

Functional job requirements for the position of agricultural assistant

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 36.8 hours per week (7.46 hours per day)
Not present	0%	0 minutes
Rare	1% – 7%	22 minutes – 2 hour 57 minutes
Occasional	8% – 33%	3 hours – 12 hours 15 minutes
Frequent	34% – 66%	12 hours 50 minutes – 24 hours 30 minutes
Constant	67% - 100%	25 hours – 36 hours 36 minutes



Description of agricultural assistant

The role of the agricultural assistant is to contribute to the efficient and effective operation of the agricultural curriculum, by providing a high level of agricultural systems support to the agricultural teacher and head of department. Agricultural assistants ensure that the agricultural field study sites, animals, crops, machinery and equipment used by the school are maintained to a functional, secure and safe standard. They also contribute to the preparation of school field projects, exhibits and agricultural demonstrations as part of the general school activities. Agricultural assistants provide support to the agricultural teacher during practical lessons. Time spent during an agricultural assistant's day can often be split between student contact time and non-student time.

Assessment details: assessment of the agricultural assistant was conducted at Rochedale State High School (Priestdale Road, Rochedale), who had one agricultural assistant at the time of assessment. Primary contact was Ms. Heidi Francisco, agricultural assistant who participated in all duties outlined in the following pages.

Hours of work and scheduled breaks

Hours of work: the hours of work for an agricultural assistant are 7.36 hours per day, five days per week. Ms. Francisco indicated that this role was unlike others at Education Queensland and she was required to work before and after school hours, typically between the hours of 7am and 5pm. However due to the nature of the role, agricultural assistants can be called at any time during the working week and on weekends and therefore accrue 'overtime' hours or 'time in lieu' hours for this time. This can be due to an emergency with the animals, or due to exhibits and agriculture demonstrations.

At Rochedale State High School there are currently 47 children enrolled in the agricultural subject, ranging in ages from 13 to 18 years. The students complete three lessons per week, split between theory and practical classes. The agricultural assistant is not involved in theory lessons.

Agricultural assistant's do not have set uniform requirements however are required to wear clothing suitable to outdoor work, including enclosed shoes.

Agricultural assistants will participate in approximately two professional development activities per year.

Meal breaks: the agricultural assistant assessed reported taking general daily meal breaks consisting of 25 minute morning tea break (10:15am to 10:40am daily at the staff room) and a 30 minute lunch break (12:30 to 1pm daily). It was further reported that organisational demands and children completing tasks onsite in the agricultural department inhibit taking of such breaks, particularly lunch breaks. Total period for meal breaks per agricultural assistant per week is no less than 225 minutes.

Bus and playground supervision: there was no specific supervision duties outlined.

Non-contact time: there is no specific non-contact time for agricultural assistants as they are in a public service position, rather than a teaching position. Students can be present in the agricultural department throughout the day, therefore there is no specific non-contact time.

The Activity Frequencies below have been calculated based on a week of 5 days comprising 7.36 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	Animal feeding – each different type of feed is placed in a 40 gallon drum in the feeding shed. Feeding of the animals requires the use of buckets to obtain the required feed for each animal (sheep, cows, alpacas, chickens, pigs, goats, geese, ducks) from each drum. Using one bucket at a time, each animal breed is fed in their enclosed area requiring up to nine trips back to the feeding shed to obtain the appropriate feed for each animal. The students can assist with this task, however this is not a requirement of their subjects	Up to 12 hrs 15 mins per week	Yes
2	Animal care – depending on the season (time of year) different animals require further care. During Spring, all the new lambs require marking, vaccinations, ear tagging, docking and castrating. This task is completed with students in attendance and they complete some of these tasks. Drenching of all of the animals is also required on a regular basis, which involves holding the animal down (sheep, alpacas, goat) and drenching. Maintenance of animal enclosures involves different tasks dependent on the animal enclosure. The chook enclosure requires the most maintenance; collecting eggs, raking out and putting down new rice hulls and spraying the area for pest and weed control. This task is predominantly completed by the children, however the agricultural assistant completes as required.	Up to 12 hrs 15 mins per week Takes one day for this task during Spring Season. Every 4 – 6 weeks. Eggs (daily), spraying and cleaning (weekly to fortnightly)	Yes
3	Maintenance of grounds – this task involves preparing the grounds (field study sites) which includes fencing maintenance and repair, greenhouse/crop care and soil maintenance. These tasks require the use of machinery; irrigation, tractors, mowers and vehicles (truck). Furthermore agricultural assistants are required to complete general cleaning of the sheds and surrounding area and are responsible for fixing taps, irrigation, etc.	Up to 24 hrs 30 mins per week	Yes
4	Ordering and maintenance of materials – the agricultural assistant is required to order all feeds and maintenance equipment. This involves liaison with suppliers, unpacking the deliveries, checking invoices and storing the stock in the appropriate manner.	Up to 2 hrs 57 mins per week	Yes
5	Assisting teaching activities – the agricultural assistant is required to assist the agricultural teacher during practical class activities. This includes performing tasks for the children to observe, and mainly observation of task performance of the students. They are responsible for organizing the environment, to ensure that all materials and equipment for the class are prepared and they are also responsible for the safety and first aid requirements within the department. Agricultural assistants may also be required to supervise children during lunch breaks.	Up to 12 hrs 15 mins per week	Yes
6	Extra-curricular activities – this involves transporting the animals to and from community events and exhibitions and loading and unloading materials required for each event.	Up to 2 hrs 57 mins per week	No
7	Staff meetings – at Rochedale State High School the agricultural assistant meets with the agricultural teachers most days during morning tea to discuss job requirements. Formal meetings are completed twice weekly at recess for the department. The agricultural assistant is provided with a job schedule that entails duties requested to be completed in certain time frames (for the week).	Up to 2 hrs 57 mins per week	No



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

Feed bags, hay bales (20-30kg).
Rolls of wire (30-40kg).
Transport of animals.
Rakes, shovels, hoes, spray packs on back (5-10kg)

Loads lifted and carried

	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)
0-5kg			Floor to waist		
6-10kg				Carrying waist level	
11-15kg					
16-20kg			Lifting feed bags, pushing/moving animals		
21-25kg		Feed bags, hay bales (20-30kg), rolls of wire (30kg)			



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, traffic, school activities, etc.)
- There may be limited lighting and ventilation in some facilities.
- Work is performed outdoors and the agricultural assistant is exposed to the elements (UV exposure) on a daily basis.
- Work is performed in temperatures above 24 degrees and below 16 degrees.
- Work areas may be slippery or wet.
- There are limited toilet facilities in work area.
- Exposure to vibration is present when completing some work tasks e.g. operating machinery.
- There may be exposure to chemicals e.g. when spraying pesticides.

Psychosocial risks to be considered	Social/interpersonal demands
Equipment failure – machinery in the department may break down which impacts on the ability to complete required tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing for or working directly with the public. • Communicating with persons outside organisation. • Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. • Resolving conflicts and negotiating with others. • Communicating with supervisors, peers or subordinates. • Guiding, directing and motivating students. • Training and teaching students. • Assisting and caring for others. • Coaching and developing others. • Coordinating the work of others – aides and students. • Interpreting the meaning of information for others – students. • Dealing with unpleasant or angry and physically aggressive people – parents (potentially). • Working alone – working independently without contact from others for long periods. • Responsible for others' health and safety – students.
Poor worker/team leader relationships/low social support – may exist in some environments, particularly as there is usually only one agricultural assistant per school.	
Environmental stress – frequent exposure to temperatures in excess of 24 degrees or below 16 degrees, unpleasant or strong odours can also be present during tasks.	
Insufficient work breaks – shortened breaks may be taken on a voluntary basis due to high workload and time constraints. Breaks may be limited by student supervision duties in the agricultural area.	
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.	

Considerations for assessment of physical job fitness

- Assessment of capacity to squat, kneel or crouch for periods up to 10 minutes (acknowledging ability to regularly vary posture). Including sufficient flexibility to allow adoption of awkward postures when working with animals and machinery.
- A high level of strength to ensure ability to adequately complete tasks independently and care for animals.
- Sound visual motor coordination skills for looking after animals.
- Capacity for grip patterns required for repetitive handling of stock materials.
- Ability to lift and carry heavy and/or awkward loads with no assistance (up to 25kg).
- Ability to sustain constant dynamic standing throughout the days with minimal sitting breaks.
- Symmetry, range and discomfort with movements of the spinal and peripheral joints, including hips, knees, ankles, shoulders and wrists.
- Able to ascend and descend 2 x flights of stairs.
- Sufficient visual and auditory function to enable interaction and response to students.

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 individual allergies and ability to work with chemicals (as required e.g. pesticides and animals).
- Knowledge of correct manual handling techniques i.e. ability to bend at hips, bend knees and squat with a neutral spine.
- Knowledge of vocal health and techniques to enable safe projection of voice.

