



DataOnDemand *How-To Guide*

Benchmarking to Create or Adjust a Position Salary

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Benchmarking to Create or Adjust a Position Salary

Creating a new position or making changes to an existing position requires benchmarking to determine the appropriate salary and salary range for the position. DataOnDemand is your go-to tool for benchmarking faculty, staff, professional, or administrative positions. Comprising the most comprehensive salary and workforce database in higher education, the data reported in CUPA-HR surveys can help you quickly and easily identify a market-based salary benchmark for most higher education positions. This guide will help you answer questions like:

- **How do I match a position to CUPA-HR salary data?**
- **How do I set up a comparison group for benchmarking?**
- **How do I run a DataOnDemand benchmarking report for a single position or discipline?**



Step 1: Prepare for the Analysis

To prepare for benchmarking a position for your institution, you'll need to first take these preliminary steps:

- **Determine the position's title and detailed description of job duties.**¹
- **Use your position's job duties to match a position description and position number surveyed by CUPA-HR.**
- **Plan and create a comparison group of institutions you wish to use for benchmarking the salary of this position. Depending on the type of position, you may want to consider:**
 - An institutional classification group (e.g., baccalaureate)
 - An institutional affiliation group (e.g., private religious institutions)
 - A range for total operating expenses or student enrollment
 - Institutions within a certain geographical area (e.g., Midwest)




Example: Instructional Designers

Throughout this guide, we'll use an example to illustrate the process of benchmarking for a new position. For this example, we will explore hiring instructional designers to support faculty in converting their courses to an online format. Let's search on behalf of a master's institution in the Midwest that is interested in benchmarking against the median salary for master's institutions in their geographic region that participated in CUPA-HR surveys.

¹ Sample job descriptions for higher education can be found in the CUPA-HR Knowledge Center [Job Description Index](#).

First, review the “Position Descriptions” tab of the *Survey Participation and Information Template* (SPIT) file for the appropriate survey (Faculty, Staff, Professionals, or Administrators) to match your new position to a CUPA-HR position number. SPIT files can be downloaded from the CUPA-HR website or within DataOnDemand. To access from cupahr.org, hover over *Research* then find the box listing *Signature Higher Education Surveys*. Click the name of the survey you’d like to use, then look for the download link for the *Survey Participation and Information Template*:



[Survey Participation and Information Template](#)
Includes instructions, position descriptions, upload template and more.

[Participating Institutions](#) | [Data Use Agreement](#) | [Data Anonymity Statement](#)

If you have DataOnDemand, you can access the SPIT files by clicking *Downloads* in the top menu bar, then locating and expanding the *Survey Participation and Information Templates* sub-menu.



For this example, you might surmise that data for instructional designers is collected in the *Professionals* survey:

Survey Participation and Information Templates (SPITs)

[Professionals Survey Participation and Information Template](#)
Includes instructions, position descriptions, upload template, and survey deadlines.

The best way to match a position is by using a keyword search of the “Position Descriptions” tab, focusing on the columns for “Title/Role” and “Position Description.” The position can also be matched manually by browsing the position group headers. It is more important to match the position description than the title, since titles can vary greatly between institutions, and descriptions are more likely to contain the key words and functions pertinent to the position you’re trying to match.

Based on matching against your institution’s planned position description, you would likely identify position **[406120] Instructional Designer** as the most appropriate for benchmarking.

406120	Instructional Designer	Provides support to faculty, programs, and schools in the development and conversion of courses and programs to innovative online and other technology-assisted educational venues and/or face-to-face courses utilizing cutting-edge and creative design and course delivery options. Responsibilities include analysis, design, development, and implementation of online courses, web-based training, and face-to-face training curricula; proactive consultation with subject matter experts to identify and obtain training objectives and content; draft storyboards and mock-ups; and write and develop content as needed. Minimum requirements typically include Bachelor’s degree in education, education technology, instructional design, or related field.
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Now that you have identified the position to benchmark, proceed to DataOnDemand to begin setting up your comparison group.



Step 2: Create a Comparison Group

The easiest way to create a comparison group is to use the *New Group Wizard* in DataOnDemand.² Once logged in to **Surveys Online**, navigate through the menu to *DataOnDemand > Comparison Groups*. Click the *New Group Wizard* button to get started.

Comparison Groups

A **Comparison Group** is a set of **Institutions** that you are interested in.

[New Group Wizard](#) [New Group from Scratch](#) [Combine Groups](#)

² A DataOnDemand User Guide and other tutorials to help you create comparison groups and run reports can be found at: <https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/dataondemand/dod-users/>



Our example is a master’s institution seeking to benchmark against the median salary for other master’s institutions in the Midwest geographic region. To improve the clarity of our results and help us accurately communicate which institutions contributed data, we have also decided to only include in our comparison group institutions that participated in the *Professionals* survey in the current year. Use the settings below in the *New Group Wizard* to create a comparison of institutions (1) classified as Master’s, (2) that participated in the most recent *Professionals* survey, and (3) that are in the Midwest.

Criteria	Location in Wizard	Selection	Example Screenshot
Include only master’s institutions	Carnegie Groups and States/ Carnegie Groups	Select ‘Master’s’	
Only include institutions participating in the most recent <i>Professionals</i> survey	Participation and Survey Variables/ Participation	Select ‘Professionals Survey’ and mark the most recent year available	
Only include institutions in the Midwest region	Other Classifications/ US Census Region	Select ‘Midwest’	

After completing these selections, click the *Search* button to refresh the page and scroll to the bottom of the screen to view the table of results. For detailed information about the other filtering options available in the *New Group Wizard*, visit the CUPA-HR User Guide and Tutorials page:

<https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/dataondemand/dod-users/>






When using the *New Group Wizard*, always review the list of institutions meeting filter criteria and verify that the number of institutions is large enough. In general, the more institutions in a comparison group, the more likely the group will include data on enough individual employees to produce results. This is especially important when using regional comparisons along with other filters such as classification. If this example search is limited to Wisconsin, for example, there are only 10 institutions meeting all three parameters of participation, classification, and state. However, when broadened to the entire Midwest the comparison group increases to 92 institutions. One way to ensure that a comparison group is valid is to create multiple comparison groups and compare the results for each.

INSTITUTIONS MEETING FILTER CRITERIA

92 Institutions	
Institution Name	HEDunitID
Alverno College (Milwaukee, WI)	238193
Ashland University (Ashland, OH)	201104
Augsburg University (Minneapolis, MN)	173045

Once you are satisfied with the comparison group, you can add a name and detailed description of the selection criteria in the boxes below the results, then save the comparison group. This group will now appear in *Your Personal Groups*.

● Your Personal Groups






 [Midwest MA, Professional Survey Participant \(n=92\)](#)

To make minor changes like adding or removing specific institutions, click the name of a group that was just created to open the manual editing options. You can add or remove institutions by using the search bar or check boxes. However, once this group has been used to run a report it becomes “locked” and cannot be changed by fewer than three institutions at a time. This is a privacy protection to ensure data confidentiality. *Therefore, it’s important to ensure that the comparison group contains exactly the institutions wanted before going on to the next step.*

TIP: The recommended minimum for most comparisons is at least 30 incumbents, so for single-incumbent positions you should aim to include around 30 institutions.

To make a larger comparison group of institutions, broaden your search criteria range or use fewer filters.



Step 3: Run Your Report(s)

To benchmark for a single position, you'll run a *Single Position Report* (for administrators, professionals, or staff) or a *Single Discipline Report* (for faculty) in DataOnDemand.

Navigate through to *DataOnDemand > Survey Reports*, expand the menu for *Reports Organized by What You Want to Do*, and expand the sub-menu for the survey where the position in which you're interested is found. In the sub-menu, locate *Get detailed salary distribution information for a single position* (or *discipline* for faculty). Click the name of the report you wish to use to begin.



Next, you'll set up your report on the *Report Parameters* page. For *Comparison Group*, select the new group you created in Step 2. Select your position or discipline in the next box.

Other settings default to our recommended settings (e.g., most recent year, institutional average salaries, output format, percentiles), although you can make adjustments based on what statistics you need. Detailed information for understanding and customizing report settings for all DataOnDemand reports can be found in the [DataOnDemand User Guide](#).

Click the *Go to Report* button at the bottom of the settings page to run the report.



Returning to our example, you can use the *Prof: Single Position Report* to benchmark the median salary for the position **[406120] Instructional Designer** using the comparison group you created.

On the *Report Parameters* page, set the comparison group to the group of master's institutions that participated in the *Professionals* survey, and set the position to [406120] Instructional Designer:

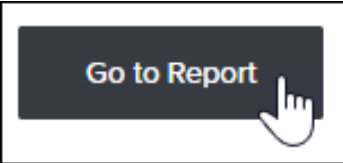
COMPARISON GROUP	
Midwest MA, Professional Survey Participant (n=92)	▼
PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS	
[406120] Instructional Designer	▼

Next, review the other settings available. In this example, let's say that our institution has determined that this position will be exempt from overtime pay (i.e., salaried rather than hourly) under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Because this is the case, we can change the *Exempt Status* setting to only include exempt positions. Additionally, let's also say that our policy is to set a salary range based on the middle third of all salaries in the market data. To get the values for this range, you will calculate additional percentiles around the median in the *Percentiles* setting, adding checks for 33% and 67% around the median (50th percentile):

EXEMPT STATUS	
Exempt	▼
PERCENTILES (MAXIMUM OF 9 ALLOWED - ONLY 50TH/MEDIAN IS REQUIRED)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%
<input type="checkbox"/> 15%	<input type="checkbox"/> 20%
<input type="checkbox"/> 25%	<input type="checkbox"/> 30%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 33%	<input type="checkbox"/> 40%
<input type="checkbox"/> 45%	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 50%
<input type="checkbox"/> 55%	<input type="checkbox"/> 60%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 67%	<input type="checkbox"/> 70%
<input type="checkbox"/> 75%	<input type="checkbox"/> 80%
<input type="checkbox"/> 85%	<input type="checkbox"/> 90%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 95%	

TIP: Exempt status is a unique setting option on the Professionals survey. Typically, the determination of a position's exempt status is made based on FLSA guidelines. However, it is possible to get additional data to inform your decision by running the *Prof: Exempt Status Comparison Report* to find out the percentage of position incumbents in your comparison group who are classified as exempt/nonexempt and the median salary for each of these classifications.

For this example, there are no additional changes necessary to the recommended default settings on other options. We will click on the *Go to Report* button to generate our report.





The *Prof: Single Position Report* includes the following table. The “Focus Institution” column displays any data your own institution has reported in this survey (if you are authorized to view it), and the “Focus as % of Comp Group” column compares salaries at your institution to the comparison group on a percentage basis. Because you are benchmarking for a position that’s new to your institution, there would be no data in this example for your (the focus) institution.

In the center of the table, the “Comparison Group” column displays summary statistics for your comparison group institutions, including the median salary, average salary, standard deviation, and the salary at any additional percentiles selected. The header of the report tells us, along with any settings enabled, the number of institutions and the number of employees reported so we can ensure there is adequate sample size.

To identify the median salary for instructional designers at master’s institutions, you would look to the row labeled 50th percentile (median). Because we have decided to use the 33rd and 67th percentiles as our market-based range, we’ll look at these rows as well.

	Focus Institution	Comparison Group	Focus as % of Comp Group
95th %		81,120	
67th %		59,715	
50th % (Median)		57,000	
33rd %		51,255	
5th %		40,725	
Average \$		57,719	
Std Dev \$		12,624	0.0

In this example, institutions that employ instructional designers within this comparison group of master’s institutions in the Midwest that participated in the *Professionals* survey pay a median salary of \$57,000. The middle third of salaries paid to instructional designers among this group falls between \$51,255 and \$59,715.

Based on this information, we can plan to compensate this position at an approximate target salary of \$57,000 based on a range of \$51,255 to \$59,715.

TIP: For reports run on faculty positions using the *Single Discipline Report*, additional settings like tenure status (tenure track, non-tenure teaching, non-tenure research) and rank are available to help refine your search.



Limitations and Considerations

When using the *Single Position Reports* or *Single Discipline Reports* to benchmark a position at your institution, keep in mind the following:

- CUPA-HR may not collect data on every position or may use a different job title than your institution. This may require you to use the job descriptions in the SPIT file to determine which position(s) are a good match, or to run reports on more than one position to ensure you are completely informed about potentially relevant market salaries.
- Always review the sample size (i.e., number of incumbents and number of institutions) when using data to benchmark. Smaller sample sizes have greater variability and therefore may not provide a valid or reliable result. A general recommendation is to aim for at least 30 incumbents.
- These reports also include a *Data Aging* option. This can be used to automatically prorate salaries by any percentage you choose to a specific date. This may be helpful when planning for the next year, since CUPA-HR salary effective dates are November 1 of each year.
- Just as in the example of exempt status above, many positions in higher education have special circumstances and have custom reports available. Some examples include:
 - Administrators: *Assistant/Associate Deans Faculty Status Report*
 - Professionals: *Exempt Status Comparison Report*
 - Faculty: *Department Head Report*

For more details on all DataOnDemand reports available, or for detailed information about the variety of report settings options available, visit the CUPA-HR User Guide and Tutorials page:

<https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/dataondemand/dod-users/>

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