

Offshore production operator Job Description

A free job description template for the Maritime industry

Company Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This offshore production operator job description template is designed to reflect Australian workplace standards and offshore oil and gas industry practices at the time of publication. Confirm the applicable modern award for your business and ensure compliance with all relevant employment laws.

1. Position overview

An offshore production operator operates and monitors the production and process plant on an oil and gas platform or FPSO — separators, compressors, pumps and control panels — to keep hydrocarbons flowing safely and on target. The role combines hands-on plant operation and routine sampling with disciplined isolations, permit-to-work compliance and emergency response in a remote, high-hazard environment.

In Australia, offshore production operators are typically classified under the Hydrocarbons Industry (Upstream) Award 2020 (MA000062) in the operations and processing stream, usually around Level 2 to Level 4 depending on experience, tickets held and the complexity of the plant operated.

This template provides a foundation for creating clear, compliant job descriptions that attract capable process operators while setting appropriate expectations for the role. Once hired, manage your swing rosters efficiently with rostering software.

2. Key responsibilities

Plant operation

Operating and monitoring production and process plant — separators, compressors, pumps, valves and control panels or the distributed control system (DCS) — to keep the facility running safely and within design limits.

Production and quality

Maintaining production targets and product quality by adjusting process conditions, optimising throughput and keeping the plant operating within specification.

Sampling and testing

Carrying out routine sampling and testing of process fluids and products, recording results and acting on any readings that fall outside specification.

First-line maintenance

Performing first-line and routine maintenance, minor repairs and equipment checks, and supporting maintenance crews during planned and breakdown work.

Isolations and permits

Preparing equipment for maintenance through isolations, applying and following the permit-to-work system, and logging readings and shift handover records accurately.

Alarm and emergency response

Responding to process alarms, upsets and emergencies promptly, following defined shutdown and emergency procedures, and taking part in drills and musters.

3. Skills and attributes

- Process awareness: Sound understanding of production and process equipment, and careful monitoring of plant conditions against operating limits.
- Troubleshooting: Ability to diagnose process upsets, respond to alarms calmly and take the right corrective action under pressure.
- Safety discipline: Consistent compliance with permit-to-work, isolation and emergency procedures in a high-hazard offshore environment.
- Communication: Clear shift handovers, accurate logging and effective coordination with control room, maintenance and marine crews.
- Teamwork: Reliable collaboration within a small offshore crew during long swings and confined living and working conditions.
- Shift resilience: Capacity to sustain focus and performance across continuous shiftwork, night shifts and extended swing rosters.

4. Qualifications and requirements

The qualifications for offshore production operator positions depend on the facility and the plant operated. Some are mandatory, while others are preferred or desirable.

- Offshore survival training (required) — Current BOSIET or HUET (helicopter underwater escape) certification is required to travel and work offshore
- Offshore medical (required) — A valid offshore medical fitness certificate and the physical fitness to work continuous shifts on a platform or FPSO
- Working rights (required) — Eligibility to work in Australia
- Process operations qualification — A Certificate III or IV in process plant operations, or equivalent process tickets, is advantageous
- Previous offshore experience — Prior experience as a process or production operator in oil, gas or heavy process industries is desirable but not always essential
- First aid or emergency response — First aid, fire team or emergency response training is desirable for offshore crew roles

5. Working conditions

- Work on a remote offshore platform or FPSO, often accessed by helicopter or vessel
- Continuous shiftwork including 12-hour day and night shifts
- Swing rosters with extended periods on and off the facility
- High-hazard environment requiring strict safety and permit compliance
- Confined living and working conditions with a small offshore crew

- Compliance with safety procedures and personal protective equipment requirements

6. Award information

Hydrocarbons Industry (Upstream) Award 2020

Most offshore production operator positions in Australia are covered by the Hydrocarbons Industry (Upstream) Award 2020 (MA000062). This modern award sets minimum pay rates, penalty rates, allowances and conditions for employees in upstream oil and gas operations and processing. View current Hydrocarbons (Upstream) Award pay rates.

Ordinary hourly rates run from around \$28.20 (Entry) up to \$38.29 (Level 7) for FY2026/27. A production operator is typically classified around Level 2 to Level 4 in the operations and processing stream — a Level 3 competent operator is around \$31.21 per hour (\$39.01 casual), progressing with experience and tickets held. Note that vessel crew are instead covered by the Maritime Offshore Oil and Gas Award (MA000086). Use award interpretation software to calculate pay accurately.

Shiftwork, penalties and swing rosters

Under MA000062, continuous shiftwork, weekend work and public holidays attract penalty rates and loadings, and overtime applies for hours worked beyond ordinary rostered hours. Many offshore facilities operate swing rosters with 12-hour continuous shifts, so confirm how ordinary hours, shift loadings and travel arrangements are structured for your operation.

Offshore allowances and living-away arrangements may also apply. Confirm the current rates and allowances that apply to your business, and check whether an enterprise agreement applies in place of the award.

7. Frequently asked questions

About the role

Q: What does an offshore production operator do?

An offshore production operator operates and monitors the production and process plant — separators, compressors, pumps and control panels or the DCS — on an oil and gas platform or FPSO. They maintain production targets and product quality, carry out routine sampling and testing, perform first-line maintenance, prepare isolations and permits, log readings, and respond to alarms and emergencies. It is a hands-on process role that combines plant operation with strict safety discipline in a remote, high-hazard environment.

Q: What award covers offshore production operators in Australia?

Most offshore production operator positions are covered by the Hydrocarbons Industry (Upstream) Award 2020 (MA000062), which sets minimum pay, penalty rates and conditions for upstream oil and gas operations. Vessel crew are instead covered by the Maritime Offshore Oil and Gas Award (MA000086). Some businesses may be covered by an enterprise agreement instead. Always confirm which instrument applies to your specific operation.

Q: What classification level should I use for a production operator?

Under the Hydrocarbons (Upstream) Award, production operators are typically classified around Level 2 to Level 4 in the operations and processing stream, progressing with experience and tickets held. Ordinary rates run from around \$28.20 per hour (Entry) to \$38.29 (Level 7) for FY2026/27, with a Level 3 competent operator around \$31.21 per hour. See our Hydrocarbons (Upstream) Award pay rates guide for current rates at each level.

Q: Do I need to include pay rates in a job description?

It's not legally required, but including indicative pay rates can attract more applicants and set clear expectations. You can reference the applicable award rate or use phrases like 'Award rates plus penalties' or 'Competitive rate based on experience and tickets.' Check the current Hydrocarbons (Upstream) Award rates for guidance.

Qualifications

Q: What tickets do offshore production operators need?

Offshore production operators generally need current offshore survival training (BOSIET or HUET), a valid offshore medical and working rights in Australia. A Certificate III or IV in process plant operations, or equivalent process tickets, is advantageous, and first aid or emergency response training is desirable. Confirm the specific certifications required for your facility before advertising the role.

Q: Is offshore survival training required for a production operator?

Yes. Current BOSIET or HUET (helicopter underwater escape) certification is typically required to travel to and work on offshore platforms and FPSOs, along with a valid offshore medical fitness certificate. Confirm the specific survival and medical requirements set by your operation and helicopter provider.

Q: What qualifications should I require vs prefer for a production operator?

Mandatory requirements usually include current offshore survival training, a valid offshore medical and working rights in Australia. Preferred qualifications include a process plant operations certificate, prior offshore or heavy-process experience and emergency response training. Balance essential safety requirements against process experience so you don't narrow the candidate pool unnecessarily.

Q: Can I hire production operators without offshore experience?

It's possible, but most operators require the mandatory offshore survival training and medical before they can travel to a facility. Some businesses recruit experienced process operators from onshore oil, gas or heavy industry and provide offshore-specific training. Focus on process competence, safety discipline and shift resilience, and be clear about the tickets you will and won't provide.

Employment

Q: Should I hire casual or permanent offshore production operators?

This depends on your operation. Casual operators offer flexibility for shutdowns or campaign work but attract casual loading under the Hydrocarbons (Upstream) Award — a Level 3 casual is around \$39.01 per hour for FY2026/27. Permanent full-time staff on swing rosters provide crew consistency and stronger retention. Many operators use a mix — permanent core crew plus casuals or contractors for peak workloads.

Q: What penalty rates apply to offshore production operators?

Under the Hydrocarbons (Upstream) Award (MA000062), continuous shiftwork, weekend and public holiday work attract penalty rates and shift loadings, and overtime applies for hours beyond ordinary rostered hours. Because many facilities run swing rosters with 12-hour continuous shifts, confirm how ordinary hours and loadings are structured. Use award interpretation software to calculate rates accurately.

Q: How do swing rosters work for offshore production operators?

Offshore facilities commonly run swing rosters — extended periods on the platform or FPSO followed by equivalent time off, with continuous 12-hour day and night shifts while on the swing. Roster patterns, travel days and how ordinary hours are averaged vary by operation and instrument, so confirm the arrangement for your facility and reflect it clearly in the job description and contract.

Q: What should I include in a production operator employment contract?

Key elements include: position title and classification level, employment type (casual, part-time or full-time), pay rate, applicable award, reporting structure, main duties, facility type and required tickets such as offshore survival and medical certification. For casuals, include the casual loading. Use our HR software to simplify contract creation and record-keeping.

Rostering

Q: How far in advance should I provide rosters to offshore production operators?

Award and agreement rosters rules vary, so confirm the notice period that applies to your business. Because offshore work uses swing rosters and travel logistics, most operators publish rosters well in advance to give crew visibility of their swings, flights and shifts. Using rosters software helps ensure compliance and reduces last-minute changes.

Q: How do I roster offshore production operators across swings?

Plan swings around crew-change dates, shift coverage and each operator's availability, balancing continuous 12-hour shift cover with mandatory rest and travel days. Use rosters tools to track hours, monitor coverage and adjust crewing when staff are unavailable. This keeps the facility fully crewed and avoids fatigue from over-rostering individuals.

Q: What breaks and rest are offshore production operators entitled to?

Break and rest entitlements are set by the applicable award or agreement and are especially important for continuous 12-hour offshore shifts. Set clear break, handover and fatigue-management policies, and ensure crew record their time accurately. Use time and attendance tools to support compliance and monitor hours worked.

Q: How do I manage production operator availability for rosters?

Collect availability and travel preferences during onboarding and update them regularly. Use HR software and rosters tools to track when each operator can work and any ticket, medical or travel constraints. Set clear policies about swing availability and how to request changes, which simplifies crew-change planning and reduces coverage gaps.