



**Instructions for Writing a  
Classified Position Description**

**Winona State University**

# **When is It Time to Update your Position Description?**

**Purpose:** Updating position descriptions should be done when there has been a significant change in or addition or subtraction to the position's primary responsibilities and duties. It is a reflection on the position, not the performance of the person holding the position. This reclassification process should not be done for the purpose of a pay increase. When there is a vacancy, the position description should be reviewed to ensure necessary updates. When new positions are created, position descriptions should be created prior to the position being filled. If there is an organizational need, a position description may be updated to fulfill that need. Position descriptions should be updated every three years. The reclassification process is done so that the positions can be assured that they are in the appropriate classifications for the classified pay programs.

**Questions to Ask:** Has the position changed? How has the position changed? Has there been a change in the complexity of duties? Has there been a change in the range of the duties? For what responsibilities does this position exist to fulfill?

## **Common Terminology:**

**Allocation:** The assignment of a specific position to an appropriate class on the basis of the kind, difficulty, or responsibility of the work performed.

**Reclassification:** Changing the allocation of a position to a higher, lower, or equivalent class by either a reallocation or a change in allocation.

**Reallocation:** A reclassification of a position resulting from significant changes over a period of time in the duties and responsibilities of a position. Incumbent is automatically appointed.

**Change in Allocation:** A reclassification of a position resulting from abrupt, management-imposed changes in the duties and responsibilities of a position. Requires a competitive appointment. Incumbent does not automatically remain in the position.

**DOER:** Department of Employee Relations

**PD:** Position Description

## **Position Description Reclassification Request Process for Existing Positions**

1. The employee and supervisor should review the employee's former position description, and must submit it with the proposed position description.
2. The employee and supervisor should complete for submission the new or updated classified position description signed by both the employee and supervisor.
3. Supervisor should include a cover memorandum that states:
  - a. The current classification of the incumbent.
  - b. How the job has changed. (Specific duties or level of responsibility)
  - c. Why the job has changed.
  - d. Timeline for change.
  - e. The new classification you are proposing.
4. Approval through the reallocation/change in classification request form from the vice president or dean. A memorandum from the vice president or dean may also be submitted if appropriate.
5. An Organizational Chart is required for submission. If you don't have an organizational chart, contact Human Resources for assistance.
6. The Human Resources department will review the former position description, the proposed position description (with employee and supervisor signatures), the Organizational Chart, the supervisor's cover memorandum, and the approval from the vice president or dean. If the Human Resources office feels the position should be reclassified, materials will be forwarded to the Office of the Chancellor. If the Human Resources department believes the position is now allocated at the correct level, the supervisor will be notified.
7. The Human Resources department will be notified of the results of the submission to the Office of the Chancellor. The Human Resources Department will communicate the results to the supervisor and employee. If the department and/or employee would like to appeal, please contact the Human Resources Department.

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**Employee Name:**  
**Division:**  
**Classification Title:**  
**Prepared By:**

**Position Control Number:**  
**Activity:**  
**Working Title:**  
**Appraisal Period:**                      **To**

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**EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE/DATE**

**SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE/DATE**

(this position description accurately reflects my current job)

(this position description reflects the employee's current job)

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**POSITION PURPOSE:**

In a short paragraph, one to three sentences, the position purpose should be a brief description of the primary purpose or objective of the position. If appropriate, include the major functions, duties, and responsibilities of the position in a broad overview without going into detail. This should provide a fundamental understanding of the job. Describe the activity first, and then state what the purpose is of doing that activity. The position purpose should answer “why” not “how” position functions. Why does the position exist? What would be affected if the job did not exist? What is the position expected to accomplish?

**REPORTABILITY**

**Reports to:** List the position title of the person to which this position reports.

**Supervises:** List the position titles of the people reporting to this position.

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**DIMENSIONS** (Note that now all positions have relevant dimensions.)

**Budget:** Include all of the budgets in which this position is involved, and state the level of involvement this position has with the budgets.

**Clientele:** State the positions or groups of people that this position collaborates with, communicates with, or interacts with on a regular basis.

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*Make 3 Copies: Employee, Supervisor, Personnel Office*

**POSITION DESCRIPTION B**

**EMPLOYEE NAME:**

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## Principle Responsibilities and Tasks

Describe between four and six of the most essential principal responsibilities of the position. This should be a list created in regards to the level of importance rather than the level of frequency, and the list should be descending based on the level of importance. Only items that are permanent tasks of the position should be included as a responsibility. The responsibilities should show the reason for the position's existence.

Assume that the person reading this is not familiar with the duties of the position. The principal responsibilities should begin with "to," followed by an action verb in the present tense, and then the sentence should be completed with factual representation of the work duty. Below each responsibility there should have a bulleted list of the supporting tasks done to fulfill each responsibility achieving an end result. Each of the sentences should begin with an action verb describing what, why, or how the duty is completed. Avoid using verbs that have unclear meanings, since the intention is to clearly and concisely describe the duty being performed. What are the primary responsibilities of the position? What tasks are necessary to fulfill each responsibility? How important is each responsibility? How much time should be devoted to each responsibility?

**Priority:** Rating based on the level of necessity associated with the responsibilities, and each responsibility should be assigned either A, B, or C.

A: The responsibility is essential, and it must be executed.

B: The responsibility is important, and it should be executed. However, the A responsibilities must be completed first.

C: The responsibility is wanted, but it should be performed after both the A and B responsibilities are fulfilled.

**Discretion:** Rating based on the level of authority the employee has to perform responsibilities and make decisions, and each responsibility should be assigned either A, B, C, or D.

A: Employee analyzes situations, takes action, and informs only if there are exceptions to the standard review process in place.

B: Employee analyzes situations, takes action, and informs immediately after action is taken.

C: Employee analyzes situations, recommends action, makes decisions with supervisors, takes action, and informs immediately after action is taken.

D: Employee discusses issue with supervisor, analyzes situations, makes decisions with supervisors, takes action, and informs immediately after action is taken.

**Percent of Time:** Each responsibility should specify an average percentage of time spent performing it. Duties that performed less than 5% of the time should not be included unless it is essential to the job. The total percentages should add up to 100%.

1.

**Priority:**

**Discretion:**

**Percent of Time:**

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**POSITION DESCRIPTION C**

**EMPLOYEE NAME:**

**NATURE AND SCOPE: (RELATIONSHIPS; KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES; PROBLEM - SOLVING AND CREATIVITY; AND FREEDOM TO ACT)**

**RELATIONSHIPS:** Describe individuals that this position has direct contact with both inside and outside the organization, and include the reason for the relationship. This list should include primary contacts focusing on the contacts that are critical to performing the position's crucial responsibilities. It should be individuals or groups that provide work or information to the position or receive work or information from the position. The purpose is to give an overall idea of the position's interactions and communications on a regular basis, so it does not need to be all-inclusive. Inside or outside the University, with who does this position regularly interact to give or receive necessary information?

**KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES:** Describe any knowledges, skills, and abilities that are necessary to perform this position's responsibilities at a minimally acceptable standard. Also describe knowledges, skills, and abilities that are wanted for performing this position's responsibilities. Include information on how each knowledge, skill, and ability is used to achieve the position's responsibilities. The description should provide an understanding of the minimum levels of knowledges, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the position's responsibilities at entry level. Include any special techniques that are required for this position.

**Knowledge:** Understanding of concepts and information through work experience, training, or education that can be verified through testing.

**Skill:** Talent that can be demonstrated and verified through testing.

**Ability:** Potential to learn new things to be able to fulfill the position's primary responsibilities.

**PROBLEM SOLVING:** Describe typical problems and the process of solving the problems that this position would encounter. Describe the level of investigation and analysis compared to referencing standard procedures for solving the problem. The descriptions should show the amount of independent thinking, judgment, and innovative problem solving skills used to fulfill this position's responsibilities and duties, and they should be problems that are solved independent of supervisor approval. What are regular types of problems associated with this position? What problems does this position encounter that requires investigation and analysis in order to solve them? What problems does this position encounter that causes reference to standard procedures in order to solve them? What problems does this position turn over to the immediate supervisor?

**FREEDOM TO ACT:** Describe the level of independent authority that this position has in the actions to take to perform the essential responsibilities. Explain the purpose and frequency this position would report to the direct supervisor. Describe policies, procedures, rules, laws, or anything else that might limit the position's freedom to act. To what degree is work assigned, reviewed, and approved by others? What is the highest level of action taken to fulfill this position's responsibilities without approval?

## Position Description Terminology

**Employee Name:** name of the person holding the position for who the update request is being performed.

**Division:** name of the institution at which the position is employed.

**Classification Title:** official title assigned through the classified position descriptions from the Department of Employee Relations.

**Prepared By:** name of the person who wrote the position description; should be the employee.

**Position Control Number:** control number assigned to each position that can be found on the organizational chart.

**Activity:** department or area in which the position is employed.

**Working Title:** unofficial title assigned by the university which the position is commonly referenced.

**Appraisal Period:** date the position description was last reviewed through the date the proposed position description was written.

**Position Purpose:** brief description of the primary purpose or objective of the position providing a fundamental understanding of why the job exists.

### **Reportability**

**Reports to:** position title of the person to which this position reports.

**Supervises:** position titles of the people reporting to this position.

### **Dimensions**

**Budget:** description of all the budgets and the level of involvement the position has with each budget.

**Clientele:** description of the positions or groups of people that this position collaborates with, communicates with, or interacts with on a regular basis.

**Principle Responsibilities and Tasks:** description of the most essential principal responsibilities of the position. Below each responsibility, a bulleted list of the supporting tasks showing what is done to fulfill each responsibility achieving the end result.

**Priority:** rating based on the level of necessity associated with the responsibilities. Each responsibility is assigned either A, B, or C.

**A:** the responsibility is essential, and it must be executed.

**B:** the responsibility is important, and it should be executed. However, the A responsibilities have priority.

**C:** the responsibility is wanted, but both the A and B responsibilities have priority.

**Discretion:** rating based on the level of authority the position has to perform responsibilities and make decisions. Each responsibility is assigned either A, B, C, or D.

**A:** employee analyzes situations, takes action, and informs supervisor only if there are exceptions to the standard review process in place.

**B:** employee analyzes situations, takes action, and informs supervisor immediately after action is taken.

**C:** employee analyzes situations, recommends action, makes decisions with supervisors, takes action, and informs supervisor immediately after action is taken.

**D:** employee discusses issues with supervisor, analyzes situations, makes decisions with supervisors, takes action, and informs supervisor immediately after action is taken.

**Percent of Time:** each responsibility should specify an average percentage of time spent performing it.

**Relationships:** description of individuals that this position has direct contact with both inside and outside the organization, and include the reason for the relationship.

**Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities:** description of knowledges, skills, and abilities that are necessary to perform this position's responsibilities at a minimally acceptable standard, and how they are utilized to achieve the position's responsibilities.

**Knowledge:** understanding of concepts and information through work experience, training, or education that can be verified through testing.

**Skill:** talent that can be demonstrated and verified through testing.

**Ability:** potential to learn new things to be able to fulfill the position's primary responsibilities.

**Problem Solving:** description of typical problems and the process of solving the problems that this position encounters.

**Freedom to Act:** level of independent authority that the position has over the actions taken to perform the essential job responsibilities.

# **Employee and Supervisor Checklists**

## **Employee Checklist**

It is important that you, the employee, review the proposed position description to ensure that it is accurate to the specific position, it is written in the correct format, and it clearly communicates the necessary information.

- ✓ Does the position purpose accurately summarize the reason for the position?
- ✓ Does the position description include information that would be specific do the job?
- ✓ Do the duties and responsibilities accurately reflect the position without being tailored to me as an employee?
- ✓ Is the position description written in my own words, or did I simply copy information from the DOER website?
- ✓ Does the proposed position description accurately reflect how the position has permanently changed?

## **Supervisor Checklist**

It is important that you, the supervisor, review this checklist to ensure that you and the employee have the same perspective on the position that is accurately represented on the proposed position description.

- ✓ Does the overall position description accurately reflect the position without being tailored to an individual?
- ✓ Do the duties and responsibilities described accurately reflect those of the position without taking into consideration the performance of the specific employee?
- ✓ Do the position changes in the proposed position description accurately reflect the changes that have occurred to adapt to the organizational or departmental needs?
- ✓ Does the proposed position description accurately reflect how the position has permanently changed?
- ✓ Do you agree with everything that the employee included in the proposed position description?
- ✓ Is the position description written in the employee's own words, or did the employee simply copy the information from the DOER website?
- ✓ Do the dimensions in the proposed position description accurately reflect the budget and clientele of the position?
- ✓ Does section B of the proposed position description accurately and appropriately reflect the discretion and priorities of the principal responsibilities and tasks?
- ✓ Do the percentages of time figures accurately represent the amount of time that the employee should be spending on each responsibility?
- ✓ Are the described relationships accurate to what the position requires?
- ✓ Does section C of the proposed position description accurately reflect the position's problem solving procedures and ability to freely act?
- ✓ In section C of the proposed position description, are there any unnecessary or missing knowledges, skills, or abilities required to perform the job at a minimally accepted standard?
- ✓ Do you have additional comments on about the position not reflected in the position description that should be included in the cover letter?

# **Frequently Asked Questions about Position Descriptions**

**1. What should I do if I disagree with the classification recommendation? Can I appeal the decision?**

If you disagree with the decision, you may write a written request of appeal. Please contact Human Resources if you are interested in pursuing an appeal.

**2. How often should position descriptions be reviewed or updated?**

Positions descriptions should be reviewed when there has been a significant change in duties for the employee. It is also a good idea to review the position descriptions annually with the performance review, or at least every three years.

**3. When should position descriptions be updated?**

Position description should be updated when there has been a significant change in job duties of a current position or when this position is vacant. They should also be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the position description accurately reflects the duties that the position is fulfilling. Updates can be made without reclassifying.

**4. What is the purpose of a position description?**

Position descriptions are designed to give an accurate illustration of the purpose and responsibilities of the position as well as the ways in which the job is executed.

**5. Is it appropriate for me to request reclassification?**

If you feel that the duties and responsibilities in your job do not match your current position description, then it would be appropriate to go through the process of requesting a reclassification.

**6. What is the purpose of updating a position description? What are you hoping to accomplish?**

The purpose of updating a position description is to ensure that it is in alignment with the work being done. The intention should not be to receive a raise or a promotion.

**7. How can I obtain an Organizational Chart?**

Winona State University's Human Resources Department can assist with creating an organizational chart.

**8. What is reclassification?**

Reclassification is the process of getting a position description categorized into a different class based on a change in job duties and responsibilities of that position.

**9. Who is eligible for reclassification?**

Classified employees have the right to review classifications and write a proposed position description. The proposed position description needs approval from the immediate supervisor, the vice president or dean of the department, the Human Resources department, and the Office of the Chancellor in order to be officially classified.

**10. Is it important to regularly review your position description?**

Reviewing position descriptions are important for ensuring that employee classifications are an accurate reflection of their regular job duties. MNSCU has a classification system in place, so employees being accurately classified achieves MNSCU's objective of utilizing a fair and accurate classification system.

**11. How do I get a copy of a job description?**

Every Winona State Employee should have a copy of his or her position description. If not, contact Human Resources.

**12. Where can I find the pay grades and ranges for different titles on campus?**

The Department of Employee Relations website has a database of job class specifications that can be found at the following link: <http://www.doer.state.mn.us/stf-bltn/jobs2/classif.asp>. Information on the pay grades and ranges for the different titles can be found in the pay grids in the employee union contracts.

**13. What is a class?**

A class within a classification system is a group of positions with identical titles, comparable duties and responsibilities, and equal pay ranges.

**14. Since the position description should be a reflection of what I am currently doing, what time period should it cover?**

Position descriptions are a reflection of the current permanent job duties. The time period should start with the last date that the position description was reviewed through the date that the position description was written.

**15. What happens if the supervisor does not agree with the duties and responsibilities that the employee has written?**

The supervisor and the employee need to work out the details of the employee's job duties and responsibilities. If the employee has written job duties and responsibilities that the supervisor does not feel accurately reflect the actual job duties and responsibilities, then the supervisor and employee must rewrite the position description so that both people feel the proposed position description is accurate. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the employee is actually doing the work that is written on the proposed position description. Both employee and supervisor signature approvals are required for the proposed position description to be processed.

**16. What is the basis for requesting a review of a position?**

The basis for requesting a review of a position is to ensure that the job duties being regularly and permanently performed by the employee align with the duties documented in the employee's position description.

**17. My responsibilities have changed because I am responsible for completing more work, is this a factor in my review?**

The regular permanent employee's responsibilities rather than the amount of work are taken into consideration when reviewing an employee's position description.

**18. What factors count in classification decisions?**

The classification decisions are based solely on the classification title's correlation between the position description published by the Department of Employee Relations and the Winona State University employee's current position description. The employee's performance and amount of work are not considered factors in classification decisions, and classifications decisions are not decisions on pay increases.

**19. What factors are not a part of classification decisions?**

The employee's performance and amount of work are not considered factors in classification decisions, and classifications decisions are not results of pay increases.

**20. Does employee performance affect evaluation?**

No, employee performance is not a factor in classification decisions. Employee annual reviews would be more appropriate for evaluating performance.

**21. Who should initiate a classification review request?**

The employee and his or her supervisor are responsible for ensuring that the position is appropriately classified. Employees that think that their position description belongs in another class can go through the steps of the position description reclassification process.

**22. Will there be an on-site review as part of the reclassification process?**

No, on-site reviews are not officially part of the reclassification process. A supervisor may review the employee's duties and responsibilities on-site prior to signature approval of the employee's proposed position description. However, the Human Resources Department does not require an on-site review as part of the reclassification process.

**23. Can a position be reclassified to a lower level?**

Yes, a position can be reclassified to a lower level. This is rare occasion, since typically an employee would not request classification into a lower classification level. Also, an employee and supervisor usually predict the classification levels when reviewing the Department of Employee Relations' website.

**24. Can I view my current position description online?**

No, currently Winona State University's position descriptions are not yet available online.

**25. Where can I find class specification?**

Class specifications can be found on the Department of Employee Relations' website at the following address: <http://www.doer.state.mn.us/stf-bltn/jobs2/classif.asp>.

**26. How long should I plan on waiting for reclassification decisions?**

Position description reviews can typically take a few weeks to be processed by Winona State's Human Resources Department. The Human Resources Department will return any proposed position descriptions that are incomplete, unsigned, or need modifications prior to being sent to the Chancellor's Office. Once they are sent to the Chancellor's Office, it takes about a month to hear about a decision. If there are questions that need to be answered, or further investigation needed, then reclassification decisions can take longer.