the knowledge, skills and experience required to successfully perform these functions and the role of the position within the work unit and the university as a whole.

The PD should describe the position, not the person holding the position. It should be based on the specific duties and responsibilities associated with the role, rather than targeting a specific HEW level. This approach ensures clearer expectation setting and allows for a more accurate reflection of the work involved.

A PD serves a number of purposes. It is an essential organisational tool to enable managers, employees and prospective candidates to:

- Correctly classify the position;
- Better define the knowledge, skills, and attribute requirements of the role;
- Better define reporting lines;
- Identify the right candidate in the recruitment and selection process;
- Create role clarity for the manager and the Employee; and
- Provide the basis for identifying and discussing work and objectives and formulating a development plan in the Career Development Planning and Review process.

Some frequent errors that occur in the development of a Position Description include:

- A position purpose which is not clearly articulated and is too long;
- Key responsibilities identified as a task list rather than the main accountabilities of the position,
- Too many selection criteria – criteria should be limited to a maximum of 6, and should describe the requirements of the position itself and not the attributes of the current/recent occupant; and
- Selection criteria that include too many elements in one criterion.

### POSITION DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE

To prepare a PD use the Position Description Template found at the [Office of People, HR forms, template, and guidelines website](#). Your Senior HR Partner and/or HR Advisor are also available to provide assistance in the development of your PD.

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR POSITION DESCRIPTION DEVELOPMENT

The immediate Supervisor of the position is responsible for developing or updating the PD. Where the position is occupied (i.e., in instances of a reclassification request) the PD should be developed in consultation with the occupant.

Supervisors are encouraged to liaise with their Senior HR Partner or HR Advisor for advice on completing the Position Description Template, and the process for classifying, approving, and establishing a position.

The Office of People is responsible for the formal classification of the position, and for ensuring the PD complies with University Staff Agreements, policies, and procedures.



In accordance with university delegations, the Dean/Director/Unit Head must authorise the content of the final Position Description before it can progress for approval.

All new positions must be approved and established prior to commencing a recruitment action.

## **DEVELOPING A POSITION DESCRIPTION**

### **Position Details**

This section provides basic information about the position that helps to distinguish it from other positions in the University. This information is to be consistent with establishment details in AscenderPay and will be checked by the Office of People. Please do not delete any of these lines of information. This template must remain in a standard format to ensure consistency.

Example:

<b>Position Title:</b>	HR Partnerships Graduate
<b>Position Number(s):</b>	
<b>Classification:</b>	Level 4
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Executive Director, HR Partnerships and Employment Relations (7011490)
<b>School/Office:</b>	Office of People
<b>Division:</b>	People and Advancement

### **Position Title:**

The Position Title should be short and concise and align with the roles and responsibilities.

### **Classification:**

The Higher Education Worker (HEW) Level or Academic Level indicates the appropriate level of responsibilities and duties of the position. The HEW/Academic level determines the base salary level for the position. The Office of People will evaluate the PD and advise the appropriate classification.

### **Establishment No.:**

Each position in the University has a unique establishment number to identify the specific role. For a new position, the establishment (position) number will be generated by the Office of People. If the position is an existing position, an establishment number will already be in place.

### **Reporting to Title & Establishment / Position No.:**

Include the title of the supervisor's position, and establishment number.

### **School/Office:**

Enter the name of the School or Office in which the position will be situated.

### **Division:**

Enter the name of the Division in which the position will be situated.

## **ABOUT WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY**

Standard wording that must be contained in the context of all Position Descriptions can be found in the Position Description Template.

## **ABOUT THE SCHOOL/ OFFICE:**



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Following the standard wording, each School, Unit, or Institute should have an approved overview of the work unit, outlining how it fits within the wider University community.

## **POSITION PURPOSE**

This section is to provide a brief overview of the position. Include a few sentences that explain the overall objective of the position. What are the key components and broad accountabilities of the position? What functions is the position responsible for? This section should not list specific responsibilities or tasks.

The reader should be able to judge the overall complexity of the position from this section. This section is also often used as the text for advertising the position. Please see below for examples of the type of information to be included and the recommended length of this section.

Examples:

- *The IT Support Officer is responsible for the provision of a wide range of first and second-level support services that include desktop support, computer lab support, server administration, technical advice, and client-specific technical IT support depending upon the services required by the client.*
- *The Manager, Payroll Services is responsible for the provision of high-level quality payroll and leave service to the business. This is achieved through the supervision and development of payroll staff and adherence to taxation requirements, accounting and audit procedures, and employee entitlements detailed in workplace agreements and HR policies and procedures.*
- *The School Administrative Officer is responsible for providing high-level, effective, and efficient administrative support to the School and is also responsible for the supervision of program and forum administration staff. The School seeks continual improvement in student satisfaction with program and teaching quality and the School Administrative Officer assists in the development, implementation, and evaluation of administrative systems to support this improvement.*

## **KEY RELATIONSHIPS**

The first sentence confirms who the position reports to and following that, if there are any positions that report to this role.

This section relates to identifying the key positions and/or work Units and stakeholders (internal and external) that this position is required to liaise with.

Should the position have no direct, note as “*This position has no supervisory responsibility.*”



Example:

## KEY RELATONSHIPS

This position reports to the Executive Director, HR Partnerships and Employment Relations.

This position has no supervisory responsibilities.

Success in the role will be dependent on developing and maintaining positive relationships with:

1. Executive Director, HR Partnerships and Employment Relations.
2. Senior HR Partners
3. HR Advisors
4. Workplace Relations Advisors
5. Change Manager
6. Chief People Officer and staff of the Office of the CPO
7. Schools and Divisions

## MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section describes the major areas of responsibility of the position, to which the position holder will be accountable. The major responsibilities are to be written focussing on the expected outcomes of the position.

The major responsibilities will have standardised headings. Examples of headings can be obtained from the Office of People. The major headings should be numbered and written in order of importance. Following the headings will be dot points of the expanded requirements of the responsibilities. They should be expressed concisely. Statements for responsibilities should begin with a verb such as coordinate, build, develop, deliver, facilitate, implement, maintain, negotiate, produce, etc.

Generic statements covering administrative activities, staff management and budget/finance management can be obtained from the Office of People.

Examples:

## MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### **1. Administrative Support**

- Assist the Executive Director, HR Partnerships and Employment Relations with a wide range of administrative tasks
- Assist with the preparation of documentation for the Partnership, Workplace Relations and Change management teams.
- Follow up any outstanding matters with due consideration being given to critical and important issues and deadlines.

### **2. Systems and Records**

- Access the Human Resources Information System (AscenderPay), creating, updating, and amending records as required.
- Extract data and arrange data in report format
- Conduct routine analysis and make recommendations as appropriate.
- Access and file records in TRIM, the University's records management system.

### **3. Project Support**



## MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work with the broader HR team to support the development and implementation of HR initiatives and projects.
- 4. Ongoing Learning and Development**
- Comply and remain current with relevant legislation applicable to the position and its duties.
  - Work closely with the HR Partnerships and Workplace Relations Advisors to learn new skills and provide a pathway.
  - A high degree of confidentiality, professionalism, and diplomacy is exercised in all aspects and areas of the operation.
- 5. Stakeholder Management**
- At all times act in a professional manner, demonstrating high-level interpersonal skills and good working relations within the Office of People and across the University.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

This section contains the experience, skills, and abilities required to undertake the role. The selection criteria should include a mixture of qualifications, attributes, skills, and knowledge that are consistent with the requirements of the position and in line with Schedule 4: Position Descriptors of the University Staff Agreements. Each criterion should be measurable.

The selection criteria are critical to the recruitment and selection process, and applicants use these criteria to assess their suitability for the position. They are also used by the Selection Panel to formulate appropriate interview questions and select the appropriate candidate.

When drafting selection criteria, please consider the language used as this may impact on the type of applicant that expresses an interest.

Selection criteria should be limited to a maximum of 6. Each criterion should be a separate point. They should be numbered rather than bullet points and listed in order of importance.

The following four categories should be addressed in the selection criteria:

- **Qualifications** - the desired level of education required for the position i.e., degrees, certificates, licenses, etc. Only qualifications required to undertake the position should be listed. Not all positions will require a mandatory qualification. Please consult the University's Staff Agreements for guidance on the required level of qualifications and experience for each HEW and Academic level.

Examples:

- *Completion of a degree-level qualification in an appropriate field or an equivalent combination of relevant experience, education, and training.*
  - *A tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline and experience and contributions in teaching and research/development. A Ph.D. in a related discipline is also a position requirement.*
- **Knowledge/Experience** – what type, how much, and at what level of previous work experience is required for competent performance in the position. The first criterion should specify the amount and type of experience required. Due to EEO legislation, the experience cannot be specified in the number of years, instead statements such as 'proven', 'demonstrated', 'substantial', and 'extensive' should be used.



Examples:

- *Demonstrated knowledge of accounting principles and theories.*
- *Demonstrated experience and knowledge in web development and design principles and practices with proven success in designing and developing innovative and user-friendly web pages.*
- *Specific knowledge of Work Health & Safety legislation.*
- *A thorough understanding of contemporary issues in teaching and learning in higher education.*
- *Extensive knowledge and demonstrated experience in the area of delivery and planning of relevant technical service.*
- *An understanding of the tertiary sector would be an advantage. (May be added to a criterion where there is reference to sector-specific duties or reference to a large and complex organisation for example)*

- **Skills/Abilities** – the demonstrated capacity to perform observable behaviour. Use of terms such as ‘understanding of’, ‘demonstrated’, ‘proven’, ‘extensive’, and ‘high level’ should be considered in order to convey the breadth and depth of the experience expected and required of the position.

Examples:

- *Demonstrated ability to supervise staff.*
- *Proven ability to organise and prioritise work and complete tasks within tight timeframes.*
- *Demonstrated ability to work within a team and/or independently as required.*
- *Extensive experience working with all aspects of budget management.*

- **Personal Attributes** – the personal qualities required to perform the responsibilities of the position. These include personal attributes such as interpersonal relations, working under stress, adaption to change, and communication skills.

Examples:

- *Quality customer service focus*
- *Details focus/Attention to detail*
- *Responsive*
- *Stakeholder management (able to engage people from diverse backgrounds).*
- *Strategic thinker*
- *Planning focus*
- *Strong communicator (High level communication skills and interpersonal skills, with a demonstrated capacity to develop and maintain effective collaborative working relationships across the University).*

Selection Criteria Example:

## QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

1. Currently completing or recently completed (within the past 12 months) a Business Degree or Diploma in Human Resources Management or a related discipline.
2. Experience and/or strong interest in Human Resources Management.
3. Knowledge of contemporary human resources practices.
4. Well-developed organisational skills with strong attention to detail.
5. Well-developed interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills, with the ability to establish and develop effective collegial working relationships to complete work tasks.
6. Proven sound analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills, along with the capacity to successfully manage competing work priorities and meet deadlines.



## QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

7. Demonstrated ability to maintain confidentiality and exercise judgment.
8. Proficiency in Microsoft Word and Excel.

## UNIVERSITY EXPECTATIONS

All position descriptions will include a list of key legislation, University policies, and procedures that all staff are required to comply with. This is mandatory and included in the Position Description Template.

### **Example:**

## UNIVERSITY EXPECTATIONS

Ensure you are aware of and comply with legislation and University policies and procedures relevant to the duties undertaken including, but not limited to:

- [Code of Conduct](#);
- [Work Health and Safety and Wellbeing Management System](#);
- [Western Sydney University Professional Staff Agreement 2022](#);
- [Western Sydney University Academic Staff Agreement 2022](#);
- Anti-Discrimination principles, Equal Employment Opportunity and staff and student equity.

## ORGANISATIONAL CHART

An organisational chart must be provided with the position description. The chart provides visual context about where the position fits within the University/School/Unit structure and assists with the evaluation process. Please ensure that the organisational chart is up to date and includes the position that the Position Description represents.

The Organisational Chart should be obtained from OrgPlus and contain the Position title and HEW Level of all positions. Your Senior HR Partner or HR Advisor can assist with OrgPlus access if you don't have it and require it.

## POSITION DESCRIPTION APPROVAL

Once the position description has been evaluated by the Office of People, your Senior HR Partner or HR Advisor will progress the document to the appropriate delegated University staff member for formal approval of the evaluated Position Description in line with the University's delegations.

**For assistance in developing a position description, contact your Senior HR Partner and/or HR Advisor. Your contacts within the Office of People can provide some sample and/or generic position descriptions covering a range of positions across the University.**



## **Responsibility Heading Examples**

- Customer Service
- Case Management
- Administrative Services
- Strategic Initiatives
- Policy Development & Review
- Career Development
- Ongoing Learning and Development
- Stakeholder Management
- People Management
- Budget
- Record Management
- Project Management
- Student Enquiries
- Continuous Improvement/Quality Assurance
- Data Analysis
- Projects and Initiatives
- Customer experience
- Governance and Compliance
- Operational Performance & Strategies
- Integration & Advice
- Research Impact
- Information Management
- Business Management
- Governance and Engagement
- General
- Industry Partnerships
- Policy, System, Management & Reporting
- Event Coordination/ Management