

3 FAH-2 H-440 POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

3 FAH-2 H-441 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

3 FAH-2 H-441.1 Definition and Format

(TL:FSNH-3; 8-2-93)

A position description is an official statement of the duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements of a position. All position descriptions will be prepared on form OF-298, "Interagency Foreign Service National Position Description." This form provides for recording certain identifying data and certifications, and information about qualifications and position in a specified order. Certain instructions and guidance which will be helpful in describing the duties and responsibilities of the position are provided in 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix B, "Instructions for Preparing Interagency Foreign Service National Position Description."

3 FAH-2 H-441.2 Why Position Descriptions Are Needed

Position descriptions are needed to provide a basis for accurate classification, but they serve a number of other purposes, including: assisting management officials in the budgeting process and in making organizational studies, providing the supervisor with a tool for training new employees and for gaining a common understanding of the work of an organizational unit, and aiding the personnel officer in recruiting new employees and planning career development programs.

3 FAH-2 H-441.3 When Position Descriptions Are Needed

A position description is needed whenever a new position is established. A new or revised description is needed whenever there is a material change in the duties, responsibilities, or organizational relationships of an existing position. Although all material changes should be promptly reported by new or amended descriptions, it is a good practice to allow the change to establish before attempting to describe it. On the other hand, the supervisor should not allow a change to go unreported for very long.

3 FAH-2 H-441.4 Who Prepares Position Descriptions

A. Management's Responsibility

The first step in the process of preparing a position description is creating a position. A decision should be made that there is a valid management need for a position consisting of certain agreed upon duties and responsibilities, and that authorized funds and position ceilings are

available. It is a responsibility of management to make this decision and to take the necessary action to create the position. Management may also add, remove, or change duties, responsibilities, and assignments at any time. Thus, management is responsible for the currency, adequacy, and accuracy of position descriptions.

B. The Supervisor's Responsibility

The American supervisor is usually responsible for initiating classification action, and he is always responsible for assuring that the positions under his direction are accurately described. In many cases, the American supervisor will direct the local employee performing the work, or that employee's local supervisor to prepare a position description. In some cases, it will be appropriate for the American supervisor to prepare the description personally. This may be appropriate when the position is vacant, when it is filled by a recently assigned employee who is not yet fully acquainted with it, when the position is undergoing change, or when the employee in the position does not have sufficient proficiency in English to prepare an adequate description. When the employee assigned to the position is directed to prepare the position description, the American supervisor is responsible for discussing the position with the employee, indicating the approach to be taken in describing it, reviewing the description the employee prepares to insure that the management concept of the position has been carried out, and finally, certifying that the description is a current and accurate representation of the duties and responsibilities of the position, and that there is a valid management need for the position.

C. The Employee's Role

In many cases, the employee who incurs the position will prepare the description. Even where he or she does not prepare the description, the employee is an important source of information about the position, and should be consulted by the person preparing the description.

D. The Personnel Officer's Responsibility

The Personnel Officer or other American official charged with carrying out the personnel function has several responsibilities in the preparation of position descriptions, including:

(1) Requesting New or Revised Position Descriptions

New or revised position descriptions should be requested when changes have occurred in organization, level of staffing, performance of functions, etc., which make existing position descriptions obviously inaccurate.

(2) Instructing and Counselling Supervisors and Employees

Supervisors and employees should be instructed, advised, and counseled concerning the preparation of position descriptions where such assistance is appropriate. The assistance may take a number of forms, including group lectures, demonstrations and audience participation sessions, individual discussions, and the preparation and distribution of written instructions, guides, check lists, and other aids.

(3) Written Descriptions

The Personnel Office should not make a general practice of writing descriptions, since it is not usually staffed to perform this function. In certain circumstances, however, it may be appropriate. For example, it may be well for the Personnel Office to prepare position descriptions where two employees disagree as to exactly which parts of a function each performs. It may also be appropriate for the Personnel Office to prepare position descriptions when new descriptions have been requested, but the organization concerned has not prepared them after a reasonable period of time. When a mission or office is to be established or a new program instituted, the Personnel Office may prepare the initial FSN position descriptions.

(4) Reviewing Descriptions

The Personnel Office must review position descriptions received from organizations serviced to insure the descriptions are understandable, in proper form, reasonably brief, prepared in accordance with instructions, contain the information needed for classification purposes, and are not in conflict with other position descriptions or with known facts about organizations and functions. When descriptions are unsatisfactory for any of the above reasons, they should be returned to the originating organization for rewriting. The Personnel Officer must be personally satisfied that position descriptions are accurate. When the Personnel Officer is unable to obtain an accurate description from the employing unit, the position should be audited and appropriate audit notes prepared, attached to the position description, and used in the classification of the position.

3 FAH-2 H-442 PREPARING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Position descriptions will be prepared in accordance with the instructions contained in Appendix B, "Instructions for Preparing Interagency Foreign Service National Position Description."

3 FAH-2 H-443 KEEPING POSITION DESCRIPTIONS CURRENT

3 FAH-2 H-443.1 Responsibility

In general, the official in charge of an organizational unit is responsible for keeping position descriptions up to date, and the Personnel Officer, or other American official charged with the personnel function, is responsible for insuring that the classification of FSN positions are kept current. This division of responsibility reflects the line official's authority to create positions, define their content, and to change their nature at any time. However, the Personnel Officer cannot insure that classifications are kept current if position descriptions are not current and accurate. Accordingly, the Personnel Officer is also responsible for requesting new position descriptions or amendments to position descriptions whenever there is reason to believe existing descriptions have been made inaccurate by reason of organizational changes, changes in the assignment of performance of functions, changes in the level of staffing, etc. Finally, the Personnel Officer is also responsible for administering an annual review in which all positions in each organizational unit are examined for currency, accuracy and need.

3 FAH-2 H-443.2 Day-to-Day Action

Position descriptions should be revised as changes occur, or as soon thereafter as the organizational unit "settles down" to the change. It should be possible to revise position descriptions within a very short time when the change affects only one or two employees, or a small group of employees performing a common function. Changes which affect all positions in the organizational unit usually require a longer "settling down" period, but no change should be allowed to go unreflected in position descriptions for very long. Personnel Officers should be attuned to changes in functions, organization and the level of staffing and, as noted above, should request new position descriptions if there is reason to believe existing position descriptions have been made inaccurate by the change.

3 FAH-2 H-443.3 Annual Reviews

Day-to-day action sometimes tends to focus only on the individual positions which are most affected by a management action, and to overlook the changes which the same action causes in related positions. Also, day-to-day action often fails to take note of gradual changes which occur as a result of increasing or decreasing workload and other factors. The annual review procedure provides a safeguard against overlooking such changes, and also provides an opportunity for officials in charge of organizational units to satisfy themselves that there is a valid management need for each position in the unit. The latter is a needed control in a system which rotates the official in charge of the unit every two years or so.

A. Scheduling

Each post shall develop a schedule for the review which provides for the various organizational units of the embassy or the associated agency mission to conduct their reviews on a staggered basis. This will avoid the disruptions and delays in classification action that would result if all organizational units conducted their reviews at the same time.

B. Assistance to Organizational Units

The Personnel Office will initiate a copy of Interagency Foreign Service National Position Description Review Report (see 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix E) for each organizational unit prior to the date its review is to be conducted, completing the organizational entries, and entering the position number, present classification, and name of incumbent for every position in the unit. The report format, together with copies of the current position descriptions of record, will be delivered to organizational unit immediately prior to the scheduled date for the start of the review, and the Personnel Officer and appropriate members of the Personnel Office staff will meet with the official in charge and his subordinate supervisors to explain the purpose of the review and how it is to be conducted.

C. Review by Organizational Unit Official

Organizational unit officials will, in consultation with subordinate supervisors and employees, review each position description. If the position description is determined to reflect accurately the major duties and responsibilities currently assigned to the position, the word "Yes" will be entered in Column 4 of the Report; if the description is determined to require revision, a check will be placed in column 5 or 6, as appropriate. Position descriptions should be revised only when there are changes in major duties and responsibilities. Organizational unit officials will also review the management need for each position and personally satisfy themselves there is an identifiable and valid management need for each position. When these steps have been accomplished, organizational unit officials will sign the certification at the bottom of the Report, and return it and the unit's position descriptions to the Personnel Office. Every attempt should be made to submit any new position descriptions that may be necessary at the time the report is returned. Reports should normally be returned within thirty days of the date received.

D. Personnel Officer Action on Review Report

The Personnel Office shall review the organizational unit official's findings, take classification action on any new position descriptions submitted, and discuss the results with the organizational unit official. Following that discussion, and any changes that may result from it, a final copy of the Review Report will be forwarded to the organizational unit official, and the results of the review will be noted on the "Interagency Foreign Service National Position Classification Review Record" (see 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix F), attached to each local employee position description.

3 FAH-2 H-444 THROUGH H-449 UNASSIGNED