

		STAFFING Superior Qualifications	
	Question	Answer	OPM URL
1	What is superior qualifications or special needs pay setting?	Agencies may set the rate of basic pay of a newly-appointed employee at a rate above the minimum rate of the appropriate General Schedule (GS) grade because of 1. the superior qualifications of the candidate, or 2. a special need of the agency for the candidate's services.	http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/fact-sheets/superior-qualifications-and-special-needs-pay-setting-authority/
2	When can superior qualifications or special needs pay setting authority be used?	The superior qualifications and special needs pay setting authority may be used for the following:	
		A. First appointment (regardless of tenure) as a civilian employee of the department	
		B. A reappointment that is considered a new appointment under 5 U.S.C. 5333 and when the employee has a break in service of at least 90 days.	
		C. A reappointment that is considered a new appointment under 5 U.S.C. 5333 and when the employee does not have a break in service of at least 90 days but meets any of the following criteria: 1. The previous employment was under a time-limited or nonpermanent appointment in the competitive or excepted service; 2. Employment under an appointment as an expert or consultant under 5 U.S.C. part 304; 3. Employment under a provisional appointment designated under 5 CFR 316.403. 4. Service as an employee of a non-appropriated fund instrumentality of the Department of Defense or United States Coast Guard is not considered employment by the Federal Government under 5 CFR 531.212 except for employees covered by 5 CFR 531.216. If the employee is covered by 5 CFR 531.216, upon appointment to a GS position they are not eligible to have the pay set under the superior qualifications or special needs authority since their NAFO employment is considered employment by the Federal Government.	
3	What are the criteria used in determining	The following criteria are used in determining the use of a superior qualifications and special needs pay setting authority:	

	the use superior qualifications and special needs pay setting authority?	<p>A. The candidate has superior qualifications.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Superior qualifications are based on the level, type, or quality of the candidate's skills or competencies for the position being filled. 2. Skills and competencies may be demonstrated or obtained through work experience and/or education. A candidate's accomplishments compared to others in the field or other factors may be used to support a superior qualifications determination. 3. All skills and competencies used to justify a superior qualifications appointment must be relevant to the requirements of the position to be filled. 4. Skills and competencies must be significantly higher than what is needed to be considered minimally qualifying for the position. <p>B. The candidate fills a special need.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Filling a special need is based on the candidate's type, level, or quality of skills and competencies that are relevant to the requirements of the mission, goal, or program activity. 2. The position is difficult to fill. 3. Candidate meets the special needs of the Bureau or equivalent office work force requirements as documented in the Department's strategic human capital plan. 	
4	Does a candidate need to meet all of the criteria in order to approve a superior qualifications and special needs pay setting appointment?	<p>No. The candidate needs to meet one of the following criteria:</p> <p>A. The candidate has superior qualifications.</p> <p>B. The candidate fills a special need.</p>	
5	Who is the Approving Official for an appointment based on superior qualifications and/or special needs?	The heads of Bureaus, equivalent offices or their designee are granted authority to approve this type of appointment. This authority may be furthered delegated at the discretion of the head of the Bureau or equivalent office at the level that best serves the organization.	
6	Are there any restrictions within the Approving Official's role with superior qualifications and special needs pay setting authority?	<p>The following outlines the restrictions within the Approving Official role with the superior qualifications and special needs pay setting authority:</p> <p>A. An authorized approving official within the Bureau or equivalent office must be at least one level higher grade than the supervisor of the employee receiving superior qualifications and special needs pay setting.</p> <p>B. For employees in the Immediate Office of the Secretary the approving official is the Policy Management & Budget Assistant Secretary with the concurrence of the Director of the servicing Human Resources Office. NOTE: These requests must be submitted through the appropriate Assistant Secretary or equivalent official to the Policy Management & Budget Assistant Secretary.</p>	
7	What factors are used when determining the pay rate for a superior qualifications or special needs pay	A Bureau or equivalent office may consider one or more of the following factors to determine the step with the General Schedule at which to set an employee's payable rate of basic pay using the superior qualifications and special needs pay setting authority:	

	setting authority?	A. The level, type, or quality of the candidate's skill or competencies;	
		B. The candidate's existing salary, to include recent salary history, or salary documented in a competing job offer. The Bureau or equivalent office must take into account the location where the salary was or would be earned and comparing the salary to payable rates of basic pay in the same location;	
		C. Significant disparities between Federal and non-Federal salaries for the skills and competencies required in the position to be filled;	
		D. Existing labor market conditions and employment trends, including the availability and quality of candidates for the same or similar positions;	
		E. The success of recent efforts to recruit candidates for the same or similar positions;	
		F. Recent turnover in the same or similar positions;	
		G. The importance or criticality of the position to be filled and the effect on the Bureau or equivalent office if the position is not filled or if there is a delay in filling it;	
		H. The desirability of the geographic location, duties and/or work environment associated with the position;	
		I. Bureau or equivalent office workforce needs, as documented in the Department's strategic human capital plan, Bureau workforce plan; or	
8	Is there a deadline in which the superior qualifications and special needs pay setting should be approved by?	Yes. Requests to use superior qualifications and special needs pay setting must be approved prior to the candidate entering on duty.	
9	Is the consideration of other incentives required before using superior qualifications and special needs pay setting?	Yes. A Bureau or equivalent office must first consider the use of authorizing a recruitment incentive under 5 CFR part 575, subpart A. They must document their decision to offer or not offer a recruitment incentive in the folder/merit promotion file and their memorandum requesting the superior qualifications and special pay setting. The offer must be in writing, along with the candidate's refusal to accept the position with the recruitment incentive, and must be documented in the memorandum requesting approval.	

10	What is the required criteria in the documentation for the use of the superior qualifications and special needs pay setting?	<p>Each request and the subsequent approval/disapproval must be in writing. The Bureau must document in writing all of the reasons for the use of the superior qualifications and special needs pay setting authority:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The superior qualifications of the candidate and the Bureau or equivalent office's need for these skills and competencies; 2. An explanation of the factors and the supporting documentation used to justify the rate at which the candidate's pay is set. The written documentation must explain how these factors directly relate to the rate of approval; and 3. The reasons for authorizing a higher than minimum rate instead of or in addition to a recruitment incentive. 	http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/fact-sheets/superior-qualifications-and-special-needs-pay-setting-authority/
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