

## **Overview of Position Classification Process**

Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, one of the 14 state-owned universities comprising the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, uses prescribed and formal classification standards to classify all its support staff positions. These standards are developed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State System in order to appropriately represent all staff positions that exist within our organizations.

The classification plan consists of orderly groupings and structured formal standards which represent the many and varied job categories needed to identify all positions in the workplace. Each job category represents one of these groups of positions through a general descriptor called a class. Position classification is the process used to match each position to and place it into the correct class. The intent is to assure that the same title, pay range, qualification requirements, examinations, selection procedures, training programs, performance standards, etc., are applied uniformly to all positions that are substantially similar in tasks, responsibilities, and skills. The result of the position classification process by design directly impact recruitment, staff development, retention, and internal and external pay consistency.

Those engaged in administering the position classification program at Mansfield University believe administrators and staff at the institution should be provided with an explanation regarding the policies and principles that serve as the basis for the position classification system. The intent of this publication is to provide such statements, as a basis for information, to support future deliberation, and promote greater understanding. It provides the user with the basics as to “how” positions are assigned to the proper class and illustrates that proper position classification considers a position’s relationship to all other positions in the immediate organization.

Since the responsibilities of any given position may be affected by the dynamics of reorganization and change, it should be understood that the position classification process is designed to respond to change by assessing whether additions or deletions of duties have impacted upon the proper classification of a position.

The staff of Mansfield University Human Resources Office is available to assist in furthering your understanding of position classification and facilitate guidance in this process, as needed. Located on the first floor of Alumni Hall, the office is open weekdays from 8:00a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

## **Purposes of Classification**

The position classification plan provides a framework for the organization's Human Resource management objectives and activities, as well as assures that employment practices comply with federal and state laws. The classification plan, with associated class specifications, facilitates other Human Resource functions such as recruitment and selection, pay structuring, training and development, performance evaluation, and employment/workforce planning.

### **Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment and selection involves attracting, interviewing, and selecting job applicants with the necessary skills. Position classification assists in the recruitment and selection process since job context (purpose, scope of responsibility, and degree of accountability); job content (identification and description of responsibilities); and job requirements (minimum skills, abilities, and experience necessary to perform job) are identified by the class and class specifications.

### **Pay Structure**

Pay structure is determined for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by the Governor's Office of Administration. Position classification serves as the basis for the Commonwealth's pay structure. Classes are assigned to pay grades based on an assessment of the value of the work of one class relative to other classes. The assignment of a class to a pay grade based on its relative value to the organization builds equity across the organization and assures that there is a logical relationship between rates of pay and services provided.

### **Training and Development**

Training and development programs are most effective when designed for and delivered to groups of employees selected on the basis of needs assessment. Position classification supports the training and development function by providing the means to identify employees by discrete groupings. Programs intended to improve or update job skills, to provide information, or to retrain employees can be tailored for a particular target group.

### **Performance Evaluation**

Performance evaluation involves assessing how well an employee performs the duties and responsibilities assigned to the position that an employee occupies. Each position in the organization is identified by class and by typical statements concerning the duties and responsibilities listed in the specification for that class. The use of objective, job-related criteria in the evaluation process, e.g., assigned duties and responsibilities, reduces or eliminates subjective opinion.

### **Employment/Workforce Planning**

Employment/workforce planning requires an organization to identify both the number and types of employees needed to perform work necessary for the future growth of the organization. The classification system facilitates this type of long-range planning because current classified positions and employees can be easily matched to projected needs.

# **Position Classification and Review Process**

## **The Classification Cycle**

1. Management determines the need for a set of duties and responsibilities
2. A position is defined and authorized with funding approval
3. The position is classified
4. Recruitment and selection occur
5. Supervisor delegates duties and responsibilities
6. Employee assumes and performs assignments
7. Position is monitored for continued proper classification

# The Review Process

Reviews may be initiated in several ways including: employee-initiated reviews, university-initiated reviews, Human Resources-initiated reviews, ongoing position accuracy reviews, classification grievances, and system level-initiated reviews. Following is a brief description of each.

## **Employee-Initiated Reviews**

If an employee experiences substantial changes in their permanent position responsibilities, they may make a request for a position classification review. The employee would complete Part 1 of the Classification Review Request Form and attach a copy of the current job description. The Classification Review Request Form is then forwarded to the employee's Director or Department Chair. The Director/Department Chair will sign the form and indicate whether they support the request and then forward it to the Vice-President.

The Vice-President will review the request and indicate whether they support the request. The Vice-President will sign and date the form and then forward it to the Human Resources Office. The date of signature by the Vice President becomes the effective date of any classification upgrade. (The effective dates of lateral reclassifications or downgrades in classification will be determined in accordance with the provisions of the appropriate collective bargaining agreement.)

Regardless of whether the Director/Department Chair and Vice-President support the employee's classification review request, the Human Resources Department will review the employee's position to determine if there is any merit to the request. If an on-site review is needed, a Human Resource manager will schedule and conduct the review, which is generally conducted at the employee's worksite. A subsequent discussion is also held with the immediate supervisor. As needed, the information gathered during a review may be discussed with other PASSHE university classification managers in order to compare the duties performed against similar positions at other schools.

Once the position duties are analyzed, a written report is prepared and forwarded to the Vice President. The extent that all information is available, the Human Resource manager will attempt to complete the written report within two months. If needed, the Human Resource manager will meet with the Vice President to clarify or provide additional information.

Following the Vice President's review and approval/denial of the analysis, the classification review is presented to the Job Evaluation Committee (JEC). When a decision is rendered by the JEC, a letter is forwarded to the employee to inform him/her of the outcome.

Following a review, if it is determined that a position should be downgraded, the employee may be demoted to the proper classification and pay range without any immediate reduction in pay. As an alternative, it may be decided to earmark the position and review it again upon vacancy for possible downgrading.

## **University-Initiated Reviews**

If a Director/Department Chair believes there has been a substantial change to an employee's permanent position or the Director would like to propose a substantial change to an employee's permanent position, the Director/Department Chair may request a position classification review by completing the Classification Review Request Form. The Director/Department Chair should attach a copy of the employee's current job description and also list the new duties added or proposed for the employee's position. The Director/Department Chair should indicate why it is necessary to assign these duties to the position. The form is then forwarded to the Vice President.

If the Vice President approves a request, it is signed, dated and forwarded to the Human Resources Office. The date of approval by the Vice President becomes the effective date of any classification upgrade. (The effective dates of lateral reclassifications or downgrades in classification will be determined in accordance with the provisions of the appropriate collective bargaining agreement.) If a Vice President does not approve the request, the form is sent back to the Director with a copy forwarded to the Human Resources Department.

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## **Human Resources-Initiated Review**

The Human Resources Office may choose to review all positions in a particular department or selected positions or groups of positions, such as all Clerk Typist 1s, all Police Officer 1s, etc., in order to ensure that the classification level continues to be appropriate. Reviews of this nature may include a worksite discussion with the employee or a review of the written job description with the employee's supervisor.

## **Ongoing Position Accuracy Review**

This type of review occurs throughout the year. The Human Resource manager reviews rewritten job descriptions as they are received along with the annual performance evaluation form. Also noted and filed are the signed statements from supervisors which indicate that job duties have not changed. If there are permanent changes in the position duties and responsibilities which appear to

be substantial, the Human Resource manager discusses these changes with the supervisor. The Human Resource manager may decide that a more thorough review is necessary.

### **Classification Grievance**

A review may also occur as a result of a classification grievance. An employee who perceives that substantial changes have occurred in his/her permanent job duties may choose to file a classification grievance in accordance with his/her collective bargaining agreement.

### **System-Level-Initiated Review**

There are times when the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education determines a review of one or more classes is necessary. One of the several reasons for launching such reviews would be to ensure that a certain class or classes are used consistently across the State System.

## **Reasons for Initiating the Review Process**

There are several circumstances that can activate the review process. These include the following:

Newly created positions	Reorganization
Vacant positions	Special study
Significantly changed positions	Legislative implications
Periodic review	

### **Newly Created Positions**

When a new position is approved and authorized, a position description is developed by the supervisor and reviewed by the Director and appropriate Vice President. The position description, which must include the major duties and responsibilities, and the reporting relationship, is submitted by the Vice President to the Human Resource manager for review and analysis.

### **Vacant Positions**

When an employee leaves a position, the position description is reviewed by the supervisor or Director to ensure accuracy, and submitted to the Human Resource manager to determine if the current classification is appropriate.

### **Significantly Changed Positions**

If a position has undergone change because the supervisor has added, deleted, or changed some of the duties and responsibilities and these changes are significant in terms of level of responsibility, accountability, or impact, the position may be reviewed to ensure appropriate classification. Note: Where an assignment of new or additional duties is questioned by the Director or Vice President, a discussion with the supervisor should be scheduled to discuss the rationale behind the assignment.

### **Periodic Review**

Every position should be reviewed periodically. There are several ways this may be accomplished. The Human Resource manager may simply review the job description currently on file in the Human Resources Office. Or, if the job description is rewritten and forwarded to the Human Resources

Office along with the annual performance review report, these rewritten job descriptions are closely reviewed as well. Following these types of periodic reviews, the Human Resource manager may feel it is necessary to discuss aspects of the position with the supervisor or with both the supervisor and employee.

It is important to emphasize that the annual performance evaluation meeting is an ideal opportunity for the supervisor and employee to review the employee's position description for accuracy and completeness. Changes should be documented by editing the job description and forwarding it along with the performance evaluation report to Human Resources.

### **Reorganization**

Reorganization within a department or program area may result in the restructuring of one or more positions. The supervisor/manager should document such changes in the appropriate position descriptions.

### **Special Study**

A special study may be undertaken at the university level or at the system level for a variety of reasons, i.e., to provide documentation on a certain class or group of positions.

### **Legislative Implications**

State and federal laws sometimes impact positions and/or classes of employees.

## **Roles of the Participants**

### **Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education**

The present classification plan, initiated in 1956 by the Executive Board of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, contains a schedule of class titles and specifications for each class. The Office of Administration, Bureau of Personnel, establishes all class specifications and pay ranges in the classification plan (for coalition bargaining units), and periodically reviews them to make sure they reflect current conditions.

Passage of Act 188 in 1982 established the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PAPASSHE) and shifted the lines of authority for labor relations from the Governor's jurisdiction to that of the new System's Chancellor and Board of Governors. The State System was subsequently empowered to administer the classification plan developed by the Office of Administration.

### **Mansfield University Administration**

Between June 1986 and July 1987, authority was delegated to Mansfield University and the other 13 State System universities for bargaining unit and classification decision-making under the directives and guidelines of the Office of the Chancellor.

### **Director/Department Chair/Supervisor**

The supervisor's role in position classification is to:

- Provide current and accurate documentation for all positions within his/her area of responsibility;
- Initiate the evaluation of any new positions or the re-evaluation of any current position because of substantial changes;
- Prepare required documentation to accompany the request for a classification review;
- Ensure employees within his/her area of responsibility are assigned work appropriate to their classification.

### **Position Incumbent**

All university employees (position incumbents) influence the accuracy of position classifications. By maintaining current job descriptions, by carefully reviewing job descriptions annually as part of performance evaluations, by clarifying any key assignment changes with supervisors, and by documenting important changes on revised job descriptions, employees provide timely, detailed information on what workers do and what they need to know to perform their tasks well. Position incumbents also bolster the overall classification system whenever they participate in a review by providing insight and up-to-date information about job assignments and answering questions relative to their particular tasks.

### **Union**

The class titles, specifications, and pay grades are part of the collective bargaining agreements negotiated between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania/State System of Higher Education and the various unions on the campus. A classification grievance may be filed by a union representative on behalf of an employee who believes his/her position classification does not reflect the duties and the responsibilities assigned to his/her position.

### **Office of Human Resources**

At the university level, the Human Resource representative is responsible for administering the university's classification programs under the direction of the Director of Human Resources. The Human Resource representative has two primary duties with regard to classification:

- To administer and maintain the job classification programs
- To act as a consultant to university departments on classification and related issues

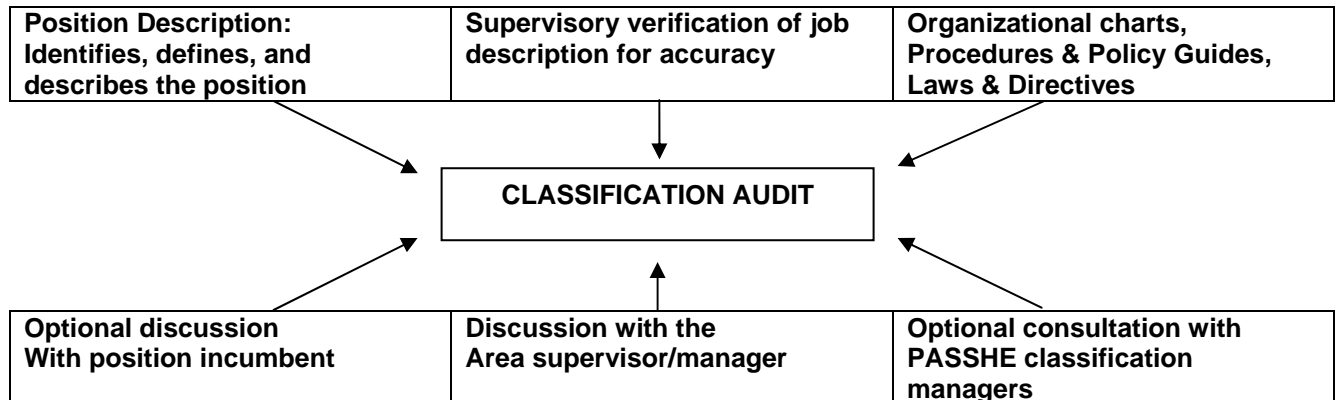
The Human Resource representative reviews the classification of all vacated positions and newly approved positions prior to posting. This individual also evaluates positions to determine if the current designated classification is appropriate, and consults with supervisors on issues such as structural or organizational changes that influence classified positions within their departments.



# Position Information

## Information Gathering

This graph illustrates various sources of information the Human Resource representative taps to gain a clear understanding of what a particular position entails.



# Classification Standards and Other Resources

## Classification Standards

Three formal classification standards comprise the core documentation in the position classification process. These include class specifications, job benchmarks, and allocation guides. A summary of each standard follows:

- **Class Specifications** – These are written descriptions of a class describing representative duties for a group of like positions. The definition of work, which is the most critical part of the class specification, establishes the parameters and provides the internal composition of the class. The specification describes the nature of work and establishes the relative level of the class in relationship to other classes in the same class series and occupational group; formalizes the class content which is used to derive a pay level through pay analysis; provides the documentation essential in arriving at a title; establishes the framework around which the remaining portions of the class specifications are developed; characterizes typical organization relationships, when applicable, by describing the work environment and the supervisory/subordinate structure; and provides the documentation used in formulating a bargaining unit assignment and Equal Employment Opportunity code assignment.
- **Job Benchmarks** – These are comparative job standards used in determining position classification. A job benchmark typically describes the functions of a position

touching on such aspects as independence of action, scope of responsibility, and sphere of influence. The position under review is compared to a job benchmark, which serves as a standard, in order to identify similarities and differences.

- **Specialized Allocation Guides** – These are specialized standards used to evaluate a variety of jobs.

## **Other Resources**

In addition to the three classification standards, there are additional resources and tools which are utilized. A list of these other resources follows.

- Documentation on other positions within the organization may be reviewed and analyzed to determine the areas of comparability and/or distinctive differences prior to deciding on a relative ranking for the position under review.
- Documentation on comparable Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education positions may be considered.
- Classification arbitration decisions are an important resource since decisions by the Advisory Arbitration Panel represent the panel's interpretation of class specifications relative to work as signed to coalition bargaining unit employees.
- Relevant court decisions or judges' rulings may influence the classification of positions because of the court's interpretation of various pieces of legislation.
- Employment legislation affects position classification. The Commonwealth/State system must be in compliance with federal and state laws, i.e., Fair Labor Standards Act, the Equal Pay Act, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.
- The various labor agreements are referenced since they contain language relative to the classification plan.
- Certain personnel rules and management directives addresses and deal with position classification.
- The United States Employment Service provides for the classification and the coding of job applicants and positions by using an occupational classification system, as incorporated in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

## Factors to be Considered

As defined earlier, position classification is the orderly grouping of positions with similar duties and responsibilities into the same categories or classes. The duties and responsibilities of these positions and the skills required to perform them must be sufficiently similar. This is to ensure that the same titles, pay ranges, qualification requirements, examinations, selection and placement procedures, training programs, and performance standards can be applied uniformly to all positions in the same category or class. Factors which determine classification involve what the incumbent does, the kind of work performed, the responsibility one has, and the skills and abilities necessary to do the job.

Factors considered in classification include:

Variety and complexity of work  
Supervision received  
Guidelines available  
Personal contacts

Level of responsibility  
Supervision exercised  
Finality of decisions  
Consequence of error

## COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Does a desk audit or on-site review always have to be conducted in order for an analyst to make a classification decision?

\*No. It is generally up to the Human Resource representative to decide how to obtain the necessary information. A desk audit may be performed. Sufficient information may be obtained from the job description, the supervisor, and other sources so that a desk audit is not necessary.

2. Does the supervisor have any influence on the classification of a position?

\*Yes, in a sense that the supervisor determines what duties are assigned to a position and how independently the individual functions. This is why the Human Resource representative talks to the supervisor when conducting an audit.

3. What impact does the supervisor have on the final decision of a classification review?

\*None, other than that mentioned above.

4. How often can a position be reviewed?

\*There is no limit on how often a position can be reviewed. However, only those positions which have undergone substantial change in job content or job context are eligible for a full review under the terms of the current collective bargaining agreement.

5. Can a position be reclassified to a class lower than the current classification? (For example, clerk typist 3 to clerk typist 2).

\*Yes, this can happen.

6. Who should initiate a request for a job or position audit?

\*The Director/Department Chair should initiate a request for a review, but an employee is also free to initiate a request.

7. Does the performance evaluation of an employee have an impact on the classification of his/her position?

\*No. The performance evaluation process is a separate and distinct function from classification.

8. How much influence does length of service have on the final classification decision?

\*None. The length of time you have worked in one position has nothing to do with the classification of that position. One of the purposes of having steps in each pay range is to compensate employees for length of service.

9. How much impact do an employee's qualifications or experience have on the proper classification of positions?

\*None. An employee's qualifications to perform higher-level work are not taken into account when reviewing a position for reclassification.

10. Is the quantity of work performed a consideration in determining classification of a position?

\*No. Quantity or volume of work performed is not considered when reviewing a position for reclassification.

11. Can a position be reclassified on the basis of financial need?

\*No. Financial need is not a classification factor.

12. What is the difference between a promotion and a reclassification?

\*A promotion means that an employee moves from one position to another in a higher pay range. A promotion occurs when an employee applies for and is selected for a vacant or new position. Reclassification occurs as a result of a review of a position or job. Reclassification can result in upward reallocation of the position which means it moves to a higher pay range; or can result in a downward reallocation of the position which means it moves to a lower pay range. The position can also move laterally and remain in the same pay range.

13. Who should be contacted regarding classification questions?

\*An employee's first resource is their supervisor since this is the person responsible for the employee's work assignment. If an employee needs more information, the next contact is the university's Human Resource representative in the Human Resources Department.

## **Glossary of Classification Terms**

**Allocation** – the act of placing a position in a particular class based on the classification finding (result).

**Allocation Factors** – separate and distinct criteria that measure the level characteristics and similarities and differences among and between positions.

**Class** – a group of positions or jobs similar enough with respect to duties and responsibilities so that the same title and code may be used for all positions in the group. These positions/jobs are treated alike for pay, classification, bargaining unit, recruitment and other personnel/management purposes.

**Class Level** – the relative level of a class within a class series that represents its hierarchical placement based on complexity and responsibility in relationship to the other classes within the series.

**Class Series** – the hierarchical group of two or more classes of the same job family reflecting various levels of work in progression, e.g., the clerk typist series consists of clerk typist 1, 2, and 3.

**Class Specifications** – a representative description of the kind and level of work, the typical significant duties, the desirable preparation and significant knowledge, skills, and abilities required to do the work positions allocated to a class.

**Classification Plan** – one or more documents describing all the classes in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Classification Plan consists of the orderly grouping and structures formal standards of all classes that represent the many and varied job categories of positions within the work place.

**Duties and Responsibilities** – the units of work and tasks/activities, with required commitment to finality and accuracy, that are assigned to a position.

**Classify (Classification)** – the process of evaluating a position using all relevant factors.

**Job** – a group of two or more identical or substantially similar positions, that have common tasks, responsibilities and required skills.

**Job Family** – jobs involving work of the same nature, but requiring different skill and responsibility levels.

**Job/Position Description** – document describing various aspects of a position such as the job title, statements outlining the principal duties and responsibilities, knowledge and skill requirements, reporting relationship, and working conditions or environment; used as documentation for position classification.

**Position** – an authorized and individually identified group of responsibilities and duties assigned or delegated by an appropriate authority requiring the full-time or part-time employment of one or more persons.

**Position Audit** – the review or study of a position to determine what kind and level of duties the employee is assigned and performs.

**Promotion** – the movement of an employee in a class to another class assigned to a pay range with a higher minimum hourly rate. A promotion occurs when an employee applies and is selected for a vacant or new position.

**Reclassification** – the reassignment of a position from one class to another in order to reflect a change in duties and responsibilities or to correct an error in the original assignment.

- \* Upward reclassification of a position – the reassignment of a position to a class assigned To a pay range with a higher minimum hourly rate.
- \* Downward reclassification of a position – the reassignment of a position to a class with a Lower minimum hourly rate.
- \* Lateral reclassification of a position – the reassignment of a position to a pay range with the same minimum hourly rate.

**Supervision** – responsibility for the work of others with authority in the interest of the employer to hire, assign, promote, transfer, suspend, discharge, evaluate, reward, or discipline employees; responsibility to direct other employees or adjust their grievances; or, to a substantial degree, effectively recommend such action.