



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**  
42D AIR BASE WING (AETC)  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE ALABAMA

3 May 10

MEMORANDUM FOR APPROPRIATED FUND SUPERVISORS/MANAGERS

FROM: 42 FSS/FSMC

SUBJECT: Superior Qualifications Appointment Policy Guide

1. The Maxwell-Gunter Civilian Personnel Section (CPS) developed this guide to assist supervisors in understanding the policies and procedures for submitting superior qualifications recruitment incentive requests. The attached guide (Attachment 1) outlines the policy, procedures and justification criteria that are required for administering the Program properly.
2. Attachment 2 identifies the justification criteria that must be addressed to substantiate the applicant's qualifications as being "superior." The justification is used in conjunction with the superior qualifications matrix template (Attachment 3).
3. The CPS will use the checklist and approval form (Attachment 4) to document your organization's request and to coordinate the approval/disapproval.
4. Should you require additional assistance and/or guidance when submitting your superior qualifications package for approval consideration, please contact your organization's servicing Human Resources Specialist.

Signed//3 May 2010

DONALD G. COMSTOCK  
Human Resources Officer

4 Attachments:

1. Superior Qualifications and Special Needs Policy
2. Superior Qualifications Appointment Justification Criteria
3. Superior Qualifications Matrix Template
4. Superior Qualifications Checklist and Approval Form

## Attachment 1

### SUPERIOR QUALIFICATIONS AND SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY

#### 1. REFERENCES.

- a. 5 CFR, Part 531.212 Superior qualifications and special needs pay-setting authority.
- b. DoDI 1400.25V531, 18 Jul 06
- c. AFI 36-802, 1 Sep 98

#### 2. APPLICABILITY.

Authority to set the payable rate of basic pay for an employee above the minimum rate of the grade may be used when:

- a. A first appointment (regardless of tenure) as a civilian employee of the Federal Government; or
- b. A reappointment only when the employee has had a break in service of at least 90 days from the last period of civilian employment with the Federal Government, or
- c. If the candidate's civilian employment with the Federal Government during the 90-day period immediately preceding the appointment was limited to one or more of the following:
  - 1) Employment under a time-limited appointment in the competitive or excepted service;
  - 2) Employment under an appointment as an expert or consultant;
  - 3) Employment under a provisional appointment designated under;
  - 4) Employment under a non-permanent appointment (excluding a Schedule C appointment under 5 CFR part 213) in the competitive or excepted service; or
  - 5) Employment under the Student Career Experience Program

#### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES.

### NOTE TO MANAGERS: THIS FLEXIBILITY SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A MEANS TO NEGOTIATE SALARY

- a. Managers will not make a firm salary commitment to a candidate. The candidate should be cautioned against resigning from current employment until the proposed pay rate is approved and a firm offer is made. The superior qualifications must be approved prior to the candidate's appointment date.
- b. Managers must first consider the possibility of a recruitment incentive under 5 CFR part 575, subpart A, in determining whether to use the advanced in-hire rate authority and in setting the higher rate of basic pay.
- c. Managers will prepare documentation in support of a superior qualifications' appointment in accordance with the justification criteria identified at Attachment 1.

d. The Civilian Personnel Section (CPS) is responsible for:

- 1) Advising managers on the requirements for superior qualifications appointments;
- 2) Advising managers on use of a recruitment bonus as an alternative to setting pay at a step higher than that needed to match the candidate's salary;
- 3) Determining whether a manager's justification addresses the criteria for authorizing an advanced rate and meets requirements set forth in these guidelines;
- 4) Keep the manager apprised of the status of the request for an advanced rate of pay; and
- 5) Ensuring that all documentation for the appointment is received prior to transmittal to the Human Resources Officer (HRO) for review and approval/disapproval.
- 6) A checklist to facilitate this procedure is provided at Attachment 4.

e. The HRO shall approve or disapprove each request for a superior qualifications appointment on the soundness of recommendation and consistency, and may recommend a recruitment bonus instead of, or in addition to, the advanced rate.

f. The CPS is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the justification package to ensure that the candidate meets all the requirements for an advanced rate of pay; completing and approving the Superior Qualifications Checklist and Approval form. The approval form is forwarded to the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) prior to the effective date of the personnel action.

g. The Air Force Personnel Center is responsible for processing the personnel action effecting the appointment above the minimum rate.

#### 4. POLICY.

a. Each superior qualifications appointment shall be approved before the candidate enters on duty. There is no provision for an adjustment in pay after appointment.

b. A superior qualifications determination may be based on the relevance of the candidate's accomplishments compared to others in the field.

c. In determining considerations of a well-qualified candidate and what would make a candidate superior, managers shall consider the overall quality of candidate(s) available and particular requirements of the position being filled.

d. An advanced rate may not be above step 10 of the grade for which the candidate is applying.

e. In determining whether an employee should receive a superior qualifications appointment and if so, at what level the employee's pay should be set, consideration shall be given to the possibility of authorizing a recruitment bonus.

#### 5. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE REQUESTED RATE.

a. There is no set formula to determine propriety of a rate within the grade. Each case shall be evaluated with consideration to available well-qualified candidates, bona-fide and

confirmed competing offers, existing compensation of the candidates, the possibility of authorizing a one-time recruitment bonus, and the necessity for an advanced rate.

#### 6. EXISTING PAY/ACTUAL INCOME AS A DETERMINANT.

- a. A determination to approve or disapprove an advanced rate will be based in part on existing pay. What income will the candidate forfeit by accepting federal employment? A person's existing pay or actual income is what he or she would earn in his or her current position or in a position for which the candidate has a current firm offer.
- b. A superior qualifications appointment would not be appropriate for retirees who are not actively employed in a private or public sector position. A retiree, who is not actively employed, is not receiving a salary and therefore, the beginning step of the grade is adequate and competitive.
- c. Fringe benefits that are substantially better than those offered by the Federal Government such as health and life insurance may be considered as existing pay if they differ substantially from those available in the federal service. If the individual is retiring from military service, do not consider benefits that will continue after retirement.
- d. Special care must be exercised to not use the authority solely to match any candidate's earnings outside the Federal civilian sector.

#### 7. DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED.

All requests for superior qualifications appointments shall, at a minimum, contain the following documentation:

- a. A memorandum prepared by the appropriate manager (i.e., hiring supervisor) that fully documents justification for the superior qualifications appointment. The documentation shall be in accordance with the justification criteria at Attachment 1.
- b. A current position description for the job being filled.
- c. The candidate's resume for federal employment on which the election was based.
- d. The vacancy announcement advertising the position and identification of other recruitment sources used.
- e. Copy of all appropriate referral certificates provided to the manager/supervisor for selection.
- f. A copy of the candidate's latest earnings statement, previous year's W-2 (Wage and Tax Statement) or some other official documentation verifying the employee's earnings.

#### 8. CPS PROCEDURES

- a. Upon receipt of the manager's request, the servicing HR Specialist will:
  1. Review the package to ensure that it contains all necessary documentation; and
  2. Evaluate the package to ensure that the individual requested meets all requirements for an advanced rate of pay under this authority

- b. Once the above review has been completed, the HR Specialist will:
  - 1. Complete, sign, and date a Superior Qualifications Checklist and Approval Form attesting to his/her recommendation; and
  - 2. Forward the package to the identified teams Supervisory HR Specialist for review.
- c. If the Supervisory HR Specialist agrees with the Specialist's recommendation, he/she will forward the package to the HRO for final approval.
- d. Once final approval has been obtained, the HR specialist will inform the manager of the approval and forward the approval form to AFPC.
- e. Complete package, to include all supporting documentation, including the verification of existing pay, competing job offers, or salary history, should be retained by the approving official for the period of three years.

## Attachment 2

### SUPERIOR QUALIFICATIONS APPOINTMENT JUSTIFICATION CRITERIA

Requests for superior qualifications appointments must address all criteria reflected in the following paragraphs:

1. Is the individual entering the government for the first time or returning to federal employment after a break in service of 90 days or more? (If the answer is no, the individual may not be eligible for a superior qualifications appointment. Review 5 CFR 531.212(a) to determine if applicant meets this eligibility)
2. Is the position being filled subject to a special pay rate?
3. Qualifications Documentation: Are the candidate's qualifications demonstrably superior to what would be expected from other well-qualified candidates for the job being filled? The following points shall be addressed as appropriate, when documenting this factor.
  - a. Describe the special need of the agency that justifies the superior qualifications appointment. Documentation should include why the candidate's qualifications are unique and required by the agency.
  - b. Include a comparison of the candidate's qualifications with those of other well-qualified and available candidates. The comparison must document why the candidate's qualifications are superior and how the experience, education or other factors relate directly to the position as described in the position description. For example, if many candidates showed high-level experience or education directly pertinent to the position, a superior candidate would demonstrate an outstanding reputation in the field through publications, lectures, or leadership roles in professional organizations.
  - c. If the candidate is being considered for a shortage category positions, as defined by either a direct hire authority or special pay rate for the agency geographic area, describe how his or her background would enable him or her to better perform the needed work than other candidates who were recruited or who could reasonably be *expected* to respond to renewed recruiting efforts.
4. Explain reasons for requesting an advanced rate instead of, or in addition to, a recruitment bonus.
5. Salary Documentation: Document information regarding an applicant's actual income/existing pay. What income will the candidate forfeit by accepting federal employment?
  - a. Consider actual income from the candidate's present position and any current firm bona-fide offers of other employment. A candidate's actual income is what he or she would earn in his or her current position or in a position for which the candidate has a current, firm bona-fide offer. (A bona-fide offer must be in writing and must clearly offer current employment. The offer must include enough specific information to

distinguish it from general correspondence). A candidate who is leaving his or her current employment (for example, one who is retiring from military service, without an offer of employment or whose employer is going out of business) would not have income for actual pay purposes under the provisions of this authority. Rather, that candidate's income must be considered based on a current employment offer or on a reasonable expectation of employment. This consideration should include such issues as current market salaries for similar positions and the number of available candidates to select from. Possible sources of market salary information include review of paid advertisements for similar positions and qualification requirements, professional society publications, Bureau of Labor Statistics information, salary and benefit studies conducted for other organizations, and the like. Considerable research may need to be conducted to assure that the candidate would indeed be well qualified for such positions.

- b. Consider the difference in fringe benefits when there is a significant variance between what the Federal Government offers versus the private sector. For example, when a private firm provides health insurance and a pension plan at no cost to the employee.
- c. Consider earnings from any outside employment that have been a regular part of the candidate's total income and that the candidate will not be able to continue as a federal employee. Note however, that it is not appropriate to base an assumption of continuing income on a single bonus or consulting assignment that is out of line with the candidate's recent salary history unless the candidate has a commitment for continued earnings at that rate.
- d. Do not use annualized or full-time equivalent income if a candidate is paid on a less than full-time basis.
- e. Do not consider income that would be unaffected by the federal job offer (e.g., income from real estate rentals).
- f. Include a copy of the candidate's latest earnings statement, a copy of the previous year's W-2 (Wage and Tax Statement) or some other official documentation verifying the employee's earnings, i.e. 1099 forms. Examples of inadequate documentation include bank statements, lists of income sources and amounts prepared by applicants, and copies of other similar documents.

**Attachment 3**

RPA #1234567 – Position Title \_\_\_\_\_ – GS-XXXX-XX Date

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Name of Candidate</b>	<b>Applicable KSA Experience</b>	<b>Applicable KSA Experience</b>	<b>Applicable KSA Experience</b>	<b>Applicable /Specialized Experience</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Total Points</b>
Graham, Reginald	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ready, Frederick	2	6	2	0	0	10
Lady, Dorothy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dixon, Mary	0	0	0	0	3	3
Nice, Victoria	3	6	0	0	2	11
Polly, Steven	3	12	4	4	2	25
Lender, Gary	0	0	4	0	0	4
Leon, Margaret	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chaplin, Charles	5	17	2	16	9	49
Jones, James	3	6	0	0	2	11
Riddle, Roger	2	9	0	6	2	19
Sears, Lowen	0	0	0	0	5	5
Slime, Stephen	3	0	4	6	0	13
Joe, Gordon	2	9	0	13	2	26
Tittsworth, Tyler	2	6	0	4	0	10
Twiggs, Brenda	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Attachment 4**

<b>SUPERIOR QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST AND APPROVAL FORM</b>	
<b>Name:</b> <i>(Last, First, MI)</i>	<b>Grade/Step Requested:</b>
<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>	
1. Does the justification memorandum show that the candidate's qualifications are demonstrably superior to what would be expected of a well-qualified candidate <u>and</u> that the employee is forfeiting income? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
OR	
2. Does the justification memorandum and the resume clearly show the candidate has a unique combination of education and experience that meets a special need of the agency? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>EXISTING PAY/SALARY HISTORY</b>	
The justification memorandum discusses the following (check all that apply):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Salary	<input type="checkbox"/> Fringe Benefits
<input type="checkbox"/> Bona Fide Offers	<input type="checkbox"/> Bonuses
<input type="checkbox"/> Avg Salary for Occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> Shortage Category
<input type="checkbox"/> Forfeited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> Reasonable Expectation of Employment
<input type="checkbox"/> Special Need	
<b>Is all required documentation provided (salary, education, income forfeiture, etc.)?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum from manager with justification (including the matrix) for a superior qualifications appointment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of position description	
<input type="checkbox"/> Description of the superior qualifications	
<input type="checkbox"/> Candidate's resume package	
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacancy announcement advertising the positions and identification of other recruitment sources	
<input type="checkbox"/> All certificates referred to the manager for selection	
<input type="checkbox"/> Income verification (W-2, tax return, check stub, or 1099)	
<p>Recommended by: _____ Date: _____ <i>(Organizational HR Specialist)</i></p> <p>Concurrence: _____ Date: _____ <i>(Team HR Supervisory Specialist)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Approved</b>    <b>Grade/Step Approved:</b> _____    <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Disapproved</b></p> <p>_____ <i>(Civilian Personnel Officer)</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Date: _____</p>	