

Schedule Policy/Career: What it Means for You as a Manager

Quick Reference Guide

Purpose

This overview is for managers and supervisors whose positions — or whose employees' positions — may be designated as Schedule Policy/Career. It explains, in plain language, what Schedule P/C is, what changes, what does not change, and how to talk to your employees about it.

What is Schedule Policy/Career?

Schedule P/C is an excepted service, career schedule used for certain positions that:

- Are confidential, or
- Are policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating, and
- Are not part of the Senior Executive Service (SES).

These positions are career, non-political jobs. They are not Schedule C or other political appointments. Only positions the President designates can be filled under Schedule P/C.

As a manager, you do not unilaterally decide to place a job in Schedule P/C, but you may be asked to help describe the duties of positions that could qualify.

What changes for how you manage these positions?

Trial period and “at-will” nature

- Schedule P/C positions are at-will unless an exception applies under civil service rules or other legal authority.
- Standard appeal rights for performance-based or adverse actions do not apply, but employees still benefit from protections under agency policies.

In practice, this means:

- You still need to set clear expectations, give feedback, and document performance and conduct.
- You may have more flexibility to address poor fit or performance, but decisions must focus on performance, conduct, or job or mission-related factors, consistent with agency policy.

Appeal rights and protections

- Employees in Schedule P/C may not use the usual Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) appeal routes for many performance-based or adverse actions.
- They are still protected from prohibited personal practices (PPPs), retaliation, and discrimination, but those protections may be applied through internal agency procedures.

What changes for how you manage these positions? *(continued)*

In practice, this means:

- You cannot use Schedule P/C status to “get rid of” someone for the wrong reasons (for example, because they raised concerns, filed a complaint, or are part of a protected class).
- You should involve HR (and, when appropriate, labor relations and counsel) early when considering significant personnel actions involving a Schedule P/C employee.

What does not change

Several important responsibilities and protections stay the same:

- **EEO obligations**
 - All equal employment opportunity laws still apply. You must continue to prevent and address discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.
 - Employees may still contact the EEO office and use EEO procedures.
- **Workplace expectations and conduct**
 - Standards of conduct, agency policies, and performance expectations do not change because of Schedule P/C.
 - You are still responsible for setting expectations, coaching, and holding employees accountable.
- **Benefits and Retirement**
 - The move to Schedule P/C does not, by itself, change retirement coverage or basic benefits.
- **Bargaining-Unit status (if applicable)**
 - Moving a position into Schedule P/C does not automatically remove it from the bargaining unit.
 - The Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) determines which positions are represented by a labor union.

Your role as a manager or supervisor

When a position you supervise is moved into Schedule P/C, you should:

- **Talk with HR first**
 - Clarify how Schedule P/C affects trial periods, appeal rights, incentives, and protections for your employee.
- **Prepare to explain the change to your employee**
 - Be ready to describe, in plain language, what Schedule P/C is, what it changes, and what it does not change for them.
 - Emphasize that their position remains a career, non-political role.

Your role as a manager or supervisor (continued)

When a position you supervise is moved into Schedule P/C, you should:

- **Review duties and expectations**
 - Make sure the position description and performance standards accurately reflect the job's responsibilities.
- **Check incentives and agreements**
 - If the employee has student loan payment or recruitment, relocation, or retention (3Rs) incentives, confirm with HR which agreement(s) remain in place under what conditions.
- **Coordinate on sensitive actions**
 - Consult HR (and, when appropriate, labor relations and counsel) before taking significant personnel actions affecting Schedule P/C employees.

Myth vs. Fact (for conversations with employees)

You can use these to respond to common questions:

Myth: "Schedule P/C makes this a political job."

Fact: Schedule P/C positions are career jobs. Employees remain career federal employees, not political appointees.

Myth: "Because it's 'at-will,' a P/C employee can be removed for any reason."

Fact: Supervisors must still follow agency policy, merit system principles, and prohibited personnel practice rules. Decisions must be performance, conduct, or job or mission related-factors.

Myth: "P/C employees lose all protections if they raise concerns."

Fact: P/C employees are still protected from retaliation, discrimination, and prohibited personnel practices through agency procedures.

Myth: "Moving to Schedule P/C automatically ends union coverage."

Fact: Schedule P/C status alone does not automatically change bargaining-unit status. That depends on a determination made by the FLRA concerning the employee's duties.

Myth: "Schedule P/C affects my pay and retirement benefits."

Fact: An employee's basic pay and retirement coverage remain the same. However, some benefits may not be available such as student loan repayment and 3R incentives.

Where to go with questions?

- **Your HR office:** First stop for questions on designations, hiring, incentives, and employee relations.
- **Labor relations (if applicable):** For bargaining-unit and union-related issues.
- **EEO office:** For questions about rights and responsibilities under EEO laws.
- **Agency counsel (through HR or your leadership chain):** For complex or high-risk situations involving Schedule P/C employees.