

Understanding a Position Description Job Aid

Purpose: Each P&S and Merit employee at the University has a Position Description (PD). This job aid will provide insight as to what a Position Description (PD) is, why it is important, and how to access your own PD. This guide will also explain in detail how PDs are evaluated.

What is a Position Description (PD)?

A position description (PD) is a document explaining the duties and responsibilities of a position at the University. PDs promote equity across campus, set expectations of performance, and also serve as a basis for external postings. All full and part-time P&S and Merit (organized and non-organized) employees have a PD, which is used to determine position classification and pay grade.

PDs are created for new positions and modified when there is a change in duties or to start a reclassification. PDs should be written for the position, not for the incumbent and should provide a clear picture of what the duties of the position are to someone who is unfamiliar with the position (e.g. new director or supervisor).

The classification of a PD is determined through examining all sections, including the duties and factors. The duties influence the family/series (e.g. Academic Adviser compared to a Student Services Specialist) and the factors influence the pay grade (e.g. II or III).

Why is a PD Important?

A PD is important because it documents the expected roles, responsibilities, and impact of the position. A PD has three major impacts: Classification & Pay, Performance Expectations, and serves as a resource for other departmental processes.

Classification & Pay

An accurate PD contains elements that determine how a position should be classified, which affects not only the classification, but also the level of the classification. For example, the factors indicate the appropriate pay grade – P33 for example, whereas the duties may identify that the position is an Accountant. The combination of factors (pay grade) and job family or series (duties) in this case, would indicate that the classification is an Accountant II. This enables HR to further identify the most appropriate internal and external benchmarks. The combination of these elements guide salary recommendations for positions. An accurate PD and classification aligns pay more closely with the external market and helps preserve internal equity at the University. The classification may also identify a career ladder or natural progression as the accountant example illustrates.

Performance Expectations

The PD identifies what duties should be performed; the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform them well, and identifies essential elements to the position. The supervisor should have a vested interest in this document, as it should be used during yearly performance appraisals to assess if an employee is meeting the expectations set in the job description. This process can

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also help to identify changes to a position over time and determine if a reclassification is appropriate.

Recruitment Services

The position description is the basis for a posting to attract candidates to a position. It is important that the PD is accurate to manage expectations and potential applicants receive a realistic representation of the position. Inflating or understating the duties of the position can result in a gap between the skill level needed for the job and the candidate selected. In turn, this can cause performance issues, increased turnover or inequities among employees.

Benefits Office

One example of how the benefits office uses the position description is by gathering information to assist in determining eligibility for long-term disability. The classification and position description also help determine eligibility and options for retirement and other benefits programs such as health and dental.

Employee Relations / Labor Relations

Employee Relations and Labor Relations (ERLR) is involved with disability cases in addition to worker's compensation cases. The position description outlines essential functions, which may aid in determining what reasonable accommodations should be made for employees. ERLR is also involved in performance management issues and use the PD to determine what expectations should be for an employee or to help set accurate and reasonable expectations. The classification and PD also determine if a position is covered by a collective bargaining agreement and may guide processes and expectations for positions.

How to Access Your PD

The following steps will lead you to viewing your own Position Description:

1. Navigate to www.iastatejobs.com/hr/login
2. Click the yellow link
3. Enter your **Net ID** and **associated password**
 - a. If you forgot your password, click the "I Forgot my Username/Password" link
4. Click **My Profile** at the top of the page and select the **Position Description** tab
5. Select the blue title link with your University title to view your PD

For questions, please email uhrcc@iastate.edu

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How is a PD Evaluated for Classification?

When writing or modifying a PD, it is important to understand how the PD is evaluated. Each PD is evaluated on a point-based system and each pay grade has an associated point range. Points are given based on the seven compensable factors, which include:

Factor 1	Knowledge and Experience	16.5%
This factor measures the knowledge needed to perform assigned duties or to function at the appropriate scholarly or professional level. Knowledge is generally acquired through a formal education, on-the-job training, and prior work experience.		
Factor 2	Complexity	16%
This factor measures the variety and difficulty of the tasks necessary for successful completion of work. Consider the amount of judgment and analytical thinking necessary along with the availability of policies, procedures, precedents and standards for guiding the position's actions.		
Factor 3	Innovation	17.1%
This factor measures the extent to which the job demands resourcefulness, creativity, ingenuity, or inventiveness. This factor considers the degree of original thinking required to organize or develop new or improved methods, ideas, strategies, procedures or techniques.		
Factor 4	Impact on Institutional Mission	13.9%
This factor assesses the scope of responsibility of the job with regard to the overall institutional mission of the University, and relative to positive or negative outcomes. Consider the following as possible points of Impact on Institutional Mission: research, instruction, instructional support, outreach programs, public relations, administration, support services, revenue generation, financial and/or asset control and student advisement and development.		
Factor 5	Internal Interactions	15.6%
This factor appraises the responsibility for working with or through other people employed by the University to get results. Consider the nature and level of contact encountered on a regular, recurring and essential basis during operations. Consider whether the contacts involve furnishing or obtaining information, influencing others or negotiating. Only those internal contacts outside the position's immediate work unit/area should be considered.		
Factor 6	External Interactions	12%
This factor appraises the responsibility for working with or through other people outside the University to get results. Consider the nature and level of contact encountered on a regular, recurring and essential basis during operations. Consider whether the contacts involve furnishing or obtaining information, influencing others or negotiating.		
Factor 7	Leadership Responsibility	8.9%
This factor measures the job's leadership responsibility. It appraises the extent of responsibility for the organization, selection, assignment, guidance and review of other staff. It also addresses project assignment responsibilities and the guidance or direction given in a professional capacity that ensures the maintenance of satisfactory human relations and/or productive atmosphere.		