

Category Rating Policy

1. **Authorities:** Public Law 107-296; Title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) 3319; 5 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) part 337, subpart C.
2. **Responsibility:** [Agency HR Office Name] employees and managers trained in category rating procedures are authorized to evaluate and select candidates under those procedures.
3. **Policy:** The [Name of Department or Agency] plans to increase flexibility in selecting quality candidates through a category-based ranking method. This approach is a way of assessing, ranking, and selecting job candidates for positions filled through competitive examining procedures. The policy is established in accordance with regulation issued by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in 5 CFR part 337 subpart C. The [Department or Agency] policy must be used in conjunction with this regulation. Heads of [bureaus and equivalent organizations] are responsible for effective administration of this plan.
 - a. **Coverage:** All competitive positions filled through the delegated examining process.
 - b. **Assessment:** Candidates will be assessed against job-related criteria assigned to at least two previously defined quality categories, for example, Highly-Qualified, Well-Qualified, Qualified, depending upon the quality and relevance of their qualifications to the job. The categories will be defined through a job analyses conducted in accordance with the “Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures,” prior to starting any recruitment activity. The competencies and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) identified in the job analysis will serve as the foundation for the [bureaus and offices] assessment strategy. [Bureaus and offices] will spend adequate time in the beginning of the process performing a thorough assessment of the needed competencies/KSAs.
 - c. **Quality Categories:** Multiple categories (at least two categories) will be established to assess each candidate against job-related criteria. Applicants who meet the basic qualification requirements established for the position will be placed in a quality category. The [bureau or offices] cannot establish a “Not-Qualified” category. For example each category is broadly defined as: [Additional categories may be added.]
 - **Highly-Qualified:** This higher category will be used for those candidates who possess the type and quality of experience that substantially exceeds the minimum qualifications of the position, including all selective placement factors and appropriate quality ranking factor(s) as determined by the job analysis.

To be Highly-Qualified, the candidates are considered by the Human Resources Office and the subject matter expert (selecting official) as being highly proficient in all the requirements of the job and can perform effectively in the position almost immediately or with a minimum amount of training and/or orientation.

- **Well-Qualified:** The next lower category (Well-Qualified) will be used to for those candidates that meet the minimum qualifications of the position and are proficient in some, but not all, of the requirements of the position. Candidates may require extensive training and/or orientation in order to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position.

Exception: When using OPM’s Standing Registers, agencies must follow OPM’s established quality categories for each register.

- d. **Announcement:** For each position to be filled, the job opportunity announcement must clearly define the categories each applicant will be assessed against based on the competencies/KSAs directly related to the job. The Human Resources Office must use the “How You Will Be Evaluated” section of the job opportunity announcement to communicate to applicants the rating criteria, i.e., the categories, which will be used to assess all applicants “Highly-Qualified” and “Well-Qualified”.
- e. **Ranking:** Assessed applicants will be placed in the appropriate quality category and ranked according to preference eligibility and non-preference eligibility. Within each category, all qualified preference eligibles are placed ahead of non-preference eligibles. Qualified preference eligibles are listed in alphabetical order within each preference order (CPS, CP, XP, and TP). Qualified non-preference eligibles are listed in alphabetical order. The following are exceptions:
 - (1) For scientific and professional positions at the grade 9 levels (or equivalent) or higher, qualified preference eligibles with a compensable service-connected disability of 10% or more (CPS and CP) are placed ahead of non-preference eligibles within the same quality category. Candidates within the preference groups will be listed in alphabetical order.
 - (2) For all other positions (series) and grade levels, qualified preference eligibles with a compensable service-connected disability of 10% or more (CPS and CP) are placed at the top of the highest quality category regardless of the quality category in which they were placed and ahead of non-preference eligibles rated in the highest quality category (CPS and CP eligibles “float” to the highest quality category). Candidates within the preference groups will be listed in alphabetical order.

[Merging categories is optional. Agency must decide whether merging categories will be available for use and establish instructions in its category rating policy as to when it will be used.]

- f. **Merging Categories:** When there are fewer than three candidates in the highest quality category, the category may be merged with the next lower quality category. Merging may take place before issuing a Certificate of Eligibles or before selecting an eligible. When merging categories, preference eligibles from the lower category

will be placed in the highest quality category above the non-preference eligibles in the newly merged highest quality category.

g. Selection:

- (1) Agencies must send **all** eligible candidates in the highest quality category on the Certificate of Eligibles or equivalent to the selecting official.
- (2) Pass over requests of preference eligibles will be processed as prescribed in 5 U.S.C. 3318 using procedures in OPM's Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, Chapter 6, Section D, Object to an Eligible.
- (3) Veterans' preference points as prescribed in 5 U.S.C. 3309 will not be applied in category rating procedures.
- (4) The "three consideration" rule embodied in 5 CFR 332.405 does not apply in category rating.

h. Records Retention and Reporting Requirements

- (1) Each agency that establishes a category rating system must submit a report to Congress in each of the 3 years following that establishment (5 U.S.C. § 3319(d)).
- (2) Agencies must send their annual reports to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate.
- (3) The report must include the:
 - (a) Number of employees hired under category rating;
 - (b) Impact category rating has had on the hiring of veterans and minorities, including those who are American Indian or Alaska Natives, Asian, Black or African American, and native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders; and
 - (c) Way in which managers were trained in the administration of category rating.
- (4) An agency that uses category ranking must forward to OPM a copy of the same annual report submitted to Congress. The report must be mailed to:

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Associate Director
Employee Services
1900 E Street, NW, Room 7470
Washington, DC 20415