



CLASSIFICATION STUDY FAQ

1) What is a classification plan?

A classification plan is a systematic process for grouping jobs into common classifications based on similarities in duties, responsibilities, and requirements. The County's Civil Service Rules state that the emphasis of the class plan will be on broader classifications wherever possible. In other words, when positions have sufficiently similar duties, responsibilities, and requirements they are appropriately classified in one job class.

2) Why are studies conducted?

The most common reasons studies are conducted are:

- Gradual changes in duties performed
- Changes in organizational relationships and responsibilities
- Recruitment/retention problems
- Changes in requirements as mandated

3) What happens during a study?

A classification study requires a significant amount of research and analysis and has a good deal of "process" to follow. The methodology typically includes:

- Reviewing all pertinent documentation and information, with one of the most critical pieces of information being a Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ) completed by an incumbent(s) and reviewed by a supervisor.
- Conducting interviews and/or desk audits with the incumbent(s) and in some cases gathering information from other employees who perform similar work
- Communicating with supervisors/manager to confirm and clarify information
- If applicable, conducting research of comparable agency classes or organizational structure
- Researching "industry" information
- Studying classifications
- Analyzing the data
- Developing and/or updating classification specifications
- Developing and then presenting a preliminary report and recommendations to interested parties
- Communications with interested parties on the preliminary report and recommendations
- Developing and presenting the final report to the interested parties, then to the Civil Service Commission
- If applicable, presenting a report and the recommendation to the Board of Supervisors

The job evaluation process involves thoroughly researching, analyzing, determining, and documenting the responsibilities, duties, skills, knowledge and abilities related to a position. The analyst looks at various factors in determining the proper class, such as, but not limited to, decision making responsibilities; scope and complexity of work; nature and purpose of contact with others; required knowledge, skills, and abilities; supervision received and exercised; working conditions and physical effort; organizational level, size, etc. These factors are known as Classification Allocation Factors, an industry recognized principle.

After the analysis is completed a preliminary recommendation is developed. Recommendations may include reallocating a position to a different class, developing a new class, changing the existing class, or determining that the position is appropriately classified and no change is needed.

4) What types of classification studies are there?

There are three main types of classification studies:

- **Position Review:** A study of a position's duties to determine the most appropriate classification.
- **Classification Specification Update:** A study of an existing class' current duties, responsibilities, and required knowledge and abilities.
- **New Classification Request:** After approval of the business justification from the County Administrator's Office, a study of newly identified duties, responsibilities, and required knowledge and abilities to develop the appropriate classification, specification, and salary.

5) How long does it take to conduct a study?

A study may take a few weeks to several months. Some of the factors that affect the length of a study are the number of classes and positions included in the study, the amount of research necessary, the extent of the recommendations, department's shifting priorities, the length of time it takes to get information from the department and/or incumbent, the workload of the assigned analyst, and the interested parties acceptance of the recommendations.

6) Who can ask for a classification study and where do I find the forms?

Department heads, employees, or the unions may submit a study request to Human Resources. There are a few request forms depending upon the type of studying being requested. The forms can be obtained by contacting the Recruitment and Classification Division of Human Resources.

However, the requesting party must make a compelling/prima facia case in the request stating the classification issues in order for Human Resources to accept and assign the study.

7) When should a request to study a position for possible reclassification be submitted?

Requests should be submitted when there have been significant and/or major changes that appear to be ongoing in an incumbent's duties and responsibilities, particularly in the level of complexity, decision making authority, scope of the position, and knowledge and abilities. These changes are often brought on by changes in the law or state and/or federal mandates, or evolve over time as departments grow/consolidate.

8) What factors do not justify a reclassification?

- Performance of the incumbent in the position; reclassification should not be considered a reward or means to promote
- Retention of a specific employee
- Increase in workload that is of the same nature and level of complexity (volume) – this is a workload issue, not a class issue
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by the incumbent which are not required or regularly used in the position
- Desired salary changes
- Technological changes or tools (e.g. new software) that does not substantially alter the essential functions of the job, particularly if the industry is similarly changing to the new technology
- Job stress

9) What are the factors that justify a reclassification?

The factors that may justify reclassification include:

- Change in type of work/essential functions (e.g. Secretary now doing accounting work)
- Change in lead/supervisory responsibilities
- Change in authority for making operational changes or in developing, recommending, and interpreting policies and procedures and the extent of the impact to the organization
- Addition of stronger, more complex duties/removal of duties
- Change in organizational structure or mandate that affects reporting relationships, level in the organization

These changes must be significant in a single area or overall in order to justify reclassification. For example, if in the analysis a position is found to have a new function that is not currently within the scope of the current class, and this new function is found to only be 10% of the overall duties of the position, reclassification is not likely.

10) How is the incumbent involved in the study?

The incumbent’s role is to thoroughly and accurately complete the PDQ and provide clear and concise information in an interview and/or desk audit regarding the work that is being performed in the position. The incumbent may also participate in communications and provide feedback on the preliminary report and recommendations.

Due to the nature of incumbent’s having a vested interest in the outcome of a classification study, it’s critical for incumbents to understand an important concept. A classification study is the evaluation of a position or group of positions, not a study of incumbents. An incumbent’s performance on the job is not considered in a study.

11) An employee is really smart and efficient and their manager has been giving them additional assignments. Many of these assignments aren’t listed in the job spec for their current position. Should the manager or employee ask to have this position reclassified?

Not necessarily. Most of the County’s job classifications have been written “broadly” to be able to encompass a wide variety of duties and responsibilities. To think that an employee can’t do anything outside of what’s specifically stated in a job class specification is not accurate. Employees often perform duties that are not specifically listed on the class specification, but as long as those duties are within the overall purpose, scope, and level of the class, then the duties are likely to be appropriately assigned.

Managers/supervisors are responsible for ensuring that employees work within the definition of their position. If the duties that are assigned are not appropriate, then when operationally possible, the duties should be reassigned to a more appropriate position. Only if the additional duties cannot be reassigned and are anticipated to be ongoing, should a reclassification study be requested.

The Recruitment and Classification Division can also help with additional acceptable options.

12) If Human Resources does study a position, does this mean the employee will get more money?

Not necessarily. There are several possible outcomes to a classification study. Human Resources may determine that an employee is in the correct job classification. The employee may be reclassified into a job classification which pays the same, more, or less than the current job classification. Or Human Resources may determine that a new job classification needs to be created, and they will do a salary study at that time to set the salary of the new job classification appropriately. The salary for the new job classification may be the same, more, or less than the employee's current classification.

13) Human Resources studied an employee's position, and determined it was in the correct job classification, but made some changes to the job specification. Why isn't the salary being studied at this time?

Salaries are only studied under very specific circumstances. During a classification study, the only time a salary is studied is when a new job classification is created. Human Resources may, but under very limited circumstances, re-evaluate a classification's salary if those specification updates are extremely significant to the overall scope, complexity, purpose, and knowledge and abilities of the classification.

14) An employee's position has been reclassified – what will the employee's new salary be?

When an employee is reclassified to a job classification with a higher salary range than the current job classification, it is considered a promotion. Salaries upon promotion are determined by the appropriate MOU. Generally, the employee will receive an increase to the salary step which is closest to a 5% increase from their current salary, but not less than the minimum salary step of the new classification, and not more than the highest step of the new classification.

When an employee is reclassified to a job classification with a lower salary range than the current job classification, it is treated as an involuntary demotion. Salaries upon involuntary demotion are determined by the appropriate MOU. Generally, the employee will receive the highest salary step for the new classification which does not exceed their current salary. However, whenever the effect of a reclassification is to reduce an employee's salary, the Human Resources Director may recommend that the employee continue to receive their previously authorized salary until such time as the salary range for the new classification exceeds the employee's current salary. This is defined as being "Y" rated.

When an employee is reclassified to a job classification with the same salary range as the current job classification, the employee will retain the same salary step they were at prior to the reclassification.

15) When an employee gets reclassified to a higher level position, do they automatically get promoted or do they have to apply for the job?

Civil Service Rules allow incumbents to be promoted without examination if they have been performing the duties for more than one year. This is most frequently the case. If the incumbent has not been performing the duties for more than a year, then they would need to “compete” for the position in a recruitment/examination. Typically, a County promotional recruitment is conducted and the department requests the certification of the employment list be limited to employees in that department.

16) What happens to an employee’s probationary status when they get reclassified to a different class? Does the employee have to serve a new probationary period?

An appointing authority, employee, or employee organization may request that all or any part of a probationary period be waived by the Director of Human Resources upon written request.

17) An employee has been reclassified to a different job classification. How does this affect seniority?

If the reclassification is to a higher level job class, meaning a higher salary range, the seniority in the new job class begins upon the date the promotion/reclassification is effective.

If the reclassification is to a lower level classification, meaning a lower salary range, an employee’s time in a higher (paid) job class counts toward seniority in the lower (paid) job class. The time in the higher class will be added to the time in the new class for purposes of determining seniority in a layoff situation.

18) If an employee’s position is reclassified to a different job classification, will they continue to be covered by the current MOU and/or represented by the same Union?

Not necessarily. The employee will be covered by the MOU and represented by the Union which represents the job classification into which they have been reclassified.

For additional questions and information on classification studies, please contact the Recruitment and Classification Division at 707-565-2331.