VCU
Human Resources

Job Postings: Best Practices for Creating an Inclusive Workforce

The purpose of this document is to provide pertinent information and strongly suggested practices regarding VCU job postings with the goal of attracting top talent and developing diverse candidate pools. The intent is for this to be a brief but comprehensive guide to all aspects of a job posting and to contain the most essential information, including key insights and clear takeaways. This document is intended for use by HR Professionals, HR Associates, Hiring Managers, and any other stakeholders involved in the recruitment process.

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Job Title

- The job title on job postings should be clear, specific, and concise. It should be no more than three to four words in length. Avoid using VCU lingo, verbiage or abbreviations in the job title and in the job posting overall. Job seekers are typically searching for jobs by their title, and you want your job to appear in their search. Standard job titles perform best in search engine queries.

  - In most cases, the title of the job posted should be the working job title, not the VCU job title, although they may be similar in some cases. *E.g. A job is posted as "Senior Communications Coordinator," and "Sr Coordinator CM 2" is the VCU Job Title.*

- The VCU Job Title must also be included in the job posting. This information will not appear externally to applicants automatically when a requisition is created in Talent; it must be added manually into the "Description" field. As a best practice, put this information at the very end of the content you enter in the description field.

Duties and Responsibilities

- A good starting place for crafting some elements of the job posting is the [Job Summary Tool](). Here, you will find the VCU job summary and typical duties, as well as the education, licensures, and expertise recommended to successfully perform in the position. While you may include content from the Job Summary Tool, you will need to customize the job posting to your particular position. There may be information specific to the role that needs to be added or details that are not as relevant that should be removed. You should not simply copy and paste all of the information in the Job Summary Tool into your job posting. Keep in mind that the job posting overall should be compelling and the job should sound exciting. This is the applicant's first impression of the position and potentially of VCU altogether.

- Outline the core responsibilities of the job, the day-to-day activities, and how the role fits into VCU's organization. An effective job posting will give a clear, accessible view of the role and provide enough detail for applicants to determine if they're interested in and qualified for the job. However, it should be succinct. Avoid the temptation to list out every minute task.

- Use inclusive and gender-neutral language. Avoid using "he," "she," or "he/she." You can easily circumvent gendered language by utilizing "the ideal candidate," or "the incumbent," or by adjusting the sentence structure. You can also use "they." Whichever option you chose, be consistent with that choice throughout the job summary. One resource that can assist with this is the [Gender Decoder](), which allows job summary language to be reviewed for subtle linguistic gender-coding elements that may have a discouraging effect on job applicants.

Essential Functions

- Keep in mind that one of VCU's core values is to ensure a climate of mutual trust and respect where individuals of different cultural backgrounds, identities, abilities and life experiences are embraced, engaged and empowered to drive excellence and success. Fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce is paramount to living this core value and should be reflected in our recruitment practices and in our job postings.

- Essential functions are the basic job duties that an employee must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation. You should carefully examine each job to determine which functions or tasks are essential to performance. A job function may be considered essential if:

  1. The job exists for performance of the function;
  2. A limited number of employees can perform the function, and it, therefore cannot be reassigned; or

3. The function is specialized and requires certain expertise to perform it

Physical and Cognitive Requirements for Essential Functions

● If there are psychological and/or physiological requirements the applicant must meet in order to perform essential functions, these need to be included.
● Carefully consider the language used in regards to physical and/or cognitive requirements for the job. Describe what needs to be done, not how to do it. Use accessible language in job duties:
    ○ "Communicate," vs. "hear/speak." "Move," vs. "walk." "Transport," vs. "carry/lift."
● Be clear in the physical needs, but don't overstate:
    ○ E.g. Is it *really necessary* for an Office Manager to lift 50 lbs?

Job Environment/Specifications

● Information about the work environment should be included. For example: are the working conditions loud, quiet, bright, dark, cramped, hectic, or fast-paced?
● Include the ability to work without supervision if applicable.

Qualifications

● **Minimum vs. preferred qualifications.** The minimum qualifications should be the true minimum required to perform the job duties. Think of the preferred qualifications as a "nice to have but not necessary." Be specific, but also use plain language and be concise whenever possible. The goal is to provide enough clarity that any candidate from any background will be able to discern whether or not they are qualified for the position. A lengthy list of minimum or preferred qualifications can potentially dissuade qualified job seekers from applying and can reduce gender diversity in your applicant pool. Research shows that while men will apply to jobs where they meet 60% of the qualifications, women will typically only apply when they believe they meet 100% of the qualifications.

● **Education requirements.** Evaluate whether a degree is absolutely crucial to successfully perform in the role. Oftentimes it is not. You might consider using "or equivalent experience." Keep in mind that experience is difficult to quantify; *x* number of years in a particular job title or function can vary widely in the skills and experience obtained. Overall, organizations are moving away from advertising a college degree as a minimum requirement and are looking more closely at applicant experience, abilities, and certifications. 65% of job seekers in the United States do not have a college degree; rigid degree requirements can result in missing out on diverse and otherwise qualified candidates.

- **Emphasis on diversity.** In the minimum qualifications, include the established line item: *"Demonstrated experience working in and fostering a diverse faculty, staff, and student environment, or commitment to do so as a staff member at VCU."*

- **Certifications.** If there are relevant certifications, carefully consider if they are a true requirement to perform the job, or a "nice to have but not necessary." Include these as applicable in the minimum or preferred qualifications fields.

Compensation

- **Posting a hiring range.** Listing a salary range, an "up to," or a "starting at" amount rather than simply "commensurate with experience" is a best practice. Candidates are more likely to apply to postings that provide compensation information up front. Additionally, this transparency will weed out candidates who are expecting much more than what the department's anticipated budget allows, saving the hiring manager and search team time and effort.

- **Pay transparency**. There are significant upward trends in state legislation requiring salary information to be openly listed in job postings. Leading, global organizations such as Indeed and LinkedIn are moving toward including pay information in every job posting. Indeed has shared from their data and insights that job postings that provide salary information receive 30% more applicants than those that do not.

- Here are some examples of how to include salary information:

  - ❖ *$50,000 - $55,000*
  - ❖ *Up to $55,000*
  - ❖ *Up to $55,000; Commensurate with experience*
  - ❖ *Commensurate with experience, starting at $55,000*

- **Sign-on bonuses.** If offering a sign-on bonus, draw attention to it by placing that information at the very top of your job posting or in the title of the posting itself.

- **Referral programs and retention bonuses.** Both can be effective incentives to attract candidates and retain staff members. If offering a sign-on bonus, it may be appropriate to enact retention bonuses concurrently, as department budgets allow. Partner with HR Professionals for assistance.

Other Information to Include

- **Benefits/total rewards information.** In both internal and external postings for full-time jobs, it is a best practice to include this information. Highlight those benefits that are unique to VCU, e.g. tuition benefit, abundant leave hours and leave granted up front, opportunities for career advancement, etc. Also include a link to VCU's benefits website. Some business units have crafted their own verbiage regarding this. Here is an example of one that can be used for all full-time postings, and departments can customize as they see fit:

    - *All full-time university staff are eligible for VCU's robust benefits package that includes: comprehensive health benefits, paid annual and holiday leave granted up front, retirement planning and savings options, tax-deferred annuity and cash match programs, generous tuition benefit, employee discounts, well-being resources, abundant opportunities for career development and advancement, and more. Learn more about VCU's benefits here.*

- **Flexible work arrangements (FWA).** Include that the job offers a flexible work arrangement (if applicable) in job postings both internally and externally. Globally, in our post-pandemic climate, more and more companies are providing FWA, and applicants are increasingly prioritizing this in their job search. Additionally, if there is a set schedule, provide that information as well. *E.g. "Work schedule is Monday-Friday 8am-5pm."*

- **Unstoppable introduction to VCU.** If a job is advertised outside of Talent on any external website, the posting should include the "Unstoppable" introduction to VCU. This verbiage is found on the bottom of each page on vcujobs.com, so there is no need to include it in internal postings. For external postings, add this:

    - *Welcome to VCU … a world unlike any other.*

      We combine learning, research, creativity, service and discovery with a commitment to inclusive excellence. Ranked by U.S. News as one of the 30 "most innovative" public universities in the country, VCU is a premier, urban, public research university home to multiple nationally ranked programs.

      Here, your success is supported and your career can thrive. VCU offers a generous leave package, career paths for advancement, competitive pay and mission-driven work. We advance a conscientious drive to support a climate where excellence and success for all people are valued and differences are celebrated.

Together, we can be unstoppable.

- **VCU's DEI commitment statement.** When posting a job to any external websites outside of Talent, be sure to add VCU's DEI commitment statement. The DEI commitment statement is on the footer of each page on vcujobs.com, but will not map over automatically to any external job postings. You should add this at the end of your job posting:

  - ❖ *Virginia Commonwealth University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action university providing access to education and employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, political affiliation, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability.*

- **Contact information.** If there is a dedicated point of contact for the requisition, it is best to include this information in the posting. At a minimum, provide a name and email address. This personal touch gives applicants an opportunity to ask questions and a name to use for addressing cover letters. For hiring managers or others involved in the recruitment process, listing contact information may provide an opportunity to make a connection with a great candidate.

- **Requisition closing date.** If there is a close date on the posting or a priority date for applications, include this information at the end of the job posting.

Requisition Technical Information

- Pay attention to length: the job posting ideally should not exceed 800 words, and 300-500 words is an ideal length.

- **Accessible formatting.** These recommendations make reading easier for all applicants and especially for those with vision impairments and/or who use a screen reader:

  - Set font size to a "2" in Talent or higher.
  - Break up long paragraphs.
  - Include bullet points and individual lines for the Job Summary, Typical Duties, Minimum, and Preferred Qualifications.
  - Use a Sans-Serif font (e.g. Arial, Verdana).

- Jobs posted in Talent will scrape automatically to the Virginia State Jobs site, the Virginia Employment Commission, Higher Ed Jobs, Chronicle Vitae, Indeed, Diverse Jobs, and others. Once you have posted a job in Talent, there are no additional steps that you need to take to ensure that your job will be posted additionally to these websites.

- Once you post your requisition in Talent, it will scrape onto the external sites listed above, and on all platforms it will begin "aging." The newest requisitions will always post at the top of search results, and after a few weeks, your requisition could be pages back. VCU posts about 80 requisitions a month, so this can happen fairly quickly. If you find that you are not getting enough applicants and your requisition has been posted for more than 30 days, consider closing that requisition and creating a new one to draw fresh attention to your job.

Recruitment Assistance

- If you find that you are not drawing enough applicants or qualified applicants or if you are posting a job that has been historically hard to fill or that you anticipate being hard to fill, reach out to:

  - Allison Jarrett, HR Consulting Analyst, at jarretta2@vcu.edu

  Allison can review your job posting and make suggestions for edits and review best practices before or after the job has been posted. Other services Allison can provide include consultation on the job, candidates, talent trends, and compensation strategies. Additionally, Allison has Indeed "recruiter" access and is able to perform resume searches and make contact with potential candidates.

Resources and References

VCU Resources

- [Job Summary Tool](#)

- [VCU Benefits Website](#)

- [VCU Careers Website](#)

- For a comprehensive list of websites for recruiting a diverse candidate pool refer to the [DEI Sourcing Resources Guide](#).

- Inside HR [Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit](#)

Sources addressing trends in pay transparency in job postings

- Indeed includes pay information in nearly all job postings. From Indeed's Employer Support: "Salary is one of the most important pieces of information that job seekers value when looking at a job, and having more insight into expected salary ranges is one of the top pieces of feedback that we receive from job seekers. We encourage all of our employers to include a salary range in their job description. Jobs posted without employer provided pay data may result in an Indeed estimate to be displayed."

- LinkedIn listed Pay Transparency in their Big Ideas that will Change the World in 2022

- List of States that Require Employers to Provide Salary Ranges, including California which passed a law in September '22.

- Wall Street Journal Article 10/22 "Job seekers like pay transparency because the salary data allows them to be more targeted in their search, according to compensation specialists and researchers. Posted pay ranges can also help people assess whether their own compensation is at market rate. Many managers say public salary information saves them time with candidates because there is a better chance that the company and the worker are on the same page when it comes to pay."

- From SHRM: More Employers Post Salary Ranges to Attract Workers, and Is Pay Transparency Good for Business?

- "Radical Retention: How Higher Education Can Rise to the Challenges of the Great Resignation and Beyond," on *NACE* website. Co-written by Samara Reynolds (Director, VCU Career Services).

Resources for Accessibility and Inclusion

- Gender Decoder for reviewing job posting language.

- From JAN (Job Accommodation Network): Job Descriptions Accommodation and Compliance

- From EEOC: Guidance on Job Applicants and the ADA

- From TMHRA (Texas Municipal Human Resources Association): Writing ADA Compliant Job Descriptions (includes a helpful list of ADA Compliant words and phrases for physical demands in job descriptions)

- From SHRM: How to Make Your Careers Website Usable for People with Disabilities

- From EARN (Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion): [Job Descriptions Checklist](#)

Accessibility and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- "Inappropriate language used in job descriptions reveals discriminatory or inappropriate phrases and offers a quick indicator that an individual may want to apply elsewhere. For example, an employer should avoid citing standards that may unnecessarily screen out particular groups such as individuals with disabilities. In contrast, a description written in a respectful tone with appropriate etiquette may encourage an individual to apply." –*Job Accommodation Network*

- The ADA does not require an employer to develop or maintain job descriptions. A written job description that is prepared before advertising or interviewing applicants for a job will be considered as evidence [in determining essential functions] along with other relevant factors. However, the job description will not be given greater weight than other relevant evidence.

- The ADA does not limit an employer's ability to establish or change the content, nature, or functions of a job. It is the employer's province to establish what a job is and what functions are required to perform it. The ADA simply requires that an individual with a disability's qualifications for a job are evaluated in relation to its essential functions.

- If an employer uses written job descriptions, the ADA does not require that they be limited to a description of essential functions or that essential functions be identified. However, if an employer wishes to use a job description as evidence of essential functions, it should in some way identify those functions that the employer believes to be important in accomplishing the purpose of the job.