

What is a position description?

A position description is a document that outlines the responsibilities and requirements of a particular job. It is intended to provide a clear and accurate representation of what is expected of the person who holds the position, as well as the skills and experience they need to possess to perform the job effectively.

While a position description will include the key responsibilities that the job entails and the expected outcome, it is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all duties and tasks that the employee will perform. Rather, it is intended to provide a general overview of the position and its expectations.

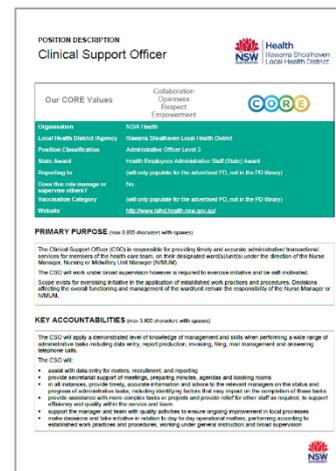
A position description can serve several purposes.

- **Recruitment and selection:** A position description is an essential tool for recruiting and selecting the right candidate for a job. It helps to attract suitable candidates and provides a clear basis for evaluating their qualifications and suitability for the role.
- **Performance management:** A position description serves as a basis for performance management, helping to clarify performance expectations, goals, and objectives. It provides a clear understanding of the job requirements, which can be used to evaluate and monitor performance, set targets and objectives, and provide feedback to employees.
- **Career development:** A position description can be used to identify areas for employee development and career progression. It provides a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills, and experience required for the role, which can be used to identify training and development needs and career progression opportunities.

It is important for both the manager and the employee to have a clear understanding of the position description, as it can help to ensure that expectations are aligned, and that the employee is able to perform their job effectively.

A well-written position description is essential for effective recruitment, performance management, and compliance with employment laws and regulations.

Generic position descriptions are located on the Position Descriptions page on the ISLHD Intranet. Go to [Workforce Services > Recruitment and Onboarding > Position Descriptions](#).



Generic position descriptions

Wherever possible and relevant, generic position descriptions should be developed to cover roles drawing on the same skills and capabilities to support mobility and career path options.

When to review position description

Position descriptions change over time and therefore should be reviewed regularly. Drivers for a review include the position becoming vacant, priorities of the department/service/unit or organisation change and/or as a result of workforce planning.

Components of a position description

Primary purpose

(Size limit 3,800 characters with spaces)

A concise summary of the primary purpose of the position, answering the question “Why does this position exist?” The purpose should clearly and concisely articulate how the position assists the organisation to achieve its objectives rather than the main tasks of the position.

Key accountabilities

(Size limit 3,800 characters with spaces)

A summary of the critical goals for which the position is held accountable. This section is not intended to describe every aspect of the position. Rather, accountabilities provide the rationale for the position. There should be no more than 6-8 key accountabilities in total, and they should be:

- outcomes focussed, rather than process focussed
- ordered in importance and/or frequency
- as specific to the position as possible while not detailing tasks.

Selection criteria

Selection criteria are a list of essential and desirable skills, experience, personal attributes, and qualifications that employers look for in candidates to fulfil a certain role. Any selection criteria developed must be clear and concise, directly relate to the position, and reflect any relevant Award requirements. Selection criteria can be used to efficiently vet high numbers of job applications.

There are a number of mandatory requirements which are listed in [Appendix 1.5](#) of the Recruitment and Selection of Staff to the NSW Health Service.

Selection criteria have sentences that often begin with:

- Background in...
- Proven experience in...
- Evidence of...
- Demonstrated application of...
- Proven record in...
- Knowledge of...
- Proven understanding of...
- Demonstrated capacity to
- Demonstrated ability to...

Key challenges

A summary of the position’s key challenges, indicating the complexity of the position. “Key Challenges” inform job evaluation and are an important consideration when selecting the capability levels required for the position.

There should be no more than 2 – 3 key challenges for the position. The number of key challenges does not need to match the number of key accountabilities.

The key challenges listed should be those that are regularly encountered in the position, as opposed to occasional challenges that may arise. The key challenges should not restate the position’s key accountabilities and should describe the complexities the position is expected to manage, rather than business as usual activities.

Key relationships

The relationships to be identified are those with whom the position is expected to interact with routinely, rather than occasionally. These relationships are important for understanding the nature of the interpersonal skills required to successfully perform the position.

Useful resources

- [Recruitment and Selection of Staff to the NSW Health Service](#)
- [Position description template](#)
- [Guide to writing a position description](#)
- [Developing a selection criteria – glossary of key phrases](#)

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