

Classification Overview

Frequently Asked Questions



Q. What is classification?

- A. Classification is the process of comparing individual Position Descriptions (PD) to generic Classification Specifications (class specs) and assigning a best fit for that particular job. The outcome of this matching process yields a classification decision.

A class spec is intended to match the general character of a position. It may not capture every responsibility indicated in a PD, and similarly, a position performing only a portion of the duties listed in a class spec is not necessarily qualified for placement into that class spec. Rather, the position is looked at in its entirety and placed within a classification that offers the greatest match and overall best fit.

A fundamental characteristic of the classification method of job evaluation is that some individual jobs represent a "strong" example of the classification, while others are weaker, or marginal, in their placement, but are still an appropriate fit within that classification.

Q. What is a Position Description?

- A. Position Description's (PD's) are unique to every employee of the City, and describe the important features of the work you do. The essential elements recorded on a PD include: job characteristics such as tasks or duties performed; decisions made and accountabilities that are expected; supervisory and other responsibilities; and the minimum level of training, certification and experience specific to a role. The development and maintenance of PD's are typically a collaborative effort between you and your supervisor.

Q. What is a Classification Specification?

- A. Classification specifications define general levels of duties and responsibilities, and help to establish a framework for the many kinds of work we do at the City of Edmonton. They outline common characteristics typical to each class, and are often integrated into a class "series". These series establish a hierarchical grouping, reflecting factors such as complexity of function, years of experience required, or responsibility for supervision of subordinates.

Q. Why are Position Descriptions and Classification Specifications important?

- A. Properly defining a position and its classification has many significant impacts, such as:
- **Recruitment & Selection:** properly describing the position to candidates, and ensuring appropriate considerations and qualifications are used in the screening process.
 - **Orientation:** understanding how one position relates to others in the organization and how each individual position contributes to the mission goals and objectives of the organization.
 - **Development:** identifying the responsibilities of the position and where performance improvements could be made. Also assists in understanding the steps in career progression.
 - **Compensation:** developing a consistent salary structure, based on relative level of duties, responsibility and qualifications of each position in the organization.

Q. What is considered as part of the classification decision?

- A. It is important to distinguish that the classification process is meant to look objectively at the duties and responsibilities being carried out by the position, and is not an evaluation of the employee. The key factors of the position that are considered include:
- Level of Complexity: Skills/Experience Required, Status of Work When Presented to the Employee, Guidelines provided, Problem Solving required, Originality, Diversity
 - Supervision and Administrative Responsibility: Nature of Functions Supervised, Size of Organization, Nature of the Supervisory Function
 - Other Level Determinants: Independence of Action/Decision Making, Supervision Received, Contacts

Q. What is not considered as part of the classification decision?

- A. Classification is not an evaluation of the employee or his/her performance. As such, classification does not consider factors such as:
- Incumbent in the position, length of service, performance, etc: Exceptional performance, or performance concerns, can be documented and handled through the performance management and performance appraisal systems.
 - Volume of work performed: Higher volume of the same work does not increase the complexity of decision making required by the position.
 - Confidentiality and accuracy requirements: Effective completion of these requirements are considered to be *performance* expectations.
 - Temporary duties assumed: Temporary duties are not a permanent aspect of the position; therefore, temporary duties are not evaluated in the classification process. An employee may assume additional duties at the *same* level which have not been formally assigned and would not be required on an ongoing basis. If duties at a *higher* level are assumed on a temporary basis, this is addressed through the application of Acting Pay according to the pertinent Collective Agreement or Management Administrative Guidelines.
 - Market/Recruitment and other pay issues: A review of the rates of wages for a classification is a pay related issue and is *NOT* addressed through the classification process.
 - Technology: Technological changes/advances are inevitable. Although new technology is implemented, existing position purposes and related job duties remain unchanged.
 - Incumbent qualifications: The classification process assesses the level of duties performed and the minimum level of education needed to perform those duties. The purpose of the classification process is to evaluate the job, not the person doing it.
 - Classifications applied to other positions: As with any large-scale classification system, the City acknowledges that some positions may be inappropriately classified. No classification system is perfect. Organizational change can often result in "over-classified" positions. For these reasons, the City does not classify positions based on "comparators" or other positions, which may be misallocated within their current class.

Q. When is a reclassification request appropriate?

- A. Reclassification is appropriate when significant changes are permanently made to the job duties of a position. The result of these changes requires a re-evaluation of a current up-to-date Position Description to decide if the current classification is still the best fit for that job. Reclassification can result in moving a job to a higher or lower range in the hierarchy of classifications. It may also be determined that the current classification is still the best fit, or a different classification within the same pay grade is a better fit.

The addition or deletion of the following is considered to be a significant change and *MAY* result in a change (re-classification) to the classification level of the position:

- **Supervision:** The addition or deletion of supervisory duties (*Please note, supervision does not include showing others how to perform tasks to complete their work. This is viewed a mentoring skill that all employees are expected to perform on the job*).
- **Scope:** The impact the position has on the organization. For example, is the impact to the work unit, the Department, or the entire organization?
- **Decision Making and Accountability:** The increase or decrease in the level of authority, decision making and responsibility for outcomes.
- **Breadth:** The increase or decrease in variety and/or diversity of tasks. For example, addition or deletion of tasks/duties that are unrelated to existing duties and may require a different skill set.

Q. What is the difference between a Reclassification Request and a Regrade?

- A.** A Reclassification Request is a request for a review of your individual position and the classification that has been assigned to it. Reclassifications occur only when there have been significant changes to the duties or responsibilities of a position that are not characteristic of the current classification (please see above: "*What is (not) considered as part of the classification decision*"). The end result of a Reclassification Request is a decision on the most appropriate classification that offers the greatest match and overall best fit for your position.

Reclassification can result in moving a job to a higher or lower range in the hierarchy of classifications. It may also be determined that the current classification is still the best fit, or a different classification within the same pay grade is a better fit. For more information on the job evaluation process, see article 22 of the Collective Agreement.

A Regrade on the other hand, does not seek to change the classification of a position, but rather the pay that is associated with the classification. A Regrade would therefore affect the pay of all employees who belong to that classification. Regrades are generally only considered during collective bargaining and requests must be justified with supporting data indicating the specific need and why a change is necessary.