

Writing your own job description to define your career goal(s)

We recommend that you do this exercise **to help develop a clear idea about what you want** from the career development process and to be able **to set career goals**. A person's career is a lifelong journey. As we develop our skills, our dream job may alter on the way, but taking some time to define your dream job as it looks today – establishing the highest possibility you dare to dream about, right now – can be very useful.

This is, in essence, a way to think about answering the question: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

As a first step, reflect on the experiences you had during your undergraduate studies and then think about the details that are important to you. Job Title? Salary? Benefits? Work Environment? Flexibility? What specific skills and responsibilities would your job include? Maybe you really love working with people but perhaps you loathe talking on the telephone. It could be that you thrive in a vibrant, multi-tasking, fast paced environment or maybe you prefer a slower paced environment with less deadlines and a predictable workload? . Would you be happiest in a large multinational corporation or within a small organization dedicated to a great cause? In your ideal job, are you sitting behind a desk or are you out of the office in different locations? Do you work long hours and weekends to climb the ladder, or do you work two part-time jobs for more variety and flexibility? These examples are just a beginning towards developing a clearer picture of what is important to you and also establishing what you would and would not be flexible about for the sake of your career.

We suggest that you start by considering the following matters related to work:

- Consider geography: what is your ideal location and how much are you willing to travel?
- Know how you want to spend your working hours—imagine the activities you would do each day and write them down.
- Know what kind of people and company environment you want to be surrounded by.
- Is the type of work the company does important to you? Are organization's cause/mission important? If so, what are some of those causes or what is important to you in a mission?
- What are you looking for in a supervisor?
- Establish what your salary needs are/will be by carefully considering all angles (will you have educational loans to pay off? is there something you already want to be saving for? what is your desired standard of living? what kind of benefits do you envision?)

As a written exercise, ask yourself the following questions to determine what type of work, environment, and people you would like to be involved with. Take note of the answers that feel most important to you.

THE TASKS:

- What types of tasks do you enjoy or not enjoy doing? (For instance: Writing? Problem solving? Contact with clients or customers? Teaching? Planning? Implementing?)
- Do you thrive on taking responsibility and inspiring and leading others or do you prefer to be in a support role?

- Do you like the stability of doing routine and repetitive tasks or do you need constant variety? How well do you adapt to change?
- Where does your motivation come from? Are you able to self-motivate? Does competition help to get you motivated? Do you need strict deadlines and a boss telling you exactly what to do?
- How detail-oriented are you? Are you a big-picture person or do you enjoy digging into the details?

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

- Do you need clear procedures? How do you feel about developing them yourself? How would you feel in a very structured environment? A disorganized or chaotic environment?
- How do you imagine the physical environment of your ideal workplace? A small office all to yourself? An open workspace with colleagues always around? Home-based? High-tech? Warm and welcoming?
- What's your ideal 'uniform' for work? Business or smart casual? T-shirts & jeans?
- What is the benefits package like at your ideal workplace?
- What are the work hours (9-5 or completely flexible)? How do you feel about working on evenings and/or the weekends?
- Where is it located? How far do you have to commute and how? What is nearby? Is it in an office park? Is the grocery store nearby? Is there greenspace where you can retreat for a break?

THE PEOPLE:

- How much contact do you have with people outside the department and/or organization (external clients or customers)? Does this take place in person or over the phone/online? Does your work involve engaging with the general public or is engagement limited to professionals in your field or a related field?
- Who are your co-workers? How many are there? What are they like? Imagine!
- Do you prefer to work independently or in a collaborative team environment?
- Do you like being closely supervised or do you prefer to be given lots of space to do things your own way and style? What is your ideal relationship with your boss?

Start with these questions and jot down how you would like to spend your working hours, and how your job would influence your ideal lifestyle. Most of all in whatever you do find happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction in ways that are meaningful and important to you. You can use your Career Tracker to become aware of some answers and to reflect on past experiences to find out what you liked and what you disliked.