# How to Write a Good Job Description

## Incorporating the Job Families Framework into Job Descriptions for Professional/Administrative Roles

If you are a Hiring Manager who wants to write or update a job description, who wants to ensure that the best possible candidates are attracted to the role and wants to do this as quickly and efficiently as possible then this is the document for you.

This document is designed to help Hiring Managers to write job descriptions and to incorporate the functional and core competencies outlined in the Anchor Role Profiles for each Job Family into job descriptions.

### What Documents Do I Need when Writing a Job Description?

When drafting a job description the following supporting documents are required:

- Job Families Framework Anchor Role Profile for the role
- Functional Competencies
- Core Competencies
- Proficiency Levels

### What's in a Job Description?

- Position Summary – gives a high level overview of the role and a brief description of the type of person needed for it.
- Principal Duties and Responsibilities – outlines the specific duties and responsibilities of the role.
- Candidate Attributes required for the role:
    - Qualifications
    - Experience
    - Mandatory Requirements (Functional and Core Competencies)
    - Desirable Requirements (Functional and Core Competencies)
- Further information for Candidates:
    - Supplementary Information
    - Relocation Expenses

### Steps in Writing a Job Description

There are three key steps in writing or updating a good job description.

## STEP 1 - Describe the Purpose of the Role and Draft the Position Summary

The process of writing a job description requires a clear understanding of the purpose of the role, how it links to the overall strategy and objectives of the School/Unit and of the job's duties and responsibilities. The position summary should provide an overview of the School/Unit and the expectations for the role. The position summary forms the main Job Advertisement that candidates will see before deciding if they wish to apply for the position. Advertisements should make reference to the UCD strategy (include link to it).

- You should consider:
    - What is the core purpose of the role?
    - How does it link to the overall objectives and Strategy of the School / Unit?
    - What is the context of the role in relation to other roles in the School/Unit?
    - What are the primary duties and responsibilities of the postholder?


## STEP 2 – Create a list of the Principal Duties and Responsibilities

You should:

- Identify and list all of the key tasks the employee will be expected to complete;
- The list of duties and responsibilities should be a high level list as opposed to an exhaustive list;
- Group together duties and responsibilities of a similar nature;
- Rank the list of duties and responsibilities in order of importance;
- Emphasise the duties that may be unique to the School/Unit and the individual role;
- Use action verbs when describing the duties and responsibilities of the role such as managing, processing or supporting.

This will ensure candidates understand the work environment and the duties and responsibilities of the role. This level of detail will help candidates understand if the role is the right fit therefore attracting the best candidates for the position.


## Writing an Inclusive Job Description

Language is a powerful tool and can play a significant role in the recruitment process. Inadvertently, job descriptions can have subtly coded language that affects how attractive a role is to a particular gender, LGBT people, people with a disability or from a different cultural or ethnic background.

Consider the type of language used in job descriptions: for instance, remember to use 'you/your' and 'they/their' rather than 'he/she' or 'him/her'. Research shows that some words have masculine or feminine connotations and may appeal to or put off one gender specifically. Being aware of this can help you ensure your job descriptions are more inclusive and may help you attract an underrepresented group. For more detailed information visit http://www.ucd.ie/equality/support/tipsforinclusiverecruitment/

## STEP 3 - Identifying the Functional and Core Competencies for the role

UCD's Job Family Framework provides Anchor Role Profiles for roles at all Career Levels in each Job Family. The Anchor Role Profile uses common language to describe the main / typical accountabilities, experience and qualifications for the role at that level in the Job Family along with the functional and core competencies required to fulfil those roles effectively.

### A. How Do I Know Which is the Correct Anchor Role Profile for the role?

There are a number of ways to determine the correct Anchor Role Profile for the role.

For existing roles the Anchor Role Profile will already be known as the job family and career level will have already been identified as part of the mapping process that took place in 2018. Information on the mapping process can be obtained from promotions@ucd.ie.

For new roles consider the indicative grade of the role and which job family the role may belong to.

A Job Family contains roles that are related to each other as they carry out work in a similar field of activity. There are 9 Job Families in UCD.

When identifying the most relevant job family consider the following:-

- The names of the Job Families, which outline the types of roles associated with that particular job family;
- The detailed descriptors for each Job Family;
- If there are any existing, related jobs within the University and what Job Family they belong to.

Within each Job Family there are a number of career levels which normally align with the current administrative grading structure which has 9 grades in it (EA – SEA – AOII – AOI – AOIA – SAOIV – SAOIII – SAOII – SAOI). When selecting the career level consider the following:

- What is the indicative grade for the role?
- What are the minimal educational qualifications required to successfully carry out the role?
- What level of experience does an individual require to successfully carry out the role?
- What are the types of functional and core competencies required to carry out the role?

In reviewing the different Anchor Role Profiles within the Job Family the qualifications, experience and competencies typically expected at each level are clearly defined. When you have selected the most appropriate Anchor Role Profile you can use this information to build the selection criteria of the Job Description using the indicative functional and core competencies.

If you are unsure of the Job Family and/or Career Level contact promotions@ucd.ie.

### B. How to Use the Functional and Core Competencies in the Job Description

As described above, each Anchor Role Profile identifies the functional and core competencies and the proficiency level expected. Detailed descriptors for the functional and core competencies are available at:

- https://www.ucd.ie/hr/t4media/Job_Families_Functional_Competencies_Detailed_Descriptors.pdf
- https://www.ucd.ie/hr/t4media/Core%20Competencies.pdf.

A table of descriptive adjectives to indicate "Proficiency Levels in Job Descriptions" is also available as an appendix to this document.

Functional competencies are unique to each job family. Each set of functional competencies has a detailed descriptor and a proficiency level in line with the career level.

To incorporate the functional competencies into your job description, copy and paste the functional competency and proficiency level from the Anchor Role Profile into your job description then copy in the detailed functional competency descriptor. Insert a descriptive adjective from the "Proficiency levels in Job Descriptions" table and blend the detailed descriptor with the descriptive adjective. Ensure that the combination of the functional competency and proficiency level adjective make a proper sentence and adjust if necessary.

Core competencies are a combination of the knowledge, skill and/or ability that is needed to perform the role effectively. Core competencies apply across all Job Families but their relevance and the proficiency level will vary between roles at different levels.

To incorporate the core competencies into your job description, the same process described above for functional competencies should be followed.

### Tip:

If you find yourself moving away from any of the above versus the career level outlined in the Anchor Role Profile you should review the Anchor Role Profile again and the level above and below.

If you require further information you should contact your Resourcing Consultant.

### Example (taken from a job description from the HR Job Family at Career Level 3)

The previous job description contained the following three criteria:

- Ability to build and maintain relationships at all levels in the University.
- Excellent interpersonal and communications skills both written and oral
- Proven ability to work on own initiative and to exercise good judgment

After reviewing the Anchor Role Profile, the detailed core competencies and proficiency levels, the same three criteria have been developed to read as follows:

- **Communicating Effectively (Proficiency Level 1)** – Good communication skills demonstrated through engaging in written and oral communication that is clear, unambiguous, transparent, and consistent with UCD's Values.

- **Building Relationships (Proficiency Level 2)** – Exhibits strong relationship building skills through building effective relationships within own area and more broadly
- **Taking Initiative (Proficiency Level 3)** - Excellent ability to take initiative through acting early to address and resolve problems and find solutions.

## C. Draft Desirable Criteria for the Role

The addition of desirable criteria is not a specific requirement of a job description. However, they can be helpful in differentiating between similarly experienced candidates in an assessment process.

## Why incorporate functional and core competencies into Job Descriptions?

The benefits of this this approach are:

- By defining roles more clearly, by clarifying the competencies required to carry out these roles effectively and by showing how roles relate to each other, it is much easier for staff to plan for their development and identify the various career pathways open to them.
- Hiring Managers can clearly list the requirements of the role in terms of the qualifications, experience and functional and core competencies required to carry out the role successfully.
- Candidates can also clearly see the qualifications, experience and functional and core competencies required to carry out the role successfully;
- Clearer description of responsibilities and accountabilities within roles. Staff will know where their current role sits so that they can be clear where they are starting from when they want to consider career options and discuss these with their manager as part of Performance for Growth conversations.
- The Job Families Framework will help managers to have better quality career and development conversations with their staff as part of the Performance for Growth process.
- Standardisation of language used for skills and competencies bringing greater clarity and consistency to the Resourcing process for both applicants and Assessment Boards.

## Appendix I – Proficiency Levels in Job Descriptions

| Proficiency Level | Descriptor | Adjectives for Describing Proficiency Levels |
|---|---|---|
| Proficiency Level 1 | Developing understanding and capability with this competency | • Good<br>• Developing<br>• Emerging<br>• Satisfactory |
| Proficiency Level 2 | Strong knowledge, understanding and application across most areas of this competency | • Strong<br>• Substantial<br>• Significant |
| Proficiency Level 3 | Strong knowledge, understanding and application across all areas of this competency and beginning to guide and support others in its development | • Excellent<br>• Outstanding<br>• Considerable<br>• Extensive |
| Proficiency Level 4 | Expert knowledge and understanding across all areas of this competency and advanced in its broadest application. Proactive mentor capability to support others in developing their proficiency. | • Advanced<br>• Superior<br>• Highly Developed<br>• Exceptional<br>• Expert |