

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE INTERIM PROCEDURES

ADVANCED STEP PLACEMENT for INITIAL APPOINTMENTS

This Standard Operating Procedure supercedes SOP 09-I, revised 06/09/95, and all subsequent revisions. A full, formally revised SOP is in process.

I. ADVANCED STEP PLACEMENT-INITIAL APPOINTMENT

A. Purpose

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to provide guidelines and required procedures to departments for approving advanced step placement upon initial appointment and upon appointment of current employees to a lower class in a different class series.

Advanced step placement is an exception to the normal starting rate of pay in a salary range for new employees. The purpose of allowing for advanced step placement is to give management flexibility in the pay plan in order to competitively compensate exceptionally qualified individuals and offer additional compensation for positions difficult to fill.

Advanced step placement is an exception to the merit principle and is strictly controlled in order to assure consistency in the pay plan providing like pay for like work. Approval of advanced step placement must be based on the exceptional qualifications of the individual and/or difficulty in recruiting for the position.

B. Scope

The requirements in this SOP apply in all cases where exceptional qualifications of the applicant and/or recruiting difficulty is used as justification for the advanced step placement of an employee. This may include initial appointment or the appointment of a current employee to a lower class not in the same class series. No advanced step hire may be authorized for nonpermanent employees unless the request is thoroughly documented and found to be an extremely compelling argument (Personnel Memorandum 90-8). *Step placement for appointments made through transfer, rehire, promotion, and demotion are not covered by these procedures.*

For purposes of this SOP, the following definitions are applied:

"initial appointment" means the first appointment of an employee into a position covered by the Personnel Act.

"qualified" means that an applicant has a background of training, education and experience that satisfies the published minimum requirements (MQs) for employment in the job class.

NOTE: The recruitment system allows the creation of up to ten "desired qualification" (DQ) questions to further screen and sort qualified applicants. Answers to DQ questions do NOT establish qualification for the job class, but can be used to establish eligibility for further consideration. When the answers to DQ questions are used to sort or rank qualified applicants, the sorting or ranking criteria must be applied to the entire group of qualified applicants.

C. Authority

Personnel Rule 2 AAC 07.320, Article 21, Section 6(A), of the General Government Unit Agreement, and Article 24, Section 6(A), of the Supervisory Unit Agreement provide for exceptions to placement at the minimum rate of pay in a salary range for initial appointments.

D. Guidelines

Advanced step placements for initial appointments or appointments to a lower class in a different class series must be based on the exceptional qualifications of the appointee and/or difficulty in recruiting for the position and must be approved prior to the appointment.

1. Exceptional qualifications

- a. The appointee's exceptional qualifications are demonstrated using the following criteria:

The training, education and/or experience of the appointee must substantially exceed both the minimum qualifications for the job class, and the training, education and/or experience of all other qualified candidates,

and

The exceptional qualifications will be of particular benefit in this position.

The delegated authority is responsible for:

Reviewing the recruitment to assure a legal appointment.

Reviewing the application of the appointee and applications of other qualified applicants to determine if the qualifications of the appointee substantially exceed those of all other qualified applicants.

Reviewing the Position Description (PD) to verify the appointee's exceptional qualifications are relevant to the position.

- b. If it is determined that the appointee's qualifications exceed those of the other qualified applicants, if the appointee's qualifications exceed the level of those required to meet the minimum qualifications and if those qualifications will be of particular benefit in the position, advanced step placement may be approved.

For each complete year of experience at a level higher than that needed to qualify for the job class, one step above step A can be authorized, up to step D; for each earned college degree above the qualifying degree requirement for the job class, one step above A step can be authorized, up to step D. In no case is a step beyond step D authorized based solely on qualifications.

2. Recruiting difficulties

- a. Difficulty in recruiting for a position must be demonstrated by active, recent recruiting producing fewer than five qualified, eligible and available applicants.

The delegated authority is responsible for verifying the recruitment history. Continuous open recruitment cannot be the sole justification for advanced step placement.

- b. When difficulty in recruiting is the sole reason for considering advanced step hire, steps above A step can be awarded. Steps up to and including step D may be authorized.
3. When recruiting difficulties and exceptional qualifications exist together, higher steps up to and including the final merit step in the range may be considered. Neither exceptional qualifications nor recruiting difficulties can be used as a basis for granting longevity or service increments.

E. Procedures

1. The delegated authority is responsible for maintaining files on all advanced step hire requests and approvals. These files must contain the following documents:
 - a) Request for advanced step placement giving justification based on recruiting difficulties and/or exceptional qualifications. For advanced step authorizations based on difficulty of recruitment, the dates, types and results of active recruitments must be included in the justification.
 - b) A list of the applicants and the disposition comments assigned.
 - c) For advanced step authorizations based on an applicant's exceptional qualifications, a written comparison of the training, education and experience of the appointee to each other qualified applicant on the list. Also included must be a discussion or outline of the specific benefit(s) to the vacancy.

Please see Addendum A for a suggested work sheet.

These files must be available to the Division of Personnel staff for inspection and audit.

2. The delegated authority must submit an annual report for the fiscal year to the director of the Division of Personnel on the department's activity in advanced step placement by July 31 each year. This report shall include the names of appointees granted advanced steps, their date of appointment, the PCN and job class of the position, and the approved step placement.
3. For departments not accepting the authority delegated by the director of the Division of Personnel to approve advanced step placement, similar procedures will be followed. Advanced step placement will be based on the same criteria. The delegated authority is responsible for requesting approval for the advanced step from the director of the Division of Personnel prior to the appointment and for providing the justification and documentation required in E(1) above. Files containing the documentation for advanced step placements approved by the Division of Personnel will be maintained within the Division of Personnel and the report described in E(2) above will not be required.

ADDENDUM A

Advanced Step Placement Work Sheet

Appointee: _____

Date of Appointment: _____ Job Class: _____

Minimum Qualifications:

Applicant's Name	Summary of Qualifications

Analysis:

Approved []

Step Authorized

Disapproved []

Signed _____ Date _____