

PART 2048 - POSITION CLASSIFICATION

SUBPART A - POSITION CLASSIFICATION

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PART 2048 - POSITION CLASSIFICATION

Subpart A - Position Classification

§ 2048.1 General.

Position classification is a process for assigning the pay plan, series, grade level, and title to positions, based on their duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements. This regulation covers classification of work in the General Schedule (GS) and the Federal Wage System (FWS). This policy supplements Office of Personnel Management (OPM) classification regulations, rules, and policies, as well as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classification policies. Key OPM references include "The Classifier's Handbook," "Introduction to the Position Classification Standards," "Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families," "Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions," and "Employee Fact Sheet on Position Classification Appeals." These OPM documents are available at www.opm.gov/fedclass.

§ 2048.2 Classification Authority.

(a) Assistant Administrator for Human Resources (AAHR). All classification authority delegated to the Under Secretary, Rural Development, is redelegated to the AAHR. The AAHR may redelegate classification authority to any other qualified employee within Human Resources (HR) not expressly designated in writing in this part. These additional redelegations will be issued in writing.

(b) Human Resources, National Office (Washington DC and St. Louis). The AAHR redelegates authority to classify all serviced positions GS-15 and below to the Chief, Headquarters Personnel Services Branch, and the Chief, Field Services Branch, except for their respective positions and those specifically reserved to OPM or USDA by regulation. The AAHR also redelegates authority to classify field positions GS-13 and below to the Chief, Field Services Branch. The Chief, Headquarters Personnel Services Branch, and the Chief, Field Services Branch, have the authority to redelegate classification authority to qualified specialists within their respective branches. Limited classification authority (i.e., no higher than the full performance grade level of the HR assistant) may be redelegated to qualified HR assistants within the respective branches.

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Human Resources
Position Classification

(c) Human Resources, State Office. HR Specialists and Administrative Officers are delegated classification authority for serviced positions GS-7 and below. Limited classification authority (i.e., no higher than the full performance grade level of the HR assistant) may be redelegated to qualified HR assistants in State Offices.

(d) Delegation of Additional Classification Authority. The Chief, Field Services Branch, may redelegate authority to classify serviced positions above GS-7 to qualified specialists in a State, usually the senior HR specialist. Additional delegations may be approved for program positions GS-13 and below (with the exception of GS-0810-13) and administrative positions GS-12 and below (with the exception of the Administrative Officer and senior HR Specialist). Requests for additional classification authority must be submitted to the Field Services Branch and must document training and experience. If the candidate is new to the HR specialist position (e.g., selected from an assistant position or a position outside HR), the request must include samples of classification work. No work samples are required if the candidate is new to Rural Development, but has had training and experience in classification in a previous position.

§ 2048.3 Classification Responsibilities.

- (a) Classification Delegates. Classification delegates must:
- (1) Provide advice and assistance to supervisors and employees in drafting position descriptions (PD's) and explaining the classification process.
 - (2) Prepare and classify PD's in accordance with published OPM position classification standards.
 - (3) Ensure positions are classified and officially established before employees are assigned.
 - (4) Conduct desk audits and other position reviews to ensure PD's are accurate and positions are appropriately classified.
 - (5) Provide input to mission area officials on proposed classification standards, studies, and other classification-related matters.

§ 2048.3(a) (Con.)

(6) Implement new and revised position classification standards within stated timeframes.

(7) Ensure official classification files are established and maintained.

(b) Supervisors. Supervisors must:

(1) Make work assignments and draft PD's.

(2) Certify the accuracy of duties and responsibilities in a PD before a position is officially established.

(3) Learn how subordinate positions are classified and respond to basic inquiries from employees on classification.

(4) Assign work and ensure it is performed in accordance with duties and responsibilities on the official PD.

(5) Periodically review position descriptions for accuracy and contact the HR staff if concerns surface or changes are needed. Review the accuracy of PD's for vacant positions prior to initiating requests to fill them. Prepare draft revisions to PD's.

(6) Contact the HR staff for assistance on position classification matters.

(c) Employees. Employees must:

(1) Review and understand the duties and responsibilities in assigned PD's.

(2) Raise concerns about the accuracy of assigned PD's. (Employees may submit draft revisions for assigned PD's.)

(3) Provide information on duties and responsibilities during desk audits and other position reviews.

§ 2048.4 Position Descriptions.

(a) Responsibility for Preparation.

(1) The primary responsibility for preparing position descriptions lies with the first-line supervisor.

(2) Anyone with knowledge of the duties and responsibilities may draft a PD. This includes other supervisors, employees, and HR staffs.

(3) A PD will be final and a position officially established after the supervisory certification and classification certification are completed on the Optional Form (OF) 8, "Position Description." (Revised 08-23-06, PN 401.)

(b) Standard of Adequacy.

(1) A PD is considered adequate if it includes the major duties, responsibilities, and organizational relationships of a job. Estimated percentages of time for various duties will be shown if it is essential to the determination of series and/or grade level for a position.

(2) It is not necessary to include minor duties unless they affect the classification of the position.

(3) The PD should be written in clear, concise, and easy to understand language. The description of the duties and responsibilities, excluding the Factor Evaluation System (FES) factors, generally should not exceed two pages.

(4) The FES format must be used when the grade of the position is determined by an FES position classification standard. The FES format may be used, but is not required, when a narrative standard determines the grade of the position.

(c) Simplification and Timesaving Alternatives. Some examples are:

(1) Use of automation to prepare and store libraries of PD's.

(2) Use of the same (i.e., standard or identical additional) PD to cover multiple positions with similar requirements.

(3) Use of Statement of Differences to describe trainee and/or intervening levels below the full performance level of a position.

(4) Use of prototype PD's developed to describe a typical pattern of duties and responsibilities for common jobs.

(5) Use of amendments or pen and ink changes to document minor changes in a position's assigned duties and responsibilities.

§ 2048.4 (con.)

(d) Responsibility for Accuracy.

(1) The first line supervisor has the primary responsibility to ensure an employee's PD is accurate.

(2) Employees have the responsibility to notify their supervisors if they identify the need for changes in their PD's.

(3) Supervisors and employees are encouraged to discuss the accuracy of the PD during mid-year and annual performance reviews.

(4) Supervisors and HR staff should review the accuracy of PD's prior to initiating action to fill vacant positions.

(5) Classification delegates are encouraged to periodically review the accuracy of PD's and classification determinations. They may use a variety of methods, alone or in combination. These include desk audits, interviews, duties questionnaires, and paper reviews.

§ 2048.5 Titling Practices.

(a) Official Titles. Classification delegates must use official titles that are prescribed in OPM's Position Classification Standards. When the standards do not prescribe an official title, the classification delegate must follow current Rural Development guidance on official titles. Periodically such guidance is issued to encourage consistency in titling, particularly for similar field positions across State lines.

(b) Working Titles. Working titles may be used for positions with official titles that are prescribed in OPM standards. The classification delegate must follow current Rural Development guidance on working titles. Working titles are discouraged for positions when OPM does not prescribe the official title. In these instances, the flexibility to assign an official title should negate the need for an additional working title.

§ 2048.6 Position Classification Files.

(a) Servicing Human Resources Office. Each servicing Human Resources Office must maintain position classification files.

(1) The official files must include the original OF-8 and the PD for each active position. (Revised 08-23-06, PN 401.)

(2) The official files must also include the original evaluation statements. Classification delegates are encouraged to prepare evaluation statements for each PD to record the rationale for classification and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) status determinations. Evaluation statements must be prepared when no OPM standards have been published for a position, when there is a mixed series and/or mixed grade position, and when the basis for the final classification is not readily apparent.

(i) As with the preparation of PD's, simplification and timesaving alternatives are encouraged.

(ii) Evaluation statements should be prepared and stored electronically.

(iii) If the grade of a position is determined by using an FES standard, recording the assigned points and factor levels on the front of the OF-8 will meet the minimum requirements for an evaluation statement. There should be an expanded evaluation statement if there are any questions about the basis for final classification.

(Revised 08-23-06, PN 401.)

(b) Official Personnel Folder. A copy of the current PD must be filed on the left side of the Official Personnel Folder for each employee.

(c) Supervisor. Each supervisor must maintain a file that includes a copy of the PD for each subordinate position.

(d) Employee. Each employee must be given a copy of his/her PD.

§ 2048.7 Position Classification Appeals.

An employee dissatisfied with the classification of the position to which he/she is currently assigned may file a classification appeal. There is one level of appeal within Rural Development and that is to the AAHR.

(a) General Schedule (GS). RD Instruction 2048-A, Exhibit A, Classification Appeal Procedures, provides information on what may be appealed, when an appeal may be filed, how to file an appeal, and what to include in an appeal. This exhibit may be used to inform GS employees of their classification appeal rights.

§ 2048.7 (Con.)

(b) Federal Wage System (FWS). Although most of the information in Exhibit A applies to FWS employees, there is one significant difference. FWS employees do not have the option to file a classification appeal directly to OPM. They first must appeal to either Rural Development or the Department; however, they cannot appeal to both. Once the FWS employee has a formal appeal decision from either Rural Development or USDA, the employee may file with OPM.

Attachment: Exhibit A, Classification Appeal Procedures

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CLASSIFICATION APPEAL PROCEDURES

What May Be Appealed

Pay plan, title, series, and/or grade level of the position.

When An Appeal May Be Filed

An employee may file an appeal on the classification of his/her current position at any time. However, there are specific time limits for filing an appeal when an agency's classification action results in actual loss of grade or pay for an employee. Unless this has happened, the employee is not entitled to retroactive pay if the appeal decision supports a higher grade.

How To File An Appeal

An employee in a General Schedule (GS) position has the following options:

- (1) Written appeal, following agency procedures, to the Rural Development Assistant Administrator for Human Resources in the National Office; and/or
- (2) Written appeal, following Department procedures, to USDA, Office of Human Resources Management, Compensation and Employment Division; and/or
- (3) Written appeal directly to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

An employee receives the maximum number of reviews if the appeal is filed first with the agency, then with the Department, and lastly with OPM. If the appeal is filed directly with OPM, it is the first and final review. An employee chooses which office(s) to send his/her appeal.

What To Include In An Appeal

- (1) Employee's name, mailing address, office telephone number, office facsimile number, and electronic mail address.
- (2) Present title, series, and grade level of the employee's position.

What To Include In An Appeal (Con.)

(3) Reasons why the employee believes the position is not correctly classified. The employee is encouraged to include references to appropriate classification standards.

(4) Title, series, and grade level the employee is requesting for his/her position.

(5) Copy of the employee's official position description (PD) and either a statement affirming that it is accurate or a detailed explanation of the inaccuracies and an explanation of the employee's efforts to correct the PD.

(6) Any additional information about the employee's position that will aid in understanding it.

The employee's servicing Human Resources staff is available to provide more specific information on classification appeal procedures.

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