How to write better position descriptions

This information is being provided to assist supervisors and unit contacts in developing better position descriptions when creating a new position description or updating a current position description.

Proposed Job Details Tab

If it is an existing position description enter the PIN number. If it has been more than 2 years since the PIN was vacated, make sure it is still active in the payroll/budget and then check to be sure it is activated in GreatJobs. If it has been inactivated in payroll/budget, create a new position description rather than updating the vacant PIN in GreatJobs. If it is to be a newly created position description, for the PIN field on the PD enter A(New) or X(New).

Indicate "vacant" for the Employee user account, last name and first name if it is a vacant PIN or a newly created position description. If the action is for a PD update, make sure the correct employee's information is in these fields.

The percent effort should be 100% for full time budgeted positions, 50% or more for part time budgeted positions, and 49% or less for temporary wage positions. The appropriate job type should be marked based on the percent effort.

Pay Basis should be either monthly, for exempt positions, or hourly for bi-weekly non-exempt positions.

Salary should be entered as the monthly amount or the hourly amount, not an annual salary amount.

Source of funds, system part, percentage, account and appropriate annual FTE amount should be entered for each fund source so that the total of all annual FTE boxes equals the annual salary amount (FTE means full time equivalent, even if the position is less than 100% effort.)

Employees Supervised – should include only the title and number of each title (ie: Office Assistant – 1). Do not include employee names or enter "varies". If no employees are supervised, indicate "none" and don't leave blank.

For the question "Does this employee regularly exercise discretion and independent judgment and have the authority to make important decisions?" – If the employee is in a non-exempt title the answer should be NO and the percentage Zero. If the employee is in an exempt title, the answer should be YES and the percentage between 50 and 90. Only positions such as department head or executive administration should be shown with 90-100% percent of time.

Proposed Job Duties Tab

Essential duties are core tasks or functions which must be performed to accomplish the job (do not list requirements, abilities, skills or knowledge needed as those are entered in a separate part of the position description.) Non- essential duties are the occasional duties that are performed as needed and will rarely comprise more than 10% of the total job.

There is not a set requirement for the number of duties sections, but a general guideline is that most positions can be described in 3 to 10 sections of duties. Any one duty can have several components to help identify the level and scope of the duty being performed. Duties should be grouped into logical sections, with assigned percentages of time for each section of 5% to 35%. The recommended maximum percentage is 35% but some positions may be allowed higher depending on HR review. The maximum total for all duties is 100%.

The last job duty should always be "Other duties as required/assigned" and marked "no" as an essential duty with 2% of total time marked.

When writing job duties, use action verbs at the beginning of each duty, such as: advises, administers, coordinates, directs, develops, plans, maintains, instructs, participates, performs, reports, distributes, serves, assists, analyzes, etc. Use clear and concise language and avoid using adjectives which tend to give extra detail to nouns and may be unnecessary.

Proposed Job Requirements Tab

Required qualifications are the minimum qualifications of education, experience, licenses/certifications/registrations, and knowledge, abilities and skills for acceptable performance of the essential functions of the job upon hire. Required qualifications may not be modified and are assigned/updated by the Pay Plan Administrator.

Preferred qualifications are the secondary qualifications that you would prefer in an applicant/employee but are not required for performance of the essential functions. These can be more specific such as listing a degree in a particular field, specific type of experience in an industry, specific knowledge of software, specific skill in operating equipment, etc.

All position descriptions need to have the following statement listed under required special knowledge, abilities and skills: "Ability to multi-task and work cooperatively with others."

Under the section "Other requirements or other factors" you can list if travel is required or if any other special information is necessary for the applicant/employee in order to perform the job.

Action Justification Tab

The justification for action is a required field for PD updates as well as reclassifications. Example action justification statements for requesting a new position would include: "The purpose of this action is to establish a new position to meet departmental staff needs" or "A new position is needed to work on the XX grant in Dr. XX 's lab." Examples of action justification statements for updating a position description are: "This is to update the position description to more accurately reflect job duties as part of the annual performance review process", or "To update position description to correct funding information" or "To update position to change percent effort from 75% to 100%."

Documents Tab

Generally, no documentation is required to be attached to new or updated position descriptions, however sometimes this can be used to provide an organizational chart for a new position description approval. Organizational charts are required by TAMU HR to be attached for new 02 adloc position descriptions to be approved.

Additional Information

Recommended online course in TrainTraq is Course Number 11008 "Position Descriptions." For more information on how to write position descriptions, please contact your Human Resources Generalist.