

Direction on Writing Job Descriptions for Postdoctoral Fellows

People always ask for a “sample”, but, the things postdocs do are so diverse that what one dept has their postdocs do does not apply to another. Even within the same lab responsibilities and expectations can be very different. This is designed simply to stimulate thought for successful planning, communication, and evaluation.

Describe exactly what THIS person is expected to DO in THIS lab.

- Think of the product you want to see, and figure out what action the postdoc needs to take to accomplish it.
- Verbs are key and should be active.

Does s/he need to:

- Demonstrate ability to use/learn to use a particular piece of equipment?
- Produce a certain type of data? Or synthesize, analyze, review for conclusion, all data gathered within the lab? What do they do with data?
- Use particular (named) methods/techniques?
- Write a specific kind of product, such as grant proposals or articles for publication? How many in the course of the appointment?
- Supervise any others in the lab? How?
 - Review, approve, or assign work, workload, and schedules?
 - Contribute to the performance evaluation?
 - Train others in use of equipment?
 - Oversee progress of experiments done by others?
 - Other things – list above not exhaustive
- Present “research in progress” to certain audiences? Travel to attend or present at conferences? Or some other kind of speaking engagement?
- Meet with the mentor, or specified others, on any kind of regular basis?
- Complete any particular training offered either at UCD or elsewhere? (RCR, lab safety...)
- Perform duties associated with University fiscal responsibility? (i.e. purchase lab supplies, manage a grant budget, become a user of the University’s PeopleSoft Financial system, etc.)
- Comply with federal regs on research subjects with humans or animals?
- Manage data/information: transfer, storage, security, design of software, you-name-it.
- Whatever!

And then you always put in the “other duties as assigned” type of clause.

Tips:

- It is also good to try and assign weights or time spent to larger areas of responsibility. They should equal 100%. (ex: 70% bench research experimentation, 15% supervision, 15% personal career development) Organize the duties under the larger umbrellas, whatever you decide they are.
- The more specific you are in outlining expectations, the more likely the postdoc will be able to perform, not only to your satisfaction, but to his/her benefit.
- Job descriptions can change. Prep one for the year of initial hire, and then assess progress to create one for the second year.