Best Practices For Job Description Postings

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RESOURCE	Guide

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A job description is a crucial aspect of an overall hiring process and should accurately reflect the specific duties and responsibilities you are hiring for. They are often the first impression a student will have of your department or unit and if written intentionally, can help them determine whether they see themselves working there. Transparency and honesty in a job description provides candidates realistic expectations and a true understanding of the job they are applying for.

The additional consideration for working learner job descriptions is the opportunity to incorporate ongoing development, skill articulation and connection, and retention of talent for those applying and ultimately, those hired for the student positions at your institution. Focusing on skill and career development for working learners may include some institutional-wide change or even partnership with Human Resources, but that lift will be extremely beneficial procedurally and experientially for those doing the hiring and being hired into these positions.

To ensure your working learning job descriptions contain sufficient information and detail to describe the overarching duties and responsibilities of the position as well as essential functions of the office in which they will be working, consider using a sort of temple. It is not necessary to include every single detail of the role as work is often flexible and adaptable to time of year and varying needs. Instead, consider some key categories such as title, purpose, duties and responsibilities, skills, qualifications, and potentially knowledge, skills, and abilities or working environment. This resource will take you through a variety of commonly utilized job description categories and point out ways to best utilize them for your working learner positions.

Overall best practices

Before diving into the specific categories, consider these overall best practices:
- Avoid unnecessary jargon, abbreviations, or acronyms. Students may not know all of your institution's specific departments or what may seem common language. Therefore it is best to not use acronyms without defining what they mean.
- Base the content of the job description on the actual job and not on individual capabilities, skills, or interests of candidates or previous employees.
- Ensure your language is not biased, gendered, or written in a way that may bring into question any potential for discrimination.
- Include the department, office, or unit name as a clear detail in the job description to ensure candidates understand where they will be working and for whom.
- If you require specific required processes for onboarding such as background checks or institutionally led training, consider including these in the job description to ensure students are aware prior to applying.

- To ensure equity in the overall hiring process, including pay rates is important. This may look different based on your institution's system or process, but ensuring there is transparency in either the job level or the rate of pay is critical and can save time and potential frustration later on in the process.
- Consider centrally posting all student employee or working learner positions at your institution. This may be through a centralized job board site or system or through a consistent process. This will benefit those applying as well as allow for equity in access to positions for all students at the institution eligible for the role.
- Avoid references to other employee's names (other than if you chose to list the supervisor or point of contact at the top of the job description) and instead refer to the job title or department throughout the job description. Remember, you are writing a job description for the position, not for a person working in the position.

Job Title

A job title can often be seen as less important than the job purpose, but across posting platforms, the job title is the first (and sometimes only) thing a student sees and can lead a student to click or keep scrolling. Therefore, it is extremely valuable for hiring managers to be as intentional with the job title as possible. This can be challenging when working within a larger institutional procedure that may have a naming process, of course. But, even revamping an overall procedure to include job categories with describing words such as Research Assistant, Front Desk Manager, Grader, or Mentor can be versatile across jobs and departments while still providing candidates more information than Student Worker and may urge them to click the job link.

Job Purpose/Description

The Job Purpose section of a job description is a great place to introduce your department, office, or unit and outline the ways in which this position will contribute to overall goals or objectives of your team. This short statement should provide a reason as to why the job exists and allow the candidate to see how this job connects to the rest of the department or college.

Supervisor/Reports to

If it is known who will supervise these working learners, include this in the job description. That can allow candidates to do their necessary research for the application but can also provide transparency on the structure of the office and the team. If you are looking for consistency in all postings and want to avoid using individual names, simply use the job title of the position supervisor.

Duties & Responsibilities

Duties and responsibilities can be written in a lot of different, successful ways. Some institutions and organizations will include a percentage with each duty or responsibility category, providing the candidate with a whole, 100% image of the role. Others will simply list the various duties that must be performed in the role. Regardless of overall breakdown, consider using a bulleted or numbering format to provide easy review and

ensure the duties and responsibilities include an action verb and are frequently performed responsibilities. Using precise, clear, and concise language will be beneficial for the candidate when applying as well as when referring back to the job description while carrying out these duties. Here are a few overall pointers when writing out duties and responsibilities:

- Try not to use internal lingo that may be unknown or confusing to the applicant
- Consider anticipated job responsibilities to give candidates a clear understanding of the role while not getting stuck in the minute details or specific tasks this position may carry out - instead, think of overall themes and larger scale impact
- Include explanatory phrases telling the applicant why, how, where, or how often the duties are performed
- List job duties that reflect the position requirements and ensure they are not based upon the capabilities of any one individual
- If applicable, address type of supervisory responsibilities expected within the role
- List job duties in order of their importance or frequency
- Focus on essential activities and leave out trivial duties or occasional tasks

Skills or Transferable Skills

Including a skills section is a wonderful way to focus on transferable skills and the ways in which this role can provide experiential learning for your chosen candidate(s). This section may be skills you are truly needing your candidate to possess coming into the role, but it is more likely it will be more beneficial if it is an area of the job description where you can highlight the skills you will train, teach, or support your team in learning during their time in the position. If there are specific skills or mandatory requirements for your position due to the nature of the work or the level of the position, consider including those in the Minimum or Preferred Qualifications sections and allowing the Skills section to truly speak to learning and development, training offered, career development, etc.

This can also be a perfect place to incorporate the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Competencies in a digestible and direct format for candidates to connect it right to the position. Again, either skills you are needing the candidate to have prior to beginning the role or skills you can guarantee they will have opportunity to strengthen during their time in the role.

Minimum Qualifications

When writing a job description, it can be hard to not write the description for an ideal candidate that carries out all the necessary, anticipated, *and* ideal qualifications. But, creating criteria that is too specific or too strict may discourage applicants and may also misrepresent what you are actually looking for. Minimum qualifications should be the lowest level of education, skills, experience, knowledge, coursework, etc. needed to still ensure success of an incoming candidate. For student positions, we typically want an actively enrolled student who is willing and able to learn, grow, and show up. We don't necessarily need a lot of specific skills for the average student position across campuses. Remember this when thinking of minimum qualifications and really think through required education, experience, or skills you are looking for.

Other commonly leveraged qualifications are GPA or major. If your position is not a specialized role, try thinking of your ideal candidate outside of GPA, major, and other factors that may mistakenly define success in your specific role. Though some majors align nicely with specific roles and may provide foundational knowledge needed for your position, it is also important to not limit yourself in your candidate pool *and* limit students in their opportunities

for transferable skill development. Higher GPAs do not directly translate to specific skills. Instead of making that assumption, think through the skills you are equating to GPA and include these skills within the job description where it may make the most sense.

Preferred Qualifications

If there are additional considerations you are looking for or aspects of a candidate you would prioritize, consider including preferred qualifications. These qualifications can be looked at as a good-to-have but not required or mandatory for candidate success. This is also where you may include if you are hoping for a specific major or GPA but don't want to limit your pool.

Working Environment

The working environment can be a category allowing you to elaborate on the department, location, working hours, or even number of hours per week you can offer the working learner chosen for the position. This can be especially helpful if your office has multiple locations or hours of operation outside of 8am-5pm, such as a position working with Athletics that would be working a variety of games throughout the semester typically in the evening or weekends.

This would also be a great place to include information that may help all candidates understand the direct environment they would work in such as a cubicle, office front desk, shared lobby space, back private office, classroom, research lab, outdoors, etc. This can be extremely helpful for students who are seeking or needing specific environments to be most successful.

Your Human Resource department may have required specific Physical and Environmental Factors verbiage to include in order to recognize any accommodations which may be necessary for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Some institutions and organizations utilize a Knowledge, Skills and Abilities section, also known as KSA's, when posting job openings. This is sometimes referred to as "competency". These can be thought of as qualities described throughout the job description that make it more likely for a candidate to be successful in the position and are used to identify the hiring criteria beyond the minimum or preferred qualifications. These KSA's are often brought into a matrix when reviewing applicants. If this would be beneficial within your working learner job description, consider including them with intention and transparency.
Below are some various KSA categories and a short description:
- Knowledge—comprehension of specific information gained and acquired through experience or education/study.
- Skill—a present, observable competence to perform a learned activity.
- Ability—competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product.

- Physical characteristics—the physical attributes an employee must have to perform the job duties with or without a reasonable accommodation.
- Environmental factors—working conditions (inside or outside the office).
- Credentials/experience—the minimum level of education, training, experience or certifications acceptable for the position.

Additional Sections to Consider Including:

- Number of openings
- Closing date of application
- Length of position
    - This can also include if you are able to offer working hours during institutional breaks such as summer
- Evaluation or appraisal process
- Anticipated start date
- Benefits, if applicable to your student positions
- Opportunities for ongoing advancement within department
    - This is ideal if you have varying levels of positions within your department and this position is not the highest level

Resources:

[How to Write an Effective Job Description](#)

[Guide to Writing Student Job Descriptions](#)

[Student Position Description Template Guide](#)

[How to Write a Job Description](#)

[Writing an Effective Position Description](#)

[Writing an Effective Job Description](#)

[Campus Job Description Template for Student Employee Positions](#)