HRDG 4511 - Section C - Related Position Description Information

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Subchapter 4511
Position Classification
Section C - Related Position Description Information

- General Schedule and Federal Wage System Positions
- Types of Position Descriptions
- Interdisciplinary Positions
- Collateral Duties
- Career Ladder Positions
- Grade Stacking
- Titling Practices
- Position Sensitivity
- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Classification Actions and Effective Dates

Return to 4511 Table of Contents

A position is subject to the General Schedule, even if it requires physical work, if its primary duty requires knowledge or experience of an administrative, clerical, scientific, artistic, or technical nature not related to trade, craft, or manual-labor work.

5 U.S.C. 5102 (c)(7) exempts a position from coverage under the General Schedule if its primary duty involves the performance of physical work which requires a “paramount requirement” for knowledge or experience of a trade, craft, or manual-labor nature. The “paramount requirement” of a position refers to the essential, prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the primary duty or responsibility for which the position has been established.

General Schedule and Federal Wage System Positions

This exemption resulted in the development of the Federal Wage System (FWS). FWS is an equitable system for fixing and adjusting the rates of pay for prevailing rate employees of the government. Common job standards were developed to insure interagency equity in wage rates and to coordinate wage-setting practices among agencies.

No specific format is required for FWS position descriptions. However, the content of the PD should address the following factors as indicated below.

Supervisory Jobs:

- Nature of Supervisory Responsibility.
- Level of Work Supervised.
- Scope of Work Operations Supervised.

Nonsupervisory Jobs:

- Skill and Knowledge required to perform assigned duties.
- Responsibility for carrying out work, how work is reviewed.
- Physical Effort - degree and frequency of the physical effort exerted in performing assigned work.
- Working Conditions - environmental conditions and safety precautions needed.

Types of Position Descriptions

There are three types of GS and FWS PDs – discrete, identical/additional, and standard:

- Discrete PDs are used for one-of-a-kind positions that have unique requirements and warrant a separate PD. Discrete PDs can only be used for a single employee.
- Identical/additional (IA) PDs allow duplication. They can apply to several employees at one location. These PDs are useful when developed by organizations with smaller numbers of employees that do the same work. This saves substantial time, as supervisors do not need to submit separate PDs for each employee.
- A standard PD is a time saving option for a large number of positions. A standard PD can be used “as is” without changes. Standard PDs are created for several positions within an organization whose duties are basically the same. No further classification is necessary, since the standard PD has already been evaluated. A standard PD is generally not appropriate for supervisory positions or positions at grade 13 and above.

MRP standard position descriptions can be accessed at the following link:

- **PD's Online** (internal only)

Interdisciplinary Positions

When a position’s duties and responsibilities can be equally performed by individuals from different academic disciplines, an interdisciplinary professional position description can be used. Interdisciplinary professional positions involve duties and responsibilities closely related to more than one professional occupation, where people from two or more professions could perform the work equally well. As a result, the position can be classified in two or more professional occupational series.

Interdisciplinary positions are used for positions in scientific, mathematical, or engineering disciplines and are not appropriate for administrative or nonprofessional positions.

Collateral Duties

Collateral duties are separately assigned and distinct duties, which are in addition to the primary duties and responsibilities of the position. An employee spends less than 25% of work time performing collateral duties, and collateral duties do not constitute a grade controlling duty or responsibility. Collateral duty assignments are specific to the individual employee, and not applicable to identical or standard position descriptions that are shared with other employees. The employee does not receive technical guidance from the immediate supervisor and the collateral duties are attached as an addendum to the employee’s PD.

Some examples of collateral duties are ongoing committee work, technical representatives, and special emphasis program responsibilities (e.g., veterans’ programs/civil rights). Management is responsible for initiating and completing collateral duty statements - while considering position management and the impact collateral duties may have on the paramount reason of the position’s existence.

When describing collateral duties, the language must include:

- The percentage of the employee's official duty time to be spent performing collateral duties.
- The scope of responsibilities.
- Who will assign the collateral duties.
- Who will evaluate the employee's collateral duty performance; to be shared with the supervisor of record for consideration when conducting the employee’s annual performance review.

Career Ladder Positions

Career ladders for developmental positions can be established below the full performance level of the position and have several advantages:

- They give agencies more recruitment options and flexibility.
- Employees can be selected at lower grades and provided additional training and experience that will allow career development and noncompetitive promotion to the full performance level.
- Employee advancement within career ladders is not automatic and satisfactory performance can be evaluated before promotion to a higher level.

A career ladder is generally utilized for developmental positions and seldom used for supervisory or higher graded positions. Supervisors often provide technical supervision, and must be able to plan, assign, direct, and review work operations, as well as objectively rate the employee's performance. Also, the classification of non-supervisory positions above GS-12 requires the ability to perform duties independently, with advance subject matter knowledge, skill, or expertise.

Career ladder PDs for non-supervisory and supervisory positions at GS-13 and above will not be approved unless it is documented that there is an insufficient candidate pool for the target grade, and the candidate pool needs to be expanded. In addition, all the following criteria must be met for supervisory positions, regardless of grade level:

- The career ladder established cannot be more than one level below the full performance level of the position, and both levels are properly classified under OPM's General Schedule Supervisory Guide.
- The supervisor of the position is available to provide guidance and development that enables the employee to assume the full range of supervisory responsibility when promoted to the target level.
- The developmental grade is no lower than the highest grade supervised, and no lower than the first full performance level for two grade interval occupations.

Grade Stacking

Grade stacking results when subordinate positions are established at the same grade of the supervisor. This practice is inconsistent with sound classification and position management principles and is prohibited by Department Directive **DR-4020-511-001**, unless the subordinate position is a research position classified under the Research Grade Evaluation Guide. Grade stacking shall not be used in a non-research program unless a narrative evaluation statement is prepared and approved by the MRPBS Human Resources Division and authorized by the Human Resource Director.

Titling Practices

OPM is required to establish official titles by 5 U.S.C. 5105. Position classification standards generally prescribe the titles to be used for positions in most series. Only the prescribed title may be used on official documents relating to a position - such as position descriptions, leave and earnings statements, and personnel actions.

Working titles that are organization-specific such as “Branch Manager” or “Division Director” may not be used as official titles in lieu of “Supervisory” prefixes. On rare occasions, agencies may designate the official title of positions in occupational series for which OPM has not prescribed titles, e.g., 0301, 0401. The title selected by the agency cannot be one that has been prescribed by OPM as an official title for a position in another series. Any newly proposed official title must be approved by the Department.

Agencies may independently construct organizational (working titles) for informal or internal purposes.

Position Sensitivity

Certain positions perform sensitive duties including access to classified information. Misconduct or illegal action by an employee in a sensitive position could directly compromise national security. Proper position sensitivity designations are based on an assessment of three prescribed levels of risk and four prescribed levels of sensitivity.

A position sensitivity designation must be assigned to all positions in the competitive service (or excepted service positions that can be noncompetitively converted to the competitive service) and also to positions on career appointments in the Senior Executive Service.

Position sensitivity designations determine the type of security investigation required before individuals can be assigned to positions and granted the applicable clearance level (e.g., SECRET, TOP SECRET, etc.). Security investigations for sensitive positions often take up to a year to complete and are costly. Managers and classification specialists work collaboratively to ensure that accurate position sensitivity codes are established per OPM criteria.

Fair Labor Standards Act

FLSA provides minimum standards for wages and overtime entitlements and specifies administrative procedures for the compensation of covered work-time. Positions are designated exempt or nonexempt:

- Nonexempt - covered by the minimum wage and overtime provisions.
- Exempt - not covered by the minimum wage and overtime provisions.

The Servicing Classification Specialist determines a position's FLSA status, which is based on the type of position (e.g., executive, administrative, professional, technical, clerical, and other) and the nature of the duties and responsibilities of the position. An employee is presumed to be FLSA nonexempt unless the employing agency correctly determines that the employee is exempt using criteria spelled out in the Act.

Fair Labor Standards Act information can be found on the Department of Labor Web site.

Classification Actions and Effective Dates

A classification action is a determination to establish or change the title, series, grade, or pay system of a position based on application of OPM classification standards. This is a position action.

The effective date of a position action is the date an official with delegated authority signs the AD-332 (PD coversheet). The effective date may be extended to correspond with the effective date of the personnel action when:

- The employee occupying the position is eligible for retained grade or pay under 5 U.S.C. 5362–5363.
- The position is being changed to lower grade or pay (the agency must advise the employee in writing of the position action and proposed date of the personnel action).

A position action is always implemented by a personnel action. A personnel action must occur within a reasonable period of time following the date of the position action.

Classification actions may not be made retroactive, unless an employee was wrongfully demoted. Retroactivity may be based only on duties and responsibilities existing at the time of demotion and cannot be based on duties and responsibilities assigned later.

A retroactive effective date may be required only if:

- It corrects a classification action which resulted in a loss of grade or pay.
- The employee files an initial request for review no later than 15 calendar days after the effective date of the reclassification action. At the discretion of the agency, this time limit may be extended if the employee ascertains that he or she was not notified of the applicable time limit, or circumstances beyond the employee’s control prevented the filing of an appeal within the prescribed time limit.

If the appellate decision raises the grade of the position above the original grade, retroactivity will apply only to the extent of restoration to the original grade.

Return to 4511 Table of Contents

Print