

Professional Job Position Description

Section I: Position information

Effective date	2026-03-24	☐ Update only	☒ Classification review
Position title	Ability Management Specialist		
Position number	998482		
Classification level	Excluded Professional C		
Position affiliation	☐ AUFA ☒ Excluded		
Location	Virtual with Place-based Activities		
Department	Human Resources		
Reports to	CHRO or Designate		

Position summary

Briefly describe the main purpose(s) of the position.

Reporting to the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) or designate, the Abilities Management Specialist, is responsible for the development, implementation and coordination of the Abilities Management (AM) Program at Athabasca University (AU). The position provides abilities management expertise and support to clients and stakeholders and ensures the program promotes a safe and healthy workplace while meeting legislative requirements.

The Abilities Management Specialist plays a key role in fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive workplace by ensuring compliance with human rights, employment, and occupational health and safety legislation.

This role leads the short-term and long-term abilities case management, develops education and awareness programs, resources and tools that promote equity, inclusion, and employee wellness. Through sound judgment, empathy, and collaboration, the position helps ensure that employees are supported to perform their duties safely and effectively while balancing operational needs and legal obligations.

Duties and responsibilities

Organize by key responsibility area and include % of time spent where possible.

Administer the Abilities Management Program (70%)

Case Management

- Administer and manage short-term and long-term disability cases.
- Obtain and review relevant information necessary to make decisions about sick leave entitlement. Monitor ongoing entitlement to sick leave benefits for employees.
- Collaborate with healthcare providers, insurers, and internal teams to support recovery and

clarify restrictions

- Provide guidance, support, and advice to employees on the abilities management process.

Return to Work Planning

- Develop, implement, and coordinate comprehensive return-to-work plans for injured or ill employees.
- Work with applicable employees, supervisors, and union representatives to facilitate a return-to-work plan that meets the employer obligations under duty to accommodate.
- Establish and maintain employee disability files in accordance with record retention provisions and privacy legislation.

Accommodation Management

- Manage workplace accommodations, including complex cases involving mental health, wellness, and physical limitations. Develop, implement, and monitor individualized accommodation plans in collaboration with employees, leaders, HR, and healthcare providers.
- Partner with managers and supervisors to provide guidance on attendance management, accommodations, and employee absence issues. Advise on legal obligations, including the duty to accommodate and duty to inquire.
- Partner with human resources and labour relations to address cases where accommodations intersect with performance management or other workplace concerns.

Program Development & Support (20%)

- Strategize, design, implement, and maintain the abilities management framework with a view to promote consistency, fairness, and accountability. This will include leave and absence management plans, related programs, policies, procedures and supporting documentation.
- Monitor and analyze legislative, regulatory, and industry changes; recommend and implement compliance and improvement strategies.
- Provide coaching and consultation to managers, supervisors, and employees to build internal leadership capacity in abilities management and return to work strategies.

- Design and deliver education, training, resources, and tools, for leaders, human resources, labour relations teams and other stakeholders on accommodation, disability management, and related human rights obligations to strengthen a proactive employee wellness culture.
- Lead and support initiatives and special projects that promote health, wellness, inclusion, and equity across the organization.
- Provide expertise, and support to Joint benefits Committee, Joint Health and Safety Committee and related working groups, as needed.
- Using data and analytics, identify trends and recommend proactive strategies to improve outcomes and reduce claim duration and costs
- Regular and ad hoc reporting relating to illness leaves and/or absence tracking for HR Client Partners, supervisors, managers, and other clients and stakeholders, as required.
- Continuously improve internal processes by integrating industry best practices.

Projects and Initiatives (10%)

- Focuses on supporting strategic initiatives that enhance organizational culture, strengthen leadership capability, and improve processes.
- Support and implement initiatives associated with organizational change, culture development, and employee engagement.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to design and implement culture-building initiatives that reinforce Athabasca University's values and strategic direction.
- Partner with Manager, Organizational Development and Effectiveness to develop and support the delivery of leadership development programs and training, enhancing leadership capability across the organization.

Occupational health and safety

Employees:

Responsible to participate in the AU OHS program as required.

Supervisors:

Responsible for awareness of one's OHS Responsibilities as an AU employee and supervisor, for participating in the AU OHS Program as required, and for ensuring the participation of employees in the AU OHS Program as required.

See: <https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li008>

Classification factors

Communication

The Abilities Management Specialist must possess excellent written and verbal communications skills. The incumbent must be able to communicate effectively with the HR Team as well as clients and external stakeholders using objective listening skills, in particular and as related to highly sensitive and confidential matters. The Abilities Management Specialist requires excellent influencing skills to be able to influence various stakeholders and employees especially at very sensitive times. The AMS needs to have excellent presentation skills to develop and deliver presentations and training.

Supervision

This position has no direct supervisory responsibility.

Impact of service or product

Responsible for serving as a trusted advisor to clients on all matters of related to abilities management, including the interpretation and application of applicable legislation, collective agreements, policies and industry best practices.

Contributes to the development and implementation of the Abilities Management Framework, and, priorities, ensuring alignment with the University's broader institutional goals and mandates.

Advice and guidance provided in this role have a significant impact on employee engagement and retention. The role contributes to risk mitigation, and effective decision-making across the organization.

Decisions and recommendations arising from this role require sound judgment, strategic insight, and a high degree of professional credibility.

Independence of action

The incumbent is expected to manage independently and with limited direct supervision in all areas of responsibility, routinely consulting with members of the HR Team, CHRO, and operational leaders. The Abilities Management Specialist is required to address matters requiring sensitive information, input, clarification or resolution, and will be expected to use proper judgment, effective diplomacy and influence in decisions.

Complexity

The position requires comprehensive knowledge of human rights, employment, and occupational health legislation, emergency management principles, AU policies, collective agreements, case law, insurance and claims management processes, and operational risk management practices.

The work involves analyzing complex and sometimes sensitive situations, conducting detailed incident and risk investigations, evaluating competing priorities, and balancing legal, strategic, operational, academic, and culture impact considerations.

The incumbent frequently interacts with regulatory bodies, employees at all levels, academics, union representatives, operational and senior leadership, requiring a combination of technical expertise, influence, diplomacy, and discretion.

The role also supports institution wide cultural and behavioural change related to safety, risk, and emergency readiness.

Some travel required to other AU locations and external agencies.

Planning

Planning is performed collaboratively with supervisor, operational leaders, and committees across AU to ensure the effective coordination of employee health, and wellness programs.

The position is responsible for planning and organizing work requires ongoing analysis and interpretation of legislation, regulatory changes, trends and best practices, and operational needs.

Many situations are non-routine and require independent problem-solving, evaluating alternate approaches, and coordinating with multiple stakeholders to implement solutions.

Signatures for section I

Incumbent signature		Date Select a date.
Supervisor signature		Date Select a date.

Section II: Qualifications

Qualifications

Includes education, experience, skills, abilities, and any other special qualifications required. The qualifications relate to the position not the incumbent.

Education & Credentials

- A minimum of a post-secondary degree in human resources, abilities (disability) management, health sciences or related field (e.g., Occupational Health, Rehabilitation)
- A degree in Nursing, Health Sciences or a related field is an asset
- Relevant certifications such as Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP), Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC), or CPHR are considered assets.

Experience

- A minimum of five (5) years' experience in abilities management in a complex multi-union organization of significant size, complexity & diversity.

Knowledge, Skills & Abilities

- Strong written, oral communication and presentation skills with ability to translation complex regulatory and risk concepts into clear guidance is essential.
- Demonstrated ability to foster strong trusting relationships and collaborate with unions, internal stakeholders (employees, operational leaders, HR) and external partners (healthcare providers, insurance carriers, third-party vendors).
- Deep understanding of regional human rights, FOIP, and relevant disability management legislation.
- Proven problem solving & conflict resolution skills through negotiation, facilitation to manage complex and sensitive situations.
- Ability to lead, influence, and collaborate across all levels of the organization and support cultural change related to employee health, wellness, safety, and risk mitigation.
- Ability to manage highly sensitive and confidential medical information with a high level of discretion
- Strong knowledge of attendance and abilities management related legislation, case law, industry information and trends.
- Strong analytical, problem-solving, and organizational abilities; capable of managing multiple priorities, deadlines, and stakeholder needs.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office, digital training tools, and online communication platforms; ability to work effectively in a virtual and hybrid environment.
- Demonstrated initiative, sound judgment, empathy, and ability to work independently with minimal supervision.
- Must be willing to pursue professional development to fulfill the growing demands of the role. Policy and Legislation: Interpreting and applying relevant legislation and policies, including the WCB Act, Human Rights Legislation, and disability insurance policies.
- Committed to making a meaningful difference.

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Signatures for sections I and II

Department Head signature		Date Select a date.
Executive Officer signature		Date Select a date.
Human Resources review		Date Select a date.