

Getting Employees on the Payroll is Easier with PASS

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Over the past two years, New York University has been engaged in a multi-project initiative to enhance the administration and support of grant awards and other sponsored programs. The Grants Management Initiative is a joint effort involving the Office of the Controller, Human Resources (HR), Purchasing Services, and Information Technology Services (ITS). With guidance from schools across NYU, including fiscal officers, HR officers, and other school administrators, the Grants Management Initiative combines tighter policy controls with state of the art technology.

The applications under development by NYU/ITS' Administrative Computing Services (ADCOMS) perform a number of critical functions during the funding process. The technology components of the Grants Management Initiative are part of an integrated strategy to:

- provide a web-based, paperless process that speeds up payment of employees and enhances the quality of financial and business controls;
- provide sponsor organizations with uniform financial reporting, including personnel activity;
- better monitor sponsored programs for compliance with state and federal guidelines.

There are two major technology components to the initiative, each at varying stages of development. The first part of the initiative, comprising the Grants Reports and the Grants Management Planning Tool (GMPT), is complete, though a second round of changes is planned prior to rollout to the NYU community. The second part of the initiative, the Personnel Action Submission System (PASS), is well underway in a multi-part implementation that began in October 2004. Together, these applications represent a major

advance in the monitoring and administration of grants and other sponsored programs here at NYU.

PASS, which will be the focus of this article, is a new automated workflow system that uses a web-based interface to enable HR officers, their staff, and other University offices to submit, route, track, review, approve, and update personnel actions in NYU's Human Resources Information System (HRIS)—all without the necessity of processing paper Personnel Action Forms (PAFs). Personnel actions are events that change an employee's job or personal information. PASS provides upwards of 30 different types of personnel actions, including leaves of absence, salary increases, promotions, resignations, retirements, new hires, additional compensations, and address changes.

PASS speeds up the process of paying employees by (1) automating the submission and approval processes, (2) enhancing internal controls related to financial and human resources business requirements, (3) providing easily accessible tracking and reporting related to personnel actions, (4) improving the quality and efficiency of personnel information management, and (5) eliminating most of the paperwork associated with the former paper-based personnel action process.

Comments from our clients about PASS:

"We're excited for it—no more paper!"

"Excellent system that reduces/eliminates time, paper, human error, not knowing the status of a request, or where it is."

"The tracking system makes life so much easier!"

"Excellent process, will greatly improve operations."

1. AUTOMATED SUBMISSION & APPROVAL

People authorized to use PASS can access it anytime, anywhere through NYUHome (<http://home.nyu.edu>). PASS leverages the same technologies—Java, Javascript, Oracle Workflow—used by other new NYU

Workflow applications, including the Budget Integrated Application (BIA) and the Tuition Remission System. As with these other systems, minimal technical expertise is required to use PASS.

Within PASS, there are various types of user roles. The five prin-

cipal roles are: Requestor, Finance Officer, HR Rep/Coordinator, Delegate, and Administrative/Academic Officer. Requestors initiate personnel action requests; the other four roles can review or approve requests. HR Rep/Coordinators also manage the approval process for their units.

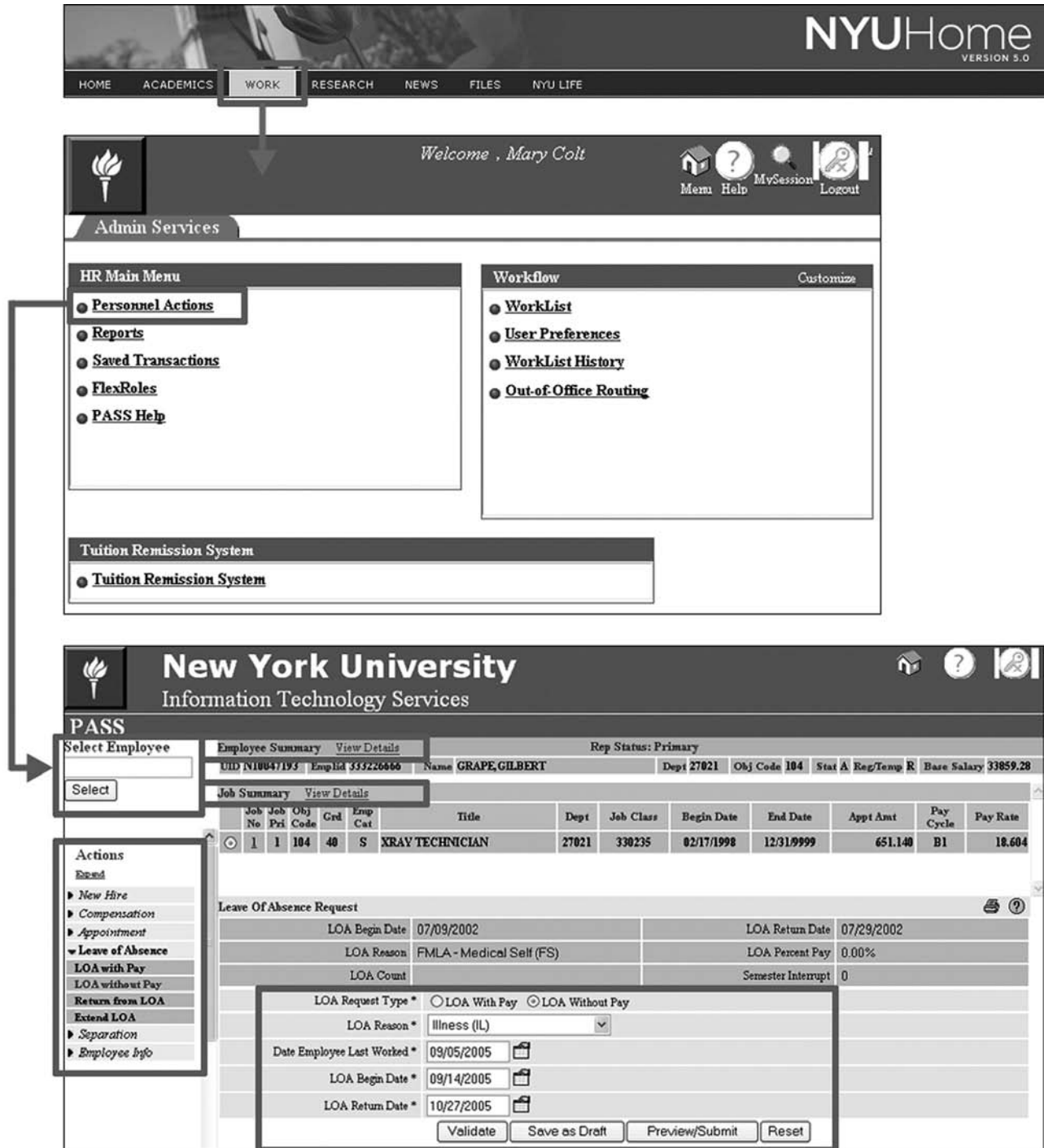


Figure 1. An overview of the PASS login process and main screen.

Submitting Requests

The formerly-used paper-based PAF contained approximately 200 distinct fields, of which an average of 10–15 are required for each action. By structuring each personnel action as a different web page, PASS eliminates the confusion a requestor can experience in not knowing what information is required; this allows the requestor to focus on filling in the required information instead of having to recall what information is necessary. In addition, PASS includes validations for each field, eliminating common errors, such as inadvertently entering an effective date outside the date range for an appointment, entering an invalid *fame* (Financial Administration Made Easy) chart-field, or placing someone on a leave for which they are not eligible.

Overview of PASS Features

- Easy access through NYUHome.
- Employee search by name or UID (University Identification Number), with a corresponding search result list.
- Employee summary and detail screens containing employee information.
- Job summary and detail screens containing job information.
- Submission, preview, and confirmation pages for each action.
- Data validations which follow defined business rules for each of the 30 personnel actions.
- Printer-friendly pages at each step in the process.
- Ability to cancel requests at any time prior to updating HRIS.

Approving Requests

After a request is submitted, either it is routed for approval or notifications are sent based on the approval process established by the unit. After the unit approves the request, it may be routed to central administrative offices for approval. The central administrative units' approval flow varies by action and is often based on the request. For instance, if a restricted fund is

included in an account change, NYU's Research/Restricted Accounting Services (RRAS) will be notified; if the salary is above a certain limit, Compensation will be notified; if an employee's work authorization expiration date is revised, Employment will be notified. Many of the items that are currently checked by various University offices will be done automatically in PASS, so fewer items require review by people in the central units.

FlexRoles Features

- A flexible approval and notification process for each unit, called FlexRoles, that can differ by unit and by action (see figure 2). For instance, the unit's Finance Officer(s), Dean, HR Officer, or other approver can receive notifications (FYIs) or Requests For Approvals (RFAs) for leaves of absence, but not account changes.
- Ability to manage and change FlexRoles at any time.

Worklist Features

- Online Worklist keeps track of all outstanding Requests For Approvals (see figure 3).
- Online Worklist History keeps track of all requests that you have submitted, approved, or been notified of.

Request For Approval (RFA) Features

- Email alerts of your FYI and RFA notifications.

- One-click access to TRACK IT!, an online view of who has already been notified and who still needs to approve or review a request.
- Ability to view, modify, approve, cancel, reject, or reassign requests (see figure 4, p. 18).

2. ENHANCED INTERNAL CONTROLS

In addition to basic data validations, there are also business requirements in place to enhance internal controls. For example, when salaries or chartfields change, PASS checks the *fame* budget; during a separation, a requestor cannot pay more vacation than is permitted by University policy without approval from central HR; and certain eligibility requirements must be met in order to qualify for retirement benefits. Including these business requirements in PASS allows the majority of PASS requests to bypass approvals that were required with the paper process.

3. EASILY ACCESSIBLE TRACKING & REPORTING

One of the most common complaints about the paper process was that once a requestor had submitted a PAF, they had a hard time determining the location of the PAF within the University review process and no way of knowing how close it was to being completed. PASS enables a requestor to easily track the progress of a request and see who is currently approving it. The requestor also receives confirmation once the request has updated

Action	Recipient 1	Notification Type	Recipient 2	Notification Type
LOA Without Pay	HR.REP/COORDINATOR (P/	RFA	FINANCE OFFICER (PASS_F	RFA

Figure 2. FlexRoles enable convenient approval and notification processes.

New York University Information Technology Services						
Worklist						
Select	Priority	Type	From	Subject	Sent	Due
<input type="checkbox"/>		PASS Standard		RFA: Grant, Gilbert, 104, 27021 (27.02), Leave of Absence Without Pay, Ref #2926 - PENDING APPROVAL	26-SEP-2005	29-SEP-2005

Figure 3. PASS' Worklist feature tracks present and past requests.

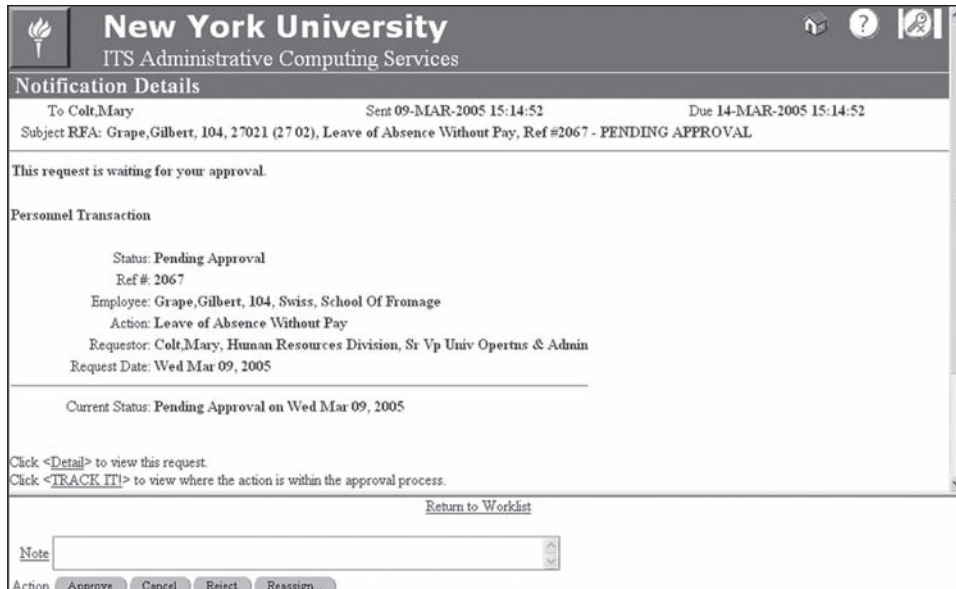


Figure 4. *The Request For Approval feature offers a variety of workflow options.*

HRIS. Reporting is easier and more accessible for both the requesting unit and the central administrative departments, and can be generated by action, status, or date.

4. IMPROVED QUALITY & EFFICIENCY OF PERSONNEL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The system security for PASS, which is based on current HRIS department access, is extensive. Automatic updates to HRIS help eliminate human transcription errors. Online help resources allow access to support information with a click of the mouse.

5. LIMITED PAPER!

PASS will eventually eliminate the use of many thousands of pieces of paper at NYU each year! Only certain documents, such as I-9s, Social Security Cards, Birth Certificates, etc., are required, and PASS lets the requestor know what documentation is needed on the confirmation screen when a request is made.

DEVELOPMENT STATUS

The entire University has been

employing PASS since March 2005, with over 300 people currently using the system. PASS has been used to update personal information and work authorization; change names, dates of birth and social security numbers; and authorize leaves of absences, extensions of leaves, returns from leave, separations, account changes, salary changes, and new hires. Recently, functionality for processing new and additional appointments and additional compensation has also been added.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE

The development, implementation, and continual evolution of PASS are the results of a major team effort involving all University HR departments and reviewers and technical experts in other University offices. The project was supported by a steering committee, a project advisory group, and an implementation team consisting of functional and technical sub-teams.

The project advisory group, which consisted of representatives from each of the schools and several administra-

tive units, met with the implementation team at least once a month for the past two years to develop system requirements and evaluate functionality. The support of the advisory group was essential to ensuring that the system was well tested and met the varying needs of the diverse group of people who use it.

MORE INFORMATION

If you are interested in learning more about PASS, please visit the NYU Human Resources website at <http://www.nyu.edu/hr/records/training.html>.

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