

The New Profile-Based Classification System for Health Science Professionals

Why We Needed It, How It Was Developed, and the Resulting Benefits

Executive Summary


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On December 6, 2024, under the provincial collective agreement for the health science professionals employed by publicly funded health service employers throughout British Columbia, and collectively represented by six different unions, all health science professionals became classified and compensated under a new comprehensive “profile-based” job classification system.

This paper provides background to the development of the new profile-based classification system, the multiple phases of that development, and is essential to an understanding of how the new system works.

It took negotiators and joint union-employer committee deliberations under seven collective agreements over a period of 25 years to develop and implement this new unified system of job classification for all health science professionals covered by the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association and Health Employers Association of BC collective agreement.

From the first collective agreement for health science professionals represented by the Health Sciences Association of BC in a small number of acute care hospitals in 1971, to the conclusion of this classification redesign project in 2024, the number of health science professionals covered by the collective agreement’s classification system gradually grew from seven to approximately 70 professions. However, prior to implementation of the new system, the job classification system within the collective agreement had not fundamentally changed from the simple basic system of the 1970s that eventually ended up applying to only 16 core disciplines, even though the scope and complexity of the work of the professions covered by the collective agreement had changed significantly. As a consequence, there emerged a second even simpler classification plan for the professions in 45 occupations that had been added to the collective agreement since 1971, many of which were not even referenced in the collective agreement.



This paper explains what a job classification system is for, how jobs are classified, the relationship between job classification and rate of pay, the nature and evolving structure of job classification for health science professionals under the HSPBA/HEABC collective agreement from 1971 to 2024, the deficiencies and inequities of the classification and compensation system that grew over that period, a detailed history of the protracted collective bargaining for redesign of the system, the difficulties, barriers and disputes in reaching agreement on the main elements of a new profile-based system and the rates of pay that would apply equitably to all professions under the new system, the many disputes that could only be resolved through referral to arbitration, how the funding was secured to fully implement the new system and pay structure over a period of six years (2019-2024), the struggle to preserve the positive elements of the old system, the classification and pay rate impacts of full implementation of the new system and corresponding pay structure, and the development and content of a new classification manual and maintenance agreement for the profile-based system that is part of the collective agreement.

This paper also identifies the main elements, strengths and benefits of the new professional grouping profile-based system, describes the relationship between a position's job class level and rate of pay, and some of the main challenges that the new system presents that will need to be resolved in future rounds of collective bargaining.

The full text of the paper is available on the HSA website, www.hsabc.org, in the "Government Submissions and Policy Briefs" section.

