



OHR Frequently Asked Questions

Implementation of Staff Rule 3.3 on Salary Policy

Determination of step upon promotion, recruitment, or movement to a different category

OHR/PG/2025/3/FAQs – 20 August 2025

Delegation of Authority

1. What is the authority of the Head of entity in determining the step-in-grade?

For implementation of Staff rule 3.3 (a), the Head of entity has delegated authority to grant a step higher than step I, which is the norm, up to the maximum allowable step as provided in paragraphs 6, 29 and 41 of these guidelines. For implementation of Staff rule 3.3 (b), the Head of entity has no authority to deviate from the application of the “two-step formula”.

2. Upon initial appointment or reappointment or movement to a different category, can a step beyond step I be determined by the Head of Entity and/or onboarding entity (Service Centers, EOs, local HR offices) or is it required that candidates be offered step I as a first step?

Staff Rule 3.3 (a) reads “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”. When the selected candidate possesses additional years of experience or educational qualifications over and above the requirements for step I, Service Centres, EOs or local HR offices (or as delegated by the Head of Entity) **must** offer an appointment at a step higher than step I as per the tables provided in the policy guidelines on Determination of step upon recruitment, or movement to a different category (OHR/PG/2025/3), up to the maximum step allowed.

3. How are we going to ensure consistency when exercising discretionary authority in step determination upon initial appointment or reappointment?

Staff rule 3.3 did not change the way the delegation of authority is to be exercised when determining steps. It is the same as established effective 1 January 2019 and operationally exercised until 31 December 2022. The only thing that has changed is the ceiling (i.e. maximum step allowable at each grade level) and the criteria (i.e. the number of years of relevant work experience) to award steps higher than one. These changes

have been captured in the tables provided in the [OHR/PG/2025/3](#). The consistent use of the tables will ensure equal treatment in the implementation of staff rule 3.3 (a).

Offers made to external candidates

4. How should offers made to external candidates on or before 24 April 2024 be dealt with?

All offers of appointment, changes of category or selections for higher-level position within the same category effective 1 January 2023 to 23 April 2024 are subject to the provisions of ST/SGB/2023/1/Rev.1, [OHR/PG/2023/2](#) and [OHR/PG/2023/3](#).

All offers of appointment, changes of category or selections for higher-level position within the same category effective on 24 April 2024 or after, are subject to the provisions of [OHR/PG/2025/3](#).

5. Should the Personnel Actions of all staff members onboarded on or after 24 April 2024 be revised under the new guidelines?

The following Personnel Actions/Offers of appointments with an effective date on or after 24 April 2024 should be revised:

- All offers of appointment (including both initial appointment and re-appointment) based on the date of issuance of the offer;
- Changes of category based on the Personnel Action effective date or the date of issuance of the offer if there was an offer, and
- Selections for higher-level positions within the same category based on the Promotion or SPA Personnel Action effective date.

6. A staff member had step VIII when employed under a temporary appointment prior to 24 April 2024. The staff member was selected through the staff selection system for a position at the same level after 24 April 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 re-employment 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 guidelines including if/when resulting in a lower step.

7. An FTA-limited appointee (including JPO) has been selected through a JO for a position. The new guidelines will result in an appointment at the same level with a lower step. Are there any transitional measures for this situation?

There is no need to separate a staff member who holds a fixed-term limited appointment when they are selected against a JO following a competitive recruitment process including CRB review. In this case, the limitation should be lifted by executing a change of contract elements PA and then a reassignment, transfer, or promotion PA as applicable. This is not a situation of separation/reappointment, and the step-in-grade level of the staff member will remain unaffected in such cases.

If selected through a TJO, the fixed-term limited appointee would have to be separated and reappointed under a temporary appointment. As such, the new offer should comply with the new guidelines and may result in a lower step.

Special Post Allowance (SPA)

Selections to higher-level positions within the same category (i.e., "Promotions") GS category:

8. How are steps on SPA to be calculated after 24 April 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. As per staff rule 3.10, the two-step rule should also be used in cases of SPA for exceptional temporary assignment of General Service staff and related categories (except NPOs) and staff at the FS-5 level and below to a Professional position for a period of less than one year.

9. A staff member was given step VIII on SPA as a result of the application of the prior guidelines (OHR/PG/2023/3). The SPA is being extended after 24 April 2024. Should the step be recalculated in accordance with the new provisions?

No recalculation should be made as this is an extension of the SPA (not the determination of a new SPA calculation). Determination of a new SPA calculation should be made in accordance with the present policy guidelines OHR/PG/2025/3.

10. A staff member selected through a TJO was given step VIII as a result of application of the 2023 guidelines (OHR/PG/2023/3). The staff member has now been selected for the position through the staff selection system. Can I honour the step held at the SPA level or do I have to abide by the new guidelines ([OHR/PG/2025/3](#))?

The step should be recalculated as per the new guidelines in accordance with staff rule 3.3 (b), that is, by strict application of the two-step formula as mandated by the General Assembly. Any seniority in grade held that did not result in a higher step while on SPA may

be taken into consideration when calculating the next within-grade step increment at the higher level.

For example: A staff member is awarded SPA at P4 Step VIII on 1 August 2023 under the provisions of the 2023 guidelines. On 1 July 2024 the staff member is promoted to the P4 level and at that point it is determined that the step upon promotion should be P4 Step II under the provisions of staff rule 3.3 (b)

At the time of execution of the Promotion PA, the within-grade step increment date should be adjusted so that the months served at the higher level on SPA from 1 August 2023 through 30 June 2024 (11 months) are counted for the next WIGSI. Thus, the staff member would get the next step (P4 Step III) not on 1 July 2025, a year from the date of promotion, but on 1 August 2024, taking into account the period of time on SPA that did not result in a higher step at the time of the promotion calculation.

Operational considerations: Umoja will not automatically calculate the WIGSI date as described above. When manually adjusting the WIGSI date in the PA to account for the time served on SPA, it is crucial to include clear and detailed comments explaining the calculation.

These comments should:

1. Reference the new guidelines and staff rule 3.3 (b)
2. Detail how the SPA period was considered in adjusting the WIGSI date
3. Provide the specific dates and calculations used

“WIGSI date adjusted as per OHR/PG/2024/4/Rev.2 guidelines and staff rule 3.3 (b). Two-step formula applied. 11 months on SPA (1 Aug 2023 - 30 Jun 2024) considered for next WIGSI. New WIGSI date: 1 Aug 2024.”

11. A staff member was granted SPA under the 2023 guidelines and, as a result of the application of the more favourable rules at the time, was given P3 Step IX. The staff member is subsequently promoted to the P3 level after 24 April 2024 and as a result of the application of the two-step rule ends up with a much lower step (step IV). Is this the correct application of the guidance?

This is correct. The more favourable conditions of staff rule 3.3 under the provisional staff rules of ST/SGB/2023/1/Rev.1 could result in more generous SPA pay. However, for the selection against a JO after 24 April 2024 we are now bound by the more restrictive language of staff rule 3.3 (b) and therefore the step determination has to be calculated using the “two-step formula”. Note that SPA is a financial compensation for the temporary assumption of higher-level functions, but it is only upon “promotion” that the steps are

determined at the higher level. These are two different calculations at two different times, bound by the rules in effect at the time each calculation was computed and thus, there should be no expectation that the two should match.

12. Can PTA be used to cover the difference in salary when the SPA calculation (for G or FS-5 to P for instance) yields a lower salary than the one held at the GS or FS level? If not, what could we do so that at least the staff member continues to get the salary at his personal level and is not losing money while performing the P functions?

In accordance with staff rule 3.10 (d), the formula for calculation of the SPA is to give the equivalence to the salary increase that the staff member would have received had the staff member been promoted to the next higher level. Staff rule 3.10 (c) further states (emphasis added):

(c) In the case of a staff member holding a fixed-term or continuing appointment who is assigned to serve in a mission, or when a staff member in the General Service category is required to serve in a higher-level post in the Professional category, or when a staff member in any category holding a fixed-term or continuing appointment is required to serve in a post which is classified more than one level above the staff member's level, the allowance may be paid immediately when the staff member assumes the higher duties and responsibilities.

The staff rule therefore allows for a shortening of the 3-month period and the payment of SPA from day one of the assumption of higher-level functions when the staff member at the GS level performs at the P level. Even in cases in which the staff member assumes the functions of a post classified more than one level above his or her level, the SPA is only calculated as if there had been a promotion to the next level, in accordance with staff rule 3.3 (b), not to the actual level of the position.

There is no legal basis therefore for the payment of any allowance to bridge any potential loss in salary when the staff member is temporarily assuming higher-level functions and requests SPA. Form P.269 A, should be used for the calculation of the SPA from G and related categories to P and form P.269 B should be used for the calculation of SPA for FS-5 or below who are performing P functions temporarily.

There may be some instances in which SPA from GS to P or FS to P may not result in payment to the staff member and the pay received at the category of the staff member may be higher than the SPA calculation. Staff rule 3.10 indicates that staff members are expected to assume temporarily without extra compensation the duties and responsibilities of higher-level posts. The SPA is an allowance that needs to be claimed by the staff member or the supervisor. Should the staff member opt to accept an assignment at the P level and decide that he or she does not want to receive the SPA payment because

that calculation would result in a lower salary than what the staff member receives at the other category, the staff member may opt not to claim the SPA

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

- 13. In accordance with OHR/PG/2024/4/Rev.2, all entities should have been subject to the two-step formula as of 24 April 2024. Can you confirm that promotions should not be affected by these new 2025 guidelines?**

No changes have been made to the treatment of promotions between the 2024 and 2025 new guidelines. The 'two-step' calculation under Staff Rule 3.3(b) remains applicable.

As per Staff Rule 3.3(b), when a staff member holding a fixed-term or continuing appointment is selected for a new position at a higher level within the same category, their step is determined based on the lowest step at the higher level that provides a net base salary increase at least equivalent to two steps at the lower level.

- 14. What happens to staff members who were selected for a higher-level position within the same category on or after 24 April 2024? How will their step be calculated?**

Staff members selected for a higher-level position within the same category on or after 24 April 2024 will have their step calculated using the two-step formula.

Movements to a lower-level position

- 15. Does the following practice remain unchanged under the 2025 guidelines? *"When a staff member is selected for a position at a lower level than the one they previously occupied, the step assigned at the lower level will be the one that provides a net salary that is equal to or lower than the net salary received at the higher level."***

In line with past practice, when a staff member is selected for a position at a lower level than the one, he or she occupied, the step assigned at the lower level will be the one that provides a net salary that is equal to or lower than the net salary received at the higher level.

In accordance with staff rule 3.2 (c) any period of service since the last step increment at the higher level will be credited towards the next step increment at the lower level provided the staff member has had satisfactory service.

Loss in Salary before promotion

- 16. A promotion would normally entail an increase in the salary, however, with the 2-step formula, the staff member may get a promotion, but this promotion may result in a loss of a net salary. For example, a P3 step 6 in NY promoted to P4 step 1 in Lebanon. Is it possible to preserve the salary with the move?**

Salaries at the P and FS levels comprise a base salary and post adjustment. Staff rule 3.3 (b) indicates that the step upon promotion should provide an increase in net salary equal to at least two steps at the lower level. In the example above, with the current salary scales, the base salary at those levels is as follows:

P3 step VI. Gross salary: \$98,996; net salary \$78,737

P4 step I: Gross salary: \$107,389; net salary: \$84,672

Therefore, the staff member is getting a salary increase. However, since the P and FS salaries have a post adjustment to ensure equity in purchasing power across duty stations, the addition of the post adjustment may result in lower take-home net pay.

The current post adjustment multiplier for Lebanon is 45.2 and in New York is 75.5. As a result, the addition of the post adjustment element to the net salary will result in a net pay amount upon promotion to Lebanon which is lower than what was received at the lower level in New York. However, note that the net salary is higher and so is the pensionable remuneration.

This is the expected outcome of the UN common system salary structure, as the post adjustment reflects the lower cost of living adjustment that would be experienced by the staff member in Lebanon vis-à-vis New York.

Note that this difference in net pay may also occur when a staff member moves laterally to another duty station. The net take-home pay will differ because of the different post adjustment in the new location. This is how the net pay is structured, and it is thus not possible to preserve the original net pay upon movement to a new duty station with a different post adjustment.

Retirees

- 17. What are the caps for determining steps when hiring retirees?**

Former staff members in receipt of pension benefits will have their step capped based on two policy provisions:

- a) Step cannot be higher than the one they held before separation upon retirement in accordance with the provisions of ST/AI/2003/8 on Retention in service beyond the mandatory age of separation and employment of retirees; and
- b) Step cannot be higher than the maximum allowable for their respective category as provided in the policy guidelines on Determination of step upon promotion, recruitment, or movement to a different category.

Counting relevant work experience

18. Paragraph 8(a) states: “Only periods of completed full-time work that amount to one year beyond the minimum requirements listed in Annex I will be counted. Periods of less than one year will be disregarded.” Could you clarify the intent of this provision? Does it mean that any single employment period shorter than one year (e.g., an 8-month contract) is entirely excluded from the calculation? Or does this mean that the total (including all experiences) is rounded down, e.g. 8.6 years of total experience would be rounded to 8.0? An illustrative example would be appreciated.

The total, cumulative relevant work experience is rounded down when it does not amount to one year. For example, 8 years and 6 months of total relevant work experience would be rounded to 8.0 years. Similarly, 8 years and 1 month of total relevant work experience would be rounded to 8 years.

Reappointment-reassignment

19. There are strong concerns raised within our entities given the lower steps to be granted under the new guidelines to former staff who were previously granted a much higher step under the previous guidelines and provisional staff rule 3.3. Why can we not honour the previous step?

Upon reappointment, former staff members (whether it is movement from TA to FTA or FTA to FTA with or without a break) might get a lower step or lower remuneration for two reasons:

- (a) In accordance with the General Assembly resolution 78/725, the Secretary-General had to withdraw the amendments to the provisional staff rule 3.3 and to abolish the prior set of policy guidelines effective from 1 January 2023 to 24 April 2024. Further, a revised new policy guideline on step determination had to be published to aim for equity in pay and equitable treatment of all candidates, whether internal or external.

- (b) Staff Rule 4.18 sets the conditions for new appointments. Unless the staff member is reinstated under staff rule 4.17, any new appointment cannot take into consideration any other period of prior service.
- (c) Staff regulation 12.5 indicates that staff rules cannot give rise to acquired rights while they are provisional. Therefore, it is not possible to honour their previous step.

Eligibility

20. Does the review apply to cases where offers were issued before 24 April 2024, but PA was processed after?

All Personnel Actions with effective date on or after 24 April 2024 should be reviewed and the determination of step revised retroactively, if necessary, to ensure that the step is determined as per these guidelines.

21. The new guidelines change for GS category, but does this include NPOs?

Section I C of the policy guidelines includes provisions on Determination of step upon appointment, reappointment or change of category into the General Service (GS) and related categories including National Professional Officers (NPOs).

Communication to staff members

22. Who is responsible for informing staff members of changes to their step placement?

The Executive Office / Local HR Office of each entity is responsible for informing affected staff members and providing necessary explanations regarding the changes. They remain the primary point of contact for staff seeking clarification on individual cases. This issuance and its related guidelines may be shared with staff as appropriate. Entities may write following the usual tiered system for HR support to Tier 2: DOS-HR-Advice dos-hr-advice@un.org. OHR remains available to provide additional policy support as Tier 3: DMSPC-OHR-GSPD-Policy Support ohr-policysupport@un.org

23. Will there be system-wide communication or a town hall to inform staff? This would help restore trust of staff that have been affected.

While there is no plan for a Secretariat-wide town hall at this stage, HR offices are encouraged to share this issuance and the accompanying guidelines with staff members. Policy presentations or briefings can also be arranged on a needs basis to support clear communication and ensure staff are well informed. Entities are expected to engage proactively with affected staff to address concerns and help rebuild trust.

Calculation of retroactive payments

24. Will entities be required to absorb the financial impact of retroactive adjustments or will extra provisions be made?

The expectation is for entities to cover these amounts within existing resources unless otherwise authorized following Controller's review.

25. Is prior Controller approval required for regular budget, peacekeeping, support account, XB and project-funded posts?

Based on confirmation from the Assistant Secretary-General/OPPFB, Controller, it has been decided that entities do not need to seek approval from OHR and OPFBB before proceeding with the step recalculation and the retroactive payments/recoveries for staff appointed, reappointed, or who changed category on or after 24 April 2024.

Communication to entities on retroactive recalculation of step upon appointment - OHR/PG/2025/3 - Implementation of Staff Rule 3.3 on Salary Policy Determination of step upon appointment, reappointment, promotion or change of category sent out on 28 July 2025 refers.

26. Should the review be performed for staff nearing separation?

Yes. All eligible cases (based on the offer issuance date or PA effective date) for staff members who are still in service must be reviewed, including those who are in the process of separating.

The guidelines state that cases are subject to review based on offer issuance date (for appointments) or PA effective date (for changes of category on or after 24 April 2024). Staff members whose initial action falls within scope and who are still in service at the time of review, including those in the process of separating, must receive retroactive payment or overpayment must be recovered prior to their separation in the August payroll.

No review or corrective action is required for individuals who have already separated.

27. Will cases involving former staff (retirees, separated staff) be reviewed and adjusted? Can consideration be given to include staff members who have already separated but were employed during the period covered by the retroactive review, to ensure they receive any salary adjustments they would have been entitled to?

No. Staff members who have already separated prior to the review are not subject to retroactive review and adjustment. The review applies only to staff who remain in service, including those in the process of separating, if their original action (appointment, promotion, or category change) falls within scope.

28. Are downgraded steps (e.g., D-1, P-2, FS-4 to FS-6) to be applied retroactively?

Yes. If the review determines that a staff member was granted a higher step under previous guidance, adjustments, including changes to a lower step, are to be made retroactively as per the new policy. Staff should be informed accordingly.

29. What happens if a negatively impacted staff member refuses to sign a revised offer?

Step determinations are administrative decisions based on regulatory guidelines, not subject to staff acceptance.

30. What is the expected date for making the retroactive payment? This will impact on the entity's liquidity projection, and we will need to consider that as it will impact on other operational and staffing imperatives.

- For staff members funded from Peacekeeping, Support Account and Extra-budgetary funds, entities may proceed with the PA actions immediately.
- For staff members funded from the Regular Budget, entities may proceed with the processing of the corresponding PAs being mindful of the applicable payroll lock schedule for the month of August. To facilitate the analysis of the impact of such retro payments on the allotment of each entity, and determine if any additional allotments are needed, the Controller has requested that all retroactive actions be reflected in the August payroll. This will allow for a consolidated review in early September.
- For staff members separating, the PA actions should be completed as soon as possible regardless of the source of funding in order to avoid delays in separation processing.

31. Who will review the step for candidates at the P levels who were onboarded on transfer from another UNS agency?

The receiving entity is responsible for reviewing and revising the step determination for candidates at the P level and above who were onboarded on transfer from another UNS agency.

MAES/UNDT

32. In cases where staff members may face significant retroactive financial recoveries and have already entered into financial obligations based on their previous salary information, how will potential litigation risks (e.g. UNDT claims) be managed?

MAES and ALD appeals will handle those cases if they arise.

Staff whose net pay is reduced by more than 20% due to retroactive adjustments may request staggered recovery through their Executive Office or the local Human Resources Office in line with established practice.

Inspira/Umoja changes

33. Will Inspira and Umoja be updated to automate these calculations?

Work is underway with the Inspira team to automate these changes. Separate communication will be issued once system changes are implemented. Umoja updates are not yet finalized.

Downgrade

34. Based on the new guidelines, it appears that only certain categories (e.g., D-1, P-2, FS-2, FS-4 to FS-6) may experience a downgrade in step level. Can you confirm which categories may be subject to downward adjustment?

Yes, these categories/grades are the ones that may experience a downgrade in step level.

Miscellaneous

35. Does the table titled 'GS with first-level university degree', though not included in the current guidance, remain applicable?

The table now included under Section II.C.i (General Service and related categories) in the new guidelines does take into account first-level university degrees by deducting two years of required work experience for each grade level. Therefore, while the earlier specific table titled "GS with first-level university degree" is not separately reproduced, its principles have been integrated into the current tables. The new guidance (OHR/PG/2025/3) fully supersedes previous versions.

36. For Security Officers outside New York, which table should be applied (para 39.b and Note 6, page 17)?

For Security Officers outside New York, the Security Service table included under Section II.C.i applies (page 9). Note 6 on page 17 clarifies that the same experience requirements also apply to Security Officers in GS categories outside New York.