



Newsletter

VGH biomedical engineering technologists win new benchmarks

Wage rates reflect advances in experience requirements, says HEU

AFTER FOUR YEARS of mediated union-management discussions, an arbitrator has finally awarded new benchmarks for Biomedical Engineering Technologists, and their Supervisor category, at Vancouver General Hospital.

The new benchmarks come with a 3.25-per-cent wage increase on the previous classification's wage rates effective April 1, 2003, and some biomedes who filed job review requests will receive retroactive pay of up to \$18,200.

Arbitrator John Kinzie, in his written summary of the award, recalled that his initial decision of December 10, 1999 recognized that the two positions were not appropriately classified to any of the existing benchmarks for their class specification.

"Following publication of that award, the Employer and the Union met on a variety of occasions with a view to settling on appropriate benchmarks for these two positions and rates of pay for them," wrote Kinzie on February 9. "Success was not immediate."

However, the parties continued to pursue the matter with Kinzie's assistance as mediator and earlier this year were able to reach an agreement.

The most significant change involves the "Education, Training and Experience" qualifications. Although the old benchmarks still exist, the new ones will be applied where an employer requires years of experience in addition to a diploma from a recognized program in their field (two years for Biomed Techs and five years for Supervisors). Supervisors may also now be required to be members of the Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of British Columbia.

The education and qualification requirement for the old benchmark implies that Biomed Techs could be hired directly from the British Columbia Institute of Technology. But even though their job descriptions may require no experience, some hospitals have asked for two or more years' experience on internal and external job postings.

"What's unique about this decision is how the arbitrator addressed the employer's hiring practices," says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. "It's our hope that we'll be able to use these new benchmarks for equivalent positions throughout the facilities subsector."

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