

The Importance of the Position Description

A properly designed position description (PD) provides a competitive advantage when sourcing talent. A well written and accurate PD benefits the department, hiring manager, and both potential and current employees by:

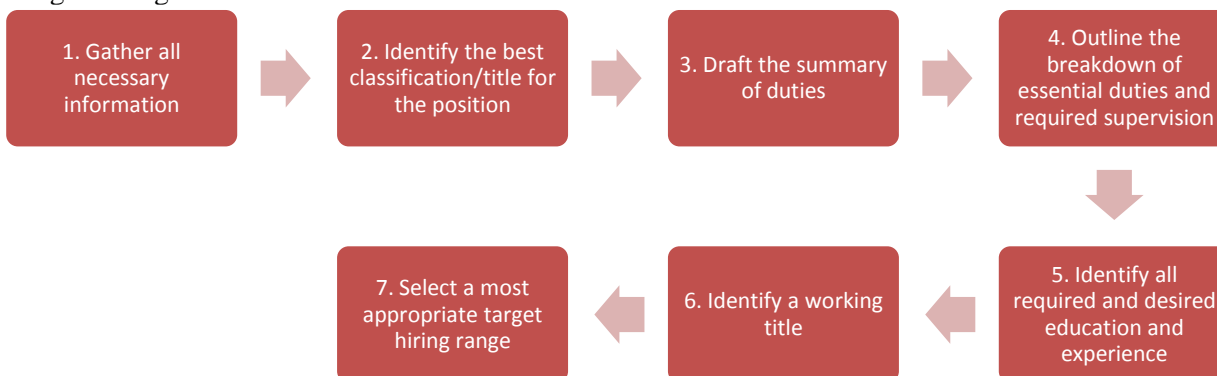
- Creating a shared understanding of position responsibilities and performance expectations
- Saving recruiting time and money
- Providing all necessary information so potential candidates can assess whether the position and company are a good fit
- Lowering turnover rates by discouraging unqualified and poorly suited candidates from applying and accepting the position
- Identifying and assessing high-quality candidates more quickly

In summary, when designing the PD, it is important to think about and include all details necessary to help candidates understand what the position involves, allowing them to assess fit. In addition to thinking through the functional or technical expertise you require of an individual, it is important to identify those attributes or behaviors that support employees in being successful. A great place to start is the university values. As such, candidates are introduced to the following when they visit the University Online Career Site:

“At Ohio State University, we promise to accomplish our mission, and be the pioneering and eminent institution that we and those we serve expect of us. As such, all members of our community will be held accountable for, and are expected to, conduct themselves on behalf of the institution according to the following fundamental values: Excellence, Collaboration, Integrity and Personal Accountability, Openness and Trust, Diversity in People and Ideas, Change and Innovation and Simplicity in our Work.”

Steps in Creating a Position Description

By following these 7 steps when creating a position description, managers and HR Professionals can ensure that they have thought through and included all essential elements:



I. Gather All Necessary Information

In order to accurately portray the position responsibilities, associated expectations, work environment and culture, hiring managers should do the following when creating a PD:

1. Think about the business need for the position.
2. Identify and clearly describe specific duties an employee will be required to perform.
3. Identify the minimum qualifications for the duties to be performed successfully.
4. Define the results, an employee will be expected to achieve, to demonstrate success in the position. In addition, consider resources necessary to achieve these results.
5. Compare top-and average-performing employees to determine attributes that are important to success.

The information you gather will be used to draft your position description and select the most appropriate position classification.

II. Identify the best classification/title for the position

Once you know the primary position responsibilities you can select the appropriate university classification/title. These are found at hr.osu.edu/statistics/titledck and are part of a list commonly referred to as the University's Title Deck. Depending on duties, classifications/titles are either Classified Civil Service (CCS) or unclassified and may be exempt or non-exempt from overtime eligibility. Many classifications (and all CCS Classifications) have an established specification, which includes a description of the primary function of the position and significant duties and can be helpful in guiding the creation of the PD.

The PD should include all significant position information including a summary of duties, any supervision responsibilities, a breakdown of essential duties, required education and previous work experience, the working title and the intended hiring salary range.

It should be written in brief, descriptive statements beginning with a verb and ending with a semi-colon, using lower case text (except in the case of proper names). In addition, it is important to spell out acronyms. The use of acronyms can create confusion and should therefore be avoided.

III. Draft the Summary of Duties

The summary of duties includes a function statement and a clear and accurate summary of the position.

The function statement is a concise description of why the position exists and should be the first line in the summary. The summary of duties focuses on the job's overall purpose and provides insight into the position and the context within which it works. It also reflects the size, scope and activity of the role. The example below contains the function statement and summary of duties for an Office Associate.

The function statement is underlined in this example.

Provides administrative secretarial support to chair of the department. Performs administrative secretarial duties; answers phones, screens and routes calls; schedules appointments and maintains calendar; coordinates travel; plans meetings and conferences; arranges catering, equipment and rooms; purchases supplies and equipment; assists Program Manager with daily operation of department; assists with special programs and projects as assigned (summary of duties).

Once the position information is summarized, units should consider if there is any other information that is critical to share with candidates. Examples may include any required background checks or hours of work. This information should be designated as *additional information*, and outlined at the end of the summary of duties. Sample language might be listed as, "Additional Information".

Note: Inclusion of the term "Supervision" in the PD, where the job duties do not involve hiring, firing, evaluation of employee work, or issuing necessary corrective action, consider using alternate terms such as "coordinate", "lead", or "oversee" (e.g., "coordinate student lab activities") rather than "supervise." Per Classified Civil Service rules (3335-55-04), to supervise "... means that an employee assigns and reviews work, completes employee performance management procedures, rewards exemplary employee performance, recommends disciplinary action, adjusts grievances, and requires the use of independent judgment in exercising authority."

IV. Outline the Breakdown of Essential Duties and Required Supervision

The essential duties of a PD describe what needs to be completed to satisfy the function statement. Each section needs to contain related responsibilities, and each responsibility must have a percentage of time assigned to it. The total of all sections combined needs to equal to 100%. The sections are organized into four or five categories, listed in order of importance.

Below is an example of the essential duties for an Office Associate:

35%	Answers phones, screens and routes calls; schedules appointments and maintains calendar; serves as liaison; manages mail, documentation and correspondence; organizes and maintains filing system.
30%	Composes letters; prepares typed correspondence, business documents, statistical reports, reviews, miscellaneous reports, and other medical/administrative documentation
20%	Schedules meetings and conferences; coordinates catering, equipment and rooms, and creates presentations.
15%	Assists with specials programs and projects as assigned; purchases supplies and equipment; attends meetings as needed; provides coverage for other support staff when needed.

The duties also need to be evaluated according to exemption status. If the majority of duties are exempt, the position would be classified as such (the position would be salaried and not eligible for overtime); if the duties are non-exempt, the position would be classified as such (the position would be paid hourly and eligible for overtime). More information on the exemption status can be found on the United State Department of Labor website (www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-flsa.htm) or you can contact a representative on your Talent Management team (in Organization and Human Resource Consulting – OHRC) for more information (hr.osu.edu/ohrc/talentmanagement).

Finally, it is important to indicate how many students, staff and/or faculty the incumbent will be expected to supervise.

V. Identify All Required and Desired Education and Experience

As mentioned above, all CCS classifications/titles have an established specification. Stated requirements within these specifications cannot be removed and/or modified. The only exception would be the addition of a license or qualification as required by law (example: if the position requires the incumbent to operate a university vehicle, then a valid Ohio driver’s license would be an acceptable additional requirement).

Many unclassified titles have established specifications. Some do not. For those that do, the requirements must be included in every position that falls within that classification. Rare exceptions can be made; please consult your appropriate Talent Management representative for more information. Additional requirements can also be added to an unclassified position, provided the requirement(s) are job related. Specifications can be found by searching OHR’s “title deck”, located at hr.osu.edu/statistics/titledck.

Required qualifications should be based on the position, not an individual. Be sure that the requirements are truly the **minimum** qualifications needed to perform the job at the time of start; additional requirements, while not necessary, can be included as desired qualifications. The required qualifications should be absolute requirements and be reflective of the position responsibilities.

Examples of requirements include:

Experience ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Three years of experience in contract negotiation” • “One year of experience in budgeting”
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Knowledge of Ohio employment laws” • “Knowledge of medical terminology”
Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ability to lift 50 pounds” • “Ability to stand for long periods of time”
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Excellent communication skills” • “Excellent time management skills”
Certifications/Licenses	

¹ It is also important to know how Ohio State defines “experience.” The levels of experience are defined as follows:

- Experience = one year
- Considerable experience = three years
- Extensive experience = five years

As such, if you say a position requires considerable experience managing people, candidates must have at least three years experience managing others in order to qualify.

Note: In the context of immigration filings on behalf of foreign nationals, the government will closely examine requirements and duties to determine the prevailing wage for the position, and whether listed qualifications truly reflect the “minimum” requirements. When utilizing the word “experience” in the minimum requirements, the government considers that it is work experience acquired after a degree.

VI. Identify a Working Title

The employing unit determines the working title for the position. A working title clearly defines the role and *may* be the same as the university classification/title (as described in section 2). When creating working titles, remember the following:

- Keep titles short (usually one to three words)
- Avoid outdated use of numbered rankings (e.g. I, II, III)
- Avoid titles so specific that they must be changed each time job duties change
- Avoid working titles that are identical to an existing classification/title, other than the one the position falls into
- Ensure titles are meaningful to the workgroup and the individual

Examples of working titles:

University Classification	Sample Working Title
Office Associate	Medical Secretary
Systems Developer/Engineer	Design Engineer
Program Coordinator	Transportation Planner

If a university classification/title appropriately describes the function of the position, it is fine to leave as is.

VII. Select a Most Appropriate Target Hiring Range

The following list of considerations should be utilized by the department when deciding the appropriate targeted hiring range:

1. Level of expertise, length, and how specialized the experience needs to be.
2. Past practices within the college or VP Unit.
3. Balancing funding and/or budget restrictions with workforce demographics (e.g. shortage of talent in the particular field, highly competitive position in the market place, etc.).
4. Internal equity/compression relating to existing staff (internal market data for staff salaries is available at hr.osu.edu/statistics/sim; no password is required).
5. Degree of impact on the mission and goals.
6. Local competition/external market equity (external market data is available at hr.osu.edu/comp/jobmatch; note: you must use your name.# to log in and must be an approved user of this site).

VIII. Additional Information

Two final pieces you will need to include in your PD are the Emergency Closing Designation and the Disaster Designation. An employee must be designated, in case of an emergency closing or in the case of disaster, as essential, alternate, or standby. For complete details, please reference the university’s Disaster Preparedness and University State of Emergency Policy 6.17, located at hr.osu.edu/policy/policy617.

IX. Conclusion

In conclusion, the design of a PD is critical to sourcing the best talent. Departments, hiring managers, potential and current employees all benefit from this. Keeping the university’s values in mind while completing all seven steps will help ensure that the PD is strong and effective.

Here are two examples of properly written PD’s. Each section is numbered (in red) to correspond with the step in the process. Notes (not to be included in the actual PD) are included in red.

Example 1:					
Systems Developer/Engineer (unclassified title) (section 2)	Job Code: 8189 (found in the title deck) (section 2)				
	Pay Range: (found in the title deck) (section ?)				
	Position #: 00000000 (position number will be generated upon entry into PeopleSoft) (section 7)				
Employee Name:	(to be completed after a hire is made)				
Department Area:	XXXXXXXX				
Working Title:	Network Engineer (section 6)				
Hours/Shift:	8 a.m. – 5 p.m.				
Summary of Duties:	Provides network support and installation functions in Network Support Group; installs and maintains various data communication equipment at clients and POP/HUB sites; provides network support and installation functions in Network Support group; maintains and troubleshoots complex/difficult network problems, designs and recommends changes in network topology; maintains and schedules procedures and administers those changes; examines current network topologies and provides management with advice by outlining opportunities to provide better and/or more cost-effective network services; has responsibility for project management/oversight and/or administrative supervision of staff; other duties as assigned. (sections 1, 3)				
Supervision and Essential Duties:	Supervises one Office Associate and two Systems Specialists. (section 4)				
	35% Installs and maintains various data communications equipment at client and POP/hub sites; designs and recommends changes in network topology, maintenance and scheduling procedures and administers those changes. (section 4)				
	35% Examines trouble-shooting of data circuits and communications equipment; travels within Ohio, occasional out-of-state travel; works occasional off-hours; on-call 24/hrs/day (on rotating basis) to respond to escalated network problems on resolution and procedures. (section 4)				
	20% Documents site and hub equipment configuration, including such as software and/or hardware configuration, inventory and tracking changes on an on-going basis; coordinates client installations within networking and third party vendors, and provides accurate records on install and configure of client equipment (section 4)				
	5% Tests new equipment and initial configuration of equipment; recommends and tests new network technologies and provides interoperability with existing networking operations; manages and ensures proper monitoring and configuration of network equipment and systems. (section 4)				
	5% Other duties as assigned. (section 4)				
Education and Experience:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Required:</td> <td>Bachelor’s degree in computer and information science or related field or an equivalent combination of education & experience; experience with large networks, including the Internet, network monitoring & high speed networks; knowledge of Internet protocols; knowledge of TCP/IP, BGP, MPLS and OSPF. (section 5)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Desired:</td> <td>Knowledge of UNIX systems. (section 5)</td> </tr> </table>	Required:	Bachelor’s degree in computer and information science or related field or an equivalent combination of education & experience; experience with large networks, including the Internet, network monitoring & high speed networks; knowledge of Internet protocols; knowledge of TCP/IP, BGP, MPLS and OSPF. (section 5)	Desired:	Knowledge of UNIX systems. (section 5)
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Desired:	Knowledge of UNIX systems. (section 5)				
Emergency Closing Designation (Short-Term): (section 8)	This position has been designated as an Essential position for short term. See University Policy 6.17.				
Disaster Designation (Long-Term): (section 8)	This position has been designated as an alternate position for long term university closures. See University Policy 6.17.				

Example 2:	
Office Associate (CCS title) (section 2)	Job Code: 6120 (found in the title deck) (section 2)
	Pay Range: \$14.42-\$18.27 Hourly (hourly rates found in the title deck with the Office Associate title) (section 7)
	Position #: 00000000 (position number will be generated upon entry into PeopleSoft) (section 7)
Employee Name:	(to be completed after a hire is made)
Department Area:	XXXXXXXX
Working Title:	Facilities Area Office Associate (section 6)
Hours/Shift:	7 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Summary of Duties:	The Office Associate provides administrative support and coordination for Facility Management & Logistics on a daily basis in one of our four geographic areas related to building services; manages office and human resource related functions for area maintenance, housekeeping and paint shop; assists in hiring, training, and supervision of 1-6 student employees; performs inventory activities for maintenance and painting teams, keeps track of budgets and provides reports (including eReports and customized reports) for management staff; ensures compliance with university policies and procedures; assists with inventory management and physical equipment inventory; performs timekeeping duties for maintenance, housekeeping and painting staff; oversees work order processing; maintains various records; works during Student Move-In. (sections 1, 3)
Supervision and Essential Duties:	Supervises four students. (section 4)
	40% Office Management: Serves as customer service representative on behalf of the building services office for a geographic area of buildings; manages phone calls and walk-in customer service, dispatches maintenance, painting, and housekeeping staff as appropriate, and solves problems for student residents, contractors, guests and visitors to our facilities; coordinates office functions for the building services area, including supervision of student employees; enters, maintains and reports data from Service Request program, including sorting and prioritizing information, and distributing to area staff and assigning costs; collects data related to maintenance and painting functions and organizes in Word or Excel documents for reporting purposes; creates and maintains on-call schedules; coordinates service contracts on behalf of management personnel; coordinates communication within department and to other departments; maintains files in accordance to University's Records Retention Schedule. (section 4)
	20% Human Resources support: Performs timekeeping and payroll functions for Maintenance and Painting departments; enters time data and leave into timekeeping system; reviews and verifies time data; approves time for hourly staff; certifies payroll for maintenance and painting teams; may serve as back-up for housekeeping staff timekeeping; maintains overtime logs and ensures OT is logged into timekeeping system; coordinates and mails leave requests to department Human Resources; tracks training of maintenance and painting staff in cooperation with department HR; assists area staff with routine HR issues, assists in interpreting CWA contract and university policies & procedures related to payroll and various types of leave (i.e. Family Medical), and refers complex issues to department HR; assists with student and regular staff hiring process, including processing paperwork, scheduling interviews, and preparing documents; assists area manager in coordination and review of regular employee job applications; responds to job applicant phone calls. (section 4)
	20% Procurement management: Completes purchase request forms for stock replenishments; approves releases against blanket purchase orders (PO's) in accordance to university and departmental policies; tracks and expedites orders; receives and verifies deliveries against orders; verifies orders have been received and/or services rendered for payments; verifies accounting chart-fields for all purchases, including purchases with external vendors on PO's, Internal Orders, PCards, etc; generates reports from eReports Portal and other customized reports for management; highlights areas for concern for management. (section 4)
	20% Inventory Management: provides support for inventory of maintenance and painting teams; performs daily, weekly and monthly inventory counts, verifying stock levels against par levels; receives product shipments; assigns and distributes parts and stock to staff; works with managers to establish realistic par levels; monitors inventory; assists with area key control, including processing requests, resolving problems, maintaining temporary key and lock database, maintaining temp lock inventory and coordinating with Housing Key Control for lock-related services; maintains inventory of both capitalized and non-capitalized inventory for area shops in accordance to university policies and department procedures; other duties as assigned. (section 4)
Education and Experience:	Required: Experience and/or training using typewriters and/or word processing equipment to generate a variety of materials ranging from basic to complex; experience and/or training in office practices and procedures, and customer service. (per CCS spec for the Office Associate title) (section 5)
	Desired: One year of office management and customer service experience; knowledge of university policies and procedures; knowledge of PeopleSoft and eReports; proficient in Microsoft Office products, including Excel and Word; excellent written and verbal communication skills; ability to lift 35 lbs. (section 5)
Additional Information:	Generally works 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; this position is Classified Civil Service, is not exempt from overtime, and is paid biweekly. Requires successful completion of background check(s). Position will have daily physical activity periods: receiving deliveries and taking items to secure rooms, walking between buildings, etc. (section 3)
Emergency Closing Designation (Short-Term):	This position has been designated as an Essential position for short term university closures. See University Policy 6.17.
Disaster Designation (Long-Term):	This position has been designated as an alternate position for long term university closures. See University Policy 6.17.