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U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration

Memorandum

Subject: INFORMATION: Promotions of Newly Hired
Inspectors

Date: JUL 20 2001

From: Director, Flight Standards
Service, AFS-1

Reply to
Attn. of:

To: All Regional Flight Standards Division Managers

Several of you raised concern regarding differing interpretations of when a newly hired inspector is qualified for a promotion. This memorandum is issued to provide clarification and to ensure consistency throughout the regions. It does not establish a new policy or practice. The clarification provided below is a result of analyzing pertinent information available from Order 3140.19, On-The-Job Training (OJT) of Aviation Safety Inspectors, as well as applicable personnel guides, and input from your regional Flight Standards human resource staff.

The following should be noted:

- The OJT Order sets 52 weeks as a NORMAL time period for a newly hired inspector to master those tasks required to be performed or simulated before he/she is eligible for promotion, without regard to VRA status.
- The Qualification Standards Operating Manual (formerly X-118) states 1 year (in lieu of the 52 weeks) as a general period of time, from the initial appointment, in which the applicant can demonstrate satisfactory performance before being eligible for a promotion. It further states that satisfactory performance can be measured by mastery of those tasks required to be performed or simulated at the next higher-grade level. This mastery of tasks can be obtained through, but not limited to, OJT, other training, and/or outside experience.
- The Qualification Standards Operating Manual permits promotions if the applicant has the experience required

to qualify for the next higher grade (no matter where the experience was gained and without regard to VRA status).

- Personnel reform eliminated time-in-grade requirements.

Based on the above guidance, a newly hired inspector will normally be eligible for promotion after 1 year. However, promotions can occur in less than a year if the employee has mastered the tasks required at the next higher level, and meets all other criteria outlined in the Qualification Standards Operating Manual for experience including, but not limited to, OJT, other training, and/or outside experience. The supervisor/manager is responsible for determining when an employee has met all of the requirements for promotion up to and including the target level of the position to which the employee is assigned. The supervisor/manager determines whether there is sufficient continuing work at the higher-grade level to support the promotion. In no case does promotion automatically follow completion of an established waiting period or meeting the qualification requirements.

Attached are examples of cases where an employee may be promoted prior to the 1 year time period. If you have any questions or need further information regarding this issue, please contact Sandy McRae, (202) 267-3791, or Betty Brown, (202) 267-7101.



Nicholas A. Sabatini

Attachment

Case #1: What is the highest entry level for hiring a VRA appointee as an inspector? Also, can I promote him/her before the 1 year time frame if they are eligible?

Response: As long as a VRA appointee meets all of the qualifications, a VRA appointment can be made without competition up to and including the grade -11 level. In most cases, one year of qualifying experience is necessary for promotion. However, in rare cases, a VRA appointee may be qualified for promotion prior to the 1 year. This determination would have to be made based on the VRA appointee receiving all necessary training, meeting the qualifications as stated in the Qualification Standards Operating Manual, and demonstrating the ability to perform all of the duties associated with the position at the higher level.

Reference: USOPM - Special Appointing Authority for Veterans.

Case #2: What about a new hire that is not a VRA, who, when hired, meets the Qualification Standards Operating Manual (formerly X-118) requirements for promotion to the next level?

Response: The 1 year time frame is set as a normal period of time applicable to all initial hires, regardless of grade level. However, it should be noted that the FG-12 grade level is identified as the journeyman ASI level with the FG-13 level being the full performance level. To be considered for the FG-12 level, the inspector should have received all necessary training and must be able to demonstrate ability to perform all of the duties associated with the inspector position at that level.

Reference: Order 3140.9, paragraph 7.d.

Case #3: If an applicant is hired at a particular grade level, but the Qualification Standards Operating Manual indicates he/she is qualified for two grade levels above that, can he/she be promoted two grade levels after the initial 1 year time period? In other words, are we permitted to promote, for example, an FG-9 to the FG-12 level if they meet all of the qualifications?

Response: Yes, personnel policy allows promotion of more than 1 grade if the Qualification Standards Operating Manual requirements are met. The OJT Order does not address this

issue. When the OJT Order does not address an issue, we rely on the relevant personnel policy such as the Qualification Standards Operating Manual or other guidance. Therefore, if the selectee can demonstrate satisfactory performance, has completed the necessary training and OJT, the appropriate personnel procedures are followed, the Qualification Standards Operating Manual requirements are met, there is a vacancy at the higher grade level, and the funds are available--if all of these conditions are met, the manager can request, through the regional division manager, a 2 grade level promotion.

Reference: OJT Order and Qualification Standards Operating Manual

Case #4: Suppose the inspector completes OJT and the string courses in less than the 1 year timeframe and meets the Qualification Standards Operating Manual requirements for the next higher grade level--can he/she be promoted in less than 1 year?

Response: Normally, an inspector will take 1 year to complete the required training. However, on rare occasions, if the inspector satisfactorily completes the training, meets the Qualification Standards Operating Manual provisions for promotion, and appropriate personnel procedures are followed, the manager may request a promotion be granted in less than 1 year. The OJT Order sets the 1 year as a basic timeframe, not the minimum or maximum.

Reference: OJT Order 3140.19, paragraph 8.(3).

Case #5: If an employee spends 1 year at a particular grade level, but has not completed the training, what action, if any, should be taken?

Response: The response can be either of the following, depending on the circumstances surrounding the 1 year:

- a. If 52 weeks at a particular grade level has been completed by an employee, but they have not completed the string training due to budgetary constraints or other conditions beyond the control of the inspector, OJT Order, paragraph 8.a., provides that a waiver can be requested for a promotion of the employee provided the manager agrees that the employee has progressed in all other areas.