

PD Express Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: "What is the objective of the Service's position classification program?"

Our objective is to establish a classification program that:

- Implements the principle of equal pay for substantially equal work;
- Recognizes that variations in ranges of basic pay for different employees should be proportionate to substantial differences in the difficulty, responsibility, and qualification requirements of the work they perform; and
- Facilitates human resource management in areas such as compensation, recruitment, selection, promotion, and training of employees.

Q: "What terms do you need to know to understand the PD system?"

Accretion of Duties Promotion

An accretion of duties promotion is an *exception to merit promotion rules*. We give this type of promotion when we reclassify a position at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities. We may make such a non-competitive promotion if the initial position has been absorbed into the new position and the promotion does not directly affect other employees in the organization (duplication of work efforts or dilution of higher-graded positions). The additional duties and responsibilities frequently represent an outgrowth, over a significant period of time, of the initial position.

Career Ladder or Developmental Positions

Career ladder or developmental positions are positions that we establish *below the full performance level* to give us more recruitment options. For these positions, we select the employee at a lower grade and provide additional training and experience that will allow us to promote the employee non-competitively to the full performance level.

Classification Standards

Classification standards are the basis for assigning the appropriate title, series, and grade to each position. *OPM issues classification standards*.

Official Title

An official title is what we assign a position in accordance with OPM classification standards.

Organizational Title

We may assign an organizational title to more accurately reflect the position's responsibility within the organizational unit.

Q: "What is an SPD?"

A Standard Position Description (SPD) is created by the HR department, much like a template, in order to:

- Describe the work that can apply to a number of *positions which similar duties* and/or positions that are suitable for *establishment at multiple locations* within the Service.
- Ensure *consistent classification* of title, series and grade level between positions based on the work described.
- Enable a more efficient and reliable process for creation of *legally compliant* and *organizationally aligned* position descriptions as the first step in the hiring process.

Q: "When and how should a supervisor use a Standard Position Description (SPD)?"

You should use an SPD when the *major duties* described represent *at least 80%* of the assigned work.

You may use SPDs when requesting an upgrade to an encumbered position if the described major duties represent at least 80% of

the assigned work. Although using the SPD eliminates the need to classify the PD, you still must follow Merit Promotion Principles to determine if you can promote the employee non-competitively through an [accretion of duties promotion](#). For this type of promotion, the Regional HR office must perform an audit.

Using an SPD to create a Position Description:

1. The Division of Human Capital classifies SPDs. *No additional classification review is required prior to use.*
2. The first and second level supervisors certify, by electronically signing to confirm that the selected SPD is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of the work and its organizational relationship.
3. The Regional HR office completes a position management review of the selected SPD to ensure organizational suitability.
4. *Supervisors may amend an SPD* so that the person in the position may successfully perform work not originally described in the SPD (e.g., motor boat operator, collateral duty safety officer, supervision of one or two employees). We frequently use SPD amendments to document a requirement for a special license or certification.
5. *An SPD may not be amended to* change title, series, or grade level of a position.
6. The HR office reviews all non-standard SPD amendments that have no impact on title, series, and grade of the position.
7. You can search for standard SPD amendments using the Search feature of PD Express

Q: "Why such a complex approval process for a job description?"

OPM maintains guidelines for developing and classifying positions, including:

- o "Position Classification and Job Grading Standards"
- o "Introduction to the Position Classification Standards"
- o "Introduction to the Federal Wage System Job Grading System"
- o The "Classifier's Handbook"

Position Descriptions (PDs) are the basis for establishing what duties and responsibilities employees must fulfill **to earn their salaries and to be eligible for any additional compensation**. They are the legal basis for:

- Appointment of an employee
- Payment of salary or wages
- Establishment of job qualifications and selection criteria to fill a position
- Development of performance plans and objectives
- Preparation of Individual Development Plans
- Review and evaluation of the employee's work
- The determination of the rights and responsibilities of an employee.

Because supervisors have the sole responsibility and authority to assign work, they must ensure that PDs are current and accurately describe the major duties and responsibilities of the employees occupying the positions. Supervisors and other managers use PDs to:

- Detect duplication of work or overlapping responsibilities between different employees
- Identify competencies to establish selection criteria for evaluating applicants for positions
- Inform applicants or appointees about duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and working conditions
- Improve work methods and design organizations
- Review job content to establish performance standards
- Analyze recommendations for incentive awards
- Evaluate training needs
- Establish competitive levels for reduction-in-force
- Serve as the official record of assigned duties and responsibilities in classification appeal cases.

Supervisors must certify the accuracy of the duties and responsibilities that they assign to each position under their supervision. **A PD is published and available for use only after both the supervisor and the classification official certify it.**

Q: "What is a PD?"

A **Position Description (PD)** is the official record of the work that you perform on a regular, recurring basis. The PD addresses the specific position duties and responsibilities, as well as various factors to further explain the position, such as the knowledge, skill, and ability required to perform the duties. Each PD is analyzed by the Human Resources Office to identify various position and pay related aspects of the position, including the grade, pay plan (General Schedule or Wage Grade), occupational series and title, and Fair Labor Standards Act code. This analysis

is called Position Classification.

Q: "What is the format for writing PDs?"

All PDs should contain the following three basic sections:

The Introduction:

The Introduction Statement will *auto-populate* for all new, unique PDs in PD Express. The content in this section is editable to the PD Developer, but in general, this section should contain:

- a brief summary of the primary purpose(s) for the position
- the positions placement within the organization
- a short organizational mission statement and the position's relationship in fulfilling the mission of the organization
- the physical location of the position

Major Duties:

Duties are categorized as Major Duties and Other Duties.

- Percent of time breakdown *is required* for Major Duties.
- At least one major duty is required;
- no more than 8 Major Duties can be entered for a single PD
- Major Duties must sum to 100% before the PD can move out of Draft status.
- Hiring managers may input Qualifications (Selective Factors or Quality Ranking Factors) at the duty level or at the PD level, then designate the duties as selective factors or quality ranking factors
- Changing text in major duties, factor level, factor language and/or % of time per major duties will result in a warning statement notifying the hiring manager that this change may require full classification.

Factor Evaluation:

- Point levels for a given job category, series and grade are automatically determined based on FES if you are leveraging this standard.
- Default factor level and text for FES factors are also based on the job category, series and grade level selected.
- Factor level & text can be edited for all standards; These changes will be tracked.
- A change to the proposed grade level will not modify the factor details. This will ensure that edits to the factor level & text remain intact.
- If the Factor levels / points are modified enough that the grade is no longer in synch with the grade of the PD, a message will be displayed to the user notifying them of this discrepancy. The PD can not be approved until this discrepancy is addressed and resolved.

Q: "When is an evaluation statement needed? What is its purpose?"

The evaluation statement establishes the rationale for the classification determinations of the pay plan, title, series, and grade as well as credit for each grading factor.

An evaluation statement is needed in the following circumstances:

- Supervisory Positions
- Positions that exceed the published grade level criteria in the governing standard
- Positions for which there are no specific published grade level criteria
- Positions that are borderline GS/FWS

Q: "How does the PD system assign PD numbers?"

PD Express will automatically generate a unique PD Number for every PD created in the system once it reaches "Published" status.

Q: "Who can create a PD in the system?"

- Standard Position Description (SPD) can only be created by HR
- Depending on user role, user can create or edit PDs under their organization
- Only one review / rework cycle between hiring manager and HR will be allowed by the system prior to approval and classification.
- System will allow user to create a career ladder PD at FPL and attach a statement of difference summarizing key differences between lower grade PDs or create full PDs at each level

Q: "Can I create a PD from an existing PD?"

Yes! You can create a PD creation from an SPD in "published" status or PD in "Published" status (but not from PDs in "draft" status)

The system is designed to open an existing PD in edit mode, copy all existing information, then [assign it a new PD number](#). This new PD will be in "draft" status until it goes through the review/approval process and is published.

Note: Speed up the process by limiting the amount of change to SPD language. Excessive changes will necessitate a trip through the entire classification process for the modified SPD.

Classification occurs when:

- 20% change to Major Duty
- Elimination of Major Duty that accounts for $\geq 30\%$ of time

Q: "Who can sign and approve a PD?"

Two (2) levels of approval are required to publish a PD

1. Supervisor approval
2. Classifier approval

In some cases there may be as many as four (4) signatures on a PD:

- New PDs (not based on an existing PD) require two Supervisor signatures
- Grade 14 / 15 PDs require two (2) Supervisor signatures
- PD Express allows for a PD to have two (2) HR signatures

This multi-tiered approval model ensures that the duties are accurate and in compliance from all perspectives. The HR Classifier is the only role with rights to publish a PD.

Q: "Why is there a separate classification system for supervisory positions?"

Background: The focus of supervisory positions warrants a separate classification. Supervisory positions focus on the supervision of others, program oversight, and / or organizing the work of subordinates into a single product. Supervisory positions are classified according to the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG). The GSSG uses a point-factor evaluation approach with six evaluation factors designed specifically for supervisory positions. The general classification concepts, principles, and policies used in determining non-supervisory GS positions also apply for supervisory positions. However, supervisory positions use the GSSG format rather than the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Each factor has several factor level definitions which are assigned specific point values.

IMPORTANT: Individuals performing supervisory and related managerial responsibilities are those that:

1. require accomplishment of work through combined technical and administrative direction of others
2. constitute a major duty occupying at least 25 percent of the position's time
3. meet at least the lowest level of Factor 3 in this guide, based on supervising federal civilian employees, federal military or uniformed FWS employees, volunteers, or other non-contractor personnel. These positions must demonstrate that 25% of their time is spent directly supervising (technical and administrative) or indirectly supervising (through subordinate supervisors) employees. If less than 25% of the position's time is spent supervising, the position is classified under FES rather than GSSG rules.

Q: "Is there a special way to establish supervisory titles?"

Titling Instructions: To determine the title for a supervisory position, reference the position classification standard, classification guide, and/or series guidance used to determine the occupational series of the position. In most instances, these guidelines require

use of the word "Supervisory" as a prefix to the appropriate occupational title. However, in some occupations, certain titles (e.g., "Budget Officer") denote supervision and the supervisory prefix are not used.

If the specific titling criteria is missing in a classification standard, apply the titling instructions located in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards and the Handbook of Occupational Groups and Series. Positions which meet the minimum requirements for coverage by this guide should be titled as supervisory even if non-supervisory work in the position is grade controlling. Although agencies may independently construct titles for informal or internal purposes, it is not permissible to use the words "Supervisory" or "Supervisor" in the official title of a position unless the position meets the minimum criteria for classification by this guide.