UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, May 25, 2001
MSG 2001-043

MEMORANDUM FOR: Human Resources Directors

FROM: Ellen E. Tunstall, Assistant Director for Employment Policy

Subject: Examining Options for Clerical and Administrative Support Positions

The Office of Personnel Management has approved a change to the Qualifications Standards for Clerical and Administrative Support Positions. To afford agencies as much flexibility as possible to compete in this tight labor market, effective immediately the written test requirement for these positions is eliminated. Experience and education requirements are unchanged.

When making appointments under a delegated examining authority, or using outside the register selection procedures under 5 CFR 333, agencies may use any of the following individually or in combination to assess the qualifications of applicants for clerical and administrative support positions:

- Commercially available written tests,
- Rating schedules and crediting plans,
- Work samples,
- Structured interviews, or
- Examining services provided by the Office of Personnel Management.

We have included a number of attachments that further explain these options and provide information regarding the transition from written tests to other assessment tools.

Also attached is the revised section of the Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions summarizing the occupational series for which written and/or performance tests are still required.

For further information about this policy, please contact. Suzy Barker, Director, Qualifications and Examining Policy Division (202) 606-0830.

3 Attachments:

Clerical and Administrative Assessment Options
Questions and Answers
Operating Manual, Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions, Section V, Test Requirements

Clerical and Administrative Assessment Options

Commercially developed test. Agencies may use any commercially developed test, as long as it is valid and meets the professional standards in the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (29 CFR 1607, dol.gov/dol/allcfr/Title_41/Part_60-3/toc.htm).

Rating Schedule/Crediting Plan. Raters evaluate a candidate's job-related competencies, knowledge, skills and abilities by reviewing the candidate's experience, education, and accomplishments against a set of pre-determined, job-related benchmarks.

Work Sample. Examiners rate candidates on their performance using exercises that simulate tasks which have been determined (through job analysis) to be important to success in the position to be filled.

Structured Interview. Interviewers ask candidates a set of standardized, job-related questions and rate the candidates' responses based on pre-determined, job-related criteria. These benchmarks provide specific examples of high, medium, and low levels of proficiency.

OPM can provide the following examining services:

Case examining uses an automated staffing system. The automated staffing system develops the vacancy announcement, supplemental qualifications statement and rating schedule; posts the announcement on USAJOBS; mails application materials; determines minimum qualifications and rates applicants; conducts quality review, issues applicant notices; produces and audits a list of eligible candidates; and answers applicant inquiries.

Inventory-based examining produces multiple lists of eligible candidates. OPM updates candidate information; opens/closes the inventory based on need of the requesting agency; mails application materials; receives and reviews applications; determines minimum qualifications and rates applicants; conducts quality review; issues applicant notices; produces lists of eligible candidates; and answers inquiries regarding candidate eligibility.

Examination administration covers the administration of a written examination. OPM manages all logistical details relating to test site selection, competitor scheduling, scoring and issuance of competitor results. Upon request, OPM can also issue a referral list.

Test material developed by OPM is also available but must be administered by individuals trained and certified by OPM as test administrators/examiners. Agencies may order test materials for one-time use from OPM Service Centers.

Structured interview training and question development are available through OPM.

For more information on services available through OPM, please refer to the following web-site: opm.gov/employ/prices/index.htm.

Questions and Answers

1. When must agencies use the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) clerical examination?

Agencies are no longer required to use the OPM clerical examination. However, they may use it if they choose.

2. Do agencies need OPM's approval to use a particular assessment option for clerical occupations?

No, it is the agency's choice. Agencies do not need OPM approval to use a commercially developed test. We will change the DEU Manual accordingly.

3. What assessment options may agencies use instead of the OPM clerical examination?

Agencies may use any one or combination of the available assessment options. These include:

- Commercially developed tests;
- Rating schedules/Crediting plans;
- Work samples;
- Structured interview; or
- Examining services provided by the Office of Personnel Management.

See Clerical and Administrative Assessment Options for definitions.

4. Are there any restrictions on what assessment option an agency may use?

Yes, the assessment procedure must be job-related and meet the standards in the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (29 CFR 1607)*. See question 10.

5. Can an agency develop its own test?

Yes, agencies may develop their own tests/assessment procedures.

6. Can agencies consult OPM for assistance in evaluating commercially developed assessments?

Yes, agencies can request OPM assistance in evaluating commercially developed assessments.

7. What is an effective assessment option?

An effective assessment option is one that provides accurate information about a candidate's ability to successfully perform the job.

8. Must agencies use the same assessment procedure for all clerical positions?

No, typically an agency will decide on an assessment option when it announces a position. Agency decisions on which assessment options to use may vary for each position. Likewise, there is no requirement to use the same assessment tool each time an agency fills a specific position.

9. Must agencies accept notices of ratings from candidates who passed the clerical examination before this policy change?

The agency may decide to accept notices of ratings previously issued. If an agency continues to use the current clerical examination, they must decide whether notices of ratings will be accepted from candidates who previously passed the examination or whether the candidates must re-take the test. Agencies must include this information in the vacancy announcement.

10.Has OPM placed any restrictions on an agency's choice of assessment tools?

Agencies must ensure that any assessment tool used is valid and meets the requirements in the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (29 CFR 1607)*. These guidelines can be found at dol.gov/dol/allcfr/Title_41/Part_60-3/toc.htm. An abbreviated explanation of these requirements can be found in 5 CFR 300.103.

11. Where can I find more information on candidate assessment techniques?

More detailed information is in the DEU Manual (http://www.opm.gov/deu).

12. Who will inform applicants of the new policy?

OPM will place information on this new policy on the USAJOBS website, computer bulletin boards, touch screen kiosks, and the automated telephone system. Agencies must notify candidates of the assessment option they plan to use for each job in the vacancy announcement for the job.

13. Do agencies have to terminate their current inventories to implement this policy?

No, it's an agency option. If the agency wishes to continue using the current clerical test, there is no need to terminate the inventory. However, if an agency chooses to use another option, they must terminate the inventory and notify eligibles. If a local OPM Service Center is maintaining an inventory, you will need to check with them to determine if people on the inventory need to be notified.

14. Do agencies have to inform applicants which assessment option is used for a position?

Yes, an agency must specify in the vacancy announcement the assessment option it plans to use.

15. Has OPM changed the education and experience requirements for clerical and administrative support positions?

No, agencies must still use the education and experience requirements listed in the standard.

16. In Washington, DC, will OPM continue to administer the clerical test on a regular basis?

No, however, agencies may request special testing if they have such a need.

17. What about other locations?

Agencies may contact local OPM offices to request testing.

18. Will the proficiency/performance test requirements remain the same?

Yes, proficiency/performance test requirements remain the same.

19. How will I know if there is a written test requirement for a job series?

Occupations that require a written and/or performance test are listed in the attached table ("Occupations/Positions for Which Written and/or Performance Tests are Required"). This replaces the table in Section V of the *Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Occupations*. If an occupation is not listed on the table, there is no written test requirement.

Operating Manual, Qualifications Standards
for General Schedule Positions,
Section V, Test Requirements

OCCUPATIONS/POSITIONS FOR WHICH WRITTEN AND/OR PERFORMANCE TESTS
ARE REQUIRED

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
019 Safety Technician	2/3	written test
023 Outdoor Recreation Planning	5/7	ACWA
025 Park Ranger	5/7	ACWA
028 Environmental Protection Specialist	5/7	ACWA
080 Security Administration	5/7	ACWA
082 United States Marshal	5/7	written test
083 Police	2	written test
083 Park Police	5	written test
083 Police (Secret Service)	4/5	written test
085 Security Guard	2	written test
105 Social Insurance Administration	5/7	ACWA
106 Unemployment Insurance	5/7	ACWA
132 Intelligence	5/7	ACWA
142 Manpower Development	5/7	ACWA
181 Psychology Aid & Technician	2/3	written test
187 Social Services	5/7	ACWA
189 Recreation Aid & Assistant	2/3	written test
201 Human Resources Specialist	5/7	ACWA
244 Labor Mgmt Relations Examining	5/7	ACWA

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
249 Wage & Hour Compliance	5/7	ACWA
301 Misc Administration & Program	5/7	ACWA
312 Clerk-Stenographer	3/4/5	performance test or self certification
312 Reporting Stenographer	5/6	performance test mandatory for competitive appt & inservice placement
312 Shorthand Reporter	6/7/8/9	performance test mandatory for competitive appt & inservice placement
319 Closed Microphone Reporting	6/7/8/9	performance test mandatory for competitive appt & inservice placement; also outside certification
322 Clerk-Typist	2/3/4	performance test or self certification
326 Office Automation Clerical and Assistance	2/3/4	performance test or self certification
334 Computer Specialist	5/7	ACWA for Alternative B only, may also use written test
341 Administrative Officer	5/7	ACWA
343 Management and Program Analysis	5/7	ACWA
346 Logistics Management	5/7	ACWA
356 Data Transcriber	2/3/4	performance test or self certification
391 Telecommunications	5/7	ACWA
404 Biological Science Technician	2/3	written test
421 Plant Protection Technician	2/3	written test
455 Range Technician	2/3	written test
458 Soil Conservation Technician	2/3	written test
459 Irrigation System Operation	2/3	written test

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
462 Forestry Technician	2/3	written test
501 Financial Administration & Program	5/7	ACWA
526 Tax Specialist	5/7	ACWA
560 Budget Analysis	5/7	ACWA
570 Financial Institution Examining	5/7	ACWA, except for FDIC positions
621 Nursing Assistant	2/3	written test
636 Rehabilitation Therapy Assistant	2/3	written test
640 Health Aid & Technician	2/3	written test
642 Nuclear Medicine Technician	2/3	written test
645 Medical Technician	2/3	written test
646 Pathology Technician	2/3	written test
647 Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist	2/3	written test
648 Therapeutic Radiologic Technologist	2/3	written test
649 Medical Instrument Technician	2/3	written test
651 Respiratory Therapist	2/3	written test
661 Pharmacy Technician	2/3	written test
667 Orthotist & Prosthetist	3	written test
673 Hospital Housekeeping Management	5/7	ACWA
681 Dental Assistant	2/3	written test
683 Dental Lab Aid & Technician	2/3	written test
685 Public Health Program Specialist	5/7	ACWA

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
698 Environmental Health Technician	2/3	written test
704 Animal Health Technician	2/3	written test
802 Engineering Technician	2/3	written test
809 Construction Control	2/3	written test
817 Surveying Technician	2/3	written test
818 Engineering Drafting	2/3	written test
856 Electronics Technician	2/3	written test
895 Industrial Engineering Technician	2/3	written test
950 Paralegal Specialist	5/7	ACWA
958 Pension Law Specialist	5/7	ACWA
962 Contact Representative	3/4	written test
962 Contact Representative	5/7	ACWA
965 Land Law Examining	5/7	ACWA
967 Passport & Visa Examining	5/7	ACWA
987 Tax Law Specialist	5/7	ACWA
990 General Claims Examining (One-grade interval)	4	written test
990 General Claims Examining (Two-grade interval)	5/7	ACWA
991 Workers' Comp Claims Examining	5/7	ACWA
993 Social Insurance Claims Examining	4	written test
993 Railroad Retirement Claims Examining	5/7	written test
994 Unemployment Comp Claims Examining	5/7	ACWA

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
996 Veterans Claims Examining	5/7	ACWA
1001 General Arts & Information	5/7	ACWA, except for fine arts positions
1016 Museum Specialist & Technician	2/3	written test
1021 Office Drafting	2/3	written test
1035 Public Affairs	5/7	ACWA
1082 Writing & Editing	5/7	ACWA
1083 Technical Writing & Editing	5/7	ACWA
1130 Public Utilities Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1140 Trade Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1140 International Trade Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1145 Agricultural Program Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1146 Agricultural Marketing	5/7	ACWA
1146 Grain Marketing Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1147 Agricultural Market Reporting	5/7	ACWA
1150 Industrial Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1160 Financial Analysis	5/7	ACWA
1163 Insurance Examining	5/7	ACWA
1165 Loan Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1169 Internal Revenue Officer	5/7	ACWA
1170 Realty	5/7	ACWA
1171 Appraising & Assessing	5/7	ACWA
1173 Housing Management	5/7	ACWA
1176 Building Management	5/7	ACWA

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
1311 Physical Science Technician	2/3	written test
1316 Hydrologic Technician	2/3	written test
1341 Meteorological Technician	2/3	written test
1371 Cartographic Technician	2/3	written test
1374 Geodetic Technician	2/3	written test
1412 Technical Information Services	5/7	ACWA
1421 Archives Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1521 Mathematics Technician	2/3	written test
1541 Cryptanalysis	2/3	written test
1801 Civil Aviation Security Specialist	5/7	written test
1801 Center Adjudications Officer	5/7	written test
1801 District Adjudications Officer	5/7	written test
1802 Compliance Inspection & Support	2/3/4	written test
1802 Detention Enforcement Officer	2/3/4/5	written test
1810 General Investigating	5/7	ACWA
1811 Criminal Investigator (Customs)	5/7	written test
1811 Criminal Investigating	5/7	ACWA
1811 Criminal Investigator (INS)	5/7	written test
1811 Treasury Enforcement Agent	5/7	written test
1811 US Marshal	5/7	written test
1812 Game Law Enforcement	5/7	ACWA
1812 Special Agent (Wildlife)	7	written test
1816 Immigration Inspection	5/7	written test

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
1831 Securities Compliance Examining	5/7	ACWA
1854 Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms Inspection	5/7	ACWA
1863 Food Inspection	5/7	written test
1864 Public Health Quarantine Inspection	5/7	ACWA
1884 Customs Patrol Officer	5/7	written test
1889 Import Specialist	5/7	ACWA
1890 Customs Inspection/ Canine Enforcement Officer	5/7	written test
1896 Border Patrol Agent	5/7	written test
1910 Quality Assurance	5/7	ACWA
1981 Agricultural Commodity Aid	2/3	written test
2001 General Supply	5/7	ACWA
2003 Supply Program Management	5/7	ACWA
2010 Inventory Management	5/7	ACWA
2030 Distribution Facilities & Storage Management	5/7	ACWA
2032 Packaging	5/7	ACWA
2050 Supply Cataloging	5/7	ACWA
2101 Transportation Specialist	5/7	ACWA
2101 Airway Transportation System Specialist		
Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration	5/7	written test
2110 Transportation Industry Analysis	5/7	ACWA

SERIES/TITLE/POSITIONS	GRADE	TEST REQUIREMENTS
2125 Highway Safety	5/7	ACWA
2130 Traffic Management	5/7	ACWA
2150 Transportation Operations	5/7	ACWA
2152 Air Traffic Control	5/7	written test