

## Standard Operating Procedures Noncompetitive Promotions Based on Accretion of Duties

### 1. Purpose.

This instruction provides guidance to Business Service Center Human Resources (HR) Branches on criteria for effecting a non-competitive promotion based upon the accretion of duties, e.g., addition of new duties and responsibilities.

### 2. Coverage.

This guidance applies to all agencies within the REE mission area to include the Agricultural Research Service, Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service, and National Institute of Food and Agriculture. It covers all positions covered by Title 5 in the competitive service, General Schedule (GS) and the Federal Wage System (WG, WL, and WS). Positions classified using the Research Grade Evaluation Guide are exempt.

### 3. References.

- 5 CFR 335.103 (c) (3) (ii), Promotion and Internal Placement
- 5 CFR 511, Subpart F-Classification Appeals
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Position Classification Standards; Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, August 2009; and The Classifier's Handbook, August 1991
- OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide, September 2006
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Departmental Regulation 4030-335-002, Merit Promotion and Internal Placement, August 23, 2013
- REE Policies and Procedures 431.1, Position Management and Position Classification, October 2, 2002

### 4. Policy.

a. It is the policy of the Human Resources Division (HRD) to maximize the use of the merit promotion process and encourage free and open competition by posting all vacancies. USDA and the HRD believe that this strengthens the adherence to Merit System Principles required by law and regulation. Frequent use of exceptions to this undermines and weakens these Merit System Principles. Accretion of duties promotions should be rare,

since positions are thoroughly reviewed to ensure that all paramount and essential duties required of a position are included during the classification process. The HRD recognizes that a permanent non-competitive promotion to a reclassified position may be processed as an exception to merit promotion procedures. Examples include the application of new OPM classification standards, correction of a previous classification error, and the re-promotion of an employee who had previously competed for a higher-grade position.

b. Managers and supervisors who seek a noncompetitive promotion based upon a reclassification of new and additional duties and responsibilities must contact their HR Specialist to discuss their needs and options. The HR Specialist must inform the manager that an accretion of duties promotion is not automatic. There are other options including reassigning the higher grade duties to another employee; having the duties performed in another work unit; or submitting a competitive promotion in accordance with OHRM's Merit Promotion and Internal Placement plan.

c. HR Specialists must ensure that all requests for noncompetitive promotions are fully documented and meet all the requirements for an exception to the merit promotion process. Proper documentation includes a new Position Description (PD) that adequately describes the additional duties and responsibilities assigned to the employee; a Position Description Coversheet, AD-332, signed, and dated by the manager with authority over the position; and all justification documents that support the manager's assertion that an accretion of duties noncompetitive promotion is warranted.

d. All information submitted for an accretion of duties noncompetitive promotion must be reviewed and certified by the servicing HR specialist before forwarding to a contractor for classification.

e. Prior to granting a promotion based upon an accretion of duties, concurrence from the HR Director is required. The Classification Officer (CO) will conduct a paper review of the documents, and prepare a written recommendation for the Human Resources Director.

f. In the event the HR Director does not support the request for a noncompetitive promotion based upon reclassification, the HR Specialist or the manager may submit written information not previously considered, for reconsideration. The CO will prepare a written notice for the HR Director, when the new information changes the CO's recommendation.

## **5. Requirements.**

a. In order to determine whether an employee meets the requirements for a noncompetitive promotion, the HR Specialist must receive the following documents from the first line supervisor:

Documents that are to be submitted:

- (1) A completed and signed Request for Personnel Action, SF-52;

(2) Justification for Promotion Based on Reclassification (Accretion of Duties);  
(3) A Position Description Coversheet, AD-332, that is signed and dated by the manager with the authority over the position; and

(4) A new draft PD, which includes the additional duties and responsibilities.

Managers are encouraged to include the percentage of time spent for each major duty.

b. Noncompetitive promotions based on an accretion of duties must meet the requirements set forth by USDA Departmental Regulation 4030-335-002 (paragraph 9k):

Requirements:

(1) The major duties and basic functions of the current position must be absorbed into the new position;

(2) The current position must be abolished;

(3) The new position must not have any known promotion potential beyond its accreted grade level;

(4) The addition of higher level duties and responsibilities must not result in the abolishment of another position, reduce the known promotion potential of another position, or adversely impact another occupied position;

(5) No other employee(s) in the same organizational unit may be performing similar duties prior to the addition of the new duties and responsibilities which precipitated a promotion based on accretion of duties; and

(6) The employee meets time-in-grade and qualification standards.

c. The following actions will not be considered for a promotion based on an accretion of duties:

(1) Promotion from one-grade interval position to a two-grade interval position (e.g. GS-5/6/7 to GS-9/11);

(2) Promotion from one occupational series to another occupational series (e.g., GS-685 to GS-1101);

(3) Movement to a vacant, higher level position;

(4) Promotion from an identical additional position within the same organization;

(5) Promotion from a non-supervisory position to a supervisory position;

- (6) Promotion from a non-leader position to a leader position; and
- (7) Accretion of duties across organizational lines.

## 6. Actions.

### Requesting Official:

- Draft and submit a new position description, and signed Position Description Cover Sheet, AD-332
- Submit a Request for Personnel Action, SF-52, for a noncompetitive promotion
- Provide justification documents for a noncompetitive promotion
- Participate in position audit

### Human Resources Specialist:

- Conduct position audits with the incumbent and supervisor
- Prepare a classification evaluation report using applicable classification standards and guides to explain the rationale for the classification decision
- Submit electronic copies of the signed SF-52, AD-332, PD, evaluation report, and justification documents to the Supervisory Human Resources Specialist for review

### Supervisory Human Resources Specialist:

- Review documents and discuss recommendation with the HR Specialist
- Request additional information, when necessary
- Forward electronic documents to the Classification Officer

### Classification Officer:

- Review PD, AD-332, evaluation report, and justification documents
- Write a short narrative to concur or nonconcur with the request
- Submit narrative and documentation to the Human Resources Director for consideration

### Human Resources Director:

- Review documentation and Classification Officer's rationale
- Approve or disapprove the request
- Sign block 29 of the SF-52 to document approval
- Draft e-mail to document non-concurrence, and forward to the Classification Officer
- Return all documents to the Classification Officer

Once a decision is rendered by the HR Director, the Classification Officer will notify the servicing HR specialist and Supervisory HR Specialist of the determination by e-mail. If the request was approved, the signed SF-52 will be returned to the servicing HR specialist. The servicing HR specialist will notify the requesting official of the decision.

**7. Processing and Retention of Documentation:**

a. If the HR Director concurs with the request for a noncompetitive promotion based upon reclassification, the personnel action will be processed.

b. All position related documentation would be retained and attached to the revised PD in the organization's PD book and electronic PD library, for as long as the PD remains active in the organization.

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(Classification Officer)  
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Justification for Noncompetitive Promotions  
Based on Accretion of Duties

This is to request a noncompetitive promotion for (Employee Name) from the position of (Title, Series, Grade, and Position number) as provided in this document.

State what changes have occurred in the employee's duties. Specifically, address each of the following:

1. Describe the new duties and reasons for changes in the employee's duties.
2. Does the new position absorb the major duties of the old position? Will the old position be abolished?
3. Do you anticipate promotion potential beyond the accreted grade level? If so, why?
  4. State the percentages of time spent on each major duty in the position description, to include the newly assigned work.
  5. Has the new work noted above been described in the position description?
  6. What work, if any, will the incumbent no longer perform?
  7. Did anyone perform these duties in the past? If the duties were not performed in the past, what created the need for these duties?
  8. Why did management have no choice but to assign the new work to the incumbent?
  9. Are there employee(s) in the same series and grade in the same organization as the employee being recommended for promotion? Could they have assumed these duties?
  10. What consideration was given to assigning these new duties to an already established higher graded position?
  11. What additional training, if any, did the employee receive to perform the higher level duties?
  12. Will the new position remain in the same organization as the old position and will it retain the same supervisor?

I certify that the responses to the questions above are accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Signature

I certify that the employee and the position meet all the requirements for a noncompetitive promotion.

\_\_\_\_\_  
HR Specialist's Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
HR Specialist's Signature

I have discussed the recommendation with the servicing HR Specialist and agree the requirements are met for a noncompetitive promotion.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisory HR Specialist's Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisory HR Specialist's Signature