

## ***Job Announcement Express Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)***

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### **Job Analysis Overview**

- What is a job analysis?
- When to conduct a job analysis?
- Why use a job analysis?
- Uses for a job analysis?

#### **Q: “What is a Job Analysis?”**

- A systematic examination of the tasks performed in a job and the competencies required to perform them
- A study of what workers do on the job, what competencies are necessary to do it, what resources are used in doing it, and the conditions under which it is done
- A job analysis is NOT an evaluation of the person currently performing the job

#### **Q: “When to Conduct a Job Analysis?”**

It depends on the novelty of the position and the currency of the most recent job analysis for that occupation. However, if the requirements of the position are relatively static, then the position may only need to be reviewed as needed.

– *From the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook*

#### **Q: “When Should You Conduct a Job Analysis?”**

- When the position you seek to fill is unlike any other position in your agency
- When the requirements of the position 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

#### **Q: “Why Use a Job Analysis?”**

- To establish and document the tasks and competencies required for the job
- To identify the job-relatedness of the tasks and competencies
- To form the basis of applicant assessment tools
- To help provide legal defensibility
- To enhance the validity and utility of human resource products
- Legal requirements

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

- The basic duties and responsibilities;
- The knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the duties and responsibilities; and
- The factors that are important in evaluating candidates

– *5 CFR Part 300*

In addition, the Uniform Guidelines on Employment Selection Procedures (1978), (29 CFR Part 1607) ([www.uniformguidelines.com](http://www.uniformguidelines.com)), provide a set of generally accepted principles on employee selection procedures, including when and how to conduct a job analysis that will meet the standards of the Guidelines.

Job analysis data can be used to determine:

- Job requirements
- Training needs
- Position classification and grade levels
- Other personnel actions, such as promotions and performance appraisals

## **Category Rating FAQ**

### ***Q: “What is the purpose of category rating?”***

The purpose of category rating is to increase the number of qualified applicants an agency has to choose from for selection while preserving veterans' preference rights. The category rating approach gives agencies the flexibility to assess and select from among applicants in the highest quality category without regard to the "rule of three."

### ***Q: “Are agencies required to use category rating for all competitive examinations or can they continue to use the traditional “rule of three?”***

Yes. The Presidential Memorandum directs agencies to use the category rating approach in place of the "rule of three" approach.

### ***Q: “What does an agency need to have in place before implementing category rating?”***

An agency is required to have a category rating policy in place that describes how applicants will be evaluated and placed in two or more quality categories.

### ***Q: “How are quality categories defined?”***

Quality categories are defined through job analysis. The categories should be written to reflect the requirements to perform the job successfully and to distinguish differences in the quality of candidates' job-related competencies or knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Each category has eligible candidates who have demonstrated through an assessment(s) similar levels of proficiency on the critical job-related competencies/KSAs. Some factors to consider when developing categories may include:

- Breadth and scope of competencies/KSAs;
- Increased levels of difficulty or complexity of competencies/KSAs;
- Successful performance on the job; and
- Level of the job.

The highest quality category definition should not be written in broad terms solely to increase the number of eligible candidates who may be considered for selection. Instead, the highest quality category definition should be written to identify the best qualified individuals for the position.

Example: Agency uses two quality categories: Highly Qualified and Qualified. In filling a Human Resources Specialist, GS-201-14, policy position, the agency might define the Highly Qualified category as experience in a senior level HR position writing regulations or agency policy or providing guidance to an agency on staffing, downsizing, realignment, classification, or compensation. The Qualified category might include senior level HR operations experience in staffing, downsizing, realignments, classification, or compensation. More information on how to define quality categories, including examples, is located in the [Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#) in Chapter 5, Section B, Rating Procedures (Category Rating).

### ***Q: “May agencies use category rating to fill any job that uses an assessment(s) that generates a numerical score?”***

Yes. Agencies may use test scores as part of the job-related criteria used to place candidates into categories, as long as the test assesses job-related KSAs/competencies. When establishing a category definition with numerical scores, agencies must be consistent with the technical standards in the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (see 29 CFR Part 1607) with respect to the development of any applicant assessment procedure and comply with the laws, regulations, and policies of merit selection (see 5 U.S.C. § 2301 and 5 U.S.C. § 2302).

***Q: “How are candidates selected under category rating?”***

Agencies make selections from within the highest quality category regardless of the number of candidates (i.e., the rule of three does not apply). However, preference eligibles receive absolute preference within each category. If a preference eligible is in the category, an agency may not select a non-preference eligible unless the agency requests to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 3318, and the request is approved.

If there are fewer than three candidates in the highest quality category, agencies may combine the highest category with the next lower category and make selections from the merged category. The newly merged category would then constitute the highest quality category. Preference eligibles must be listed ahead of non-preference eligibles in the newly merged category. Once again, as long as a preference eligible remains in the merged category, an agency may not select a non-preference eligible unless the agency receives approval to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 3318.

***Q: “When does veterans' preference apply?”***

Veterans' preference applies after the candidates are assessed.

***Q: “How are preference eligibles given preference in selection under category rating?”***

Preference eligibles who meet the qualification requirements are assessed and placed in the appropriate quality categories. Preference eligibles receive veterans' preference by being listed ahead of non-preference eligibles within the same quality category in which they are placed. No preference points, i.e., 5 or 10 points, are added to the preference eligibles' rating. An agency may not select a non-preference eligible if there is a preference eligible in the same category unless the agency receives approval to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 3318.

***Q: “How do preference eligibles who have a compensable service-connected disability receive preference in selection?”***

Preference eligibles who meet the qualification requirements for the position and who have a compensable service-connected disability of at least 10 percent must be listed in the highest quality category (except in the case of scientific or professional positions at the GS-9 level or higher). As noted above, an agency may not select a non-preference eligible over a preference eligible in the same category unless the agency receives approval to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 3318.

***Q: “Are the procedures used to pass over a preference eligible under category rating the same as those used in traditional numeric rating, ranking, and selection?”***

Yes. The procedures used to pass over a preference eligible under category rating are the same as those used in the traditional “rule of three” process. In the traditional and category rating processes, an agency may not select a non-preference eligible over a higher ranked preference eligible or a preference eligible within the same category, respectively, unless the agency receives approval to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 3318.

***Q: “May an agency apply the “three consideration” rule under category rating?”***

No. The “three consideration” rule that is prescribed in 5 CFR 332.405 does not apply in category rating.

### ***Q: “Does the hiring manager have to interview all the candidates within the category?”***

OPM does not require the hiring manager to interview everyone within a category. All candidates within a category are considered equally qualified. The hiring manager may interview one or more applicants. Managers should refer to their agency-specific policy on this issue because it may vary by agency.

### ***Q: “Can an applicant appeal his or her rating under category rating?”***

Yes. Applicants will have the same right of appeal (reconsideration) on an examination rating as they do now. The agency must explain to the applicant why the applicant was placed in a particular category (see [5 CFR 300.104\(b\)](#)). Each agency is required to have an appeal/reconsideration procedure in place.

### ***Q: “Are agencies required to evaluate their category rating process?”***

Yes. Agencies who have not already implemented their category rating policy must submit a report to Congress in each of the 3 years following the implementation of their policy.

## **Job Questionnaire FAQ**

Screening applicants with an occupational questionnaire? Here are some helpful hints on writing quality questionnaire items.

### ***Identify what to assess***

First, identify the competencies you plan to measure, based on your job analysis. The competencies you identify should relate to tasks and activities that can be seen and measured.

Generally, you will want to select about five (5) competencies as the focus of the occupational questionnaire.

### ***Write Behaviorally-Based Items***

- The rule of thumb is to ask about 5 to 10 quality items for each competency.
- Clearly distinguish competencies (e.g., be sure an item doesn't measure both technical AND general content)
- Consider level of experience required (e.g., should the item cover very job-specific knowledge or general job-related behavior?)
- Items should distinguish among candidates (i.e., break items into different levels of proficiency)
- Use observable (verifiable) terms (e.g., "write a report" vs. "develop a report" as a measure for Written Communication)
- Write clearly and succinctly (e.g., "Audits employee time reports" vs. "Audits employee time reports of persons under own supervision by checking for errors in addition and hours claimed")

### ***Build consistency into your process***

- Establish clear standards of quality
- Consider designating certain individuals to develop occupational questionnaires
- Evaluate your results to determine the usefulness of your items

### ***Did you know?***

The general formula for writing items is:

Perform *What?* + to *Whom* or *What?* + to produce *What?* or *Why?* *How?*

(ex, Sort + incoming mail + into groups for distribution)