Understanding Classification & Compensation

Introduction
Title 3 of the Education Code governs the classification of positions in a Merit System District. This law establishes the role of the Personnel Commission to classify all classified positions and maintain a classification plan for all positions in the classified service on the basis of “like pay for like service.” The Personnel Commission at Santa Monica College consists of five members who appoint the Director of Classified Personnel and employ Commission staff to fulfill this responsibility.

This document has been prepared by Commission staff to provide a general overview of classification & compensation rules, principles and practices as pertaining to the Santa Monica College Classified Service.

What is classification?
Classification includes but is not limited to allocating all positions to appropriate classes, arranging classes into occupational hierarchies or job class families, determining relationships between classes within the occupational hierarchies and overall internal alignment, and preparing class specifications.

A class specification or job description is developed by Commission staff and describes job duties and requirements for a group of positions that are sufficiently similar in title, salary range, and qualification requirements. This core job document includes the official class title, a statement of the concept of a class, distinguishing characteristics, range of supervision received and exercised, examples of duties to be performed, critical knowledge, skills and abilities, minimum qualifications, work environment, and other pertinent information about the class. All class descriptions are available online at www.smc.edu/jobs.

“The position duties shall be prescribed by the board and qualification requirements for the position class shall be prepared and approved by the commission...”
California Education Code 88095

Positions at the District are classified on the basis of duties and responsibilities assigned by the Board of Trustees and the qualifications required to do the job. A classification is deemed appropriate when it describes 80% of the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position.

A classification plan is a systematic process for grouping jobs into common classifications based on similarities in duties, responsibilities, and requirements. Per PC Rule 3.2.3C, the Personnel Commission is responsible for maintaining a classification plan for all positions in the classified service organized by class series, group, and job family. The list of classes contains designation of the salary rate or range applicable to each class.
Class Studies

Most commonly, class studies are performed to account for gradual changes in duties, changes in organizational structure or goals, recruitment and retention challenges, changes in mandated requirements, and other reasons which substantially alter a significant portion of the job duties and responsibilities.

There are several types of classification studies, but the most commonly conducted studies at SMC are:

- New classification requests
- Class description revision
- Position review or reclassification
- Reorganization
- Classification system maintenance
  (initiated by the PC)

Conducting Class Studies

Class studies of existing positions can be requested in writing to the Director of Classified Personnel. Administrators, incumbents, and/or employee organizations may initiate this request. Typically, the first step is to complete a Position Description Questionnaire (PDQ). PDQs are reviewed and signed by the appropriate supervisors; however in the event that an employee and the supervisor disagree with its contents, the employee may submit the PDQ directly to Commission staff, who will review it with the supervisor.

Once the Commission staff receives all completed PDQs, all pertinent information related to the classification is reviewed. Interviews with incumbents and supervisors may be conducted to obtain more details. In addition, position content and scope are evaluated in relation to comparable positions at SMC and available external comparable agencies. After the job analysis phase, a salary study may be initiated to maintain external competitiveness and internal equity.

Common job factors assessed when studying a position or classification

- **Scope of responsibility**: Purpose of the work
- **Knowledge required for the position**: Nature of knowledge, skills and competencies required and how such knowledge is used.
- **Level of complexity**: Nature of the assignment and difficulty level and originality involved
- **Degree of decision-making authority**: Supervisory controls and level of independent judgment needed
- **Nature & purpose of contacts**: People, conditions/setting, and reasons under which contacts are made
- **Consequence of error**: Impact of work product or services

Once the analysis phase is complete, the preliminary findings and recommendations are typically reviewed with incumbents, administrators, and applicable bargaining unit prior to formal action by the Personnel Commission. Personnel Commission meetings are open to the public and are held on the third Wednesday of every month in the SMC Board Room. Agendas and minutes are posted on the Personnel Commission website at www.smc.edu/jobs.

If the Personnel Commission approves the recommendations, then the recommendations are presented to the Board of Trustees for action.
Factors Not Considered
Factors which cannot be considered in determining the work level of a position include volume of work, quality of work, efficiency of performance, and incumbent’s qualifications, tenure or pay. In addition, automation may increase productivity, but typically the basic work processes performed remain substantially unchanged.

Reclassification
Requests for reclassification of an existing position must be submitted in writing to the Director of Classified Personnel. An administrator, the incumbent, or the collective bargaining unit representing employees in positions in the subject classification may initiate a request. A completed PDQ showing the new duties and responsibilities must accompany the request.

Requests for reclassification should be submitted when gradual accretion of duties occurs over two or more years of regular service, and the change impacts a substantial portion of the duties and responsibilities of the incumbent.

There are several possible outcomes to a reclassification study. Commission staff may determine that:

- The employee is in the correct job classification.
- The employee should be reclassified into a job classification which pays the same, more, or less than the current job classification.
- A new job classification needs to be created, and a salary study conducted 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.

At least two years must elapse before another request for reclassification can be initiated for the same position. Please contact the Commission office for more details about the reclassification process.

Working Out of Class
Requests for approval for an employee to be working out of class must be submitted to the Director of Classified Personnel. Per PC Rule 3.2.10, an employee is working out of class if:

- The employee has been assigned to perform work that is beyond that indicated in the definition of the class to which his or her position is currently assigned.
- The assignment is at least a full work week within a fifteen calendar day period, or equivalent working days within a fifteen day calendar period.
- The employee must have been assigned duties which are at a higher range for a substantial part of his or her assignment.

The employee’s supervisor or the employee must notify the Director of Classified Personnel.
in writing, no later than forty-five (45) working
days after the start of the assignment. Any
request submitted after this time period will be
considered from the date of receipt. Please
contact the Commission office for more details.

Compensation Philosophy
The Personnel Commission aims to promote
equity within the District and equity in the
marketplace when recommending salary
allocation. We take into account fair
compensation for employees, competitive
compensation to attract applicants, budget,
organizational projections, bargaining unit
agreements, cost of living, and funding
resources.

Questions?
Commission staff is available to answer any
questions or concerns you may have and to
guide you through the classification &
compensation process. Please call or email us at
personnel_commission@smc.edu.

Sources:
California Education Code – www.leginfo.ca.gov
Santa Monica College Personnel Commission Rules –
www.smc.edu/jobs
– www.opm.gov

“The commission shall recommend to the
governing board salary schedules for the
classified service. The governing board may
approve, amend, or reject these
recommendations... No changes shall
operate to disturb the relationship which
compensation schedules bear to one
another, as the relationship has been
established in the classification made by the
commission.”
California Education 88087