IT Career Ladder Development Plan

Purpose

A Career Ladder is a process designed to formally progress a staff employee to a higher level of job responsibility within his/her current position series. Since the employee and the manager work together to progressively advance to the higher level of responsibility, there is no need for a competitive posting process. Employees can advance in their career ladder through reclassification. The career ladder is basically a department-driven process, with 3 basic preconditions: 1) the department must have a genuine need for the higher level work; 2) the department has the ability to pay for the higher position; and 3) the employee meets the eligibility criteria shown below.

Participation Eligibility Criteria

An employee meets eligibility requirements for a career ladder if s/he:

- Is a regular (full or part-time) staff employee,
- Is in a position in which the department has determined the career ladder will enhance retention,
- Has been in their current position a minimum of 6 months,
- Has a performance evaluation on file from the immediate previous rating period and received a satisfactory rating or better, and
- Is not currently under adverse performance management or disciplinary action.

Types of Career Ladders Available

There are two different kinds of career ladders available to eligible staff employees, depending on circumstances:

1. **Predefined vertical career ladders:** A predefined career ladder allows employee recognition for increased skills and responsibilities of staff employees employed within an identified position classification series. Employees may advance along a classification hierarchy consisting of 2 or 3 levels, such as, "Programmer Analyst I" to "Programmer Analyst II".

2. **In-range career ladders:** In cases where a vertical career ladder is not available or appropriate to the circumstances of an employee, it may be possible, under defined circumstances, to initiate an "in-range" career ladder program that will enable staff to advance in responsibility and compensation within the range of the position series without changing position classification. "In-range" career ladders are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in discussion with Human Resources, to determine whether the progression is appropriate to specific organizational needs and in compliance with overall career ladder guidelines. The incumbent may grow into a vertical track elsewhere if the opportunity is presented. If the nature of work changes to a point no longer defined by the level of the position, a reclassification is in order.

Distinguishing Characteristics

Vertical career ladders, either predefined or in-range, are predicated on the identification of the distinguishing characteristics between the responsibilities of the position classification currently held by the employee and those of the higher level classification to which the employee aspires.

Distinguishing characteristics are those key functional responsibilities of a position classification that make it significantly different from and greater than another classification at a lower pay grade. Distinguishing characteristics may be specifically noted as such on the job template or description for the position classification. If they are not listed, then departments should use 3 to 5 essential job functions listed in the Position Description (PD) , that clearly define the difference in responsibility levels between the 2 positions. Another distinguishing characteristic may be the requirement of certification or licensure to define the difference between the two positions.

Initiating a Career Ladder

As mentioned previously, the career ladder is a department-driven process, with 3 preconditions: 1) the department must have a genuine need for the higher level work; 2) the department has the ability to pay for the higher position; and 3) the employee meets the eligibility criteria shown below. An employee is not automatically enrolled in a career ladder. It is at the discretion of each department whether or not to implement a career ladder. There are eligibility requirements for the career ladder processes, which must be met before the initiation of a program can be approved for an individual employee. These requirements are listed on the IT Career Ladder Eligibility Checklist that managers must complete before proceeding any further with the initiation process.

After the manager has completed the checklist and the employee and the manager have mutually agreed that a career ladder plan is appropriate, they will work together to complete a vertical career ladder plan. This process includes an action plan for attaining all education and experience requirements and acquiring the specific competencies that the employee will need to be successful at the higher responsibility level.

Supporting Documents Needed to Start a Career Ladder Include a:
- Completed IT Career Ladder Eligibility,
- Department organizational chart, and
- Copy of the employee's performance evaluation from the immediate previous rating period with a satisfactory rating or better.

The Career Ladder Life Cycle

The career ladder may end depending upon:
- A peak in the area in which the career ladder is assigned,
- Termination of the incumbent in the career ladder,
- Reclassification of the job,
- The time it takes to attain the qualifications, knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the higher level of responsibilities,
- The time it takes to complete all the elements of the action plan outlined on the original career ladder form completed at the commencement of the career ladder, or
- The time it takes to demonstrate a satisfactory degree of competence in the performance of the higher level responsibilities.

Pay rates within the Career Ladders
- Salary increases within the career ladders will be in accordance with the institution's salary administration policy.
- Employee pay rate increases are reviewed based on qualifications that are related to duties and skills of the new position.
- Increases are reviewed in the context of other employees in similar positions in the department (internal equity).
- Salary adjustments made as the result of a career ladder will not trigger an equity adjustment salary increase for other employees of the same grade and job title within your department.

At-Will Employment

Nothing in this document constitutes a contract for employment or that a contract is being offered. Unless otherwise specified, all employment at Texas Tech University is employment at-will.

Right to Change Policy

Texas Tech University reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend, or rescind this policy, in whole or in part, at any time without the consent of employees.