

OHR Policy Guidelines

Determination of step upon promotion, recruitment or movement to a different category: Implementation of staff rule 3.3 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/275

OHR/PG/2024/4 – 28 March 2024

I. Scope of application

1. Pursuant to the Fifth committee resolution approved on 28 March 2024 (A/C.5/78/L.35) on the Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules, the General Assembly has decided in resolution 78/275 to withdraw the provisional amendments to Staff Rule 3.3. As a result, staff rule 3.3 will read as follows:

“(a) On appointment, a staff member shall normally be placed at the first step of the level of his or her post, unless otherwise decided by the Secretary-General.

“(b) On promotion, a staff member who holds a fixed-term or a continuing appointment shall be placed at the lowest step of the level to which he or she has been promoted that provides an increase in net base salary equal to at least the amount that would have resulted from the granting of two steps at the lower level.”

2. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on how the provisions of staff rule 3.3 are to be applied.
3. For the purposes of this rule, “promotions” are defined as selections of internal staff members to a higher-level position within the same category. The determination of step in these cases will follow staff rule 3.3 (b) strictly upon application of the “two-step” formula contained therein. Internal staff members who change categories (including recruitment of General Service staff and related categories to the Professional category) are not promotions and are to be treated for the purpose of step determination as if the movement were an appointment or reappointment and will follow the provisions of staff rule 3.3 (a), not staff rule 3.3 (b). When a staff member changes category, a new letter of appointment must be issued reflecting the different conditions of service of the new category. This is especially important when the movement involves a change from a locally recruited category to an internationally recruited category and vice versa.
4. Therefore, these guidelines apply to:
 - (a) Selections for positions in a different category than the one held by the staff members, regardless of whether the change of category is the result of a temporary assignment or a recruitment for a position for one year or more; and

- (b) all initial appointments or reappointments, regardless of appointment type, except for the following cases:
- a. Lateral movements on secondments or transfers from common system organizations, which are governed by the provisions of the *"Inter-Organization Agreement concerning Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowances"*;
 - b. Former staff members in receipt of pension benefits¹, who are governed by the provisions of ST/AI/2003/8, whereby they cannot be reappointment to a position at a grade and level higher than what they held before separation upon retirement; and
 - c. Recruitment for positions in the Professional and higher category that require special language competence, which are covered by other guidelines.

The guidelines are divided into 3 parts:

- Part I deals with the determination of step upon change of category or recruitment into the Professional and higher category;
- Part II deals with the determination of step upon change of category or recruitment into the Field Service category; and
- Part III deals with the determination of step upon change of category or recruitment into the General Service and related categories, including but not limited to National Professional Officers, Trades and Crafts and Security Service categories.

¹ Note that former staff members who are not in receipt of pension benefits will be reassessed upon reappointment

PART I: CHANGES OF CATEGORY OR RECRUITMENTS INTO THE PROFESSIONAL AND HIGHER CATEGORY

A) Minimum academic and experience requirements for the professional and higher category

5. The minimum academic qualifications required for appointment to positions in the Professional and higher category is a first-level university degree from an accredited (recognized) academic institution². In some instances, certification of specialized training or license relevant to the job family, such as military and police academy diplomas, may be accepted in lieu of a recognized degree for the positions whose classified job descriptions provide for such alternative. In such cases, this information will be contained in the educational requirements of the job opening. Where there is no language accepting equivalences, no staff member is to be recruited into the Professional and higher category without meeting the requirement of the recognized first-level university degree.
6. An advanced degree is required for certain levels and in such cases, additional years of qualifying work experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree. The UNESCO “World Guide to Higher Education” may be used as a guide in determining the level of degrees in individual countries. Information may also be obtained from other reliable sources, such as official internet sites, permanent missions and/or the educational institution concerned.
7. The table below summarizes the minimum requirements in terms of relevant work experience and academic qualifications for the different levels in the professional and higher category that do not require special language competence:

Professional Level	Number of years of relevant professional experience	
	Masters degree or equivalent Or higher (ISCED[1] Level 7 academic qualifications or higher)	First level university degree or equivalent (ISCED Level 6 academic qualifications)
P1	0	2
P2 Non YPP/G to P	2*	4
P2 YPP/G to P	0	0-2
P3	5	7
P4	7	9
P5	10	12

² For a definition of what constitutes a recognized degree, please refer to ST/AI/2018/5.

D1	15	17
D2	Over 15	Over 17

* At this level, consideration would be given for a doctoral degree (ISCED level 8) or equivalent with no experience.

8. In counting relevant work experience, HR specialists should consider work experience that would contribute to professional competencies/skills and that would prepare a candidate to perform the functions of the post for which the candidate is being selected. Work experience after the completion of the first-level university degree would fall under this category in most instances.
9. Work experience obtained prior to completing the first-level university degree will not normally be considered. However, in some cases, such experience may be considered when it is:
 - a. at the substantive and professional level; and
 - b. obtained in the fields specified in the job opening.
10. Work experience obtained in the General Service and related categories in the UN common system at the GS-6, GS-7, FS-4, FS-5, S-5 to 7, and TC-6 to 8 levels, National Professional Officer or Language Teacher category may be considered as relevant work experience, provided that the experience meets the above-mentioned criteria under paragraphs 8 and 9.
11. Experience obtained in certain job families (such as security, police or military) where certification of specialized training or licence relevant to the job family are deemed to be equivalent to the first-level university degree, may also be considered as relevant work experience, provided that the experience meets the above-mentioned criteria under paragraph 9.
12. Any other situation must be evaluated carefully on its own merits and may only be considered in exceptional circumstances and upon proper justification of meeting the requirements under paragraph 9 above.
13. Work experience can be acquired on a full-time or part-time basis. Work experience acquired on a part-time basis should be credited proportionately to the time worked provided that the experience meets the above-mentioned criteria under paragraph 8. When there is no information on the proportion of the time worked, part-time experience will be credited at 50%. This applies to self-employment, including consultancies and volunteer work. Internships will always be counted at 50%, even if they were on a full-time basis.
14. Work experience acquired during periods of full-time study will always be credited as part-time work experience and will be credited proportionally to the time worked. Therefore, when full-time study takes place concurrently with part-time work, work experience cannot be credited at 100%. Conversely, it should be possible to credit full-time work experience at 100% while undertaking part-time study.

B) Determination of step upon appointment or reappointment in the professional and higher category or movement to the professional and higher category from another category

15. Upon initial appointment or reappointment or movement across categories (including movement from the General Service to the Professional and higher category following a competitive examination), selected candidates will be appointed at the first step of the level for which they have been selected upon confirmation that the minimum academic and experience requirements of the job opening have been met as per paragraph 7 above.
16. Appointment at step I should be the norm for all recruitments. In cases in which the level of pay is an issue for attraction, the head of entity has discretionary authority to award steps higher than step I if the candidate possesses relevant work experience or educational qualifications over and above the minimum requirements stated in paragraph 7 above. In such cases, one additional step above step one may be given for each completed year of full-time work experience, except where two years are required to qualify for the next step, up to the maximum allowable steps as follows:
 - a. Step VI for P1 to P4 posts; and
 - b. Step V for P5 and D1 posts.
17. No higher steps than those indicated in paragraph 16 above may be granted by heads of entity and no revision of step may be granted after onboarding. No additional steps beyond step I may be granted for D2 posts.
18. In counting the years of work experience, the following criteria will be used:
 - (a) Only periods of completed full-time work that amount to one year beyond the minimum requirements in paragraph 7 will be counted. Periods of less than one year will be disregarded;
 - (b) A degree at level 8 as per the criteria of the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED (doctoral or equivalent) will be considered as equivalent to two years of full-time work experience.

Special considerations for determination of step upon recruitment into the Professional and higher category from other categories

19. For staff members who are recruited to the Professional and higher category from the General Service and related categories, or the Field Service category up to the FS-5 level, attention should be drawn to staff rule 4.16 (b) (i) requiring that appointments at the P1 and P2 levels be made exclusively through competitive examinations as well as to staff rule 3.4 (c) that calls for a grandfathering of the pensionable remuneration prior to the change of category until such time that the pensionable remuneration is surpassed by the one obtained in the

Professional category. Such recruitments can only be made at the P1 or P2 level after being successful in a competitive examination.

20. Internal staff members other than the ones indicated in paragraph 19 can be recruited into the Professional and higher category from another category provided they meet the requirements of the position. The staff member will be given a new letter of offer reflecting the new contractual conditions as per staff rule 4.5 and the step determination will be subject to the provisions of paragraphs 16 to 18 above. Upon acceptance of the offer, the staff member shall be given a new letter of appointment.
21. There may be some situations in which the net salary of staff members in the Professional and higher category may be lower than what they receive in their previous category. Under no circumstances can additional steps be given in these cases. Since the change of category represents a change in contractual conditions, the staff member should be given the standard period of time to consider the offer before accepting and be advised to consider the offer in its totality, including the additional entitlements that may be due as per staff rule 4.5.

Operational Considerations upon change of category: Personnel Actions (PA)

Temporary assignments

22. When an internal staff member is selected for a temporary assignment from the General Service and related categories to the Professional and higher category, the movement will be processed as an SPA in accordance with ST/AI/1999/17. Hiring managers are reminded, however, that recruitment to the Professional and higher category of staff members from the General Service and related categories shall be made exclusively through competitive examinations. Even the selection of internal General Service staff temporarily on such positions should be rare.
23. When an internal staff member is selected for a temporary assignment from the Field Service category or National Professional Officers (NPOs) to the Professional and higher category, the movement will be processed as a temporary grade. In the case of NPOs, as per Staff Rule 4.4 (b), NPO may only be temporarily assigned outside of the country of their employment to a United Nations field mission for a period not exceeding three months or to any other duty station for a period not exceeding six months under conditions established by the Secretary-General. Such movement should not involve a change of duty station. As the determination of step could result in a lower salary than the one given in the category of the post they encumber, staff members should be given the standard period of time to consider the offer before accepting the temporary grade and be advised to consider the offer in its totality, including the additional entitlements that may be due as per staff rule 4.5.

Selections for positions in the Professional and higher category for one year or longer

24. When the movement into the Professional and higher category is the result of a competitive selection through the staff selection system or a recruitment from a competitive examination roster, this movement will be processed as a change of category PA.

PART II: CHANGES OF CATEGORY OR RECRUITMENTS INTO THE FIELD SERVICE CATEGORY

A) Minimum academic and experience requirements for the field service category

25. The table below summarizes the minimum requirements in terms of relevant work experience and academic qualifications for the different levels in the Field Service category:

Level of Appointment	Minimum relevant experience	Minimum academic requirements*
FS-7	12 years **	Completion of Secondary education or equivalent. Technical or vocational certificate.**
FS-6	10 years**	Completion of Secondary education or equivalent or equivalent. Technical or vocational certificate**
FS-5	8 years	Completion of Secondary education or equivalent or equivalent. Technical or vocational certificate
FS-4	6 years	Completion of secondary education
FS-3	4 years	Completion of secondary education
FS-2	2 years	Completion of secondary education
FS-1	0 years	Completion of secondary education

**Technical positions such as vehicle mechanics, radio technician or communications technicians require a technical certificate/license of successful completion of an apprenticeship and tradesmen's qualifications in the relevant field.*

*** The minimum number of years of relevant experience is reduced for candidates who possess a first-level university degree as follows: for FS-6, a minimum of 5 years of experience; for FS-7, a minimum of 7 years of experience.*

B) Determination of step upon appointment or reappointment in the field service category

26. Upon initial appointment or reappointment, upon confirmation that the minimum academic and experience requirements of the job opening have been met as per paragraph 25 above, selected candidates will be appointed at the first step of the level for which they have been selected.
27. Appointment at step I should be the norm for all recruitments. In cases in which the level of pay is an issue for attraction, the head of entity has discretionary authority to award steps higher than step I if the candidate possesses relevant work experience or educational qualifications over and above the minimum requirements stated in paragraph 25 above. One additional step above step one may be given for each completed year of full-time work experience up to a maximum of step VI.
28. No step higher than VI be granted by heads of entity and no revision of step may be granted after onboarding.
29. In counting the years of work experience, the following criteria will be used:
 - (a) Only periods of completed full-time work that amount to one year beyond the minimum requirements in paragraph 25 will be counted;
 - (b) For FS-1 through FS-5, one additional year of experience may be computed for relevant higher-level education, i.e. one step for Bachelor's degree or equivalent and 2 years for Masters. This is not applicable for the FS-6 and FS-7 levels.

Special considerations for staff members who move to the Field Service category from a different category.

30. Staff in the General Service and related categories and NPOs shall be eligible to apply for jobs into the Field Service category regardless of their current grade and level, as long as they meet the requirements with respect to academic qualifications and years of experience for the category and level they are applying for.
31. In the case of NPOs, as per Staff Rule 4.4 (b) NPO may be temporarily assigned outside of the country of their employment to a United Nations field mission for a period not exceeding three months or to any other duty station for a period not exceeding six months under conditions established by the Secretary-General. Such movement should not involve a change of duty station.
32. These movements are considered to be a recruitment to a new category and the determination of step will be done in accordance with part II. B of the present guidelines regardless of the type of movement and personnel action that needs to be processed.
33. Internal staff members who move to the Field Service category from a different category will be given a new letter of appointment reflecting the different conditions of service of the FS category.

Operational Considerations upon movement to the Field Service category: PA actions

Temporary assignments

34. When an internal staff member is selected for a temporary assignment from a different category to the Field Service category, the movement will be processed as a temporary grade.

Selections for positions for one year of longer

35. When the movement to the Field Service category from another category is the result of a selection through the staff selection system and the staff member holds a permanent or continuing appointment, this movement will be processed as a change of category PA.

PART III: CHANGES OF CATEGORY OR RECRUITMENTS INTO THE GENERAL SERVICE AND RELATED CATEGORIES INCLUDING NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS

Definitions:

36. General Service posts encompass all administrative support functions and range from GS-1 to GS-7.
37. Related categories (RC) encompass technical support or specialised functions other than those in the General Service category. The range of categories and grade levels include those listed below:
- (a) Trades and Crafts (TC): include functions that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and are related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation such as drivers, plumbers, electricians, various machine operators, and maintenance workers. The levels are prefixed by "TC", and range from levels TC-1 up to TC-8;
 - (b) Security Service (S): covers security officer function. The levels are prefixed by "S" and range from S-1 up to S-7; This category is limited to New York only.
 - (c) Public Information Assistant/Tour Guides (PIA): The levels are prefixed by "PIA" and range from PIA-1 up to PIA-3. This category is limited to New York only;
 - (d) Language Teacher (LT): The level is prefixed by "LT", with one grade, LT-1. This category is limited to New York and Geneva only.
 - (e) National Professional Officer (NO-A to NO-D) category covers functions in UN field offices that required national knowledge and experience and could not be carried out as effectively by international professionals.

A) Minimum academic, experience and un examinations and tests requirements for the general service and related categories

38. The following eligibility requirements must be met by prospective candidates to be recruited for positions in the General Service and related categories:

(a) The minimum age to be eligible for consideration for a position is 18;

(b) Applicants must have completed secondary education or equivalent.

In some specific instances certification of specialized training or license relevant to the job family, may be required. In such cases, this information will be contained in the educational requirements of the job opening. Any assessment required for specific functions will be contained in the job opening for the position advertised.

39. The tables below summarize the minimum requirements in terms of relevant work experience and academic qualifications for the different levels in the General Service and related categories and NPOs as well as the UN assessments and tests for their respective functions:

General Service	Number of years of relevant post-secondary experience		UN examinations/tests
	Upper Secondary education or equivalent (ISCED Level 3 academic qualifications)	First-level university degree or equivalent (ISCED Level 6 academic qualifications)	
GS-1	No experience required.	No experience required.	Any specialised test required for specific functions ³
GS-2	1 year	No experience required.	
GS-3	2 years	No experience required.	
GS-4	3 years	1 year	
GS-5	5 years	3 years	
GS-6	7 years	5 years	

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Job openings in the GS category in the UN Secretariat advertised after 7 July 2023 no longer require the passing of the GGST. The discontinuation of the GGST has no bearing on other tests for the General Service and related categories, such as Data Assistant Test (DAT), Trades and Crafts Test (TCT), and Editorial and Desktop Publishing Assistant Test (EDPA). The tests will be administered as before.

GS-7	10 years	8 years	
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Security Service⁴	Number of years of relevant post-secondary professional experience		UN examinations/tests
S-1	2 years in a police force or 3 years in a military force		Security Officers Examination
S-2	2 years		
S-3	5 years		
S-4	9 years		
S-5	12 years		
S-6	15 years		
S-7	18 years		

Public Information Assistant Category		Number of years of relevant professional experience	UN examinations/tests
PIA-1	Not applicable	No experience required	
PIA-2	Not applicable	1 year	
PIA-3	Not applicable	2 years	

Trades and Crafts Category	Number of years of relevant professional experience		UN examinations/tests
TC-1	No experience required.		Trades and Crafts Test
TC-2	No experience required.		
TC-3	No experience required.		

⁴ Applies also to Security Officers in GS categories outside New York.

TC-4	3 years		
TC-5	5 years		
TC-6	7 years		
TC-7	10 years		
TC-8	12 years		

National Professional Officer Category	First-level university degree or equivalent (ISCED Level 6 academic qualifications)	Masters degree or equivalent Or higher (ISCED Level 7 academic qualifications or higher)	UN examinations and tests
NO-A	2 years	0 years	N/A
NO-B	4 years	2 years	
NO-C	7 years	5 years	
NO-D	9 years	7 years	

Language Teacher category	Masters degree or equivalent Or higher (ISCED Level 7 academic qualifications or higher)	UN examinations and tests
LT-1	5 years	N/A

For information on United Nations Online Examinations and Tests System please check: <https://hr.un.org/page/general-service-examinations>

B) Determination of step upon appointment or reappointment in the general service and related categories including national professional officers

40. Upon initial appointment or reappointment, upon confirmation that the minimum academic and experience requirements of the job opening have been met as per section A above, selected candidates will be appointed at the first step of the level for which they have been selected.
41. Appointment at step I should be the norm for all recruitments. In cases in which the level of pay is an issue for attraction, the head of entity has discretionary authority to award steps higher than step I if the candidate

possesses relevant work experience or educational qualifications over and above the minimum requirements stated in in the previous section. One additional step above step one may be given for each completed year of full-time work experience up to a maximum of step VI.

42. No step higher than VI be granted by heads of entity and no revision of step may be granted after onboarding.
43. In counting the years of work experience, the following criteria will be used:
 - a) Work experience obtained in the General Service and related categories in the UN common system may be considered as relevant work experience, provided that the experience meets the above-mentioned criteria under section A.
 - b) Work experience obtained prior to completing the required educational qualifications for the category will not normally be considered.
 - c) Any other situation must be evaluated carefully on its own merits and may only be considered in exceptional circumstances and upon proper justification of meeting the requirements under section A above.
44. Work experience can be acquired on a full-time or part-time basis. Work experience acquired on a part-time basis should be credited proportionately to the time worked provided that the experience meets the above-mentioned criteria under section A. When there is no information on the proportion of the time worked, part-time experience will be credited at 50%. This applies to self-employment, including consultancies and volunteer work. Internships will always be counted at 50%, even if they were on a full-time basis.
45. Work experience acquired during periods of full-time study will always be credited as part-time work experience and will be credited proportionally to the time worked. Therefore, when full-time study takes place concurrently with part-time work, work experience cannot be credited at 100%. Conversely, it should be possible to credit full-time work experience at 100% while undertaking part-time study.
46. In counting relevant work experience, HR specialists should consider work experience that would contribute to required competencies/skills and that would prepare a candidate to perform the functions of the post for which the candidate is being selected. Work experience after the completion of the minimum required educational qualification would fall under this category in most instances.

Operational Considerations upon change of category

47. Staff in the General Service and related categories including NPOs shall be eligible to apply for job openings across categories for positions subject to local recruitment regardless of their current grade and level, as long as they meet the requirements with respect to academic

qualifications and years of experience for the category and level they are applying for and the selection does not involve a change of duty station unless the staff member is legally authorised to work in the new duty station. Such movements are considered to be a recruitment to a new category and the determination of step will be subject to the provisions of staff rule 3.3 (a), covered in Part III.B of the current guidelines.

48. For selections of staff from the General Service and related categories into the Professional and higher category, please refer to Part I of these guidelines and for selections into the FS category, please refer to Part II.

Abolished

Annex

FAQs on step determination following 5C resolution on staff rule 3.3

Offers made to external candidates

1. How should offers made to external candidates before 28 March 2024 be dealt with?

Offers made before 28 March and complying with the expired guidelines (OHR/PG/2023/2) will be honoured. There is no need to change or withdraw the offer and you may proceed with the recruitment.

2. How should offers made to external candidates after 28 March 2024 be dealt with?

Offers issued to candidates after 28 March 2024 which followed the expired guidelines for step determination (OHR/PG/2023/2) should be withdrawn if the candidate has not accepted the offer and a new offer following the new guidance (OHR/PG/2024/4) should be issued.

Offers issued to candidates after 28 March 2024 which followed the abolished guidelines for step determination (OHR/PG/2023/2) that have been accepted by candidates by the time of issuance of the new guidance should be honoured as a transitional measure.

3. The new guidance will require changes to the Inspira offer management tool. When will these changes be available?

All offers should be made at the step 1. Only in cases in which compensation may be an obstacle to the acceptance of the offer may you revisit the case. In such circumstances, you may use the calculator of the years of experience in Inspira to determine what step could be awarded as per the guidelines.

4. A staff member had step 8 when employed under a temporary appointment prior to 28 March 2024. The staff member has been selected through the staff selection system for a position at the same level after 28 March 2024 and the new guidelines will give the staff member a lower step than the one held under the temporary appointment. Can I honour the step under the old contract?

Staff rule 4.18 on reemployment states that the terms of the new appointment are fully applicable without regard to any period of former service. Consequently, the new offer should comply with the new guidance and may result in a lower step.

SPA

5. How are steps on SPA to be calculated after 28 March 2024?

If the SPA is the result of a selection to a higher-level position within the same category, the step should be determined in accordance with staff rule 3.3 (b) by application of the two-step formula.

If the SPA is the result of selection to a different category (temporary selection of G to P, for instance), the step should be determined as a new recruitment in accordance with staff rule 3.3 (a).

- 6. A staff member was given step VIII as a result of the application of the prior guidance (OHR/PG/2023/3). The SPA is being extended after 28 March 2024. Should the step be recalculated in accordance with the new provisions?**

No recalculation should be made as this is an extension.

- 7. A staff member was given step VIII as a result of application of the prior guidance. The staff member has been selected to the position as a result of a selection through the staff selection system. Can I honour the prior step given or to I have to abide by the new guidance (OHR/PG/2024/4)?**

The step should be recalculated as per the new guidance in accordance with staff rule 3.3 (b), that is, by application of the two-step formula.

Selections to higher-level positions within the same category (i.e. “Promotions”)

- 8. What happens to staff members who were selected for a higher-level position within the same category between 28 March and 31 March 2024? How will their step be calculated?**

Staff members selected for a higher-level position within the same category BEFORE 28 March will have their step calculated under the old guidance (OHR/PG/2023/3).

As a transitional measure, staff members selected for a higher-level position within the same category between 28 March and 31 March will also have the step calculated under the old guidance (OHR/PG/2023/3).

Selections made on or after 1 April 2024 will have to follow the new staff rule 3.3. (b) and will be calculated in accordance with the two-step formula.