



## **Developing Specifications**

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### **1. What is a Specification?**

- A precise description of the physical or functional characteristics of a product, service or combination;
- A description of what the purchaser seeks to buy and what a bidder must respond to in order to be considered for award of a contract.
- Specifications generally fall under the following categories:
  - Design
  - Performance
  - Functional
  - Combination (design and performance)
  - Brand name or approved equal
  - Qualified products list and samples.

### **2. What is a Design Specification?**

- It details physical characteristics, materials, and product features, as well as details of the manufacturing process. Engineering plans, drawings, or blueprints may be included.
- The objective is to meet a custom or unique requirement.
- Because a design specification is complete and limits the options of the contractor/manufacturer, this places a higher level of risk on the University for design errors or omissions.

### **3. What is a Performance Specification?**

- It describes the desired end-result, outcome or intended use for the commodity and how the commodity performs. Focuses on outcome(s).
- Performance metrics are essential for acceptance testing and successful achievement of the desired outcome. Metrics may be linked to incentives or disincentives.
- It may also utilize a functional description to define the task or desired result of the commodity and is most commonly used for technology-related commodities.

### **4. What is a Brand Name Specification?**

- It is a title, term, symbol, design, or any combination thereof used to describe a product by a unique identifier and its producer.
- A performance specification may use brand names to describe a certain level of desired output and quality levels of the commodity.



## 5. What should I avoid when writing specifications?

- Conjunctions (and, or, also, with)
- Escape clauses (if, when, but, except, unless, although)
- Mixing different types of requirements (combining system, business and design requirements in the same section)
- Run-on sentences
- Speculative language (usually, generally, often, normally, and typically)
- Unverifiable or vague terms (flexible, proper, suitable, reasonable, appropriately, user-friendly, approximately, as possible)
- Absolute terminology (100% sage, totally reliable, runs on all platforms, functioning 100% of the time, fully compatible)
- Assumptions
- Over or understating the desired quality, output or function