

A Guide to Job-banding for IT Systems Specialists

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For further information, contact:

Melissa J. Woods, Director
Technology Management and Planning
Office of Information and Organizational Systems
2096 Gaither Road, Suite 102
Rockville, Maryland 20850
Phone: 240-632-6980
E-mail: melissa_woods@mcpsmd.org

OVERVIEW

Job banding is an approach to career advancement that was developed in collaboration with SEIU Local 500 by a joint labor management work group. This guide is intended to assist employees and their supervisors in implementing job-banding career advancement for IT systems specialists (ITSSs). The procedures contained in this guide were developed, piloted and revised by the Job-banding Implementation Work Group prior to implementation.

Job-banding Career Advancement

Initiating the Process for Advancement: (page 3) Employees in the ITSS job family notify their supervisor of their intent to initiate the career advancement process and must complete the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form.

Measuring Readiness for Advancement: (page 5) The section on criteria for advancement outlines the performance, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to advance. Achievement of these criteria is measured as follows.

- 1. One year of experience at the current job level; 6 months, for interns (required)**
- 2. Satisfactory job performance (required)** – employees in the Peer Assistance and Review process or under special evaluation for unsatisfactory performance are not eligible to participate in job banding career advancement
- 3. Passing score on the Job Skills Assessments (required)** (page 6)
- 4. Two additional measures selected from the following list:**
 - a. Industry certification(s) related to ITSS responsibilities (page 7)
 - b. Portfolio with artifacts demonstrating achievement of needed skills (page 9)
 - c. MCPS certification that the ITSS coaching program has been completed (page 11)
 - d. Passing grade in qualified coursework related to ITSS responsibilities (page 12)

Verifying the Process for Advancement Has Been Completed: (page 13) When all of the advancement criteria have been met, the employee's supervisor completes the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form, and sends it to the Department of Recruitment and Staffing, Office of Human Resources

Classification Description: The classification or generic job description for the ITSS pay band (intern through ITSS III) can be found on the MCPS Web site at:

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/personnel/posclass/5160.shtm>

SECTION 1: Initiating the Process for Advancement

Employees that are committed to undertaking career advancement should begin the process by meeting with their supervisor and notifying them of this interest in career advancement. Being committed to career advancement means having a realistic understanding what is required to move up to the next career level—namely, being dedicated to learning and to self-initiated actions. Participation in the career advancement process is not officially initiated until the employee and supervisor complete “Part I. Enrollment in the Career Advancement Process” of MCPS Form 336-84, entitled *Job-banding Career Advancement*.

The following tips for employees and supervisors are intended to help gain an understanding of the career advancement process.

Tips for Employees and Supervisors

1. Employees and supervisors should carefully review this guide to ensure successful completion of the process.
2. Employees and supervisors should review the FAQ’s (posted on the job banding website) to understand the considerations and impacts of advancement
3. Supervisors should ensure employees are officially enrolled for career advancement by completing and signing “Part I. Enrollment in the Career Advancement Process” of the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form.
4. Supervisors also may encourage employees to begin the job-banding career advancement process to promote the professional growth of employees or to address changes in the work needs of the school system.
5. Once enrolled, employees may begin to fulfill the criteria for advancement, as described in Section 2 of this guide.
6. Employees and supervisors should be aware that employees are to use their own time and available resources to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for career advancement. (Note: employees may be eligible for tuition reimbursement)
7. As employees complete each of the criteria for advancement, documentation should be submitted to their supervisor and “Part II. Completed Requirements for Career Advancement” of the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form should be filled in, signed, and dated.
8. To assist supervisors in objectively determining whether a criterion for advancement has been met, refer to the measures for completion. (See Section 2 of this guide.)
9. The original *Job-banding Career Advancement* form and copies of the required documentation are to be kept in the employee’s file by the supervisor.
10. Once all criteria for advancement have been met by the employee, the supervisor completes “Part III. Supervisors Request for Advanced Salary Placement” of the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form

11. The supervisor submits the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form to a division/department director for approval; then forwards the form to the Department of Recruitment and Staffing, Office of Human Resources.

Action on Career Advancement: Upon receipt of a *Job-banding Career Advancement* form, staff in the Department of Recruitment and Staffing will finalize completion of the form and notify the Employee and Retiree Service Center (ERSC) staff to advance the employee to the next IT systems support grade level and to award a one-step pay increase. The effective date for the career advancement grade and one-step pay increase is the pay period following the date of the supervisor's signature.

Further details on finalizing the career advancement process and completing the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form are provided in Section 3 of this guide, *Verifying the Advancement Criteria Have Been Completed*.

SECTION 2: Measuring Readiness for Advancement

General Guidance

- The Supporting Services Professional Growth System sets the performance standard for nontechnical skills. An ITSS cannot enroll for career advancement while involved in the Supporting Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS) Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) process or is under special evaluation for unsatisfactory performance.
- Job knowledge standards for ITSSs being evaluated under the SSPGS should be consistent with the job knowledge measures for job-banding career advancement.
- New hires should conform to the job knowledge standards for job-banding career advancement and the SSPGS.
- Courses used as a chosen option for career advancement must have been completed within the previous two years to be used to meet the criteria.
- Employees must have at least one year of job experience in their current job, or six months as an intern, to be eligible for career advancement.
- Specific knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience required for advancement within the ITSS job band are contained in the document, *The Criteria for Advancement*.

The following are the measures of readiness for career advancement as an IT systems specialist

- 1. One year of experience at the current job level; six months, for interns (required)**
- 2. Satisfactory job performance (required)** – employees in the Peer Assistance and Review process or under special evaluation for unsatisfactory performance are not eligible to participate in job banding career advancement
- 3. Passing score on the *Job Skills Assessments* (required)**
- 4. Two additional measures selected from the following list:**
 - e. *Portfolio* with artifacts demonstrating achievement of needed skills
 - f. *Industry certification* related to IT systems specialist responsibilities
 - g. Certification that the MCPS *coaching* program has been completed
 - h. Passing grade in *qualified course(s)* related to IT systems specialist responsibilities

Job Skills Assessments

The required job skills assessments are web-based, online tests. The required assessments taken to advance will be proctored—that is, employees must take the test under supervision in an isolated location. The proctor will select and provide secure access to two tests required for advancement under the “job role” selected by the employee. Each assessment takes approximately one hour to complete. Scores for proctored tests will be provided to the employee’s supervisor and the Office of Human Resources.

The frequency of test administration will depend on demand. The following are the guidelines for test administration:

- Employees are to call ahead to schedule a test.
- Tests will be proctored, and no study materials may be brought to the test site.
- Employees may take the proctored assessment a total of three times over a 12-month period. While there is no recommended time period between tests, applicants are expected to allow themselves enough time to improve their skills.
- Feedback will be given to all employees who take the test to help employees identify areas where improvement is needed.

The required job skills assessments are web-based, online tests that are hosted and scored by an outside vendor, PreVisor. PreVisor is an experienced provider of web-based job skill assessments and has provided documentation of the “Brainbench” product’s test validity. The vendor has also shown they have qualified staff and the organizational capacity needed to ensure the skills being tested are kept up-to-date with industry standards.

ITSS employees will be given access to the assessments required for advancement, as well as the full list of assessments offered by Brainbench. ITSS’s do not need to participate in job banding to take advantage of the professional development advantages of Brainbench. After each test taken, the employee will get feedback on their skills and where they need to develop their knowledge and skills. When employees achieve a satisfactory level on any assessment, Brainbench will issue a certificate to the employee.

ITSS’s may take any assessment offered as many times as desired. Because the questions vary each time the test is taken, the assessment questions will never be the same from one test session to the next.

Industry Certification

The following are the guidelines for industry certification under job banding:

1. Industry certifications must be focused on preparing the employee to perform the skills and abilities needed for career advancement as an ITSS.
2. Only work toward approved industry certifications will count toward career advancement. Certification tests with similar names offered by providers that are not recognized by the approved certification entities will not fulfill the ITSS job banding career advancement requirements.
3. Training and testing taken to qualify for career advancement must occur outside of work hours and any costs are to be borne by the employee.
4. Personal or annual leave may be used to address the requirement that training and testing must occur outside of work hours; professional leave may not be used.
5. To meet the certification criteria, employees must meet the required certification measure(s) for their current job level in addition to passing the tests needed for career advancement.

Industry certifications are currently available in three of the general skills areas used in MCPS. These certifications are from Cisco (for telecommunications), Microsoft (for server/workstation management), and the Project Management Institute (for project management).

The number, type, and cost of exams required for a non-competitive promotion varies depending on the provider and the ITSS level to which the employee seeks to be promoted. A detailed outline of the ITSS job banding career advancement certification requirements appears on the follow page.

The following are helpful links to information on approved industry certifications:

Microsoft

<http://www.microsoft.com/learning/mcp/default.aspx>

Cisco

http://www.cisco.com/web/learning/le3/learning_career_certifications_and_learning_paths_home.html

Project Management Institute

<http://www.pmi.org/CareerDevelopment/Pages/Obtaining-Credential.aspx#capm>

ITSS Job Banding Career Advancement Certification Requirements

Level 1: IT systems specialist intern (18) to an IT systems specialist I (20)

Prerequisites: None

Required Test Options:

- Option A: **Microsoft** Certified Desktop Technician or current equivalent
- Option B: **Microsoft** Certified Professional or current equivalent
- Option C: **Cisco** Certified Entry Networking Technician or current equivalent

Level 2: IT systems specialist I (20) to an IT systems specialist II (23)

Prerequisites: A or C: One of the test options listed for Level 1 above (A, B, or C)

Required Test Options:

- Option A: Two exams toward certification as a **Microsoft** Certified Systems Administrator on the Windows Server version used by MCPS or current equivalent
- Option B: **Microsoft** Certified IT Professional: Server Administration or current equivalent
- Option C: **Cisco** Certified Network Associate or current equivalent

Level 3: IT systems specialist II (23) to an IT systems specialist III (25)

Prerequisites: One of the test options listed for Level 1 above (A, B, or C)
One of the test options listed for Level 2 above (A, B, or C)

Required Test Options:

- Option A: Certification as a **Microsoft** Certified Systems Administrator on the Windows Server version used by MCPS or current equivalent
- Option B: Two exams toward a **Cisco** Certified Network Professional or current equivalent
- Option C: Certified Associate in Project Management or current equivalent (**Project Management Institute**)

Portfolio

The guidelines for meeting the requirement for a portfolio are based on the portfolios that are recommended for employees who are in an evaluation year under the Support Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS). While the SSPGS portfolios have one section for each competency, this portfolio concentrates on the competencies most closely associated with the job skills that are needed to advance in the IT systems support family.

The following are the guidelines for developing a job-banding career advancement portfolio:

1. The portfolio should focus on two competencies: knowledge of job and problem solving.
2. For each *Behavior*, the employee must include *Artifacts* (documentation) and a *Reflection* (notes on why this is important and what you learned from it):
 - Competency #2 Knowledge of Job: 3–5 artifacts and reflections
 - Competency #7 Problem Solving: 3–5 artifacts and reflections
3. *Behaviors* and *Artifacts* should be current (i.e., nothing over five years old).
4. *Behaviors*, *Artifacts*, and *Reflections* should demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for career advancement as an ITSS.

Sample *Behaviors* and *Artifacts* for the required competencies appear on the following tables.

Table 2. Competency #2 Knowledge of Job

<i>Behavior that demonstrates competency</i>	<i>Artifact that calls attention to the behavior in the portfolio</i>
Keeping current with latest procedures and technology	Covers of books, trade publications, articles
Samples of work	Forms, reports, project plans, documents written on technical issues, documentation for end users, sample scripts
Networking for best practices	E-mails, contacts
Job knowledge	Letter of recognition, thank you cards, letters of reference, evaluations, awards
Meeting deadlines, completing work in a timely fashion	Notes of appreciation
Self starter, requires little supervision	Comments from supervisor, quotes from evaluation
Knows how to access resources (computer programs, collaborate with others, who to contact)	Samples of work, letters, reports, memorandums describing examples of when these skills were used successfully
Knows all existing configurations in schools	Comments from supervisor, quotes from evaluation
Knows MCPS rules and regulations related to the position	Copies of procedures and regulations documenting relevance to work
Knows vendor products and how they are used in MCPS	Letters to vendors explaining how MCPS uses their products

Table 3. Competency #7 Problem Solving

<i>Behavior that demonstrates competency</i>	<i>Artifact that calls attention to the behavior in the portfolio</i>
Developing positive solutions	Samples of work, letters, reports, memorandums describing the problem and how it was solved
Taking data to help reach division goal	Sample data and goal to be achieved
Mediating	Samples of work, letters, reports, memorandums describing mediation methods or participation in a formal mediation program
Gathering information before taking action	E-mails, letters
Redesigning a form or procedure to make it more effective	Samples of original and redesign
Knowing when it is necessary to change routine	E-mail, note, special announcement documenting flexibility and a change in routine to meet a specific need
Anticipating and preventing problems by being mindful of potential changes	E-mail or report that documents anticipated potential changes and readiness to adapt
Gathering data and recommend possible solutions	Sample of communicating data to recommend a change
Being flexible in all situations	Thank you notes demonstrating willingness to help out “in a pinch”
Brainstorming with group to solve a problem	Meeting minutes or agenda as evidence of comments shared and results or conclusion

Coaching

Coaching is a process that is used to increase employees' job knowledge and skills. For job-banding career advancement, it is defined as a formal practice wherein the employee is to observe, question, and explore; and the coach is to demonstrate, explain, and model.

Coaches, as leaders of learning experiences, need to share their "how to" stories; but they also need to share their experiences of failure (i.e., "how I did it wrong"). Both are powerful lessons that provide valuable opportunities for analyzing individual and organizational realities. When it works, coaching provides continuous learning that is not a one-time event or even a series of discrete experiences. Rather, it is intended to be a combination of ongoing learning experiences, observations, studies, and thoughtful analyses.

Under job-banding career advancement, coaching is intended to be a joint venture. This means employees must share the responsibility for their learning. It also means that the coach and the employee have an up-front agreement on what subject matter is to be learned, how this learning will take place and be measured, and the schedule for face-to-face coaching sessions.

The coaching experience under job-banding career advancement is based on the following:

1. The coaching experience must focus on preparing the employee to perform the skills and abilities needed for career advancement as an ITSS.
2. The coaching experience must be a defined learning experience that describes what the employee should know and be able to do by the end of this experience and describes how and when the opportunity for learning will occur.
3. Coaching is not performing uncompensated work at the next ITSS skill level under the supervision of a coach.
4. Because the coaching experience involves the assignment of qualified MCPS staff, employees interested in coaching must make a formal request for a coach through their supervisor to the Department of Technology Modernization and Support. Employees will be allowed to participate in this experience on a first-come/first-served basis, depending on the availability of qualified coaches.
5. The employee will be assigned to a coach who has a minimum of two years of job experience at or above the grade level to which the employee seeks to be promoted. For example, an ITSS I seeking a non-competitive promotion to the ITSS II level must be coached by an ITSS II, ITSS III, or IT systems engineer with a minimum of two years of experience as an ITSS II or above in total.
6. As part of their orientation and training, coaches will be provided with guidelines and materials for conducting the coaching experience.
7. The coach must document that the employee has successfully completed a minimum of 40 to 45 hours of training, including hands-on experiences.

To learn more about the MCPS coaching program for IT systems specialists, see *Coaching for ITSS Job Banding: Supervisor's Guide* and *Technical Advancement Skills Coaching for Employees and Coaches*, which are available on the Job Banding website.

Passing Grade in Qualified Course(s)

The requirements for course work are modeled on the requirements for tuition reimbursement. One difference is, that in addition to accepting courses from an accredited institution, under job-banding employees may use courses from approved MCPS providers. Approved MCPS providers are those preapproved by the Board of Education to provide training and course work for supporting services staff.

The following are the requirements for accepting course work under job banding:

1. Courses must improve skills and prepare the employee for career advancement as an ITSS.
2. Course work must be completed on the employee's own time.
3. Courses must be from an accredited institution (e.g., college, university, or trade school) or an approved MCPS provider.
4. Courses must provide a minimum of 40 hours of training. Courses of a shorter duration may be combined to achieve the minimum number of hours of training.
5. Courses may be those offered by MCPS to support career advancement for ITSSs.
6. In instances where a course provider is identified by the employee but is not on the MCPS provider list, such provider must be approved in advance by Office of Organizational Development.
7. Participant must receive at least a "C" in an undergraduate course or a "B" in a graduate course.
8. Participant must receive a "Pass" for courses taken on a "Pass/Fail" basis.
9. For nongraded courses, participant must receive a certificate of completion.
10. For nongraded courses, participant must take and report the results of a skills test, if offered by the provider.
11. Course work completed prior to enrollment for career advancement may be used if it meets the above criteria and was completed within the last two years.

Note: Employee's may be eligible for tuition reimbursement per MCPS policies and procedures.

SECTION 3: Verifying Completion of the Career Advancement Criteria

1. As employees successfully complete the requirements for career advancement, they should schedule a meeting with their supervisor to review the documentation for completion and update their *Job-banding Career Advancement* form.
2. Once it is clear that the criteria for career advancement are completed and documented, the supervisor completes “Part III. Supervisors Request for Advanced Salary Placement” of the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form.
3. The supervisor is to submit the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form to their division or department director for approval; then forward it to the Support Services Coordinator, Department of Recruitment and Staffing, Office of Human Resources.
4. The form should be forwarded to Support Services Coordinator within ten business days of the supervisor’s signature. (Also, supervisors are kindly asked to email the coordinator to let her/him know the form is on the way.)
5. Copies of the *Job-banding Career Advancement* form and attachments should be made for the employee and for the supervisor’s records.
6. Staff in the Department of Recruitment and Staffing will complete the form, ensuring the effective date for the pay increase is the pay period following the date of the supervisor’s signature on the *Job-banding Career Advancement Form*.
7. Staff in the Department of Recruitment and Staffing then informs the Employee and Retirement Services Center (ERSC) that the employee has received a non-competitive promotion.
8. ERSC then issues a *Personnel Action Notice* to confirm the non-competitive promotion and the corresponding increase in grade and one-step salary increment.
9. Once the employee has been approved for career advancement, they should expect to be asked to handle duties associated with the higher grade. Their new job level, with its expectations for duties and responsibilities, becomes the basis for all future SSPGS evaluations and professional development plans.
10. Employees approved for career advancement are subject to reassignment. Any promotion (competitive or non-competitive) means a change in tasks and responsibilities or the addition of duties to current responsibilities. Reassignments may also mean a change in reporting location, a change in work units, and/or a new supervisor.
11. Employees approved for career advancement will not be temporarily assigned to perform higher level duties or to lead or participate in special projects with another unit or at a different location, leaving a school or office without full-time support.
12. Principals and directors will be authorized to advertise and fill a position if their ITSS is reassigned to another permanent job opening where their newly acquired knowledge and skills can be fully utilized.