



Background

Bargaining for Classification Improvements

HEU's classification system dates back to 1987. It consists of more than 200 benchmarks and 11 occupational families - Clerical, Housekeeping, Laundry, Maintenance, Patient Care, Patient Care Technical, Stores, Trades, Transportation, Food Services and Miscellaneous.

What is a Benchmark?

A benchmark is **not** a job description. A benchmark is a number of duties - described in broad terms - that represents a level of work and responsibility. A job description is a detailed list of duties that an employer requires of a worker at a facility. Job descriptions may have different requirements depending on the needs of a particular facility.

The job description is matched to the benchmark that is closest in terms of the type of work and level of responsibility. This match establishes the pay rate.

Members can file a **Job Review Request (JRR)** if they feel changes in their job responsibilities and/or training should be reflected in their benchmark language and pay rate. If the employer does not agree with the union's request, it may go to arbitration.

There are, however, some limitations on what can be considered when a member files a JRR and it goes to arbitration. These limitations are outlined in the *Maintenance Agreement and Classification Manual* for the classification system. Below are two examples of these limitations:

1. If you are looking at a new wage rate to attach to a new benchmark, or at a revision to an old benchmark, the argument is restricted to wages that already exist in the HEU pay scale. The union cannot make comparisons with market rates or with another union who has the same or similar jobs.
2. The benchmarks recognize types of work - not volume or scope of work. Therefore, if you are doing the same job for the entire region and not just one facility, it is very hard to argue that you should be paid more, even though this change has significant implications on the level of organizational and decision-making skills required to do your job.

Since making changes using the classification system is limited, bargaining is a place where improvements are often won.

What can you take to the Bargaining Table?

1) Negotiating a New Rate:

Evidence related to changes in market rates, education and training requirements and level of responsibility can be raised at the bargaining table and a new rate established. In the 1998 agreement, a new rate was negotiated for the Payroll Supervisors, Systems Analysts and Power Engineers.

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2) Negotiating New Benchmarks:

Sometimes a new benchmark is required to address changes in duties or responsibilities. A good example is the position of "Super User", a clerical worker who is proficient in a particular software application program. "Super Users" oversee the installation of the program in their hospital or region, teach others how to use the application, and maintain and troubleshoot the program once it's up and running. In bargaining, the parties can agree to recognize these skills and develop a benchmark that describes the work and recognizes a higher-level of responsibility.

3) Strengthening the Maintenance Agreement Language:

Bargaining is the place to make changes to the classification language in the collective agreement. For example, in the *Maintenance Agreement and Classification Manual*, different kinds of supervision are described, but the definition is loose and hard to enforce.

Often in a work place, there is someone co-workers go to for direction and the employer knows they can count on to get a job done. This worker could be described as a "Lead Hand". However, when the union approaches the employer on behalf of that member, they are usually told that it's not an expectation of the job or that the worker is only following the manager's direction and it's the manager's responsibility.

This is a common complaint in clerical, patient care, dietary and many others jobs. Language could be crafted to ensure the role of the "Lead Hand" is recognized and compensated.

The issue of dual qualifications is another example. The *Maintenance Agreement* recognizes that if an employer requires two qualifications or more for a job posting, then the employee will be paid at the higher rate. However, a problem arises if the two qualifications are paid at the same rate.

We have a recent example of this. The employer now requires a Steamfitter/Plumber trades qualification that when combined could take six years to attain. Both are paid at a TD5 rate and the employee does not get compensated for having two trades because there is no language to support the stacking of qualifications. A change to the language in the *Maintenance Agreement and Classification Manual* could rectify this inequity.

4) Developing New Classification Language and Triggers

Training and education requirements are not appropriately recognized or compensated in our classification system.

Many HEU members in teaching hospitals oversee practicum students as part of their work. And while we recognize the need for practical experience, HEU members who take on this responsibility, do not get extra compensation. There are practicum placements for Medical Stenographers, Unit Coordinators, Licensed Practical Nurses, Residential Care Attendants, Trades, Maintenance, Dental, and many others. There could be language put in the collective agreement to recognize this work and provide appropriate compensation.

In addition, the educational requirements for many HEU jobs are increasing, and yet these requirements do not trigger a change in the wage rate for a particular benchmark

For example, quite recently, the training requirement for Health Records Clerks changed from a one-year certificate to a two-year diploma program, but the wage rate for Health Records Clerks remains the same. If increases in training were recognized as an automatic trigger for pay increases, then members would not have to go through the JRR to be compensated for increases in job-related educational requirements.