

Classification Process Overview

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I. Overview of Classification Process

West Chester 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 non-instructional positions. These standards are developed and affected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State System in order to appropriately represent all 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 results of the position classification process by design, directly impacts recruitment, staff development, retention, and internal and external pay consistency.

Those engaged in administering the position classification program at West Chester 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 to 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.

II. What employees or supervisors need to have to submit a request to review a current classification

The review process may be initiated by a supervisor, a staff person in concert with a supervisor, or by the Classification Manager in the Office of Human Resources and Labor Relations.

First the employee and supervisor need to ensure there is a substantial, permanent change in the employee's responsibilities since they were last classified – **not** including quality of work, length of service, volume of work, or dependability (these characteristics warrant a merit increase, not a reclassification and do not count towards a decision). If the employee and/or manager decide there has been a substantial change in the responsibilities, they can complete a [Classification Review Request Form](#).

1. A cover letter from the employee **or** supervisor requesting the classification to be reviewed, highlighting the highest level of responsibilities that have changed and warranted the review request.
2. A current job description including the new responsibilities being performed. This document is the foundation for the classification process.
3. The previous job description.
4. An organizational chart of the department.

The date of receipt becomes the effective date if the position is allocated to a different classification as a result of the review. A typical review includes a desk audit with the employee to review the details of the job description and new duties; follow up discussions with the employee's immediate supervisor; a review of class specifications, arbitration rulings, comparable positions throughout the state system; and any other supporting documentation.

The Provost or Vice President has the ability to direct that the work of the position, particularly work which may warrant upward reclassification, be redistributed within the department. The work of the position involved and of other positions may be adjusted in order to accommodate the organizational needs efficiently without incurring additional salary expenses. The Vice President or Provost may direct the Classification Manager to assist the manager in re-describing and realigning the duties of staff in the affected department.

Should the Provost or Vice President agree with the job description and preliminary classification determination, he/she will notify the Classification Manager to proceed with the formal classification of the position and subsequent personnel actions if any are required.

III. Types of Classification Reviews

1. **Management-Initiated Request** - Review of vacant positions and positions that have undergone substantial change are examples of the type of review generally initiated by management.
2. **Employee-Initiated Request** - Employees may request their positions be reviewed if they believe there have been substantial changes in either their position's permanent job content or job context. The Classification Manager will ultimately determine if such changes merit a change in the position classification.
3. **Classification Grievance** - A review also may occur as a result of a classification grievance. An employee who perceives that substantial changes have occurred in their permanent job duties or job content may opt to file a classification grievance with their union. The Office of Human Resources responds to this union action by initiating a review of the employee's position.
4. **Human Resources-Initiated Review** - The Classification Manager in the Human Resources Office may choose to review all positions in a department or all positions within a single class such as Clerk Typist I, Fiscal Assistant, or Painter.

5. **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.

IV. Factors that Count in Classification Decisions

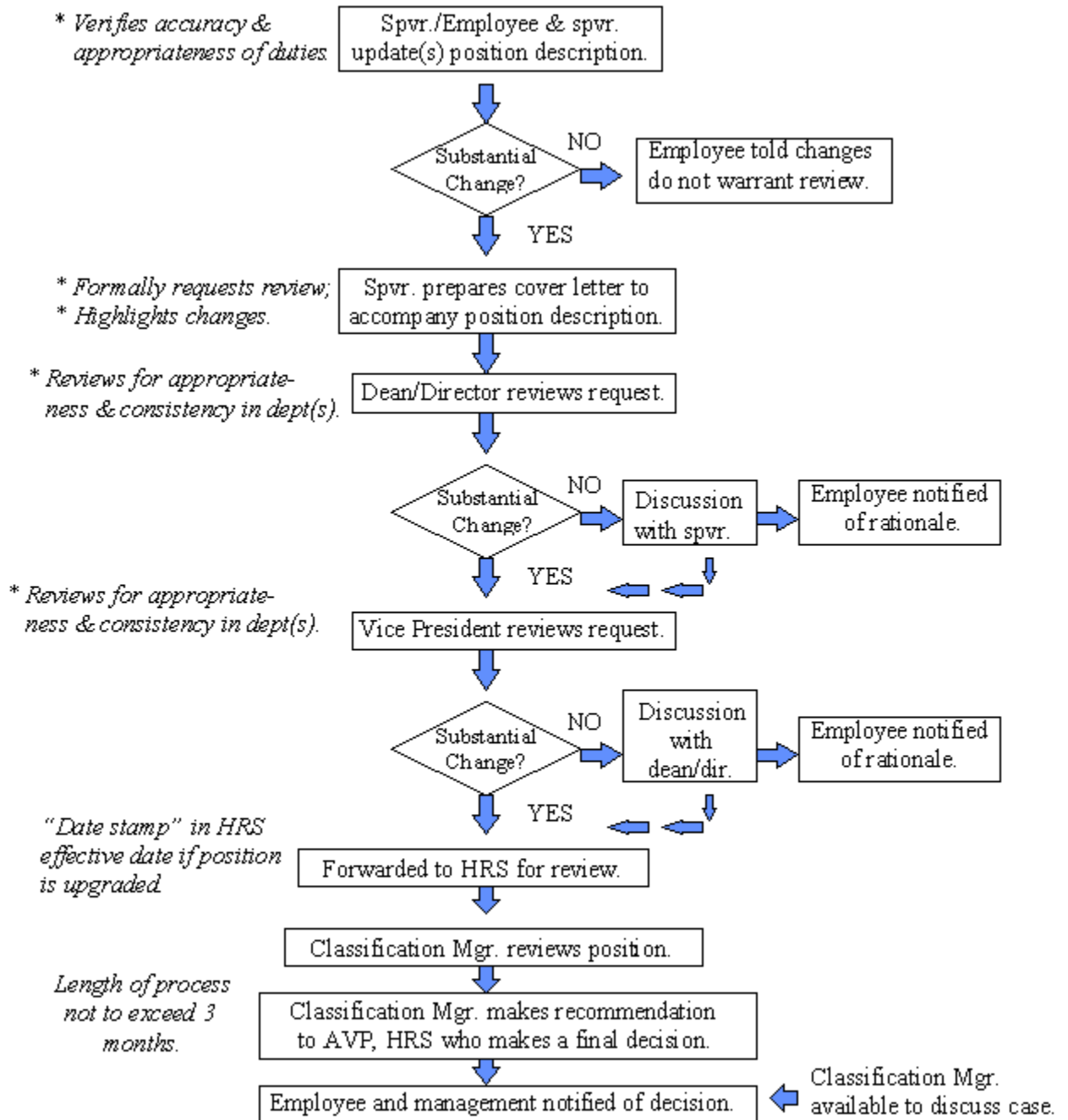
- Nature and variety of work
- Complexity of work
- Supervision or guidance received
- Supervision or guidance exercised over others
- Guidelines available
- Originality
- Consequences of errors
- Nature and finality of decisions
- Public contact
- Knowledge, skills and abilities needed to do the work

V. Factors that Do Not Count in Classification Decisions

- Length of service
- Quality of performance
- Pay scale location
- Financial need
- Loyalty to university and/or department
- Personal qualifications and/or experience
- Volume of work
- Dependability

VI. Flowchart of the Classification Review Process

While either the supervisor or employee can initiate a request, employees are encouraged to work closely with the supervisor in preparing the information since the supervisor will be used as a resource throughout this process.



VII. Classification Frequently Asked Questions

- **When should a position's classification be reviewed?**

A position's classification should be reviewed: (1) when the position is a newly created position, (2) when the position is vacated, (3) when the position has significantly changed or (4) when the position is changed as part of a restructuring.
- **Who initiates a classification review request?**

Either an employee or supervisor can initiate a request. However, employees should discuss their requests for an audit with their supervisor so that the supervisor can verify the accuracy of the job duties and changes leading to the request.
- **What documents are required for a classification review?**
 - An updated job description, highlighting the newly added, higher level responsibilities signed by the employee and supervisor.
 - The previous job description.
 - An organizational chart for the department.
- **How long does a classification review take?**

Human Resources aim to complete each review within 30 days of receiving the required information of signed documents for the position being reviewed. The Classification Manager may require additional time beyond the 30-day time if the review involves more than one job/position. For management positions, the review process may be longer.
- **Does a supervisor influence a position's classification?**

Yes. The supervisor determines the duties are assigned to a position and the degree of independence exercised in the carrying out of those duties.
- **Can a position be reclassified to a lower level (e.g. Clerk Typist 3 to Clerk Typist 2)?**

Yes, this can happen if the position's duties, responsibilities, and independence of action are reduced significantly. A position can also move laterally and remain in the same pay range.
- **When does a position reclassification become effective?**

When a position is reclassified it is effective retroactive to the date on which the Human Resources department had received all of the required documents.
- **What factors impact the classification of a position?**
 - Nature & variety of work permanently assigned employee
 - Complexity of work assigned
 - Supervision or guidance received
 - Availability of procedures and guidelines
 - Originality required in problem solving

- Consequences of errors
 - Span on influence
 - Nature and finality of decisions
 - Long-term impact of decisions
 - Supervision or guidance exercised over others
 - Knowledge, skills, abilities, experience needed to do work
- **What factors do not impact a position's classification?**
 - Number of years worked at university
 - Quality of performance
 - Employee's financial need
 - Employee's loyalty to University or department
 - Employee's personal qualifications and experience
 - Volume of Work assigned to the employee
 - Dependability of the employee
- **Does a classification desk audit or on-site review always have to be conducted in order to make a classification decision?**

No. It is generally up to the Classification Manager to decide how to obtain the necessary information. A desk audit is typically performed but sufficient information may be obtained from the job description, the supervisor, and/or other sources so a desk audit is not necessary.
- **Does the supervisor have any influence on the classification of a position?**

Yes, in the sense that the supervisor determines what duties are assigned and how independently the individual functions. This is why the Classification Manager usually talks to the supervisor during the review process.
- **What impact does the supervisor have on the final classification decision?**

None; other than that mentioned above.
- **What impact does the budget have on the final classification decision?**

None. The supervisor should consider budget implications of a possible classification upgrade prior to assigning or allowing the employee(s) to assume responsibilities and duties. Under the university's Complement Management System (CMS) the department is responsible for funding any upgrade within his/her control.
- **How often can a position classification be reviewed?**

There is no limit on how often a position can be reviewed. Only those positions with substantial change in job content or context that have undergone administrative review, however, are eligible for a full review.
- **Can a position be reclassified to a class lower than the current one (i.e., Clerk Typist 3 to Clerk Typist 2)?**

Yes, this can happen.

- **Does an employee's performance evaluation rating impact on the classification?**
No. The performance evaluation process is a separate and distinct function from classification.
- **What is the difference between a promotion and a reclassification/reallocation?**
A promotion means an employee moves to a higher pay range. This action may be the result of a classification review if the position is found to be at a higher level. However, it can also result in a downward reallocation of the position which means it moves to a lower pay range or move laterally and remain in the same pay range.
- **Who should be contacted if you have classification questions?**
Your first resource is your supervisor since this is the person responsible for your work assignment. If you need more information, your next contact is the [Classification Manager](#) from the Office of Human Resources.

VIII. Glossary of Common Classification Terms

- **Allocation** - act of placing a position in a particular class based on the classification finding.
- **Allocation Factors** - separate and distinct criteria that measure the level characteristics and similarities and differences among and between positions.
- **Class** - 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** - 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** - hierarchical group of two or more classes of the same job family reflecting various levels of work in progression, i.e., the Clerk Typist series consists of Clerk Typist 1, 2, and 3.
- **Class Specifications** - representative description of the kind and level of work, typical duties, desirable preparation and significant knowledge, skills, and abilities required to do the work of 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 workplace.

- **Duties and Responsibilities** - units of work and tasks/activities, with required commitment to finality and accuracy, which are assigned to a position.
- **Classify (Classification)** - process of evaluating a position using all relevant factors.
- **Job** - 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 job title, statements of principal and essential duties and responsibilities, knowledge and skill requirements, reporting relationship, and working conditions or environment; used as documentation for position classification.
- **Position** - authorized and individually identified group of responsibilities and duties assigned or delegated by an appropriate authority requiring the full or part-time employment of one or more persons.
- **Position Accuracy Certification** - form used as part of the annual performance appraisal process. It verifies duties and responsibilities of the position and serves as an addendum to the position/job description.
- **Position Survey or Audit** - review or study of a position to determine what kind and level of duties the employee is assigned and performs.
- **Reclassification** - 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. Reclassification can be upward (reassignment of a position to a class assigned to a pay range with a higher minimum hourly rate), downward (class with a lower minimum hourly rate) or laterally (class with same pay rate).
- **Supervision** - responsibility for the work of others with authority in the interest of the employer to hire, transfer, suspend, layoff, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline employees or responsibility to direct them or adjust their grievances; or to a substantial degree effectively recommend such action.

IX. Classification Appeals Processes by Bargaining Unit

AFSCME:

The Employee or the Union may submit a written appeal to the Office of Administration, Classification and Pay Division within 15 working days after the Employer's Step 1 response is due. The Office of Administration will then have 45 working days to respond in writing to the grievance appeal at this level.

The Union, in response to an unfavorable decision at Step 2 may submit classification appeals to an arbitration panel, within 45 working days after the Office of Administration's response is due. The findings of the panel shall be submitted to the parties within 30 days after the hearing or receipt of transcript when taken.

Additional information can be found in Article 27 of the AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Non-Represented Employees:

Any non-represented employee not in agreement with the salary grade assigned to his/her position should discuss the matter with his/her supervisor. If both the non-represented employee and his/her supervisor think the job has not been properly graded, the job description may be re-submitted to the Office of Human Resources for reevaluation along with written rationale for why the job should be reviewed. This request for reevaluation should be supported by the concurrence of the senior manager of the function.

If the position is evaluated at pay grade 230 or above, the university president must send the classification appeal for the position to the Office of the Chancellor. After appropriate review and consultation, the Office of the Chancellor will render a classification decision.

For additional information, please contact the Office of Human Resources.

OPEIU:

University determinations prior to Step 2 can be reversed by the Office of the Chancellor.

The Union, in response to an unfavorable decision at Step 2, may submit classification appeals to an advisory arbitration panel by notifying the Office of the Chancellor of its intent to proceed to arbitration within 12 working days after receipt of the Step 2 decision. A copy of said notice shall be sent to the University.

The findings of the panel shall be submitted to the parties within 30 days after the hearing or receipt of transcript when taken.

Additional information can be found in Article 23 of the OPEIU Collective Bargaining Agreement.

SCUPA:

The professional employee may appeal in writing to the Final Appeal Committee. Such appeal shall be sent to PASSHE's Office of the Chancellor, Labor Relations within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the Step 1 response. The appeal must include at a minimum a copy of the professional employee's job description under review and a copy of the decision of the university Human Resource Office.

The appeal will be heard by the Committee within forty-five (45) working days from the date it is date stamped at the Office of the Chancellor and a decision will be rendered within forty-five (45) working days from the date the appeals hearing is considered closed.

Additional information can be found in Article 12 of the SCUPA Collective bargaining Agreement.

SPFPA:

Determinations prior to Step 3 of Section 2 of Article 37 can be reversed by the Employer.

The Union, in response to an unfavorable decision at Step 3 of Section 2 of Article 37, may submit classification appeals to an arbitration panel.

The findings of the panel shall be submitted to the parties within thirty (30) days after the hearing or receipt of transcript when taken.

Additional information can be found in Article 26 of the SPFPA Collective Bargaining Agreement.