

Functional job requirements for the position of advisory visiting teacher (physical impairment) - special schools

Department of Education

This document was developed for the following purposes: assisting in the development of rehabilitation programs for injured or ill employees, and providing detailed information about job demands to medical practitioners and allied health professionals undertaking medical reviews of departmental employees.

This report identifies those activities which are essential to successful performance in this role. In determining whether a work activity is a 'critical activity', the following questions are considered:

- Does the worker spend greater than 33% of designated work time performing this activity?
- Is specialised training/experience required to complete this activity? Has this been completed by only a small proportion of staff in this geographical region?
- Is this activity performed in an environment where no other workers are readily available to assist with its completion?
- Does this activity occur without prior notice and require immediate attention leaving no time to seek assistance to complete it?
- Is this activity core to the development of stakeholder relationships, which are essential to achieving successful outcomes?
- Would an inability to perform this activity result in an increased health and safety risk to co-workers, students, and/or members of the public?

The development process included: site observation of work environments, staff interviews, staff feedback on draft documents and consideration of benchmark publications for the analysis and description of work activities and job demands specific to particular positions (the *Revised Handbook for Analysing Jobs*, the *Occupational Information Network* and the *Australian Job Guide, 2006*).

This report indicates the average time spent across a working week on each work activity, and also on each physical demand of work. In order to make this information meaningful to the various users of this report, in some instances the time spent is expressed as a single word, as a percentage of total time, or as an actual amount of time (i.e. hours and minutes). The timeframes used are based on the benchmark descriptions (from the publications above) for expressing frequency of performance of work tasks.

Descriptor	Percentage of time	Amount of time based on 25 hours per week
Not present	0%	0 minutes
Rare	1% – 7%	15 minutes – 1 hour 15 minutes
Occasional	8% – 33%	1 hour 30 minutes – 8 hours 15 minutes
Frequent	34% – 66%	8 hours 30 minutes – 16 hours 30 minutes
Constant	67% - 100%	16 hours 45 minutes – 25 hours



Description of advisory visiting teacher (physical impairment)

It is the role of an advisory visiting teacher (AVT) to assist with the delivery of quality education to students with disabilities, (birth to exit 0—18 years) who have been assessed as requiring specialist educational support at levels 4, 5 or 6. AVTs are involved in the identification of educational needs and direct support of students with disabilities and providing support to teachers of children with disability through the provision of specialist advice relating to curriculum (e.g. content, strategies, assessment). AVTs are required to implement a flexible approach to support programs for students with disabilities in response to local needs of the school and families facilitate networks within community. The curriculum is spread across four terms per school year and is determined prior to the start of the new school year. Most AVTs manage a caseload of approximately 20 to 40 students per school term and are required to complete regular visits on a weekly or fortnightly basis in addition to attending meetings. Students are spread across approximately 20 schools, dependent on locality (i.e. smaller number of schools, spread over a vaster geographical location are serviced in rural areas).

Assessment details: assessment of the AVT (PI) position was conducted at Mt. Gravatt West School (49 Nursery Road, Holland Park), who had one senior AVT (PI) at the time of assessment. Primary contact was Ms. Lee Withall throughout the assessment.

Hours of work and scheduled breaks

Hours of work: the ordinary hours of work for an AVT (PI) is 25 rostered hours per week. The ordinary spread of hours of work exclusive of meal times is between 8.30am and 3.30pm, Monday to Friday. Alternate hours can be worked between 7.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday and it is generally expected that AVTs will participate in relevant school related activities prior to set working hours e.g. attending parent teacher meetings, attendance at school excursions, and supervision of sporting activities. Visits and appointments are scheduled across 7 hours a day; however, the frequency with which these occur fluctuate according to demand. These alternate hours must be implemented through the Local Consultative Committee (Refer to Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement for details). AVTs will participate in approximately one day of professional development activity per term on a group basis, on topics such as research and development for paediatric conditions, equipment available for specific conditions, behaviour management, etc.

Meal breaks: AVTs are entitled to a meal break of 60 minutes unpaid if in excess of 5 hours is worked on any day. It was further reported that organisational demands and visits specifically scheduled around lunchtime to meet with teachers, parents and observe playground behaviour may inhibit taking of such breaks. Meal breaks may be altered through consultation with the Local Consultative Committee.

Rest pauses: AVTs are entitled to a rest pause of 10 minutes duration as their school visits and meetings allow.

Bus and playground supervision: this may only be required for special circumstances such as supervising the transfer of a student with a disability during a school excursion or on an initial education vision to teach and provide manual handling advice to teachers in conjunction with therapists.

Non-contact time: AVTs complete non-contact time on a daily basis in order to complete case notes, follow up equipment orders, respond to emails, and research equipment and conditions.

Activity frequencies below have been calculated based on a week of 5 days comprising 5 contact hours per day, as per page one of this report. Job activities have been listed as critical only where they meet criteria for critical job demands, as outlined on page one of this report.



	Job activity	Average time	Critical job demand
1	Meetings and liaising with families and teachers - dependent on the specific needs of the student, AVTs are required to visit schools to attend meetings with teachers and/or parents to review educational adjustments, develop and review Individual Education Plan (IEP), and discuss progression and concerns. These meetings occur throughout the day, before and after school hours.	Up to 25 hrs per week	Yes
2	Teaching of students – each student under the care of AVTs has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which is developed in conjunction with their teacher and parents. This plan forms the basis of the teaching curriculum for each student. Skills and topics that are covered include; Life Skills, Self-Care, Literacy and Numeracy, Oromotor programs, Gross and Fine Motor Skills, Community Access activities and Work Placement. Students may be provided with specialised equipment for which AVTs, in conjunction with treating therapists, provide education to students, teachers and teacher aides in relation to their correct use. Teaching of the above may involve standing or seated presentation of information to students; both one on one and in group sessions.	Up to 25 hrs per week	Yes
3	Administrative duties/non-contact time – involving session planning, completion of administrative paperwork, preparation of case notes on meeting outcomes and planning, research on medical conditions and equipment requirements, resource preparation, review of resources, purchasing of equipment, following up equipment suppliers, checking and responding to phone and email messages etc. This can also include answering parent enquiries as they arise. These duties may be completed in or out of the office using laptop computer, handwritten files notes and mobile telephones.	Up to 16 hrs 30 mins per week	Yes
4	Professional development – this involves weekly participation in in-service meetings with other teachers and members of staff. During this time discussions are held regarding areas of professional development such as new development in literacy programs, paediatric assistive equipment available, etc. This is completed after school hours on a weekly basis.	Up to 8 hrs 15 mins per week	Yes
5	Transferring of students and self-care assistance – the type of assistance provided to each student varies based on their level of dependence. This may involve teaching teachers and students how to use equipment or, from time to time, assisting with providing assistance to children who are unable to access the toilet independently. In the completion of this task, AVTs may undertake adjustment of equipment such as desks, wheelchairs, computer equipment, home economics equipment, writing slants etc. This task can involve supervision and instruction to move students.	Up to 1 hr 15 mins at other times	Yes
6	Assisting with student transportation and extracurricular activities – this activity includes assisting and providing aid to children to get in/out of school bus and public transport, for special excursions or sporting events. It can involve utilising the hoist for wheelchair transport, or manually assisting a child in/out of the bus. This is dependent on the individual school; however, AVTs may be required to participate in this task outside of school hours. Examples can include on camps and excursions.	Up to 1 hr 15 mins	Yes
7	Staff meetings – AVTs are required to participate in staff meetings as per school requirements. For example at schools where their office bases are located or where the assessment was conducted. AVTs reported they participated in two meetings per fortnight: one general staff and the other for positive behaviour support. These are completed outside of general school hours.	Up to 1 hr 15 mins per week	Yes
8	Driving to school visits – AVTs are required to travel to schools, equipment suppliers, offices, to attend meetings and reviews constantly throughout the day. Typically, dependent on distance, three visits to various schools are completed daily.	Up to 16 hrs 30 mins per week	Yes
9	Professional research – this involves learning about equipment options and researching availability and ordered specialised equipment such as slope boards, height adjustable desks, paediatric scooters, home economics equipment, specialised physical education equipment including balls, etc.	Up to 1 hr 15 mins per week	No – does not meet criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4



Frequency of physical job demands (average % of shift)

Demands	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)	Demands	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)
Sitting					✓	Reaching				✓	
Standing – static			✓			Handling					✓
Standing – dynamic			✓			Pushing			✓		
Walking – flat terrain			✓			Pulling			✓		
Walking – slippery/gravel terrain			✓			Lifting			✓		
Climbing – step stools/ladders			✓			Carrying				✓	
Climbing – stairs			✓			Balancing – above ground		✓			
Stooping			✓			Fine motor				✓	
Kneeling				✓		Control operation				✓	
Crouching – one off			✓			Arm – hand steadiness			✓		
Crawling		✓				Driving					✓
Auditory function					✓	Visual function					✓

Tools/equipment handled

Wheelchairs, hoists, walkers, positioning equipment, toileting equipment, foot supports, seat covers, balls.

Students' chairs and desks – up to approximately 20kg.

Computers, PDAs and data projectors.

Pens/pencils/chalk/whiteboard markers, books and games and activity equipment

Phone and email – for planning and liaising.

Learning aids – overhead projectors, screens, computers, keyboards, mice, switches

Loads lifted and carried

	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)
0-5kg				Files, documents, pens, balls	
6-10kg				Files, documents, briefcase, laptop	
11-15kg					
16-20kg				Assisting children with transfers, waist level and floor to waist	
21-25kg			Powerchair, manual checking access		



Risk based physical environmental considerations

- There may be clutter in the work area, increasing the risk of trip hazards, awkward bending and lifting, and poor storage practices.
- Items, furniture and fixtures may be poorly positioned or designed by staff members, requiring the adoption of awkward postures.
- There may be limited/confined space for movement during performance of some activities.
- There may be constant low-level ambient noise (from students)
- There may be limited lighting and ventilation in some facilities.
- Some work may be performed outdoors or in an area exposed to the elements (e.g. activities on school oval or uneven surface).
- Terrain during special sporting events, camps or excursions is variable (e.g. shopping centres, parks)
- Work may be performed in temperatures above 24 degrees (occasionally in summer).

Psychosocial risks to be considered

Time pressure/high workload – while deadlines exist for many tasks, the level of demand is dependent upon student requirements, teacher support needs and parent needs. AVTs are required to arrange equipment, attend meetings with multiple stakeholders and may also be required to address multiple competing demands and a large number of unplanned interruptions may occur throughout the day.

Low social/peer support – may exist in some environments.

Environmental stress – constant low-level ambient noise from students, school bells etc. requiring projection of voice to be heard. Some temperature variation during winter and summer, constant monitoring of student wellbeing during sessions.

Insufficient work breaks – shortened breaks may be taken on a voluntary basis due to high workload and time constraints. Breaks may be limited by scheduling of meetings to suit multiple stakeholders and observe student during playtime. AVTs infrequently experience uninterrupted breaks.

Investigations – participate in reporting, investigation and resolution processes, including mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect and participation as a witness or party to performance, discipline, grievance, WorkCover or other processes.

Policies – comply with departmental policies, procedures, guidelines and the code of conduct, including undertaking risk management processes to ensure the health and safety of students and others under their supervision or direction.

Interactions with parents when goals are not achieved – AVTs are required to review the progress and develop goals for students with physical impairments in conjunction with their parents and explain failure to meet specific benchmarks or goals established.

Social/interpersonal demands

- Performing for or working directly with the public - parents and students
- Communicating with persons outside organisation – parents and community members, therapists
- Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships – students, staff and parents
- Resolving conflicts and negotiating with others – students, parents, staff
- Communicating with supervisors, peers or subordinates
- Guiding, directing, supporting and motivating students
- Training and teaching others – students and teachers
- Responsible for others health and safety
- Coordinating or leading others – students, teachers, teacher aides and volunteers
- Coaching and developing others – teachers, teacher aides and students
- Negotiating with others – parents, students and internal and external service providers such as therapists
- Explaining equipment use – students, teachers, parents
- Dealing with distressed or frustrated people, parents or students
- Assisting and caring for others – supervising and assisting with self-care of students (may include first aid)
- Interpreting the meaning of information for others e.g. parents.



Considerations for assessment of physical job fitness

- Assessment of sustained sitting capacity of 50 minutes, including on floor either cross-legged, kneeling or crouching (acknowledging ability to regularly vary posture). Including sufficient flexibility to allow adoption of awkward postures when working with students, particularly on floor level or during task demonstrations e.g. equipment demonstration.
- Assessment of grip strength (within norms for age and gender).
- Assessment of pushing and pulling (to 1200N of force if working with older children and to 700N of force if working with children up to 12 years).
- Assessment of lifting an tilting load while it remains on a supporting surface, at between knee and waist level, to reflect sideways movement and support of student while placing and removing hoist sling (up to 100kg single person, but this would be rare – more likely body weight to be supported would be up to 60kg).
- Assessment of handling ability (stereognosis may be required for positioning hoist sling).
- Assessment of pushing and pulling to 80N of force on flat terrain.
- Assessment of kneeling, stooping and crouching (sustained static and one-off).
- Assessment of fine motor dexterity or actual keyboard operation for typing activities (for non-contact duties).
- Ability to lift and carry heavy and/or awkward loads with no assistance (up to 20kg).
- Symmetry, range and discomfort with movements of the spinal and peripheral joints, including hips, knees, ankles, shoulders and wrists.
- Ability to ascend and descend 2 x flights of stairs.
- Sufficient visual and auditory function to enable interaction and response to students.
- Assessment of forward and overhead reaching in various positions.

Other considerations

- History of neck/shoulder discomfort associated with static and sustained repetitive neck flexion postures.
- History of upper limb, lower limb or spinal pain with repetitious or static tasks.
- History of lower back pain with sustained sitting.
- Knowledge of behaviour management strategies for children.
- Knowledge of ergonomic principles for clerical workstations and knowledge of/ability to learn safe crouching/stooping posture (with flexion occurring at the hips rather than in the lumbar spine).
- Knowledge of correct hoist use and manual handling techniques i.e. ability to bend at hips, bend knees and squat with a neutral spine.
- Knowledge of infection control practices to prevent cross-contamination after exposure to urine/faeces/blood and knowledge of food safety practices.
- Knowledge of appropriate medical treatment regimes.
- Knowledge of vocal health and techniques to enable safe projection of voice.