



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

STATE HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION | DIRECTOR'S REVIEW PROGRAM
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April 16, 2015

TO: Melany Peterson

FROM: Holly Platz, SPHR
Director's Review Investigator

SUBJECT: Melany Peterson v. Central Washington University (CWU)
Allocation Review Request ALLO-15-002

The Director's review of CWU's allocation determination of your position has been completed. The review was based on written documentation provided by you and by CWU. A list of the documents reviewed is attached. In addition, I considered the guidance provided in Personnel Resources Board appeal decisions and the State Human Resources Glossary of Classification Terms.

As the Director's Review Investigator, I carefully considered all of the documentation submitted by you and by CWU in this matter. Based on my review and analysis of your assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude your position is properly allocated to the Human Resource Consultant 1 classification.

Background

On October 22, 2014, you submitted a Position Review Request (PRR) (Exhibit B-2) to CWU's HR office asking for reallocation of your Human Resource Consultant Assistant 2 position. By memorandum dated December 15, 2014, Lisa Conn, Human Resource Consultant, determined that your position should be reallocated to the Human Resource Consultant 1 (HRC1) classification. (Exhibits A-2 and B-1).

On January 12, 2015, the Office of Financial Management State Human Resources Division received your request for a Director's review of CWU's allocation determination (Exhibit A-1). In your review request, you ask that your position be reallocated to the Human Resource Consultant 2 (HRC2) classification.

Your position is located in CWU's Human Resources Office (HR) where you perform duties as the Benefits Representative. You report to Traci Klein, Benefits Administrator, who reports to CWU's Chief Human Resources Officer. You are not assigned ongoing lead or supervisory responsibilities but you do provide training to HR Interns on certain aspects of your work such as the implementation of the tobacco/spousal surcharge and data entry processes. Your duties and responsibilities require you to have contact with employees, retirees, family members and outside organizations such as the Washington State Health Care Authority, the Public

Employees Benefits Board, the Department of Retirement Systems, insurance, medical and dental providers and others. In the supervisor's portion of the PRR (Exhibit B-3), Ms. Klein acknowledges that you have a large workload which requires you to work independently, to perform a large amount of data entry and to spend a large percentage of time with customers. Ms. Klein also acknowledges that you provide excellent customer service and that you always meet deadlines.

Summary of Ms. Peterson's Argument

You argue that you are an experienced professional and that working under general direction, you independently provide benefit related human resource services. You explain that since your supervisor has taken on additional responsibilities, she has entrusted you to work with increasing independence and does not typically prioritize your work or review your work in progress. You contend your supervisor reviews your work products and decisions to assure that the final results are effective and within the rules. You explain that you are required to understand and work in accordance with many rules, policies and objectives and that you must be cognizant of the ever changing rules and regulations of the insurance industry. You argue that you exercise discretion and independent judgment; deal with complex issues; plan, organize and prioritize work; and develop strategies to resolve problems. You contend that you deal with a wide variety of customers and that you must know, understand and interpret a wide variety of rules, regulations, policies and procedures related to insurance, retirement and employee benefits. You assert that your duties and responsibilities go beyond first-level professional duties as described at the HRC1 level. You contend that your position is better described by the definition and distinguishing characteristics of the HRC2 classification.

Summary of CWU's Reasoning

In the December 15, 2014 memorandum reallocating your position to the HRC1 class, CWU explains that you perform your duties and responsibilities "under general supervision, with regular guidance of a higher level human resource professional or manager. Ms. Klein typically reviews work in progress as well as outcomes and assists with work prioritization. [You work] independently in making decisions regarding benefits enrollment, work processes or methods which will be used during [your] daily activities. The work assignments in the benefit area are typically reoccurring, however a substantial amount of time is consulting and providing excellent customer service to new and departing staff. Assignments require analysis of a variety of policies and rules and development of strategies to resolve problems consistent with established standards." CWU asserts that the duties and responsibilities of your position and the nature, complexity and scope of your work are best described by the HRC1 classification.

Rationale for Director's Determination

The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Duties and Responsibilities

Your duties and responsibilities are described in detail in your PRR and the attached unsigned Position Description Form (PDF). Your supervisor agrees that the PRR is accurate. The first page of your PRR indicates that you work under general direction. The PRR also indicates that over the past two years you have been entrusted with increasing independence and responsibility and that your on-going work is no longer reviewed.

I have carefully reviewed your PRR and the attached unsigned PDF and find that the duties described PDF add up to 150%. CWU included an updated Position Description Form (Exhibit 6) which, although signed after your request, describes your duties at a 100% level. Both documents indicate that 50% of your time is spent on complex benefits administration. The remainder of your time is spent on benefits eligibility and enrollment, data entry, benefit premium deductions and other tasks. The PRR and the updated PDF show that your responsibility for complex benefits administration tasks has increased compared to PDF (attached to Exhibit B-1) that was in place at the time of your request for review.

Class Specifications

The following classification standards, in descending order, are the primary considerations in allocating positions:

- a) Category concept (if one exists).
- b) Definition or basic function of the class.
- c) Distinguishing characteristics of a class.
- d) Class series concept, definition/basic function, and distinguishing characteristics of other classes in the series in question.

In addition, the Glossary of Classification Terms provides guidance for interpreting the language used in the class specifications.

The Class Series Concept for the Human Resource Consultant series states:

Human resource professionals are involved in assignments that frequently crossover or merge traditional functions and specialties. Many are leading, facilitating, or coaching others regarding a wide range of organizational, leadership, and human resource issues. It is anticipated that the current trend will continue, resulting in human resource personnel continuing to assume greater responsibility in addressing organizational issues.

The Human Resource Consultant is a professional series with a Human Resource Consultant Assistant 1 and 2 as the paraprofessional levels. Positions in this series may require specialization in one or a limited number of human resource areas or may be assigned a wide variety of responsibilities.

Examples of professional responsibilities typically assigned include, but are not limited to: classification, compensation, recruitment, selection, affirmative action, diversity, staff and leadership development and training, career counseling, employee recognition and motivation, advising management on corrective and disciplinary actions, representing an organization in appeals or grievances, conducting labor negotiations, mediation or arbitration, organizational analysis or development, interpretation and application of laws, rules, policies and procedures, and other personnel services. Positions may also be assigned workplace safety or security issues, loss control analysis or prevention, program

or policy development, quality consultation, or other functions relating to human resource management in an organization.

Examples of paraprofessional or technical responsibilities typically assigned include, but are not limited to: interpreting rules and policies to direct payroll actions, explaining human resource policies, procedures, and programs to employees, managers, the public, and others; providing technical assistance to support the professional responsibilities listed above; providing guidance to others in registering or applying for human resource programs, completing requests for personnel actions, benefits, etc.; providing training or orientation in area of responsibility; maintaining confidential records and generating reports.

The Definition for the Human Resource Consultant 2 class states:

Independently performs professional level human resource assignments in one or more areas of the human resource function such as classification, compensation, benefits, recruitment and selection, affirmative action and equal employment opportunity, reasonable accommodation, training, organizational development, and/or labor relations. Consults with and provides assistance to managers, staff and the public regarding human resource issues.

The Distinguishing Characteristics for the Human Resource Consultant 2 state:

Experienced professional level. Under general direction, independently provides professional human resource services. Works under general guidance of a higher level human resource professional or manager. Supervisor typically reviews outcomes and provides advice or direction as needed. Work performed is complex, but impact of decisions is generally limited. Assignments normally involve making decisions and judgments within established precedents.

The Glossary of Classification Terms defines "general direction" as:

- Employee independently performs all assignments using knowledge of established policies and work objectives.
- Employee plans and organizes the work and assists in determining priorities and deadlines. May deviate from standard work methods, guidelines or procedures in order to meet work objectives.
- Employee exercises independent decision-making authority and discretion to decide which work methods to use, tasks to perform and procedures to follow to meet work objectives.
- Completed work is reviewed for effectiveness in producing expected results.

Based on the comments of your supervisor, at the time of your PRR you were not performing at the experienced professional level and the level of supervision you received did not meet the definition of general direction. While you worked independently, your supervisor indicates that you were continuing to learn and gain a better understanding of the various policies and laws that govern benefits and that your duties, while not new, took time to learn before they could be handled independently. In the supervisor's portion of the PRR, Ms. Klein identified the level of guidance/oversight she exercises over your position as general supervision rather than general direction. As a result, when you submitted your PRR, your position did not fit within the HRC2 classification.

The Definition for the Human Resource Consultant 1 states:

Performs first-level professional human resource assignments in one or more areas of the human resource function such as classification, compensation, benefits, recruitment and selection, affirmative action and equal employment opportunity, reasonable accommodation, training, organizational development, and/or labor relations.

The Glossary of Classification Terms defines "professional" work as:

Performs work that requires consistent application of advanced knowledge usually acquired through a college degree in a recognized field, work experience, or other specialized training. Exercises discretion and independent judgment when performing assignments. Examples include, but are not limited to, social workers, psychologists, registered nurses, economists, teachers or instructors, human resource consultants, accountants, and information system analysts.

The Distinguishing Characteristics for the Human Resource Consultant 1 state:

Under general supervision, performs first-level professional human resource assignments. Works under the regular guidance of a higher level human resource professional or manager. Supervisor typically reviews work in progress as well as outcomes and assists with work prioritization. Positions work independently in making decisions regarding work processes or methods which will be used. Assignments are typically reoccurring, of limited scope, and/or involve a portion of a project. Assignments require analysis of a variety of policies and rules and development of strategies to resolve problems consistent with established standards.

The Glossary of Classification Terms defines "general supervision" as:

- Employee performs recurring assignments without daily oversight by applying established guidelines, policies, procedures, and work methods.
- Employee prioritizes day-to-day work tasks. Supervisor provides guidance and must approve deviation from established guidelines, policies, procedures, and work methods.
- Decision-making is limited in context to the completion of work tasks. Completed work is consistent with established guidelines, policies, procedures and work methods. Supervisory guidance is provided in new or unusual situations.
- Work is periodically reviewed for compliance with guidelines, policies and procedures.

In the supervisor's section of the PRR, your supervisor indicates that you perform recurring assignments within established guidelines, that you must seek approval to deviate from normal policies, procedures and work methods, that she provides guidance in new or unusual situations and that your work is periodically reviewed to verify compliance with policies and procedures. This level of supervision is consistent with the definition of general supervision found at the HRC1 level.

While much of your work is complex, the overall majority of your work is recurring in nature such as providing professional and confidential service in delicate situations, coordinating between multiple benefits and providers, coordinating the annual open enrollment process and the faculty

enrollment process, counseling and assisting families with death benefits, and assisting customers with extended leave benefits, benefit eligibility and claim denials. You also perform recurring work such as completing enrollment tasks, performing data entry and calculating benefits and benefit adjustments. The recurring nature of the majority of your work is consistent with the HRC1 distinguishing characteristics. In addition, as described in the HRC1 distinguishing characteristics, your duties and responsibilities require you analyze a variety of rules, policies and procedures and develop strategies to resolve problems consistent with rules, policies and procedures.

Your supervisor indicates that you are beginning to exercise a higher level of independence and that you have assumed a more consultative role. However, when determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

When you submitted your request for review, the overall majority of your duties and responsibilities fit the definition and distinguishing characteristics of the HRC1 classification. Your position is properly allocated to the Human Resource Consultant 1 classification.

This decision is based on the duties and responsibilities of your position during the six months prior to October 22, 2014. WAC 357-13-065 provides that an employer's position review request procedure ". . . must allow an employee to request the employer to review his/her position at least every six months." If you feel that your duties or level of responsibility have changed since October 22, 2014, you may be able to request a review of your current duties and responsibilities in accordance with CWU's procedures.

Appeal Rights

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to the Washington personnel resources board. Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The mailing address for the Personnel Resources Board (PRB) is P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911. The PRB Office is located on the 3rd floor of the Raad Building, 128 10th Avenue SW, Olympia, Washington. The main telephone number is (360) 407-4101, and the fax number is (360) 586-4694.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

c: Katelyn Muir, CWU
 Compensation & Classification, SHR

Enclosure: List of Exhibits