

Development of Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ)

The staff compensation study team, in collaboration with Milliman USA and colleagues in the Office of Information Services, developed a web-based tool called the Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) to collect the same type of information about all staff positions, including student staff positions. The questionnaire was developed to be convenient to use and to serve department heads and staff members during the compensation study and thereafter.

Notifying Department Heads

Because of the importance of having the PDQs completed as fully and accurately as possible and in a timely way, department heads were given advance opportunities to consider the following as resources for completing the PDQ:

- *existing job descriptions for positions in their area that have been recently reviewed with staff members in those positions*
- *vacancy announcements used to advertise positions*

Collaborative Approaches for Completion

The questionnaire allowed department heads to select from a variety of options for completion:

- In most instances, department heads asked the staff member performing the responsibilities of the position to complete the questionnaire, and then a supervisor reviewed the questionnaire and submitted it via the web when completed.
- In other instances (e.g., several staff members in the same position), a supervisor asked one or two staff members to complete the questionnaire. After reviewing the description with others in the same position, the supervisor submitted the final edition.
- And in yet other instances, a supervisor completed the PDQ reviewed the results with the persons performing the job, and then submitted the final edition. This was the case for most student staff positions.

Testing the PDQ

The PDQ was tested in academic departments, Facilities Services, and the Library. We learned to advise department heads to determine whether staff members using the tool had web access (preferably via Internet Explorer), to remind department heads to approve PDQ-completion plans on the web before staff could proceed, and to encourage some departments to plan inter-department rollouts.

Campus-wide Rollout of the PDQ

Members of the staff compensation study team then met with each vice president to review the Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) phase of the compensation study project. We introduced the tool and emphasized that our objective was to have completed and certified PDQ's for all staff positions, including student staff positions, by April 19, 2002.

Spring 2002 was a particularly busy time throughout the University. In our meetings with each vice president we learned of additional division-specific projects that demanded staff members' time and attention. Recognizing such realities, it's important that all

participants be congratulated on the fact that the PDQ's were completed fully and accurately and in a timely way.

All staff members at the university, including student staff, had access to the PDQ. The tool appeared for them as a Cascade menu item. Only persons designated as Completers and Reviewers of the PDQ, however, were able to enter information into the PDQ. Vice presidents had full view access to the PDQ's for all positions in their divisions. Vice presidents could also view the completion status of PDQ's in their divisions. The department head had full access to the PDQ's for all positions in his or her department. Individual staff members were be able to view the PDQ's for their positions.

The PDQ's were used to describe the job (not the staff member who is currently performing the job) based on normal, recurring *required responsibilities*, not extraordinary or unusual situations. Vice presidents and department heads identified completers and reviewers for each staff position at Puget Sound. By using the view/edit options provided by the web-based PDQ, the completer and reviewer could pass the description back and forth prior to submitting it to the staff compensation study team. Completers and reviews used the comments section in various ways--to highlight distinctions within a general description used by several incumbents, to note differences of opinion concerning a job description, etc. Department heads could check the status of PDQ completion in their departments through web-based status reports.

The Staff Compensation Study Team consultants (each team member was responsible for a group of Puget Sound departments) were available to provide information and assistance to help departments complete the PDQ's. The team provided such tips for completing the PDQ as the following:

- You can cut and paste from a Word document into the text sections of the PDQ. This has some additional benefits: you can use the spell-check capability, and you can develop your responses to the PDQ during periods of peak web traffic.
- While working in the PDQ, save your work frequently (every 10 minutes), especially if you are working on the same page for a long period of time.
- Write for a reader who is not familiar with your department or position.

The following email messages went to staff and student staff regarding the PDQ completion phase of the Staff Compensation Study:

Staff Message

We are now in the information gathering phase of the staff compensation study. As you may recall from the open forums last November, the University's goal for this study is to ensure that its pay levels are equitable and competitive.

For this phase of the study, we have developed a web-based tool--the Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ). The PDQs will give us valuable information for grouping similar positions, assigning them to appropriate classifications based on job content, and matching them with comparable positions in our labor markets.

You will receive an e-mail message from helpdesk@ups.edu with a subject relating to your University of Puget Sound website privileges. The message will identify that the PDQ has been added to your Cascade web menu, at <http://cascade.ups.edu/>. If you are new to the Cascade web, you will be given a password to enter. If you are a current

user, and cannot remember your password, please call the Help Desk in the Office of Information Services at extension 8585.

Your supervisor or department head will identify your role in working with this tool in order for your department to complete the PDQ for your position prior to April 19. If you are not identified to complete a PDQ yourself or as part of a team, you will be able to view and provide input toward the completion of the PDQ for your position.

When President Pierce announced the compensation study in her November 12, 2001 message, she said in part, "The University has begun a staff compensation study to assure that comparable positions across the university receive comparable compensation and to assure that the University is providing compensation that is competitive within a given marketplace. The University is committed to implementing this study's results although it will necessarily take several years to do so. Please be assured that this study will not result in salary decreases."

The 2002-2003 budget includes \$50,000 for 2002-2003 to begin implementing staff compensation study results. Regular fiscal year staff salary increases will be announced in the normal way, with managers distributing staff compensation statements in July. However, this year's compensation statements will not include salary range information because the new structure will not yet have been finalized. Our expectations are that the results of the study will be announced in September.

Thank you in advance for your efforts towards making this study successful. Please contact your supervisor if you have any questions concerning the study.

Student Staff Message

This message is to notify current student staff members about a change in your Cascade web menu. You do not need to take any action unless requested to do so by your supervisor.

As you may know, the University is involved in a special staff compensation study project. President Pierce announced the compensation study in November of 2001. In her announcement, she said in part, "The University has begun a staff compensation study to assure that comparable positions across the university receive comparable compensation and to assure that the University is providing compensation that is competitive within a given marketplace."

We are now in the process of gathering current information about jobs. We have developed a web tool (the Position Description Questionnaire, or PDQ) to assist supervisors to provide current job information for the study. To this end, as of March 31, all student staff members will have an additional menu item (the PDQ) appear on their Cascade web menu.

Your supervisor will be responsible to complete the PDQ for department head review and approval prior to April 19. In some instances, supervisors will complete the PDQ's for student staff positions, and in other instances, student staff members may be asked to review or complete the PDQ's. If you are not identified to complete a PDQ yourself or as part of a team, you will be able to view the PDQ for the position(s) you hold.

Again, the University's goal for the staff compensation study is to ensure that pay levels are equitable and competitive for all staff positions. Thank you in advance for your efforts towards making this study successful. Please contact your supervisor if you have any questions concerning the study.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Quality of Information Gathered

The web-based PDQ realized our goal of gathering the same kind of information about all positions, via an easy-to-use tool, which also makes the information more available for distribution and analysis. In addition, the PDQ allowed the team to review information for all positions in the aggregate, providing perspective that would not have been apparent in another format. Hugh Judd, the senior consultant from Milliman USA, said at one point that he was “very impressed with both the PDQ design work done in collaboration with Gerrit Nyland in the Office of Information Services, and also with the thorough, well-written PDQ's.” This task was a critical step in the overall process and was successful due to the commitment of those involved in completing the PDQs.

The information generated through the Position Description Questionnaire process was used to evaluate positions, to group like positions, to match positions at Puget Sound with comparable positions in external labor markets, and to assign positions to appropriate classifications and salary ranges.