

Job Description Writing Guidance

This guidance aims to support managers to write effective job descriptions. It provides the wider considerations, an overview of a job description structure and a user friendly template that can be utilised when writing to ensure that the required information is captured.

Quality job descriptions are not only key to ensuring an efficient job evaluation process, but also in maximising candidate engagement during the recruitment campaign, and for a successful induction, performance management and appraisal process.

The Purpose of a Job Description

To effectively support job evaluation, recruitment and performance management processes, it is crucial that a job description provides a clear overview of the purpose of a role and its expected duties or responsibilities. It should therefore:

- Provide an engaging, overall summary of the post, which briefly explains the purpose of the role, as well as its contribution to the team, and wider organisation for example in a strategic or operational capacity.
- Concisely state the core responsibilities of the role including its key achievements, tasks, as well as relationships.
- Use active verbs that indicate the seniority of the role for example “to lead” “to support” or “to develop.” This will clearly signpost to both candidates and a job evaluator, the level of responsibility or accountability of the post.
- Statements about responsibilities should not be overly specific and writing exhaustive lists, for example of key contacts or providing overly detailed explanation of duties should therefore be avoided. This will ensure that the description is flexible and can follow the development of a role, for example by covering multiple circumstances or minor changes/additions to its responsibilities.

The Purpose of a Person Specification

The person specification should provide an accurate list of the competencies required to successfully fulfil the duties of the post, for example skills, experience and qualifications. These criteria not only encourage qualified candidates to apply for the role, but will also form the basis of the shortlisting and interview process.

The required competencies for a role should therefore be carefully considered, as the criteria will need to be accessible to candidates and also accurately reflect what is required to work successfully within the post.

Carefully considered and accurate person specification criteria also ensures a transparent and effective decision making process, as candidates can access clear information on how they will be measured. This will also support the provision of useful and justifiable feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

A successful person specification should contain the following:

- Explicit criteria that relate directly to the role detailed in the job description.
- The minimum requirements to complete the post. Overstating requirements will reduce the talent pool.
- Essential criteria that is critical to the successful performance of the role.
- Desirable criteria that will enhance a candidate’s ability to perform the role. These criteria can however be acquired or learnt once in post.

Equality and Diversity Considerations

The language used within a job description plays a crucial role in whether or not a candidate chooses to apply for a vacancy. Consideration therefore should be given to the inadvertent use of “subtly gender coded” language, which may deter a specific gender from applying. If a description contains a large quantity of masculine words, this could lead to a reduction of female applicants. Masculine words include ‘ambitious’ ‘confident’ or ‘capable.’

The use of a gender decoder is therefore recommended to ensure that a job description appeals to everyone and this can be accessed by clicking [here](#). The decoder will scan a description, provide a summary of the language used and highlight if it is, for example, too masculine.

Using a time period to quantify experience can also be discriminatory to certain age groups, for example requesting “ten years marketing experience” may discriminate against younger individuals. It is also important to note that the length of experience does not guarantee a good skill set or behaviours.

Following these guidelines will enable a job description to effectively promote our equality and diversity values, as well as encourage a wider, more diverse talent pool of candidates to apply for roles at the University.

It is also important to note that as a disability confident employer, we are committed to interviewing all candidates who have declared a disability and meet the essential criteria.

Things to Consider Before Writing:

- The wider context of the role within the team, for example are there shared responsibilities or similarities with other roles? Could another job description therefore be used to form the basis of/be amended for this post?
- Are there roles within the wider business that are similar and could also inform writing a description?
- Could a generic job description be utilised in this instance? A description for an administrator for example, will contain core responsibilities that are the same, no matter the team or type of administration being completed. Please refer HR for templates.
- Could this description be used for other roles within the team (similar or the same) or form the basis of a more senior post? If so, please consider creating a generic template.

Please refer to the [job description template](#), which has been provided to support the creation of job descriptions in an easy and user friendly manner.