



MYTH BUSTERS INTERNSHIP AND RECENT GRADUATES PROGRAMS

After extensive discussions with many in government who are trying to hire recent graduates and use interns, and with very helpful feedback from the Office of Personnel Management, we have compiled these “myth busters” to reduce confusion and correct the most common misconceptions about the government-wide Pathways Programs regulations and implementation guidance issued in 2012.

Individual agencies may have complementary policies for the Internship and Recent Graduates Programs. If you have any questions about these initiatives, please contact your Pathways Programs Officer.

UNDER THE PATHWAYS PROGRAMS:

★ Myth #1

- Agencies cannot target their outreach to specific academic institutions, associations or other talent sources.
- Agencies cannot target their outreach by geographic area.

Fact

Agencies can decide how they will recruit and accept applications for positions, provided that they comply with applicable law and the regulatory procedures outlined in [5 CFR, Part 302](#).

Agencies can:

- Engage in local recruiting efforts;
- Use familiar recruiting networks; and
- Establish guidelines regarding geographic areas of consideration, minimum announcement periods and other recruitment sources.

Supporting language from the “Responses to Overarching Comments” in the [Final Rule](#)

Agencies retain the discretion to determine how they will recruit and accept applications as long as they comply with applicable law and the regulatory procedures of part 302. Nothing in the regulations precludes agencies from undertaking local recruiting efforts or using familiar recruiting networks, so long as they do so in compliance with law. Thus, agencies retain the flexibility to establish guidelines regarding minimum announcement periods, geographic areas of consideration, or additional recruitment sources. However, agencies must follow the appointment procedures in part 302.

★ **Myth #2**

Agencies must post every job and internship that they are hiring for on USAJOBS.

Fact

Agencies do not need to post job opportunity announcements (JOAs) for every job and internship that they are hiring for on USAJOBS. One JOA or notice can be used to advertise all of the Internship or Recent Graduates Programs opportunities that an agency is hiring for at a given time, so long as it includes information about the position titles, series and grade, geographic locations, and how to apply or express interest in them.

Supporting language from the Final Rule

When an agency accepts applications from individuals outside its own workforce, it must provide OPM information concerning opportunities to participate in the agency's Internship Program* ... The information must include:

- Position title, series and grade;
- Geographic location of the position;
- How to apply. A public source (e.g., a link to the agency's Web site with information on how to apply) for interested individuals to seek further information about how to apply for Internship opportunities; and
- Any other information OPM considers appropriate.

OPM will publish information on Internship opportunities in such form as the Director may determine.

**Please note that this language is mirrored in the portion of the Final Rule describing the Recent Graduates Program (see 5 CFR 362.303(a)).*

Supporting language from the "Responses to Overarching Comments" in the Final Rule

We agree that individuals who are interested in applying for positions in the Pathways Programs should be able to obtain information about the opportunities that are available. This will benefit all members of the public who are interested in and eligible for these Programs, including veterans who may have been out of school for up to 6 years and therefore not have the same access to school career counselors. Thus, we are retaining the provisions in the regulations that require agencies to provide information to OPM about positions, locations, and where to find information to apply for Pathways jobs. OPM will make this information available to the public. Our intention is to do so through USAJOBS.gov, as the commenter suggested.

Supporting language from the OPM Implementation Guidance

Agencies must meet OPM public notification requirements by providing Pathways Program opportunities and procedures for application to the general public, as provided by 5 CFR 362.105(b), 362.203(a), and 362.303(a). This information includes the position title, series and grade, geographic location and how to apply or express interest. OPM will then make available to the public via USAJOBS.

★ **Myth #3**

Agencies cannot accept applications for Recent Graduates positions from students who are still in school and have yet to complete their degrees.

Fact

Agencies can accept applications for Recent Graduates positions from these students, provided that they are scheduled to complete their degrees prior to the start dates for the jobs being advertised.

Supporting language from the OPM Implementation Guidance

Agencies have the discretion to determine the process for accepting applications for specific Recent Graduates opportunities in accordance with 5 CFR 362.302, consistent with applicable legal and policy requirements.

★ **Myth #4**

Agencies must use OPM qualification standards to fill Internship positions.

Fact

Agencies can use OPM qualification standards or develop and use their own to fill Internship positions, provided that these selective factors are outlined in their MOUs. The OPM qualification standards are intended to serve as minimum requirements for Internship positions, and agencies can and should add other criteria to help them attract well-qualified candidates and winnow down their applicant pools.

Supporting language from the Final Rule

Individuals may be evaluated against either agency-developed standards or the OPM Qualification Standard for the position being filled.

Supporting language from the OPM Implementation Guidance

Agencies can use agency-developed or OPM qualification standards when filling Internship positions as specified in their MOUs. However, individuals being considered for positions that have positive education requirements (e.g., biologist, geologist) should be enrolled in directly related degree programs in order to be eligible for conversion to that position in the competitive service.

★ **Myth #5**

Agencies must apply veterans' preference as part of each screen in the hiring process for Internship and Recent Graduates positions, when they hire students and recent graduates for these roles, and before noncompetitively converting them to full-time jobs.

Fact

Agencies must only apply veterans' preference once during the process when hiring students and recent graduates into the Internship and Recent Graduates Programs. They do not need to apply it again before noncompetitively converting them to full-time positions. Agencies should refer to their internal excepted service policies when determining how to apply preference during rating and ranking, in accordance with 5 CFR, Part 302 procedures.

Supporting language from the OPM Implementation Guidance

Veterans' preference applies to selection for positions in the Pathways Programs. Selections must be made in accordance with the requirements of 5 CFR, Part 302, veterans' preference laws, and OPM guidance issued as a Memorandum for Chief Human Capital Officers, dated February 9, 2009, on *Procedures for Passover of Compensably-Disabled Preference Eligibles in the Excepted Service*. This includes, but is not limited to, ranked and unranked referral lists.

★ **Myth #6**

Students must accumulate 640 hours of continuous, onsite service at the same office location and agency, or 320 hours if they demonstrate outstanding academic achievement or exceptional job performance, in order to meet the requirements of the Internship Program and be eligible for noncompetitive conversion.

Fact

Students are able to carry over the hours accumulated towards their *overall* Program requirements when they have breaks in service, work remotely or switch office locations or agencies.

Supporting language from the Final Rule

An agency may waive up to one-half (i.e., 320 hours) of the 640-hour minimum service requirement ... when an Intern completes 320 hours of career-related work experience under an Internship Program appointment and demonstrates high potential by outstanding academic achievement and exceptional job performance. For purposes of this paragraph:

- *Outstanding academic achievement* means an overall grade point average of 3.5 or better, on a 4.0 scale; standing in the top 10 percent of the student's graduating class; and/or induction into a nationally-recognized scholastic honor society.
- *Exceptional job performance* means a formal evaluation conducted by the student's Internship supervisor(s), consistent with the applicable performance appraisal program that results in a rating of record (or summary rating) of higher than Fully Successful or equivalent.

★ **Myth #7**

Students who participated in volunteer or third-party internship programs cannot apply any of their hours of experience towards the 640-hour minimum service requirement for noncompetitive conversion once they apply and are accepted into the Internship Program.

Fact

Agencies may grant credit for up to half of the 640-hour minimum service requirement, or 320 hours, to students who participated in *certain* volunteer or third-party internship programs once they apply and are accepted into the Internship Program.

Supporting language from the OPM Implementation Guidance

Agencies may credit up to 320 hours of certain non-Federal career-related internship program experience, volunteer service, or active duty military service and apply it towards the 640 hours as provided in 5 CFR 362.204(c).

Supporting language from 5 CFR, Part 362

An agency may evaluate, consider, and grant credit for up to one-half (320 hours) of the 640-hour service requirement ... for comparable non-Federal internship experience in a field or functional area related to the student's target position and acquired while the student:

- Worked in, but not for, a Federal agency, pursuant to a formal internship agreement, comparable to the Internship Program under this subpart, between the agency and an accredited academic institution;
- Worked in, but not for, a Federal agency, pursuant to a written contract with a third-party internship provider officially established to provide internship experiences to students that are comparable to the Internship Program under this subpart; or
- Served as an active duty member of the armed forces (including the National Guard and Reserves), as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2101, provided the veteran's discharge or release is under honorable conditions.

★ Myth #8

Participants in the Internship and Recent Graduates Programs who meet all Program requirements may only be noncompetitively converted at the agency where they completed these requirements.

Fact

Agencies can noncompetitively convert any participant in the Internship Program who meets all Program requirements, even if that individual has never worked for their agency in the past. Participants in the Recent Graduates Program do not have the same conversion eligibility. These individuals must be converted within the agency to which they were initially appointed.

Supporting language from the OPM Implementation Guidance

Subject to any OPM-imposed conversion limitations, an agency may noncompetitively convert any Pathways Program participant who has met all Program requirements to a position in the competitive service under a term or permanent appointment. However, service in a Pathways Program confers no right to further employment in the competitive or excepted service.

Supporting language from 5 CFR, Part 362

A Recent Graduate or Presidential Management Fellow may be converted within the employing agency. Agencies may not convert Recent Graduates or Presidential Management Fellows from other agencies.

We thank OPM for reviewing and providing input into this resource.