COURSE SYLLABUS

Basic Position Classification Course

Gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities classifiers need to do their work successfully. The focus of this course is on helping participants develop competence in applying various classification standards. It also provides participants with exposure to other topics important to federal classification programs, such as writing position descriptions and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Group classes (Live Online) and onsite training are available for this course. For more information, email onsite@graduateschool.edu or visit: https://sdfm.graduateschool.edu/courses/basic-position-classification



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Course Outline

Module 1: Foundation for Federal Classification

- Explain how classification underpins federal HR (selection, pay, performance, and accountability).
- Distinguish the two GS evaluation methods (Factor Evaluation System vs. narrative “best-fit”).
- Identify GS structure components (occupational groups, series, grades, factors) and legal basis (5 U.S.C. §5104).
- Use core OPM references (Introduction to PCS, Classifier’s Handbook, Occupational Groups & Families, Digests).

Module 2: The Factor Evaluation System (FES)

- Apply FES’s nine factors, defined levels, and point values to determine GS grades.
- Use the Primary Standard, occupational standards, and grade conversion tables correctly.
- Follow six FES steps: select series, compare factors, assign points, total, and convert to grade; document results.
- Recognize “factors not considered” in classification and appropriate non-classification remedies.

Module 3: The Narrative System

- Evaluate positions by comparing duties to narrative grade-level criteria (no points) to find the “best fit.”
- Select appropriate standards and factors; interpret levels consistently across similar work.
- Document rationale that links duties to grade-level language and precedent.

Module 4: Writing Evaluation Statements

- Know when evaluation statements are required and what they must substantiate.
- Organize: references, background, series/title, grade determination (factor or narrative), and conclusion.
- Support determinations with comparisons, examples, and clear reasoning tied to standards.

Module 5: Position Descriptions (PDs)

- Define roles of management, HR, and incumbents in creating accurate, adequate PDs.
- Write FES-style PDs: major duties plus Factors 1–9; ensure consistency with organization charts and missions.

- Complete cover sheets (e.g., OF-8) and include information needed for downstream HR actions.

Module 6: Classification Guides

- Use applicable OPM functional guides and job family standards to supplement occupational standards.
- Select the correct guide (e.g., administrative, technical, professional) and apply it to the work being evaluated.
- Integrate guide criteria with PD content to ensure equity and alignment.

Module 7: General Schedule Leaders, Supervisors, and Managers

- Differentiate work leaders, team leaders, and supervisors along the management continuum.
- Apply the General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG) and the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG).
- Derive proper title/series/grade by assessing program scope, complexity, and delegated authorities.

Module 8: Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

- Determine coverage and apply exemption criteria (executive, administrative, professional, computer).
- Document FLSA determinations and align with OPM/agency guidance.
- Address common pitfalls and reconcile PD content with exemption logic.

Module 9: Guiding Principles for Federal Classification

- Reinforce Merit System Principles and avoid Prohibited Personnel Practices.
- Promote equity, consistency, and legal sufficiency in all determinations.
- Use precedent (OPM Digests/appeals) and quality control to sustain defensible decisions.