

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE VSR POSITION (for a full understanding of the new requirements of the Skills Certification program, please read Article 67)

1. Can a station recruit for the Full Performance Level (FPL) GS-11 VSR position at a lower grade level? I.e., GS-9; 10

No

2. Can a VSR who was reassigned to the FPL GS-10, be non-competitively promoted to the GS-11 at a later date?

Employees hired under the FPL GS-11 VSR position will have the opportunity to achieve GS-11 if they pass the VSR Skills Certification test within three consecutive attempts. (See Article 67, Section 1d)

3. Will employees be given the opportunity to “opt out” of taking Skills Certification testing and be reassigned to the FPL, GS-10?

No. Public Law 110-389, Section 225 requires that all claims processors undergo skills certification testing. (See Article 67, Preamble)

4. If a VSR passes certification during one of the three opportunities, will he/she still receive a bonus?

No. Bonuses will no longer be paid for passing the Skills Certification tests.

5. Is there an expectation that GS-11 VSR selectees be certified GS-10s?

There is an expectation but not a requirement.

6. When will VSRs (GS-7 or GS-9) have the opportunity to attempt Certification?

Article 67 states that Skills Certification testing is not intended for employees who are in a trainee (non-journey) status. (See Article 67, Section 1a) A VSR would not be considered journey level and eligible to take the Skills Certification test until he or she reaches the GS 10 “full performance” status.

7. Section 9 of Article 67 states the employee’s electronic-Official Personnel File (e-OPF) will indicate the employee has successfully met the requirement of Skills Certification. How will this be accomplished? Will documentation be required for initial certification only or also for the periodic recertification?

The skills certification contractor will send a letter notifying the appropriate RO director that an employee has passed the skills certification test. The RO will forward a copy of the letter to the servicing HR Center to be filed on the temporary side of the e-OPF for both the initial certification and periodic recertification.

8. If GS-10 VSRs fail certification after 3 opportunities and are placed in a full performance GS-10 position, how do they get to the GS-11 position?

They will need to compete for the job and be selected for the position.

9. Can a GS-11 targeted VSR opt out of the full performance GS-11 and request placement in the GS-10 full performance position?

Yes. A journey level VSR will still be required to sit for certification.

10. Is there a re-certification process for the VSRs?

All employees covered by PL 110-389, Section 225 will be required to sit for recertification every 2 years.

11. Who is responsible for tracking/monitoring the number of times the VSR skill certification test is taken by individuals?

Regional Offices will be responsible for tracking and monitoring the number of times a VSR takes the Skills Certification test. Compensation Service and the Pension and Fiduciary Service will maintain a national list of all certification testing results by individual employees.

12. Will VSRs be required to take the next 3 consecutive tests?

VSRs hired under a FPL GS-11 announcement will be expected to take and pass the skills certification test within one year of attaining the GS-10 level. Employees who have been a GS-10 for one year or greater will be required to attempt certification beginning August 2012. These VSRs will attain the GS-11 position once they pass the Skills Certification test.

Eligible employees (GS-10s hired under a FPL GS-11 announcement) will be provided three consecutive opportunities to pass beginning with the August 2012 skills certification test. Employees unable to pass Skills Certification testing after 3 consecutive opportunities will be placed in the VSR position where the full performance level is a GS-10. (See Article 67, Section 1c.)

13. Is there a time requirement to take the test for journey level employees?

Article 67 states that employees are required to take the test within one year of becoming eligible to do so and to retake the test each time offered until certification is achieved.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE RVSR POSITION

14. How will GS-11 RVSRs who have not previously been able to successfully pass the basic test be handled? Will they still receive the automatic promotion to GS-12?

Yes, if they meet all requirements of Article 23, Merit Promotion. (See as Article 67, Section 7)

15. What is the earliest effective date of the promotion for those RVSRs who meet promotion criteria – February 12, 2012?

Per Article 67, GS-11 RVSRs will be promoted to GS-12 on the first day of the pay period following implementation of Article 67. Article 67 was effective on February 9, 2012. Therefore, the earliest effective date of the promotion described would be February 12, 2012 – Beginning of PP 4.