



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Writing an Effective Job Description. Guidelines for Managers

Purposes of a Job Description

Provides clarity of the role for the role-holder.

This is a Job Description, not a Job Advertisement.

It is intended to serve as a description of the job throughout the life of the job as follows:

Recruitment	Gives candidates a clear concise description of the post so they can determine if this role matches their skills and decide whether to apply. Ensures we are attracting the right talent for the job vacancy.
Organisation Context	Gives the post-holder an understanding of how the role fits into the wider organisation. Clear context on the role and its purpose are necessary for job satisfaction, motivation, performance, sense of purpose and sense of connection.
Direction and Development	When in the job, a clear job description assists the employee and their manager to set objectives, identify training, set priorities and review achievements. It is a key document in probation reviews.

Investing time in writing a clear Job Description that accurately reflects the role will bring dividends throughout the recruitment process and into the future when the appointee has commenced in the role.

Job Description Layout: 5 parts

The Job Description is segmented into 5 parts as follows

Overview	Job Title, Area, Grade
Purpose of the Role	Brief overview on the purpose of the job – why it exists
Context	Brief overview about the area of Trinity where the role is based.
Tasks / Responsibilities	This section describes the job. List of the tasks to be carried out & the responsibilities of the role.
Person Spec	This section describes the type of person needed to fulfil the role. <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Qualifications▪ Knowledge▪ Experience▪ Skills▪ Personal attributes

Job Description Layout: 5 parts

A template Job Description is available for use. The same format should be followed, and you can insert the relevant content depending on the job.

Sect 1: Overview

- Job Title, Area of the University in which the role is based, Grade.

Example: Project Officer, Trinity Sport and Recreation, Administrative Officer 2

Sect 2: Purpose of the role

- Brief overview on the purpose of the job. Plain English, no jargon.
- To assist in completing this, think about (i) why the job exists (ii) what is it that the job is intended to achieve.
- This should be a succinct overview of the role (not the area, not the person, not the skills)

Example 1: To assist in the management of the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the School from recruitment to degree award, through module enrolment and providing full support to the relevant academic staff to ensure the smooth running of all the degree programmes on a day to day basis. To deputise for the UG & PG Manager in their absence, to ensure continuity of service for both students and staff in the School.

Example 2: To develop, lead and manage the work of the service, comprising of two large customer facing teams. To take an active role in managing critical and urgent issues, project activity across campuses, and developing management procedures, ensuring that quality standards are set, achieved and maintained to the benefit of the University community.

Sect 3: Context of the role

- Explains how the role fits into the overall structure in the School / Unit / University.
- Indicate who the job reports to and how the person will function within your organization, helping people see the bigger picture and understand how the role impacts the organisation.
- Keep it factual. This is not a job advertisement intended to create a glowing report of the area in which the job is based. It should be recognisable as how the School / Unit actually operates. It can include detail on the type of customers / colleagues / students that the role-holder will engage with.

Example 2: This role is part of a small team of administrative staff who provide services to management, staff and students within the School. The role reports to the School Administrator / Manager of X. Although the role-holder will work as part of a team, they will have responsibility for delivery of certain parts of the operation within the School. The School of X offers X programmes, with approximately Y staff and Z students. The role holder is the first point of contact for staff and students in the School and is responsible for providing a professional, efficient and welcoming services to all students, staff and visitors to the School.

Sect 4: Tasks and Responsibilities

The most important section of the Job Description setting out the expectations of the role.

- **Outline the main duties & responsibilities** – not an exhaustive list of all activities. Highlight the day-to-day activities of the role. This will help the post-holder understand the work environment and the activities they will be exposed to on a daily basis.
- Use **Headings** to group the tasks
 - Think about the headings for the tasks.
 - E.g. Service, Systems, Leadership, Management, Budgets, Planning, Administration,
- **Order** the list
 - Set out the headings & tasks in order of proportionality within the role.
 - Whatever tasks forms the bulk of the job - put these at the top.
 - If some tasks are only required occasionally, put these further down the list
- **Describe the Task or Responsibility, not the person**

Example

 - ✓ “Log and fix bugs and deal with support issues” (task)
 - ✓ “Responsible for finance administration including purchasing and payments” (responsibility)
 - ✗ “Development / programming skills” (this is a skill – instead explain what the task is that requires the programming skills)
- **Include 2 catch-all statements**
 - Deputise for the manager as required and represent the manager or department at meetings and events (tailor as appropriate)
 - Any other duties that arise from time to time as directed by the manager or nominee

Example

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1. **Service**

Receive and respond to everyday enquiries from/to customers escalating requests outside their knowledge base to the appropriate person/area.

 2. **Systems**

Use and understand common systems (e.g. SITS, FIS, CoreHR) relevant to area of work and carry out searches to respond to queries.

Update databases and spreadsheets and run standard reports.

Carry out routine record keeping, filing, photocopying and data entry to ensure accurate records are maintained.

Run automated or routine reports to support established school/departmental/work unit information requirements.

 3. **Clerical**

Provide routine administrative and/or customer support activities to contribute to the smooth operation of the team/department.

Provide essential administrative and/or support activities to contribute to the smooth operation of a work unit (e.g. maintaining a filing system, processing invoices).

 4. **Organisation**

Assist with the arrangements and/or support internal and external activities/meetings/events through detailed instruction or direction, collating and recording relevant information/documentation as requested

Monitor and take responsibility for small-scale resources such as petty cash, following established procedures.

 5. **General**

Deputise for the manager as required and represent the manager or department at meetings and events.

Any other duties that arise from time to time as directed by the manager or nominee.
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Sect 5: Person Specification

This section sets out the knowledge, skills and attributes the post-holder will need for successful performance in the role. These must be relevant to the requirements of the role.

- If you don't need it, don't include it. Keep your list concise.
- Don't over-specify the qualifications – it may unnecessarily exclude a good candidate.
- Think about the required years of experience. Be realistic about what a person will need to do the job in hand.
- Don't ask for skills that won't be used in the role – this can lead to a poor fit where the role-holder expected to have greater responsibility or autonomy than is the case.
- Use **Headings** as follows

Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaving Cert, Degree, Masters or Post-Graduate, PhD• Professional accreditation, ACCA, CIPD, PMI• Specify the discipline if appropriate
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systems e.g. Oracle, Core, SITS. MSOffice, Social media platforms• Relevant legislation, policies, processes• Sector, industry, discipline
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quantify and specify <i>e.g. 3-5 years in a customer-facing role, 7-10 years in senior management</i> Experience in delivering projects, managing budgets, managing teams, process re-engineering, policy development, secretarial duties, event management
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• List skills that are required, that have not been covered in Quals, Knowledge, Experience e.g. Presentation Skills,
Personal Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For Professional staff, refer to the competency framework• For Academic staff, at discretion of hiring lead <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible approach to working hours, or ability to travel, etc

- Qualifications, knowledge & experience are clear and measurable, and used for shortlisting.
- Skills and Personal attributes are assessed during interview, presentation, test.

Investing time in preparing the person specification will provide the foundation for the shortlisting criteria and interview scoring criteria within the recruitment process.

Recap

These five sections are all that is required for a job description.

Information about the Recruitment Process is included on the Recruitment Website.

Information about the University and School/Unit is available at www.tcd.ie.

Other Considerations in preparing job specifications

Terminology: this is the job description, not a job advertisement.

Refer to 'post-holder' or 'role-holder'.

Do not use 'candidate' or 'appointee', as these only make sense in the context of a recruitment competition and are defunct once the person is in post.

Tone:

The tone of the job description can be formal, or informal depending on the role and grade.

Formal: Trinity, the School, the post-holder

e.g. The Assistant Professor will be involved in the administration and future development of related postgraduate programmes.

Informal: We, us, you,

e.g. You will work within a team to carry out a range of administrative tasks within the School

Either option is fine provided the tone is used consistently throughout the document.

Gender Pronouns:

Don't use 'he/she', 'him/her', 'his/her' or other binary forms of gender description.

Instead refer to the job-title or 'post-holder' or 'they'

Future Proofing:

If this is a job that will require specific tasks now, but these might change in the future, include a statement to this effect.

We want to be specific about the tasks and responsibilities of the job as it is today. However, as the university makes changes in adopting new technology or processes, the job descriptions should be flexible in anticipating this.