PATHWAYS FLEXIBILITIES

Resource for Hiring Managers and Supervisors – Recent Graduates Program Edition

There are a number of Government-wide flexibilities within the existing Pathways regulations, outlined below, that can help you and your colleagues more effectively use the Pathways Programs (Programs), particularly the Recent Graduates Program. We encourage you to review your Pathways Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and agency-specific policies before using any of these strategies. Please consult your Pathways Programs Officer (PPO) or a human resources (HR) professional for further guidance.

To learn more about the Recent Graduates Program, please visit the Program Fact Sheet on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website.

FLEXIBILITY	BENEFITS	HOW IT WORKS	SUPPORTING CITATION OR REFERENCE
Agencies may:			
Conduct outreach on campuses	Target mission-critical occupations and hard-to-reach audiences Meet agency diversity goals The ability to recruit locally and/or use familiar recruiting networks	Agencies have the discretion to conduct outreach on campuses before or without posting a job opportunity announcement (JOA) on USAJOBS, provided that they are participating in informational or awareness-type events or liaison activities.	5 CFR 362.303(a) Final Rule (Responses to Overarching Comments – #6) OPM Pathways FAQs (#5-10)

FLEXIBILITY	BENEFITS	HOW IT WORKS	SUPPORTING CITATION OR REFERENCE
Collect applications at an on-site recruiting event	Maintain relationships with talent partners Target mission-critical occupations and hard-to-reach audiences Meet agency diversity goals Reduce your recruitment timeline	To collect applications at an on-site recruiting event for Recent Graduates, agencies should: • Post an advertisement that publicizes the event on USAJOBS; • Make the event open to the public and part of an overall recruitment strategy; • Provide instructions on how candidates can apply if they are unable to attend the event; and • Have HR professionals and hiring managers on-site to assess applications and conduct interviews, as well as make selections.	5 CFR 362.105 OPM Pathways FAQs (#7, #9 and #10)

FLEXIBILITY	BENEFITS	HOW IT WORKS	SUPPORTING CITATION OR REFERENCE
Post an advertisement rather than a JOA	Experience greater flexibility in advertising and receiving applications through means other than, or in addition to, your Talent Acquisition System (TAS) (e.g., USA Staffing) Receive and/or review applications at on-site recruiting events Make the rating and ranking process more manageable for HR professionals Make the review of the list of eligibles more manageable for hiring managers Allow applicants to be notified of their status more quickly	Agencies may advertise a Recent Graduates position using a JOA or by posting an advertisement on USAJOBS. Posting an advertisement for a Recent Graduates position is different from posting a JOA in that the "Apply Online" button is not a part of its functionality. This means that applicants cannot submit their applications directly through USAJOBS. Therefore, agencies must include instructions on where to find information to apply for the position within the body of the advertisement.	5 CFR 362.104(c) 5 CFR 362.105(b) 5 CFR 362.303 Final Rule (Responses to Overarching Comments – #6) OPM Pathways FAQs (#12) OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance (Appendix E)
Recruit students up to nine months before they complete their academic requirements	Enhance your ability to compete with private sector and other employers for talented students and recent graduates Experience greater flexibility in syncing your recruitment timelines with academic calendars Provide applicants with a greater number of employment opportunities in Government	Agencies inform applicants in the JOA of how soon they may apply for the position prior to completing their academic requirements. The JOA should state that all qualification requirements must be met by applicants before they may enter on duty.	OPM Pathways FAQs (#21) OPM Qualification Standards (General Policies, Application of Qualification Standards, 4.d. Educational and Training Provisions or Requirements, College or University Education)

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Use pay flexibilities and/or incentives for Recent Graduate positions	Attract and retain talented recent graduates Enhance your ability to compete with private sector and other employers for talented candidates	Agencies determine if the use of incentives (e.g., recruitment, relocation and retention incentives; student loan repayment assistance; superior qualifications and special needs pay settings; maximum payable rate rules; etc.) is appropriate and offers them to eligible applicants.	5 CFR 362.105(j) 5 CFR 531.212 5 CFR 537 5 CFR 575 (Subparts A, B and C)
Consider non-U.S. citizens for Recent Graduates positions *Pathways participants must be U.S. citizens in order to be eligible for conversion to permanent positions*	Expand the pool of qualified applicants for mission-critical positions, in particular	Agencies may hire non-U.S. citizens under any of the Pathways Programs provided that they meet applicable immigration requirements. Participants in the Programs must be U.S. citizens in order to be eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service.	5 CFR 362.105(e) OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance (Citizenship)
Consider competitive status candidates for Recent Graduate positions	Expand the pool of qualified applicants for available positions Recruit candidates with valuable Federal experience Develop and retain existing talent	Agencies may consider all eligible and qualified applicants for Pathways positions, including applicants with competitive status. When applicants include those with competitive status, agencies should be aware of certain considerations when appointing them (e.g., applicants must leave the competitive service in order to accept an excepted service position).	5 CFR 302.102(b) 5 CFR 315.713(b) 5 CFR 315.201(c) 5 CFR 362.305 5 CFR 362.306 5 CFR 550.703

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Limit the number of days a JOA is open	Make the rating and ranking process more manageable for HR professionals Make the review of the list of eligibles more manageable for hiring managers Allow applicants to be notified of their status more quickly	Agencies must list the opening and closing dates in the JOA.	5 CFR 302.301 Final Rule (Responses to Overarching Comments – #6) OPM Pathways FAQs (#15) OPM Delegated Examining Operations Handbook
Set a cap on the number of applications received	Make the rating and ranking process more manageable for HR professionals Make the review of the list of eligibles more manageable for hiring managers Allow applicants to be notified of their status more quickly	Agencies must include language in the JOA that states that it will close after receipt of a specified number of applications (e.g., 200 applications).	5 CFR 302.301 OPM Pathways FAQs (#15) OPM Delegated Examining Operations Handbook
Hire Recent Graduates above the GS-9 level (or equivalent) for Pathways Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) positions	Enhance your ability to compete with private sector and other employers for STEM talent Offer higher paying, higher graded positions, which may include more responsibility, to STEM talent	Agencies may hire individuals at higher grades for STEM occupations (and positions involving scientific and professional research) than for non-STEM occupations (up to the GS-9 level) if they meet the position qualification requirements.	5 CFR 213.3402(b) OPM Pathways Transition and Implementation Guidance (Recent Graduates and Appointments)

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Establish a Recent Graduates Program that lasts longer than one year	Align your interest in having sufficient time to evaluate candidates for conversion with candidates' interest in obtaining training and career development opportunities	If agencies have position-specific training programs that new hires must complete before they can perform the duties of their jobs, then agencies may develop a Recent Graduates Program that lasts longer than one year and up to a maximum of two years. Agencies wishing to use this flexibility must include a provision in their Pathways MOU that describes the training program, including its length.	5 CFR 362.301 Final Rule (Responses to Overarching Comments – #7) OPM Pathways FAQs (#55)
Modify Participant Agreements	Ensure that the expectations outlined in Participant Agreements best meet your agency's needs	Agencies have discretion to tailor Participant Agreements for each of the Pathways Programs. While these documents must include certain elements (e.g., general descriptions of duties and work schedules), agencies have the flexibility to incorporate additional components into them (e.g., points of contact at educational institutions).	5 CFR 362.106
Extend the appointments for Recent Graduates by 120 days	Retain talented participants even when they need to take extra time to address unexpected circumstances or situations Provide participants with the flexibility to address unexpected circumstances or situations and still meet the requirements of the Program	Appointments for Recent Graduates may be extended for a period of up to 120 days under the employing agencies' procedures. Appointment extensions should be used to cover rare or unusual circumstances or situations. The criteria for approving appointment extensions will be identified in agencies' Pathways MOU.	5 CFR 362.303

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Convert Recent Graduates to term appointments first and then to permanent positions later on	Retain Pathways participants even when permanent positions are not immediately available	Agencies may convert a Recent Graduate to a term appointment—one to four years—upon Program completion. Agencies may then convert a Recent Graduate from the term appointment to a career or career conditional (permanent) appointment when a position or slot becomes available.	5 CFR 362.107(b) 5 CFR 362.305(a) OPM Pathways FAQs (#45)