

## Human Resources: Job Descriptions and Titles

A job description is a summary of the most important features of a job. In addition to duties and level of responsibility, a job description should include job specifications, which are the knowledge, skills and expertise normally required for competent performance in the job.

The job description should focus on the job itself and not the person who fills the job.

At WHOI, our job description template allows for a WHOI Title and a Working Title. The WHOI Title is the official job title on record at the Institution. Some jobs, however, may warrant a Working Title that assists with clarifying an individual's role at the Institution. Working Titles are typically used for jobs that are part of a more general career path.

Here are some important things for employees, supervisors, and managers to remember when creating job descriptions and titles:

- Avoid inflating job descriptions and titles. Doing so could result in confusion regarding the nature and level of work being performed as well as performance expectations.
- The job specifications (knowledge, skills and expertise) section of a job description should articulate the minimum qualifications for a new hire. When writing the job specifications, your objective should not be to describe incumbents.
- Avoid arbitrary education and experience requirements. If one of the minimum qualifications for a job is a Bachelor's Degree, you need to be able to show the relationship between that requirement and the job.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Use present tense, action verbs.
- Since technology, software, and vendors are subject to change, it is best to use generic terms rather than proprietary names.

The Human Resources Office is available to assist with writing job descriptions. The [Position Information Questionnaire](#) should be completed by the employee, supervisor and/or manager to provide necessary information. Job descriptions must be approved by the Department Chair or Senior Manager.

All new or updated job descriptions must be reviewed by Human Resources.

*Last updated: November 3, 2014*

Copyright ©2007 Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, All Rights Reserved.

Mail: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, 266 Woods Hole Road, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA.

E-Contact: [info@whoi.edu](mailto:info@whoi.edu); press relations: [media@whoi.edu](mailto:media@whoi.edu), tel. (508) 457-2000

Problems or questions about the site, please contact [webdev@whoi.edu](mailto:webdev@whoi.edu)