

RECLASSIFICATION

Facts about Reclassification and Suggested Procedures

Who may apply?

The employee may apply with or without the support of the supervisor.

The supervisor may also initiate the process.

According to the New Jersey Department of Personnel, position classification involves the "grouping together, into categories or classes, positions which are sufficiently similar in 1) duties and responsibilities, 2) level of difficulty, and 3) requirements."

The New Jersey Department of Personnel was formerly responsible for the creation of titles, their reevaluation and the reclassification of positions. Subsequent to the creation of the generic title system, these functions were assumed by the Department of Higher Education in 1985.

Under the system of generic titles, professional staff have one of 12 in-unit titles. These 12 titles replaced some 150 functionally specific titles, which existed under the old Civil Service system. Examples of generic titles are Administrative Assistant I, Professional Services Specialist II and Program Assistant. However, not all professional staff were switched to the generic system; there are still some professional staff in our unit who bear old Civil Service functional titles because these could not be matched with the new generic titles. These old or "retained titles" are to disappear as their current incumbents leave them.

Each of the 12 generic titles has a JOB SPECIFICATION. Each job specification contains certain information: the job definition, examples of work, education and experience requirements, knowledge and abilities, unit designation and salary range designation. The salary for any given title is determined by a study of the duties and responsibilities of the job through the process of JOB EVALUATION. New Jersey uses a Hay-based system and this system underlies the generic titles. Each position at the colleges and universities has a JOB DESCRIPTION. In theory, when a new position is created, a job description is written for it. After it is written it is compared to the JOB SPECIFICATIONS, and assigned its title based on matching with a JOB SPECIFICATION. The job is then advertised as bearing a particular title and salary.

Position Reclassification

Reclassification occurs when there is "a change of an individual position from one class, (generic) title to a different class (generic) title," This change occurs when the duties and responsibilities of a position change. Such changes may be gradual or sudden. If the change(s) is (are) so significant that the current title is no longer appropriate, a reclassification of the position is in order. The reclassification may be lateral, upward, or downward. Upward reclassification would result in the assignment of a new and higher generic title to the professional staff member's position-it is the position that is reclassified, not the employee-because the old title is no longer reflective of the job content of the position.

Upward Reclassification

Article XVI, Section E.3 of the State-Union Agreement states that "A substantial increase in job responsibilities in an existing position held by an employee may make the position eligible for a position reclassification review. Professional staff may apply to the first level non-unit supervisor for a position reclassification whenever there is a substantial increase in their assigned job responsibilities." The employee must identify the specific duties that do not conform to the specification for the employee's current title and, if he or she proposes a different title for the position, he or she must explain why that title is more appropriate.

It is important to know what a "substantial increase in job responsibilities" may include. The following are often factors in job changes and a professional staff member seeking reclassification of a position should look for these:

1. Addition of new programs; 2. Realignment of organizational structures; 3. Introduction of new, more complex technologies; 4. Expansion of existing programs and staff; 5. Higher educational and experience requirements.

Should a college or university deny an employee's reclassification request, the employee faces many difficulties in appealing the decision.

1. The words "substantial increase in job responsibilities" are subjective and good comparative data based on a review of similar positions in the unit is difficult to obtain and assess.
2. The generic JOB SPECIFICATIONS are exceedingly vague and the overlap one another. Thus, employees find it difficult to conclusively show that new duties are not encompassed in the JOB SPECIFICATION for the employee's current title.
3. JOB DESCRIPTIONS written by the colleges and universities for professional staff positions vary greatly in completeness and accuracy and are hard to match with a particular JOB SPECIFICATION.
4. Even when the employee is successful in showing that the job has changed markedly, the college or university has the option of settling the matter of reclassification by removing duties that do not conform to the JOB SPECIFICATION for the employee's current title; i.e., the college or university does not have to grant any upward reclassification.

Reclassification---Suggested Procedures

Who may apply?

The employee - - with or without the support of the supervisor. The supervisor may also initiate the process.

How do you apply?

1. Speak to your supervisor about the possibility. Ask your supervisor to give the appropriate form — if there is one — or get directions for writing up your job description.
2. Gather current and past job descriptions for reference. Also obtain a copy of the old DHE job specification for the title which you deem most appropriate or which your supervisor suggests might fit your job because of the changes that have occurred in it. If there is a form, fill out the employee portion. Some colleges/universities are still using the old CS-44 form from the Department of Personnel. You should write your duties on it giving most important first and specifying the percent of time for each of the duties or examples of work.

In writing up your duties, follow the suggestions in the Union's primer on job description writing. The job specifications can serve as a guideline or format. Try to write the duties in such a way that they seem to conform to the examples of work in the DHE job specification.

3. Turn in your new job description to your supervisor. Ask him/her if he/she wants supporting materials such as handbooks, pamphlets, articles, or other work products you have produced.

The supervisor should comment and send the materials to the next level of review. Unless your local has negotiated timetables for the internal processing of reclassifications, you may have to "nag" to get a timely response. Some colleges/universities have written procedures for internal processing which were created by management. Be sure you have a copy of these procedures.

4. The overall processing of reclassifications is now governed by College/university procedures. Obtain a copy of these procedures. These procedures are probably similar to ones in this folder.
5. Contract provisions affecting reclassification and your title may be found in Article XVI of the State-Union Agreement. Specifically, check Sections D., E., and G.
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Support for the professional staff member's request or reclassification by the supervisor has always been important because approval by the ultimate authority — Department of Civil Service under the old system and the College under the new — is much more likely.

The reclassification process has always been a lengthy one. As much as a year or two often elapsed between request and final approval or denial. Locally negotiated timetables can alleviate this problem. Undue delays should be brought to the attention of the union. Failure of the College/university to follow negotiated procedures and timetables may be grieved.

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MODEL COVER LETTER

Director
Office of Human Resources

March 11, 2005

Dear Director of Human Resources:

I am writing to request a reclassification from my PSS III title a Professional Services Specialist II (Range 24). At present, I report to Ms. L.T. Executive Director of the Marketing and Public Relations Office. I have reported to Ms. T since my employment at the University began in 1997. She is intimately familiar with my work and supports my application for reclassification to a PSS II title.

In May 2004, I earned my Master's degree in art from the University. Because I majored in art, my knowledge of design has grown exponentially. In addition, over the years my position in desktop publishing has greatly evolved. Today at the University, desktop publishing has retooled the profession by vastly expanding the role and capabilities of the publications designer. Desktop technology has increased productivity and enhanced many functions—especially in the elements of design. During this dynamic period, I, as a designer, have learned to implement sophisticated computerization skills by not only becoming more proficient in designing page layouts, but also by increasing my knowledge of and ability to use both software and hardware that includes illustration, image processing, and Web design in two platforms, Mac and PC.

For these reasons, I feel that my present position warrants a reclassification to the higher AFT title of PSS II. In addition, when the reclassification takes effect, I respectfully request that my new rate of compensation be effective retroactively to May 2004, which is when I earned my M.A. from the University. The rationale for this request is that I have been performing the duties and responsibilities of the higher title for at least the past few years and since earning my degree, I have the requisite education for the title.

To illustrate how my duties have increasingly evolved over the past few years, please note the following differences between the position's original requirements and my new multitasking skills in the documents attached herein. If you have any questions regarding the enclosed materials, please call me at 555-5555 or e-mail me at username@theuniversity.edu Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Employee PSSIII

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