

Best Practice Guide to Writing Effective Position Descriptions

In order to attract a competitive and diverse applicant pool, it is important to start by writing an effective position description. Utilize the guide below to help curate your position description, and use the attached template to format the information for posting in UGA Jobs. All position descriptions should be audited annually during the performance evaluation and updated in UGA Jobs accordingly.

Reach out to your unit HR liaison and/or Talent Management for additional support.

1) Start with identifying unit needs

Review the most recent position description, then consider the following:

- Does this position add value as it is written? Have our needs changed since the last time the position was filled?
- Identify skill gaps within the unit – What skills will add value to our team?
- Is this position classified correctly? Does the available salary align with university and industry standards?

2) Write an accurate and succinct job title + position summary

- Job titles should accurately reflect the duties of the position, and should translate to applicants both inside and outside of higher education.
- Mention reporting structure of the position in the summary, including any positions supervised.
- Include the most pertinent overarching duties while highlighting the position's impact on the unit/division/larger campus community.

Position Summary Example:

*The **(insert position title)** is an integral part of the **(insert department/unit)** and reports to the **(insert supervisor title)**. This position is primarily responsible for **(insert summary of job duties)**. Additionally, this position will **(insert additional relevant responsibilities)**, and supervises **(insert position(s) supervised)**. In collaboration with **(insert unit/division/campus partners)**, this position **(insert summary of position impact)**.*

3) Use inclusive language

- Avoid acronyms and/or industry slang – using these can unintentionally discourage candidates with transferrable skills from applying.
- Use gender-neutral language (e.g., they/the individual/this position vs. he/she).
- **Address gender coding** (words, phrases, or traits) historically attributed to either male or female gender (e.g., “competitive”, “ambitious”, and “driven” implicitly alienate women).
- Evaluate “physical demands” – Ensure these do not dissuade talent with disabilities, visible and invisible. (e.g., “Must be able to lift 50 pounds” is exclusive, while “Moves equipment up to 50 pounds” removes the “how” aspect and focuses instead on what needs to be accomplished in a role.)

4) Pare down preferred qualifications

- Reflect on must-haves vs. nice-to-haves when evaluating preferred years and types of work experience, educational credentials, and/or professional certifications.
- Keep in mind, candidates from historically underrepresented identities are less likely to apply for a position if they do not meet 100% of the qualifications listed.
- If referring to a skill that can easily be learned, consider listing this under “KSAO’s” instead.

5) Focus on competencies (KSAO’s - knowledge, skills, abilities and other competencies)

- Include the KSAO’s necessary to be successful in the role.
- Review [UGA’s Staff Competency Model](#).

Example KSAO’s:

Administrative Specialist

- *Knowledge of Microsoft Office suite and general computer literacy.*
- *Ability to communicate with diverse internal and external constituencies in a professional manner.*
- *Capable of learning UGA purchasing regulations and guidelines, including UGA mart and P-Card policy and procedure.*
- *Ability to facilitate cooperation and work well with a diverse staff in a team setting.*
- *Exhibit strong organizational skills and a keen attention to detail.*

6) Stick to bullet points

- According to LinkedIn research, candidates spend between an average of 14 and 30 seconds reviewing a job posting before deciding if they are interested (or if they should keep scrolling!).
- Keep job responsibilities between 3-5 groupings, with no less than 5% assigned to any one responsibility (assigned in increments of 5%). No more than one bullet point should be assigned at 5%.
- Consolidate where you can! Job duties/responsibilities should not be viewed as an exhaustive list of daily tasks.

7) Post the salary/salary range!

- **Prior to posting**, confirm the salary range approved for the position by talking with your unit’s HR + finance liaison(s).
- Posting salary ranges increases transparency, promotes pay equity, and saves (everyone) time!
- According to a Glassdoor survey, 67% of employees and job seekers cite a posted salary range as the most critical part of a job post.