

## Support staff job descriptions and job evaluation

ATL 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?

### 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. The model job profiles can be viewed at [www.atl.org.uk/help-and-advice/rights-and-conditions/support-staff-rights-England.asp](http://www.atl.org.uk/help-and-advice/rights-and-conditions/support-staff-rights-England.asp).

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?

The Training and Development Agency 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**

The recent survey of ATL members in the maintained sector highlighted the fact that many ATL 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 differing number of levels for each factor, ranging from the most basic level to the most complex. So for instance, creativity and innovation has seven factor levels, ranging from “work with very limited opportunity for creative or innovatory thinking (factor 1)”, right up to factor 7 – “Work carried out in new and 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?

Our support staff members in the independent sector 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 ATL school rep.

### ATL back-up

Before embarking on a challenge to your existing job description or grading, it is a good idea to consult your ATL school rep. If you do not have a rep at your school, you can always seek advice from your local ATL branch. If you don't know the name of your branch secretary, please go to [www.atl.org.uk/about/find-us.asp](http://www.atl.org.uk/about/find-us.asp) to find out the details.



### Need advice?

Your first point of contact is your ATL rep in your school or college. Your local ATL branch is also available to help with queries, or you can contact ATL's member advisers on **020 7930 6441**, email: [info@atl.org.uk](mailto:info@atl.org.uk) or write to 7 Northumberland Street, London WC2N 5RD. Don't forget you can also get lots of help and advice, as well as download copies of other ATL advice sheets, on our website at [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk)

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