

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Qualifications, Assessment, and Hiring Policy  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Qualifications Policy**

**1. What is [Executive Order 13932 on Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates \(EO 13932\)](#) and its purpose?**

On June 26, 2020, Executive Order (EO) 13932 was issued, directing merit-based reforms to expand the use of valid, competency-based assessments and narrow the use of educational qualifications in the Federal hiring process. The intent is to direct agencies to use a skills and competency-based approach in conducting hiring across the Federal government via assessments that carefully measure candidates' ability to perform the job.

In accordance with title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) 3308, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) or other examining agency may not prescribe a minimum educational requirement for an examination for the competitive service except when it is determined that “the duties of a scientific, technical, or professional position cannot be performed by an individual who does not have a prescribed minimum education.” EO 13932 clarifies the rare circumstances when a position cannot be performed absent a minimum level of education and where it is appropriate to establish a minimum education requirement for examination for the competitive service. The main concepts outlined in the EO are as follows:

1. Reviewing and streamlining agency hiring practices;
2. Revamping the use of education to qualify applicants governmentwide;
3. Using competency-based hiring practices including assessments to identify highly skilled talent; and
4. Using a multiple hurdle process for assessing skilled talent.

For more information, please see [Executive Order 13932 on Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates](#)

**2. How does EO 13932 change how applicants are determined to be qualified for positions?**

In accordance with 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 338, Federal agencies use the provisions outlined in OPM's General Schedule (GS) Qualifications Operating Manual for appointment to white collar occupations in the competitive service of the Federal Government. Currently, many qualification standards permit applicants to qualify for assessment based on education/training, experience, or a combination of the two. Through the job analysis process, Federal agencies analyze work and apply OPM qualifications standards to determine the education, training, experience and/or other requirements (e.g., licensure, certification) that an applicant must possess in order to be admitted to the assessment process, and, if successful, be considered for a position or occupation (5 U.S.C. 5112, 5 U.S.C. 5105, and 5 U.S.C. 5102(a)(5)(b)). At present, most agencies use federal resumes and an occupational questionnaire to screen applicants for minimum qualifications. A “deeper dive” needs to be taken in order to address the actual competencies needed to perform work successfully. Agencies must verify that an individual has the right knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)/competencies to be successful

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in the position and not rely solely on information presented in an applicant's resume or experience claimed in responses to an occupational questionnaire. This may be achieved through the use of a passing grade assessment. Having applicants demonstrate possession of the KSAs/competencies to be successful through a passing grade assessment helps ensure the right talent is identified for the position to be filled.

**3. What are qualification standards?**

Qualification Standards are a description of the minimum requirements necessary to be admitted to the assessment process. Qualification standards are intended to identify applicants who are likely to perform successfully on the job, and to screen out those who are unlikely to do so. These minimum requirements may include specific job-related work experience, education, medical or physical standards, training, security, and/or licensure/certification. They are not designed to rank candidates, identify the best qualified for a particular position, or substitute for an analysis of an applicant's KSAs/competencies. The qualification standards for white collar occupations are in the General Schedule Qualifications Operating Manual. To review the Operating Manual please visit [OPM's General Schedule Qualification Policies](#). For information about the Job Qualification System for Trades and Labor Occupations, please visit [OPM's Federal Wage System Qualifications](#).

**4. What is a job analysis and when is it needed?**

A job analysis identifies the KSAs/competencies directly related to performance on the job. It is a systematic procedure for gathering, documenting, and analyzing information about the content, context, and requirements of the job. It demonstrates that there is a clear relationship between the tasks performed on the job and the KSAs/competencies required to perform the tasks.

Job analysis data should be used to develop effective recruitment, selection, performance management, and career development methodologies.

Job analysis is a foundation for identifying and/or developing assessment tools such as occupational questionnaires, structured interviews, and job knowledge tests. The information (tasks and competencies) gathered during a job analysis can also be applied to other employment practices such as performance appraisals, promotions, and employee development.

Federal regulations provide that each employment practice of the Federal Government generally, and of individual agencies, shall be based on a job analysis that identifies:

- The basic duties and responsibilities;
- The KSAs/competencies required to perform the duties and responsibilities; and
- The factors important in evaluating candidates ([5 CFR 300.103](#)).

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Position descriptions and job postings published by agencies should be based on job analyses that emphasizes the specific skills and competencies required to perform the work of the position successfully. Agencies' analysis of work should follow the guidelines included in the *Delegated Examination Operations Handbook*.

For more information, please see the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#).

**5. How should agencies utilize qualification standards?**

Agencies and examining offices should select the qualification standard that covers the occupational series to which a position has been classified. If there is more than one standard for an occupational series, they should select the most appropriate standard for the position(s); please see the [Introduction to the Position Classification Standards](#).

OPM qualification standards generally are not sufficiently specific to be used verbatim in job opportunity announcements or when examining for positions. Since a published OPM qualification standard may cover hundreds of positions in dozens of organizations, it must be broad enough to cover the range of work classified to the occupational series. Therefore, agencies and examining offices must identify through job analysis and clearly describe the specific KSAs/competencies required to qualify for the positions covered by an examination or job opportunity announcement. This will better attract applicants with appropriate qualifications to agencies, thereby greatly improving the effectiveness of the examination process. The specific requirements may be demonstrated through passing a competency-based assessment in addition to meeting any specific experience (i.e., general or specialized) and/or education requirements identified in the qualification standard.

**6. Are there multiple ways to meet minimum qualifications?**

Most OPM qualification standards permit applicants to qualify on the basis of education/training, experience, or a combination of the two. The qualification standards include the patterns of education, training, and/or experience most commonly applicable to a particular occupational series. Some qualification standards, however, have specific educational, licensure, or certification requirements that may apply only to specific work in an occupational series.

The educational provisions referenced in an occupational qualification standard normally pertain to either high school graduation or the equivalent, or to education above the high school level (post high school education). Whether at the high school or post high school level, 5 U.S.C. 3308 prohibits requiring education for positions in the competitive service, unless OPM has determined that the duties of a scientific, technical, or professional position cannot be performed by an individual who does not have the prescribed minimum education.

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Applicants for positions in some occupational series must meet certification, licensure, or registration requirements in addition to meeting experience and/or educational requirements. In other series, applicants can qualify fully on the basis of licensure, certification, registration, or special training as an alternative to experience and/or educational requirements. Such requirements or provisions are noted in the qualification standards or individual occupational requirements for those series.

Agencies are instructed in the [General Policies](#) section of the [OPM General Schedule Qualifications Operating Manual](#) that when interpreting and applying minimum educational requirements, it is important to recognize there are applicants who may not exactly meet the educational requirements stated for a particular series but may be demonstrably well qualified to perform the work because of exceptional experience, or a combination of education and experience. In such instances, a more comprehensive evaluation must be made of the applicant's entire background, with full consideration given to both education and experience. To be considered qualified, the applicant's work experience must reflect significant full performance-level accomplishment directly applicable to the position to be filled. A verification by a panel of at least two persons who have professional standing in the field is required ([OPM General Schedule Qualifications Operating Manual, \*Interpreting minimum educational requirements\*](#)). Occupational Therapy and other health care occupations where occupational degrees (i.e., legacy degrees) have evolved over time are prime examples where agencies must apply further analysis of applicant credentials and experience to identify when basic qualifications for an occupation are met.

### **7. How do I determine if an applicant's course work is creditable, if a qualification standard requires specific college level course work?**

A detailed review of an applicant's educational background and evidence of their completed coursework is required to determine if an applicant's course work is credible. OPM does not publish a list of acceptable college course work. Courses do not need to be directly identifiable to the fields identified in qualification standards to be acceptable. Additionally, colleges and universities do not use a standard convention for course naming and numbering aligned to the fields OPM describes in the standards. For example, one institution identifies its accounting curriculum as "AMIS" courses, standing for "accounting and management information systems." Therefore, it is neither practical nor reasonable to restrict interpretation of the word "fields" to institutional programs using precisely the same language. Instead, it is appropriate to consider the identified fields as general subject areas. If the content of a course arguably fits within the general subject area represented by one of the fields, it should qualify toward the credit-hour requirement. A human resources specialist and/or an individual with expertise in the organization must review and credit completion of required educational hours, which may include the need to review the course description whenever it is not obvious from the course title that the content fits the field. For instance, consider the following examples: a sociology course in statistics; a public administration course in quantitative techniques; and a psychology course in research

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methodology. If the content of these courses is comparable to or recognized by the academic institution as a substitute for courses clearly resting in the listed fields in the qualification standard, an applicant should receive credit toward the hour requirement. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide documentation or proof of having met the applicable educational provisions described in the job opportunity announcement and to furnish supporting descriptive information if credit for a course is being questioned.

**8. When a bachelor's level degree is required, may applicants qualify with higher level degrees?**

Applicants may qualify for positions that require a bachelor's level degree as a minimum qualification with higher level or advance degrees. Agencies must base qualifications determinations on a valid job analysis. Successful completion of graduate level courses and degrees aligned with a valid job analysis should be accepted as evidence that an applicant also possesses the knowledge taught in courses at lower levels in the same field.

**9. What is the agency's role if an applicant disputes an agency's qualification determination?**

While OPM provides Governmentwide leadership on Federal personnel policies and programs, each Federal agency has full authority and responsibility to administer and carry out its own hiring programs. This includes all aspects of the application process such as accepting and rating applications and hiring candidates to fill their positions. Final rating and selection determinations rest with the hiring agency. Agencies must have established grievance and appeal procedures for applicants. ([5 CFR 300.104](#), Appeals, grievances and complaints)

**10. May OPM qualification standards be waived or modified?**

Agencies can modify qualification requirements for certain in service placement actions (See [GS Qualifications Operating Manual, 9. Special Inservice Placement Provisions](#)). When agencies define or modify particular requirements, they are responsible for supporting and documenting their decisions.

An agency may determine that an individual can successfully perform the work of a position even though that person may not meet all the requirements in the OPM qualification standard. In that situation, agencies are authorized to modify OPM qualification standards for reassignments, voluntary changes to lower grades, transfers, reinstatements, and repromotions to a grade not higher than a grade previously held when the applicant's background includes related experience that provided the KSAs/competencies necessary for successful job performance. This authority should be used only when there is a reasonable likelihood that the employee will successfully make the transition to the new position and cannot be used for directed reassignments to positions in which an employee obviously would not be able to perform the work.

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This authority is not to be used for placement to a higher grade, except where the employee previously held a position at that grade or higher grade levels.

Agencies can also waive or modify qualification requirements when assigning employees in reductions in force or in lieu of reductions in force. (See [OPM guidance on reduction-in-force procedures](#).)

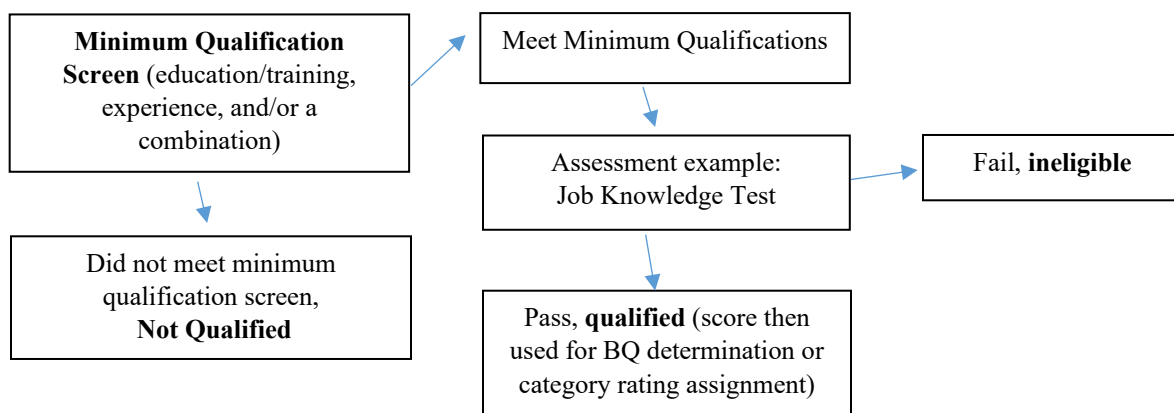
Additionally, agencies may request from OPM waivers of qualification requirements for competitive actions on a case-by-case basis if, after careful analysis of applicant qualifications, it is determined that an applicant may qualify based on other qualifications gained through experience, education, or training. These requests should be routed through your agency Chief Human Capital Officer and include full justification of the circumstances. (See [GS Qualifications Operating Manual, Waiver Request](#).)

## 11. What is the difference between minimum qualifications and assessments?

Under the Civil Service Rules promulgated by the President, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3301 and 3302, the purpose of minimum qualifications is merely to determine who should be admitted to or rated in examinations or assessments. Applicants are then expected to achieve a passing grade on the assessment in order to be rated and ranked.

Applicants who satisfy minimum qualification requirements are **not** automatically entitled to a qualifying score of 70 or more points, out of 100, in an assessment process that uses a numerical rating procedure, nor are they entitled to placement in a quality category under a category rating process. Screening on minimum qualifications is **not** the same as assessing applicants on the competencies necessary to perform the job. Screening minimum qualifications on an occupational questionnaire is important, but a “deeper dive” is required in order to address the actual competencies that have been rated as critical for the job, and to evaluate who is genuinely qualified to perform the particular position (i.e., those who achieve a passing grade on the assessment) and then to assess their relative levels of qualification beyond the passing level.

Here is an example.



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Please see the definition for minimum qualifications and assessments in the GS Qualifications Operating Manual and the use of passing scores with additional examples in Chapter 5 of the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#).

#### Assessment Policy

#### 12. What is personnel assessment?

Personnel assessment refers to any method of collecting information on an individual's KSAs/competencies for the purpose of making a selection decision. Selection decisions include, but are not limited to, hiring, placement, promotion, referral, retention, and entry into programs leading to advancement (e.g., apprenticeship, training, career development). Selecting qualified applicants is a critical step in building a talented and committed workforce, supporting an effective organizational culture, and enhancing the overall performance of the agency.

While many applicants may apply for any particular position, quantity does not guarantee quality. Rigorous assessment procedures can be a cost-effective tool in narrowing down large applicant pools. Good assessment tools can also make the selection decision process more efficient because less time and fewer resources are expended dealing with applicants whose qualifications do not match what is needed by the agency.

Effective personnel assessment involves a systematic approach towards gathering information about applicants' job qualifications. Factors contributing to successful job performance (e.g., oral communication, problem solving) are identified using a process called [job analysis](#). A job analysis identifies the duties performed on the job and the competencies needed for effective job performance. Basing personnel assessments closely on job analysis results makes the connection between job requirements and personnel assessment tools not only valid, but more transparent, thereby improving the perceived fairness of the assessment process.

#### 13. What are personnel assessment tools?

Generally speaking, an assessment tool is any test or procedure administered to individuals to evaluate their *job-related* competencies, interests, or fitness for employment. The accuracy with which applicant assessment scores can be used to forecast performance on the job is the tool's most important characteristic, referred to as [predictive validity](#) (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998).

Not all assessment tools are appropriate for every job and organizational setting. Agencies must consider a number of factors in determining the most appropriate assessment strategy for a particular situation. These considerations include timetables for filling positions, available staff, financial resources, number of positions to be filled, and the nature and complexity of the work performed in the positions to be filled.

A discussion of assessment tools can be found in Chapter 2, Section C in the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#).

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Reference: Schmidt, F. L., & Hunter, J. E. (1998). The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124, 262-274.

**14. What are the steps to effective personnel assessment?**

Briefly, the first step to creating an effective personnel assessment is conducting (or having) a valid, current [job analysis](#) to accurately reflect KSAs/competencies of the position being filled. The second step is to use the information gathered from the job analysis to create an assessment used to demonstrate that an applicant possesses the right KSAs/competencies to be successful in the position and to rate/rank applicants.

After an initial screening has been completed to determine whether minimum qualifications are met, agencies can employ [assessment methods](#) (e.g., [occupational questionnaire](#)) including those that may be more resource-intensive, such as [structured interviews](#) and [work sample tests](#), to determine whether the candidate can achieve a passing score, and assess the relative degree to which the applicant possesses the KSAs/competencies required for the position.

Detailed information on [Designing an Assessment Strategy](#) and [Other Assessments Methods](#) are available on OPM's Assessment and Selection website.

**15. How many assessments should I use in my assessment process? What is the difference between a multiple assessment and multiple hurdle approach?**

One key consideration is the number of assessment tools to include in the process. Using a variety of assessments tends to improve the validity of the process and will provide information on different aspects of an applicant's likely job performance. Using a single measure will tend to identify applicants who have strengths in a specific area but may overlook applicants who have high potential in other areas. A multiple assessment approach is the use of two or more assessments in the hiring process. The use of multiple hurdles involves the administration of assessments in sequential steps. After each assessment, candidates' scores that fall below a predetermined threshold are eliminated and should not proceed to the next steps.

Assessing applicants using multiple methods will reduce errors because people may respond differently to different methods of assessment. For example, some applicants who excel at written tests may be too nervous to do well in interviews, while others who suffer from test anxiety may give impressive interviews.

Another advantage of using a variety of assessment methods is the use of a multiple hurdle or progressive hurdle approach. The least expensive assessments (occupational questionnaire) can be used first to pare down the applicant pool. More labor-intensive and time-consuming (structured interviews) procedures can be introduced at a later stage when there are fewer candidates to evaluate.



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Considering which assessment methods best measure identified KSAs/competencies within the process should help you develop an assessment process well-suited to your agency's hiring needs.

When designing an assessment strategy, the use of multiple assessments or multiple hurdles must align with your hiring situation. Low volume hiring or entry level work may not require the use of a multiple hurdle approach. The OPM's [Assessment and Selection](#) website, section [Designing an Assessment Strategy](#) includes key areas of consideration and resources for designing an assessment strategy.

Please see the Hiring Process Options in Chapter 5, Section B of the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#) for hiring scenarios using multiple assessment and multiple hurdle approaches which includes the application of veterans preference, when appropriate.

### **16. What is a competency and what is competency-based assessment?**

OPM defines a competency as a measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully. Competencies specify the “how” of performing job tasks, or what the person needs to do the job successfully (Shippmann et al., 2000). Competencies represent a whole-person approach to assessing individuals. Competency-based assessments test whether applicants meet the standards of performance required for a given job.

Competencies tend to be either general or technical. General competencies reflect the cognitive and social capabilities (e.g., problem solving, interpersonal skills) required for job performance in a variety of occupations. On the other hand, technical competencies are more specific as they are tailored to the particular knowledge and skill requirements necessary for a specific job. OPM has conducted a number of occupational studies to identify competencies for many Federal occupations. These competencies are available in the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#).

Reference: Shippman, J. S., Ash, R. A., Carr, L., Hesketh, B., Pearlman, K., Battista, M., Eyde, L. D., Kehoe, J., Prien, E. P., & Sanchez, J. I. (2000). The practice of competency modeling. *Personnel Psychology*, 53, 703-740.

### **17. How do I determine which competencies are needed for the position?**

A job analysis identifies the job tasks, roles, and responsibilities of the incumbent performing the job, as well as the competencies required for performance, the resources used during performance, and the context (or environment) in which performance occurs. As such, a job analysis demonstrates the clear connection between job tasks and the competencies necessary to perform those tasks.

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Conducting a [job analysis](#) involves collecting information from job experts. The term subject matter expert (SME) is properly applied to anyone who has direct, up-to-date experience of a job and is familiar with all of its tasks. The person might currently hold the job or supervise the job. SMEs help identify the job's critical tasks, roles, and responsibilities and the competencies needed for successful performance. Critical incidents (i.e., examples of particularly effective or ineffective work behaviors) are also developed in some cases to describe essential job functions.

Documentation of the job analysis process and the linkages between job tasks, competencies, and selection tool content are essential to ensure an assessment strategy meets legal and professional guidelines. Please refer to Appendix D on conducting a job analysis in OPM's [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#) and [Job Analysis](#) on OPM's Assessment and Selection website for more information.

**18. Are all competencies rated as important to job performance appropriate for selection purposes?**

When assessing the appropriateness of an employee selection procedure, it is important to distinguish between competencies that are needed upon entry to the job and those that are acquired after selection, either through on-the-job experience or training. Only those competencies that applicants are expected to possess the first day on the job are appropriate to use for selection purposes.

Conversely, those competencies that employees will be expected to learn on the job should not be the subject of an employee selection requirement. Competencies not considered essential on the first day of the job – even those that eventually will be critical for job performance – can unfairly eliminate otherwise qualified applicants.

Please see Appendix D in the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#) for more information regarding competency importance and ratings.

**19. Am I required to conduct a job analysis each time a position comes open?**

No, you do not need to conduct a new job analysis each time you fill a position. However, if the position is unlike any other position in your agency or if the nature of the position is such that its requirements are likely to change with relative frequency (e.g., information technology positions), you should review the position at least annually to ensure that your selection tools are still valid (and, for positions with requirements that change less frequently, you should still review the position as appropriate). After performing the review through HR and hiring manager collaboration, you can determine whether a new or updated job analysis is needed.

For more information regarding job analysis, please visit [OPM's Assessment and Selection website and the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#).

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**20. To make gathering tasks and competencies for a job analysis easier, are there free task and/or competency “banks” available to the public?**

There are many resources and websites you can use to gather tasks and competencies. While none listed here are a substitute for a comprehensive environmental scan (except for OPM’s Selection and Assessment website), they can provide a good starting point for your job analysis.

Some of these resources include:

- [OPM's Assessment and Selection - Competencies \(opm.gov\)](#)
- [Occupational Information Network \(O\\*Net\)](#)
- [Department of Labor's Competency Model Clearinghouse \(CareerOneStop\)](#)
- [National Institutes of Health's Competencies Dictionary](#)

**21. Can agencies develop their own assessments? If so, what should an agency consider when developing an assessment?**

Yes, agencies can develop – or purchase – their own assessments as long as the development, validation, and use of the assessments are consistent with:

- [5 CFR 300.103](#);
- Chapter 2, Section C, of the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#); and
- The technical standards in the [Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures](#).

Detailed information on assessment method considerations can be found in OPM's [Assessment Decision Guide](#). The guide covers the essential concepts behind personnel assessment and will allow your agency to:

- Learn about the benefits and limitations of various assessment methods and strategies;
- Evaluate and implement assessment tools that help improve the match between jobs and employees; and
- Become familiar with the professional and legal guidelines to follow when administering an assessment program.

The guide also contains an extensive list of resource materials if you need more information on a particular topic and a glossary for quick clarification of assessment terms and concepts.

If an agency is interested in purchasing an assessment, Appendix B of the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#) lists criteria you may want to consider when choosing an assessment vendor. Under delegated examining, the decision to administer assessments for particular occupations and the responsibility to defend the use of those assessments rests with the agencies. Also, many vendors offer professionally developed assessments, including [OPM](#).

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**22. On December 29, 2021, OPM issued [Updated Interim Guidance on EO 13932](#) to provide an extension that requires agencies to fully implement their assessment strategies in two phases: By May 30, 2022, agencies must comply with the requirements of EO 13932 in at least 50% of the instances in which they assess individuals for jobs and full compliance of the EO by December 31, 2022. Will OPM provide guidance to agencies on the use of assessments to continue towards compliance?**

In support of your agency's continued implementation of EO 13932, OPM will also host sessions with agencies and provide additional policy and compliance guidance, including tools and resources to meet the requirements of the EO.

The aforementioned sessions and further policy guidance will be informed by multiple OPM sessions previously held with Federal agencies, data and information collected from Federal agencies, as well as engagement activities with agency talent teams and Chief Human Capital Officers.

### **Hiring Policy**

**23. How do the new qualification and assessment policies impact non-competitive actions, such as reassignments and transfers?**

There is no change to how agencies effect non-competitive actions. Appointments to competitive service positions must be made from individuals who meet OPM qualifications, with limited exceptions. When filling positions non-competitively, agencies must determine selectees meet the qualification requirements of the position through meeting the education and/or experience requirements described in the OPM Qualification Standard for the occupation at the grade level of the position being filled. Agencies have the option to verify, through use of a passing grade assessment, that an individual has the right KSAs/competencies to be successful in the position. This additional assessment is optional.

**24. How do the new qualification and assessment policies impact selections under special appointing authorities?**

There is no change to how agencies use special appointing authorities. Appointments to competitive service positions must be made from individuals who meet OPM qualifications, with limited exceptions. When filling positions under special appointing authorities, agencies must follow the specific requirements of the authority being used. Agencies must ensure selectees meet the qualification requirements of the position by meeting the education and/or experience requirements described in the OPM General Schedule Qualification Standard for the occupation at the grade level of the position being filled; and through use of a passing grade assessment that indicates an individual has the needed KSAs/competencies to be successful in the position, if used. Additional assessment for rating and ranking purposes would depend on the requirements of the appointing authority used.

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**25. How do the new qualification and assessment policies impact filling positions under direct hire authorities authorized by OPM?**

There is no change to how agencies use direct hire authority authorized by OPM. Appointments to competitive service positions must be made from individuals who meet OPM qualifications, with limited exceptions. When filling positions under direct hire authorities, agencies must follow the specific requirements of the authority being used. Agencies must ensure selectees meet the qualification requirements of the position through meeting the education and/or experience requirements described in the OPM Qualification Standard for the occupation at the grade level of the position being filled. Agencies must determine whether an applicant has the level of proficiency needed to perform the work of the position being filled. This may be done through the use of a passing grade assessment. The provisions governing direct hire waive rating and ranking, so agencies should not be making a further assessment of an applicant's relative ability to perform the duties of the position.

**26. How do the new qualification standards and assessment policy impact Pathways Programs?**

There is no change to how agencies use the Pathways Program authorities.

- Internship Program – Individuals may be evaluated against either agency-developed standards; the OPM Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Schedule D, Pathway Internship Positions; or the OPM Qualification Standard for the competitive service position being filled. ([5 CFR 362.203\(c\)](#)). In filling Internship positions, agencies are required to follow 5 CFR part 302 procedures. Agencies have the option to verify, through use of a passing grade assessment, that an individual has the right KSAs/competencies to be successful in the position.
- Recent Graduates Program - Individuals are evaluated using OPM Qualification Standard for the occupation at the grade level of the position being filled. ([5 CFR 362.303\(d\)](#)). When filling Recent Graduates positions, agencies are required to follow 5 CFR part 302 procedures. Agencies have the option to verify, through use of a passing grade assessment, that an individual has the right KSAs/competencies to be successful in the position.
- Presidential Management Fellows qualification requirements for evaluating applicants are established by OPM. ([5 CFR 362.402\(c\)](#)).

**27. How do the new qualification standards and assessment policy impact qualifications in a reduction in force?**

Generally, an employee is qualified for assignment under [5 CFR 351.701](#) if the employee meets the OPM Qualification Standard and any selective factor established by the agency. Agencies have the option to verify, through use of a passing grade assessment, that an individual meets the qualification requirements for assignment under [5 CFR 351.702\(a\)](#).