
The President's Hiring Reform

Assistant Commandant for Human Resources

Office of Civilian Personnel



Category Rating

- Mandatory under the Presidential Memorandum issued on May 11, 2010
- Part of the competitive examining process
- A ranking and selection procedure
- Applies to all competitive positions
- Requires use by agencies with delegated examining authority under 5 USC 1104(a)(2) effective November 1, 2010

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Category Rating - Purpose

- Increases the number of eligible candidates from which a selecting official can choose while preserving veterans' preference rights

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Category Rating - Ranking

- Who?
 - Applicants who meet basic qualification requirements established for the position *and whose job-related competencies or Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) have been assessed*
- How?
 - Eligible candidates are ranked by being placed in one of two or more pre-defined quality categories instead of being ranked by individual numeric score order
 - For USCG there are 3 categories:
 1. Best-Qualified
 2. Well- Qualified or Highly –Qualified
 3. Qualified

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Category Rating - Selection

- Names of all eligible candidates in the highest quality category are referred/sent on the Certificate of Eligible's to the selecting official for consideration
 - Selecting official selects from among eligible candidates in the highest quality category (without being limited to the top three eligible candidates)
 - Preference eligible's are listed ahead of non- preference eligible's within each quality category
 - Absolute veterans' preference is within each quality category

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Category Rating – Basic Requirements

Agency:

- Must have a category rating policy established before use
- Must establish a minimum of two quality categories
- Must define quality categories prior to announcing the job
- May not establish a “**not-qualified**” category

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Category Rating - Agency Policy

Policy will identify requirements for implementing category rating in the agency, including such considerations as:

- Coverage – all competitive positions
 - Identify and define each quality category
 - Identify type of assessment tool(s) used to evaluate candidates
 - Job opportunity announcement
 - No essay questions are allowed after 1 Nov 2010
 - Ranking and selection procedures
 - Conditions under which categories may be merged

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Defining Quality Categories

- Quality category definitions should be written to:
 - Reflect requirements to perform the job successfully
 - Distinguish differences in the quality of candidates' job-related competencies/KSAs

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Defining Quality Categories (Cont'd)

Some possible examples of quality categories

- **Example 1**
 - Highly Qualified
 - Qualified
- **Example 2**
 - Well-Qualified
 - Qualified
- **Example 3**
 - Best-Qualified
 - Well-Qualified
 - Qualified

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Defining Quality Categories (Cont'd)

Some factors to consider when developing quality categories may include:

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

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Defining Quality Categories (Cont'd)

- Numerical scores may be used as part of the assessment of job-related criteria to place eligible candidates into quality categories; provided, the assessment:
 - assesses job-related competencies/KSAs, and
 - is consistent with technical standards in the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* (see 29 CFR part 1607, section 14) 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)

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Job Announcement Requirement

- Describe each quality category in the job announcement
- Describe each category simply by name such as, “Best Qualified, Well-Qualified or Highly Qualified”, and “Qualified”
- Describe in the “How You Will Be Evaluated” section of the job announcement to communicate to applicants that category rating and selection procedures will be used
- Describe how veterans' preference is applied under category rating procedures

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Ranking Eligible's

- All applicants who meet the basic qualification requirements established for the position are ranked by being assigned to the appropriate quality category based upon the job-related assessment tool(s)

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Applying Veterans' Preference

- Identify preference eligible's
- No veterans preference points (5 or 10 points) are added
- Place qualified preference eligible's with their appropriate veterans 'preference designation code shown on the certificate (i.e., CPS, CP, XP, and TP), above non-preference eligible's within their respective quality category (preserving veterans' preference rights)

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Applying Veterans' Preference (Cont'd)

- Qualified preference eligible's with a compensable service-connected disability of 30% or more (CPS) and those with a compensable service-connected disability of more than 10% but less than 30% (CP) are placed at the top of the highest quality category (except for scientific or professional positions at the GS-9 level or higher)

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Applying Veterans' Preference (Cont'd)

Quick Reference

- **Placement of Preference Eligible's with a Compensable Service-Connected Disability of 10 % or More (CPS and CP)**
 - For scientific and professional positions at the GS-9 or higher...
 - Qualified CPS and CP preference eligible's are placed above non-preference eligible's within the same quality category for which they are assessed (CPS and CP eligible's do not “float” to the highest quality category)
 - For all other positions (series) and grade levels...
 - Place qualified CPS and CP preference eligible's at the top of the Best Qualified category (CPS and CP eligible's “float” to the highest quality category)

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Names Referred to Selecting Official

- All eligible candidates in the highest quality category are referred/sent on the Certificate of Eligible's to the selecting official
- “Rule of Three” does not apply under category rating

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Merging Categories

- When there are fewer than three eligible candidates in the highest quality category it will be merged with the next lower category

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Merging Categories – Rule

- Preference eligible's must be listed ahead of non-preference eligible's in the newly merged category
- As long as a preference eligible remains in the merged category, the selecting official may not select a non-preference eligible unless the selecting official obtains approval to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 3318

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Merging Before Issuing a Certificate

Highest-Qualified

- James John (NV)
- Peter Wolf (NV)

Well-Qualified

- Lisa James (TP)
- Harry Upton (NV)
- Jackie Downs (NV)

Newly Merged Highest Qualified –

- Lisa James (TP)
- Jackie Downs (NV)
- James John (NV)
- Harry Upton (NV)
- Peter Wolf (NV)

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Selection Procedures - Rules

- Selecting official may select from among the eligible candidates in:
 - Highest quality category *or*
 - Newly merged category comprised of the highest and the second-highest quality categories
- Example: If there are 20 eligible's in the highest quality category (no preference eligible's), the selecting official may select any one among the 20 eligible's including the 20th eligible because they are all equal in the category.

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Selection Procedures - Rules (Cont'd)

- Selection rule: A selecting official may not pass over a preference eligible to select a non-preference eligible unless there are proper and adequate reasons for passing over the preference eligible and the selecting official obtains approval to pass over the preference eligible in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 3318
- Example: If there are 20 eligible's in the highest quality category and five preference eligible's are at the top of the list, the selecting official must first select from among the five preference eligible's. The selecting official may not select any non-preference eligible unless the selecting official obtains approval to pass over all (5) preference eligible's under 5 U.S.C. 3318.

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Category Rating - Summary

- Rank eligible candidates by placing in one of three pre-defined categories
- Apply veterans' preference by placing preference eligible's ahead of non-preference eligible's within same quality category in which they were placed (exception for veterans with greater than 10% disability)
- Select from among all eligible candidates in the highest quality category; rule of 3 does not apply
- Select preference eligible's before non-preference eligible's within the same quality category
- Exception: Qualified CPS and CP eligible's "float" to top of highest quality category for positions other than scientific and professional at the GS-9 level and above

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