

# Functional job requirements for the home economics teacher aide

## 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 15 hours per week
Not present	0%	0 minutes
Rare	1% – 7%	15 minutes – 1 hour 5 minutes
Occasional	8% – 33%	1 hour 10 minutes – 5 hours
Frequent	34% – 66%	5 hours 5 minutes – 10 hours
Constant	67% - 100%	10 hours 5 minutes – 15 hours



## Description of home economics teacher aide

Teacher Aides provide assistance and support to the Home Economics teachers through the setting up equipment prior to classes, maintenance of stock and equipment; purchasing of stores, general cleaning tasks, and providing administrative support as required. Teacher Aides may work in a number of different departments simultaneously, for example in Manual Arts Department and Home Economics.

**Assessment details:** assessment of the Home Economics Teacher Aide position was conducted at Sunnybank High School (Boorman St, Sunnybank), who had approximately 1 Teacher Aide at time of assessment. Primary contact was Ms Robyn Pedler, Head of Home Economics, however discussion was conducted with one teacher aide throughout the assessment. Depending on the school teacher aides may work in a variety of departments.

## Hours of work and scheduled breaks

**Hours of work:** The ordinary hours of work for a school teacher aide is 38 rostered hours per week with approximately 15 hours dedicated to assisting the Home Economics Department. However this may vary between schools depending on the size of the department and number of students enrolled in the subjects taught within the Home Economics stream. The ordinary spread of hours of work exclusive of meal times is between 7:30 am to 3:30pm Monday to Friday. Teachers Aides do not have set uniform requirements however are required to wear clothing suitable to the practical nature of some of their role.

**Meal breaks:** Home Economics Teacher Aides are entitled to a meal break of 30 minutes unpaid if in excess of 5 hours is worked on any day. It was further reported that organisational demands may inhibit taking of such breaks.

**Rest pauses:** Home Economics Teacher Aides are entitled to a rest pause of 10 minutes duration to be taken mid-morning which will be considered as rostered duty time. It was reported that organisational demands may inhibit taking of such breaks.

**Bus and playground supervision:** home economics teacher aides may be required to undertake supervision duties with students.

The activity frequencies below have been calculated based on a week of 5 days comprising 3 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.



	<b>Job activity</b>	<b>Average time</b>	<b>Critical job demand</b>
<b>1</b>	Room/activity setup – teacher aides are required to set up the workshop/classroom prior to a demonstration of a lesson by a teacher or in preparation for students themselves to partake in a practical lesson. The Manual Arts Teacher and/or students may assist with this process. This may include setting out items required for a cooking class including food items and equipment, sewing machines for textiles and moving furniture to accommodate a particular class.	Up to 5 hrs per week (e.g. 30 mins per day)	Yes
<b>2</b>	Purchasing supplies – staff are required to develop a list of supplies required by all departments for which they provide assistance, which involves liaising with all staff on a regular basis. The staff member drives to the local supermarket or supermarket which sells bulk items, purchases what is required and transports it back to the department for appropriate storage. Students may assist if available with carrying heavier items within the school grounds.	Up to 5 hrs per week (generally 1-2 classes per week)	Yes
<b>3</b>	Basic cleaning – staff are required to complete basic cleaning tasks and replenishing of supplies in the rooms of the Home Economics Department following completion of student classes. For example wiping bench tops and sinks; filling soap detergent bottles, collecting used tea towels, and refilling stores of food items. Please note cleaners employed by the school complete the bulk of the regular cleaning tasks including mopping of floors.	Up to 5 hrs per week (e.g. 30 mins per day)	Yes
<b>4</b>	Laundry staff are required to collect used tea towels and other soiled linen from the kitchens and place in the onsite washing machines and dryers. The staff then fold and replace the clean linen in the appropriate storage room.	Up to 5 hrs per week (e.g. 2 hrs per week)	Yes
<b>5</b>	Administration tasks - staff are required to complete an array of basic administrative tasks to assist the teacher as required. These may include photocopying, monitoring stock and equipment loans, phoning trades people and arranging quotes for repairs.	Up to 1 hr per week	Yes
<b>6</b>	Completion of stock take – once per year the Teacher Aide together with the Teacher complete a basic stock take of all equipment used by the students and staff in the Home Economics Department. Tasks may include a thorough cleaning of all surfaces (for example ovens, bench tops, cupboards), washing all equipment (e.g. mix masters, cooking utensils), labeling and restocking all equipment (e.g. cutlery, crockery)	Up to 1 hr per week (e.g. 3 weeks once per year)	Yes



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**

Bulk food supplies (e.g. up to 20kg bulk packets of flour), bulk cleaning agents (e.g. 25L detergent)
Cooking equipment (pots/pans, food processors), sewing machines, bolts of fabrics, linen
Computers, PDAs and data projectors – for use during information technology based learning activities with students and administrative tasks.
Pens/pencils/chalk/whiteboard markers, books and activity equipment.
Students' chairs and desks – up to approximately 20kg
Learning aids – charts, models, posters, overhead projectors and screens

**Loads lifted and carried**

	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)
<b>0-5kg</b>				Floor to waist to shoulder e.g. cooking aides	
<b>6-10kg</b>			Floor to waist to shoulder e.g. sheets of MDF, timber		
<b>11-15kg</b>			Floor to waist e.g. food stores		
<b>16-20kg</b>			Floor to waist e.g. tables		



## 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 e.g. music practice, etc.)
- 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 ovals or projects completed in lunch areas, etc).
- Fine motor work may be performed in temperatures of 16 degrees or lower and above 24 degrees, due to local environmental conditions and capacity of school facilities to control ambient air temperatures.
- Work may be performed in temperatures above 24 degrees (occasionally in summer).
- Work areas may be slippery or wet.

Psychosocial risks to be considered	Social/interpersonal demands
Time pressure/high workload – while deadlines exist for many tasks, the level of demand is dependent upon school environment and staffing level. The teacher aides workload can be high due to multiple demands and a large number of unplanned interruptions occurring throughout the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating with persons outside the organisation – community members</li> <li>• Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with students, staff.</li> <li>• Communicating with supervisors, peers or subordinates</li> <li>• Assisting and caring for others – students, staff (may include first aid)</li> <li>• Negotiating with others – staff</li> <li>• Coordinating or leading others – students when assisting in classes</li> <li>• Interpreting the meaning of information for others – students</li> <li>• Dealing with unpleasant or angry people – students</li> <li>• Dealing with physically aggressive people – students and parents</li> <li>• Working alone</li> </ul>
Lack of control/autonomy – may exist as the teachers generally direct the tasks of the teacher aide.	
Environmental stress – constant low-level ambient noise from students, PA announcements, school bells etc. requiring considerable projection of voice to be heard. Some temperature variation during winter and summer, constant environmental monitoring of student location during outdoor 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 meal and playground supervision duties, particularly if there is insufficient planning e.g. unplanned wet weather duties. Although break times are stipulated, teachers do not always receive an uninterrupted break	
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 sustained standing sitting capacity of 50 minutes.
- Assessment of grip strength within norms for age and gender.
- Assessment of kneeling, stooping and crouching (sustained static and one-off)
- Ability to sustain constant dynamic standing throughout the day with minimal sitting breaks.
- 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.
- Able 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 individual allergies and ability to work with a wide range of chemicals (e.g. glues).
- 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 manual handling techniques i.e. ability to bend at hips, bend knees and squat with a straight back.
- Knowledge of vocal health and techniques to enable safe projection of voice.

