

### 1-1 Creating positions

Section 9 (2) of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 (PSEM Act 2002)* provides that department heads may create, abolish or otherwise deal with any positions in their department other than the position of department head.

### 1-2 Classifying and grading positions

#### 1-2.1 Sources of authority

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- *PSEM Act 2002*, Chapter 2, Part 2.1;
- PEO Circular 95-34, Guidelines under the *Public Sector Management Amendment Act 1995*. This Circular still applies and the reference to section 8(3) of the *Public Sector Management Act 1988 (PSM Act 1988)* is taken to be a reference to section 9(3) of the *PSEM Act 2002*.

#### 1-2.2 Scope of provisions

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This section applies to positions up to and including that of Clerk Grade 12 or equivalent positions. See also section 1-3 *Guidelines on Senior Officer classification*.

#### 1-2.3 General

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Section 9 (3) of the *PSEM Act 2002* requires department heads or their delegates to classify and grade non-SES positions in accordance with guidelines issued from time to time by the Premier's Department, exercising the authority of the Director Public Employment.

##### 1-2.3.1 Principles underpinning classifying and grading

Decisions on classifying and grading should be consistent with:

- Government policies and priorities;
- classifications and grades established by appropriate industrial instruments;
- compliance with wage fixing principles;
- obtaining value for money by assessing work value in terms of the expected outcomes;
- employees being assigned duties appropriate to their classification and grade; and
- equal employment opportunity.

##### 1-2.3.2 Choosing the appropriate classification

Job evaluation is not only about ascertaining the size of a job relative to others in the department but also about its most appropriate classification. Once a classification decision has been made, the question of appropriate grading can then be determined.

The classification can be assessed from information contained in the position description.

##### 1-2.3.3 Qualifications

Appropriate emphasis should be given to the qualification requirements of the position and whether formal qualifications are essential to the position's functions. Qualifications should only be required if they are necessary to fulfil the requirements of the position and where relevant experience is not sufficient.

A qualification is the recognition – accepted in NSW, nationally or internationally – that a person has attained a certain standard of education, knowledge and skill in a particular field. Qualifications include degrees, diplomas, certificates, grades of membership in a professional association or institution, or enrolment or licensing by legally recognised registration bodies such as courts or registration boards.

Qualifications are essential for many positions in the public service including Medical Officers, Legal Officers, Engineers, Architects and Surveyors.

Qualification requirements can usually be ascertained by referring to the relevant industrial instrument for the position. In the case of financial and accounting officers, see the Premier's Department Circular number 98-71, *Upgraded qualifications for certain NSW Public Service positions in accounting, financial management and auditing*.

## 1-2.4 Methods of classifying and grading

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All departments must have an accredited job evaluation methodology.

There are two methods of classifying and grading:

- The points factor system of job evaluation for salaried positions used by departments that have implemented an evaluation system accredited by the Premier's Department.
- Draft classification and grading by a department that does not have an accredited job evaluation system, subject to review by the Premier's Department before the department head makes a final determination.

Any other situation is to be referred to Employee Relations Policy and Advice, Public Sector Workforce Office on 9228 4444.

### 1-2.4.1 Obtaining accreditation

In order to obtain Premier's Department authorisation to use job evaluation methodologies to classify and grade positions, departments must have successfully implemented one of the three accredited systems. These are:

- Cullen Egan Dell Job Evaluation System;
- Hay Job Evaluation System; and
- OCR Job Evaluation System.

*[NOTE William Mercer has merged with Cullen Egan Dell and acquired OCR but the evaluation systems retain the above titles.]*

Departments should then make application to the Premier's Department demonstrating that:

- best practice standards have been fully adopted (see *Appendix A* of this chapter);
- the department can maintain the integrity of the job evaluation system; and
- there has been a transfer of job analysis and job evaluation skills from the consultants to the department's employees.

The application should also include:

- the total number of salaried employees in the department and the number in each classification;
- details of the sample group whose positions were evaluated to indicate how representative they are of the department as a whole;
- the points-to-grade table for the classifications within the department derived from the evaluations of the representative sample; and
- several completed position descriptions.

## 1-2.5 Using accredited job evaluation methodologies

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Job evaluation refers to the use of a methodology to assess the work value of a position. The process involves the systematic comparison of jobs to ascertain the relative size of each position in a classification or grading structure. Jobs are analysed and compared by reference to different factors common to all jobs, such as skill, responsibility, decision-making, complexity, team work and contact with other people. Each factor is given a range of points. The maximum number of points allotted to it determines the relative importance or weighting of a factor.

*Appendix B* of this chapter contains a sample position description. *Appendix C* provides advice on preparing quality position descriptions.

### 1-2.5.1 When the Premier's Department's advice is to be sought

Departments with accredited job evaluation systems are expected to classify and grade positions in accordance with the appropriate industrial instrument without reference to the Premier's Department, unless the department proposes to change the classifications and grades of most or all of the positions within a vocational group (See *Implementation of Job Evaluation Outcomes* - Circulars No. 97-35 and No. 98 -50).

If there is uncertainty about the most appropriate classification for a position, Employee Relations Policy and Advice, Public Sector Workforce Office should be contacted on 9228 4444.

## 1-2.6 Departments without job evaluation systems

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Departments that do not have an accredited job evaluation system are to refer all draft classification and grading recommendations for non-SES positions to Employee Relations Policy and Advice, Public Sector Workforce Office for review before a final determination is made.

Departments should provide Employee Relations Policy and Advice Public Sector Workforce Office with details of their draft job evaluations using an approved job evaluation methodology, and information on job analysis and job evaluation panel procedures. Otherwise, they must submit detailed justification for the recommended classifications and grades, together with copies of the position descriptions. (See PEO Circular 95-34, Guidelines under the *Public Sector Management Amendment Act 1995* where the reference to section 8(3) of the *PSM Act 1988* is taken to be a reference to section 9(3) of *PSEM Act 2002*).

### 1-2.6.1 Endorsement for certain new positions

Departments classifying and grading new positions without accredited job evaluation methodologies may regard the Premier's Department endorsement as given when:

- the new position(s) warrant the same classifications and grades as one or more similar positions already existing in the department; and
- there are no significant differences in the descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of the new position(s) and the existing positions; and
- the maximum salary of the position(s) does not exceed the maximum salary for Clerk Grade 12 under the *Crown Employees (Administrative and Clerical Officers – Salaries) Award* (or equivalent).

## 1-3 Guidelines on Senior Officer classification

### 1-3.1 Sources of authority

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- *PSEM Act 2002*, Chapter 2, Part 2.1;
- PEO Circular 95-34, *Guidelines under the Public Sector Management Amendment Act*. This Circular still applies and the reference to section 8(3) of the *PSM Act 1988* is taken to be a reference to section 9(3) of the *PSEM Act 2002*;
- Crown Employees (Senior Officers Salaries) Award.

### 1-3.2 Introduction

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The Senior Officer classification provides additional capacity to recognise the work value of non-senior executive positions. There are three grades within the classification.

Inclusion in the Senior Officer structure is by evaluation of positions by the department head using an approved job evaluation methodology. Appointment as a Senior Officer is in accordance with the provisions of the *PSEM Act 2002*, including competitive merit selection for advertised vacancies.

For assistance with the Senior Officer classification, contact Employee Relations Policy and Advice, Public Sector Workforce Office on 9228 4444.

## 1-3.3 Senior Officer classification

### 1-3.3.1 Purpose

The Senior Officer classification helps to:

- provide continuity of employment;
- improve career opportunities for employees;
- obviate the need for skill shortage allowances being misapplied to recognising work value;
- aid in the retention and attraction of skilled employees; and
- give department heads the flexibility to establish a Senior Executive Service contract position or a Senior Officer continuous employment position of equal work value.

### 1-3.3.2 Classification structure

The Senior Officer classification, introduced by Determination under section 63 (1) of the *PSM Act 1988*, was subsequently made as the *Crown Employees (Senior Officers 1997 Salaries) Award*. It applies to departments listed under schedule 1 of the *PSEM Act 2002*.

The following table illustrates the points-to-grade structure of the classification and shows its parity in work value with comparable Senior Executive Service levels.

Senior Executive level	Senior Officer grade	Job evaluation methodology points		
		Cullen Egan Dell	Hay	OCR
SES Level 1	SO Grade 1	670 – 749	731 – 870	780 – 900
SES Level 2	SO Grade 2	750 – 849	871 – 1050	901 – 1045
SES Level 3	SO Grade 3	850 – 989	1051 – 1240	1046 – 1250

### 1-3.3.3 Progression

Positions are to be created, classified and graded as Senior Officer Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3. There is no broadbanding. Only single grades can be created.

Movement within a salary grade is by incremental progression subject to satisfactory performance, as for other non-Senior Executive positions.

### 1-3.3.4 Guidelines on Senior Officer classifications

Department heads create, classify and grade Senior Officer positions under section 9 of the *PSEM Act 2002*.

### 1-3.3.5 Evaluating positions

Positions are to be included within the Senior Officer classification structure following an evaluation using an approved job evaluation methodology. Evaluations are to be undertaken in the usual way.

### 1-3.3.6 Positions receiving skills shortage allowances

Departments are to evaluate positions at the top of the current graded structure that attract skills shortage allowances or other allowances in recognition of work performed. The Senior Officer classification may be more appropriate given that it is based on work value.

When the position is evaluated at less than the work value for a Senior Officer Grade 1, the remuneration will revert to that of the top of the relevant graded structure for the job. Any case for retention of the skills shortage or other allowance would need to be based on strong evidence of attraction and retention difficulties that are significantly disrupting the department's service delivery.

Retention of these allowances must be reviewed by the department head at least every 12 months or on the position becoming vacant, whichever occurs first. The power to review and pay this allowance was delegated to Department Heads from 3 November 2004 – Delegation 11. The allowance is payable to positions at or above Grade 12 but is not payable to Senior Officers. (*Premier's Department Circular 2004-37 Manual of Delegations to Department Heads*).

The maximum allowance payable remains at \$13,000 per annum.

### 1-3.3.7 Other classifications above Clerk Grade 12

Classifications that prescribe salaries above that of for Clerk Grade 12 under the *Crown Employees (Administrative and Clerical Officers – Salaries) Award* (or equivalent) should continue to be applied in accordance with the appropriate industrial instrument.

### 1-3.3.8 Employee related benefits

Under the *Crown Employees (Senior Officer Salaries 2004) Award* Senior Officers are eligible to salary package up to 50% of their salary in accordance with the non-SES salary packaging guidelines first set out in Circular 2002-61 and as updated from time to time. Items that may be packaged include motor vehicles, lap-tops and superannuation contributions.

**Comment [d1]:** consider excluding the date so it doesn't need updating until the provision is changed.

Unlike other non-SES staff who are limited to salary packaging motor vehicles on a 100% novated lease (ie 100% private) basis, Senior Officers retain the option to salary package motor vehicles under the same conditions applying to the SES as determined by the Director Public Employment from time to time. This involves packaging a vehicle on either a 100 percent private usage basis through StateFleet, or on a business /private basis through State Fleet with the private portion being funded by the Senior Officer by way of salary sacrifice.

### 1-3.3.9 Appointment

Positions that are evaluated as being within the Senior Officer classification should be filled in accordance with the provisions of the *PSEM Act 2002*, including those of Chapter 2 Part 2.3 requiring advertising and selection based on merit.

There are no appeal rights against promotion to Senior Officer positions.

# Appendix A

## Summary of standards of best practice for job evaluation

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The Standards of Best Practice formed part of the document *Job evaluation of salaried positions – Arrangements for application of job evaluation systems* issued in December 1991 by the former Department of Industrial Relations, Employment, Training and Further Education.

The following is a summary of the 26 points contained in that document. Departments seeking to implement job evaluation should consult the original document, a copy of which may be obtained from Employee Relations Service, Public Sector Workforce Office on 9228 4444.

### **Employee participation**

Employees, through their union representatives, should be consulted about the job evaluation system to be implemented, trained in its use and involved in the application of the system in the department. This is essential to achieve employee understanding and support for the job evaluation system used to assist in the grading of positions.

### **Classification Committee**

Each department should establish a Classification Committee to serve as the forum for consultations and negotiations between the department and employees on job evaluation matters.

Membership of the Classification Committee should achieve a balance in employer/employee representation, and include both women and men drawn from different classification streams within the department. The Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator should participate. The objective is to ensure the process is open and promotes equity.

The role of the Classification Committee should be to advise the department head on job evaluation matters in connection with the classification and grading of positions in the department. The detail of committee operations should be decided within individual departments.

### **Selection of job evaluation system and consultants**

The engagement of job evaluation consultants should be in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Engagement and Use of Consultants* - Premier's Department Circular 2000-17, and Premier's Memorandum 2002-7.

Departments included in schedules 1 and the table listed in section 133(2) of the *PSEM Act 2002* should only use the methodology of accredited firms Cullen Egan Dell (now Mercer HR Consulting), Hay and OCR. (See Note in 1-2.4.1 *Obtaining accreditation*).

### **Costs**

Costs of competing job evaluation consultancy services should be assessed on normal commercial grounds of value for money.

Departments should specify the task to be performed, identify the possible combinations of in-house and external resources, the comparative costs and benefits of these options, and negotiate with the accredited job evaluation service suppliers to achieve the best arrangement possible for the department.

### **Role of consultants**

The use of specialist consultancy services is accepted practice in implementing a proprietary job evaluation system. However, it is essential that the department controls the implementation program and that the role of the consultant, including the nature, extent and quality of services to be delivered, is set out clearly and agreed before the project commences.

Consultants offer implementation services ranging across advice on evaluation practice, management of evaluation programs, training, employee information and briefing sessions, sampling techniques, briefings on completion of questionnaires and position descriptions, job analysis, convening evaluation panels, presentation and interpretation of evaluation outcomes, and computer-aided analysis of evaluation findings.

As consultants' fees are based on time spent on the project, careful planning and specification of services to be delivered and the timetable to be met are essential.

### **Skill transfer**

A key objective in devising the department's implementation strategy, particularly plans for using consultancy services, should be the transfer of skills in the use of the selected job evaluation system from the consultants to the department's own employees.

Self-sufficiency for the department, at the least cost to achieve and maintain acceptable standards of job evaluation practice, should be given high priority.

**Access to information**

Successful implementation and use of job evaluation is dependant on a shared understanding within the department of the objectives of systematic and equitable assessment of the relative work value of positions for classification and grading purposes, and how the system operates to achieve these objectives.

Information on the system, how it operates, inputs required and outcomes to be expected should be freely available. Factor levels and evaluation point scores for positions should also be freely available to employees including the occupants of the positions that are evaluated, on the same basis that information on grades of positions and salary levels are freely available. Details of evaluations of positions should be made available to occupants only after final grading decisions have been made by the department head, or delegate.

**Training**

All employees directly involved in job analysis and evaluation of positions, including the Classification Committee, need sufficient training to be proficient in the use of the system.

A key objective should be to equip the department with the skills necessary to use the selected job evaluation system proficiently, without a continuing dependence on consultancy support.

**Employee awareness**

All employees should be informed about the job evaluation system to be used and how they will be involved. This is essential for job evaluation to be successful.

**Briefing sessions**

In addition to the general employee awareness program, it is essential that briefing sessions at the departmental unit or work group level are held for individual employees at the time they are to be involved directly in the job evaluation process.

**Questionnaire**

A standard questionnaire has been developed as the basis for collecting information on positions to be evaluated. The accredited consultancy firms use the same standard questionnaire.

Information collection is based on the idea that the employee best informed about the work performed is the occupant of the position. The starting point, therefore, is for the position occupant to complete the standard questionnaire, which is designed to collect all the information necessary to prepare a position description to be used in evaluating the position.

Individuals should be encouraged to consult their colleagues, supervisors, employee representatives and the department's nominated project employees for advice and assistance on completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire should be made available in formats that are accessible to any employees with physical disabilities, and interpretation assistance should be provided for employees requiring such assistance.

Typically, an employee should have occupied the position for at least 6 months before completing a job evaluation questionnaire. A shorter or longer period might be adopted as a guide to suit the circumstances in different departments, or different parts of a department.

If it is inappropriate for an employee to complete a questionnaire, but it is desired to include the position in the evaluation program, the employee's supervisor, colleagues and other sources of input mentioned above may complete the questionnaire, consulting with the position occupant. A similar approach may be taken in the case of vacant positions.

**Job analysis**

This is the process of translating information from the questionnaire and from interviews with position occupants, into a position description for the position. Interviews may be held with individual employees, groups of employees or a sample of employees with similar responsibilities.

The job analysis task is one of the most important in the evaluation process. The employees or consultants performing this task must possess highly developed analytical and communication skills, particularly skills in listening, recording and presenting the outcome of the analysis in clear, concise written form.

### Position description

A standard position description has been developed as the basis for capturing and presenting the information on positions needed for the evaluation. The accredited consultancy firms use the same standard position description. The occupant of the position and the supervisor should agree on the position description and, ideally, any difference of opinion should be resolved between them, with assistance from a trained job analyst if needed. If this is not successful, the department's grievance resolution procedures should be followed.

The following checklist was developed to assist with quality control of position descriptions for the 1990 job evaluation pilot study and should be observed:

- (1) Are the occupant's sex and current remuneration or grading concealed on the questionnaire?
- (2) Have the occupant and the supervisor sighted and agreed to the position description?
- (3) Does the position description provide sufficient information for someone not familiar with the job to understand its purpose and functions as well as the knowledge and skills required to perform the job competently?
- (4) Is the position description internally consistent?
- (5) Does the section summarising the basic purpose of the position provide an adequate picture of the range of functions performed in the position even if those functions are secondary?
- (6) Are the more challenging and complex components of the job placed first in the list of position responsibilities and objectives?
- (7) Have the skills required in identified positions been articulated?
- (8) Does the position description use active rather than passive voice?
- (9) Is the language used in position descriptions easily translatable into scores?
- (10) Is the position description free from ambiguous, vague and blanket terms that mask the work actually being done by the occupant, such as "familiarity with", "assists", "responsible for", and "receptionist duties"?
- (11) Is the position description free from:
  - sexist language?
  - sex-biased job titles?
  - sex congruent language?
- (12) Are position descriptions:
  - of equivalent length?
  - written using the same type of language?
  - standard in structure and order of sections?
- (13) Does the section on Position Responsibilities and Objectives:
  - identify *what* is done (does "x"), *how* it is done (by...), and *why* it is done (to ensure that.../in order to...)?
  - list responsibilities in order of importance rather than, say, in order of most visible activity or most time-consuming activity?
- (14) Is the section on Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities consistent with the Position Responsibilities and Objectives?
- (15) Is the position description free of judgments by the writer?

### Sex and race bias

Sex bias is widely regarded as a major historical source of inequity in assessments of the relative work value of work typically considered as "women's work" and "men's work". Similarly, race bias may occur in assessing the value of jobs occupied by members of racial minority groups.

One of the strengths of points factor job evaluation is that it demands a more systematic and open analysis of the actual content of the work done in the position to be evaluated. This process is intended to ensure a better understanding of the role and responsibilities of all positions, and call to attention features or characteristics of work that may have been overlooked or disregarded in traditional work value assessments.

The standard questionnaire and standard position description have been designed in consultation with the Director or Equal Opportunity in Public Employment to avoid any inherent sex or race bias. However, this issue should be addressed explicitly in training programs for job evaluation project employees, particularly for job analysts and members of evaluation panels.

**Evaluation panel composition**

Evaluation panels should comprise a convenor with training and experience in the use of the job evaluation system, representatives of management and employees, and a person with detailed knowledge of the role and responsibilities of the position to be evaluated, other than the occupant of the position. Panels should include both women and men. Small departments should arrange for external participants to ensure panels are large enough to include people from different classification streams and achieve a balance of views and experience regarding classification and grading matters. The optimal size for a panel is between 5 and 7 people.

**Evaluation panel operations**

The members of the panel should individually assess the position against each factor used by the system and then compare their views. If initial assessments are different, the panel should follow a process of discussion and review to reach a consensus on the assessment for each factor. The panel should then translate the agreed assessments for each factor into a total point score for the position, using the scoring method for the system.

If a panel cannot reach consensus on the evaluation of a position, the majority and minority views should be recorded. Patterns or trends in majority and minority views should be identified and referred to the classification committee for consideration.

All panel members should have adequate training and a clear understanding of their role on the panel. The convenor has a particularly important and potentially difficult role, in achieving consensus amongst panel members. Selection of people for the role of convenor should be made on the basis of their understanding of the job evaluation system used by the department and experience in its use, as well as their skills in reconciling diverse points of view.

The convenor of the panel should arrange for the panel's evaluations to be submitted for consideration in accordance with the department's decision-making arrangements.

**Documentation of evaluations**

The conclusions of evaluation panels on the assessment of factors and the total point scores for positions should be recorded in a document in the format specified by the system, and that document should be retained as an auditable document. These documents should be retained for at least 3 years. Thereafter, records of evaluation panels should be treated in the same way as other personnel management documents under the department's records management procedures.

**Role of evaluation panels in assessing comparative ranking of positions**

The outcome of an evaluation panel's assessment of a position should be a comparative ranking of all the positions considered by the panel.

Comparative ranking of a diverse set of positions should be based on comparison of assessments of individual factors, and comparison of total point scores. The panel should calculate the total point score for positions because comparison of scores is the most meaningful indicator for the panel on whether its judgments on individual factors are reflected in its overall judgments on the comparative size of positions.

After an evaluation panel has reached its conclusion on the factor levels and total points score for a position, and this has been recorded, the factor levels and total point score should not be changed other than as the outcome of a subsequent evaluation by a panel. The reasons for any change in factor levels and score should be recorded as part of the documentation to be retained.

**Review of evaluation outcomes**

The Classification Committee should only review evaluation outcomes for positions that have not experienced significant change in responsibilities following consideration. The request for review should be submitted to the Classification Committee in writing, setting out the grounds for review.

Given the emphasis on consensus in the arrangements for collecting information, preparing position descriptions and evaluating positions, requests for review should be based on more substantial grounds than that the occupant of the position, the employee representative, or another person with a relevant interest, is dissatisfied with the outcome.

**Status of evaluation outcomes**

The assessments of evaluation panels should be regarded as reports to the department head in relation to the exercise of classification and grading powers under the *PSEM Act 2002*.

**Pay outcomes**

The final outcome of the evaluation process should be a decision by the department head, or delegate, on the classification and grade of the positions evaluated.

**Grievance procedures**

Employee participation in job evaluation is intended to minimise the level of grievances regarding classification and grading practice. However, on the basis that consultation and employee participation cannot be expected to prevent all grievances concerning job evaluation, procedures for considering job evaluation grievances should fit within the framework of the department's general grievance procedures.

# Appendix B

## Sample position description

<b>(DEPARTMENT NAME)</b>	
<b>POSITION DESCRIPTION</b>	
<b>POSITION TITLE:</b>	
Division:	
Branch:	
Location:	
<b>Family Name of Position Holder:</b>	<b>Initials:</b>
<b>POSITION TITLE OF SUPERVISOR:</b>	
<b>Family Name of Supervisor:</b>	<b>Initials:</b>
<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OR DELEGATE:</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>Date Position Document Approved:</b>	...../...../..... <b>Day Month Year</b>
<b>FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:</b>	
<b>POSITION NO:</b>	
<b>CLASSIFICATION:</b>	
<b>GRADE:</b>	

*The primary purpose of a position description is to enable a job evaluation panel to understand the job. The committee examines each paragraph to review the key elements of work in order to determine the appropriate work value, resulting in accurate grading. The following information provides you with an indication of how to include appropriate information into a position description.*

### 1. PURPOSE OF POSITION

*Purpose of Position is a **summary** of the position. It is usually one or two sentences that capture the essence of the job – not a list of several important **tasks**. The statement should indicate **what** the job does and **why**. For example, a basic purpose may be to ... “Administer the central registry so that all records are registered upon receipt (this covers **what**) and all subsequent movements are tracked to ensure their location is known for efficient access when required (this covers **why**).”*

### 2. DEPARTMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

- i) **Position Title(s) of Supervisor**
- ii) **Position Titles that also report to the Supervisor identified in (i) above**
- iii) **Titles of positions which report to this position**

### 3. DEPARTMENTAL CONTEXT

The Departmental Context of the position should describe the “big picture” in which the position is located. It is much easier for an evaluation panel to understand the position if they understand how it fits into the department as a whole. The best way to do this is to use a “cascade” effect. That is:

*Briefly explain the responsibilities of the Division in which the position is located, the responsibilities and type of work of the Branch,*

*the responsibilities and type of work of the Unit,  
the responsibilities and type of work of the Section,  
then a sentence or two briefly linking the responsibilities of the position to the Section.*

This will explain the context/environment within which the position operates. It is preferred to have the departmental context as reasonably standard for all positions in the same unit or section (apart from, obviously, the closing statement linking the position) to provide for some consistency.

## 4. NATURE AND SCOPE OF POSITION

### A. WORK PERFORMED

The Nature and Scope of Position focuses on the major functions/areas of work performed by the position: challenges/problem solving; decision making; and position dimensions.

*The first paragraph should succinctly summarise the key areas of work performed by the job. One useful way is to see if the position can be summarised into a small number of segments. An example of this technique follows:*

*“The position has three major components:*

- the management of the accounting section including all staffing matters;
- as a developer of finance policy;
- as an adviser on finance-related matters to senior management.”

*Each point will then have information to help the evaluation panel better understand **how** and **why** the position exists. Whenever a point is raised under any of the headlines in Work Performed (such as, **What** the job does) always indicate **How** it is done and **Why**.*

### B. CHALLENGES AND PROBLEM SOLVING

This section requires careful judgment on the part of the job analyst (writer of the position description). It is designed to focus upon those areas that represent the need for problem solving skills, including level of complexity or challenges facing the position.

### C. DECISION - MAKING

The level of decision making should indicate the level of freedom to act that is available. It should detail the most important areas where the position can make decisions or take action. This section should include the nature and degree of thinking, analysing, planning or problem solving together with the requirement for decision making or recommending action.

For example, a position may be responsible for “sourcing new suppliers for office equipment up to a value of \$“x”. This indicates what the position does but the evaluation panel will require further information. For example, does the position have full autonomy on deciding which suppliers to contact or do departmental guidelines or the position’s supervisor determine this? Is this an ongoing activity or is it an annual event undertaken for budget requirements? Is price the only determining factor or does the position holder need to be able to make judgments based on quality or other predetermined standards? Does the position have the authority to change suppliers or merely to recommend such changes?

## POSITION DIMENSIONS

Position Dimensions is not compulsory and the heading may be deleted if not used. This section refers to quantitative data relevant to the position including budgets, staff levels, or other relevant information. This section provides the evaluation panel with an idea of the quantitative data to better assess the level of work performed. For a Registration Clerk, the number of registrations processed in a given period may be helpful.

### D. COMMUNICATION

Helpful information in relation to communication includes interaction with people inside and outside of the department, either in supervising and managing, in discussing or persuading or in providing information, advice or recommendations. It is also helpful to include information about the level of teamwork and collaboration (if) required.

Sometimes it is easier to divide the communication aspects into internal and external communication. You can include communication requirements for the position in the unit or section and then elsewhere in the department. You may then move onto communication with external parties which includes info in relation to things like providing advice, negotiating contracts, answering straight forward inquiries, and so on.

Alternatively you may wish to divide communication into written communication aspects for the position and verbal communication aspects. It may be best to decide what form you may use for every position description in advance to keep some consistency.

### **E. KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES**

Key Accountabilities is a listing of specific responsibilities or accountabilities for the position. Typically positions have up to ten main accountabilities, although this can vary. Key Accountabilities are the closest thing to what was a statement of duties – a list of major tasks.

*There should not be any “surprises” under Key Accountabilities. That is, each major accountability listed must be explained in terms of **How** and **Why** the task is performed in a previous section/heading. Each task should be a short statement indicating **what** is done. **Why** it is done should have been covered previously. For example, Enter creditors' names and details into Oracle financial computer system and ensure payments are made on time.*

It is best to number each task. This makes it easier for the evaluation panel to make reference to specific points.

*It is easier and best to list the tasks in order of importance.*

*Always start each new point with a verb.*

*Every position description with a component of supervision must include the position's EEO responsibilities in line with supervision. It is usually the last point under key accountabilities and usually worded in the following way: 'Take account of EEO, OHS and cultural diversity policies and programs in the performance of duties'.*

### **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**

This Section should include the amount of knowledge, skills and experience required to competently perform the duties of the position, gained through experience, on-the-job training or formal education.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience should not merely state a previous position holder's background but relate:

*Typical knowledge and experience required including qualifications if necessary.*

*The qualification requirements should not be greater than those stated in the Award.*

*Important skills including how they are used in the job.*

*What specific training or information is required to do the job?*

**NOTE** Qualifications should only be required for certain financial and accounting positions within the Administrative and Clerical classification.

# Appendix C

## Tips for preparing quality position descriptions

A good position description will show not only what a position does, but also why it does it and how it does it. This represents how the position contributes to the department's success and progress.

### What to avoid

- Avoid listing tasks in minute detail when explaining *what* a position does.
- There are some words that should be avoided because they are ambiguous, vague or blanket terms that mask what is actually being done. Some of these words and phrases are “familiarity with”; “handles”; “deals with”; “assists”; “exceptionist duties”. For example, rather than “Assist supervisor with production problems” it might be more accurate to say “Review and analyse production complaints” or “Recommend production adjustments to supervisor”. You can reduce ambiguity by providing examples to some points raised. These will often answer **Why** or **How** a task is performed. This is necessary throughout the position description.
- Avoid using terms like “The Clerical Officer” or “The Clerk”. It is best to steer clear of using the classification as the naming term for the job. This may bias the evaluation panel if it is included.
- Avoid thinking about the qualities or attributes of someone who previously performed the role. Many employees mould a job to fit their own attributes. Position descriptions should be written to cover those tasks and accountabilities that the department requires and the way the department needs it to be done.
- Avoid overusing the term “The position holder ...”. While you should not sex bias the position description (that is, using he or she terms) it becomes repetitive when every sentence starts with “The position holder is responsible for .....”.

### Finished your first draft?

A good test of the quality of a position description is to check back through the various parts of the description to see if each of the key accountabilities and elements of knowledge, skills and experience are included and explained in full.

It is important to ensure that the entire document hangs together and that the information contained in it is consistent and links back to the key accountabilities.

At the end, ask yourself these questions:

- Have I written the position description in plain language, keeping to the point and avoiding use of jargon or initials that outsiders may not understand?
- Have I covered the whole position so that a reader will understand what the position does and why; put it in context within the department, division, or branch in which it operates; and explained the major duties of the role in a clear, concise way?

If you can honestly answer YES then you're on your way to writing a solid position description.

There are some simple techniques to ensure that your position descriptions are of a high standard.

**REVIEW AND EDIT YOUR OWN WORK** This is best done some time well after the initial writing. Obviously, with deadlines to meet, it may be something of an unrealistic luxury to leave much time between the original writing and the reviewing and editing stage. However, whatever the time constraints, it is critical to re-read your work for clarity, logic, expression and generally to ensure that you have imparted your knowledge to the reader.

**SET UP A BUDDY SYSTEM** Check each other's position descriptions. If possible, share your work with an analyst who is less familiar with the area on which you are working. This will ensure that any assumptions of knowledge, shortcuts or omissions are highlighted.

**POSITION HOLDER REVIEW** Have the position holder or, for new positions, someone who has a knowledge of particular tasks, review the position description to ensure that it is factually correct and complete.

**SOMEONE REVIEWS OUTSIDER REVIEW EVERY POSITION DESCRIPTION IN FINAL DRAFT FORM** outside of your division. This is the best test of how well you have communicated the purpose, objectives and basic essence of a position. This is usually a job analysis or evaluation expert either inside or outside of your department.