

# Position Classification Standard for Passport and Visa Examining Series, GS-0967

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## SERIES DEFINITION

This series includes positions that involve managing, supervising, or performing administrative work concerned with adjudicating applications for United States passports or visas, including related work involving determining citizenship or fitness of noncitizens for admission to the United States.

The work requires knowledge of legal and regulatory provisions governing U.S. citizenship, nationality, and/or visas; and principles, systems, and operations related to the issuance of passports or other citizenship registration, certificates, or visas.

## EXCLUSIONS

1. Classify positions in the [Job Family Position Classification Standard for Assistance Work in the Legal and Kindred Group, GS-0900](#), when they primarily involve reviewing applications for proper completion and presentation of documentary evidence of birth in the United States or naturalization and recording the evidence submitted for proof of identity, but when they do not include adjudication functions.
2. Classify positions in the [Job Family Position Classification Standard for Assistance Work in the Legal and Kindred Group, GS-0900](#), when they primarily involve providing information on rights, benefits, privileges, or obligations; explaining pertinent legal provisions, regulations, and related administrative practices and their application to specific cases; and assisting individuals in developing needed evidence and preparing required documents, or in resolving errors, delays, or other problems, but when they do not include adjudication functions.
3. Classify positions in the [Paralegal Specialist Series, GS-0950](#), when they primarily involve analyzing legal decisions; compiling substantive information on legal subjects; and collecting, analyzing, and evaluating evidence in connection with hearings, appeals, litigation, or advisory services, but when they do not include adjudication functions.

## OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION<sup>1</sup>

A passport is a travel document providing a person's right to constitutional protection during international travel and return to this country. There are several types of passports. For example, there are regular, official, and diplomatic passports; passports of full duration and limited duration; and fee and no-fee passports. There are also documents that serve in place of

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<sup>1</sup> This section covers only the issuance of passports. Most visas are issued by Foreign Service Officers in embassies and consulates. These positions are not in the General Schedule.

passports, as for example, certificates used by U.S. flight crews when they fly to other countries in a duty capacity. Since a passport issued for the full period of validity is proof of identity, as well as citizenship, it is often used by those born elsewhere as primary identification for obtaining employment, drivers licenses, and for banking or other services.

Applications for passports may be presented in person to a designated "acceptance" facility rather than a passport office. Clerks of Courts and Post Offices are most frequently used as these facilities. Also, applications of dependents of military personnel stationed in other countries are accepted by designated military acceptance facilities. Acceptance agents review the application for proper completion, presentation of documentary evidence of birth in the United States or naturalization, and record the evidence submitted for proof of identity. They then forward the case to a passport office for adjudication. Most passport offices oversee the training and operations of acceptance agents within the region.

Over the years, laws concerning the acquisition and retention of U.S. citizenship have changed provisions concerning passport issuance both prospectively and retroactively. Treaties and agreements with foreign governments that affect citizenship determination have also changed. Some aspects of citizenship determination involve provisions of State or foreign laws relating to such issues as the "legitimation" of offspring. Employees in this occupation must be able to apply these varying requirements correctly, as well as to apply differing definitions of terms, such as "residence", that occur in some governing provisions. They also must understand and apply other legal distinctions, such as those that concern people living in U.S. territories and possessions who may be considered "nationals," but not citizens of the United States.

In addition to correctly applying legal provisions, employees also must be skilled in interviewing techniques and in quickly determining the authenticity of documentary evidence and the credibility of applicants, their relatives, and witnesses. Employees must be alert to various types of fraud. For example, applicants may claim an adoptive child born overseas as a natural child, or they may make false statements in order to get a passport to obtain work or to visit abroad and be assured of reentry into the U.S. Obtaining a passport in several identities is a major area of fraud practiced by persons engaged in criminal activities. There are also cases of "vanity" fraud in which documents are altered for such purposes as making the passport holder appear younger.

## TITLES

*Passport Specialist* and *Visa Specialist* are the titles for nonsupervisory positions.

*Supervisory Passport Specialist* and *Supervisory Visa Specialist* are the titles for positions that meet the criteria in the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#).

## EVALUATING POSITIONS<sup>2</sup>

Positions should be evaluated on a factor-by-factor basis using the factor level descriptions provided in this standard. Only the designated point values may be used. Use the [Primary Standard](#) to evaluate trainee positions having factor levels lower than those described below. Use the [Primary Standard](#) and related FES standards to evaluate factors of positions that significantly exceed or fall below the highest or lowest levels described in this standard. The absence of an example or illustration in a factor level description does not preclude evaluating a particular position at that factor level.

Classify supervisory positions using the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#).

### GRADE CONVERSION TABLE

Total points on all evaluation factors are converted to GS grade as follows:

GS Grade	Point Range
7	1355-1600
8	1605-1850
9	1855-2100
10	2105-2350
11	2355-2750
12	2755-3150

## FACTOR LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

### FACTOR 1, KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

*Level 1-6 -- 950 points*

The work requires knowledge of passport issuance principles, practices, methods, and techniques to adjudicate applications independently using precedents and guidelines that apply to most situations encountered. This includes, for example:

- Knowledge of provisions of laws, treaties, rules, and regulations pertaining to birth, identity, and citizenship matters concerning the examination and adjudication of applications for passports;

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<sup>2</sup> This section and the grade level criteria portion of the standard apply only to the issuance of passports. Positions involving the issuance of visas may be evaluated by reference to the FES [Primary Standard](#) and comparison with grade level criteria in this standard.

- Knowledge of provisions of State and foreign laws as they apply to such issues as marriage, legitimation, adoption, and child custody;
- Knowledge of provisions that govern entitlement to diplomatic and official passports on regular and exceptional bases and knowledge of agreements with other countries as they apply to entitlement to such passports;
- Knowledge of certain provisions of immigration and naturalization laws and regulations covering legal entry into the United States, residency, and other requirements as they apply to acquiring and retaining U.S. citizenship;
- Knowledge of the functions, policies, systems, procedures, and processes employed by headquarters and passport offices in the issuance of passports;
- Skill in interpreting and explaining the requirements for obtaining a passport and advising on sources and types of documentation needed to establish proof of citizenship, residence, and identity;
- Skill in questioning a variety of applicants and others to ascertain facts and the veracity of statements, evidence, and representations; and
- Skill to uncover the probability of a fraud without alerting persons to the purpose of the inquiries.

Knowledge and skills are used to perform independent factfinding, analysis, and problem solving to --

- Analyze facts contained in applications, documentary evidence, affidavits, and statements of applicants and witnesses;
- Research policy and regulatory material to determine requirements for specific situations;
- Develop additional information or evidence;
- Reach timely and correct conclusions; and
- Express decisions clearly and concisely in written and oral form.

### Illustration:

- Employees examine applications and supporting documents for acceptability as proof of citizenship, identity, and for official and diplomatic passports, appropriate authorization, entitlement, and information. They evaluate evidence for sufficiency, credibility, authenticity, and consistency of facts. They look for indications of alteration, false identity, untruthful statements, or other types of fraud. When questioning applicants, their relatives, and witnesses, they determine the veracity of statements and corroborating information.

They determine the appropriate type and duration of the passport and decide whether or not to issue it or to refer the case for further action.

### *Level 1-7 -- 1250 points*

The work requires an indepth knowledge of the application of various laws, court decisions, departmental and agency precedent determinations and interpretations, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that pertain to the administration of passport issuance programs. This knowledge is used to perform various functions that contribute to the management of passport operations. This may include, for example:

- A comprehensive understanding of organizational policies, practices, systems, and resource requirements of passport operations. This knowledge is used for various types of assignments such as providing liaison between passport offices and headquarters on various substantive matters; performing studies for the development of new or modified systems and methods or other forms of centralized program support; and serving as a team member to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of passport offices and support organizations.
- A comprehensive understanding of the concepts, policies, and practices of a specialized program or functional area, including skill in initiating and maintaining cooperative liaison with other organizations, in developing and conducting training, and in problem solving. This knowledge is used to plan, monitor, evaluate, and coordinate activities at a passport office in such areas as training, fraud prevention, or acceptance agents operations.
- A comprehensive understanding of the evolution and development of passport adjudication, including procedures and policies for which guideline material is lacking due to the recency and/or uniqueness of the subject matter. This knowledge is used to resolve precedent setting, unusual, and very complicated cases; and to develop new or modified guidelines, procedures, or explanatory materials.

### Illustrations:

- Employees serving in passport office anti-fraud coordinator assignments reevaluate suspected fraudulent applications referred by adjudication staff. They make inquiries and conduct interviews to determine whether discrepancies or alterations of documentation are explainable (e.g., inadvertent actions, mistakes, or vanity fraud). If the case warrants further investigation, they prepare reports of findings for referral to law enforcement organizations and may participate in further investigations. They establish and maintain contacts with law enforcement and other agencies of Federal, State, and local governments. Employees collect and analyze statistics and other data related to passport fraud. They evaluate passport fraud patterns in the region and refine existing fraud indicators or develop additional ones for use by the adjudication staff. They conduct passport and identity fraud training for office staff and for the staff of cooperating organizations.
- Employees serving in passport office acceptance agents coordinator assignments provide technical guidance, direction, and assistance to acceptance agents (e.g., designated military,

postal, or court employees) concerning problem cases and acceptance agents operations, procedures, and processes. They assess the need for training of acceptance agents and conduct training. They review the adequacy of acceptance facilities in the geographic area and determine the need for establishing additional or replacement facilities. They identify and attend to continuing problems that need corrective action and develop outreach mechanisms, such as issuing a periodic newsletter for acceptance agents under the passport office's supervision and articles for acceptance facilities' publications.

- Employees serving in headquarters staff assignments maintain liaison with assigned passport offices to provide guidance and interpretation on cases or issues referred to them. They monitor workload status and indicators to assist in resolving operational, technical, and administrative problems. They prepare procedures and instructions for incorporating changes in policy, workflow, and automated systems for use in all passport offices. They serve on passport office management evaluation teams. They post-adjudicate cases on a random or selected basis to determine integrity of operations, evaluate quality of determinations, and develop data for studies. Employees adjudicate cases referred to headquarters, research laws and regulations pertaining to the loss of citizenship and nationality, and draft letters regarding final determinations.

## **FACTOR 2, SUPERVISORY CONTROLS**

### *Level 2-2 -- 125 points*

The supervisor provides continuing or individual assignments by indicating generally what is to be done, the types of applications or other work, limitations on authority, quality and quantity of work expected, deadlines, and priorities. The supervisor or higher grade employee provides additional, specific instructions on work methods, references, sources of primary and corroborating evidence, referral practices for fraud or difficult issues, and new procedures and processes.

Employees carry out a limited range of passport adjudication and other recurring assignments independently. They use initiative in reviewing applications and examining documentary evidence, in ascertaining travel plans to determine the need for priority handling, in detecting possible fraudulent cases, in reaching conclusions, and in advising applicants of requirements for specific missing information in person or by form letter. They refer deviations, problems, and unfamiliar situations not covered by instructions to the supervisor or higher grade employee for decision or help.

The supervisor or higher grade employee reviews all cases of suspected fraud and provides instructions on further action. Adjudicated cases are reviewed periodically for adequacy, accuracy, and conformance to established procedures. Daily reports of production are available to the supervisor. The supervisor or higher grade employee assures that work processes and procedures conform to technical requirements.

*Level 2-3 -- 275 points*

The supervisor assigns case work on a continuing basis according to a standardized control system, or assigns other work by providing standing general instructions about timeliness, objectives, and relative priorities. The supervisor assists employees with unusual situations or controversial issues that do not have clear precedents.

Employees adjudicate applications for the full range of passports independently in accordance with instructions, policies, and guidelines of the organization. They determine the issues involved, the acceptability of corroborative evidence, and any other actions that may be necessary to issue a passport. They handle commonly occurring problems in accordance with previous training, established techniques, and accepted work practices. Employees performing functional or program assignments independently ascertain issues, gather and analyze data, and develop written materials such as reports, changes in procedures, and information articles.

The supervisor samples completed cases on a random basis for quality of determinations, appropriateness of results, and conformity to established requirements and deadlines. Other work products, such as correspondence or informational materials, are reviewed for technical soundness and conformance to policy. The methods used to carry out the assignment are not usually reviewed.

*Level 2-4 -- 450 points*

The supervisor sets the overall objectives and resources available. Employees and the supervisor, in consultation, identify the work to be done, formulate general operating plans or project specifications, determine the scope of activities and the results to be achieved, and develop timeliness for completion.

Employees independently plan and carry out the work, resolving conflicts, coordinating with others, and interpreting policies on their own initiative to meet planned or program objectives. They serve in various functional capacities, such as planning training and developing training materials, or coordinating anti-fraud or acceptance agents operations; or they troubleshoot various operational, administration, and management problems, or adjudicate the most difficult cases. They keep the supervisor informed of progress, potentially controversial matters, and far-reaching implications.

The supervisor evaluates completed case work only in terms of effectiveness in meeting requirements or expected results, although precedent setting cases are reviewed for overall impact. The supervisor reviews other work, such as functional program activities and centralized staff assignments, for feasibility and compatibility with organizational goals.



## FACTOR 3, GUIDELINES

### *Level 3-2 -- 125 points*

Procedures for doing the work are well established, and written guidelines such as explanations of regulatory, operational, and policy requirements; procedural manuals; and other instructions are available for all aspects of the work.

Employees use judgment in identifying and selecting the appropriate provisions and procedures according to the circumstances portrayed in each application. They may make only minor deviations and adapt guidelines only within supplemental oral or written instructions.

### *Level 3-3 -- 275 points*

Guidelines include laws, regulations, and organizational policy and procedural manuals. Employees may need to refer to technical manuals, precedent cases, or court or other legal decisions. Guidelines are not always applicable to the issues and situations encountered due to the variety and individuality of applicants' circumstances.

Employees use judgment in selecting and applying guidelines to a wide range of technical issues presented by all types of citizenship questions and circumstances. They interpret and adapt guidelines, analyze results, and recommend revisions to or changes in the guidelines.

### *Level 3-4 -- 450 points*

Guidelines include policies and legal requirements that are broadly stated or provide only a general conceptual outline of the results expected. They require considerable expansion and adaptation to make them applicable to particular operational problems and circumstances found in the different geographic areas overseen by passport offices. The guidelines provide only rudimentary direction when developing new or revised instructions, procedures, systems, or policies, and they may be contradictory or inadequate for resolution of cases or issues overseen centrally.

Employees use initiative and resourcefulness in extending or adapting the guidelines to the particular operational needs of their offices. For example, when coordinating activities, such as anti-fraud, training, and acceptance agents operations, employees are expected to develop their own programs and to use methods that work best in their particular geographic jurisdictions. Employees use a similar latitude of judgment in developing precedent decisions, reviewing and providing guidance in problem cases, researching trends and patterns in programs and passport offices, and developing new guidelines, program concepts, methods, or revised policies.

## FACTOR 4, COMPLEXITY

### *Level 4-2 -- 75 points*

The work consists of conducting limited studies or adjudicating applications that involve a limited range of identity and citizenship determinations, or are otherwise straight-forward. For example, employees adjudicate applications where birth evidence or proof of citizenship are readily verified, re-issue unexpired passports for full terms, or replace passports for those that have been mutilated, lost, or stolen.

Employees consider the authenticity and acceptability of various types of primary evidence of birth, citizenship, and identity in support of statements made in applications. Evidence of identity may include testimony by peers or relatives, or documents such as report cards, school year books, and medical, financial, or insurance records. They analyze the sufficiency and consistency of information presented and determine if more is needed. They obtain additional information by questionnaire or inquiry.

Employees base recommendations and decisions on comparing the information submitted with explicit requirements and any previously recorded information. They must be meticulous in determining that the information to be printed in the passport is complete and accurate. The types of passports issued are limited as is discretion in the type and sufficiency of evidence.

### *Level 4-3 -- 150 points*

The work consists of adjudicating applications that involve the full range of citizenship determination and include circumstances for which proof may be difficult to establish. For example, applicants --

- May have been born abroad of one citizen parent, out of wedlock, or are attempting to establish a claim through a grandparent; or
- May have been born in the U.S. but lack primary supporting evidence and must develop secondary evidence that confirms their claim.

In deciding what needs to be done, employees identify the basis for acquisition of citizenship, evaluate the applicant's statements in comparison with the requirements of governing provisions, consider that documentation may be fraudulent, and determine the kind and extent of information needed to reconcile discrepancies. For example, they resolve such issues as why there is no record of birth in the U.S.; or how paternity was established for persons born abroad, if citizenship is claimed through a U.S. citizen father. In the latter case, they must determine how requirements such as legitimation and residence requirements in effect at the time of the birth were met. In applications for diplomatic or official passports, considerations include the nature of the overseas assignment, the foreign country requirements and, in some instances, provisions of treaties with the U.S. Government.

Employees base recommendations and decisions on discerning interrelationships among the facts and evidence presented by the applicant, the historical conditions affecting the availability of evidence, the feasibility of constructing conclusive evidence from various sources, and any other aspects, such as those related to ethnic or cultural traditions, that may impinge on the existence or acceptability of records. Complications arise when factual information has been withheld by, or from, the applicant because of its sensitive personal nature, such as out of wedlock birth, sex change, or adoption. The type and sufficiency of evidence is largely a discretionary decision on the part of employees performing the examination. In functional or program work, employees consider specific issues and problems in applying regulations, policies, and procedures similar to those described for adjudication work.

#### *Level 4-4 -- 225 points*

The work consists of planning and coordinating activities for a functional program area in a passport office, such as training, anti-fraud, or acceptance agents operations; monitoring and evaluating the activities for several passport offices in a geographic area; providing advice and revising procedures, instructions, and guidelines; or adjudicating the most difficult cases. For example, cases involve --

- Possible loss of citizenship or nationality;
- Persons born abroad who claim acquisition of citizenship through a U.S. citizen parent when issues such as paternity, legitimation, and residence are unproven;
- Questionable reasons for residing in a foreign country after naturalization;
- New classes of citizenship determination resulting from legislation for which interpretation is unclear; and
- Applicants for whom a system alert, such as a "hold" or "look-out" exists.

In deciding what needs to be done, employees assess matters for which factual information is difficult to document, in conflict, and inconclusive. They interpret the intent of past and present laws, regulations, court decisions, and policies in terms of programs, projects, and problem cases. Employees develop approaches to fit conditions that may arise from new legal interpretations or policy requirements, new or revised systems, unusual combination of circumstances, and/or the involvement of other agencies or branches of the Federal Government, or other foreign or domestic governmental or nongovernmental organizations.

Employees base recommendations and decisions on legally correct and accurate interpretations regardless of the technical difficulties encountered. In adjudication work, employees must sort out disputed factual situations, evaluate applicant's intent in cases such as those involving loss of citizenship, apply governing provisions that are tangential and may be subject to varying interpretations, and resolve fraudulent or other problem cases. In other assignments, employees resolve specific issues or problems of a systemic nature, refine or adapt existing work procedures to increase organizational effectiveness, develop training plans and informational material about

program operations and systems for employees and specialists in other cooperating governmental organizations, or plan and coordinate the activities in a functional program area.

*Level 4-5 -- 325 points*

The work consists of centrally planning, coordinating, guiding, and evaluating passport operations. Employees oversee functional program areas such as anti-fraud or acceptance agent operations on a nationwide basis. They carry out projects that address broad problems and issues of a systemic nature and develop rationale for the resolution of cases that concern classes of persons with questionable citizenship status. They develop long-range plans, goals, and objectives for administering the issuance of passports and lead management evaluations of passport offices.

In deciding what needs to be done, employees assess the requirements, costs, timing, and effects of major system changes on the public and the work force. These may involve, for example, new means of automating passport operations or other system improvements that make use of new technology; changes in legal or legislative requirements; and variations in the demand for passport services. Employees appraise problems surrounding the integration of new concepts and approaches with existing systems and methods. In planning and coordinating management evaluations of passport offices, they determine the subject matter, scope, and depth of operations and activities to be evaluated. They review the findings of team members and prepare final reports of findings.

Employees base recommendations and decisions on integrated analyses that take into account all aspects of passport issuance. They develop methods to improve the administration of passport services and devise new approaches to seemingly insoluble issues. They develop policies that change the way passports are issued or establish new ways of accomplishing the passport services mission.

## **FACTOR 5, SCOPE AND EFFECT**

*Level 5-3 -- 150 points*

The purpose of the work is to adjudicate applications for passports or to perform other equivalent work in support of passport operations. The work is accomplished in accordance with established criteria but may involve subjective considerations, such as looking for misrepresentations or fraud.

The recommendations, decisions, or actions of employees result in the granting or denial of a U.S. passport to applicants.

*Level 5-4 -- 225 points*

The purpose of the work is to provide program expertise in such areas as --

- Planning, coordinating, and assessing effectiveness for a functional program area, such as those that concern training, anti-fraud, or acceptance agents operations in a passport office;
- Developing centralized policies, procedures, instructions and other criteria for use in the operation of passport offices; or
- Providing guidance on operational or adjudication problems, coordinating pilot projects for assigned passport offices, or performing other similar centralized staff assignments.

When the work product concerns a functional program area in an individual passport office, it permits that office to perform its mission and carry out its relationships with other governmental entities. When the work product involves other activities performed centrally, it provides the foundation for precedents that have broad impact and/or affects the operations of all passport offices and passport issuing operations.

## **FACTOR 6, PERSONAL CONTACTS AND FACTOR 7, PURPOSE OF CONTACTS**

Match the level of regular and recurring personal contacts with the directly related purpose of those contacts and credit the appropriate point value from the chart below.

### *Persons Contacted*

1. Contacts are with employees of the immediate organization.
2. Contacts are with employees outside the immediate organization, such as those in headquarters and departmental offices and/or with applicants, their witnesses and relatives, and others, as well as persons working in other governmental or business organizations, such as acceptance facilities and travel agencies. The contacts take place in structured settings and are established on a routine basis.
3. Contacts are with applicants, their witnesses and relatives, and other persons involved in suspected fraud or in situations where loss of citizenship is possible. Employees may also have nonroutine contacts with representatives or staff members from the news media, public action or cultural/ethnic groups, professional organizations, Congressional offices, or the offices of Federal, State, and local elected or appointed officials.

*Purpose of Contacts*

- a. The purpose of contacts is to present facts about the passport application process; to request applicants to complete all parts of the application; to ascertain and record the identity of the applicant and other information. Other contacts may be to provide information about passport services operations or obtain information needed in carrying out projects.
- b. The purpose of contacts is to question applicants and others concerning the veracity and validity of statements and evidence in support of citizenship and identity. Employees also counsel applicants as to acceptable kinds and sources of evidence to support a claim of citizenship and other related matters. Other contacts may be to plan and coordinate projects or programs and to resolve operating problems, or to revise procedures, systems, or policies and to make presentations to public acceptance facilities.
- c. The purpose of contacts is to investigate cases of suspected fraud or deal with other situations where interpersonal difficulties are encountered regularly. For example, the persons contacted may be nervous, hostile, confrontational, distraught, or otherwise uncooperative. Employees must establish rapport with uncooperative contacts and use tact and diplomacy in matters of a sensitive personal nature or in calming or defusing a situation to obtain desired results.

P U R P O S E

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	a	b	c
1	30	60	130*
2	45	75	145
3	80	110	180

\*This combinations are probably unrealistic.

**FACTOR 8, PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

*Level 8-1 -- 5 points*

The work is primarily sedentary, performed sitting at a desk and/or sitting and standing at a counter. There are no special physical demands.

## **FACTOR 9, WORK ENVIRONMENT**

### *Level 9-1 -- 5 points*

The work is typically performed in an office environment. Normal safety precautions are required. Some assignments may require travel.