

# Guide to Preparing Competency-based Job Descriptions

**COMPETENCY**



# Guide to Preparing Competency-based Job Descriptions

## INTRODUCTION

### What is a job description?

A job description is a formal statement providing essential information about a job including functions, competencies, and qualifications. The job description serves as a critical document for attracting, screening and interviewing candidates and also enables an employee to better understand what is expected to successfully accomplish the responsibilities of the position. Job descriptions are usually prepared by a Manager with the approval of the Department Head.

### Why do we have job descriptions?

A job description serves six key functions:

1. Provides the incumbent an understanding of the primary accountabilities, duties and responsibilities they are expected to fulfill (what is expected of the incumbent),
2. Identifies the purpose of the job based on essential and non-essential functions, core competencies and position specific competencies (what is the purpose of this job),
3. Provides essential information for assigning the appropriate pay grade, job function and/or title for the job (how do we determine the grading and compensation for this job),
4. Assists in recruiting efforts for screening and interviewing (how we tell prospective candidates about the job).
5. Provides a means to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (ensures that people with disabilities are not excluded if they can perform the essential functions of the position, with reasonable accommodation).
6. Provides the basis for determining whether a job can be exempt from the requirement to pay overtime as prescribed under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

A competency-based job description focuses more on the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to successfully accomplish the responsibilities of the job than on just the responsibilities themselves.

### Types of Job Descriptions

**CORE:** these descriptions are for jobs found in more than one department at UMMS. These jobs have the same functions and qualifications and are graded the same throughout UMMS.

**UNIQUE:** these jobs descriptions are specific to a department or require a very particular set of skills and experience.

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## Writing a Competency-based job description

The UMMS Job Description template is available on the HR intranet under Human Resources/Forms. The Essential Responsibilities should be listed in order of importance with the percentage of time indicated. Before beginning to write a job description, spend some time compiling information and thinking about what the job entails

- DO NOT attempt to write a job description to “fit” a specific individual. A job description should be thought of as a business plan for a needed position within the context of the department’s structure.
- Use short, direct action verbs (selected from drop-down lists contained in the Essential and Nonessential sections of the job description).
- Keep sentences concise and clear.
- Essential functions should be grouped into categories that could include several specific responsibilities.

## When should a job description be rewritten?

A job description should be rewritten when there are significant changes to the functions, competencies, and/or qualifications. Job descriptions should be reviewed on a periodic basis to determine whether they are still accurate and current.

## Section by section instructions for completing the job description

UMMS has adopted a standard format for job descriptions. The sections included in the job description, a brief summary of their contents, and an example “screen shot” of each section follow.

### **Job Title, Job Code, Department Name, Etc.**

- **Job Title** – Drop down list from which to select an existing job title or add a new title.
- **Job Code** – Automatically populates based on the title selected. For a new job title, will populate with “New Title”. The job code will be created by HR Compensation.
- **Department Name** – Drop down list with a selection of current department names. Choose “Various” if applicable to more than one Department.
- **L.U.** – Labor Union code, to be provided by HR Compensation
- **Grade** – Will be provided by HR Compensation upon final review of the job description.
- **SBU** – Strategic Business Unit (School, Commonwealth Medicine, or MassBiologics). Choose “Various” if applicable to more than one SBU.
- **Manager/Non Manager** – Drop down list from which to select either “Manager – has direct Reports” or “Individual Contributor – No direct reports”.
- **Position Summary** – This section consists of a few (generally less than five) concise sentences summarizing the main purpose of the job.
- **Supervision/Direction Received** – Identifies the person who will provide direct supervision to the employee.

*Note – drafters cannot revise fields in the job description template that are shaded in grey.*

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POSITION DESCRIPTION				
<b>Job Title:</b>	<b>Job Code:</b>	<b>Department:</b>	<b>L.U.:</b>	<b>Grade:</b>
Research Associate	MR2240	Cardiovascular Medicine		
<b>SBU</b>	<b>SCHOOL</b>			
Manager/Non Manager	Individual Contributor - No direct reports			
<b>POSITION SUMMARY:</b>				
Under the general supervision of the Principal Investigator, performs a variety of complex research experiments				
<b>SUPERVISION/DIRECTION RECEIVED:</b>				
Under the general supervision of the: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Director or designee</span>				

### Essential Functions

Functions are groups of duties that constitute the distinct and major activities involved in the work performed. Drafters must assign an estimated percentage of time the employee will spend performing each function. Note that for Essential Functions, no specific function can be less than 5%.

Essential Functions are functions and duties that are critical to performing the job. "Essential functions" are those functions that the individual who holds the position must be able to perform independently or with the assistance of reasonable accommodation.

It is generally best to start with itemizing the functions that the job is expected to perform, answering the question of 'what do I want this job to do?' with concise, factual statements. These items then become the basis of the Essential Functions section. Analyze and determine estimated percentages of time spent on each essential function.

It is an essential function if:

- It is a critical function;
- The duty takes up more than 5% of the employee's time;
- Eliminating the duty fundamentally changes the job;
- Operations will be disrupted if the duty is not performed;
- Every incumbent in this job is required to perform the duty or responsibility;
- Prior incumbents in the job regularly performed the duty or responsibility.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:		
	Function	%
<b><i>Conduct experiments</i></b>		<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">50</span>
	conduct in-depth analysis of research experiments	
	perform complex experiments in the laboratory	
<b><i>Analyze Data</i></b>		<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">30</span>
	interprets data, forms conclusions, and plans next experiments	
	compiles and analyzes data and performs computations using software, spreadsheets, and graphing	

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## Nonessential Functions

Next, consider the nonessential functions that will comprise a part of this position.

Nonessential functions are groups of duties that are not critical to performing the job. This means that the function could be reassigned to another employee without significantly changing the job. This category will include “other duties as assigned” in order to provide the supervisor with the flexibility to add functions or duties without revising the job description.

Example: Participates in departmental budget meetings in the absence of the supervisor.

Remember -- All remaining duties that take up less than 5% of the employee's time are considered "nonessential", which means that the function could be reassigned to another employee.

NONESENTIAL FUNCTIONS*:		
	Function	%
Laboratory supplies		4
	maintains laboratory supplies and equipment	

## Competencies

Competencies describe the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to perform the job.

1. Skills – Abilities needed to execute job duties, such as software and computer proficiency, interpersonal skills, accounting skills, or specific laboratory techniques.
2. Knowledge – Areas of specialty or expertise; for example, nursing, finance, employment law, or history.
3. Attributes – Characteristics an employee must display in the job; for instance, initiative, collegiality, resourcefulness, or professionalism.

Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes needed to succeed in a job fit into two basic categories: “Core Competencies” and “Position Specific Competencies”.

- **Core Competencies** – These competencies are identified by UMMS leadership and should be demonstrated by all employees across the enterprise. UMMS Core competencies are listed below:

**ACCOUNTABILITY** - Accountable for measurable, high-quality, timely, and cost effective results.

**INITIATIVE** - Takes prompt action to accomplish tasks and meet goals and objectives.

**PROBLEM SOLVING/DECISION MAKING** - Identifies and analyzes problems weighing the relevance and accuracy of available information. Generates and evaluates alternative solutions and makes effective and timely decisions.

**QUANTITY/QUALITY of WORK** - Pays close attention to detail. Strives to achieve accuracy and consistency in all tasks.

**SERVICE ORIENTATION** – Applies effective interpersonal and problem-solving skills when responding to customers.

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COMPETENCIES:
Core Competencies:
PROBLEM SOLVING/DECISION MAKING
Identifies and analyzes problems weighing the relevance and accuracy of available information
Generates and evaluates alternative solutions and makes effective and timely decisions
Reviews the effects and implications of decisions and takes appropriate follow up actions
QUANTITY/QUALITY of WORK
Pays close attention to detail
Strives to achieve accuracy and consistency in all tasks
Organizes work to achieve maximum productivity
Actively applies strategies and tactics that routinely deliver results
Follows all safety rules, proactively works to prevent accidents, and encourages the use of sound judgment in order to comply with departmental and UMMS safety policies and procedures
Produces a consistently high volume of work that also meets quality standards

- **Position Specific Competencies** – In this section, the manager identifies three to five competencies that are unique to the position and necessary for the individual to successfully accomplish the position's functions. These competencies are specific to the job being considered and need to be demonstrated by people in those specific jobs to be successful. There is a drop-down list of position specific competencies to choose from. You should pick up to three competencies that are most critical to performing the requirements of the position.

Examples:

- Attention to Detail - Is thorough when performing work and conscientious about attending to detail.
- Communications and Media - Knowledge of the production, communication and dissemination of information and ideas to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.
- Computer Skills - Uses computers, software applications, databases, and automated systems to accomplish work.
- Project Management - Knowledge of the principles, methods, or tools for developing, scheduling, coordinating, and managing projects and resources, including monitoring and inspecting costs, work, and contractor performance.

Position Specific Competencies:
Attention to Detail - Is thorough when performing work and conscientious about attending to detail.
Written Communication- Writes in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.
Dependability- Arrives on time to work, meetings and appointments. Adheres to schedule. Follows up on decisions, actions, and commitments.

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## Physical Demands and Work Environment

Because an individual must be able to perform the essential functions of a position, with or without reasonable accommodation, it is important that the physical tasks associated with the essential functions be identified appropriately so that persons with disabilities can determine if any accommodation is necessary. There is a drop-down list of typical physical demands associated with jobs. Please be sure that these physical demands are accurate and necessary to perform the job. Once you have chosen the appropriate physical demands, you will need to indicate the level of the activity. The drop-down list includes: "Frequent", "Occasional", or "Constant".

PHYSICAL DEMANDS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT:	Level
Reaching. Extending hand(s) and arm(s) in any direction.	Occasional
Standing. Particularly for sustained periods of time.	Frequent
The worker is required to function in narrow aisles or passageways.	Occasional
Walking. Moving about on foot to accomplish tasks, particularly for long distances or moving from one work site to another.	Constant
Add additional details here:	

## Machines and Equipment Used

This is a list of machinery or equipment that is required to perform the essential duties of the position. There is a drop-down list of typical machines and equipment associated with jobs. As mentioned above, please be sure that this listing is accurate and necessary to perform the job.

MACHINES AND EQUIPMENT USED:	
Lab equipment	
Telephone	
Computer	
Add additional details here:	

## Qualifications

All qualification statements must be specific, realistic, and defensible - clear, and demonstrably necessary to successful performance of the job.

From a practical standpoint, if job qualifications are unnecessarily high, they screen out people who are actually qualified to perform the work. This may make recruiting efforts more difficult and have the effect of driving up pay rates unnecessarily. Inflated requirements may also screen out a disproportionate number of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities, thus exposing UMMS to legal risks. Think carefully to be sure your minimum qualifications can be uniformly applied to all applicants.

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## Qualifications Matrix

You can use the following matrix to prepare the qualifications for the job description.

	<b>Minimally Required</b> Identify those items that are minimally required to perform the essential duties of the role not what the current incumbent may possess. For example, if the job can be performed with a Bachelor's degree and the incumbent has a Master's degree, indicate Bachelor's degree as the minimum educational requirement.	<b>Preferred or Specialized</b> These are not required to perform the basic functions of the role.
<b>Education</b> Formal education (e.g. High School Diploma, Bachelor's degree, licenses and/or certifications etc.)		
<b>Experience</b> Type or number of years of directly related work experience		

- Required Qualifications**

Required Qualifications are the list of education and years of experience required to successfully accomplish the functions of the position. Under this section, you should list only the "minimum" education and years of experience required to perform the job responsibilities.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:	
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor's Level Degree
<i>Add additional details here:</i>	Biological Sciences
<b>Experience</b>	1 - 2 years
<i>Add additional details here:</i>	

- Preferred Qualifications**

Unlike Required Qualifications, Preferred Qualifications are the list of education and years of experience that you "would like to have" for someone performing the job. When you think about Preferred Qualifications, you think about what the "ideal" candidate would have for education and experience, not necessarily the minimum need to perform the job responsibilities.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:	
<b>Education</b>	Master's Level Degree
<i>Add additional details here:</i>	
<b>Experience</b>	No prior experience necessary
<i>Add additional details here:</i>	



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## Signatures and Submission

Job descriptions should be forwarded to the Compensation Department after the Department Head has approved. You can forward the signed job description to the Compensation Department by clicking the “Submit Form” button. The Compensation Department will review the content of the description, will follow up with the department should they have any questions, and will also evaluate the description to determine the appropriate salary grade. Once evaluated and approved, the Compensation Department will return the approved job description to the originating Manager.

### Notes:

*The template allows you to “Save” the description and return to it for completion or editing*

*The template has a “Spell Check” feature, which you should use to check the spelling of all text fields that you draft prior to submitting to Compensation.*

<b>SIGNATURES:</b>		
<b>Manager:</b>		11/6/2017
<b>Department Head:</b>		11/6/2017
<b>Submit Form</b>	<b>Print Form</b>	<b>Save Form</b>
<b>Check Spelling</b>		