SOLUTIONS

Revising job class specifications

What does it mean and how does it work?

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Employee Services

What is a class specification?

For those who don't know, a class specification (frequently referred to as a class spec) is a document that specifies the critical factors that associate similar positions (jobs) for purposes of pay, recruitment, selection and training.

Each class specification includes the class title; a brief explanation of the job class; a list of duties commonly associated with the job class, the typical authority and responsibilities of someone in the job class; and the qualifications (knowledge, skills and abilities) necessary or desirable to do the job. (see §36.100 RSMo).

There are currently 1,004 class specifications in the Uniform Classification and Pay Plan. Each year the Division of Personnel revises approximately 35-40 class specifications, and submits them to the Personnel Advisory Board for approval.

This article will explain why class specifications are revised, how the revision process works, who is involved in the process and what their roles are. The information will follow the procedures established by the Code of State Regulations, the Revised Statutes of Missouri (RSMo) and the Rules of the Personnel Advisory Board. Additionally, this article will outline the steps that may be taken to expedite the revision process, along with answers to frequently asked questions about the process.

Why are class specifications revised?

Class specification revisions may be necessary:

1. Because there have been substantial changes in the duties and responsibilities assigned to the class;
2. To expand the use of the class to meet the specific needs of additional agencies;
3. To make major changes to the class specification language;
4. To broaden or narrow the experience and education qualifications of the class specification to meet current needs and/or policies;
5. Because routine maintenance reviews make apparent the need for a minor change in detail without a substantive change in concept.

The time required to complete the revision process varies depending on the extent of revision required, whether or not there is an accompanying proposal recommending a change in the established pay grade and the number of user agencies involved.

Who are involved in the revision process?

Three parties are involved in the revision and adoption of a class specification: the affected agency or agencies, the Director and staff of the Division of Personnel, and the Personnel Advisory Board. Each of these parties has a separate and important role.

The agency has the knowledge of the goals to be met and the resources available to meet programmatic objectives. The agency generally develops an initial proposal. In some cases, however, Selection Services staff in the Division of Personnel may develop a proposal to address an identified need. Throughout the process, the agency and the Division of Personnel work closely to ensure that the final proposal effectively addresses the staffing needs of each agency involved.

The Director and the staff of the Employee Services Section serve as technical and administrative resources to both the agency and the Personnel Advisory Board. Employee Services staff help to determine where a class specification appropriately fits, not only within an agency's organizational structure, but also within the classification and pay system. Employee Services staff also provide assistance in choosing language to accurately describe the level of responsibility; the knowledge, skills and abilities; and experience and education qualifications of the class specification.

In order to achieve an effectively uniform and cohesive classification and pay system, it is necessary for staff to review and balance the needs of each agency with the needs of the system as a whole. These balancing efforts often require a great deal of negotiation, communication and compromise.

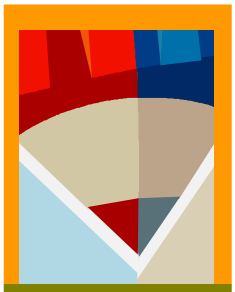
The Personnel Advisory Board serves an oversight function. Proposed class specifications are presented to the board at its monthly meeting. Once the revised class specification has been approved by the board, the revision becomes effective and a notice is sent out to each agency regarding the change to the Classification and Pay Plan.

Who initiates a class specification revision?

An agency or the Division of Personnel can initiate a revision to a class specification.

If an agency wants to initiate the revision, the agency will typically prepare a draft proposal of the revised class specification and send it with an explanation of why the revision is being requested to the Division of Personnel. Upon receipt of this information, Division of Personnel staff will review the proposed draft to determine if the revision appears to be justified based on the information provided and make any necessary changes. Agency organizational charts showing the lines of authority above and below any affected positions are reviewed along with the Position Description Forms (PDFs) for the affected positions to determine what, if any, internal impact the revision will have on the positions and their incumbents.

If the proposed revision will necessitate a pay grade revision, Division of Personnel staff assesses internal impact, determines if there will be an external impact (does the revision have an impact on other agencies) and assesses the budget impact (are funds available for full implementation). Division staff will then meet with the human resources staff of all user agencies to discuss the proposed class spec revision and if necessary, the revision to the pay grade. At this meeting additional changes may be suggested, and if agreed to by all participating parties, will be incorporated into the proposed revised spec. This process will continue until all parties reach an agreement regarding the proposed revisions.



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Once these actions have been completed, Division staff will prepare a summary of the proposal and mail it, along with the current and proposed revised class spec to the Personnel Advisory Board in order for Board members to review before their next scheduled meeting. It is customary for Division of Personnel staff involved in the revision process to attend the board meeting to answer any questions that Board members might have regarding the proposed revision. If approved by the Personnel Advisory Board, the revised class specification is implemented effective the first day of the following month.

How can "minor" revisions be made to a class specification?

At times it is necessary to make only very minor revisions to a class specification. This is provided for in §36.120.5 RSMo, which states

"After a class of positions has been approved by the (Personnel Advisory) Board, the director (of the Division of Personnel) is authorized to make such changes in the class title or in the statement of duties and qualifications for the class as the director finds necessary for current maintenance of the classification plan; provided, however, that changes which materially affect the nature and level of a class, or which involve a change in salary for the class shall be approved by the board."

In addition, to further expedite the revision of class specifications involving minor changes, the Personnel Advisory Board authorized the Director of the Division of Personnel to:

1. Replace the "Effective" or "Revised" date with a "Minor Revision" date on class specification changes involving: (A) correction of spelling, grammatical or related errors; (B) removal of references that are gender-specific or relate to physical characteristics (e.g., orally and in writing); (C) amendment of outmoded terminology (e.g., inmate vs. offender, institution vs. facility); (D) amendment of outdated agency or program names; and,

2. Replace the "Effective" or "Revised" date with a "Reviewed" date on those class specifications which have been reviewed by affected agency and appropriate Division staff and found to be current and accurate with no changes.

Class specification revision is a process used to maintain a current, effective and accurate Uniform Classification and Pay Plan.

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