

SUPPORT STAFF JOB DESCRIPTIONS and JOB EVALUATION

NEU Guidance for Support Staff Members

NEU receives many enquiries from support staff members about job descriptions – their accuracy, and how to go about changing them, and job evaluation – what is it, and how to get your job re-evaluated to take account of changes (normally an increase) in responsibilities. This factsheet will help you to find the answers.

What we say

When you read through this document you may have questions about what happens in your particular school or workplace and there may be collective issues that affect other members. In most circumstances, you should initially discuss the matter with your workplace rep, as they will know whether similar concerns have been raised by other members. If you do not have a rep at the moment, it would be a good idea to get members together to elect one. Further advice on this is available at:

<https://neu.org.uk/becoming-a-rep>

Although you may sometimes feel that you are the only person affected by or concerned about a particular issue, in reality this is seldom the case. Any difficulties you may experience are likely to be linked to wider conditions at your workplace and as a member of the NEU you have the advantage of being able to act collectively with your colleagues. This should give you the confidence of knowing that you have the weight of the Union behind you.

What is a job description?

A job description should detail the purpose, tasks and responsibilities of a particular job. The national agreement for support staff ('School support staff – The Way Forward') says that "every member of staff needs a comprehensive job description reviewed on a regular basis", and includes a number of model job profiles which should be used when compiling a more detailed job description. The job profiles cover three 'families' of support staff roles, broadly grouped as teaching assistants, curriculum/resource support and administration and organisation.

The teaching assistant role is split into two further streams: supporting and delivering learning, for primarily classroom-based TAs, and behaviour/ guidance/support. The roles are set against a four-part structure based on increasing skills levels.

Most local authorities (LAs) will use the model job profiles to create what are called generic job descriptions, which will cover the vast majority of school support staff roles. But there will also be a need to have bespoke job descriptions for particular specialised functions. Even for the more standard schools' roles, such as teaching assistants, librarians, technicians, administrators, the generic job description can be amended to take account of any additional duties the postholder is expected to carry out. While a job

description does not have the same legal standing, it should be provided to a new employee at the same time as the contract of employment.

How can a job description be changed?

Government guidance on the Workload Agreement states that headteachers should “consult with staff regarding changes to their job descriptions. Agreement (must be found) if there is a substantial change to a role.”

If you wish to amend your job description to encompass changes to your role and responsibilities, you should firstly update it yourself, using the model job profiles for guidance.

You should then talk informally to your line manager, to try to reach agreement on the revised job description. Should the informal approach not result in a satisfactory outcome, then you have recourse to the school or LA grievance procedure (whichever is applicable).

Job descriptions - the current state of play

A recent survey of NEU members in the maintained sector highlighted the fact that many NEU support staff members are working to inaccurate and out of date job descriptions, with all that that implies for their rate of pay.

More than a third of respondents (35.6 per cent) said that their job description does not really reflect the work they now carry out, and 5.1 per cent said that their job description was completely inaccurate.

Only a third of members (32.4 per cent) have had their job description reviewed in the last 12 months, while an almost identical percentage (32.5 per cent) cannot recall the last time their job description was updated.

Given the many innovations in state education in recent years which have directly impacted upon support staff roles - the introduction of PPA time for teachers, cover supervision, the divesting of administrative tasks from teachers – the survey figures are hardly surprising. But they highlight the fact that many support staff are working beyond the boundaries of their current job description and are therefore not being adequately paid for what they now do.

Job evaluation

Job evaluation is the assessment of the relative worth of varied jobs within an organisation on the basis of a consistent set of job and personal factors, such as skills, qualifications, experience and training required.

In the main, LAs use one of two different job evaluation schemes, when undertaking a complete overhaul of their grading structures (as part of what is called single status), and for ongoing reviews of individual posts.

The national local government single status job evaluation scheme has been developed jointly by the local government employees and unions, and has been incorporated into the Green Book (Part 4).

But increasingly popular with employers is the Greater London Provincial Council Scheme (GLPC) which in spite of its parochial title is used by LAs in many parts of country when implementing single status.

The GLPC Scheme

Under the GLPC scheme, a job description will be assessed against 11 different criteria, or factors:

- supervision/management of people
- creativity and innovation
- contacts and relationships
- decisions – discretion
- decisions – consequences
- resources
- work demands
- physical demands
- working conditions
- work context
- knowledge and skills.

There are a number of levels for each factor, challenging situations frequently involving innovatory response on diverse subjects which have extensive policy or service implications.”

Every factor level has a points value, and these points are added up to give an overall total for the job in question. The different factors are also weighted, reflecting the fact that some factors are deemed to be more important than others; e.g. a factor level 1 for contacts & relationships is worth 20 points, whereas the equivalent level for working conditions is only worth six points.

By using a job evaluation scheme such as GLPC, employers are able to ensure that jobs with vastly different characteristics can be assessed and remunerated on a fair and equitable basis

I think I am underpaid for what I do – how do I go about getting my job re-evaluated?

Once you have agreed an up to date and accurate job description, you should ask your line manager to review your current pay. Again, it is worth doing this on an informal basis initially, but if no progress can be made, you can submit a grievance under the school or LA grievance procedure, with a formal request for the school management to look at your current pay level.

If after due consideration, the school refuses to budge and agree a satisfactory pay increase, then you have the right to request a reconsideration of your grading by the LA (Green Book, part 2, paragraph 5.3 refers). There will be locally agreed arrangements in place for such appeals.

It is important to stress that you are perfectly within your rights to request a grading review. The support staff national agreement states that “any additional responsibilities (taken on by support staff) need to be assessed against the grading system”.

And the Workload Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) guidance is even more emphatic: “It is incumbent on all schools to ensure that (support staff) roles and responsibilities (ie job descriptions) reflect the skills, training, expertise and experience of members of staff and that such attributes are reflected in appropriate pay and rewards and fair conditions of employment.”

So, if you believe that you are currently underpaid for the work you do, you should consider asking for a job re-evaluation.

A number of the support staff in my school believe we are underpaid – what can we do?

You and your colleagues should seek to pursue the matter informally at first, but if that proves unsuccessful, then you should consider submitting a group grievance, to be signed by all members involved.

What about the independent sector and free schools?

Our support staff members in the independent sector and free schools may not be covered by the various national agreements and guidance mentioned above, but that does not mean to say that inaccurate job descriptions should be tolerated or pay anomalies should go unchallenged.

Job description

The same approach should be adopted as in the maintained sector. You should update your job description, pursue the matter informally at first, and then if necessary, use the grievance procedure route.

Job evaluation

It is unlikely that your school uses a job evaluation scheme to work out the pay rates of its various employees. But that should not prevent you from challenging your current grading through discussions with your line manager, and if necessary via the school grievance procedure. Before starting on this course, you should seek guidance from your NEU school rep.

What about support staff in academies?

If you wish to have your job re-evaluated, please speak to your line manager and NEU representative in the first instance. If the initial approach does not work, you may wish to formally seek to resolve with assistance from NEU.

Where should I go for further advice and support?

Before embarking on a challenge to your existing job description or grading, it is a good idea to consult your NEU workplace rep. If you do not have a rep at your workplace, you can always seek advice from your [local NEU branch](#) or contact the NEU AdviceLine, or the Wales office where appropriate. Their details may be found at <https://neu.org.uk/contact-us>