**Introduction**

Western HR is providing the following information on the classified staff classification and compensation process. A number of questions have arisen regarding this process and we hope that the following information provides some clarity for both employees and supervisors.

Decisions regarding an employee’s classification are made at time of recruitment, when a supervisor submits a position for review or when an employee submits their position for review. Information and guidance from State HR is assisting us to ensure that our interpretation of the classification specifications is accurate and reflective of the State’s intent.

If you have questions that are not addressed here, please contact Aly McEwen at 360-650-2513 or aly.mcewen@wwu.edu. We will be adding this document to our updated website shortly.

**Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Position Allocation Process**

**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

Q: What prompts HR to conduct a position review?

A: A position review is initiated in one of three ways:

1. A recruitment when the position is new and/or vacant;
2. When an employee submits a position review request; and
3. When a supervisor/department manager submits a position review request (often as a result of a reassignment of duties or a reorganization of the unit).

Q: Does Western HR have flexibility to change the position review process?

A: The policies and procedures regarding the position allocation and review process are dictated by State HR and Western HR must maintain alignment with the State. As the State provides new/updated guidance and clarification of its classification system, whether through a salary survey, Director’s Reviews or other methods, Western HR has a duty to adjust its allocation and classification process to maintain the alignment with the State. When a position comes to HR for review and it is determined that the current classification is no longer the appropriate classification, HR will re-allocate the position to the correct classification to align with the State.
Q: How does HR determine a position’s classification?

A: Western HR follows the State’s allocation process. For an employee-requested review, HR reviews the employee’s Position Review Request (Employee & Supervisor portions), position description, org chart, notes from interviews with the employee and their supervisor and any supplemental materials provided to HR.

For a supervisor-requested review, HR reviews the employee’s position description and org chart, notes from discussions with the supervisor and the employee and any supplemental materials provided to HR.

HR then determines the relevant class specifications and the appropriate allocation:

(1) HR reviews the category concept (if one exists) for a class series. This is often referred to as a “class series concept” in a specification. It is found in the specification for the first level of a class series. Many of the class series concepts utilize words that are specifically defined by State HR in its Glossary of Classification Terms. The State’s intent behind the class series concepts are also further described in State Director’s Reviews.

If the position does not fit into the class series concept, the class series is not the “best fit” (the State defines a “best fit” classification as the classification that fits 51% of a position’s duties and responsibilities) for the position and HR reviews additional class series concepts until the “best fit” class series is identified. Once the “best fit” class series is identified, HR moves to Step 2.

(2) HR reviews the definition or basic function of the various specifications of a class series to determine which specification “best fits” with the position. Again, the Glossary of Classification Terms can be useful to determine if any of State HR’s words in the definition have a specific or intended meaning.

If none of the class definitions fit, HR will look back to the class series concept and may review additional class series concepts to determine if there is a better class series fit for the position.

(3) Once HR finds the “best fit” definition, HR reviews the distinguishing characteristics, again utilizing the Glossary of Classification Terms. If the distinguishing characteristics do not fit the position, HR may review additional specifications within the class or may review additional class series concepts.
(4) HR reviews the “Typical Work” of the specification. The “typical work” is not allocating criteria, but can be helpful to provide support for the duties typically performed at each level of the class series.

(5) In many cases, HR also reviews relevant Director’s Reviews, Personnel Resources Board decisions and additional guidance available on State HR’s website.

(6) Pursuant to State HR’s instruction, Western HR does not consider:
- Volume of work
- Performance of work
- Desired salary
- Comparisons of other employees’ positions (except in terms of determining level of authority of incumbent’s position, supervisory/lead responsibility, etc.)
- Expertise & training (unless a required qualification)
- Seniority

Once the appropriate classification is determined for the position, HR will issue a written decision. If an employee disagrees with the decision, the employee may request a Director’s Review of the decision from the Director of the Office of Human Resources within thirty (30) calendar days of being provided the results of the position review via email.

Example: A new position comes in for recruitment. The position appears to be fiscal in nature. HR discusses the position description with the department. HR reviews the Fiscal Analyst class series concept (found in the Fiscal Analyst 1 Class Specification). After review, HR determines that the class series does not fit the position. HR reviews the Fiscal Specialist class series concept for Fiscal Specialist and determines it fits the position. HR reviews the definitions for Fiscal Specialist 1 and 2 and Fiscal Specialist Supervisor and determines that the Fiscal Specialist 2 is the best fit definition for the position. HR reviews the Fiscal Specialist 2 distinguishing characteristics and determines they are applicable to the open position. In reviewing the typical work, HR determines the open position’s work is similar to the typical work performed by a Fiscal Specialist 2. HR makes its classification determination, provides a response to the department seeking the recruitment and the recruitment proceeds with this classification.

Example: A new position comes in for recruitment. The position has previously been allocated to the Secretary Supervisor classification. However, when HR reviews the class series concept for the Secretary class series, HR determines that the class series does not fit the position. Given that the majority of the position’s duties and responsibilities relate to customer service, HR reviews the Customer Service Specialist class series and determines that the position fits the class series concept. After further review of the definitions and distinguishing characteristics of the specifications within the Customer Service Specialist class series, HR determines that the Customer Service Specialist 1 classification is the best fit
for the position, even though the salary range is different than that of a Secretary Supervisor. HR provides its classification determination to the department and the recruitment proceeds at the new classification.

Example: Due to a re-structure, a supervisor submits a position review for a filled position that is currently allocated to the Office Assistant 3 classification. After reviewing the position with the supervisor and the employee, HR reviews the Office Assistant class series and determines the position no longer fits the class series. HR reviews potentially applicable class series and determines that the position best fits the Communications Consultant class series. HR reviews the class definitions and distinguishing characteristics and determines that the position best fits the Communications Consultant 3 specification. HR provides the employee and supervisor with a written report regarding the change in classification. The department submits a personnel action form with the revised position classification to complete the process. The employee has the right to appeal this decision.

Example: An employee whose position is currently classified as a Program Coordinator submits a position review because they believe they have taken on a significant amount of new duties in the past 8 months and now may be a Program Manager. HR interviews the employee and their supervisor. HR reviews the class concept series and the State’s definition of a “program” in the Glossary of Classification Terms and determines that there is a program that the position serves and that the position is best allocated to the Program Series. HR reviews the definitions for the various specifications within the Program Series and is unsure of the correct specification. HR reviews Director’s Reviews regarding the specifications in question and determines that the Program Coordinator classification remains the best fit for the position. HR reviews the Program Coordinator distinguishing characteristics and confirms that the Program Coordinator classification remains the appropriate classification. HR provides the employee with a written report regarding the review. The employee now has the right to appeal.

EMPLOYEE QUESTIONS REGARDING THE POSITION ALLOCATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Q: I don’t think my classification is right. What are my options?

A: You can submit a Position Review Request and accompanying position description to HR. Before submitting a Position Review Request, HR suggests that the employee discuss their Position Review Request and position description with their supervisor. The employee can also consult with their union representative.

Q: My position fits more than one classification. Which one is right?

Most positions perform duties that appear in more than one classification. To determine the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of the position must be considered in their entirety and then the allocation must be to the classification that is a 51% “best fit”
to the position. The State also requires that if there is both a specific and a more general classification that applies to a position, Western must utilize the more specific classification.

**Q:** [Person A] is a [classification] and my job is the same as theirs, but when I put my position in for review, HR determined that my position was not a [classification].

**A:** The allocation or misallocation of a similar position is not a determining factor in the allocation of another position. Equity between similar positions at Western, and around the state, is not a basis for allocation. While comparing positions may be useful to understand the duties performed and the level of responsibility of a position, the allocation decision must be based on the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to an individual position compared to existing classifications.

**Q:** Why am I in the same classification as [Person A] when I have so much more work to do than they do and/or my performance is so much better than theirs?

**A:** Each specification represents a range of work. A classification decision does not measure the volume of work performed nor is it an evaluation of the person’s quality of work performance. Whether or not someone else is properly allocated is also not a determining factor in the review and classification of your position.

**Q:** What is the relevant time period HR is looking at when reviewing my position?

**A:** An employee-requested position review is based upon the work you performed during the six months prior to filing the request. A supervisor-requested position review is generally prospective, though it can be retrospective as well.

**Q:** Can I contact HR before I submit my Position Review Request to find out what my classification would be if I submitted my position for review?

**A:** You can always contact HR to discuss the position review process and your current position. However, HR does not issue “advisory opinions” for employee-requested position reviews, so HR would be unable to make an allocation determination based solely upon those discussions. The employee also can discuss their Position Review Request with their supervisor and union representative prior to submission.

**Q:** What are the ways that I can assist HR with the position review process to ensure that HR understands my position?

**A:** The position description is the most important document in the position review process. An employee can greatly assist HR by ensuring that the position description includes all of their duties and responsibilities and accurately reflects the job that they are currently performing. The other important assistance an employee can provide is during the employee interview. The interview is the time that the
employee has to bring to HR’s attention any special circumstances, critical duties or other key information regarding their position.

Q: When I submit a position review, what outcome can I expect?

A: The allocation process can result in an upward or downward classification or may result in no change to your classification. HR encourages all employees to review their union’s collective bargaining agreement for information regarding the allocation process (Article 29.4 – PSE; Article 42.3-42.4 –WFSE).

Q: I submitted my Position Review Request… now what?

A: HR will contact you to obtain an updated position description for your position and HR will also contact your supervisor to obtain the Supervisor Portion-Position Review Request Form. After that, HR will contact you to set up a meeting to discuss your position review request. The focus of this meeting is to discuss the intent and purpose of your position as well as the information you provided in your position review request. You are welcome to bring your union representative to the meeting. HR will also meet with your supervisor. After these meetings, HR will conduct a thorough analysis of your position and make a classification determination and issue a written position review. The process is typically completed within 60 days of submission of your position review request.

Q: Once I submit a position review, can I withdraw it?

A: You can withdraw a position review request until the final determination is made by HR. The withdraw request must be submitted in writing.

Q: If my classification changes, will my job title change?

A: Classified employees often have two job titles at Western—their classification (i.e. Program Support Supervisor) and their working title (i.e. Robots Program Manager). While an employee’s classification is determined by the State’s position allocation process, an employee’s working title is determined by their supervisor or their department. After a change in classification through a position review, the classification of the position will change but the working title may remain the same.

Q: My position was allocated to a classification at a higher salary range. How do I receive the higher salary?

A: At the bottom of the Position Review will be a “Reallocation Information” section that provides you with the information regarding your new classification, class code and salary range. Your new salary is calculated in accordance with your union’s collective bargaining agreement. Your increment date and the effective date of the position review are also included.

Sometimes, as a result of a reallocation, you will be moving bargaining units. This information will be provided to you in this section, if applicable, and your old and new union representatives will be copied on the email notifying you of the allocation decision.
To effect the change in salary and classification, your department head must submit a Personnel Action e-sign form through the usual signatures. Your Position Review must be attached to the PA to ensure proper processing.

Q: My position was allocated to a classification at a lower salary range. What happens now?

The next steps will be governed by your union’s collective bargaining agreement.

WFSE: Reallocation to a lower salary range maximum is governed by Article 42.4(c). You will be paid an amount equal to your current salary provided it is within the salary range of the new position. If your current salary exceeds the maximum of amount of the new salary range, you will be compensated at the salary you were receiving prior to the reallocation until such time as you vacate your position or your salary falls within the new salary range.

PSE: Reallocation to a lower salary range maximum is governed by Article 29.4(e). If the lower classification has a greater than five percent (5%) pay differential, you may exercise full options under Article 32, Reduction in Force/Layoff.

SUPERVISOR QUESTIONS REGARDING THE POSITION ALLOCATION PROCESS

Q: I have assigned additional duties to my employee and now I am not certain that their current classification is still accurate. What should I do?

A: As a supervisor, you can submit an employer-requested position review to HR to have HR review the position and issue an allocation determination. Please contact the Classification/Compensation Manager to discuss your employee’s position prior to submitting any review request.

Q: What do I need to submit if I want HR to conduct an employer-requested position review?

A: To conduct an employer-requested review, HR will need you to submit an updated position description for the employee and an organizational chart.

Q: What is my role in the position allocation process?

A: In a supervisor-requested review, once you submit the necessary documentation and HR has met with you regarding the position, HR completes the analysis and makes a classification determination for the position. In an employee-requested review, you need to submit the Supervisor Portion – Employee-Requested Position Review Request Form. HR will then contact you to speak about the employee’s request and the position. After that, HR completes the analysis and makes a classification determination for the position.

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Q: My department supports the employee’s employee-requested position review request. What can I do to advocate for my employee?

A: The three most important things that you can do to assist in the employee-requested review process are to ensure that HR has an updated, accurate and complete position description for the position; to thoroughly fill out the Supervisor Portion-Employee-Requested Position Review Request Form with as much information regarding the position as possible; and to provide HR with any additional, relevant information during your interview with HR.

Q: How will HR notify me of the position review decision?

A: HR notifies the employee, supervisor (and often second and third-line supervisors), the employee’s union and the division’s budgetary authority of its allocation determination by issuing its decision via email to the employee with a copy to the other parties.

Q: My employee is appealing HR’s allocation determination. What is my role in the Director’s Review process?

A: HR will take care of the exchange of exhibits for the Director’s Review and then will be in contact with you to discuss the review process. Generally, the supervisor takes an active role in the review process by attending the telephone conference/hearing held by the Director’s designee in Olympia.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE APPEAL PROCESS

Q: I reviewed my Position Review from HR and I don’t think the classification determination is right. What are my options now?

A: You may request a Director’s Review of the results of the position review to the Director of the Office of Human Resources within thirty (30) calendar days of being provided the results of the position review via email. HR encourages employees to discuss their appeal with their union representative well in advance of the thirty (30) day deadline, as your union representative can be a great resource throughout the appeal process.

The Director’s Review is the first step in the appeal process and your request for review must be received (not postmarked) in the Director’s Review Office within 30 days of service of the position review results or reallocation notice. You may file in person, by mail, or by fax (but not by email) to the following address: Office of the State HR Director, Director’s Review Program, Insurance Building, 302 Sid Snyder Ave SW, PO Box 40911, Olympia, Washington 98504-0911/ Fax: 360-586-4694.

After the Director’s Review office receives the request for review, the office reviews the request for timeliness and asks for any clarification, if needed. The office sends an acknowledgement letter to both parties and sets specific dates for exchanging exhibits.
Western HR then sends copies of the documents (exhibits) considered during its allocation review to the Director’s Review office and to you via email. You review the exhibits and may submit additional exhibits to the Director’s Review office and Western HR via email. The Director’s Review office will create an exhibit list identifying all documents in the Director’s review file and will provide the list to both parties at the time of scheduling.

**It is important to redact confidential and/or protected information from any materials shared with your union and State HR. This includes information protected by FERPA and HIPPA.**

The Director’s designee or investigator then conducts the review through written documentation, a telephone conference or an in-person conference. Subsequently, the Director issues a determination. Either party may appeal to the Personnel Resources Board.