

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
CLASSIFICATION SPECIFICATION

OPERATIONS PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of This Classification Specification

This classification specification is the basic authority under ER 2.04, Wis. Adm. Code, for making classification decisions relative to present and future paraprofessional positions that provide complex administrative support to one or more professional program areas. This classification specification is not intended to identify every duty that may be assigned to positions, but is intended to serve as a framework for classification decision making in this occupational area.

Classification decisions must be based on the “best fit” of the duties within the existing classification structure. The “best fit” is determined by the majority (i.e., more than 50%) of the work assigned to and performed by the position when compared to the class concepts and definition of this specification or through other methods of position analysis. Position analysis define the nature and character of the work through the use of any or all of the following: definition statements; listing of areas of specialization; representative examples of work performed; allocation patterns of representative positions; job evaluation guide charts, standards or factors; statements of inclusion and exclusion; licensure or certification requirements; and other such information necessary to facilitate the assignment of positions to the appropriate classification.

B. Inclusions

These paraprofessional positions provide complex administrative and program-related support to professional staff in a work unit of a state agency or campus.

C. Exclusions

Excluded from this classification are the following types of positions:

1. Positions that perform routine clerical support activities for the majority of time and are more appropriately classified as Clerical Assistant.
2. Positions that perform routine or complex administrative office support activities that implement existing policy and procedures for the majority of the time and are more appropriately classified as Office Associate or Office Operations Associate.
3. Positions that perform work activities in a specific administrative functional area for a majority of the time and are more properly classified by a more specific classification such as Financial Specialist, Payroll & Benefits Specialist, etc.
4. Positions that perform paraprofessional administrative duties with a broad scope providing support to a division administrator or agency head, with confidential duties and reporting relationships that are more appropriately classified as Academic Department Associate,

Academic Department Specialist, Dean Assistant, Executive Staff Secretary, Executive Staff Assistant, University Executive Staff Assistant, or University Business Specialist.

5. Positions that meet the statutory definition(s) of supervisor and/or management as defined in s. 111.81 (19), and (13), Wis. Stats., as administered and interpreted by the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission.
6. Positions performing confidential administrative duties as defined in s. 111.81(15), Wis. Stats., that are more appropriately classified as Program Assistant-Confidential and Program Assistant Advanced-Confidential.
7. Positions that perform paraprofessional administrative support for a student program or a program area unique to higher education and are more appropriately classified as University Services Program Associate.
8. Positions that perform professional duties as defined in s. 111.81(15), Wis. Stats., for the majority of time that include the full scope and accountability of a complex program area.
9. All other positions that are more appropriately identified by other classification specifications.

D. Entrance Into This Classification

Employees enter positions in this classification by competition. Note: Competition is required for first time permanent assignment of leadworker duties.

E. Terminology Used in this Classification Specification

The following definitions apply in this classification specification:

Administrative Program: A program where the paraprofessional work activities are focused on the most complex and critical administrative functions necessary for the success of any work unit. These major functions include communication (e.g., controlled correspondence), fiscal (e.g., purchasing, budgeting, accounting) human resources (e.g., payroll, benefits, personnel transactions), staff and resource services (e.g., telecommunications, space management), and technology maintenance (e.g., web pages, complex graphics and databases).

Administrative Functions: The duties performed support management and/or the professional program area and staff of an organization. Work is varied and requires some analysis before reaching a decision or making an effective recommendation. Each of the functional areas has professional staff doing professional work.

Complex: The difficulties, intricacies and complications associated with solutions. Multiple factors need to be researched and considered prior to recommendations or decisions being made.

Leadworker: An employee whose permanently assigned duties include training, assisting, guiding, instructing, assigning and reviewing the work of two or more permanent full-time equivalent classified employees in the employee's work unit as assigned and documented on the work unit's organization chart. Leadworkers do not have supervisory authority as defined under s. 111.81(19), Wis. Stats.

Usually, leadworkers will be required to lead the work of two or more employees in order to be credited with leadworker duties. Leadworkers cannot "share" the responsibility of leading the work of employees. For example, if two leadworkers lead the work of one employee each and together jointly lead the work

of one more employee, neither position will meet the definition of leadworker. In certain circumstances, leading the work of one other employee can justify leadworker status, if the employees are located in a geographically remote office or are in the field. The classification specification for that class will define the number of employees a position must lead in order to meet the definition of leadworker.

Note: Agencies use a variety of other terms to describe non-supervisory leadership positions such as project manager, project leader, team leader, project team leader, and project coordinator. These terms are not synonymous with leadworker and additional analysis is required to determine if individuals in these roles function as a leadworker. Also, the classification significance of these roles cannot be determined in the abstract and must be evaluated based on the specific class factors and definitions contained in the relevant class specification.

**Paraprofessional:** Work that is similar to professional work but does not have the breadth and depth of true professional work. A paraprofessional employee may perform duties that are a narrow, specialized subset of the professional employee's duties. A paraprofessional employee does not perform the full range of duties assigned to professional employees, or performs duties of lesser scope, impact, and complexity than duties assigned to professional employees. Paraprofessional duties tend to support the work of professional employees. A paraprofessional employee may carry out or implement plans or projects that are developed, planned, and managed by professional employees. The paraprofessional employee carries out or implements plans or projects based on extensive experience and supplemental on-the-job training rather than on formal academic education in the discipline itself. Paraprofessional work is performed in a narrow or highly specialized area of the overall occupation and requires a high degree of practical knowledge and skill. The experienced paraprofessional employee often works with considerable independence for significant periods of time. This independence, however, does not alter the nature and character of the work, which is to support a professional discipline.

**Professional:** Wisconsin statute s. 111.81(15) states, "Professional employee means: (a) Any employee in the classified service who is engaged in work: 1. predominantly intellectual and varied in character as opposed to routine mental, manual, mechanical or physical work; 2. Involving the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment in its performance; 3. Of such a character that the output produced or the result accomplished cannot be standardized in relation to a given period of time; 4. Requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction and study in an institution of higher learning or a hospital, as distinguished from a general academic education or from an apprenticeship or from training in the performance of routine mental, manual or physical processes; or (b) Any employee in the classified service who: 1. Has completed the courses of specialized intellectual instruction and study described in par. (a)(4); and 2. Is performing related work under the supervision of a professional person to qualify to become a professional employee as defined in par. (a)."

Professional work cannot be standardized or routinized and requires independent judgment and discretion. Professional work involves many gray areas that require substantial analysis and judgment to reach the appropriate conclusion. Work classified as professional requires education and training in the principles, concepts, and theories of the occupational area. These are often gained through the completion of a four-year degree in a specified curriculum at a college or university. In a limited number of circumstances, such knowledge may be gained through on-the-job experience.

Professional work requires creativity, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation. It involves applying or interpreting natural law, principles, or theory; evaluating the research of others; and assessing the need for and validity of proposed changes and improvements in procedures and methods. Professional responsibility involves the ability to reason from existing knowledge to unexplored areas; to adapt methods to circumstances that deviate from the standards; and to stay abreast of and evaluate technical subjects, analyses, and proposals.

Professional work requires a high order of analytical ability combined with a comprehensive knowledge of (1) the functions, processes, theories, and principles of the occupational area; and (2) the methods used to gather, analyze, and evaluate information.

Unit Specific Program: Paraprofessional work activities of an explicit functional area of an organization focusing on systems or projects that are designed to provide service to the public. These services are often unique to each agency/campus and its mission (e.g. social programs at the Department of Health and Family Services, highway safety programs at the Department of Transportation, educational programs at the Department of Public Instruction, etc.).

Work Unit: The position may have responsibility at a division, bureau, section, or unit level or at a department, college, or campus level within the university system.

Working Knowledge: Sufficient knowledge of the subject area, the program staff and organizational dynamics to enable the employee to successfully perform assigned duties with little direct supervision.

## II. DEFINITION

### OPERATIONS PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

Positions perform complex administrative duties in support of a professional program area or areas. Positions require considerable knowledge of the program area(s) to enable the employee to work effectively and independently in a wide range of work situations under general supervision. Positions have a significant role and responsibility to make complex and independent judgements within the scope of their responsibility as a result of delegated authority. The work is governed by a variety of complex rules and regulations such as statutory language, administrative code or rules, policies, and/or procedures that are applied and often require analysis and interpretation. Positions frequently develop complex databases to maintain program information and prepare statistical data analysis or reports. Positions may, but are not required to, perform leadworker duties, including training, assigning and reviewing the work of other permanent employees. Note: Per Chapter 332.040 (E), WI Human Resources Handbook, competition is required for first time permanent assignment of leadworker duties.

Positions in this classification meet one of two following allocations:

1) **Unit Specific Program**:

Under general supervision, positions perform a combination of complex, unit specific program duties in support of a professional program area(s) for the majority of the time. Positions relieve supervisors or program specialists of the less complex professional tasks. Decisions usually result in approval or denial of a request in the program area and may have impact across program lines. Positions serve as a liaison with other state agencies, federal government, local units of government, courts and law enforcement agencies, other states, the general public, or the private sector to obtain, provide, or exchange complex information. Positions provide support in program compliance activities; perform quality assurance reviews within the program area, identify deficiencies, and provide feedback as necessary to effectively recommend changes in the policies and procedures of the program area.

2) **Administrative Program**:

Positions assigned to this allocation function independently in order to relieve program managers from administrative processes. Most positions have delegated authority for limited decision-making in the office management functions. Others make effective recommendations to program managers with overall responsibility for the program, with only certain functions delegated to the

paraprofessional position. Positions in this allocation are either the sole responsible office management/administrative support position **or** are formally designated as leadworker by the program or management services supervisor in this office management position, if accompanied by one or more permanent administrative support positions.

Under general supervision, positions perform a combination of complex duties in support of critical administrative functions (communication, fiscal, human resources, staff and resource services, technology maintenance) for the majority of the time. Positions have the responsibility and designated role of relieving supervisory or professional staff of the burden of the *overall* administrative system and duties. Positions have clearly stated responsibility for the development/modification, monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of office management and administrative support procedures and policies. Positions in this allocation are regarded as the subject matter experts for complex office management activities and may provide recommendations to program supervisors/department chairs or have delegated authority for final approval of all procedures and policies within the work unit. Positions require a working knowledge of the program area. Positions serve as a liaison with administrative professionals within and outside of the agency/campus. Positions may perform additional duties in support of the unit-specific program similar to those performed by paraprofessionals found in the Unit-Specific Program allocation for less than a majority of the time. These positions report to a program supervisor (a professional staff person or manager) who has little direct responsibility for managing the administrative area.

### **III. QUALIFICATIONS**

The qualifications required for these positions will be determined at the time of recruitment. Such determinations will be made based on an analysis of the goals and worker activities performed, and by an identification of the education, training, work, or other life experience that would provide reasonable assurance that the knowledge and skills required upon appointment have been acquired.

### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

This classification was created effective July 24, 2005 and announced in Bulletin OSER-0071-MRS-SC as a result of Phase II of the Administrative Support Unit (ASU) Survey. This classification replaces positions formerly classified in the Program Assistant series. The classification was abolished and recreated effective October 12, 2008, and announced in Bulletin OSER-0225-MRS/SC to remove the A/B pay designations from the title as a result of ASU 2007-2009 bargaining.

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